

# **THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH**

*The Orthodox Church from Adam to the Second Coming of Christ*

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*He who wishes personal salvation and who wishes to be a true son of the Orthodox Church, must seek in her deliverance from the flood as in the ark of Noah. He who fears the terrible thunder of anathema that overwhelms soul and body must take upon himself the most sweet yoke of Christ - the ecclesiastical dogmas. Let him tame the unruliness of his mind with the ecclesiastical laws and submit in all things to his Mother - the Church!*

St. John Chrysostom.

*Nothing is more abiding than the Church: she is your salvation; she is your refuge. She is more lofty than the heavens; she is more far-reaching than the earth. She never grows old; she always stays in bloom. And so Scripture indicates her permanence and stability by calling her a virgin; her magnificence by calling her a queen; her closeness to God by calling her a daughter; her barrenness turned to fecundity by calling her 'the mother of seven'. A thousand names try to spell out her nobility. Just as the Lord is called by many names - Father, Way, Life, Light, Arm, Propitiation, Foundation, Gate, Sinless One, Treasure, Lord, God, Son, Only-Begotten, Form of God, Image of God, - since one name could not hope to describe the Omnipotent, and many names give us some small insight into His nature, so the Church goes by many names.*

St. John Chrysostom.

*Christ the Lord called that Church the Catholic Church which maintains the true and saving confession of the faith.*

St. Maximus the Confessor.

*The Church is the gathering of the People, the Body of Christ, His Name, His Bride, which calls the peoples to penitence and prayer; purified by the water of Holy Baptism and washed by His precious Blood, adorned as a Bride and sealed with the anointing of the Holy Spirit... The Church is an earthly heaven wherein the heavenly God dwells and walks; it is an anti-type of the Crucifixion, Burial and Resurrection of Christ... The Church is a divine house where the mystical living Sacrifice is celebrated,... and its precious stones are the divine dogmas taught by the Lord to His disciples.*

St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople.

*The ark is the Church; only those who are in it will be saved.*

St. Nectarius of Optina.

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## INTRODUCTION. THE CHURCH: TRUE AND FALSE

*They have taken away my Lord,  
and I know not where they have laid Him.  
John 20.13.*

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

And yet, as the Martyr-Bishop Cyprian of Carthage said in the third century: "Whoever breaks with the Church and enters on an adulterous union cuts himself off from the promises made to the Church; and he who turns his back on the Church of Christ will not come to the rewards of Christ: he is an alien, a worldling, an enemy. You cannot have God for your Father if you no longer have the Church for your mother. If there was any escape for one who was outside the ark of Noah, there will be as much for one who is found to be outside the Church. The Lord warns us when He says: 'He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth'. Whoever breaks the peace and harmony of the Church acts against Christ; whoever gathers elsewhere than in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Nor can he have Christ as his Head who does not adhere to the Church as His Body; for, as St. Augustine of Hippo said in the fifth century, it is the Head and Body together which comprise "the whole Christ".<sup>2</sup>

Where, then, is the Church, and what are her marks?

One of the greatest saints of the twentieth century, Father John of Kronstadt, defined the Church as "the community of those being saved in Christ, beautified by every kind of good deed". But this definition, while true, can only be a first approximation. Since the beginning of Christian history, and multiplying at an ever-increasing rate since then, communities have sprung up claiming to be saved in Christ and to practise good deeds, yet differing radically in both faith and deeds, and even in whether faith and/or deeds are necessary for salvation.

Therefore St. John felt compelled to further define the True Church as the Orthodox Church: "There is not one Christian confession of faith besides the

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<sup>1</sup> St. Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, 6. Cf. St. Ambrose of Milan, *On Repentance*, II, 24; St. Augustine of Hippo, *Homily 21 on the New Testament*; St. Basil the Great, *First Canonical Epistle*; St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 11 on Ephesians*.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, *On John*, XXVIII, 1; *On Psalm 26*, ii, 2.

Orthodox which can bring Christians to the perfection of Christian life or holiness and to perfect cleansing from sins... because other non-Orthodox confessions 'keep the truth in unrighteousness' (Romans 1.18), and have mixed lies and false wisdom with the truth and do not possess those God-given means of cleansing, regeneration and renewal which the Orthodox Church possesses."<sup>3</sup>

However, this definition will not convince the great majority of people in our time who have had experience neither of the holiness of Orthodox worship nor of a living saint such as St. John. Clearly we need a definition which is both inclusive enough to encompass all the height and the breadth and the depth of the Church and restrictive enough to exclude those pseudo-churches which bear the name of Christ but in essence deny Him. Moreover, we must have clear criteria for distinguishing the true from the false.

And this is no easy task. For the Lord warned that in the last times the false signs and wonders would be so subtle that even the elect, if it were possible, would be deceived (Matthew 24.24). For, as He said in the Sermon on the Mount: "Many shall say to Me in that day: 'Lord! Lord! in Thy name have we not prophesied? and in Thy name cast out demons? and in Thy name worked many miracles?' And then I shall declare to them: 'I know you not. Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.'" (Matthew 7.22-23)

Nicetas of Remesiana wrote in the fourth century: "After confessing the blessed Trinity, you go on to profess that you believe in the Holy Catholic Church. What else is the Church than the congregation of all the saints? From the beginning of the world, all righteous men who have been, are or shall be, whether they be patriarchs, - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, - prophets, apostles, martyrs or any other righteous man, are one Church because they are sanctified by one faith and life, sealed by one Spirit, made into one Body; of which Body the Head is Christ, as it is written (Ephesians 1.22; 5.23; Colossians 1.18). I go further. Even the angels, virtues and powers above are united in this one Church; for the apostle teaches that 'in Christ all things are reconciled, whether things on earth or things in heaven' (Colossians 1.20). So in this one Church you believe that you are going to attain to the Communion of Saints? You must know that this one Church is ordered throughout the whole world and to its communion you ought firmly to adhere. There are, indeed, other pseudo-churches, but you have nothing in common with them; as for example, the churches of the Manichaeans, the Montanists, the Marcionites, and other heretics or schismatics. For they have ceased to be holy Churches, inasmuch as they have been

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<sup>3</sup> St. John of Kronstadt, *Mysli o Tserkoi* (*Thoughts on the Church*), pp. 20, 30 (in Russian). He goes on: "... and not that which produces enmity, persecutions, tortures and torments (the Roman Catholic) or which leads to false wisdom and the domination of the corrupt mind over Divine Revelation, the rejection of the mysteries, the hierarchy, the fasts... which has rashly and brazenly broken all connection with 'the Church of the first-born who are inscribed in the Heavens' (Hebrews 12.23),... broken off all communion with the dead, and considers their prayer for them to be ineffective (Protestantism)."

deceived by doctrines of demons, and both believe and do otherwise than is required by the commands of Christ the Lord and the traditions of the Apostles."<sup>4</sup>

This definition is both inclusive, in that it includes the angels and the Old Testament righteous, and exclusive, in that it excludes heretics and schismatics. But it provides only a schematic method of distinguishing the one true Church from the many pseudo-churches. For heretics, no less than the Orthodox, claim to be following "the commands of Christ the Lord and the traditions of the Apostles".

This problem vexed a fifth-century Gallic saint, Vincent of Lerins, who wrote: "I have often inquired most earnestly and attentively from very many experts in sanctity and learning, how, and by what definite and, as it were, universal rule I might distinguish the truth of the Catholic Faith from the falsity of heretical perversion; and I have always received an answer of this kind from almost all of them, namely, that whether I, or any one else, wished to detect the frauds of newly rising heretics and to avoid their snares, and to remain sound and whole in the sound faith, one ought, with the Lord's help, to fortify one's faith in a twofold manner: first, by the authority of the Divine Law, and secondly, by the tradition of the Catholic Church.

"Here perhaps one will ask, Since the canon of Scripture is complete and is in itself sufficient, and more than sufficient on all points, what need is there to join to it the authority of ecclesiastical interpretation? The answer of course is that, owing to the very depth of holy Scripture itself, all do not receive it in one and the same sense; but one in one way and another in another interprets the declarations of the same writer, so that it seems possible to elicit from it as many opinions as there are men. For Novatian expounds it one way, Photinus another, Sabellius another, Donatus another, Arius, Eunomius, and Macedonius another, Apollinarius and Priscillian another, Jovinian, Pelagius, and Celestius another, and quite lately Nestorius another. Whence it is most necessary, on account of the great intricacies of such various errors, that the rule for the interpretation of the Prophets and Apostles should be laid down in accordance with the standard of the ecclesiastical and Catholic understanding of them.

"Also in the Catholic Church itself we take great care that we hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and properly 'Catholic', as the very force and meaning of the word show, which comprehends everything almost universally. And we shall observe this rule if we follow universality, antiquity, consent. We shall follow universality if we confess that one Faith to be true which the whole Church throughout the world confesses; antiquity if we in no wise depart from those interpretations which it is plain that our holy ancestors and fathers proclaimed; consent if in antiquity itself we eagerly follow the definitions and beliefs of all, or certainly nearly all, priests and doctors alike.

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<sup>4</sup> Nicetas, *De Symbolo*, 10. Translated by J. Stevenson, *Creeeds, Councils and Controversies*, London: SPCK, 1966, pp. 119-20.

"What, then, will the Catholic Christian do if any part of the Church has cut itself off from the communion of the universal Faith? What surely but prefer the soundness of the whole body to a pestilent and corrupt member?

"What if some novel contagion seek to infect the whole Church, and not merely a small portion of it? Then he will take care to cling to antiquity, which cannot now be led astray by any novel deceit.

"What if in antiquity itself error be detected on the part of two or three men, or perhaps of a city, or even of a province? Then he will look to it that he prefer the decrees of an ancient general council, if such there be, to the rashness and ignorance of a few.

"But what if some error spring up concerning which nothing of this kind is to be found? Then he must take pains to find out and compare the opinions of the ancients, provided, of course, that such remained in the communion and faith of the One Catholic Church, although they lived in different times and places, conspicuous and approved teachers; and whatever he shall find to have been held, written, and taught, nor by one or two only, but by all equally and with one consent, openly, frequently and persistently, that he must understand is to be believed by himself also without the slightest hesitation."<sup>5</sup>

Of course, St. Vincent wrote at a time when the True Church was large and could not easily be confused with other religions or sects; whereas we live in a time when the Catholic truth is upheld by a tiny minority and is certainly not held "everywhere and always and by all". This is why Fr. Georges Florovsky was critical of St. Vincent's formula. He argued that if that which is believed "everywhere and always and by all" is interpreted to mean merely "empirical universality", then the formula becomes "primitive" and "acutely psychologistic". Rather, it should be interpreted in terms of "charismatic tradition" and "inner catholicity", which is not revealed to all, but only to the "little flock" (Luke 12.32).<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, we believe that any seeker for truth who applies this definition carefully, interpreting its universality in time as well as space, will eventually be led to the True Church.

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However, it must be admitted that in our apocalyptic days many of the terms used in St. Vincent's definition - "Catholic", "heretic", "general council" - are barely comprehensible to most people, so deprived have they been of even the rudiments of Christian history and tradition. A different approach is therefore desirable, if such can be found. The approach adopted in this little work is a scriptural-historical one, in the sense that its structure follows the order of the scriptural revelation and the history of the Church.

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<sup>5</sup> St. Vincent, *Commonitorium*, II 4 - III 8. Translated by Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 298-99.

<sup>6</sup> George H. Williams, *The Neo-Patristic Synthesis of Georges Florovsky*, in Andrew Blane (ed.), *Georges Florovsky*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993, p. 309.



Such a historical approach to the dogma of the Church is justified, we believe, because, as Fr. Georges Florovsky writes, "theological consciousness must become historical consciousness, and only to the measure of its historicalness can it be Catholic... Only in history can one be convinced to the end in the mystical reality of the Church, and be freed from the temptation to squeeze Christianity into an abstract doctrine or morality..."<sup>7</sup>

The historical order that reveals to us the nature of the Church begins with the very creation of the world. For, as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow says, "the history of the Church begins simultaneously with the history of the world. The creation of the world in itself may be seen as a kind of preparation for the creation of the Church because the purpose for which the kingdom of nature was made resides in the Kingdom of grace." Thus corresponding to the first six days of creation, "we can represent [the construction and perfection of the Church] in six consecutive image-changes.

"I. In the beginning the Church was 'heaven and earth' together, or heaven on earth. The fall of man made it 'without form and void'. Darkness covered her in such a way that she was completely united with the abyss of fallen spirits. But 'the Spirit of God' hovered over the waters, that is, over the races of men (who are represented in the word of God as 'waters' (Isaiah 7.6, 7; Revelation 17.15) that perished in Adam, and grace overshadowed him. God sent him the 'light' of the revelation concerning the Redeemer; and He 'divided' the kingdom of light from the kingdom of darkness, the believing man from the impenitent devil, the seed of the woman from the seed of the serpent, the race of Seth from the race of Cain, the house of Noah from the first world that was corrupted at the end.

"II. So as to reveal the light of revelation in greater clarity, God wished to create the 'firmament', that is, a society in which His promises would be confirmed unshakeably, and which would 'declare His glory' and 'proclaim' the grace-filled 'works of His hands' (Psalms 18.1-5, Romans 10.18). For this the troubled 'waters' of the earthly races were divided at the tower of Babylon: and the rejected races, like 'the waters beneath the firmament', covered the earth, thinking only earthly thoughts; but Abraham and the Patriarchs, like 'the waters above the firmament', were raised to the highest promises and the closest union with God; while the chosen people that proceeded from them was cleansed and established by the law.

"III. Then the Church, which was formerly immersed in the waters of the peoples, appeared on her own 'firm land' of the promises, and was adorned with earthly blessings from God. Her 'earth opened', so as to 'bring forth the fruits of salvation and let righteousness spring up together' (Isaiah 45.8). In the midst of her, like 'the tree of life', was planted 'the root of Jesse' (Isaiah 11.1), whose 'rod' was to establish, its new 'branch' renew, and its 'fruit' feed the universe with immortality.

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<sup>7</sup> Florovsky, *Puti Russkogo Bogoslovia (The Ways of Russian Theology)*, Vilnius, 1993, pp. 507, 508 (in Russian).

“IV. With the incarnation of the Son of God there appeared the spiritual ‘Sun’ of the world and the new Church, like ‘the moon’, radiant with His light. The apostles and teachers of Christianity, with the whole Church, like the moon and ‘the stars’, sent the light into the very ‘night’ of paganism.

“V. With the continuation of the light-giving action of the spiritual Sun, ‘the waters’ of the previously rejected peoples produce ‘living souls’ alive with spiritual life; and high-soaring minds fly above the visible and temporary to the pure contemplation of the invisible and eternal.

“Finally, the once-flourishing, but then for a time abandoned by its Creator ‘land’ of Israel will show in itself ‘life from the dead’ (Romans 11.15). But when the mystical body of ‘the last Adam’ (I Corinthians 15.45), which now, ‘being fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself’ (Ephesians 4.16), and is finally and perfectly constructed, then, upheld by its Head, and infused with the Holy Spirit, it will triumphantly reveal the one image of God in all its members, and the great ‘Sabbath’ of God and man will arrive...”<sup>8</sup>

It is hoped that by means of this scriptural-historical approach the reader with no knowledge of Church Tradition apart from a cursory acquaintance with the Bible will be able to see both the importance of the doctrine of the Church - for it is one of the major themes of Holy Scripture, - and how all those elements which are considered "unscriptural" or "unnecessary" by Protestants and Ecumenists are both quite scriptural and absolutely necessary if the Holy Scriptures are read, as they must be, in their totality. Then, it is hoped, he will see that the Orthodox Church of post-apostolic times is not something foreign to the "primitive simplicity" of the early Church, but in fact is that same Church, being her continuation and fulfilment.

And so the conclusion will follow naturally that he who wishes to join himself to the Church of the Bible must join himself to the Church of the Orthodox.

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

*January 27 / February 9, 2014.*

*St. John Chrysostom.*

*The Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.  
East House, Beech Hill, Mayford, Woking, England.*

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<sup>8</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, *Zapiski Rukovodstviushchia k Osnovatel'nomu Rasumeniu Knigi Bytia (Notes leading to a Basic Understanding of the Book of Genesis)*, Moscow, 1817, 1867, pp. 30-31 (in Russian).

## 1. THE FAMILY CHURCH: FROM ADAM TO JACOB

*This is our God, providing for and sustaining His beloved inheritance, the Holy Church, comforting the forefathers who had fallen away through sin with His unlying Word, laying the foundation for Her already in Paradise.*  
The Order for the Week of Orthodoxy.

### *The Church in Paradise*

God chose His people, according to the Apostle Paul, "before the foundation of the world,... having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1.4,5). Thus just as Christ existed from all eternity, and was manifest in the flesh only at the Incarnation, so the Church may be said to have existed in the mind of God from all eternity, and has been manifested in the flesh - the flesh of Christ - only since the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is in this sense that St. Clement of Rome could say of the Church that she "does not now exist for the first time, but comes from on high; for she was spiritual, and was manifested in the last days that He might save us".<sup>9</sup>

The Church was first revealed when God entered into full communion with men for the first time in Paradise. Paradise itself is the first image of the Church in Holy Scripture. At the same time it is the image of the age to come; for the Church is fully revealed only in the age to come, being not a simple creation, but the boundary between the created and Uncreated natures, the place of the communion between the Creator and His creatures.

That is why God is said not to have "created" Paradise, but to have "planted" it; and not during the seven days of Creation, but afterwards, on "the eighth day". For, as St. Symeon the New Theologian says: "God, Who knows everything beforehand, brought creation into being with order and harmony, and established the seven days as a type of the seven ages which would come later, and Paradise He planted afterwards as a sign of the age to come. For what reason, then, does the Holy Spirit not join this, the eighth day, to the seven preceding ones? This is because it was not fitting to reckon the eighth with the cycle of the seven. With the latter, first and second and in order all the seven circle each other in the cycle which comprises the week, in which first days are many indeed and seventh days just as numerous, but THAT day must be reckoned as wholly outside the cycle, since it has neither beginning nor end."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *II Clement*, XIV, 1.

<sup>10</sup> St. Symeon, *First Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*, vol. I, translated by Alexander Golitzin, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995, p. 24.

In the Garden Adam and Eve lived in full and open communion with God. Thus God is said to have walked with them in the garden: "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day..." (Genesis 3.8). This communion with God is the definition of Church membership. As the Apostle says: "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (II Corinthians 6.16). Such communion was possible for Adam and Eve because their nature was as yet uncorrupted by sin, being filled with the Holy Spirit as on the first day of their creation, when God created Adam as "a living soul" (Genesis 2.7) - alive, that is, with the Life-creating Spirit. And being in communion with God, they were in harmony with each other and created nature. Thus individually they were temples of God, and together they were the Church of God - the Church in its first manifestation, as a family...

Only in one sense could Adam and Eve be described as not belonging to the Church - in that sense in which the Church is defined exclusively as "the Body of Christ" (Ephesians 1.23, 5.23; Colossians 1.24). Before Christ became incarnate, no one could be said to belong to His Body, for He had none. Nevertheless, if, in accordance with St. Clement's definition, "the flesh is the Church and the Spirit is Christ"<sup>11</sup>, then Adam and Eve were indeed the Church, for in body as well as soul they were sinless and completely penetrated by the Spirit of Christ.

Moreover, it was in them, as representing mankind in its pristine and sinless condition, that the first major revelation of the Incarnation of Christ, and of His union with the Church, was given. For the creation of Eve (the Greek word in the Septuagint translation is: "building") from the side of Adam as he slept a deep sleep (the Greek word is: *εκστασις*, "ecstasy") was a prophecy of the building of the Church from the blood and water that flowed from Christ's side as He slept the sleep of death on the Cross.<sup>12</sup> And Adam's exclamation: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:... Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2.23,24) was a prophecy of Christ's Descent from the heavens and entering into the one-flesh relationship of Bridegroom and Bride with the Church of the New Testament.<sup>13</sup>

Again, God's words to the devil after the Fall: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3.15) indicate the means by which Christ restored the union between Himself and mankind - the defeat of the devil through the blood of Christ shed on the Cross.

Could the Church be said to have existed, or any of mankind to belong to the Church, after the Fall and before the Coming of Christ? This is a difficult question to

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<sup>11</sup> St. Symeon, *First Ethical Discourse*, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Third Discourse on Marriage*.

<sup>13</sup> The Venerable Bede, *On Genesis* 2.20-22.

answer because, on the one hand that spiritual communion with God which we have characterized as the main mark of the Church was now lacking - as the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh" (Genesis 6.3), that is, "carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7.14). But on the other hand, men still conversed with God, even "walked" with Him, like Enoch (Genesis 5.24).

Moreover, many of the signs which we associate with true religion - faith and hope, sacrifice and prayer, covenant and law, separation from the world and dedication to God - are to be found among the Patriarchs. This indicates that, even if we cannot speak of the Church as having existed in the proper sense after the Fall, we can still see it as foreshadowing, and preparing the way for, the Church as we find Her in the New Testament; so that we may speak, without much exaggeration, of "the Church of the Old Testament".

Let us now look at some of the main features of this Church of the Old Testament, beginning with the Patriarchs from Adam to Jacob.

### The Fall of Man

Adam's sin consisted in pride and unbelief. As St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: "Adam sinned with a great sin because he did not believe the words of God, but believed the word of the serpent. Compare God and the serpent, and you will see how great was the sin of most-wise Adam. In his great wisdom he had given names to all the animals (Genesis 2.19-20). But when with his whole soul he believed the serpent and not God, then the Divine grace which had rested on him slipped away from him, so that he became the enemy of God by reason of the unbelief which he had shown to His words."<sup>14</sup>

Although none of the Patriarchs, and no man before Christ, was able to receive again Divine grace and innocence in the measure that Adam had enjoyed it, they were able to reverse the Fall to this extent, that where Adam had shown unbelief they showed faith. Faith in the Providence of God, and hope in His promises, was characteristic of all the Patriarchs. The very first words of Eve after the expulsion from Eden express this faith: "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord" (Genesis 4.1). Thus Eve saw the hand of God in the birth of Cain. According to one interpretation of the Hebrew text, what she actually said was: "I have gotten the God-man", by which she expressed her belief that Cain was that Redeemer, "the seed of the woman" (Genesis 3.15), whom the Lord had promised while she was still in the Garden - a mistake, but one based on faith.<sup>15</sup> And in his murder of Abel she no doubt saw the fulfilment of His word that she would bring forth in sorrow (Genesis 3.16).

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<sup>14</sup> St. Symeon, *Homily 1: The Transgression of Adam and our Redemption by Jesus Christ*, translated in *The Sin of Adam*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1979, p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

The same faith was manifest in her immediate descendants, as the Apostle Paul witnessed: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witnesses that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." (Hebrews 11.4-7)

The faith of the Patriarchs expressed itself in other ways which show their spiritual kinship and prototypical relationship with the New Testament Church - for example, in the offering of sacrifices well-pleasing to God. In this respect, the relationship between Abel and Cain is typical of the relationship between the True Church and the false; for while the sacrifice of the True Church, like Abel's, is accepted by God, the sacrifice of the heretics and schismatics, like Cain's, is rejected. Indeed, according to the Theodotion text of this Scripture, "the Lord kindled a fire over Abel and his sacrifice, but did not kindle a fire over Cain and his sacrifice".<sup>16</sup> On which the Venerable Bede comments: "By fire sent down from heaven He accepted Abel's victim, which we read is very often done when holy men offer. But he held back from consuming Cain's sacrifice by fire. For the Apostle also seems to signify this when he says, 'By faith Abel offered a greater sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying over his gifts' (Hebrews 11.4). Therefore God 'testified to the gifts' of Abel through fire, receiving them from the heavens, by which testimony of the Apostle we are also taught that the victim of Abel was made acceptable to God through the devotion of his faith, and on the contrary we should understand that Cain was condemned because he did not serve his Creator with integral faith."<sup>17</sup>

In his famous work *The City of God*, St. Augustine traced the beginning of The City of God, that is, the Church, to Abel and the brother who replaced him, Seth, whereas the city of man takes its origin from Cain and his descendants, who are separated "from the Church in which God reveals His grace-filled presence".<sup>18</sup> Thus Abel, according to Augustine, means 'Sorrow' and Seth - 'Resurrection', prefiguring the Death and Resurrection of Christ. And in the time of Seth's son Enos it is said that "men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4.26) because the sons of the

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<sup>16</sup> Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

<sup>17</sup> St. Bede, *On Genesis* 4.3.

<sup>18</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, op. cit., p. 89.

resurrection live in hope, calling upon the name of the Lord. The name Cain, on the other hand, means 'Possession', and that of his son Enoch, the first city-builder - 'Dedication', indicating that the sons of perdition aim to possess the cities of this earth, being completely dedicated to their pleasures. That is why, moreover, the later descendants of Cain, such as Jabal and Tubal-cain were inventors of metal instruments - technology is necessary for the enjoyment of this life's pleasures.<sup>19</sup>

One of Seth's descendants, the seventh from Adam, was also called Enoch, who did not see death but was bodily translated from the earth and, according to the Apostle Jude (Jude 14-15), prophesied the Second Coming of Christ with all the saints. Augustine writes of him: "The translation of Enoch is the prefiguration of our dedication which is already performed in Christ, Who rose from the dead to die no more, and was taken up also. The other dedication of the whole house remains yet, whereof Christ is the foundation, and this is deferred until the end, and final resurrection of all flesh to die no more."<sup>20</sup> According to the firm tradition of the Church, Enoch, together with the Prophet Elijah, is one of two witnesses who will preach repentance and the Second Coming of the Lord during the time of the Antichrist, and will be killed by him...

### The Ark of Noah

Another characteristic of the New Testament Church prefigured in the Patriarchs is the clear separation of the Church from the world, and the ban on intermarriage between Christians and unbelievers. This ban appears to have been broken once, when "the sons of God [i.e. the Sethite men] saw the daughters of men [i.e. the Cainite women] that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose" (Genesis 6.2). According to another interpretation, "the sons of God" were fallen angels - demons.<sup>21</sup>

It is after this that we read of God's decision to "destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth" (Genesis 6.7), preserving only Noah, his wife, and his three sons and their wives in the ark, together with representatives of all the animal species. The Lord Himself said that the world just before His Second Coming in

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<sup>19</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XV, 17, 18.

<sup>20</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, XV, 19.

<sup>21</sup> According to Lopukhin, the majority of the Jewish and Christian interpreters of antiquity, including Justin the Philosopher, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Ambrose and others understood the term "sons of God" to mean "angels" - that is, the fallen angels or demons. But an equally impressive array of Fathers, including John Chrysostom, Ephraim the Syrian, Blessed Theodoret, Cyril of Jerusalem, Blessed Jerome and Blessed Augustine understood the term to denote the men of the line of Seth, while the "daughters of men" referred to the women of the line of Cain; so that the event described involved an unlawful mixing between the pious and the impious human generations (*Tolkovaia Biblia*, St. Petersburg, 1904-1907 / Stockholm, 1987, volume 1, pp. 44-45 (in Russian)).

This passage in Genesis was linked by several ancient as well as modern interpreters with II Peter 2.4 and Jude 4. It is argued by these interpreters that the sin of the angels referred to in the New Testament passages is the same sexual fall recounted in the Old Testament passage. However, this interpretation is not accepted by Lopukhin. See *Tolkovaia Biblia*, vol. III, pp. 299, 357.

judgement would be "as in the days of Noah" (Matthew 24.37). And the flood is, together with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, one of the clearest scriptural images of the Terrible Judgement.

Archbishop Andrew of Rockland writes of Noah: "It was revealed to him by God that there would be a world-wide flood which would destroy all those who remained in ungodliness. But for the salvation of those who would remain in godliness, those who still preserved all that is God's in honor, God commanded Noah to build an ark. And Noah began to build an ark, and at the same time to call the people to repentance.

"But the sky was clear, not a cloud; the whole of nature, as if indifferent to the sins of men, remained solemnly silent. Men heard Noah, but shrugged their shoulders and went away. The building of the ark was finished, but only the family of Noah entered it. They entered the ark, not yet to escape the flood, but to escape the ungodliness which was everywhere... And finally the rain came; the water began to rise and inundate everything. Now the frightened people hastened to the ark, but the doors closed by themselves, and no one else was able to enter..."<sup>22</sup>

The ark of Noah is the second major symbol of the Church in Holy Scripture. Since the name Noah means 'Rest', his entering into the ark signifies the rest which the people of God obtain from the billows of this world by entering into the Church (cf. Matthew 11.29). According to St. Peter, it also signifies baptism (I Peter 3.20-21); for the baptismal water is symbolized by the waters of the flood, and the grace of the Spirit by the dove bearing the olive branch to Noah after the waters had abated (Genesis 8.11).

If the ark is a type of the Church, then Noah is a type of Christ, and the flood of Noah is a type of the Coming of Christ. Thus Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow writes: "Jesus Christ reveals a correspondence between the times of the flood and the times of His Coming (Matthew 24.37-39; Luke 17.25-27). He as it were intentionally does not define which Coming He is talking about (Luke 17.20), but in the nature of things the flood can be recognized to be a foreshadowing both of the first Coming of grace and of the new and glorious Coming of Christ. The similarity of these three great events in the word of God is indicated by the fact that they are all, in action and name, *judgements* (Hebrews 11.7; John 12.31; Revelation 20.11) and definite *ends* (Genesis 6.13; Daniel 9.24-27; Galatians 4.4; Matthew 24.14).

"In His first Coming Jesus Christ appeared as a second Noah. Like Noah, He announced the judgement coming on a corrupt generation, and for the salvation of the believers from the flood of the eternal curse He created an ark not made by hands - His new Church. He Himself became the *door* (John 10.9) of this ark, and He received into it wild beast and tame beasts, clean and unclean, wheat and tares, so

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<sup>22</sup> Archbishop Andrew, "Exhortation to Solzhenitsyn", *Novoe Russkoe Slovo*, July 24, 1975, p. 2; translated in *The Restoration of the Orthodox Way of Life*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1976, p. 19.



that for all might be prepared sufficient *mansions* with His Father (John 14.2), and that to all might be given His spiritual blessing. But just as those very people who helped Noah in the construction of the ark did not enter it, so the scribes and Pharisees, who ought to have built the Church, 'rejected the stone' which should have been 'at the head of the corner' (Matthew 21.42) and closed the Kingdom of heaven for themselves and others (Matthew 23.13). So the Jews, having made themselves from children of the covenant into children of wrath, were scattered and immersed in the waters of the pagan peoples. The ark of Noah was carried for a long time over the waters; but then it stopped on a hard mountain, and gave from itself inhabitants for the whole earth. In the same way the Church of Christ, having for a long time struggled with the waves of temptations and woes, finally conquers, and is established over the kingdoms and kings of the earth, beginning from the lofty state of Rome, and is spread to all the ends of the inhabited earth.

"At the second Coming of Christ the destiny of the last world will be decided, just as in the flood the destiny of the first world was decided. The woes of the first world were prepared by the mixing of the sons of God with the daughters of men and by the multiplication of giants: the spirit of fornication and predominance in natural and spiritual things, which is represented in revelation as the *whore* and the *beast* (Revelation chs. 13, 17), will produce the woes of the last world. The judgement of the first world was announced beforehand by two Prophets: Enoch (Jude 14, 15) and Noah (II Peter 2.5); in the last world there will also appear 'two witnesses' of Jesus 'who prophesy' (Revelation 11.3). But just as the prophecy of Noah did not bring about faith in those who heard it, and the long-foretold flood of water caught them unexpectedly, so 'the Son of Man, when He comes, will hardly find faith on the earth' (Luke 18.8), and the day of the 'fiery' flood will come 'as a thief' (II Peter 3.3-10). Finally, just as the first end of the world was also its renewal, so after the coming last times there will appear 'a new heaven and a new earth' (Revelation 21.1)."<sup>23</sup>

Thus the Church is the Ark of salvation; and as in the days of Noah there was no other salvation from the wrath of God's judgement than in the ark of Noah, so today there is no other salvation from the burning fire of the Last Day than in the Church, which is entered through faith and baptism. For, as St. Cosmas says, in the Mattins of the Baptism of the Lord: "Christ baptizes in the fire of the Last Day those who are disobedient and believe not that He is God: but through the Spirit and by the grace that comes through water He grants a new birth to all who acknowledge His Divinity, delivering them from their sins."<sup>24</sup>

After the flood, Noah offered a sacrifice to God of all the clean beasts that entered with him into the ark. For God accepts as sacrifices in the Church only those whose lives have been cleansed by repentance. Only "then shalt Thou be pleased with a sacrifice of righteousness, with oblation and whole-burnt offerings" (Psalms 50.19). And in return God blessed Noah and his sons, and established a covenant with him

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<sup>23</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

<sup>24</sup> The Holy Theophany of our Lord, Mattins, Canticle Six, troparion (*The Festal Menaion*, London: Faber & Faber, 1969, p. 373).

whereby He promised never to destroy the earth again by a flood. "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth..." (Genesis 9.12-13)

This covenant is the first of many Old Testament covenants between God and the people of God, but the last which relates to the whole of mankind, irrespective of their faith or lack of it. And this is in accordance with the universal nature of the judgement that had just been inflicted on mankind, and the fact that mankind was not yet divided into races speaking different languages. However, after the destruction of the Tower of Babel, the division of the languages and the scattering of the peoples over the whole face of the earth (Genesis 11), a new beginning is made according to a new principle which is racial as well as religious - although, as we shall see, this racial principle admitted of many exceptions and was always intended to be only a preparation for the readmittance of all nations into the Church.

### *The Faith of Abraham*

This new beginning was made with Abraham, a descendant of Noah's first son Shem, from which we derive the word 'Semite', and Shem's great-grandson Eber, from which we derive the word 'Hebrew'. And yet Abraham was not the father of the Hebrews only, even in a purely genetic sense. His first son Ishmael is traditionally considered to be the father of the Arabs. And his grandson through Isaac, Esau, is the father of the Edomites.<sup>25</sup> But in the Apostle Paul's interpretation, Isaac represents the Church, and Ishmael - the unbelieving Jews enslaved to the Law (Galatians 3.16).

Moreover, there were other men who pleased God at this time who did not belong to the family of Abraham. One of these was the Patriarch Job. Another was Melchizedek, of whom it is written: "Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine [to Abraham]: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, Who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand" (Genesis 14.18-20).

The mysterious figure of Melchizedek is, in his kingship, his high priesthood and his apparent lack of human ancestors, the clearest type of Christ as the pre-eternal King and High Priest in the whole period of the Patriarchs, perhaps in the whole of the Old Testament. The Apostle Paul writes of him as "being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace: Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Hebrews 7.2-3). Since he received tithes from Abraham, the Apostle counts him even higher than Abraham; and since he blessed Abraham, the ancestor of Levi, his priesthood is

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<sup>25</sup> That is why the Edomites, unlike the Moabites, the Amorites and the Midianites, were spared by the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land (Num. 20.21).

counted as higher than the Levitical priesthood and a type of Christ's, Who is "a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110.4; Hebrews 7.4-21).<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, Melchizedek's bringing forth bread and wine was a figure of the New Testament Eucharist - although Mar Jacob considered it to be no figure of the Eucharist but the Eucharist itself: "None, before the Cross, entered this order of spiritual ministration, except this man alone. Beholding the just Abraham worthy of communion with him, he separated part of his oblation and took it out to him to mingle him therewith. He bore forward bread and wine, but Body and Blood went forth, to make the Father of the nations a partaker of the Lord's Mysteries."<sup>27</sup>

Thus while Abraham is the father of the Jewish race, the chosen people of the Old Testament, he received the Mysteries from a priest of a higher order, a man even higher than himself. This shows that the new beginning that God made in Abraham related not only to the Jews but to all peoples of all ages, and that in him, as the Lord said, all nations were to be blessed (Genesis 12.3). In fact, the nation which Abraham founded was not an ethnic nation a nation of believers, of those who believe in Christ; for, as St. Paul says, "they which are of the faith, they are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3.7) - which faith the Jews of Christ's time did not share (John 8.33-58). In a similar way, the "seed" of Abraham, to whom God made such great promises, is not to be understood as referring to his genetic descendants, the Jews, for they would be "seeds" in the plural, but to Christ alone (Galatians 3.16). Therefore those who can truly count Abraham as their father are those who are in Christ, that is, believers in Him and members of His Church.

The proverbial faith of Abraham, which merited for him the title "father of the faithful", was manifested, first, in his leaving Ur and setting out unquestioningly for the Promised Land. Nor was this simply a physical departure from the land of his fathers. It also involved breaking with their pagan beliefs (Judges 24.2).

Secondly, it was manifested in his believing God's promise that he would beget a son who would be a father of nations, in spite of the fact that he was very old and his wife was barren.

And thirdly and most strikingly, it was manifested in his continuing to believe in this promise even after God ordered him to kill Isaac.

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow writes: "The journey of Abram from the land of his birth to the promised land is an image of the journey of *self-abnegation*, by which man must pass from the condition of damaged nature to the condition of Grace.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. St. Andrew of Crete: "Follow the example of Melchizedek, the priest of God, the king set apart, who was an image of the life of Christ among men in the world", Canon of Great Compline, Thursday of the First Week of Great Lent (*The Lenten Triodion*, London: Faber & Faber, p. 258).

<sup>27</sup> "A Homily on Melchizedek", translated in *The True Vine*, Summer, 1989, no. 2, p. 44.

“Every believer has the same commandment from God as the father of the faithful – to leave all and renounce himself. ‘He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,’ says the Lord (Matthew 10.37).

“Every believer is also promised ‘the blessing of Abraham in Jesus Christ’ (Galatians 3.14). ‘There is no one who would leave home, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the Gospel’s, who would not receive now, in this time and with persecutions, one hundred times more houses and brothers and sisters (and fathers) and mothers and children, and in the age to come eternal life’ (Mark 10.29,30).

“The believer who leaves his own will does God’s with the same unlimited obedience with which Abram ‘went, as the Lord told him’. God speaks to us in nature, in the Holy Scriptures, in the conscience, in the adventures of life ruled by His Providence. ‘To go, as the Lord tells’ is the rule in which is included the whole path of those seeking the coming heavenly city.

“Like Abram, the believer comes closer to God to the extent that he leaves himself behind; and like Abram, he thanks Him for His gifts of Grace. He will receive them only so as to return them to their origin with faithfulness: and wherever and whenever he receives them, he offers them as a sacrifice to God.”<sup>28</sup>

Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is cited by the Apostle James as the paragon "work of faith", whereby "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made manifest" (James 2.22). Moreover, it is the clearest Old Testament prefiguring of the central act of the New, in which "God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3.16). And it merited for Abraham the first clear foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity - the visitation of the three angels speaking as one God at the oak of Mamre (Genesis 18).

St. Gregory Palamas takes Abraham's heroic work of faith as his main illustration of the difference between philosophical or scientific knowledge and the super-rational knowledge of faith: "I believe that our holy faith is, in a certain manner, a vision of our heart which goes beyond all sensation and all thought, for it transcends the mental powers of our soul. I mean by 'faith', not the Orthodox confession, but being unshakeably established upon it and upon the promises of God. For how through faith do we see those things which are promised for that unending age which is to come? By the senses? But faith is 'the basis of things hoped for' (Hebrews 11.1); and there is no way in which that which is to come and is hoped for may be seen by the senses; which is why the Apostle added: 'the proof of things not seen'. Is there, then, some mental power which will see the things hoped for? But how could there be if they 'have not gone up into the heart of man' (I Corinthians 2.9)? What, then? Do we not see through faith the things that have been promised by God, since they transcend all sensual and mental activity? But all those who from the beginning

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<sup>28</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, op. cit., part 2, p. 59.

of time sought the heavenly fatherland through works died, according to the Apostle, 'without having obtained the promises' (Hebrews 11.39), but saw and greeted them from afar. There is, then, both a vision and an understanding of the heart beyond all mental activity... Faith is this supra-mental vision, while the enjoyment of that which is believed in is a vision surpassing that vision...

"But let us dwell a little longer on faith and on the Divine and joyous contemplation which it procures for Christians: faith, the vehicle of the power of the Gospel, the life of the Apostles, the justification of Abraham, from which all righteousness begins, in which it ends, and by which 'every righteous man shall live' (Romans 1.7), while he who withdraws from it falls away from the Divine goodwill, for 'without faith it is impossible to please God' (Hebrews 11.6); faith, which ever frees our race from every deception and establishes us in the truth and the truth in us, from which no-one will separate us, even if he takes us for madmen, we who through the true faith have gone out into an ecstasy beyond reasoning, witnessing both by word and deed that we are not 'being carried away by every wind of doctrine' (Ephesians 4.14), but possess that unique knowledge of the truth of the Christians and profess the most simple, most Divine and truly unerring contemplation. Let us then leave the future for the time being, let us consider the supra-mental contemplation which faith gives of those things which have happened from the beginning: 'It is by faith that we recognize that the ages were formed by the word of God, so that those things which are seen did not come to be from those which appear' (Hebrews 11.3). What mind could take in that all this which has come to be has come from that which is absolutely non-existent, and that by a word alone? For that which is accessible to the mental powers does not at all transcend them. Thus the wise men of the Greeks, understanding that no corruptible thing passes into non-existence, and no existent thing comes out of non-existence, believed that the world was without beginning or end. But the faith, surpassing the conceptions which come from a contemplation of created things, united us to the Word Who is above all and to the simple, unfabricated truth; and we have understood better than by a proof that all things were created, not only out of non-existence, but also by the word of God alone. What is this faith? Is it a natural or supernatural power? Supernatural, certainly. For 'no-one can come unto the Father except through the Son' (Matthew 11.27; John 10.9), Who has placed us above ourselves and turned us to unity with the Father Who gathers us together. Thus Paul 'received grace for obedience to the Faith' (Romans 1.5). Thus 'if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved' (Romans 10.9). Thus those who have not seen and believed are more blessed than those who have seen and believed in Him Who lives after death and is the Leader of eternal life (John 20.29; Acts 3.15). For through the supercosmic eyes of faith they have seen and venerated those things which the eye has not believed it can see and which reason cannot conceive.

"This is the victory which has conquered the world, even our faith' (I John 5.4). Paradoxical though it may be to say so, this faith is that which, in different ways and at different times, re-established the world which had previously fallen. Then it

transformed it into a more Divine state, placing it above the heavens, and making a heaven out of the earth. What preserved the seeds of the second world? Was it not the faith of Noah? What made Abram Abraham and the father of many nations, like the sand and the stars in number? Was it not faith in the promises which at that time were incomprehensible? For he held his only-begotten heir ready for slaughter and, O wonder!, never ceased to believe that through him he would have many children. What, then? Did not the old man appear to be a fool to those who see things by reason? But the final issue showed, through the grace of God, that his faith was not folly but a knowledge surpassing all reasoning."<sup>29</sup>

Thus the new beginning for the Church which God created in Abraham He created in the faith of Abraham, which is the faith in Christ. For "Abraham rejoiced to see My Day: he saw it, and was glad," said the Lord (John 8.56). Moreover, in Abraham's "works of faith", whereby he acted in accordance with his faith against all worldly reason, we see the prototype of those works of "gold, silver and precious stones" which alone, when placed on the foundation of faith, will survive the fire of the Last Day (I Corinthians 3.12).

### *The Patriarchal Church*

Since the foundation of the Church is the faith of Abraham, Her God is called "the God of Abraham". Thus for Isaac God was "the God of Abraham"; and for Jacob He was "the God of Abraham and Isaac"; and for all succeeding generations He is "the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob", or, more simply, "the God of our fathers". Thus our faith is a historical faith; we distinguish it from other faiths as being the faith of our fathers, and our God is distinguished from other gods as being the God of our fathers, and in particular the God of our father Abraham. And that is why we preserve the faith of our fathers in all its details. For as the Scripture says: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Proverbs 22.28).

Just as in Abraham we see the faith of the Church in its main outlines for the first time, so in his wife Sarah we see the first personal image of the Church Herself since Eve. For, as the Apostle Paul explains, Sarah, being the freeborn wife of Abraham, and the mother of the freeborn Isaac, is the image of "the Jerusalem which is above, [which] is free [and] the mother of us all" (Galatians 4.26). On the other hand, Hagar the slavewoman and the mother of Abraham's first child Ishmael, "answereth to the Jerusalem which now is," that is, the Jews who reject Christ, "and is in bondage with her children" (Galatians 4.25). Isaac's wife Rebecca is an even closer image of the Church than Sarah; for she was Isaac's only wife as the Church is Christ's only Bride. Moreover, the fathers see in the story of the wooing of Rebecca a parable of Christ's wooing of the Church, in which Eleazar, signifying the Holy Spirit, conveyed Isaac's proposal to her at the well, which signifies Baptism, and gave her gifts of precious jewels, signifying the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, II, 3, 40, 41, 42-43.

<sup>30</sup> St. Ambrose of Milan, *On Isaac, or the Soul*.

As for the wives of Jacob, they signify the Old and the New Testament Churches. Thus Leah, whom he married first, signifies with her weak eyes and fertile womb the weak faith of the Old Testament Church (compared to that of the New Testament Church) and her abundant offspring. But Rachel, whom he married later but loved first and most strongly, signifies the New Testament Church, which the Lord loved first - insofar as the Church of the Gentiles existed even before Abraham - but married later. Moreover, if Abraham is an image of the Father, and Isaac of the Son, then it is perhaps permissible to see in Jacob an image of the Holy Spirit, Who brought forth fruit in both the Old and the New Testament Churches. However, Rachel brought forth in pain because the second Bride of the Spirit, the New Testament Church, brought forth her first children in the blood of martyrdom - that is, the children killed by Herod (Matthew 2.16-18), and Stephen and the Apostles (cf. Revelation 12.2).

Again, if to Abraham was revealed, in an image, the doctrines of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and of the Holy Trinity, then to Jacob was revealed, in another image, the doctrine of the Incarnation. For this, according to the fathers, is the meaning of his dream of a ladder between heaven and earth on which the angels of God were seen ascending and descending. The descent of God into the womb of the Virgin, and His abiding in the Church, is symbolized by the descent of the angels, while the ascent of man into heaven through the Church, is symbolized by their ascent; whence the words of Jacob: "This is none other than the house of God [i.e. the Church], and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28.17).

In honour of this revelation, Jacob, like Abraham, was given a new name - "Israel", meaning "he who has seen God". This name is also given to the Church, which is "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6.16). And Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov points out that "in the spiritual sense Christians are called Israel who have made significant spiritual progress".<sup>31</sup>

The twelve sons of Jacob and the seventy souls who go with him into Egypt signify further New Testament mysteries - the twelve and the seventy Apostles. And the increase in number and the sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt signify the multiplication of the Christians in and through the sufferings inflicted by the world, the flesh and the devil. Thus the whole story of the Patriarchs, while true and of great importance in and of itself, is also an allegory of the Church of Christ, being "a figure for the time then present..., until the time of reformation" (Hebrews 9.9, 10).

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<sup>31</sup> Bishop Ignatius, "On the Judgements of God", *Sochinenia*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery (in Russian).

## **2. THE PILGRIM CHURCH: THE LIFE OF MOSES**

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and.. confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*  
Hebrews 11.13.

The image of the Church which emerges in Genesis has many elements - faith and hope, covenant and sacrifice, prayer and sacrament (circumcision) - but it lacks three which must be regarded as essential: the priesthood (if we except Melchizedek's fleeting appearance), the feasts and fasts of the Church's rite, and the law. These three elements are supplied by God in the next stage of the history of His people - the exodus from Egypt and conquest of the Promised Land. And they are supplied in the course of the dramatic story which, as St. Gregory of Nyssa has shown in his *Life of Moses*<sup>32</sup>, is an inexhaustible mine of metaphors of almost every aspect of the Christian life.

### **The Exodus**

Moses himself is perhaps the most complete image of Christ in the whole of the Old Testament. His leadership of the people out of Egypt and against all their enemies in the desert is an image of Christ the King. His institution of the priesthood and the law is an image of Christ the Great High Priest. And his rebuking of the people and prophecy of their destiny is an image of Christ the Prophet. Indeed, Moses' most explicit prophecy of the Coming of Christ says that He will be like himself: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken..." (Deuteronomy 18.15; John 6.14; Acts 3.22)

The name Moses means "drawn out of water"; for just as he was saved by being cast into the water by his natural mother and drawn out again by his adopted mother, so the Christian is saved by being cast into the waters of Baptism by his natural mother and drawn out again by his adopted mother, the Church.

A still clearer image of Baptism is the passage through the Red Sea. Just as the Egyptians were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea, so the sins of our former life are blotted out in the waters of Holy Baptism. The evil passions still remain in the faithful, however; which is why, even after the passage through the Red Sea, the Israelites still have to contend with the Amalekites, the Midianites and other forces of evil.

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<sup>32</sup> See also the notes to the translation of St. Gregory's *Life of Moses* by Malherbe and Ferguson, New York: Paulist Press, 1978.



The sacrifice of the passover lamb is an image of the Sacrifice on the Cross of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1.29), Jesus Christ, and therefore also of the Eucharist. Just as smearing the lintels of the doors with its blood delivered the Israelites from the penalty of sin in the form of the angel of death who killed the first-born of the Egyptians, so the Body and Blood of Christ delivers the Christians who partake of it (the lintels of the doors are an image of the lips of the mouth) from the penalty of sin in the form of the eternal death which awaits unbelievers. And it is accompanied by the eating of unleavened bread, that is, a life purged from the leaven of our former sins. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (I Corinthians 5.7-8)

God commanded the Israelites through Moses to keep the feast of the Passover as the first and greatest feast of the Church year and the beginning of the Church calendar. The two other great feasts of the Old Testament Church - Pentecost and Tabernacles - also take their origin from events in the life of Moses.

Pentecost commemorates the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai fifty days after the passage through the Red Sea. And the feast of Tabernacles commemorates the joyful rest and ingathering of the harvest after the forty years wandering through the desert and just before the final crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land. Pentecost, like the Passover, has received its New Testament fulfilment - in the Descent of the Holy Spirit fifty days after the Resurrection of Christ; but the feast of Tabernacles has yet to receive its fulfilment in the New Testament Church...<sup>33</sup>

After passing through the Red Sea, the Israelites begin to suffer from thirst and other temptations. This signifies the temptations Christians suffer after they have been baptized (the Lord, too, suffered the temptations in the wilderness immediately after His Baptism), which are intensified by the fact that they are now deprived of the "the fleshpots of Egypt" - the pleasures of their former sinful life. Nevertheless, there are consolations on the way.

First, there is the Cross of Christ, which, like the wood cast into the bitter waters of Marah three days' march from the Red Sea, sweetens the bitterness of temptations. Secondly, there is the teaching of the Gospel, signified by the twelve springs of water (the twelve major Apostles) and the seventy date palms (the seventy minor Apostles).

And then there is the manna from heaven, signifying the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, which strengthens us in soul and body, being that "daily bread" (more accurately: "vital" or "essential" bread) for which we pray in the Lord's prayer.

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<sup>33</sup> See the chapter on the feast of tabernacles in Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966.

For as the Lord Himself said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world... I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever; the Bread that I wil give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that Bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6.32-3, 51-58)

The Cross appears again in the struggle with Amalek, in which the Israelites prevailed as long as Moses stood with his arms outspread in the form of a cross. This gives rise to an interesting interpretation of Matthew 5.18: "one iota or one tittle shall not pass from the law, till all be fulfilled". "The iota (i) and the tittle (a cross stroke) combined form the image of the cross," write Malherbe and Ferguson.

Moreover, this image is identical with the tau, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in which the Law was written. "Wherefore," writes St. Gregory, "not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law", signifying in these words the vertical and horizontal lines by which the form of the cross is drawn. That which was seen in Moses, who is perceived in the Law's place, is appointed as the cause and monument of victory to those who look at it."<sup>34</sup>

And we may add that "all will be fulfilled" when the "sign of the Son of man", the Cross, appears, this time from heaven, at the end of the world, after which "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn" (Matthew 24.30), acknowledging the final defeat of the enemies of Christ. For "the sign of Son of God will appear, that is, the sign of the Cross. The whole world, having willingly submitted to Antichrist, 'will break out in lamentation'."<sup>35</sup>

### The Mosaic Law

After the victory over the Amalekites the children of Israel arrive at Mount Sinai, whose ascent signifies the union of man with God. Now it was at Sinai that Moses had been given the vision of the burning bush, and had received the name of God: "I am Who I am" (Exodus 3.14). This constitutes, after the Lord's words to Eve in the

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<sup>34</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>35</sup> St. John Maximovich, "A Talk on the Dread Judgement", *Man of God: Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco*, Redding, Ca.: Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, 1994, p. 178.

Garden, the promise to Abraham concerning his seed, and Jacob's dream of the heavenly ladder, the fourth biblical prophecy of the Incarnation. Only it is clearer and deeper than its predecessors. It tells us, not only that God will come down to men, as if on a ladder, but that He Who is, absolute and uncircumscribable Being, He in Whom all limited creatures "live and move and have their being" (Acts 17.28), will consent to be circumscribed within the limits of one of these creatures in an unconfused but at the same time indivisible union of Spirit with matter, in the same way as the fire was united with the matter of the bush - except that, unlike the union of ordinary fire with matter, this will not result in the destruction, or the causing of any kind of harm to, the creature into whom He descends.

The second vision at Sinai differs from the first in three ways. First, it involves a stricter preparation and a more arduous ascent, as is appropriate to the greater degree of knowledge which it affords. Secondly, God is seen this time, not in light, but in darkness. For while, on the one hand, God is Light and enlightens all men (John 1.9, 12.46), on the other hand that Light is unapproachable and unknowable in essence (I Timothy 6.16), just as the sun which enlightens the whole material world is unapproachable and unknowable in its interior core. And thirdly, since Moses ascended the mount this time, not as an individual, but as the leader of the people of God, he is entrusted with the Law and its ordinances which will prepare the people to receive the same knowledge that he has received.<sup>36</sup>

St. Paul wrote that "the Law was our schoolmaster unto Christ" (Galatians 3.24), being "glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance" (II Corinthians 3.7). Moreover, the Lord Himself said that He had not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it (Matthew 3.17). On the other hand, "the Law made nothing perfect" (Hebrews 7.19), it was "the ministration of death written and engraven in stones", its glory "was to be done away" (II Corinthians 3.7). Misunderstandings of this apparent contradiction have led to grave errors and heresies in the history of the Church, from that of the Judaizing Christians mentioned in Acts and Galatians, who over-emphasized the holiness of the Law, to the Protestant reformers who over-emphasized its inferiority in relation to grace. It will therefore be fitting at this point to review the main functions of the Old Testament Law.

In the period of the Patriarchs, the people of God had been a very small unit, no larger than an extended family, in which the faith and piety of the people were largely determined by the character of the family head, who was usually a man of exceptional holiness. This was no longer the case at the time of the exodus from Egypt. The Israelites now numbered six hundred thousand, and although their leader Moses was unquestionably holy, he could not hope, by his personal influence alone, to mould the piety of the whole people corrupted by four hundred years' sojourn in a pagan land.

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<sup>36</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, op. cit., II, 151.

A rod was therefore required, a rod coupled to a law which clearly fenced the people around from those transgressions which were not counted as sin among the pagans but which offended the holiness of God. For, as the Apostle says, "where no law is, there is no transgression" (Romans 4.15). And "the law entered that the sin might abound" (Romans 5.20). The Law therefore defined sin and the penalty for sin at a time when the natural law of the conscience (cf. Romans 2.14-15) had grown weak through the general corruption prevailing throughout mankind. And if it could not remove that guilt and that sin, it nevertheless created the essential condition for the removal of guilt and the remission of sins - that is, repentance.

The Old Testament Law is often seen as savage and unworthy of the God of the New Testament. But the God of the New Testament, Jesus Christ, both confirmed the sanctity of the Old Testament Law and was revealed, at the Transfiguration, as the very same God Who gave the Law to Moses. Moreover, a comparison of the Laws of the Old and New Testament reveals that the latter is incomparably stricter and more terrifying in its threats. Thus whereas the Old Law demands obedience, as a rule, only with respect to outward acts (the main exceptions are the commandments to love God and one's neighbour), the New Law demands purity also in the inner man of the heart (I Peter 3.4). And whereas the Old Law's worst punishment is the physical death of the transgressor, the New Law threatens the offender with the eternal fire of gehenna (cf. Matthew 5.22).

Metropolitan Hilarion of Kiev, who was the leader of the Russian Church in the eleventh century, put it as follows: "God established the law to prepare human beings to receive the truth and grace; so that human nature supported by the law, fleeing idolatrous polytheism, would learn to believe in one God; that humanity, like some contaminated vessel, washed as it were by the water of the law and circumcision, would be ready to receive the milk of grace and baptism. In fact the law has led those who were under the law to the grace of baptism, and baptism, for its part, accompanies its sons and daughters to eternal life. Moses and the prophets had preached the coming of Christ; Christ and His apostles preached the resurrection and the future world.."

"As the moon's light disappears with the sun's rising and as the night's chill passes when the sun's warmth heats the earth, so too the law disappeared with the appearance of grace. Humankind no longer bears the burden of the law but strides firmly in grace. Actually the Jews have sculptured their justification by the light of the lamp of the law, while Christians build their salvation by the light of the sun of grace. The Jews, by means of the shadow and the law have been justified but not saved; Christians, on the other hand, by means of grace and truth have not been justified but saved. For the Jews there is justification and for the Christians salvation; justification then is for this life while salvation is for the future life."<sup>37</sup>

Besides the moral law, God gave Moses detailed instructions concerning Church rites and the objects to be used in Divine worship. These objects included the

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<sup>37</sup> Hilarion, in *The Baptism of the Rus*, Milan: Centro Studi Russia Cristiana, 1987, pp. 1, 6.

tabernacle, the golden censer, the ark, the seven-branched candlestick and the Cherubim overshadowing the ark. Many of these objects had an allegorical significance relating to future events and mysteries. Thus the curtain of the lower tabernacle, which was composed of various colours, signified the Flesh of Christ (Hebrews 10.20). And St. Methodius of Patara compared the tabernacle to the Church, on the one hand, and the resurrection body, on the other.<sup>38</sup>

As St. John of Damascus points out, these commands show that the injunction against idol-worship by means precluded the use of material images, not as idols, but as aids to Divine worship: "Just as words edify the ear, so also the image stimulates the eye. What the book is to the literate, the image is to the illiterate. Just as my words speak to the ear, so the image speaks to the sight; it brings us understanding. For this reason God ordered the ark to be constructed of wood which would not decay, and to be gilded outside and in, and for the tablets to be placed inside, with Aaron's staff and the golden urn containing the manna, in order to provide a remembrance of the past, and an image of the future. Who can say that these were not images, heralds sounding from afar off? They were not placed inside the meeting-tent, but were brought forth in the sight of all the people, who gazed upon them and used them to offer praise and worship to God. Obviously they were not adored for their own sake, but through them the people were led to remember the wonders of old and to worship God, the Worker of wonders. They were images serving as memorials; they were not divine, but led to the remembrance of Divine power."<sup>39</sup>

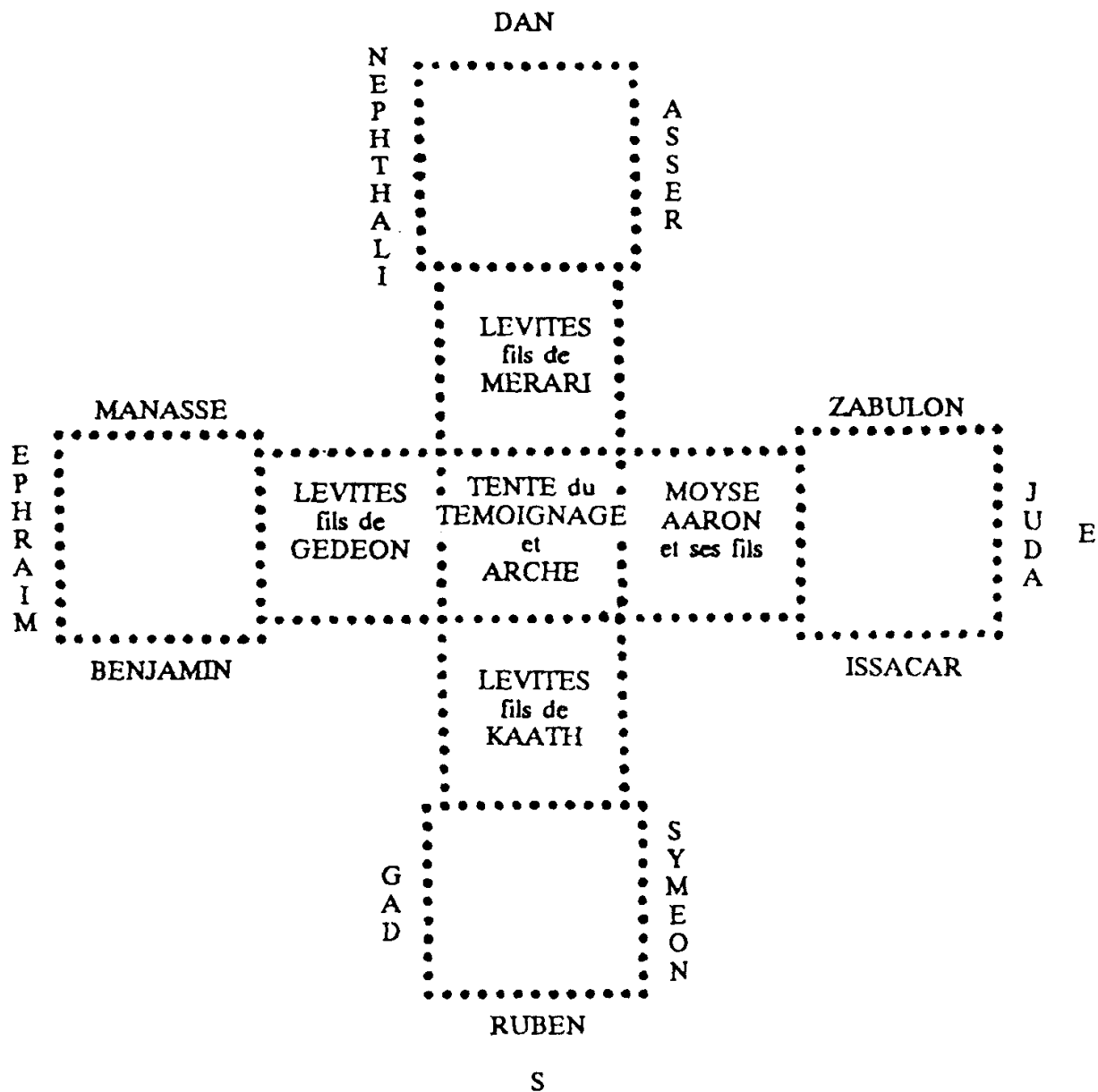
Even the formation in which the Israelites were commanded to march through the desert was the image of a mystery. For it was that of a double cross, with the ark, representing the incarnate presence of God, in the centre, the Levites, representing the priesthood, in the shape of a cross around the ark, and the remaining tribes, representing the laity, in a second cross around that (Numbers 2).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> St. Methodius, *Symposium* 5.7; *De Resurrectione* 1.14.

<sup>39</sup> St. John of Damascus, *First Apology against those who Attack the Divine Images*, 17; translated by David Anderson, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980, pp. 25-26.

<sup>40</sup> Taken from "La Phalange Cruciforme", *La Lumière du Thabor*, no. 20, Paris: Fraternité Orthodoxe Saint Grégoire Palamas.



*La Parataxe de la Croix  
protégeant l'Arche de l'Alliance*

*The Journey through the Desert*

When the Israelites left Sinai, they encountered other temptations. First, Aaron and Miriam were filled with envy against Moses, giving as an excuse the fact that "he had married an Ethiopian woman" (Numbers 12.1). St. Irenaeus sees in the Ethiopian woman a figure of the Church of the Gentiles<sup>41</sup>, which enables us to see in

<sup>41</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, 34, 12.

the whole episode a prophecy of the future envy of the Jews against the Gentile Church, in accordance with Moses' own prophecy: "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you" (Deuteronomy 32.21; Romans 10.19).

Then came the rebellion of Kore, Dathan and Abiram. If the worship of the golden calf, in which even the (distinctly fallible) high-priest Aaron took part, represents the temptation to idolatry and complete abandonment of the Faith, then the rebellion of Kore, Dathan and Abiram represents the more subtle, but no less dangerous temptation to perversion of the Faith, to heresy and schism. The rebellion was motivated by a combination of personal ambition (in the person of Kore, who "sought the priesthood" (Numbers 16.10) and material dissatisfaction (in the persons of Dathan and Abiram). It was destroyed with the utmost severity by the Lord. Not only the leaders of the schism, but all their supporters, "and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense" (Numbers 16.33-35).

St. John Chrysostom uses this story to warn against ecclesiastical schism: "If those persons have dogmas contrary to ours, then on that account one should not have intercourse with them; if, on the other hand, they hold the same opinions, the reason (for avoiding them) is greater still. Why so? Because this is the disease of lust for authority. Do you not know what happened to Kore, Dathan, and Abiram? Were they the only ones to suffer? Did not also their accomplices? What wilt thou say? 'Their faith is the same, they are Orthodox as well.' If so, why are they not with us? There is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. If they are right, then we are wrong; if we are right, then they are wrong. Tell me, do you think this is enough that they are called Orthodox, while with them the charism of ordination has grown scarce and done away with? What is the advantage of all things else, if this latter is not observed? As we must contend for the Faith, so must we for this also. For if it is lawful for any one, according to the saying of old, to fill his hands, to be a priest, in vain the Church order, in vain the assembly of the priests: let us overthrow and annihilate all this."<sup>42</sup>

Next, Moses sent spies into the Promised Land, which is, allegorically speaking, the Kingdom of heaven. They came back with conflicting reports. When the people believed the discouraging reports, they were angry with Moses, and God was angry with them. He decreed that none of those who had no faith in His Providence would enter the Promised Land, and condemned them to wander for another forty years in the desert. "For we are made partakers of Christ," writes the Apostle, "if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. While it is said, Today if ye will

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<sup>42</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 11 on Ephesians, 3*; translated in Archbishop Ilarion Troitsky, *The Unity of the Church and the World Conference of Christian Communities*, Montreal: The Monastery Press, 1975, p. 17.

hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3.14-19).

However, two spies, Joshua and Caleb, came back from the Promised Land with encouraging reports. They survived the journey and entered the Promised Land. This symbolizes the victory of the Christian who believes and endures to the end. For "we are not of those who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10.39). And the grapes hanging on wooden poles which they brought back as a pledge of the accuracy of their report symbolizes the Crucifixion of Christ on the wood of the Cross as the pledge of the reality of our salvation and entry into eternal rest.

Once, as they were wandering through the waterless desert, the people lost faith in God's help and began to revile both Him and Moses. So Moses (after some doubts of his own, which cost him his entry into the Promised Land) struck the rock, from which water flowed to quench their thirst. "For they drank," as the Apostle says, "of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ" (I Corinthians 10.4). Most of the early fathers, developing this allegory, saw in this an image either of the Eucharist, the rock representing the side of Christ out of which flowed blood as well as water, or of Baptism. St. Gregory, however, sees in it the "second Baptism", repentance through tears; and this seems appropriate at this late stage in the journey, when the cleansing received through Baptism had been stained by many sins.<sup>43</sup>

And then they again fell victims to gluttony. Only this time the Lord sent a much fiercer scourge - serpents, which killed many. However, when Moses ordered the construction of a brazen serpent, those who looked upon it were healed. In the same way, the evil passions are healed when we look with faith upon the "passionless Passion" of Christ our God. For "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up [on the Cross]", said the Lord (John 3.14).

### *Towards the Promised Land*

And so the people, purified from sin, turned back towards the Promised Land. Their path took them along "the royal highway", from which their enemies allowed them to deviate neither to the right nor to the left. "In the same way," writes St. Gregory, "the Law requires the person who keeps in step with it not to leave the way which is, as the Lord says, 'narrow and hard', to the left or the right."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, II, 270. See also the note on this passage.

<sup>44</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, II, 287.



The last major test for the people before crossing the Jordan, which means "Judgement", came from the Midianites under Barak. First, the demonic arts of the sorcerer Balaam proved powerless against the power of God, which spoke through an ass and persuaded the sorcerer to bless, and not curse, the Israelites. Then the Midianites were defeated in battle. And finally, the snare of the Midianite women was overcome by the zeal of the priest Phineas - though not before 23,000 had fallen in fornication (I Corinthians 10.8).

Balaam has been seen as a type of the demonically-inspired false prophets and heretics who wage war against the Church of Christ (II Peter 2.15; Jude 11; Matthew 7.15, 24.24). For "he taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Revelation 2.14). And the threefold struggle against Barak, the women and Balaam signifies the threefold struggle of every Christian against the world, the flesh and the devil.

Moses died at the age of 120; yet, because of his triumphant struggle against sin in all its forms, "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deuteronomy 34.7). However, it was not Moses, but Joshua, which is the same name as "Jesus" and means "the Lord saves", who was destined to lead the people across the Jordan and into the Promised Land. And the lesson in this is that even the greatest struggles of the Christian are unable, of themselves, to win for him salvation and the inheritance of the Kingdom. In addition to his own efforts, he needs the grace of the Divine Saviour Jesus, Who says: "Without Me you can nothing" (John 15.5). For, as the Apostle says, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9.16).

### **3. THE STATE CHURCH: FROM JOSHUA TO JESUS**

*I will appoint a place for My people  
Israel, and will plant them, that they  
may dwell in a place of their own, and  
move no more.  
II Samuel 7.10.*

From a spiritual point of view, the Church is always a pilgrim in this world. However, there are times when the Lord grants her a rest, as it were, from wandering, a geographical "homeland" and a political support and anchor, to the extent that she even becomes identified with certain States. This brings some very considerable advantages, especially the opportunity to exert a more constant and widespread influence on the world. And if this means that the Church engages, albeit obliquely, in political activity, this is not in itself reprehensible.

As Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles explains: "The notion that engaging in politics is reprehensible has been advanced in an entirely erroneous fashion by the enemies of the faith. This has been done that only those who are against the Church may engage in politics, with great benefit for themselves and with great harm to the faith... The Church has a purpose for working within human society and influencing all its parts, including governments, giving her approval to those that promulgate the Christian faith and chastising those that oppose it. This.. is politics, and at the same time, the duty of the Church."<sup>45</sup>

However, the Church's attempts to influence politics and acquire a political support also bring with them dangers - dangers of a more subtle kind than those confronting her in the pilgrim phase of her existence. Broadly speaking, these dangers may be described as a tendency to confuse the Church and the world, and to confuse worldly aims and methods with those of God. The Lord warned against any such confusion when he said to the political ruler of his time: "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18.36).

#### **The Temptations of the World**

Both the opportunities for conversion and the dangers of confusion are well illustrated by the next phase in the history of the people of God, which extends from Joshua to the Maccabees. In the whole of this phase, with the exception of short periods of captivity under the Philistines, the Assyrians and the Babylonians, the people of Israel were settled in a single geographical area over which they exerted the dominant political power. And at some times they used the opportunities to make Israel a great light for the world, while at others they sank to depths as yet unseen in the history of the people of God.

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<sup>45</sup> Archbishop Anthony, "The Glorification of the New Martyrs of Russia is our Sacred Moral Duty", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 29, no. 3, May-June, 1979, p. 26.

Thus in the history of the very first permanent conquest made by the Israelites in their invasion of the Promised Land, the taking of Jericho ([Joshua 1-7](#)), we have figures of both the opportunities and the dangers. Rahab the harlot, who helped the Israelites to enter the city, is a figure of those secret sympathizers of the people of God in the world who would help them if they could and join them if they could - but who can join them only if the Church extends her missionary reach into the non-Christian world. And Achan the Israelite, who took for himself a part of the booty which was reserved for God, is a figure of those believers who, under the influence of the seductions opened up by the Church's closeness to the kingdoms of this world, lose the salt of the true faith and are therefore expelled from the Kingdom which is not of this world.

The story of Achan introduces a word which is of great importance in our understanding of the nature of the Church and her relationship to the world: *anathema*. The booty which is reserved for God is called *anathema*. This is in accordance with the first part of the definition of the word given by St. Nicodemus the Athonite: "Anathema is that which is set apart by men and consecrated to God; and also we call anathema that which is separated from God by the Church of Christ and thus consigned to the devil."<sup>46</sup>

Since Athan had seized that which was anathema in the first sense he became subject to anathema in the second sense - he was cast out of the Church. And in general any member of the Church who encroaches on the sacred treasure of the Church, her doctrinal or moral teaching, by speaking heresy or hatred, is anathematized by her, that is, cast out from her. Thus the Apostle Paul writes: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" ([I Corinthians 16.22](#)); and: "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" ([Galatians 1.8](#)).

That which is attached or subjected to anathema must be removed. Otherwise the Church will begin to suffer spiritual reverses, as Israel began to suffer military reverses before Achan was removed. That is why the Church's anathemas are acts, not of hatred, but of love - love for the Church and her purity and truth, without which there can be no hope of salvation for the world.

The whole subsequent history of Israel illustrates this fundamental truth. Whenever Israel sinned against the Lord - usually by worshipping some foreign god, - she suffered reverses, in extreme cases, leading to the captivity of the whole nation. However, when a new judge or king appeared who was prepared to removed the evil, Israel prospered once more.

That is why it was so important that the leader should be chosen by God. In the time of the judges, this seems always to have been the case; for when an emergency arose God sent His Spirit upon a man chosen by Him (cf. [Judges 6.34](#)), and the

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<sup>46</sup> St. Nidodemus, in his commentary on *The Rudder*.

people, recognizing this, then elected him as their judge (cf. Judges 11.11). And if there was no emergency, or if the people were not worthy of a God-chosen leader, then God did not send His Spirit and no judge was elected; so that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21.25) - the definition of anarchy.

The unity of Israel was therefore religious, not political - or rather, it was religio-political. It was created by the history of deliverance from the tyranny of Egypt and maintained by a continuing allegiance to God - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God Who appeared to Moses and Joshua, - as their only King. That is why, when the people offered to make Gideon and his descendants kings in a kind of hereditary dynasty, he refused, saying: "the Lord shall rule over you" (Judges 8.23).

### *The Israelite Theocracy*

However, the Israelites clamoured for a different kind of king, one who would judge them, as they declared to the Prophet Samuel, "like all the nations." And this desire for a non-theocratic king amounted to apostasy in the eyes of the Lord, the only true King of Israel. So "the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should rule over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken Me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them" (I Samuel 8.4-9).

And then Samuel painted for them the image of a harsh, totalitarian ruler of the kind that was common in Egypt and Babylonia and the other pagan nations round about. These kings, as well as having total political control over their subjects, were often worshipped by them as gods; so that "kingship" as that was understood in the Middle East meant both the loss of political freedom and alienation from the true and living God.<sup>47</sup> As the subsequent history of Israel shows, God in His mercy did not always send such totalitarian rulers upon His people, and the best of the kings, such as David, Josiah and Hezekiah, were in the spirit and tradition of the judges - kings who were in obedience to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Nevertheless, the first introduction of kingship in Israel was a retrograde step in the history of the people of God. For it represented the introduction of a second, worldly principle of allegiance into what had been a society bound together by religious bonds alone, a "schism in the soul" which, although almost inevitable in the context of the times - a severe defeat at the hands of the Philistines, and the loss of the ark, - meant the loss for ever of that pristine purity and simplicity which had characterized Israel up to then. And it is important to realize that the worldly principle was introduced because the religious principle had failed, or grown weak: the history of the kings begins with the corruption of the priests, the sons of Eli, who were in possession of

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<sup>47</sup> See Igor Shafarevich, *Sotsializm kak Yavlenie Mirovoj Istorii (Socialism as a Phenomenon of World History)*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1977 (in Russian).

the ark at the time of its capture. Thus the kings' subsequent oppression of the people is ultimately ascribable to the failure of the spiritual leaders...

And yet everything seemed to go well at first. Samuel anointed as king Saul, who, when possessed by the Spirit of the Lord, defeated both the enemies of Israel, the Ammonites and the Philistines. But the schism which had been introduced into the life of the nation began to express itself also in the life of their king, with tragic consequences...

First, before a major battle with the Philistines, the king made a sacrifice to the Lord without waiting for Samuel. For this sin, which was the first gross interference of the power of the State into the affairs of the Church, Samuel prophesied that the kingdom would be taken away from Saul and given to a man after God's heart. Then Saul, following "the voice of the people" rather than the voice of God, spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, together with the best of his livestock, instead of killing them all, as God had commanded. For this Samuel turned away from Saul "and came no more to see him until the day of his death" (I Samuel 15.35). And shortly after, he anointed David as king in his place.

Saul's sins were serious because neither Moses nor Joshua, nor any of the judges (with the possible exception of Samson), had disobeyed the command of the Lord. They had preserved that theocratic submission of the whole life of the people, including political life, to the will of the Lord which is the ideal of Christian society. But Saul, by interfering in the work of the priests and listening to the people rather than the Lord, had introduced a secular, democratic element into the heart of society which was to have devastating consequences for the whole people in the long run. He was, in effect, the first revolutionary to appear at the head of the people of God. That is why Samuel said to him, in words that apply to all later political revolutionaries: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry" (I Samuel 15.22-23).

These words also contained a prophecy; for, just before his last battle at Mount Gilboa, Saul consulted a witch at Endor, asking her to call up the spirit of the dead Samuel. In fitting punishment for this sin, Samuel appeared to him from beyond the grave and prophesied his destruction, thereby depriving his last hours of any hope. And in despair he ordered his armour-bearer to kill him - for which sin of killing the Lord's anointed David had the armour-bearer himself executed.

The falling away of Saul led directly to the first major schism in the history of Israel. For after Saul's death, the northern tribes supported the claim of Saul's surviving son to the throne, while the southern tribes supported David. Although David suppressed this rebellion, and although, for David's sake, the Lord did not allow a schism during the reign of his son Solomon, it erupted again and became permanent after Solomon's death...

The reigns of David and Solomon are especially important for three main reasons. First, in them the Israelite kingdom attained its greatest strength, subduing its enemies and reaching its geographical integrity as that had been promised to Abraham: "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15.18). Secondly, the covenant which the Lord had sworn to the Family Church in the persons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to the Pilgrim Church in the persons of Moses and Joshua, He now renewed with the State Church in the persons of David and Solomon. The unconditional element of this covenant - the part which the Lord promised to fulfil whatever happened - was the promise of the Coming of Christ: the Seed seen by Abraham, the Prophet seen by Moses, and now the King seen by David; for "thine house and thy kingdom," He said to David, "shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever" (II Samuel 7.16; cf. Luke 1.32-33). And thirdly, the worship of the Old Testament Church reached its maturity and most magnificent development in the building of the Temple and the establishment of all the Temple services.

The importance of Solomon's Temple as a figure of the New Testament Church can be seen in the many resemblances between the two, from the details of the priests' vestments and the use of the Psalter to the offering of incense and the frescoes on the walls. Even the structure of the Temple building, with its sanctuary, nave and narthex and two aisles, recalls the structure of the Christian basilica. But there is this very important difference, that whereas the nave of the Temple was entered only by the priests, and the sanctuary only by the high-priest once a year, while all the services were conducted in the courtyard, the New Testament Church allows all Christians to enter the Church, inasmuch as they are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" (I Peter 2.9), for whom Christ the Great High-Priest has made "a new and living way" into the holy of holies (Hebrews 10.19-22).<sup>48</sup>

The consecration of the Temple by Solomon may be seen the high point of the Old Testament, from which the rest of the Old Testament is a long and uneven, but inexorable fall until the Coming of Christ at its lowest point. The union of the kingship with the priesthood in the only major city of Israel not belonging to any of the tribes - for Jerusalem had been a Jebusite city until David and his men conquered it, - represented that ideal symphony of Church and State which was not to be recovered in its full glory until the Emperor Justinian consecrated the Great Church

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Leontius of Neapolis in Cyprus: "Truly this command is awesome: God, who commands Israel to make no image, or carving, or likeness of anything in heaven or earth, Himself commands Moses to make graven images of cherubim which are living creatures. He shows a vision of the temple to Ezekiel, and it is full of the images and carved likenesses of lions, men and palm trees. Solomon knew the law, and yet he made images, filling the temple with metal figures of oxen, and palm trees, and men, but God did not reproach him for this. Now, if you wish to condemn me on this subject, you are condemning God, who ordered these things to be made, that they might be reminders for us of Himself" (quoted in St. John of Damascus *On the Divine Images*, *op. cit.*, p. 97).

For a detailed allegorical commentary on Solomon's temple, see the Venerable Bede's *On the Temple*, a companion work to his *On the Tabernacle*.

of the Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) in Constantinople over 1500 years later. And when the Jews looked forward to the Messiah-King who was to restore their fortunes and usher in the Kingdom of God on earth, the image they conceived was compounded of the warlike prowess of David and the peaceful splendour of Solomon.

But in Solomon himself lay the seeds of that corruption which was to bring everything down in ruins. For this lover of wisdom whom God loved was not wise enough to heed the words inscribed in the Mosaic law: "When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt set him as king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." (Deuteronomy 17.14-17).

Now Solomon was, of course, a legitimate king, a "brother" and not a "stranger" - that is, a member of the household of the faith. He was a king, moreover, whom God had chosen, giving him the great gift of wisdom. However, he "multiplied horses to himself", many of whom came from Egypt. (Archaeologists have discovered the remains of his huge stables.) And he "multiplied wives to himself", many of whom again came from Egypt and "turned his heart away" from the living God to idolatry. Finally, he "multiplied to himself silver and gold" on a vast scale. Thus with uncanny precision the prophecy pinpointed the weaknesses of Solomon, which were one of the causes of the division of the kingdom after his death.

It may be objected that David had many of these faults. He, too, had many wives - some, like Solomon's mother Bathsheba, acquired by unlawful means. And by the end of his reign he had amassed fabulous wealth. But David's wives, unlike Solomon's, did not draw him away from the True Faith; and his wealth was not amassed to be spent on his own pleasures, but was handed over en masse near the end of his life towards the building of the Temple. And therefore for his sake - here we see the great intercessory power of the saints - God promised that the kingdom would not be divided in the reign of his son (I Kings 11.12).

In this way David showed that first essential quality of a Christian king: obedience to God and loyalty to the True Faith. Moreover, when he did disobey God, he showed the other vital quality indicated by the prophecy: humility (Deuteronomy 17.20). Thus he fasted, prayed and wept when Nathan rebuked him for his sin with Bathsheba, and accepted without murmuring the loss of his first son from that union, together with all the terrible upheavals that followed in his family. And on the only occasion on which he acted without faith, like an Eastern potentate, - in carrying out

a census of the people, - he again accepted God's terrible punishment - in the form of a plague that killed thousands of the people - as entirely his own fault.

Paradoxically, therefore, while Solomon can be seen as a figure of the Messiah in his glory, in the depth of his wisdom and the splendour and peace of his kingdom, David prefigures Him rather in his shame and his sufferings, wherein he displayed the humility and the patience, and the willingness to take upon himself the full blame for the sins of the people, of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53). And as the glory of Solomon's reign was made possible by the suffering of David's, so the glory of the Resurrection is made possible by the suffering of the Cross. For, as the Church chants: "Through the Cross joy is come into the world."<sup>49</sup>

For that reason, perhaps, it was given that David in his Psalms should utter more prophecies of the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ than any other prophetic book of the Old Testament; and that the first apostolic sermon on the Day of Pentecost should be uttered by Peter next to the tomb of David in Zion (Acts 2).

### Schism and Apostasy

The downward curve in the history of the kingdom of Israel begins with its division in the time of Solomon's son Rehoboam. The immediate cause was Rehoboam's arrogant refusal to lighten the burden of heavy labour imposed upon the tribes by his father: "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastized you with whips, but I will chastize you with scorpions" (I Kings 12.14). Therefore the ten northern tribes broke away and chose as their king a renegade former servant of Solomon's who had taken refuge in Egypt - Jeroboam. Thus did Rehoboam reject the Lord's warning that the king's heart should "not be lifted up above his brethren" (Deuteronomy 17.20). And thus was fulfilled Samuel's warning about the despotic nature of ordinary - that is, non-theocratic - kingship.

The political schism immediately engendered a religious schism. For Jeroboam reasoned that if the people of his kingdom continued to go up to the Temple in Jerusalem to pray, as the Law commanded, they would soon kill him and go over to Rehoboam. So he set up two golden calves, one in Bethel and the other in Dan, and said: "behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (I Kings 12.28). "And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi" (I Kings 12.30-31).

With astonishing speed, therefore, the glorious kingdom of Solomon, the forerunner of the Kingdom of Christ, became the apostate kingdom of Jeroboam, the forerunner of the kingdom of the Antichrist - even to the extent that Jeroboam set up his false god in Dan, which, according to tradition, will be the tribe of the

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<sup>49</sup> *Pentecostarion*, The First Sunday of Pascha, Mattins, ikos.



Antichrist.<sup>50</sup> Nor was the sickness of the northern kingdom ever healed: in spite of the admonitions of such prophets as Ahijah and Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea, the people, led by kings of ever-increasing corruption and idolatry, of whom the Lord said: "They have made kings for themselves, but not by Me" (Hosea 8.4), went from bad to worse. Finally, in the reign of King Hoshea, after a vain attempt to win Egyptian support, the kingdom was conquered by the Assyrian King Shalmaneser, the people were deported and they lost their religious and national identity for ever (II Kings 17).

Not that there were no faithful worshippers left; for as the Lord said to the Prophet Elijah: "Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (I Kings 19.18). However, the believers lived in a catacomb situation; and the great miracles of Elijah, whereby he stopped the heavens from raining for three and a half years, and showed Baal to be powerless at the sacrifice on Mount Carmel, and resurrected the son of the widow of Zarephath (an image of the Church), and sent down fire on the messengers of King Ahaziah, did not bring about a lasting religious reformation. For this reason, this period - and especially the three-and-a-half years of drought brought about by the prayers of Elijah - is regarded as an image of the period of the Antichrist's rule, when the Church will be in a similarly desperate situation, and the Prophet Elijah will again come to earth to rebuke the evil ruler and "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I [the Lord] come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4.5).

This last verse is a simultaneous prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of the Christian Jews, of the conversion of the last generation of Jews to the faith of the Christians, and of God's terrible last judgement on the remaining unbelievers. For as St. Jerome writes, Elijah "'will turn the heart of the fathers to the sons', that is, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the patriarchs, that their descendants should believe in the Lord and Saviour, in Whom they also believed: 'for Abraham saw My day, and was glad' (John 8.56): or the heart of the father to the son, that is, the heart of God to everyone who receives the Spirit of adoption. 'And the heart of the sons to the fathers', so that Jews and Christians, who now disagree amongst themselves, may agree by an equal faith in Christ. Whence it is said to the apostles, who passed on the teaching of the Gospel throughout the world: 'Instead of your fathers sons were born unto you' (Psalms 44.17)."<sup>51</sup>

While the northern kingdom of Israel perished, the southern kingdom of Judah fared little better. Isaiah's words are typical of the exhortations of the prophets in these years: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*; Gen. 49.17, Jer. 8.16. Archbishop Averky writes, commenting on the enumeration of the tribes in Revelation 7: "Of these tribes only the tribe of Dan is not mentioned, because from it, according to tradition, will come the Antichrist. In place of the tribe of Dan is mentioned the priestly tribe of Levi which previously had not entered into the twelve tribes" (*Rukovodstvo k Izucheniu Soyashchennykh Pisaniy Novogo Zaveta (Guide to the Study of the Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament*, vol. II, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1956 (in Russian)).

<sup>51</sup> St. Jerome, *Commentary on Malachi*, P.L., XXV, 985-986.

have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should they be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" ([Isaiah 1.2-9](#)).

The idea of "the remnant", a faithful core in an age of apostasy, now becomes more and more important in the writings of the prophets. Just as the Lord in Abraham's time was prepared to spare Sodom and Gomorrah as long as righteous Lot remained in it, so he was prepared to spare Judah as long as a faithful remnant was preserved in it. Sometimes this remnant included the king himself - like Hezekiah, who trusted in God, in response to which the Angel of the Lord destroyed the army of the Assyrian King Sennacherib, or Josiah, who found a lost book of the Law in the Temple and instituted a thorough reformation of the people's religious life. More commonly, however, the kings led the people in apostasy: "They have set up kings, but not by Me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off" ([Hosea 8.4](#)). Sometimes the remnant included diligent priests and truly inspired prophets. But more often "the priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit" ([Jeremiah 2.8](#)). Gradually the remnant of God's faithful were being squeezed out, and a Pharisaic establishment was taking its place. Soon that establishment would reject the very Messiah the preparation of Whose Coming was their own raison d'être...

Something very close to this happened in the days of Isaiah, whose death was ordered by the idolatrous King Manasseh, and even more in the days of Jeremiah, when not only the kings refused to heed his warnings not to rebel against Babylon and enter into alliance with Egypt, but also the "priests" and "prophets" ganged up to cast him into the stocks ([Jeremiah 20](#)). The people continued to believe that, whatever their sins, the grace and the protection of God would never be taken away from them, saying: "Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet" ([Jeremiah 18.18](#)). But all of these things happened, and in the end the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem with great slaughter, destroyed the Temple, and deported most of the remaining people with the Temple treasures.

The unthinkable had happened, and now at last the Jews, led in exile by the Prophets Ezekiel and Daniel, began to repent of their sins. They even produced martyrs for the Faith, like the three holy children whom Nebuchadnezzar cast into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship the golden idol. And in the time of the Persian King Ahasuerus, and of the Jewish leaders Esther and Mordecai, the Lord delivered them from the threat of extermination in response to their heart-felt prayer and fasting.

Chastened, therefore, and purified by their sufferings during seventy years' exile by the waters of Babylon, the Jews were counted worthy by the Lord of a new beginning in a rebuilt Jerusalem. First, as prophesied by the Prophet Isaiah (45.1), He sent the Persian King Cyrus to destroy the power of Babylon and give the Jews permission to return. Then, led by the Davidic Prince Zerubbabel and the High-Priest Joshua, and urged on by the Prophets Haggai and Zachariah, they set about rebuilding the Temple.

The harmony between king, priest and prophets augured well for the success of the undertaking. And in spite of great material difficulties, the fickleness of great-power support, and the active opposition of the semi-Jewish, semi-pagan Samaritans (with whom Zerubbabel refused to work because of the impurity of their faith), Zachariah's prophecy was fulfilled: "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: he shall bring forth the headstone [of the Temple] with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of the Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zachariah 4.6-10)

This story contains an important lesson for the Church during the times of her external humiliation - the lesson, namely, that if only she remains "alien to confusion" (the meaning of the name Zerubbabel), that is, free from any admixture of heresy and idolatry, then she will achieve great things against seemingly overwhelming odds by the power of God alone. Thus it was that the Temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel received a far greater glory than the more splendid building of Solomon (Haggai 2.9); for in it was received, in the arms of Simeon, the Messiah Himself, the new Joshua, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in the time of the Maccabees, when the Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem, forced the people to break the Law and installed an idol in the holy of holies itself, the faith of the people was sufficiently strong to rise up against their oppressors and drive them out. This period of the Temple's desecration, which, like the drought of Elijah's time, lasted three-and-a-half years, is another image of the reign of the Antichrist. And its joyful conclusion, with the death of Antiochus, and the cleansing and re-consecration of the Temple, is an image of the Second

Coming of Christ, when He will destroy the Antichrist "with the spirit of His mouth and.. the brightness of His Coming" (II Thessalonians 2.8).

After the Maccabees, however, the kingdom of Judah entered into a terminal decline. Having lost their political independence to Rome, the Jews lost their last prince of the Davidic line when Herod, an Edomite, came to the throne. The stage was set for the Coming of Him of Whom Jacob had prophesied: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49.10).

Metropolitan Moses of Toronto writes: "Without Roman rule, Herod would not have [had] a place in the Jewish kingdom. At a time when it seemed his rule was threatened he killed his father-in-law Hyrcanus. Later he arranged that his brother-in-law Aristobulus be made High Priest. Aristobulus was from the Hasemonian dynasty and a legitimate choice for high priest. For this reason he was extremely popular with the Jews and fearing his popularity, the tyrant Herod had him drowned in an 'accident.' From this point on, the high priests were not of the legitimate lineage and were put in place by the tyrant Herod, i.e., not according to the proper order.

"Shapiro, a modern Rabbi comments, 'As a result of Herod's interference and the ever-spreading Hellenistic influences among the Jewish upper classes, the Temple hierarchy became very corrupt. The Sadducees, a religious group of the wealthy, who collaborated with the Romans in order to keep their power base, now controlled the Temple, much to the chagrin of the mainstream Jewish majority, the Pharisees, and of the extreme religious minority, the Zealots.'

"This was the state of things 'in the fullness of time' when our Creator fulfilled His promises. These events were prophesied to take place when 'a ruler failed from the house and lineage of Judah.'"<sup>52</sup>

### *The Holy Virgin*

The Church which the Lord came to was at the very end of her strength. So His first task was to "gather the remnant" and "close up the breaches thereof", blotting out "the transgression of the remnant of his heritage" (Micah 7.18). Then He would have a vessel into which to pour the grace and truth of the New Covenant - a Covenant that far exceeded the old in glory, being not merely a certain relationship with God, while remaining in the condition of alienation and fall, but the final overcoming of the fall, and full reconciliation and communion with God.

The Old Testament Prophets had spoken of this New Covenant. Thus the Prophet Jeremiah wrote: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to

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<sup>52</sup> Metropolitan Moses, *Sermon on the Feast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple*, 2013.

bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord; But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (31.31-34). And the Prophet Ezekiel wrote: "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; That they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God." (11.19-20; cf. 36.25-28). And the Prophet Joel wrote: "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit" (2.28-29).

The first vessel into which the grace of the new covenant was poured was neither a king nor a priest, nor a prophet, but a simple woman. This person was the Most Holy Virgin Mary. For it was she who, as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow writes, "unreservedly entrusted herself to the desire of the King of kings, and the marriage of the Divine with mankind was consummated."<sup>53</sup>

Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes: "When the most holy Virgin had lived and served in the Temple at Jerusalem for eleven years, and was by then fourteen years old - when, that is, she was entering on her fifteenth year - the priests informed her that, according to the Law, she could no longer remain in the Temple but must be betrothed and marry. But, to the great surprise of all the priests, the most holy Virgin replied that she had dedicated herself to God and wished to remain a maiden till death and enter into wedlock with no-one. Then, by God's providence and under His inspiration, Zacharias, the high priest and father of the Forerunner, in consultation with the other priests, chose twelve unmarried men from the tribe of David so that they might entrust the Virgin Mary to one of them to preserve her virginity and care for her. She was thus entrusted to Joseph, an old man from Nazareth and a kinsman of hers. In his house, the most holy Virgin continued to live in the same manner as in the Temple of Solomon, passing her time in the reading of the sacred Scriptures, in prayer, in pondering on the works of God, in fasting and in handwork. She scarcely ever left the house, nor took an interest in worldly matters or events. She generally conversed very little with anyone, and never without a particular need. She was intimate only with the two daughters of Joseph. But when the time prophesied by the Prophet Daniel had come and when God was pleased to fulfil the promise made to Adam when He drove him out of Paradise, and to the prophets, the mighty Archangel Gabriel appeared in the chamber of the most holy Virgin, at the precise moment (as some priestly writers have related) that she was holding open on her lap the book of the Prophet Isaiah and pondering on his great

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<sup>53</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, quoted in Fr. Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1979, part 1, p. 216.

prophecy: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son'. Gabriel appeared to her in angelic light and said to her: 'Rejoice, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee!', and so forth, just as is related in the Gospel of the divine Luke. With this angelic greeting and descent of the Holy Spirit, the salvation of mankind and the renewal of creation were set in motion. The Archangel turned the first page of the story of the New Testament with the word 'Rejoice!', to show by this the joy that the New Testament signifies for mankind, and for all things created...!<sup>54</sup>

The Annunciation is, on the one hand, the final goal of the whole history of mankind from the fall of Adam. For that intimate communion with God which had been lost by Adam and Eve was here restored by the new Adam, Christ, entering into the new Eve, the most holy Virgin Mary. Thus she is the remnant of the remnant, the most perfect flower of that long, two-thousand year history of planting and pruning, selection and rejection, by which God raised up for Himself a human being worthy of His habitation. On the other hand, she is the is "the ark, made not by Noah but by God"<sup>55</sup>, protecting and nourishing the righteous of the New Testament from the flood of sin as Noah's ark protected the righteous of the Old Testament from the physical flood. For by giving her own flesh to God to be His Body, she made it possible for all Christians to be redeemed from sin and united with God through participation in that same Body in the Eucharist.

"For how," writes St. Photius the Great, "could He have gladly suffered to see that which He had created with pride being led away captive and seduced? Wherefore, the oneness of the Trinity having, if it is permitted to say so, consulted with Itself (and it is permissible to say this of the re-creation, since it is said of the creation, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness', with reference to the single purpose of the mind), made disposition for the re-creation of the creature that had been crushed. It sought a man (for human kind had become grievously savage and desolate, and would not be brought back either by threats, or penalties, or laws, or prophets) possessing the same nature as ourselves, in whom could be seen the inviolate observance of the laws, so that human kind, in seeing the ways of its kin and fellow, could imitate him, and so that the contriver of the plots against us should be deprived of his mastery by a lawful victory and struggle, by the same means through which he had gained his ascendancy over us. It was needful, therefore, for one person of the Trinity to become man, and to make it manifest that the re-creation, too, like the creation, was its own work. And it was altogether meet that he should be the Son on earth and not derogate from His celestial rank, Who had been the Son from all eternity, in being and in glory. But it would have been impossible to be one of the sons of men without incarnation. For incarnation is the road to birth, and birth is the conclusion of pregnancy, which, entailing as it does a mother, naturally requires that such a one be provided beforehand."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Bishop Nikolai, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1985, Part I, March 25, p. 326.

<sup>55</sup> *Menaion*, October 1, The Feast of the Protecting Veil, Mattins, ikos.

<sup>56</sup> St. Photius, *Homily on the Nativity of the Virgin*, translated in Cyril Mango, *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958.

The faith which justified the Old Testament righteous (Hebrews 11) was exemplified to the highest degree by the Holy Virgin. For by her word of faith, "Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1.38), she brought God Himself into the world.<sup>57</sup> "Thus let us stand in awe," writes Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, "at the immeasurably lofty faith of the All-holy Virgin, before which the faith of Abraham, the father of the faithful, who believed in the prophecy of the birth of Isaac despite the barrenness of old age, is less than a mustard seed before the cedar of Lebanon."<sup>58</sup>

### The Holy Remnant

Of course, the Holy Virgin was not the only member of the remnant of Israel. Besides her, there were righteous men and women who looked for the Coming of the Messiah, such as the high priest Zachariah and his wife Elizabeth (Luke 1), the God-receiver Simeon and the prophetess Anna (Luke 2.21-38), and Joseph the betrothed. However, by the time Christ entered upon His public ministry at the age of thirty most of these had died (Zachariah had been killed by Herod), and public life in Israel was controlled almost exclusively by evil men who did not understand the prophecies and interpreted them in accordance with their own perverted ambitions.

This had been evident already when the wise men came to Jerusalem following the star and looking for the new-born King of the Jews. Thus Metropolitan Philaret writes: "Let us enter Jerusalem, in which the Gospel presents us with a miniature of the world, and let us note whither the examples of the world lead when they are accepted in blind imitation. The tidings of the birth of Christ the King are brought to Jerusalem, which expected in Him its Liberator. Herod, raised upon the throne of David, not by the sacred right of inheritance, but by his own ambition, and who strengthened his power more by hypocrisy and violence than by a truly beneficent rule, could not quietly hear of the lawful King of the Jews, although he was still in swaddling clothes, and as yet unknown. 'When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled.' But what of Jerusalem? Does it know the time of its visitation? Does it raise its head, bent under a foreign yoke? Does it rejoice? Does it 'bless the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for them in the house of His servant David'? On the contrary. The image of the troubled sovereign is reflected, as in a mirror, in the participators of his unrighteous rule; and from them this same image is impressed on their fawning sycophants; it is circulated by curiosity, malice, and imprudence, and at length all Jerusalem is filled with foolish restlessness and ungodly anxiety concerning the event so full of blessing to Israel and to the whole world. 'Herod the king was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.'<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> It seems likely that Christ was born in 7 or 6 BC. See John M. Rist, "Luke 2.2: Making Sense of the Date of Jesus' Birth", *The Journal of Theological Studies*, volume 6, no. 2, pp. 489-491.

<sup>58</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, *Homily on the Feast of the Annunciation*, translated in *Orthodox Life*, vol. 28, no. 2, March-April, 1978, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, *Against Worldly Sin*, translated in *Select Sermons by the Late Metropolitan of Moscow Philaret*, London: J. Masters, 1873.

In the years that followed many Jews followed after false Christs, such as Theudas and Judas of Galilee (Acts 5.36, 37). But when the True Christ appeared, with rare exceptions only the despised of the people - the harlots and the publicans - believed in Him. The ruling class was dominated by the sect of the Pharisees, on the one hand, who invented traditions of their own, and the Sadducees, on the other, who rejected the resurrection from the dead. In later parlance, therefore, they would be called heretics; and the fact that they dominated public life shows that Israel was very near to falling away completely from the True Faith.

By the time of the Coming of Christ, writes Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, "the Jews were not expressing that ineradicable inclination to idol-worship that had distorted and destroyed both their spiritual and civil well-being in the course of a whole millennium, from their exodus from Egypt to their exile to Babylon. Satan was not drawing them to apostasy from God and towards the worship of himself by means of the worship of idols: another more effective snare, another incomparably deeper and darker destructive trap, had been thought up by him and prepared for them. Satan left the Jews as servants of the true God externally. Moreover, he drew them towards an intensified, incorrect veneration for ritual rules and the traditions of the elders, while at the same time stealing from them veneration for the commandments of God; he drew them into the most detailed and subtle study of the Law of God according to the letter, while at the same time stealing from them the study of the Law of God as life; he used the knowledge of the Law of God according to the letter as a means of drawing them into the most terrible pride and self-opinion, as a result of which, while calling themselves and presenting themselves to others as the children of God, in actual fact they were enemies of God and children of the devil. Under the excuse of preserving fidelity to God, they rejected God; under the excuse of preserving communion with God, they rejected communion with God, and were infected with a satanic hatred for God that was sealed by Deicide..."<sup>60</sup>

Thus St. John the Baptist said to them in prophecy of their apostasy and the conversion of the Gentiles: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matthew 3.7-10).

Christ confirmed the witness of John, calling him the greatest of the prophets and even the greatest born of women. Nevertheless, He said, "He that is younger is greater than he in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 11.11; Luke 7.28). For, as Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Bulgaria, following St. John Chrysostom, writes: "Since He has extolled the praises of John, lest they think that John is greater than He,

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<sup>60</sup> Brianchaninov, "Slovo o spasenii i o khristianskom sovershenstve" (Sermon on salvation and Christian perfection), *Polnoe Sobranie Tvorenij* (Complete Collection of Works), Moscow, 2001, vol. II, p. 318 (in Russian).



He says here more clearly, I am the younger in age and the lesser in your opinion, yet I am greater than he in the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, in regards to spiritual and heavenly good things."<sup>61</sup>

However, according to another interpretation given by St. Cyril of Alexandria, Blessed Augustine, Jerome and others, "he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven" refers to any baptized believer, or angel, who is greater than the unbaptized John the Baptist. This shows that there is a great gulf between even Old Testament piety and New Testament piety; for the former, however admirable, is still in the fall and therefore outside Christ, while the latter is the fruit of an intimate union with the God-Man.<sup>62</sup>

The great gulf between the Old Testament law and piety and the New Testament law and piety is symbolized by the difference between Moses and Joshua. Moses gave the old law, but was not allowed to cross the Jordan and enter the promised land. Joshua, however, whose name is simply the Hebrew equivalent of "Jesus", crossed the Jordan (whose name means "judgement") and entered the promised land (the type of the Kingdom of heaven). Moreover, it is written that he "wrote on stones the *second* law of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the sons of Israel" (Joshua 9.5). What is this second law? Not the book of Deuteronomy (literally: "second law" in Greek), for this was part of the "first" law of Moses. The "second" law must refer to the Law of Christ, the second Joshua, which he "wrote in the presence of the sons of Israel" in the Sermon on the Mount...<sup>63</sup> The commandments of the new Law are incomparably harder to fulfil than those of the old law, insofar as they are directed to the inner, not the outer man, and whose penalties are much more terrifying than those of the old - eternal torments in hell. However, at the same time as He gave us this new Law, the Lord also gave us the means of fulfilling it - which means were not available to the Old Testament Church. These are: first, the full knowledge of God insofar as it is given to us as created

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<sup>61</sup> *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 1992, pp. 94-95.

<sup>62</sup> In accordance with this interpretation, Vladimir Lossky writes: "Here Old Testament holiness is contrasted with the holiness that could be realized when the redemptive work of Christ was accomplished and when 'the promise of the Father' (Acts 1.4), the descent of the Holy Spirit, had filled the Church with the fulness of deifying grace. St. John, although 'more than a prophet' because he baptized the Lord and saw the heavens open and the Spirit like a dove descending on the Son of Man, died without having received the promise, like all the others 'well-attested by their faith', 'of whom the world was not worthy,' who according to the divine plan 'apart from us should not be made perfect' (Hebrews. 11.38-40), i.e. apart from the Church of Christ. It is only through the Church that the holiness of the Old Testament can receive its fulfilment in the age to come, in a perfection which was inaccessible to humanity before Christ." ("Panagia", in *In the Image and Likeness of God*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974, p. 201).

<sup>63</sup> There are several other parallels between Joshus and Jesus. When Joshua went through the Jordan, "the upstream waters stopped flowing downstream, and a solid wall of water formed over a very great distance, as far as the region of Adam" (Joshua 3.16). The same thing happened when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist. Again, Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still for one hour over Gibeon "until God brought vengeance against their enemies" (Joshua 10.13). This foreshadows the eclipse of the sun at the time of Christ's crucifixion, which continued for three hours until His Death, when He conquered his enemies.

beings - that is, that God is One Essence in Three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and secondly, the grace of the Holy Spirit, which has been poured out on the Church in response to our faith in the redeeming Passion and Resurrection of the Incarnate God-Man, Jesus Christ. And so now the veil of ignorance has been taken away, and we all, in the Apostle's words, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory [the glory of the Old Testament Law] into glory [the glory of the New], even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Corinthians 3.18).

### *The Rejection of Israel*

Why did the leaders of Israel reject their Messiah? The Lord gave three answers, each of which helps us to understand why people reject the Church. The first answer is: vainglory. For "how can ye believe," said the Lord, "which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5.44) And later He said: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him." (John 7.17-18) The love of self, and of one's honour and glory above that of the Father, is the first cause of disbelief in His Son. That is why, in the Lord's prayer, the first petition to the Father is: "Hallowed be *Thy* name."

Vainglory is an especially dangerous passion when persecution arises because of the faith. Thus the parents of the man born blind would not confess the great miracle Christ had done for their son "because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue" (John 9.22). And again we read that "among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12.42-43).

Closely related to personal vainglory is national vainglory. The love of the Jews for Israel as the Church of God, as the place where His glory dwelt, had come to be replaced by a purely nationalist passion for the nation, which in essence had nothing to do with God. Thus after the resurrection of Lazarus, when it became clear that Christ could, if He wished, be enthroned by the masses as the leader of the nation, the chief priests and Pharisees said: "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11.49). This confession was hypocritical: the leaders of the Jews were themselves secret revolutionaries who wished to throw off the foreign yoke, and in 70 A.D. and again in 135 they rose up against Rome, entraining precisely those terrible consequences for the nation that they feared would come about under the leadership of Christ. But Christ had made it clear that he did not want to be a nationalist liberator-king in their image (John 6.15); He had refused to be drawn into the revolutionary act of refusing to pay the tax (Matthew 17.27; 22.21); and He had both denounced the leaders of the nation in very strong terms and prophesied the

destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew chs. 23, 24). Therefore the chief priests and Pharisees turned against Christ as they had turned against John, fearing (rightly) that Israel under Christ would not be a nation like other nations, pursuing its own nationalist and materialist aims and ambitions, but would return to what God had always intended her to be - His people, His Church, and a light for the Gentile nations whereby they, too, could join His Church and become His people. And so great was their enmity towards Christ on this account, that in order to secure His condemnation at the hands of the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate they were prepared even to renounce their proud claim to being the people whose King was God alone, crying: "We have no king but Caesar..." (John 19.15)<sup>64</sup>

A second, still deeper, cause of the Jews' rejection of Christ was: impenitence, the refusal to recognize their sins. For, as the Lord said, "If ye were not blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9.41). The Pharisees were fond of denouncing others for breaking the law when they themselves were laden with sins, thus making them ineligible as accusers. A vivid example of this took place when the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman taken in adultery to be judged by the Lord. Instead of decreeing the sentence of stoning, however, the Lord stooped and started writing with his finger on the ground - writing, according to tradition, the hidden sins and adulteries of the woman's accusers.<sup>65</sup> Then He said: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8.7). Convicted by their conscience, the accusers went out, after which Christ, acting as always in strict accordance with the law, released the woman.<sup>66</sup>

Impenitence is closely related to the third, and deepest cause of the Jews' apostasy: their blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Pharisees said that the Lord cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. The Lord replied with the terrifying words: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit." (Matthew 12.31-33) The Jews' blasphemy consisted in

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<sup>64</sup> See Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), "Christ the Savior and the Jewish Revolution", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 35, no. 4, July-August, 1985.

Attempts are often made nowadays to lessen the Jews' guilt for the murder of Christ. It is pointed out, for example, that it was the Romans, not the Jews, who actually executed Christ. However, St. John Chrysostom (*Homily 83 on John* (18.28)) asks the question: "Why did they not kill Him, instead of bringing Him to Pilate?" And he answers: "In the first place, the greater part of their rule and authority had been cut away, when their affairs were placed under the power of the Romans. And besides, they feared lest they should afterwards be accused and punished by him." So the only reason why they did not carry out the sentence themselves was their relative powerlessness and fear of punishment.

<sup>65</sup> See Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic, "What was Christ writing on the ground?", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 35, no. 2, March-April, 1985.

<sup>66</sup> See Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), "The Kiss of Judas", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 28, no. 2, March-April, 1978.

their refusal to recognize the working of the Spirit when the fruits of His action were self-evident. They refused to recognize the truth; and so they could not be freed from their sins (John 8.24, 32).<sup>67</sup>

Sins against the Son of man can be forgiven, even the most grave sin of nailing Him to the Cross; for these may be committed at least in part through ignorance, through not discerning the Divinity of Christ beneath His Humanity. Thus on the Cross the Lord said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23.34). And on the morning of Pentecost the Apostle Peter said to the Jews: "I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3.17). Again, Saul the persecutor received mercy "because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (I Timothy 1.13). This is not to say, of course, that ignorance and unbelief do not separate from the Kingdom (cf. Mark 16.16), but only that they can be overcome, they can be forgiven, if the heart of a man is not set in hardened resistance to the Spirit of truth working within him.

The Pharisees who said that Christ cast out demons by demons were being wilfully ignorant. St. John Chrysostom writes: "though ye say that ye do not know Me, of this ye are certainly not ignorant, that to cast out demons and work healings is a work of the Holy Spirit".<sup>68</sup> And if the Lord says that on the last day there will be some who will have cast out demons but will still be rejected as workers of iniquity (Matthew 7.23), this is because in other respects their works were corrupt; for, as Chrysostom says, "neither faith nor miracles avail when there are no works".<sup>69</sup>

Now what has been said about the Pharisees can be said about any individual or community that acts as they did, that is, wilfully separates itself from the communion of Christ and His Church, not discerning in Her words and deeds the grace of the Holy Spirit. Such are all those who create heresies and schisms, as well as those who follow their lead. As St. Ambrose says: "The Lord replies to the blasphemy of the Pharisees, and refuses to them the grace of His power, which consists in the remission of sins, because they asserted that His heavenly power rested on the help of the devil. And He affirms that those who divided the Church of God act with satanic spirit, so that He includes the heretics and schismatics of all times, to whom He denies forgiveness; for every other sin is concerned with single persons, this is a sin against all. For they alone wish to destroy the grace of Christ

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<sup>67</sup> This is witnessed even by Jewish sources. Thus Josephus writes: "There was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for He appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Volume 2, Page 45, 1845 Edition).

<sup>68</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 41 on Matthew*.

<sup>69</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 24 on Matthew*, 2.

who rend asunder the members of the Church for which the Lord Jesus suffered and the Holy Spirit was given us."<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, St. Augustine, who was baptized by St. Ambrose after abandoning the heresy of the Manichaeans, writes: "The first gift is that which is concerned with the remission of sins... Against this gratuitous gift, against this grace of God, does the impenitent heart speak. This impenitence, then, is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit... Therefore not only every word spoken against the Son of man, but in fact every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, because where there is not this sin of an impenitent heart against the Holy Spirit, by Whom all sins are remitted in the Church, all other sins are forgiven... Since sins are not forgiven outside the Church, they must be forgiven by that Spirit by Whom the Church is gathered together into one. In fact, if anyone outside the Church repents of his sins, but has an impenitent heart through that great sin whereby he is an alien to the Church, what use is that other repentance to him?... That they who have separated from the Church have not this Spirit, the Apostle Jude has most plainly declared, saying, 'Who separate themselves, psychical, having not the Spirit' (Jude 19)... For the visible form of the branch may exist even when separated from the vine; but the invisible life of the root cannot be had except in the vine. Therefore although those who are separated from the unity of the Christ's Body may have the outward form of sacraments, which gives them 'a form of godliness' (II Timothy 3.5), nevertheless, the invisible and spiritual power of godliness cannot in any way be in them, just as sensation does not accompany a man's limb when it is amputated from the body... And therefore, since remission of sins is given only by the Holy Spirit, it can only be given in that Church which has the Holy Spirit."<sup>71</sup>

This intimate connection between the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and resistance to the revealed truth is indicated by the title given to the Spirit by the Lord: "the Spirit of truth", Who "guides into all truth" (John 16.13). Thus Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) writes: "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, or 'sin unto death', according to the explanation of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (VIII, 75), is a conscious, hardened opposition to the truth, 'because the Spirit is truth' (I John 5.6)."<sup>72</sup>

The Jews fell away because, in spite of the enormous mass of evidence presented to them, and in opposition to the Spirit of truth working within them, they consciously and malevolently refused to believe the truth.

Two critical moments in the last hours of the earthly life of Christ demonstrate beyond doubt the Jews' hatred of the truth, and consequently their hatred both of Christ and of their own people. The first was during the trial of Christ before the high-priests Caiaphas and Annas, when by a supreme irony the blasphemers of God

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<sup>70</sup> St. Ambrose, *On Repentance*, book II, 24.

<sup>71</sup> St. Augustine, *Homily 21 on the New Testament*, 19, 20, 23, 28, 30, 32, 33.

<sup>72</sup> Metropolitan Anthony, "The Church's Teaching about the Holy Spirit", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 27, no. 3, May-June, 1977, p. 23.

condemned God as a blasphemer. In his commentary on this trial, Archbishop Averky writes: "With Caiaphas were assembled all the high-priests, the elders and scribes, in a word almost the whole Sanhedrin. In spite of it being in the middle of the night, they all hurried quickly to gather witnesses against Jesus, so as to prepare everything necessary for the other, official session of the Sanhedrin in the morning, at which they would officially pass the death sentence on Him. For this they began to search for false-witnesses who could accuse Jesus of some criminal act, 'but found none'. Finally there arrived two false-witnesses - the law required precisely two, no less, to condemn an accused man (Num. 35.30; Deut. 17.6 and others). They drew attention to what the Lord said in Jerusalem during His first casting-out of the merchants from the Temple, with evil intent misinterpreting these words and imposing another sense upon them. The Lord had said at that time: 'destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up', but He did not say: 'I can destroy' but 'in three days I will raise it up' - 'will raise up', in Greek:  $\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\iota\rho\omega$ . He did not say: 'I will build', which is expressed by a quite different Greek word:  $\omicron\iota\kappa\omicron\delta\omicron\mu\omega$ . He was speaking at that time of the temple of His Body, but the false-witnesses interpreted those words of His as some kind of boasting, in which in reality there was nothing criminal, which is why St. Mark also says: 'But neither was such a testimony sufficient' (14.59). During all this Jesus was silent, for it was not worth answering such absurd and at the same time confused accusations (another witness, according to St. Mark, said some things otherwise). This irritated Caiaphas, and he decided to force a confession from the Lord which would give them a reason for condemning Him to death as a blasphemer. According to the judicial customs of that time, he addressed the Lord with the decisive question: 'I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.' 'I adjure Thee' - this was the usual formula of invocation, when the trial demanded that the accused should without fail answer a question of the accusers and give the whole truth in reply, calling God to witness. To a question so directly put, and moreover under oath, the Lord could not but reply, the most since there was now no need to hide His Messianic Divine identity, but on the contrary it was necessary to witness to it triumphantly. And He replied: 'thou hast said,' that is: 'Yes, truly: I am the Christ,' and to this He adds: 'Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power and coming on the clouds of heaven.' This, of course, is a reference to Psalm 109.1, where the Messiah is portrayed as sitting on the right hand of God, and also - to the prophecy of Daniel 7.13-14 which refers to the Messiah as the 'Son of man', coming on the clouds of heaven. By this the Lord wished to say that all these unclean judges of His would soon see in many signs and wonders the revelation of His Divine power as the Son of God. 'Then the high-priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy' - the rending of clothes among the Jews was the usual sign of grief and lamentation. The high-priest was forbidden to rend his clothes (Leviticus 10.6; 21.10), and in this way, by rending his clothes, Caiaphas wished to express his particular grief, which even led him to forget the prohibition. Of course, this was only hypocrisy on his part, so as to declare the Lord's confession of Himself as the Messiah a blasphemy. 'What think ye? what is your opinion of this?' Caiaphas asked those present, and received the desired response: 'He is liable to death.' As upon an already condemned criminal, they began to abuse and mock Christ; they

spat in His face as a sign of extreme contempt and humiliation, they spoke evil of Him, smote Him on the head with the palms of their hands, and mockingly asked: 'Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, who smote Thee?' that is: if you are the omniscient Messiah, then name him who smote you, although you neither see him nor know him.' The latter shows that this whole trial was only a cruel facade under which was concealed blood-thirsty, bestial malice. These were not judges, but beasts, unable to hide their fury... [And then, after the second trial in the morning] the members of the Sanhedrin declare that further pursuit of the case is unnecessary and sentence the Lord Jesus Christ to be handed over to the Roman Gentile authority - Pontius Pilate - for the carrying out of the death sentence upon Him."<sup>73</sup>

If the irony of the Sanhedrin trial was that the blasphemers of God condemned God as a blasphemer, then the irony of the trial before Pilate was that the revolutionaries against Rome who wished to enthrone their own king condemned as a revolutionary against Rome Him Who was in truth their King, while obtaining a revolutionary and murderer in the person of Barabbas instead of Him.

Even Pilate recognized the kingship of Christ, saying: "Behold your King" (John 19.14). As Archbishop Averky writes: "It is as if he says - you dream of the return of your independence, of some kind of high calling you have among the peoples of the world: this lofty task no-one is better qualified to carry out as this Man, Who calls Himself the spiritual King of Israel. How can you, instead of bowing down before Him, demand His death? Do you want me, the Roman ruler whom you hate, to take away from you your King, Who can realize all your age-old dreams?"

"It seems that the accusers understood these words, because they cried out with special ardour: 'Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him, death, death to Him!' This, in the words of Bishop Michael, 'is a cry of pain from the most sensitive part of the wound', but 'Pilate, before finally giving in, once more turns the knife in the wound with the words: "Shall I crucify your King?" - if Jesus calls Himself your King, He thereby promises you freedom from the power of the Romans: how then can you demand that I, the representative of Roman power, hand Him over to death? Think again, what are you doing?' - In reply to this exhortation, the high-priests in their mad blindness and malice against Jesus pronounced the terrible, fateful words, which were a sentence on the whole of the further history of the Hebrew people: 'we have no king but Caesar'. Earlier the high-priests had said: 'we have no King but God': now, with the sole purpose of securing the crucifixion of Christ, they renounced all this, saying that they have not, and do not wish to have, any other king than the Roman Caesar. Only then did Pilate decide to satisfy their desire and 'delivered Him (Jesus) to them to be crucified'. St. Matthew informs us that before this Pilate washed his hands (27.24): 'When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this Just Person: see ye to it.' The Jews had the custom of washing their hands to prove that he who washed was innocent of the shedding of the blood of the man found killed (Deuteronomy 21.6-8).

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<sup>73</sup> Archbishop Averky, op. cit., vol. I, 1954, pp. 296-97, 300.

Pilate used this custom as a sign that he absolved himself of responsibility for the execution of Jesus, Whom he considered innocent and a Righteous Man. 'See ye to it' - you yourselves will answer for the consequences of this unjust killing. The malicious Jews agreed to everything, without thinking of any consequences, only to receive from the procurator his agreement to confirm the death sentence: 'His blood be on us and on our children', that is: if this is a crime, then let the wrath of God fall on us and on our posterity. 'Such mindless fury', says St. John Chrysostom: 'such evil passion... let it be that you curse yourselves: why do you draw this curse also on your children?' This curse, which the Jews brought upon themselves, was soon fulfilled: in 70 A.D., when at the siege of Jerusalem a huge number of Jews were crucified by the Romans on crosses. It has also been fulfilled in the whole of the further history of the Jews, scattered since that time throughout the world, in those innumerable 'pogroms' to which they have been continuously subjected, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy (28.49-57; 64-67).<sup>74</sup>

And so, as God hung on the Cross, the people of God, the remnant of Israel who remained faithful to Him to the end, had been reduced to a few weeping women (the Mother of God and the other myrrh-bearing women), an adolescent apostle (St. John) and, at the last minute, a repentant thief. The anguish of God at the betrayal of His people was so great that it wrung from Him the unfathomable words: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27.46). In the interpretation of St. Augustine, these words were spoken by Christ in the place of Israel, and expressed the fact that Israel had at that time been forsaken by God; for as the Head of the Body, and the King of the Jews, He could express in His own Person the spiritual state of the Jews as if it were His own.<sup>75</sup>

The final act came when Caiaphas, entering the Temple at the precise moment that Christ died on the Cross, saw the veil split from top to bottom: the Old Covenant had been torn up, and the Old Testament Church had died together with her Messiah, while the way was now open through Christ the Great High Priest for the people of the New Covenant to enter into the Holy of holies, the Kingdom of heaven...<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Archbishop Averky, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 310-11.

<sup>75</sup> St. Augustine, *Homily on Psalm 37*. Cf. Blessed Theophylact: "Some have understood it in this manner: the Saviour spoke on behalf of the Jews and said, 'Why hast Thou forsaken the Jewish race, O Father, that it should commit such a sin and be handed over to destruction?' For as Christ was one of the Jews, He said, 'forsaken Me,' meaning, 'Why hast Thou forsaken My kinsmen, My people, that they should bring such a great evil upon themselves?'" (*The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew*, House Springs: Chrysostom Press, 1992, pp. 247-248).

<sup>76</sup> The 18th, Rose Heredom degree of Freemasonry believes that the Shekinah, the visible sign of God's glory, left the Temple at that point. It describes the ninth hour as "the hour when the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain and darkness covered the earth, when the true Light departed from us, the Altar was thrown down, the Blazing Star was eclipsed, the Cubic Stone [Christ] poured forth Blood and Water, the Word was lost, and despair and tribulation sat heavily upon us." See Rev. Walton Hannah, *Darkness Visible*, London: Augustine Press, 1962, p. 203.



## 4. THE ECUMENICAL CHURCH: THE CONVERSION OF EUROPE

*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:  
Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever  
I have commanded you.  
Matthew 28.19-20.*

### Every Knee shall Bow

The spreading out of Christ's body on the Cross symbolised a new, truly universal reality: the unity of men and angels, Jews and Gentiles, living and dead – all rational creatures who believe in and love Him – in the Church, for which He shed His blood (Acts 20.28).

As Symeon said, the Death of Christ was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel (Luke 2.34): the fall of the nation that refused to believe in Him and put its hands to His crucifixion, and the rising again of all those who had fallen asleep in the hope of His Coming and welcomed Him rejoicing, as His soul, united to the Divine Fire, crushed the bars of hades and delivered their souls from the bondage of the devil. This was signified in the most dramatic way at the very moment when He gave up His spirit. For then, on the one hand, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, signifying the rejection of the Old Israel, and on the other, "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And they came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27.52-53).

And it was not only the Old Testament righteous who welcomed Him in this way. The Apostle Peter writes that He also "went and preached unto the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared" (I Peter 3.19-20). Thus the first-fruits of the Resurrection of Christ, Who entered Paradise with the good thief, included all those who accepted His preaching, whether they had died before the law or after the law, Gentiles as well as Jews.

And so the foundations of the Ecumenical Church were laid in the nethermost depths of hades, where "the gates of death" were uprooted and replaced by "the gates of the daughter of Sion" (Psalms 9.13, 14); for God "will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2.4), "that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil" (II Timothy 2.26).

As Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic has written: "God desires that all men be saved; for this the Lord Jesus descended into hell, to save those also who had lived on earth before His coming. For, if He had not descended into hell, it, the greatest abode of

evil against God and the human race, would have remained undestroyed. These two reasons, therefore, woke Christ the life-Giver and sent Him down in spirit into hell: firstly, to destroy the nest of the powers of hell; and secondly, to lead forth from hell to Paradise the souls of our forefathers and the prophets and righteous men and women, who had fulfilled the ancient Law of God and had thus been pleasing to Him. Before Satan had done exulting in Christ's humiliation and death on the Cross, Christ appeared, living and almighty, in the midst of hell, the chief abode of Satan. What unexpected and devastating tidings for Satan! For three years he had plaited a noose for Christ on earth, and in three days Christ destroyed his kingdom and led out the most precious booty in the form of a swarm of righteous souls."<sup>77</sup>

### Neither Greek nor Jew

When the Lord sent forth His twelve Apostles, He "commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 10.5-6) By these words He indicated that He came, not to found a completely new Church, but to reconstruct the old one, which had fallen into ruin. As He said through the Prophet Amos: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old." (9.11)

Of course, this reconstructed Church was not thereafter meant to be for the Jews alone. The reception into the Old Testament Church of the Gentiles Rahab and Ruth, both of whom are among the ancestors of Christ, was a sign that the Old Testament Church of the Jews was always intended to be the core of the New Testament Church consisting of Jews and Gentiles together. For as the Lord said: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10.16).

This ecumenical character of the New Testament Church was confirmed by the Lord in the instructions He gave to His disciples immediately after the resurrection. No longer were they told to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16.15). And again: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24.46-47).

At the same time, the Old Testament basis of the New Testament Church was never denied or forgotten. The Old Testament became the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament Church; the disciples continued to go up to the Temple to pray; and even the specifically New Testament services of Holy Baptism and the Divine Liturgy were full of Old Testament references. Thus in the Divine Liturgy of St. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, the bishop implores God to "behold this our reasonable service, and receive it as Thou didst receive the gifts of Abel, the

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<sup>77</sup> Bishop Nikolai, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, op. cit., Part II, April 3rd, p. 16.

sacrifices of Noah, the whole-burnt offerings of Abraham, the priestly offices of Moses and Aaron, the peace-offerings of Samuel, the repentance of David, the incense of Zachariah".<sup>78</sup>

Indeed, the corporate worship of the Orthodox Church represents a continuation and development of the worship of the Temple, from the incense and the vestments to the architecture of the church, the music of the chants and the words of the liturgy. The differences lie in the new content and grace imparted to the New Testament Church, making it not merely an image and shadow of things to come, but the very substance of those things. Thus we no longer sacrifice the blood of lambs, for example, as an image of the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, but we actually partake of His true Body and Blood.

Moreover, by condescension the Jewish Christians were allowed to continue to keep the Mosaic law - with the clear understanding, however, that faith in Christ, and not the Mosaic law, was necessary for salvation. Thus at the first Council of Jerusalem it was decreed by the whole Church under the leadership of St. James that the Gentile members were not obliged to keep the Mosaic law, but only to abstain from idolatry, fornication and blood (Acts 15.14-20). And when Judaizers continued to insist that the Gentiles had to keep the Mosaic law, St. Paul anathematized them (Galatians 1.8).

The principle then proclaimed by St. Paul - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3.28) - became the foundation for the missionary effort of the apostles and paved the way for the astonishing success of the Church in penetrating to the furthest reaches of the empire, and beyond, during the first generation after Christ. Thus from India in the East (St. Thomas) to Britain in the West (St. Simon the Zealot), from Russia in the North (St. Andrew) to Ethiopia in the South (St. Matthew), the name of Christ was preached and multitudes were brought to Holy Baptism. For although the path to salvation preached by the disciples of Christ was straight and narrow, it was a path that any man or woman, from any nation or way of life, could tread; and the gifts of the Spirit poured out upon the baptized depended on only two conditions accessible to all - sincere repentance and true faith, conditions which the Early Church fulfilled in abundance.

### *The Unity of the Church*

Among the most striking of these gifts, and the one most symbolic of the ecumenicity of the Church, was the gift of tongues. This was given to the apostles at Pentecost so that the Jews assembled in Jerusalem at that time from every part of the oecumene, and speaking many different languages, could each hear them speak in his own language (Acts 2.6). Thus "when the Most High came down and confused

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<sup>78</sup> See the translation by the Monastery of St. Mark of Ephesus, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, 1978.

the tongues, He divided the nations: but when He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all to unity."<sup>79</sup>

However, a little later we find St. Paul protesting at the way that the gift of tongues was being used by the Corinthians. Since those who had the gift often knew what they were saying but were not able to communicate the meaning of what they were saying to others, it was as if they were speaking a foreign language. For "if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me" (I Corinthians 14.11). Paradoxically, therefore, the gift which was supposed to enhance communication between peoples and increase their unity in Christ was being used to create barriers where none had existed before. This is perhaps why, after the Faith had been firmly planted throughout the oecumene, the gift of tongues appears to have disappeared, except in special missionary situations.<sup>80</sup>

Just as the unity created by the New Testament Church was much wider and deeper than that of the Old, so its enemies were fiercer and more varied. Thus from the beginning the Church of Christ was attacked by Jews and pagans from outside, and by heretics and schismatics from within. And many fell away, either through apostasy in time of persecution, or through confessing a perverted faith that was condemned by the Church, using her God-given authority to bind those who rejected her teaching (Matthew 16.19, 18.18; John 20.23). But while tragic in themselves, these cases were permitted by the Lord to strengthen the unity of those who remained faithful, providing them with a deeper and firmer grasp of the gift that had been given them. For, as the Apostle Paul said, "there must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (I Corinthians 11.19).

The unity of the Church was founded on faith made firm by mutual love. And it was cemented in the Holy Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ, which was from the beginning the mystical and strictly guarded heart of the Church's life (and the source of many rumours about "cannibalism"). Great miracles of healing and

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<sup>79</sup> *Pentecostarion*, Pentecost, kontakion. Although the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples in His fullness only at Pentecost, He had been preparing them to receive this fullness for some time before, as St. Gregory the Theologian explains: "...He [the Holy Spirit] gradually came to dwell in the Disciples, measuring Himself out to them according to their capacity to receive Him, at the beginning of the Gospel, after the Passion, after the Ascension, making perfect their powers, being breathed upon them, and appearing in fiery tongues." (*Fifth Theological Oration*, Chapter 26)

<sup>80</sup> Comparing the gift of tongues given to the apostles at Pentecost, the gift given to the Corinthians and the so-called "gift of tongues" given to the adherents of today's "charismatic movement", we may note the following important differences: (i) The apostles' gift was such that both they could understand what they were saying and all of their listeners could understand, whatever their native tongue. (ii) The Corinthians' gift was such that, whereas they could usually understand what they were saying, their listeners usually could not (as St. John Chrysostom says, "they themselves knew what they were saying, but they could not pass this on to others"). (iii) What the modern charismatics are saying seems to be understood neither by themselves nor by their listeners. See the chapter on the charismatic movement in Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future* (Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood Press).

deliverance from danger gave joy to the people, while miracles of punishment - as of Ananias and Sapphira, the sons of Scaeva, Simon Magus and those who died through communicating in the Mysteries unworthily (I Corinthians 11.27-30) - filled them with godly fear. These miracles emphasized the gulf between the Church and the world, and served for the strengthening of the faithful, while attracting those outside the Church whom God had chosen and warding off the unworthy whom He had not chosen. For "of the rest dared no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." (Acts 5.13)

This unity of the Church in the teachings of the faith and the love of the brethren, in obedience to the bishops and the participation of the sacraments, was greatly emphasized by the early Church writers. Thus St. Ignatius the Godbearer, bishop of Antioch and disciple of St. John the apostle, wrote: "'Being born', then, 'of the light' of truth, shun division and bad doctrines. Where the shepherd is, there you, being sheep, must follow. For many wolves there are, apparently worthy of confidence, who with the bait of baneful pleasure seek to capture the runners in God's race; but you stand united, they will have no success.

"Avoid the noxious weeds. Their gardener is not Jesus Christ, because they are not the planting of the Father. Not that I found any division in your midst; but I did find that there had been a purge. Surely, all those that belong to God and Jesus Christ are the very ones that side with the bishop; and all those that may yet change their mind and return to the unity of the Church, will likewise belong to God, and thus lead a life acceptable to Jesus Christ. 'Do not be deceived', my brethren: if a man runs after a schismatic, 'he will not inherit the Kingdom of God'; if a man chooses to be a dissenter, he severs all connection with the Passion.

"Take care, then, to partake of one Eucharist; for one is the Flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us with His Blood, and one altar, just as there is one bishop assisted by the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants."<sup>81</sup>

In the middle of the third century, St. Cyprian of Carthage emphasized this mystery of the Unity of the New Testament Church: "This holy mystery of oneness, this unbreakable bond of close-knit harmony is portrayed in the Gospel by our Lord Jesus Christ's coat, which was not divided or cut at all, but when they drew lots for the vesture of Christ to see which of them should put on Christ, it was the whole coat that was won, the garment was acquired unspoiled and undivided. These are the words of Holy Scripture: 'Now as to His coat, because it was from the upper part woven throughout without a seam, they said to one another: Let us not divide it, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be.' (John 19.23 sq.) The 'oneness' with which He was clothed came 'from the upper part', that is, from His Father in heaven, and could in no way be divided by whoever came to acquire it: it retained its well-knit wholeness indivisibly. That man cannot possess the garment of Christ who rends and divides the Church of Christ. For this reason, by contrast, when Solomon was

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<sup>81</sup> St. Ignatius, *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, 2-4.

dying and his kingdom and people were to be divided, Achias the prophet on meeting king Jeroboam in the field tore his own garment into twelve pieces saying: 'Take to thyself ten pieces, for thus saith the Lord: "Behold I rend the kingdom of Solomon and I will give thee ten sceptres, and two sceptres shall be his for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem the city which I have chosen,... that I may place there My name."' (I Kings 11.31 sq., 36) When the twelve tribes of Israel were being divided, Achias the prophet divided his own garment. But because Christ's people cannot be divided, His coat, woven compactly as it was throughout, was not divided by those who acquired it; indivisible, woven all of a piece, compact, it showed that we, who have put on Christ, form a people knit together in harmony. By the sacred symbolism of His garment was proclaimed the oneness of the Church.

"Can anyone then be so criminal and faithless, so mad in his passion for quarrelling, as to believe it possible that the oneness of God, the garment of the Lord, the Church of Christ should be divided, or dare to divide it himself? Christ admonishes and teaches us in His Gospel: 'And they shall be one flock and one shepherd.' (John 10.16) And does anyone think that in any one place there can be more than one shepherd or more than one flock? The Apostle Paul too commends this same oneness when he begs and exhorts us: 'I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no schisms among you; but that you be knit together, having the same mind and the same judgement.' (I Corinthians 1.10) And again he says: 'Supporting one another with love, striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' (Ephesians 4.2 sq.) Do you think a man can hold his own or survive, when he leaves the Church and sets up a new place and a separate home for himself? For it was said to a woman, in whom the Church was prefigured: 'Gather to thyself in thy house thy father and thy mother and thy brethren and all thy father's household, and whosoever shall pass outside through the door of thy house, his blood shall be on his own head.' (Joshua 2.18 sq.) So too the sacred meaning of the Pasch lies essentially in the fact, laid down in Exodus, that the lamb - slain as a type of Christ - should be eaten in one single home. God says the words: 'In one house shall it be eaten, ye shall not cast its flesh outside the house.' (Exodus 12.46) The flesh of Christ, and the Lord's sacred body cannot be cast outside, nor have believers any other home but the one Church. This home, this dwelling of concord is indicated and foretold by the Holy Spirit when He says in the Psalms: 'God who maketh those who are of one mind to dwell in a house. (Psalms 68.6 (LXX 67.6)) In God's house, in the Church of Christ do those of one mind dwell, there they abide in concord and simplicity."<sup>82</sup>

This understanding of the Unity of the Church entails that those who do not share her oneness of mind, or whose life is completely at odds with the Christian norm, must be excommunicated until they repent. Thus the Apostle Paul "delivered unto Satan", i.e. excommunicated, both heretics such as Hymenaeus and Alexander (I Timothy 1.20) and committers of incest (I Corinthians 5.5). And he warned the

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<sup>82</sup> St. Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, 7, 8. Cf. St. Aphrahat of Syria, *Demonstration*, XII, 525.8; St. Methodius of Olympus, *Symposium*, IX, 2.

Ephesian elders to beware of wolves who would "enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20.28).

Again, the Lord Himself in the Apocalypse warned the churches against false prophets and apostles and heretics such as the Nicolaitans. The consequence of failing to heed these warnings would be that He would "come and remove thy candlestick out of his place" (Revelation 2.5), that is, remove His grace, the mystical bond which unites each individual church to Christ and to the other churches comprising the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The outward sign of this mystical, inner bond was the intercommunion of the bishops, whom the apostles appointed in their places to administer and watch over the churches they had founded. The sacramental priesthood of the bishops, priests and deacons in no way contradicted the royal priesthood of all the people, both being empowered by Christ and owing their institution and final obedience to Christ alone as the Chief High-Priest. This is attested both by the New Testament writers and by the writers of the first post-apostolic generation.

Thus St. Clement of Rome, who was consecrated by the Apostle Peter, wrote thus to the Corinthians in about 96 A.D.: "Our Apostles, too, were given to understand by our Lord Jesus Christ that the office of bishop would give rise to intrigues. For this reason, equipped as they were with perfect foreknowledge, they appointed the men mentioned before, and afterwards laid down a rule once for all to this effect: when these men died, other approved men shall succeed to their sacred ministry. Consequently, we deem it an injustice to eject from the sacred ministry the persons who were appointed either by them, or later, with the consent of the whole Church, by other men in high repute and have ministered to the flock of Christ faultlessly, humbly, quietly and unselfishly..."<sup>83</sup>

Here we see how the apostolic traditions concerning the episcopate, which were not written down in the New Testament, were nevertheless considered of binding authority by the closest disciples of the apostles. St. Paul spoke about these traditions thus: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (II Thessalonians 2.15; cf. 3.6). Eventually these unwritten but fully authoritative traditions - for example, concerning the consecration of bishops, the administration of the other sacraments, and the sign of the Cross - came to be written down in such collections as The Apostolic Canons, whence they were incorporated into the canons of the Ecumenical Councils. It was the Ecumenical Councils, moreover, that decided which of the written Scriptures were of truly apostolic authority. Thus the canon of the Bible, which is considered to be the sole authority by Protestants, was actually determined by the Ecumenical Councils, who at the same time sealed the authority of the unwritten traditions rejected by the Protestants.

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<sup>83</sup> *I Clement*, 44.

Again, another disciple of the apostles, St. Ignatius of Antioch, wrote: "You must all follow the lead of the bishop, as Jesus Christ followed that of the Father; follow the presbytery as you would the Apostles; reverence the deacons as you would God's commandment. Let no one do anything touching the Church, apart from the bishop. Let that celebration of the Eucharist be considered valid which is held under the bishop or anyone to whom he has committed it. Where the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not permitted without authorization from the bishop either to baptize or to hold an agape; but whatever he approves is also pleasing to God. Thus everything you do will be proof against danger and valid (Hebrews 6.19). It is consonant with reason, therefore, that we should come to our senses, while we still have time to change our ways and turn to God. It is well to revere God and bishop. He who honors a bishop is honored by God. He who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop worships the devil."<sup>84</sup>

Strong words, which show the extreme importance attached to unity of faith and love in the early Church. This unity is expressed as follows. A man belongs to the Church if he is in obedience to the local bishop. A bishop belongs to the Church if he is in communion with the other bishops throughout the world. And this Church is proved to be the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church if it holds to the Apostolic Tradition handed to the Apostles by "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (I Peter 2.25), the Lord Jesus Christ.

### *The Conversion of St. Constantine*

The fervent faith of the early Church, and the shedding of the blood of the martyrs such as Saints George and Demetrius, Catherine and Barbara, finally overcame the enmity of her pagan persecutors; and when the Emperor Constantine saw the sign of the Cross in the heavens and in obedience to the vision conquered his enemies by the power of that same sign, the Church was freed to come out of the catacombs and to preach the Gospel openly. This enabled a vast harvest of souls to enter her granary; and in the course of the fourth century the religion which had been believed by perhaps 10% of the population of the Roman Empire at the beginning of the century was the religion of the great majority by the end. Moreover, the faith had spread to become the dominant religion of regions beyond the bounds of the empire, such as Georgia in the East, Ireland in the West and Ethiopia in the South.

It is fashionable to decry the unity of Church and State established under St. Constantine as undermining the independence of the Church and the purity of her worship. However, the ideal of Church-State unity is perfectly in accord with the general Christian ideal of bringing all things into unity under Christ. And if the fourth century introduced new problems and temptations not known in previous centuries, this was not the fault of the ideal, but the inevitable consequence of the fact that greater unities are more difficult to achieve than smaller ones.

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<sup>84</sup> St. Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans*, 8, 9.



The Orthodox bishops, as opposed to the heretics, did not put their service to the earthly king before their worship of Christ. They gladly availed themselves of the opportunity provided by the Christian emperors of meeting in councils to condemn heresies. But when the emperor himself became a heretic or an apostate, such as Julian the Apostate, they were ready to lay down their lives for the true faith.

Even in his fulsome tribute to Constantine in 335, Eusebius is careful to begin with a eulogy in honour of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. And while he draws out the analogies between Constantine's rule and that of Christ, it is always made clear that the human emperor derives his authority from the Divine One, and for the sake only of the spreading of the Divine rule: "The only-begotten Word of God continues sharing in His Father's rule from ages without beginning to infinite and endless ages. So too the one who is dear to Him, sustained by royal aid emanating from on high and strong in the power of his sacred title, has been exercising an earthly rule for long periods of years. Again, the Saviour of the universe is bringing the whole of heaven and earth and the Kingdom that is above into a condition worthy of His Father. So too the one dear to Him directs those who come under his control on earth to the only-begotten saving Word and makes them fit for His Kingdom. The one Saviour of the universe, like a good shepherd keeping wild beasts far from His flock, drives away by His Divine and invincible might the rebellious powers which used to fly about in the air above the earth and harass the souls of men. So too the one dear to Him is adorned by Him from on high with the trophies of victory over his enemies; by the rule of war he masters the open enemies of the truth and brings them to a right mind."<sup>85</sup>

The victory of the Church over the pagan Roman emperors had been too decisive for any Christian, not least the newly-converted Christian emperor, to consider that the Church should ever be in subjection to any worldly power. At the same time, Constantine's victory had naturally, and not wrongly, increased the authority of the emperors and of the institution of kingship. Not that the authority of the emperors had ever been disputed - the Holy Scriptures were very clear that they should be obeyed in all matters not contrary to the faith (Matthew 22.21; Romans 13.1; I Timothy 2.2; I Peter 2.13). But now the very institution of kingship had acquired a semi-sacred character as reflecting and reinforcing the authority of God. The Roman empire was now seen as the providential creation of God for the furtherance and strengthening of His rule on earth; and if some of the emperors both before and after Constantine persecuted the Christian faith, this was not seen as affecting the major benefits that the empire brought, rooted as they were in both the unity of God and the constitution of man made in the image of God.

Thus Eusebius writes: "The kingdom with which he [Constantine] is invested is an image of the heavenly one. He looks up to see the archetypal pattern and guides

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<sup>85</sup> Eusebius, *Oration in Honour of Constantine on the Thirtieth Anniversary of his Reign*, 2. Translated by Maurice Wiles and Mark Santer, *Documents in Early Christian Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

those whom He rules below in accordance with that pattern. The example of monarchical rule there is a source of strength to him. This is something granted to man alone of the creatures of the earth by the universal King. The basic principle of kingly authority is the establishment of a single source of authority to which everything is subject. Monarchy is superior to every other constitution and form of government. For polyarchy, where everyone competes on equal terms, is really anarchy and discord. This is why there is one God, not two or three or even more. Polytheism is strictly atheism. There is one King, and His Word and royal law are one."<sup>86</sup>

Thus just as the hierarchy of the Kingdom of God in the heavens is the source and model of the hierarchy of the Church on earth, so the emperor is a true image of the Kingship of Christ - as long as he remains Orthodox in faith.

It was natural, therefore, to entrust to the Christian emperor a certain role in the defence of the Orthodox Faith. Thus the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council welcomed the Emperor Constantine with the following words: "Blessed is God, Who has chosen you as king of the earth, having by your hand destroyed the worship of idols and through you bestowed peace upon the hearts of the faithful... On this teaching of the Trinity, your Majesty, is established the greatness of your piety. Preserve it for us whole and unshaken, so that none of the heretics, having penetrated into the Church, might subject our faith to mockery... Your Majesty, command that Arius should depart from his error and rise no longer against the apostolic teaching. Or if he remains obstinate in his impiety, drive him out of the Orthodox Church." As Tuskarev (now Bishop Dionysius of Novgorod) observes, "this is a clear recognition of the divine election of Constantine as the external defender of the Church, who is obliged to work with her in preserving the right faith, and in correspondence with the conciliar sentence is empowered to drive heretics out of the Church."<sup>87</sup>

It was precisely the theocratic nature of the Church that enabled her to check the power of the emperor when he transgressed God's law. Thus Theodosius the Great, one of the most powerful men ever to wear the purple, was forbidden to enter the Church by St. Ambrose of Milan until he had repented of murder. When Theodosius said that King David had committed both murder and adultery, Ambrose replied: "As you imitated him in his transgressions, imitate him in his amendment."<sup>88</sup>

### *The Ecumenical Councils*

It was not, therefore, any supposed caesaropapism which led to what many people have seen as the weakening of the Church's unity in the course of the fourth and fifth centuries. The real cause was the dilution of the purity of the Church's faith and life by the multitudes of pagans who entered the Church during this period.

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<sup>86</sup> Eusebius, *op. cit.*, 3.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted by Tuskarev, *Tserkov' o Gosudarstve (The Church on the State)*, Staritsa, 1993, p. 75 (in Russian).

<sup>88</sup> Paulinus, *Life of Ambrose*, 24. Translated by F.R. Hoare, *The Western Fathers*.

Whereas during the persecutions entrance into the Church alone required great courage and involved the very real possibility of martyrdom or hard labour, such a threat was lifted in the reign of Constantine, which meant that many of those who entered the Church then were of a lesser stature spiritually and had not fully repented of their pagan beliefs and lifestyle.

The Holy Spirit working through the Church reacted to this threat in several ways. First, a strict three-year catechumenate was introduced, involving regular instruction and exorcisms. How thorough this preparation was can be gauged from the mid-fourth century *Catechetical Instructions* of St. Cyril of Jerusalem.

Secondly, the heresies, such as Arianism, were combatted in a series of Ecumenical Councils assembling bishops from all over the oecumene. The model for these Councils was the First Ecumenical Council convened by St. Constantine in Nicaea in 325. 318 bishops, including St. Nicholas and many confessors from the time of the persecutions, condemned Arius' teaching that "there was a time when Christ was not", affirming that Christ was Pre-Eternal God, of one essence with the Father. They also agreed on the correct method of calculating the date of Pascha. The emperor confirmed the decisions of the Council, giving them the status of civil law.

Although Arianism was not finally defeated at this Council, and the Arians continued to stir up persecutions against the Church for decades, and even centuries to come, the Creed drawn up at Nicaea and completed by the addition of articles on the Divinity of the Holy Spirit and the Church at the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 381, became the official statement of faith of the True Church from henceforth; and the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431 forbade any addition to, or subtraction from, its wording. The later Councils did not change the Creed, but made further definitions to combat further heretical interpretations of its articles. Thus the Third Ecumenical Council anathematized Nestorianism, which alleged that the Divine and Human natures of Christ were united only by a moral, and not by a personal, bond, so that the Virgin Mary could be called the Mother of Christ only, and not the Mother of God as the Church maintains. Again, the Fourth and Fifth Ecumenical Councils of 451 and 553 condemned various manifestations of Monophysitism, which alleged that Christ was not fully man (the opposite error to Arianism). The Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680-81 condemned Monothelitism, which alleged that Christ had only one will. And the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787 condemned Iconoclasm, which forbade the veneration of icons as if they were idols. The Seventh Council forms a fitting conclusion to the series of Councils concerned with Christological and Trinitarian heresies insofar as Iconoclasm attacked the Incarnation of Christ by denying the ability of Spirit to penetrate and sanctify matter (specifically, the matter of icons, but by inference also the matter of Christ's Body).

The Seven Ecumenical Councils are the seven pillars upon which the Orthodox Church is built (Proverbs 9.1), and every Orthodox Christian is obliged to accept their Divine authority. Their significance was indicated by the Encyclical of the

Eastern Patriarchs in 1848: "Our faith received its beginning not from men or through a man, but through the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1.12), which the divine Apostles preached, which the Ecumenical Councils confirmed, which great and wise teachers passed on by succession to the whole inhabited world, and which the martyrs sealed with their own blood. We will hold to this confession, which we have received in purity from so many men, and will reject every innovation as an inspiration of the devil."<sup>89</sup>

The Seven Ecumenical Councils, together with the many local Councils confirmed by them, helped to preserve the purity and integrity of the Church's faith - but at great cost to the territorial integrity of the empire. Thus, beginning from the Fourth Council of Chalcedon in 451, large areas of the non-Greek-speaking East fell away into heresy (mainly Monophysitism), and from the seventh century all these areas together with large parts of North Africa and the Iberian peninsula fell under the yoke of Islam - which St. John of Damascus considered to be almost a Christian heresy.<sup>90</sup> Thus the blow to the ecumenical ideal of the Church which had been delivered by the refusal of the Jews to believe was compounded by the falling away of the other Semitic and Persian races of the East. Increasingly, the Orthodox Christian empire became the Greek - or rather, East Roman - empire, in which the Greek ethnos and language were dominant. And the very word "Greek", which among the early Fathers had been almost synonymous with "pagan", became honourable again.

### *The Spreading of the Faith*

However, the gradual loss of ecumenicity was partially compensated by the spread of the faith, later in the millenium, in North-West Europe, on the one hand, and throughout the Balkan peninsula and Russia, on the other, as well as by the gradual recovery of Christianity in Iberia. Thus by the end of the millenium the loss of most of the Middle East (except present-day Turkey and Georgia) had been balanced by the emergence of a united Christian Europe. And if there were ominous signs of discord between Latin and Greek preachers in such areas as Moravia, and disturbing rivalries between the Christian empire centred on Constantinople and the "Holy Roman Empire" established by Charlemagne and the Pope, this does not take away from the great missionary achievement of both the Latin and the Greek Churches in this period.

The majority of the missionaries in both East and West were monks, and it is to monasticism that we now turn as the third major new development in the Church after Constantine's victory. Of course, the basic principles of monasticism were not new, being simply the practice of the Gospel commandments in their most uncompromising form; and from the beginning, during the apostolic period as

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<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Archimandrites Seraphim (Aleksiev) and Sergei (Yazadzhiev), *Pochemu Pravoslavnomu Khristianinu nelzia byt' ekumenistom* (*Why it is Impossible for an Orthodox Christian to be an Ecumenist*), Saint Petersburg, 1993, p. 59 (in Russian).

<sup>90</sup> See Daniel Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972.

during the pagan persecutions, there had been Christian men and women living essentially monastic lives. But as a large-scale, semi-institutionalized movement involving flight from the main inhabited centres into the desert, monasticism may be said to date from the fourth century, and in particular from the lives of the first well-known hermit, St. Anthony, and the first organizer of coenobia, St. Pachomius.

The major centre of fourth-century monasticism was Egypt, and this location in itself tells us much about the nature of the movement. First, Egypt was, since the fall of Babylon, the world-centre of pagan religions and demonic enchantment of all kinds. However, there was a tradition that when Christ as a child had entered Egypt all the idols of the nation had fallen down, and the monks saw themselves as following in Christ's footsteps. Therefore they deliberately set out for the desert and the graveyards where the demons were thought to dwell in the greatest numbers, and there they exorcised them by mighty feats of prayer and fasting.

Secondly, the climate and ecology of the Egyptian desert was extremely severe, and life was hard even for those who had no other purpose than to earn their living. But the monks drastically limited themselves even in those material consolations which were available. In this way they practised the Gospel commandments relating to poverty, chastity, obedience and self-denial in all things, translating them into the terse philosophy of the desert: "Give your blood, and receive the Spirit."

Thirdly, with a few exceptions (such as the Roman St. Arsenius), the Egyptian monks were of Coptic peasant stock, usually illiterate, with no part in that rich Greco-Roman civilization which the conversion of St. Constantine was opening up to Christian influence. And yet so striking were their spiritual attainments that well-educated Christians from the West, such as Saints John Cassian, Jerome and Melanie, as well as from the East, such as Saints Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom, came to them as to their teachers in Christian philosophy. In this way the Egyptian monks demonstrated both the possibilities of the royal priesthood of the laity (monasticism was essentially a lay movement), and reasserted a truth which was in danger of being lost as many wise and mighty men of the world entered the Church - the truth, namely, that lack of formal education is no barrier to the attainment of Christian wisdom, and that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty,... that no flesh should glory in His presence" (I Corinthians 1.27-29).

Fourthly, these visitors from abroad took back with them the lessons they had learned in Egypt and applied them with astonishing success in their homelands, so that monasticism spread into the deserts of Palestine, Syria and Cappadocia, Gaul, Wales and Ireland. The Egyptian monks themselves rarely left their desert (although the names of seven of them are found in the Irish martyrologies), but the reports of their exploits (especially St. Athanasius' *Life of Antony*) fired the imaginations of Christians with the desire to imitate them. Thus long after Egyptian monasticism had succumbed to Monophysitism and Islam, its principles were still being practised

far to the west and north. Moreover, by the second half of the millenium the spiritual wisdom of the Egyptian monks had been combined in an exceedingly fruitful union with the more secular wisdom of the Greco-Roman world, so that the English monks in Germany and Scandinavia, or the Greek monks in the Balkans and Russia, brought with them not only the Faith but also the rudiments of education (in the case of Saints Cyril and Methodius' mission to the Slavs, even the alphabet). Thus monasticism became the major missionary and civilizing force throughout the rural areas of Europe and the Middle East, and even the urban households of the bishops were as often as not monastic communities.

Fifthly, the Egyptian monks took a leading part in the doctrinal disputes of the day, the most famous example being St. Antony's expedition to Alexandria to support St. Athanasius against the Arians. This demonstrated the important truth that the Faith was the concern not only of bishops and kings, but also of the humblest layman. As St. Theodore the Studite, the great organizer of monasticism in Constantinople, wrote during the iconoclast persecutions: "It is a commandment of the Lord that we not remain silent when the Faith is in danger. When, therefore, it is a question pertaining to the Faith, thou hast not the right to say: Who am I? A priest, a magistrate, a soldier, a farmer, a beggar? Do not concern thyself with any of these things. Yea! shall even the stones cry out whilst thou art silent and heedless?"<sup>91</sup>

This was a truth that was beginning to be lost in the West, where the sacramental hierarchy of the clergy, led by the increasingly despotic papacy, was tending to replace completely the royal priesthood of the laity and the charismatic authority of the Spirit-bearing monks...

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<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Rev. Basile Sakkas, *The Calendar Question*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1973, p. 66.

## 5. THE IMPERIAL CHURCH: EMPERORS, POPES AND PEOPLES

*There are two supreme gifts which God, in His love for mankind, has granted from on high: the priesthood and the imperial dignity. The first serves Divine things, while the latter directs and administers human affairs. Both, however, proceed from the same origin and adorn the life of mankind.*

Emperor Justinian the Great, Sixth Novella.

As we have seen, the idea of the oecumene, "the inhabited earth", closely corresponded, in the mind of the ancients, to the bounds of the Roman empire; so that, after the triumph of St. Constantine, the Ecumenical Church became almost synonymous with "the Church of the Roman Empire".

Even those Churches which lay beyond the bounds of the Empire, in Georgia, Persia, Ethiopia or Britain, felt in some way parts of it. Thus after the Roman legions left Britain in 410, the parents of the leader of the Christian Britons, Ambrosius Aurelianus, are described as having "worn the purple", i.e. held Roman imperial rank.<sup>92</sup> By the late sixth century, however, decades of separation from what we may now call the Imperial Church had loosened the ties of the British and Irish Churches with her.

Thus when Welsh bishops met the Roman archbishop of Canterbury, St. Augustine, the Welsh acknowledged a community of faith with, and a common membership of, the Ecumenical Church, but no canonical obedience to the Roman or any other patriarchate. It was not until the Synod of Whitby in 664 that the Celtic Churches - and not the Welsh even then - accepted the Roman-Byzantine paschalion and again became canonically subject to the Imperial Church.<sup>93</sup>

### The Symphony of Powers

The first important blow to the concept of the Imperial Church came in 476, when the capital of the pagan empire, Old Rome, fell to the Goths, and the line of the Western emperors came to an end.

However, the impact of this blow was softened by the fact that the real capital of the Empire had for many decades now been the New Rome of Constantinople, which, having been built from the foundations by the first Christian Emperor, was not associated with the worship of demons and the killing of Christians that so stained the history of Old Rome. And while the Christian Empire centred on Constantinople always proudly retained the name, and preserved many of the traditions and even (up to the sixth century) the language, of its western

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<sup>92</sup> St. Gildas *The Ruin of Britain*, 25. Ambrosius was the predecessor of the famous King Arthur. See John Morris, *The Age of Arthur*, London: History Book Club, 1973, p. 95.

<sup>93</sup> See the Venerable Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, book III, 25.

predecessor, it was the Christianity of this Empire, rather than its Romanness, that constituted its chief glory in the eyes of its citizens.

This was also true of the Western citizens of the Empire - but less so as time went on, and always with a subtly different emphasis. It was in the city of Old Rome itself, paradoxically, that the prestige of the New Rome was highest. This was the result of two factors: (i) many of the early Popes, right up to the end of the seventh century, were Greeks, and as such staunch defenders of the traditions of the Eastern Church, while even Latin Popes brought up in these traditions, such as St. Gregory the Great, could be fiercely loyal to both the Church and the Empire of the New Rome; (ii) for many centuries - at least until the reign of Justinian in the sixth century - the Popes looked to the Eastern Emperors to defend them and their Christian heritage against the pagan barbarians.

But there were times - even before Justinian, and increasingly after him - when Old Rome, besieged by barbarians, received little or no help from the East. At such times the Popes had to take a political role and face off the barbarian threat, clothing themselves in all the prestige of the ancient western emperors. The earliest and most dramatic example of such a confrontation took place between that most imperial of the Orthodox Popes, St. Leo the Great, and Attila the Hun. Western Christian civilization hung by a thread; and it was the Pope - aided by a threatening appearance of the Apostles Peter and Paul to Attila - who saved it. This greatly increased the prestige of Old Rome in the eyes both of the Romans and of the Germanic barbarians, many of whom actually became protectors of Roman Christian civilization.

Thus John Meyendorff writes: "Within the political void created by the barbarian invasion, in the eyes of Western Christendom, the popes were.. identified both as successors of St. Peter and as substitutes for the emperor. Being themselves convinced that they were performing an essentially apostolic mission towards the Western Barbarians, while also standing up, whenever necessary, against imperial abuse and heresy coming from the East, they boldly began to describe their own function in the universal Church as one of government. The term, which under popes Leo and Gelasius had entered the papal vocabulary to designate their authority, was not only primatus (which traditionally was used only for spiritual 'primacy'), but also principatus, heretofore designating the emperor's power. Pushed by circumstances, the Roman bishops now understood their role as heads of a 'body' (corpus) of Christians. But this 'body' was not simply a spiritual and sacramental entity in the Pauline sense, but a concrete, legally definable organism, endangered by the Arian barbarians and by imperial doctrinal vagaries. This development, which was provoked by historical circumstances, involved subtle shifts in the fields of ecclesiology and eschatology. The popes were not always equally affirmative in proclaiming their authority. There was resistance to their claims, both in the East and in the West. But the remarkable missionary, moral and doctrinal achievements of the Roman see obtained universal, and well-deserved respect. The real and very serious problems, connected with the confusion between 'primacy' and 'principality',



between sacramental episcopal ministry and political power, between missionary expansion and Latin cultural integration will appear only later, and will have serious consequences, especially in the relations between Rome and the East."<sup>94</sup>

This new political role forced upon the Popes was translated into a new assertiveness in their relations with the Eastern Churches. Thus at the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451, St. Leo refused to accept the canon which gave the patriarchate of Constantinople precedence over the older patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, together with jurisdiction over the barbarian areas in the north. Such a change reflected the increased political importance of Constantinople, and did not alarm the Eastern Christians, who were used to changes in the relative importance of sees in accordance with changed political conditions. (Jerusalem, for example, though "the Mother of all the Churches", had been not even the most important see in Palestine at one time.) St. Leo's arguments were based on the ancient prerogatives of the three older patriarchates, not of Rome alone; but his resistance to Constantinople's "promotion" was later to be seen as a reassertion of the Roman Church's primacy in the Church as a whole, and her alleged right to veto the decisions even of Ecumenical Councils on the basis of her quasi-imperial authority.

At this point it should be explained that the organization of the Ecumenical Church in her early, as it were pristine stage as a quasi-democratic union of independent, essentially equal bishops, was very soon modified, perhaps as early as the second century, by the grouping of bishops into metropolitan areas roughly corresponding to the administrative divisions of the civil power (cf. Apostolic Canon 34). In these areas one bishop was chosen as metropolitan archbishop and president of the local councils of bishops which consecrated new bishops, condemned heresies, etc. Later, these metropolitans were in turn grouped into patriarchates, with one metropolitan - usually the bishop of the most important city - being elected as patriarch. By the late fourth century, therefore, all the bishops of the Empire came within the jurisdiction of one or another of five patriarchates: (in order of seniority) Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople, with the exception of a few autocephalous Churches of sub-patriarchal, archiepiscopal status, such as Cyprus and Sinai. Rome had acquired the senior position both because it was the former imperial city and the only patriarchate for the whole of the Western half of the Empire, and because it had been the chief centre of Christianity in the early centuries, being distinguished by a large number of martyrs, including the Apostles Peter and Paul.

Now if the organization of the Church were to be modelled completely on that of the Empire, then we would expect the emergence of a super-patriarchate in the Church corresponding to the role of the Emperor in the Empire. However, this never took place; and even within each patriarchate the patriarch never had - before the rise of the heretical papacy - the full authoritarian powers of the Emperor in the Empire. For the Church jealously guarded the apostolic teaching that there are only

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<sup>94</sup> Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989, p. 129.

three ranks of the priesthood: the diaconate, the presbytery and the episcopate, so that bishops differ in seniority, but not in grace. Thus while the Church modified her administration, for obvious reasons of practical convenience, in the direction of that of the imperial administration, she held back from making it identical in form. This is one of the ways in which, even in a Christianized world, the Church shows that she is 'in', but not 'of' it.

For the Orthodox, therefore, the ideal relationship between Church and State is one of "symphony", to use the Emperor Justinian's phrase. But to the Latin mind - at least in its semi-pagan, unredeemed condition - this was unsatisfactory. First, it asked, if the State is undeniably represented by one man who holds supreme authority within it, why should this not also apply to the Church? Secondly, if Church and State can indeed work together, and be united in a single Christian commonwealth in which the bishops are citizens of the State and the civic officials sons of the Church, why should this unity not be expressed by a single man at the head of the entire organism, just as the pagan Roman empire was united both politically and religiously in the person of the emperor and pontifex maximus? And thirdly: since the Church is superior to the State as the spirit is to the body, why should this man not be the most senior of the bishops, the Roman Pope?

The first hint of an embryonic Romanist or Papist heresy can perhaps be found in a letter that Pope Gelasius addressed to the Emperor Anastasius: "There are two powers, august Emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled, namely the sacred authority of priests and the power of kings. Of these, the responsibility of the priests is the heavier in that in the Divine judgement they will have to give an account even for kings. For you know, most dear son, that you are permitted rightly to rule the human race, yet in things Divine you devoutly bow your head before the principal clergy and ask of them the means for your salvation... In these matters, as you know, you are dependent on their judgement, and you have no desire to compel them to do your will. And if it is proper that the hearts of the faithful be in submission to all priests everywhere who exercise their Divine ministry aright, how much more is obedience to be given to the bishop of that see whom the Most High God willed to be pre-eminent over all other bishops?"<sup>95</sup>

Already here we see how the Orthodox teaching of the Pope as primus inter pares is giving way to the heretical teaching of the papal monarchy. Moreover, the claim is being expressed - albeit in a moderate form - that the Pope has authority even over the imperial power. No Orthodox prelate would deny that, in purely spiritual matters, the Emperor, like every member of the Church, should submit to the teaching of the Church (as must the Pope himself); but in later centuries the Popes came to extend the duty of submission to political matters, too.

Thus by the time of Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) in the late eleventh century, and still more clearly by the time of Pope Boniface VIII's bull Unam Sanctam in 1302, it was official papal doctrine that all power on earth, both spiritual and political,

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<sup>95</sup> Pope Gelasius, quoted in Eric G. Jay, *The Church*, London: SPCK, 1977, vol. 1, p. 98.

belongs to the Pope as the successor of St. Peter and the Vicar of Christ (the so-called "two swords" theory).

The doctrine of the papal monarchy did not escape criticism, even in the West; and towards the end of the sixth century another Pope, St. Gregory the Great, vigorously rejected it, saying that a universal bishop who would have authority over all other bishops would be "the forerunner of the Antichrist".<sup>96</sup> Another factor helping to keep the embryonic heresy in check was the great prestige attained by the Christian Roman emperors in the sixth century. Indeed, the Emperor Justinian, as well as giving the classic statement of the "symphony" doctrine, showed in practice how essential it was that supreme authority in the empire should not rest with the Pope. For at the Fifth Ecumenical Council convened by him in 552 in Constantinople, the Roman Pope Vigilius was condemned as a heretic, while the armies of Justinian's general Belisarius had to rescue Rome itself from the Lombards! Moreover, the whole character of Justinian's reign showed how supra-national and unbound to one place or nation the Christian empire was. For he himself was a Slav (though this is disputed), his wife Egyptian, his capital and the largest section of his empire Greek and the official language of his empire Latin, while his armies ranged from Spain to North Africa to the Middle East! This was the truly Catholic Romanism of which the Roman Catholicism of the later "Holy Roman Empire" was no more than a grim caricature.<sup>97</sup> And if later Popes and western scholars pointed to the frequent intervention of the Eastern emperors in the affairs of the Church, this also had its basis in the ultimate good of the Church insofar as bishops, no less than emperors, were capable of falling away from the faith.

### The Carolingian Empire

In the middle of the eighth century, the Roman Church, disappointed by the failure of the Eastern Empire to defend it against the Lombards, and repelled by its fall into the heresy of Iconoclasm, made the fateful decision of appealing to the kingdom of the Franks for political support.

The "Holy Roman Empire", as the Frankish kingdom came to be called, was really conceived at a council convened by the Frankish King Charlemagne in Frankfurt in 794, when the Frankish Church rejected the decrees of the Seventh Ecumenical Council on the veneration of icons (the Franks mistakenly believed that the Greeks advocated the worship, as opposed to the veneration of icons). Also at this council the Franks introduced the heretical idea of the Filioque - the teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeds, not from the Father only, but also from the Son - into the Creed. The

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<sup>96</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *Epistle 33*. In 991, a Council of French and English bishops at Rheims expressed the fear that the Pope was not just a forerunner, but the Antichrist himself. See also Abbé Guettée, *The Papacy*, New York: Minos, 1866.

<sup>97</sup> On Romanism, see John S. Romanides, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism, and Doctrine*, Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981; Cyriaque Lampryllos, *La Mystification Fatale (The Fatal Mystification)*, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1987 (in French).

Roman papacy remained faithful to Orthodoxy at this time, but proved unable to extinguish the Frankish error.

The empire was born on Christmas Day, 800, when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as "Holy Roman Emperor" in Rome. This was not simply the birth of another Christian kingdom, but a direct challenge to the authority of the Eastern Roman Empire and the latter's claim to be the only Christian empire. From now on, although Charlemagne dropped the title "Emperor of the Romans" for the less controversial "Emperor", the potential for a political schism in Christendom was manifest.

This came at a particularly vulnerable point in Byzantine history. For from a political point of view, the empire's suzerainty over Italy, which had been re-established by Justinian, was now more nominal than real; and the presence of a woman, Irene, on the throne of Constantine was seen by many as a sign of weakness. From a religious point of view, moreover, the Eastern empire had been weakened by the heresies of Monothelism and Iconoclasm, during which period the see of Rome had remained - almost alone among the patriarchates - faithful to Orthodoxy.

And indeed, it must be acknowledged that this crisis in East-West relations was not caused primarily by Rome. Although the Popes had turned away from the Eastern Emperors and appealed to the Franks to protect them from their enemies, they remained faithful to the Eastern Church in dogmatic matters. Thus they refused to follow Charlemagne in rejecting the decrees of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and Pope Leo III caused the Creed without the Filioque to be inscribed in Greek and Latin on silver shields placed outside the doors of St. Peter's.

The real impulse both to rebellion in the body politic and to heresy in the Church came from the Frankish empire of Charlemagne, which at its height ruled most of Western Europe except for Southern Spain and Italy, the British Isles and Scandinavia.<sup>98</sup>

The crisis was the more important in that, in both East and West, the Theocratic ideal of the indivisibility of the Church and the Christian Roman empire had taken deep root. Not that it was asserted that independent Christian kingdoms, such as England or Georgia, could not exist outside the Empire; nor that the capital of the Empire could not be moved, as St. Constantine had moved it from Rome to Constantinople. What was considered inconceivable, to Greek and Latin alike, was that there could be two Christian Roman empires, any more than there could be two Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Churches. For the empire was understood to be that support of the Church which would "restrain", in St. Paul's words, the appearance of the Antichrist. After the removal of "that which restrains", according to the Church's

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<sup>98</sup> See Romanides, op. cit., and Richard Haugh, *Photius and the Carolingians*, Nordland, 1975.

tradition, there would be a great "apostasy" followed by the rule of the Antichrist and the end of the world (II Thessalonians 2.7).<sup>99</sup>

The Greek position was expressed by a chronicler of Salerno some two centuries later: "The men about the court of Charles the Great called him Emperor because he wore a precious crown upon his head. But in truth, no one should be called Emperor save the man who presides over the Roman - that is, the Constantinopolitan kingdom."<sup>100</sup> Charlemagne, on the other hand, considered, in John Romanides' words, "that the East Romans were neither Orthodox nor Roman"<sup>101</sup>, and that the Pope in Rome was too loyal in dogmatic matters to the position of the Eastern Church.

If such a view had taken root throughout the West, then the first schism between Rome and Constantinople might have taken place half a century earlier, and with its centre in Aachen rather than Rome. However, as we have seen, moderate Popes such as Leo III maintained the Orthodox confession of faith and the ecumenical understanding of Romanism. Moreover, by the providence of God the Frankish empire declined in strength after Charlemagne's death, and after the battle of Fontenoy in 841 it began to disintegrate.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Roman empire, after finally throwing off the shackles of iconoclasm and celebrating the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 842, entered upon perhaps the most glorious period of its existence...

### *The Papist Heresy*

But, in 858, the Romans elected the first truly Papist Pope, Nicolas I, who proceeded to put the Frankish policies into effect - except that he now in effect took Charlemagne's place as emperor and heresiarch. Thus he inserted the Filioque into the Creed, claimed the eastern provinces of Sicily and Bulgaria for the Roman patriarchate, persuaded the Bulgarians to expel the Greek preachers from their midst as heretics, and declared invalid the election of St. Photius the Great to the patriarchate of Constantinople. Moreover, in 865 he declared that the Roman papacy had authority "over all the earth, that is, over every Church". This claim, which had no foundation in Holy Scripture or the Tradition of the Church, and was supported only by the forged *Donation of Constantine* and *Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals*, was strenuously rejected by the patriarchate of Constantinople and the other patriarchates of the East.

Even some of the western bishops found his actions unacceptable. Thus the archbishops of Trèves and Cologne replied to an unjust sentence of his: "Without a

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<sup>99</sup> On the doctrine of the Roman empire as "that which restrains", see Archbishop Averky, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 306-9.

<sup>100</sup> Translated by Richard Chamberlin, *Charlemagne, Emperor of the Western World*, London: Grafton books, 1986, p. 52.

<sup>101</sup> Romanides, op. cit., p. 31.

council, without canonical inquiry, without accuser, without witnesses, without convicting us by arguments or authorities, without our consent, in the absence of the metropolitans and of our suffragan bishops, you have chosen to condemn us, of your own caprice, with tyrannical fury; but we do not accept your accursed sentence, so repugnant to a father's or a brother's love; we despise it as mere insulting language; we expel you yourself from our communion, since you commune with the excommunicate; we are satisfied with the communion of the whole Church and with the society of our brethren whom you despise and of whom you make yourself unworthy by your pride and arrogance. You condemn yourself when you condemn those who do not observe the apostolic precepts which you yourself the first violate, annulling as far as in you lies the Divine laws and the sacred canons, and not following in the footsteps of the Popes your predecessors."<sup>102</sup>

The reaction from Constantinople was swift and decisive. In 867, St. Photius convened a Council in Constantinople which was attended by the archbishops of Treves, Cologne and Ravenna from the West, and which excommunicated and anathematized Nicolas. Two years later, a palace revolution enabled another, "anti-Photian" council to be convened, at which the Council of 867 was annulled. Roman Catholics have often regarded this anti-Photian council as being the eighth Ecumenical, not least, one suspects, because Pope Hadrian II demanded that all its members recognize him as "Sovereign Pontiff and Universal Pope". But a much better claim to ecumenicity can be made for the Great Council convened in Constantinople in 879-80 by St. Photius, at which 400 eastern bishops were present together with the legates of Pope John VIII.

This Council annulled, under the papal legates' signatures, the acts of the anti-Photian council, and made two other very important decrees which have been summarized by John Meyendorff thus: "1. On the level of discipline, the two Churches [Rome and Constantinople] recognized each other as supreme instances in their respective spheres: there would be no papal 'jurisdiction' in the East (canon 1) but the traditional honorary primacy of Rome would be recognized, as well as the traditional territorial limits of the Roman patriarchate. 2. On the level of doctrinal teaching, the Council maintains unity of faith, through a reaffirmation of the original text of the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople; 'additions' to the text are explicitly condemned. The Filioque is clearly implied in the conciliar decree, but the authority of the pope is not directly involved, since the addition at that time was not yet used in Rome itself, but only in Frankish countries and in Spain."<sup>103</sup>

Except for a brief period in 903-4, communion was maintained between East and West until 1014, when the Filioque was introduced into the Creed of the Roman Church during the coronation of the Western Emperor Henry II. At approximately that time the names of the Popes were removed from the diptychs of the Church of Constantinople - the first step towards full excommunication. Then, in 1054, after

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<sup>102</sup> Translated in Guettée, *op. cit.*, p. 305, note.

<sup>103</sup> Meyendorff, "Rome and Orthodoxy: Authority or Truth?" in P.J. McCord, *A Pope for All Christians*, London: SPCK, 1977, p. 135.

Rome had introduced two further innovations - the removal of the epiclesis, the prayer to the Holy Spirit at the consecration, and the substitution of unleavened bread for leavened at the Divine Liturgy<sup>104</sup> - the two Churches anathematized each other.

By the end of the century Rome was out of communion with all of the eastern patriarchates, while the few pockets of resistance in the West - England, the German emperor, and the Greek-speaking south of Italy - had been bullied (in England's case, by force of arms) into submission.

The Balkans, however, remained faithful to Orthodoxy. So, still more importantly, did Russia. St. Vladimir of Kiev's decision in 988 to adopt the Eastern rather than the Western form of Christianity for his nation was to prove fateful for the whole future of Christianity...

Papism amounted to a completely new view of the relationship between truth and authority in the Church. Instead of the Eastern view that authority is based on truth, which is the expression of apostolic tradition, the Popes began to teach that truth is guaranteed by the authority of the Pope alone. And this new teaching had a political dimension: the authority of the Pope extended to the State as well as to the Church. As Pope Gregory VII, the real founder of the heretical papacy, put it in 1076: "The pope can be judged by no one; the Roman Church has never erred and never will err till the end of time; the Roman Church was founded by Christ alone; the pope alone can depose and restore bishops; he alone can make new laws, set up new bishoprics, and divide old ones; he alone can translate bishops; he alone can call general councils and authorize canon law; he alone can revise his judgements; he alone can use the imperial insignia; he can depose emperors; he can absolve subjects from their allegiance; all princes should kiss his feet; his legates, even though in inferior orders, have precedence over all bishops; an appeal to the papal court inhibits judgement by all inferior courts; a duly ordained pope is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> In his dialogue with Cardinal Humbert, the same man who sealed the schism by placing the bull of anathema on the altar of Hagia Sophia in 1054, Nicetas Stethatos points out that by adopting unleavened bread in their Mass the Roman Catholics were going back to Judaism: "Those who accept unleavened bread remain under the shadow of the law and eat the food (literally: trapeza, table) of the Jews, and not the rational and living food of God, which is vital (in Greek: epiousion, the word used to describe the bread we ask for in the Lord's prayer) and consubstantial (homoousion, the word used in the Symbol of the Faith) with us, the faithful. We have accepted the super-essential bread from the heavens, for what is super-essential if not that which is consubstantial with us? But there is no bread that is consubstantial with us except the Body of Christ, which is consubstantial with us according to His flesh" ("Dialexis", in A. Michel, Humbert und Kerullarius, part I, Paderborn, 1930, pp. 322-323). Since the eleventh century, the Roman Catholics have moved closer to Judaism, as is witnessed by the Popes' adopting the Jewish skull cap, and by their willingness to absolve the Jews of the charge of having killed Christ.

<sup>105</sup> Translated by R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970, p. 102.

It was the Crusades of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries that opened the eyes of the faithful to the true nature of the monster that had been born in their midst. And it then became imperative to cast out this teacher of what was in effect a blatant form of idolatrous man-worship, lest the warning of the Lord to the Thyateira Church be realized: "I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezabel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and heart" (Revelation 2.20-23).

Already before the First Crusade, the previously unheard-of spectacle of wars between nations calling themselves Christian had become common. Thus for much of the period 886-1018, the Greeks were fighting the Bulgarians; in 1043 the Russians attacked Constantinople; and between 1066 and 1081 the Normans conquered England and southern Italy and invaded Greece. Fortunately, in the East a shared religion and a common respect for the ideal of the Christian Empire ensured that the scars did not go deep. Thus when the Bulgarians or Serbs waged war against the Empire, they did not seek to destroy it, but rather to replace the Greek Emperor with a Bulgarian or Serbian one. For Tsarigrad - "the city of the King" - remained unchallenged as the spiritual and political centre of Eastern Christendom. In the West, however, the Norman Conquest of England, motivated as it was by religious as well as political considerations, and blessed by the pope, left deep scars which changed the religious, political, social and even linguistic character of England, and underlay the hostility between England and France for centuries to come. And when the West as a whole marched to the Christian East during the Crusades, idealistic plans to free the Holy Places from the Mohammedan yoke soon degenerated, on the part of the knights - into lust for land and spoils, and on the part of the Pope - into dreams of subduing "schismatic Romania" to himself. Thus the only Orthodox nation really to benefit from the Crusades was Georgia, whose people under the leadership of King David the Restorer profited from the preoccupation of the Saracens with the Crusaders to liberate their land from the Mohammedan yoke. But the ancient autocephalous Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch and Cyprus merely exchanged one heavy yoke for another, much more rapacious and religiously intolerant one. This process reached its bloody climax in 1204, when the Crusaders ravaged Constantinople, defiling the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia and installing a Latin king and patriarch...

The honour of being the first Westerner decisively to condemn the Jezabel of the Roman papacy belongs to Bishop Ethelwine of the North English see of Durham, who solemnly anathematized the pope in 1070, after witnessing the terrible fruits of Papism in his own land. Shortly after, a flood of English refugees began arriving in Constantinople and Kiev (the daughter of the last English Orthodox king Harold



married Grand-Prince Vladimir Monomakh), and English soldiers played a notable part in the Byzantine Emperor's wars against the West.<sup>106</sup>

Sadly, however, England and the rest of the West gradually succumbed to the papist machine, and only occasionally did the Orthodox consciousness of the first thousand years of Western Christianity flicker into life, as when the English Proto-Protestant John Wiclif declared in 1383: "The pride of the pope is the cause why the Greeks are divided from the so-called faithful... It is we westerners, too fanatical by far, who have been divided from the faithful Greeks and the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ..."<sup>107</sup>

A reminder of what true Catholicism is was provided by the foundation, not long before the Western schism, of the multinational monastic community of Mount Athos, whose first coenobitic community had been founded by St. Athanasius of the Holy Mountain in the tenth century. "Following the lead of St. Athanasius," writes Vasiliev, "many new monasteries, Greek and others were founded. In the time of Basil II there was already one Iberian or Georgian monastery; emigrants from Italy founded two, a Roman and an Amalfitan. Bishop Porphyrius Uspensky, a profound Russian student of the Christian East, asserted that when the aged Athanasius died (about 1000 A.D.) there were three thousand 'various monks' on Mount Athos. As early as the eleventh century there was a Russian Laura on this mountain..."<sup>108</sup>

After the schism, however, the Latin monasteries ceased to exist; and early in the thirteenth century, when the uniate John Beccus was patriarch in Constantinople, Catalan soldiers ravaged the Holy Mountain, putting to death many monks who refused to accept the pope. From that time until now, the Holy Mountain - which today has Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian, as well as Greek, Georgian and Russian communities - has been at the heart of the Orthodox Church's struggle against the false unia with Rome.

"On October 7, 1207," writes Boyeikov, "Pope Innocent addressed 'all the Russian bishops, clergy and the whole Russian people', demanding that they renounce Orthodoxy, since 'the land of the Greeks and their Church has almost completely returned to the recognition of the Apostolic see'. The Russian Church rejected the pretensions of the papacy, and the centre of Russian-Byzantine relations moved to Nicaea.

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<sup>106</sup> See Anna Comnena, *Alexiad*, II, 11, 9; IV, 6; J.M. Hussey, *The Byzantine World*, Home University Library, p. 103; John Godfrey, *1204 The Unholy Crusade*, Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 98, 107; Edwin Pears, *The Fall of Constantinople*, New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1975, pp. 153-55.

<sup>107</sup> Wiclif, *De Christo et Suo Adversario Antichrist (On Christ and His Adversary the Antichrist)*, 8; in R. Buddensieg (ed.), *John Wiclif's Polemical Works in Latin*, London: The Wiclif Society, 1883, vol. II, p. 672.

<sup>108</sup> Vasiliev, A.A. *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952, vol. 1, p. 337. On the Amalfitan monastery on Mount Athos, see *Saint Hilarion Calendar 1994*, Austin, Texas: St. Hilarion Press.

"The metropolitan of Kiev, who was himself a Nicaean Greek, in inspired manner led the struggle of the Russian Church in the name of the defence of Rus and Ecumenical Orthodoxy. The metropolitans of Kiev and all Russia cared for the unity and reconciliation of the warring princely groupings (of Kiev, Suzdal, Chernigov and Volhynia).

"Historians have paid a lot of attention to the Latin expansion in the Baltic. But they often forget that the other flank of the struggle in this period remained Southern Russia, while the field of battle was the Balkans. In 1205 the Bulgarians destroyed the crusading army of Baldwin II at Adrianople. The Second Bulgarian kingdom (which came into being in 1187), while recognizing the nominal headship of the Pope, was historically drawn towards Orthodox Rus'. Tsar Ivan Asen II (1218-1241) was allied to Kiev and Nicaea, for which Pope Gregory IX expelled him from the Catholic Church in 1236. This was on the eve of the Mongol-Tatar invasion.

"Then came 1238: Ryazan was burned to the ground, Vladimir was defeated, and the holy right-believing Princes Yury Vsevolodovich and his sons, and Vasilko of Rostov fell in battle. It was in these circumstances that on August 9, 1238, the Pope blessed the Hungarian king to undertake a crusade against Bulgaria.

"The Russian Church and the whole of the Russian land was overwhelmed by the flame of the Mongol-Tatar invasion. The prophecies of St. Avraam of Smolensk became clear. Many churches, monasteries, books and church utensils were captured and destroyed; in the taking of the Russian cities many bishops, priests and monks were killed; the administration of the Church fell into disarray: Metropolitan Iosif disappeared without a trace, while Bishops Mitrophan of Vladimir and Simeon of Peryaslavl were killed. Kiev, the adornment and 'mother of Russian cities' was turned into ruins (1240) and lost its significance as a political and ecclesiastical centre. Russian state life became concentrated on the North-Eastern counties."<sup>109</sup>

The thirteenth century represents a deep nadir in the history of the Orthodox Church. Beginning with the (temporary) fall of Constantinople to the Latins, and continuing with the (again temporary) apostasy of King John Asen of Bulgaria, the devastation of most of Russia and the second city of Christendom, Kiev, by the Mongols in 1240, and the signing of the unia with Rome by the Emperor Michael Paleologus at the council of Lyons in 1274, it shows Orthodoxy struggling to survive against enemies from East and West who were at the height of their power. Even the better rulers of the time, such as the Nicaean Emperor John Vatatzes, were forced into making alliances with heretics and infidels which would have horrified earlier generations. Only the twentieth century can compare with the thirteenth in the depth and extent of its spiritual and physical destruction.

However, there were bright spots in the prevailing gloom. One was the gradual rise of Serbia under the inspired leadership of the holy King Stephen Nemanja and

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<sup>109</sup> Nikolai Boyeikov, *Tserkov', Rus' i Rim (The Church, Rus' and Rome)*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983. (in Russian).

his son St. Sava. Another was the struggle of Novgorod, the last independent province of Russia, under St. Alexander Nevsky. This great prince decided, in spite of much opposition from his people, to pay tribute to the Mongols in order to concentrate all his forces in a successful war against what he considered to be his - from the spiritual point of view - more dangerous enemies, the papist Swedes and Teutonic Knights. It would have been good if other Orthodox - especially Greek - rulers of the time had imitated the priority St. Alexander placed on religious and spiritual over political freedom, and had taken heed to his saying: "Not in might, but in truth, is God".

### *The Fall of Constantinople*

A new phase in the history of Orthodoxy in general, and of Russia in particular, begins in 1299 with the moving of the seat of the Russian metropolitanate from the devastated ruins of Kiev in the South to Vladimir-Suzdal in the North. From now on it is the northern cities of Vladimir and Suzdal, and later Moscow, that take the lead in political and spiritual life of Russia. And from this time, too, begins the slow and painful, but steady rise of Russia to the leadership in the Orthodox world as a whole...

The six-hundred-year history of Russia from the Baptism of Kiev Rus' in 988 until the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate in 1589 presents a very striking and instructive illustration of the Lord's words: "the last shall be first" (Matt. 20.16). For most of this period Russia was the most populous and flourishing, and (except during the two-hundred-year Mongol yoke) powerful nation in the Orthodox commonwealth. The beauty of her churches and and the piety of her people amazed all comers. Thus at one time the famous Kiev-Caves Lavra contained more than fifty monks capable of casting out demons. And the monastic missionary movement inspired by St. Sergius of Radonezh in the fourteenth century came to be called "the Northern Thebaid" because of the resemblance of its piety to those of the Egyptian Thebaid (over 100 of Sergius' disciples were canonized). And yet during the whole of this period the Russian Church remained no more than a junior metropolitan district of the Constantinopolitan patriarchate, even when Constantinople itself fell under the yoke, first of the Latins (from 1204 to 1261), and then (after 1453) of the Turks! Unlike the much smaller Serbian and Bulgarian Churches, the Russian Church never sought autocephaly, and even when the Byzantine empire had contracted to a very small area around the capital city, the Russian Grand-Princes looked up to the emperors in Constantinople as to their fathers or elder brothers.

Of course, this tendency towards centralization around the city and the patriarchate of Constantinople was a long-standing historical tendency which answered, in part, to the need to counter the centralized empire of the papacy. Moreover, the spiritual unity of the Russian Church under the patriarchate of Constantinople was seen to be particularly providential when the political unity of the Russian lands was fractured by the quarrels of the Kievan princes, when Russia lay under the Mongol yoke, and again when a large part of the Russian lands found

itself, in the fourteenth century, under the rule of the Lithuanian Grand-Prince, who wished to have a second Russian metropolitan for his Russian Orthodox subjects. However, we have also noted a fissiparous tendency for the Orthodox Churches to divide along national lines. And in this respect the Russian Church presents a striking (and, it must be said, very rare) example of the opposite tendency, the tendency towards national humility and self-denial in favour of the Ecumenical and Catholic ideal of the Orthodox Church. And therefore as the Lord said that he who humbles himself will be exalted, so it came about that the humblest and most self-denying of the Churches was exalted by Him to the position of leader and protector of all.

The first step in this direction came after the ill-reputed council of Florence-Ferrara in 1438-39. At this council, in spite of the anathema of 1054 and all the evidence of the Crusades, and in spite of the fact that the Roman Church had again been anathematized by the mid-fourteenth century Palamite Councils for holding the heretical doctrine that the grace of God is created, the Greek emperor and all the Greek patriarchates formally entered into union with the Roman papacy on the papacy's terms - that is, acceptance of the Filioque and the supreme authority of the Pope. Only two metropolitans, St. Mark of Ephesus and Gregory of Georgia, refused to sign this unia; and it was around St. Mark that the Greeks who remained Orthodox now organized their opposition to the unia.<sup>110</sup> Many saw the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 as God's punishment of the Greeks for this betrayal of the Faith. And the faithful Greeks were wont to say thereafter: "Better the Sultan's turban than the Pope's tiara!"

The Russian delegate at this council, Metropolitan Isidore of Kiev, had acquired his position by guile, by securing the confirmation of the patriarch of Constantinople before the choice of the Russian people, Jonah, had arrived in the city. He now showed his true colours by returning to Russia, after an absence of three years, as the legate of the Pope. The Muscovite Russians, led by Grand-Prince Basil II, were horrified by this; and after Isidore had fled to Rome, they elected St. Jonah as metropolitan.

"However," writes Boyeikov, "even after he had learned about the treachery of the Orthodox emperor and the events which had shaken Byzantium, Basil did not consider that he had the right to break the canonical dependence which the Russian Church had inherited since the time of the Baptism of Rus', and after Jonah's election he wrote the following: After the death of Metropolitan Photius, having taken counsel with our mother, the Great Princess, and with our brothers, the Russian princes, both the Great Princes and the local ones, together with the lord of the Lithuanian land, the hierarchs and all the clergy, the boyars and all the Russian land, we elected Bishop Jonah of Ryazan and sent him to you in Constantinople for consecration together with our envoy. But before his arrival there the emperor and

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<sup>110</sup> See Ivan Ostrumoff, *The History of the Council of Florence*, Boston, Mass.: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1971.

patriarch consecrated Isidore as metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus', while to Jonah they said: "Go to your see - the Ryazan episcopate. If Isidore dies or something else happens to him, then be ready to be blessed for the metropolitan see of all Rus'." Since a disagreement in the Church of God has taken place in our blessed kingdoms, travellers to Constantinople have suffered all kinds of difficulties on the road, there is great disorder in our countries, the godless Hagarenes have invaded, there have been civil wars, and we ourselves have suffered terrible things, not from foreigners, but from our own brothers. In view of this great need, we have assembled our Russian hierarchs, and, in accordance with the canons, we have consecrated the above-mentioned Jonah to the Russian metropolitanate of Kiev and all Rus'. We have acted in this way because of great need, and not out of pride or boldness. We shall remain to the end of the age devoted to the Orthodoxy we have received; our Church will always seek the blessing of the Church of Tsargrad and obey her in everything according to the ancient piety. And our father Jonah also begs for blessing and union in that which does not concern the present new disagreements, and we beseech your holy kingdom to be kindly disposed to our father Metropolitan Jonah. We wanted to write about all these church matters to the most holy Orthodox patriarch, too; and to ask his blessing and prayers. But we do not know whether there is a patriarch in your royal city or not. But if God grants that you will have a patriarch according to the ancient piety, then we shall inform him of all our circumstances and ask for his blessing.'

"On reading this gramota of the Great Prince Basil, one is amazed at his tact and the restraint of his style. Knowing that the emperor himself had betrayed the faith, that Patriarch Gregory had fled to Rome, as also that Isidore who had been sent to Moscow, Basil II, instead of giving a well-merited rebuke to his teachers and instructors, himself apologized for the fact that circumstances had compelled the Russian bishops themselves to consecrate a metropolitan for themselves, and comes near to begging him to receive Jonah with honour. It is remarkable that the Great Prince at every point emphasizes that this consecration took place 'in accordance with the canons', while doubting whether there was a lawful patriarch in Byzantium itself or not. The whole of this gramota is full of true Christian humility and brotherly compassion for the emperor who had fallen onto hard times."<sup>111</sup>

On May 29, 1453, just six months after the Pope's name had been commemorated for the first time in Hagia Sophia, Constantinople fell to the Turks. And so, one might have thought, fell the imperial ideal of the Orthodox Church. However, the Lord was about to pass the guardianship of that ideal to the youngest and humblest of the Christian peoples, Russia; and it was the Russian Church and Empire that was destined to play the major role in preserving the Orthodox heritage to the beginning of the twentieth century...

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<sup>111</sup> Boyeikov, op. cit. See Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

## 6. THE NATIONAL CHURCH: THE THIRD ROME AND THE NATIONS

*The earthly fatherland with its Church is the threshold of the Heavenly Fatherland. Therefore love it fervently and be ready to lay down your life for it, so as to inherit eternal life there.*  
St. John of Kronstadt, Sermon (1905).

The fall of Constantinople presented the Eastern Churches with a new situation the like of which they had not experienced since before the conversion of St. Constantine.

The East Roman Empire was now dead; and although some cities, such as Trebizond, continued a brief and fitful independent existence, none of these could reasonably hope to serve as a new capital, still less as a springboard to the recapture of Constantinople, in the way that Nicaea had served after the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204. The Balkan Orthodox nations had been subdued by the Turks, although Romania, under great leaders such as King Stephen the Great and St. Daniel the Hesychast could be said to be semi-independent. Only little Georgia remained fully independent, though increasingly at the mercy of invasion from the south. As for the largest Orthodox nation, Russia, she was still, formally at any rate, under the suzerainty of the Mongols.

The organization of the Church might therefore reasonably have been expected to devolve into a loosely connected structure of national Churches similar to that of the Protestant national churches which were soon to appear after the collapse of the papist empire in Reformation Europe. And indeed, a tendency towards such a structure is evident - together with a corresponding increase in nationalist passions - after the liberation of Greece in the early nineteenth century.

However, it was slowed down by two antithetical tendencies: on the one hand, the grouping by the Turkish authorities of all the Orthodox Christians of their empire, of whatever race, into a single Rum millet, or "Roman nation", under the civil as well as the religious leadership of the patriarchate of Constantinople; and, on the other hand, the emergence of the ideal of Moscow as the Third Rome, the heir of the Empires of the Old and New Romes.

### *The Turkish Yoke*

There was one immediate and major gain from the fall of the Empire: the conqueror of Constantinople gave the patriarchate into the hands of St. Gennadius Scholarius, a disciple of St. Mark of Ephesus and a firm opponent of the unia. However, in almost every other respect the Christians of the Greek lands and the Balkans suffered greatly from their new rulers. Since the Constantinopolitan patriarch was made both civic and religious leader of all the empire's Orthodox, his

throne became the object of political intrigues involving not only Turkish officials, but also Greek merchants, Georgian kings, Romanian princes and, increasingly, Western ambassadors. And since each new patriarch had to pay a large sum, as well as an annual tribute, to the Sublime Porte, this meant that, with rare exceptions, the candidate with the biggest purse won. This in turn led to frequent depositions, even murders, of patriarchs, and the extortion of ever-increasing sums from the already impoverished Christians.<sup>112</sup>

In the towns and villages, conditions also deteriorated. Gradually, more and more churches were converted into mosques; bribes and intrigues were often necessary to keep the few remaining churches in Christian hands, and these usually had to have drab exteriors with no visible domes or crosses. On the whole, Christians were allowed to practise their faith; but all influential positions were restricted to Muslims, and conversion from Islam to Christianity was punishable by death. Many of the martyrs of this period were Orthodox Christians who had, wittingly or unwittingly, become Muslims in their youth, and were then killed for reconverting to the faith of their fathers.<sup>113</sup> The general level of education among the Christians plummeted, and even the most basic books often had to be imported from semi-independent areas such as the Danubian principalities or from Uniate presses in Venice.

It was only to be expected that the Western heresies would attempt to benefit from the weakened condition of the Orthodox. The Society of Jesus was founded in 1540 with the specific aim of buttressing the Counter-Reformation papacy, and was soon mounting a formidable war, not only against Protestantism, but also against Orthodoxy on a wide front. The Jesuits' methods ranged from crude force, which they used with the connivance of their Polish patrons in the Russian lands conquered by Catholic Poland, to the subtler weapon of education, which was particularly effective among the sons of Greek families who went to study in the College of Saint Athanasius in Rome or the Jesuit schools of Constantinople. Soon this pressure was producing results: in 1596, five Orthodox bishops of the Western Russian lands (but not including the metropolitan of Kiev) submitted to Rome at the infamous unia of Brest-Litovsk; and several Greek metropolitans also apostasized, especially in the Antiochian patriarchate, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nor did the Protestant reformers fail to make gains, especially in Romania.<sup>114</sup>

Amidst all this turmoil, and with the bishops so often wavering in faith or bound by political pressures, it was often left to the lower clergy or the laypeople to take up the banner of Orthodoxy. Thus the unia was fought by hieromonks, such as St. Job of Pochaev, lay theologians such as the Chiot Eustratios Argenti<sup>115</sup>, aristocratic landowners such as Prince Constantine Constantinovich Ostrozhsky, and lay

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<sup>112</sup> Sir Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge, 1968.

<sup>113</sup> See *New Martyrs of the Turkish Yoke*, Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 1985.

<sup>114</sup> Runciman, *op. cit.* On the unia, see Boyeikov, *op. cit.* ch. 4; A.V. Kartashev, *Ocherki po Istorii Russkoj Tserkvi (Sketches on the History of the Russian Church)*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1959, vol. II, pp. 267-310 (in Russian).

<sup>115</sup> See Timothy Ware, *Eustratios Argenti: A Study of the Greek Church under Turkish Rule*, Oxford, 1964.

brotherhoods such as those which preserved Orthodoxy in uniate-dominated towns as Lvov and Vilnius for centuries.<sup>116</sup> Many monks wandered around the Orthodox lands strengthening the Christians in the faith of their fathers and receiving martyrdom as their reward, such as the exarch of the Constantinopolitan patriarch Nicephorus, who was killed by the Poles, and St. Athanasius of Brest, who was tortured to death by the Jesuits, and St. Cosmas of Aitolia, who was killed by the Turks in Albania.<sup>117</sup>

The international character of Orthodoxy in these centuries is illustrated by the life of the Russian hieromonk St. Paisius Velichkovsky, who, having acquired spiritual wisdom on Mount Athos, founded some model monasteries in Romania which became the seedbed of the revival of Russian monasticism in the nineteenth century.<sup>118</sup>

Sometimes the lack of Orthodox political leadership made it necessary for bishops to take on political roles. We have already seen how this was forced upon the Constantinopolitan patriarchs by the Turkish sultans. But the same pattern is found in lands on the borders of the Turkish empire, as we see in the lives of the holy prince-bishops Maximus of Serbia and Peter of Montenegro. Such developments, though not strictly canonical, were forced upon the Christians of the Balkan lands. They were the result of the Christian power vacuum left by the fall of the Byzantine empire, which made it more and more imperative to find a political protector of the Orthodox who would save them from the crushing weight of the Muslims, in the East, and the Poles and Austro-Hungarians, in the West.

But where was this power to be found? One Orthodox power which remained relatively free of the Turks and which certainly helped the enslaved Greek and Slavic Orthodox was Romania. In the fourteenth century, a remarkable monastic movement, nourished by hesychastic monks from Mount Athos and Bulgaria, began in Romania. This movement gathered pace in the centuries that followed, being supported by pious princes such as Stephen the Great (1457-1504), who first united the three Romanian provinces of Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania, and churchmen such as St. Daniel the Hesychast, Prince Stephen's spiritual father. The Romanians were very generous in their support of the Orthodox under the Turkish yoke, and some patriarchs of Constantinople, such as St. Niphon, even retired to Romanian monasteries. Moreover, in the eighteenth century a revival of hesychast monasticism took place in Romania, as we have seen, which became the seedbed of the similar revival in Russia in the nineteenth century centred on Optina.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> See Boyeikov, *op. cit.*; Kartashev, *op. cit.*; *Russkaia Pravoslavnnaia Tserkov'* (*The Russian Orthodox Church*), a publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, 1988, pp. 45-48 (in Russian).

<sup>117</sup> See Constantine Cavarnos, *St. Cosmas Aitolos*, Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1985.

<sup>118</sup> Schema-Monk Metrophanes, *Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska brotherhood, 1976.

<sup>119</sup> Bishop Seraphim Joanta, *Romania: Its Hesychast Tradition and Culture*, Wildwood, CA: St. Xenia Skete, 1992.



However, the only power which could possibly take the place of Byzantium was not Romania, but Russia; and increasingly, from the end of the fifteenth century, we see Russia measuring herself up, as it were, for this role. In 1480, Grand-Prince John III, having already married the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, declared himself independent of the Golden Horde and took to himself the title of Tsar. In 1498, he was crowned in a ceremony which was a rough copy of the Byzantine coronation service, and the metropolitan charged him "to care for all souls and for all Orthodox Christendom". In 1511, the Pskov monk Philotheus, writing to Great-Prince Basil III, spoke of Moscow as "the Third Rome", the heir of the Empires of Rome and Constantinople - "and a Fourth there shall not be", he added.<sup>120</sup> This concept received credence from the rapid expansion of the Russian lands in this period, and by the triumph of the Russian Church over its first home-grown heresy, that of the Judaizers.

At the same time, it must be remembered that Muscovy had not yet won control even over all the Russian lands, a good half of them being still under the control of Poland-Lithuania - which also had its own Orthodox metropolitan who was not in obedience to the Muscovite metropolitan, but to the Patriarch of Constantinople. This meant that, for several centuries, the Muscovite grand-princes and tsars saw as their main task the building up of a national kingdom embracing "all the Russias"; and the idea of Moscow as the protector of all Orthodox Christendom by virtue of its position as "the Third Rome" (an idea that was originally imported into Russia by monks from the Balkans)<sup>121</sup> did not receive any intensive development until the reign of Alexander II in the nineteenth century. However, the seeds for that development were laid at this time, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and as the Muscovite state gradually grew and became stronger, the mission entrusted by Divine Providence to her gradually became clearer.<sup>122</sup>

In fact, the first intimation of the idea of Moscow as the Third Rome may be a Greek prophecy of the eighth or ninth century, which declared: "The sceptre of the Orthodox kingdom will fall from the weakening hands of the Byzantine emperors, since they will not have proved able to achieve the symphony of Church and State. Therefore the Lord in His Providence will send a third God-chosen people to take the place of the chosen, but spiritually decrepit people of the Greeks."<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> See Sir Steven Runciman, *The Orthodox Churches and the Secular State*, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 46-47.

<sup>121</sup> The Bulgarians had hopes that their empire would take the place of the New Rome. However, St. Theodosius of Trnovo (+1363) prophesied that the Turks would conquer the Bulgarian land because of its sins; and in fact Bulgaria fell to the Turks before Byzantium. See Ivan Marchevsky, *Apokaliptichnata Perspektiva ot Kraya Vremenata v Svetootecheski Sintez (An Apocalyptic Perspective on the Last Times in a Patristic Synthesis)*, Sofia: "Monarkhichesko-Konservativen Seyuz", 1994, p. 80 (in Bulgarian).

<sup>122</sup> See N. Ulyanov, "Kompleks Filofea" (The Philotheus Complex"), *Voprosy Filosofii (Questions of Philosophy)*, 1994, no. 4, pp. 152-162 (in Russian).

<sup>123</sup> Quoted by Archbishop Seraphim, "Sud'by Rossii" ("The Destinies of Russia"), *Pravoslavniy Vestnik (Orthodox Messenger)*, N 87, January-February, 1996, pp. 6-7 (in Russian).

## *The Heresy of the Judaizers*

However, before Moscow could take on the burden of "the Third Rome", she had to prove herself in a struggle against the foremost enemies of the Faith. Since the heresy of the Judaizers is sometimes considered to be the spiritual ancestor of the Russian revolution, it is worth pausing to examine its roots and history. "Its roots," writes a publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, "go deeper than is usually imagined. The part played by national elements in the heresy, which exploded like epidemics onto medieval Europe, has not yet been sufficiently clarified. The acts of the inquisition demonstrate that most of the sects were Judeo-Christian in character with a more or less pronounced Manichaeian colouring. The flourishing of the Albigensian heresy in France has been directly linked by historians with the rise of Jewish influence in that country. The heresy of the Templars, 'the knights of the Temple', who were condemned in 1314, was linked with esoterical Judaism and blasphemy against Christ...

"Judaizers were also known in the Orthodox East. In Salonica in the first third of the 14th century 'there existed a heretical Judaizing society in the heart of the Greek population' which had an influence on 'the Bulgarian Judaizers of the 40s and 50s of the same century'. In 1354 a debate took place in Gallipoli between the famous theologian and hierarch of the Eastern Church Gregory Palamas, on the one hand, and the Turks and the Chionians, i.e the Judaizers, on the other. In 1360 a council meeting in Trnovo, the then capital of the Bulgarian patriarchate, condemned both the opponents of Hesychasm (the Barlaamites) and those who philosophize from the Jewish heresies.

"The successes of the heresy in Russia could be attributed to the same cause as its success in France in the 14th century. Jews streamed into the young state of the Ottomans from the whole of Western Europe. Thereafter they were able to penetrate without hindrance into the Genoan colonies of the Crimea and the Azov sea, and into the region of what had been Khazaria, where the Jewish sect of the Karaites had a large influence; for they had many adherents in the Crimea and Lithuania and were closely linked with Palestine. As the inscriptions on the Jewish cemetery of Chuft-Kale show, colonies of Karaites existed in the Crimea from the 2nd to the 18th centuries. The Karaites were brought to Lithuania by Prince Vitovt, the hero of the battle of Grunwald (1410) and great-grandfather of John III Vasilievich. From there they spread throughout Western Russia.

"... One has to admit that the beginning of the polemic between the Orthodox and the heretics was made, not in Byzantium, but in Russia. Besides, 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 cursed him. The hypothesis concerning the Karaite origin of the 'Judaizers' 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 Judaizers - in the time of Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod (+1505) and St. Joseph of Volotsk (+1515).

"From the time of the holy Prince Vladimir, the Baptizer of Rus', who rejected the solicitations of the Khazar Rabbis, wrote St. Joseph of Volotsk, 'the great Russian land has for 500 years remained in the Orthodox Faith, until the enemy of salvation, the devil, introduced the foul Jew to Great Novgorod. On St. Michael's day, 1470, there arrived from Kiev in the suite of Prince Michael Olelkovich, who had been invited by the veche, 'the Jew Scharia' and 'Zachariah, prince of Taman. Later the Lithuanian Rabbis Joseph Smoilo Skaryavei and Moses Khanush also arrived.

"The heresy began to spread quickly. However, 'in the strict sense of the word this was not merely heresy, but complete apostasy from the Christian faith and the acceptance of the Jewish faith. Using the weaknesses of certain clerics, Scharia and his assistants began to instil distrust of the Church hierarchy into the faint-hearted, inclining them to rebellion against spiritual authority, tempting them with 'self-rule', the personal choice of each person in the spheres of faith and salvation, inciting the deceived to renounce their Mother-Church, blaspheme against the holy icons and reject veneration of the saints - the foundations of popular morality - and, finally, to a complete denial of the saving Sacraments and dogmas of Orthodoxy concerning the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. So they went so far as Jewish war against God and the substitution of Christ the Saviour by the false messiah and antichrist.

"The false teaching spread in secret. Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod first heard about the heresy in 1487; four members of a secret society, while abusing each other in a drunken frenzy, revealed the existence of the heresy in front of some Orthodox. The zealous archpastor quickly conducted an investigation and with sorrow became convinced that not only Novgorod, but also the very capital of Russian Orthodoxy, Moscow, was threatened. In September 1487 he sent Metropolitan Gerontius in Moscow the records of the whole investigation in the original. Igumen Joseph (Sanin) of the Dormition monastery of Volotsk, who had an unassailable reputation in Russian society at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries, also spoke out against the heresy.

"But the battle with the heresy turned out to be no simple matter, for the heretics had enlisted the support of powerful people in Moscow. Great Prince John III, who had been deceived by the Judaizers, invited them to Moscow, and made the two leading heretics protopriests - one in the Dormition, and the other in the Archangels cathedrals in the Kremlin. Some of those close to the Tsar, such as Deacon Theodore

Kurytsyn, who headed the government, and whose brother became the heretics' leader, were coopted into the heresy. The Great Prince's bride, Helen Voloshanka, was converted to Judaism. In 1483 a correspondence between Ioann II and the heresiarch Scharia himself was established through diplomatic channels between Moscow and Bakhchisarai. Finally, the heretic Zosima was raised to the see of the great hierarchs of Moscow Peter, Alexis and Jonah.

"The struggle between Archbishop Gennadius and St. Joseph, on the one hand, and the opponents of Orthodoxy, on the other, lasted for nineteen years.

"In 1479 St. Joseph founded the monastery of the Dormition in Volokolamsk. There he wrote his major theological works, including 'The Enlightener', which brought him the reputation of a great father and teacher of the Russian Church. His fiery epistles against the heretics were spread widely. The labours of Igumen Joseph of Volotsk and St. Gennadius, archbishop of Novgorod, were crowned with success. In 1494 the heretic Zosima was removed from the metropolitan see, and in 1502-1504 councils were assembled which condemned the most evil and impenitent heretics."<sup>124</sup>

### *The Moscow Patriarchate*

However, in the first half of the sixteenth century a dangerous tendency began to make itself manifest in Russian life: caesaropapism. The victors over the Judaizers invoked the power of the State to mete out some very harsh treatment to the heresiarchs. Moreover, the monastic ideal of non-possessiveness, represented especially by St. Nilus of Sora, began to decline as monastery holdings increased and were increasingly devoted to the support of the State.

As contact with Byzantium declined, the Byzantine idea of the "symphony" between Church and State became distorted in favour of the preponderant power of the State. The first clear sign of this development was the treatment meted out to the famous monk St. Maximus the Greek, who was imprisoned for twenty years for refusing to recognize the authority of the Tsar in spiritual matters.<sup>125</sup> Still more serious was the fate suffered by St. Philip, metropolitan of Moscow. In 1569 he had used the traditional prerogative of the chief bishop to rebuke John the Terrible for his cruelty and oppression; but then a subservient synod deposed Philip and handed him over to the Tsar, who had him strangled.<sup>126</sup> However, the balance was somewhat restored under John's pious son Theodore. And in 1589 the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II, who was in Moscow to ask for alms, raised the Russian Church

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<sup>124</sup> *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>125</sup> At the same time, St. Maximus recognized the right of a true Tsar to lead Christian society, calling him "an animate image of the Heavenly King" (quoted in Sergius Fomin, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem (Russia before the Second Coming)*, Sergiev Posad, 1993, p. 95 (in Russian)).

<sup>126</sup> See V.N. Trostnikov, "Tragedia Ivana Groznogo" ("The Tragedy of Ivan the Terrible"), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie (Russian Regeneration)*, 1980 (IV), N 12, pp. 90-107 (in Russian); Ian Grey, *Ivan the Terrible*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1964.

to the rank of an autocephalous patriarchate (the fifth in seniority), thereby increasing her authority vis-a-vis the Tsar.<sup>127</sup>

Jeremiah was one of the outstanding hierarchs of this period of the Church's history, one of the few who could justly be said to be ecumenical in his vision and his activities. In 1583, in a Pan-Orthodox Council which included two other patriarchs, he had anathematized the new calendar which Pope Gregory XIII had introduced in the West, and this anathema was confirmed by two further Pan-Orthodox Councils in 1587 and 1593. Later, he politely but firmly rejected the confession of the Lutheran Church in a dialogue with Augsburg. And shortly after his trip to Moscow he made an important tour of the beleaguered Orthodox in the Western Russian lands, ordaining bishops and blessing the lay brotherhoods. Now he confirmed the doctrine of the Moscow as the Third Rome, proclaiming that the Tsar was "Christian Emperor for all Christians in the whole world".

At the same time, however, he made Moscow only the fifth in seniority, after the four Greek patriarchates. This was to prove a prudent reservation, for in the century that followed, the Poles briefly conquered Moscow, necessitating the continued supervision of the Western and Southern Russian Orthodox by Constantinople. Indeed, in the Time of Troubles which followed the death of Tsar Theodore, Russia very nearly lost her identity as an Orthodox nation. The ambitions of Catholic Poland, the rebellions of the Cossacks and other groups, and the opportunistic intervention of Sweden, combined to put a Catholic Tsar (the so-called "false Demetrius") in the Kremlin and Jesuit priests in the Kremlin cathedrals. The national resistance to the Poles was led from his prison cell in the Kremlin by the heroic Patriarch Hermogenes (he was starved to death there in 1612), and by the monks of the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius monastery near Moscow. Through their unceasing efforts, and encouraged by miraculous appearances of St. Sergius of Radonezh and the grace of the wonder-working Kazan icon of the Mother of God, an army of national liberation was eventually organized by a prince, Pozharsky, and a butcher, Minin, from the eastern town of Nizhni-Novgorod. This army expelled the Poles; and in 1613 a zemsky sobor (council of the land) representing the whole Russian land elected Michael Romanov, the son of Metropolitan Philaret, as Tsar. In recognition of the fact that it was largely their faithlessness to tsarist authority that had led to the Time of Troubles, the delegates at this council swore eternal loyalty to Michael Romanov and his descendants, calling a curse upon themselves if they should ever break this oath.<sup>128</sup>

There followed a period of steady national recovery. The Western and Southern lands occupied by Poland were gradually won back. After his return from Polish

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<sup>127</sup> See Kartashev, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-46, and the life of St. Job, first patriarch of Moscow, in *Moskovskij Paterik (A Moscow Patericon)*, Moscow: Stolitsa, 1991, pp. 110-113 (in Russian).

<sup>128</sup> See Kartashev, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-219; Archbishop Seraphim Sobolev, *Russkaia Ideologia (The Russian Ideology)*, Saint Petersburg: Suvorina, 1992, chapter 7 (in Russian).

captivity, Metropolitan Philaret was elected patriarch; and the father-and-son relationship of patriarch and tsar symbolized the austere, fortress-like mentality of Muscovy in those years, with the defence of the Church and the Orthodox Faith against Rome the first priority.

### *The Old Ritualist Schism*

The beginnings of the tragedy of the Old Ritualists lay in the arrival in Moscow of some educated monks from the south of Russia. They pointed to the existence of several differences between the Muscovite service books and those employed in the Greek Church. These differences concerned such matters as how the word "Jesus" was to be spelt, whether two or three "alleluias" should be chanted in the Divine services, whether the sign of the Cross should be made with two or three fingers, etc.

The Muscovites had difficulty in accepting these criticisms. They suspected that the southerners were tainted with Latinism through their long subjection to Polish rule, and were therefore unwilling to bow unquestioningly to their superior knowledge. Moreover, beneath the issue of ritual differences between the Greek and Russian Churches lay a deeper principle, that of the source of authority in the Orthodox Church as a whole. The Greeks argued that, since Orthodoxy came to Russia and the other Orthodox nations from the Greeks, the criterion of correctness should be the practices of the Greek Church. The Muscovites, however, argued that the Greeks had betrayed the faith at the council of Florence, and that the pupils might have remained more faithful over the years to the teaching they had received than their original teachers.

At this point Patriarch Nikon began to play an important part in the controversy. Not that the issue of the service-books was of paramount importance to him: his primary concern was to restore the balance of power between Church and State which had tilted towards the State, and in particular to repeal the hated Monastirskij Prikaz of 1649, which had removed control of much of the economic life and administration of the monasteries from the Church to the State. Also, if Moscow was to be the Third Rome and the protector of all Orthodox Christians, it was necessary that the faith and practice of the Moscow patriarchate should be in harmony with the faith and practice of the Orthodox Church as a whole, especially now that the Ukraine and Belarus, which had been under the jurisdiction of Constantinople and employed Greek practices, were again coming under the dominion of Muscovy and the Moscow Patriarchate. That is why Nikon supported the reform of the service-books to bring them into line with the practices of the Greek Church. Since the Tsar, in accordance with the Grecophile traditions of the Russian princes, also supported the reforms, the Patriarch went ahead with vigour.

Soon opposition began to form against the reforms. The problem was, not only that a large part of the Russian aristocracy, clergy and people were suspicious of the Greeks, as we have seen, and looked upon them as of doubtful Orthodoxy, but that the practices of the Russian Church had been sanctified and confirmed, under pain

of anathema and excommunication, by the famous Stoglav council of the Russian Church in 1551. Relying on this council, therefore, the opposition condemned the proposed corrections to the service-books as treacherous and heretical.

The problem was further compounded by the doubtful methodology of the reforms, which did not take into account the fact that the newest Kievan and Greek books (many of which were printed on Latin presses in Venice) were themselves not in conformity with the most ancient manuscripts of both Greek and Slavonic origin. However, if the matter had been left to Nikon alone, there would probably have been no schism. He shared the opinion of the Patriarch of Constantinople, who wrote that differences in ritual were tolerable so long as the dogmas of the Faith are held in common. He was quite willing, as Fr. Andrew Phillips writes, "for those who did not wish to accept modifications to Russian Church ritual, to bring it into line with the practices of the rest of the Orthodox Church, to continue to use their 'old' rites. He was a man of the people and well understood the desire of the simple to keep their former ways. He required only one thing, that those who kept the 'old' rites remain in obedience and unity with the rest of the Church. Metropolitan Macarius writes that if Nikon had continued to be Patriarch, there would never have been a schism."<sup>129</sup>

But it was not to be. The Tsar was growing increasingly independent of the Patriarch, and the nobles intrigued against him - in spite of the fact that they had all sworn obedience to him at the beginning of his tenure. Deprived of support from the State, Nikon withdrew to his monastery of New Jerusalem. This move was taken by the Tsar and the nobles to mean his final resignation from Church affairs. So when Nikon began to protest against moves made by his deputy on the patriarchal throne, and especially when he began to attack the Tsar for interfering in the Church's affairs, his enemies portrayed him as a dangerous rebel against both Church and State.

Since the Russian Church was now an autocephalous patriarchate, she could have acted against Nikon on her own. But at this point the Tsar, in his efforts to gain greater support for his policies, made a fatal mistake. He invited three Greek hierarchs who were in Moscow at the time on alms-raising missions - two retired patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, and the defrocked crypto-papist Paisius Ligarides, former metropolitan of Gaza - to participate in the councils of the Russian Church.

During the course of the next few years, these three hierarchs, by dint of bluff, skilful diplomacy and plain forgery, succeeded in gaining such an ascendancy over the Tsar, the nobles and the submissive Russian hierarchy that - in spite of the opposition of the patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem - both the Grecophile Nikon was reduced to the rank of a simple monk on the basis of a mixture of true and patently false charges (this decision was reversed by the Eastern patriarchs in 1682), and the Grecophobe Old Ritualists had their rite anathematized. This injured

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<sup>129</sup> Phillips, "Patriarch Nikon and the New Jerusalem", in *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, English Orthodox Trust, 1995, p. 76.

the long-term interests of the Greek, no less than the Russian Churches; for only a strong and united Russia could hope to fulfil the mission of the Third Rome which Patriarch Jeremiah II had entrusted to her, and free the Greek and Balkan lands from the Turkish yoke. The only good to result from these councils was the suspension of the Monastirskij Prikaz - whereby one of Nikon's most persistent aims was realized after his own downfall.

The worst consequence was that the delicate symphony between Church and State was badly damaged, and the State now gained the ascendancy to the detriment of Holy Russia. In the next century Alexis' successor, Peter the Great, abolished the patriarchate and reduced the Church to a department of the State, and then Catherine the Great decimated the monasteries and confiscated their estates. Meanwhile the Old Ritualist schism continues to the present day, in spite of concessions to the Old Rite made in 1801 (the edinoverie) and the annulment of the anathemas against it in 1971...

There has been much idealisation of the Old Ritualist schism, as if the Old Believers represented the true old piety of Holy Russia which the "Niconians" destroyed. But this was not the opinion of the great Russian saints who opposed the schism, such as Demetrius of Rostov, Metrophanes of Voronezh and Seraphim of Sarov. The fact is that the Old Ritualists represented a dangerously pharisaical and nationalist stream which, if allowed to triumph, might well have torn the Russian Church away from the Ecumenical Church altogether.<sup>130</sup> Their fanatical attachment to the letter of the law (which they in case distorted) led to the loss of the Spirit that gives life; and, like the Jews, they became the enemies of lawful political authority and the revolutionary forerunners of the Bolsheviks.

This is not to excuse the coercive methods used against the Old Ritualists - although the violence was initiated by the State rather than the Church. And it is true that, having rejected the nationalist temptation of the Old Ritualists, the Russian Church showed herself less resolute in rejecting the opposite, internationalist temptation 250 years later. But that grace and truth remained with the official Church at this time, and not with the Old Ritualists, there can be no doubt.

### *The Russian Synodal Church*

Between the council of 1667 and the death of Patriarch Adrian in 1700, the Moscow Patriarchate was at the height of its power. With the weakening of Poland and the increase in strength of the generally pro-Muscovite Cossacks under Hetman Bogdan Khmel'nitsky, large areas of Belorussia and the Ukraine, including Kiev,

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<sup>130</sup> The nationalist spirit of the schism is illustrated by one of the letters that Archpriest Avvakum, perhaps the most articulate and educated of the schismatics, wrote from his prison cell to Tsar Alexis: "Say in good Russian 'Lord have mercy on me'. Leave all those Kyrie Eleisons to the Greeks: that's their language, spit on them! You are Russian, Alexei, not Greek. Speak your mother tongue and be not ashamed of it, either in church or at home!" See Michael Cherniavsky, "The Old Believers and the New Religion", *Slavic Review*, vol. 25, 1966, pp. 27-33.



were freed from Latin control, which could only be joyful news for the native Orthodox population who had suffered so much from the Polish-Jesuit yoke. Moreover, the liberated areas were returned to the jurisdiction of the Russian Church in 1686. This meant that most of the Russian lands were now, for the first time for centuries, united under a single, independent Russian State and Church. The Russian national Church had been restored to almost its original dimensions.

But there were also danger-signals. The Old Ritualists schism, far from abating, took a newly militant turn in the form of mass suicides at the approach of government troops (by 1690, 20,000 are reported to have burned themselves to death). Again, another heretical current was approaching from the West and had already influenced the upper levels of Muscovite society: the secularist, laicizing mentality of the Protestant Reformation. And one of those most influenced by this current of thought was none other than the Tsar himself, Peter the Great.

Peter's reforms were undoubtedly a great shock to Russia and the Church. Their essence, which was borrowed from the Protestant monarchies of North-West Europe, consisted in making the whole life of the country, including the Church, subordinate to the single will of the Tsar. Thus the Church was deprived of her head, the patriarch, and ruled, formally at any rate, for the next two centuries by lay officials. The nobility were chained to public service in the bureaucracy or the army; the peasants - to the land. And the whole country was subjected, by force at times, to the cultural, scientific and educational influence of the West.

This transformation was symbolized especially by the building, at great cost in human lives, of a new capital at St. Petersburg. Situated at the extreme western end of the vast empire as Peter's 'window to the West', this extraordinary city was largely built by Italian architects on the model of Amsterdam, peopled by shaven and pomaded courtiers who spoke more French than Russian, and ruled, from the middle of the eighteenth century on, by monarchs of mainly German origin. Western technological innovations undoubtedly benefited the country from an economic and military point of view, and in the eighteenth century Russia became a great power, waging successful campaigns against the Swedes, the Poles and the Turks. But Peter's reforms divided the country socially and weakened it spiritually.

Andrew Bessmertny writes: "A violent and superficial Europeanisation - that was the chief distinguishing feature of 'the age of Enlightenment' in Russia, with its relativism bordering on atheism, 'Voltaireanism' and 'Freemasonry', its aggressive secularist policy in relation to the Church and its degrading of the latter to the level of a government department. Russia was being more and more conformed to the external norms of western civilization, but by what methods? The empress's correspondence with Voltaire and Diderot did not stop her from enserfing the Ukrainian peasantry, on the one hand, and on the other, allowing herself to be called 'the head of the Church'. Western religious tolerance was 'transplanted' with weird effect onto Russian soil; Lutheran and Calvinist catecheses were printed..., but Metropolitan Stephen Yavorsky's apologetic book *The Stone of Faith* was forbidden

by the Tsar 'for reasons of religious tolerance', since it contained a polemic with the Protestants, and they could be offended... Under Peter a fine for the giving of alms (from 5 to 10 roubles) was introduced, together with corporal punishments followed by cutting out of the nostrils and exile to the galleys 'for the proclamation of visions and miracles. In 1723 a decree forbidding the tonsuring of monks was issued, with the result that by 1740 Russian monasticism consisted of doddering old men, while the founder of eldership, St. Paisius Velichkovsky, was forced to emigrate to Moldavia. Moreover, in the monasteries they introduced a ban on paper and ink - so as to deprive the traditional centres of book-learning and scholarship of their significance. Processions through the streets with icons and holy water were also banned (almost until the legislation of 1729)! At the same time, there appeared... the government ban on Orthodox transferring to other confessions of faith.

"In Biron's time hundred of clergy were tonsured, whipped and exiled, and they did the same with protesting bishops - and there were quite a few of those. 6557 priests were forced into military service, as a consequence of which in only four northern dioceses 182 churches remained without clergy or readers. St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, a zealous... missionary and theological writer, was persecuted all his life. Catherine II dealt so cruelly with Metropolitan Arsenius Matseyevich, who was tortured in prison, that for a long time the desire of the Russian hierarchs to criticize the higher authorities was knocked out of them".<sup>131</sup>

And yet, according to the historian Kartashev, this seeming triumph of eighteenth-century Western culture over the last independent Orthodox State turned, by a great mystery of Divine Providence, into one of the great triumphs of Orthodoxy. For in the two centuries that followed Peter's reforms, the Russian Empire, having absorbed what was good in Western culture (and a lot of what was bad, too, as we shall see), proceeded to extend the saving influence of the Orthodox Faith more widely and deeply over the peoples of the earth than any other Church in Orthodox history, including that of the Byzantine Empire at its greatest extent. Indeed, we may say that it was precisely in the 'enslaved' Petersburg-Synodal, and not the 'free' Moscow-Patriarchal period of her history, that Russia fulfilled her historical mission as the Third Rome. For while her armies liberated all the formerly Orthodox lands from the Neva to the Vistula and the Eastern Danube, and protected the Orthodox still remaining under the Turkish yoke from the worst excesses of the infidels, her Church, as well as consolidating the Christianisation of the vast area of European Russia, sent important and fruitful missions to the Caucasus, Persia and Central Asia, Siberia, Japan, Korea and Alaska.

Moreover, even if the poison of Western rationalism finally reaped its bitterly destructive harvest in the revolution, nineteenth-century Russian writers and artists, such as Pushkin, Gogol and Mussorgsky, Tiutchev, Repin and Dostoyevsky had succeeded in creating a culture that was Western in form but more Orthodox than

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<sup>131</sup> Bessmertny, "Natsionalizm i Universalizm v russkom religioznom soznanii" ("Nationalism and Universalism in the Russian Religious Consciousness"), in *Na puti k svobode sovesti (On the Path to Freedom of Conscience)*, Moscow: Progress, 1989, p. 136 (in Russian).

Western in spirit and which might well have helped to form a bridge between the Western world and Orthodoxy.<sup>132</sup>

And this miracle was achieved in the face of the almost continual opposition of the Western and Muslim powers. Thus from the reign of Peter to that of Alexander I, Russia faced, and triumphed over, mortal threats from Sweden, Poland, Germany, Turkey and the France of Napoleon. In the nineteenth century, again, Russia, the so-called "prison of the nations", was the initiator and most steadfast bulwark of the "Sacred Alliance" of the major continental powers against the common enemy of civilized Europe, the Socialist revolution.

In spite of this, the "Christian" countries of France and England allied themselves with infidel Turkey to invade Orthodox Russia in the Crimean war, and continued to impede (especially at the Treaty of Berlin in 1878) the attempts of Russia to free the Orthodox Balkan nations from the increasingly savage Turkish yoke. And in 1914 Russia again hurled her troops into war to defend Orthodox Serbia, on the one hand, from the invasion of Catholic Austro-Hungary, and her ally France, on the other, from the invasion of Protestant Germany.

There can be little doubt that the attack of the ill-prepared Russian armies in Eastern Prussia in August, 1914 diverted vital German armies from the assault on Paris. Solzhenitsyn has argued that Russia's intervention in that war was the fatal mistake which made possible the revolution.<sup>133</sup>

Be that as it may, it was a fittingly self-sacrificial end to Orthodox Russia's centuries-old, and still largely unrecognized, defence of Western Europe against the Mongol khans and the Turkish sultans, the French grenadiers and the German junkers - and the Socialist revolutionaries...

### *The Roots of Socialism*

However, neither the piety of her monastics nor the zeal of her missionaries, neither the endurance of her soldiers nor the imagination of her artists, was able to save Russia from the invasion of the corrosive spirit of Western rationalism, liberalism and pseudo-mysticism. This entered Russia in two waves. The first, eighteenth-century wave took the form mainly of Voltaireanism and Freemasonry, and was encouraged especially by Catherine the Great - until she took fright at their offspring, the French revolution, and turned against them.

However, the Russian armies which entered Paris in 1814 brought back with them a second dose of this malignant virus; and in spite of a change of heart on the part of the westernizing Alexander I (who probably ended his life as a secret hermit in

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<sup>132</sup> Kartashev, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-19.

<sup>133</sup> See his great novel, *Krasnoe Koleso (The Red Wheel)*, Paris: YMCA Press (in Russian), and *Le "problem russe" a la fin du XXe siecle (The "Russian Problem" at the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century)*, Fayard, 1994 (in French).

Siberia<sup>134</sup>), the virus was allowed to spread and gave birth to the Decembrist rebellion of December, 1825 - the first ideologically motivated rebellion in Russian history (as opposed to the more elemental uprisings of Stenka Razin and Pugachev).

Tsar Alexander's successor, Nicholas I, reacted to the rebellion by executing six of the leading revolutionaries, exiling some of the others, and imposing censorship controls on literature and art. And he attempted to rally society around the slogan "Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Patriotism". But society was already gathering around an opposite set of principles which derived from the "Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood" of the French revolution and which might be reconstructed as "Naturalism, Socialism and Internationalism".

The first of these was defined with typically Russian explicitness by Petrashevsky, the one-time mentor of Dostoyevsky, thus: "[Naturalism] means a science which holds that by thought alone, without the help of tradition, revelation, or divine intervention, man can achieve in real life a state of permanent happiness through the total and independent development of all his natural faculties. In the lower phases of its evolution, naturalism considers the appearance of the divine element in positive religions to be a falsehood, the result of human rather than divine action. In its further evolution, this science - having absorbed pantheism and materialism - conceives divinity as the supreme and all-embracing expression of human understanding, moves towards atheism, and finally becomes transformed into anthropotheism - the science that proclaims that the only supreme being is man himself as a part of nature. At this stage of its rational evolution, naturalism considers the universal fact of the recognition of God in positive religions to be a result of man's deification of his own personality and the universal laws of his intellect; it considers all religions that reflected the historical evolution of mankind to be a gradual preparation for anthropotheism, or - in other words - total self-knowledge and awareness of the vital laws of nature."<sup>135</sup>

This was the new religion, based on Western rationalism, materialism and evolutionism. Against this, there stood up a series of outstanding philosophers and writers. Prominent among them were the Slavophiles Kireyevsky, Khomiakov, Tiutchev and Dostoyevsky, who defended the unique value of Russian traditions, the Russian autocracy, and, at the base of and underlying everything else, Russian Orthodoxy.

They pointed to the roots of contemporary Western thought in Roman Catholic rationalism; and Dostoyevsky in particular demonstrated the kinship between Romanism and Socialism - which, he prophesied, would soon lead the whole of Europe to a terrible catastrophe: "Europe is on the eve of a general and dreadful collapse. The ant-hill which has been long in the process of construction without the

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<sup>134</sup> See *Tainstoennij Starets Feodor Kuzmich v Sibiri i Imperator Alexandr I (The Mysterious Elder Theodore Kuzmich and Alexander I)*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1972 (in Russian).

<sup>135</sup> Petrashevsky, quoted in Andrej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, pp. 157-58.

Church and Christ (since the Church, having dimmed its ideal, long ago and everywhere reincarnated itself in the state), with a moral principle shaken loose from its foundation, with everything general and absolute lost - this ant-hill, I say, is utterly undermined. The fourth estate is coming, it knocks at the door, and breaks into it, and if it is not opened to it, it will break the door. The fourth estate cares nothing for the former ideals; it rejects every existing law. It will make no compromises, no concessions; buttresses will not save the edifice. Concessions only provoke, but the fourth estate wants everything. There will come to pass something wholly unsuspected. All these parliamentarisms, all civic theories professed at present, all accumulated riches, banks, sciences, Jews - all these will instantly perish without leaving a trace - save the Jews, who even then will find their way out, so that this work will even be to their advantage."<sup>136</sup>

Dostoyevsky's intuitions were confirmed by the finest churchmen of the age - St. Seraphim of Sarov, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, Bishop Theophan the Recluse, the Optina Elder Ambrose and, on the eve of the revolution itself, the great wonderworker St. John of Kronstadt. These men pointed out that according to St. Paul, the Antichrist will come when "he that restraineth" is removed (II Thessalonians 2.7) - that is, the Orthodox Russian Tsar. And so the removal of the Tsar, they prophesied, would lead to chaos and bloodshed on an unparalleled scale.<sup>137</sup>

But what form would this Antichrist take? In the year 1900 the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev had a remarkable intuition. He felt that the Antichrist would appear first in a collective form, and that the Church would be forced to flee from him into the catacombs, as in the Roman period. Only five years later, in the abortive revolution of 1905, the name of this collective Antichrist was revealed. It was - Soviet power...

Again, only four years later, in 1909, 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

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<sup>136</sup> Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Haslemere: Ianmead, 1984, p. 1003.

<sup>137</sup> See especially the books by Sergius Nilus, *Velikoe v Malom (Great Things in Small)* and *Sviatynya pod Spudom (Holy Things under a Bushel)* (Sergiev Posad, 1911), Fr. John Sursky, *Otets Ioann Kronshtadtskij (Father John of Kronstadt)* (Belgrade, 1941) and Sergius Fomin, op. cit. (all in Russian).

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>138</sup>

As for the doctrine behind Soviet power, this was summed up by another philosopher, Simeon Ludwigovich Frank, as follows: "Socialism is at the same time the culmination and the overthrow of liberal democracy. It is ruled by the same basic motive that rules the whole modern era: to make man and mankind the true master of his life, to present him with the possibility of ordering his own destiny on his own authority... Socialism is the last stride in the great rebellion of mankind and at the same time the result of its total exhaustion - the complete spiritual impoverishment of the prodigal son in the long centuries of his wandering far from his father's home and wealth."<sup>139</sup>

### *The Rise of Balkan Nationalism*

In Greece and the Balkans the ideas of the French revolution found expression in national liberation movements, which succeeded in liberating a large part of the Greek lands in Europe from the Turkish yoke, but also split the Greek Church in a schism which was not healed until 1852. The opposing views with regard to the revolution were especially incarnate in two hierarchs who came from the same village of Dhimitsana in the Peloponnese: the Hieromartyr Patriarch Gregory V of Constantinople, and Metropolitan Germanus of Old Patras. When Alexander Ypsilantis raised the standard of revolt by crossing from Russia into Turkish-occupied Romania with a small band of Greeks in 1821, a simultaneous rebellion took place in the Peloponnese under the leadership of Metropolitan Germanos and eight other bishops. Ypsilantis' force was soon crushed, for it was repudiated by both the Russian Tsar and the Romanian peasants. But Germanos' campaign prospered, in spite of the deaths of five of the bishops in prison; and soon the south of Greece and the islands of Hydra, Spetsae and Poros were in Greek hands.

At this point the frightened Turks put pressure on Patriarch Gregory and his Synod to anathematize the insurgents. They obeyed. Some have argued that the patriarch secretly repudiated this anathema and sympathized with the insurgents; which is why the Turks, suspecting him of treachery, hanged him on April 10.

However, the evidence does not support this view. The patriarch had always refused to join the philiki hetairia, the secret society to which most of the insurgents (including Metropolitan Germanus) belonged. Moreover, the righteousness of his

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<sup>138</sup> Archimandrite Joseph, *Kormchij*, 23 May, 1909; in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 413.

<sup>139</sup> Frank, "Religioznoe-Istoricheskoe Znachenie Russkoj Revoliutsii" ("The Religious-Historical Significance of the Russian Revolution"), *Po Tu Storonu i Po Pravu (On The Other Side and on The Right)*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1972 (in Russian).

character precludes the possibility that he could have been plotting against a government to which he had sworn allegiance and for which he prayed in the Divine Liturgy.

The true attitude of the Church to the revolution had been expressed in a work called *Paternal Teaching* which appeared in Constantinople in the year of the French revolution 1789, and which, according to Charles Frazee, "was signed by Anthimus of Jerusalem but was probably the work of the later Patriarch Gregory V. The document is a polemic against revolutionary ideas, calling on the Christians 'to note how brilliantly our Lord, infinite in mercy and all-wise, protects intact the holy and Orthodox Faith of the devout, and preserves all things'. It warns that the devil is constantly at work raising up evil plans; among them is the idea of liberty, which appears to be so good, but is only there to deceive the people. The document points out that [the struggle for] political freedom is contrary to the Scriptural command to obey authority, that it results in the impoverishment of the people, in murder and robbery. The sultan is the protector of Christian life in the Ottoman Empire; to oppose him is to oppose God."<sup>140</sup>

Certainly, the Greeks had to pay a heavy price for the political freedom they gained. After the martyrdom of Patriarch Gregory (whose body was washed ashore in Odessa, and given a splendid State funeral by the Russian Church), the Turks ran amok in Constantinople, killing many Greeks and causing heavy damage to the churches; and there were further pogroms in Smyrna, Adrianople, Crete and especially Chios, which had been occupied by the revolutionaries and where in reprisal tens of thousands were killed or sold into slavery. When the new patriarch, Eugenios, again anathematized the insurgents, twenty-eight bishops and almost a thousand priests in free Greece in turn anathematized the patriarch, calling him a Judas and a wolf in sheep's clothing, and ceasing to commemorate him in the Liturgy. As for the State of Greece, it "looked to the west," writes Charles Frazee, "the west of the American and French Revolutions, rather than to the old idea of an Orthodox community as it had functioned under the Ottomans. The emotions of the times did not let men see it; Orthodoxy and Greek nationality were still identified, but the winds were blowing against the dominant position of the Church in the life of the individual and the nation..."<sup>141</sup>

And so, forgetting the lessons of the council of Florence four hundred years earlier, the new State and Church entered into negotiations with the Pope for help against the Turks. Metropolitan Germanus was even empowered to speak concerning the possibility of a reunion of the Churches. However, it was the Pope who drew back at this point, pressurized by the other western States which considered the sultan to be a legitimate monarch. The western powers helped Greece again when, in 1827, an Allied fleet under a British admiral destroyed the Turkish-

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<sup>140</sup> Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece 1821-1853*, Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 8. On St. Gregory, see *New Martyrs of the Turkish Yoke*, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-157; *Orthodox Life*, 1978, no. 2, pp. 3-26.

<sup>141</sup> Frazee, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

Egyptian fleet at Navarino. But after the assassination of the president of Greece, Count Kapodistrias, in 1832, the country descended further into poverty and near civil war.

Then, in 1833, the western powers appointed a Catholic prince, Otto of Bavaria, as king of Greece, with three regents until he came of age, the most important being the Protestant George von Maurer. Maurer proceeded to work out a constitution for the country, which proposed autocephaly for the Church under a Synod of bishops, and the subordination of the Synod to the State on the model of the Bavarian and Russian constitutions, to the extent that "no decision of the Synod could be published or carried into execution without the permission of the government having been obtained". In spite of the protests of the patriarch of Constantinople and the tsar of Russia, and the walk-out of the archbishops of Rethymnon and Adrianople, this constitution was ratified by the signatures of thirty-six bishops on July 26, 1833.

The Greek Church therefore exchanged the admittedly uncanonical position of the patriarchate of Constantinople under Turkish rule for the even less canonical position of a Synod unauthorized by the patriarch and under the control of a Catholic king and a Protestant constitution! In addition to this, all monasteries with fewer than six monks were dissolved, and heavy taxes imposed on the remaining monasteries. And very little money was given to a Church which had lost six to seven thousand clergy in the war, and whose remaining clergy had an abysmally low standard of education.

In spite of this, Divine grace worked to transform the situation from within, as it had in Russia. Thus in 1839 the Synod showed independence in forbidding marriages between Orthodox and heterodox; and gradually, within the Synod and outside, support for reunion with the patriarchate grew stronger. Then, in 1843, a bloodless coup forced the king to dismiss his Bavarian aides and summon a National Assembly to draw up a constitution in which the indissoluble unity of the Greek Church with Constantinople was declared. Then, in 1848, an encyclical issued by Pope Pius IX calling on the Greeks to "return at last to the flock of Christ" was fiercely attacked by Patriarch Anthimus. Finally, on June 29, 1851, a Synodal Tomos was read in Constantinople, which re-established relations between the now officially autocephalous Church of Greece and the other eastern patriarchates, while at the same time demanding that the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece should be independent of all secular intervention - which demand, however, was only partially met when the union was legitimized by the Greek Assembly in the following year.<sup>142</sup>

However, even while this major wound in the Church caused by the spirit of nationalism was being healed, other wounds inflicted by the same spirit were being opened, fed by the "Great Idea" of the restoration of the Byzantine Empire. Thus, on

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<sup>142</sup> Frazee, *op. cit.*, chs. 7 and 8. On this period of Greek Church history, see the series of articles being published in *Agios Agathangelos Esfigmenites (St. Agathangelos of Esphigmenou)* under the title "To atheon dogma tou oikoumenismou Prodromos tou Antikhristou" (in Greek).



the one hand, the idea of the liberation of all the Greek lands from the Turkish yoke was pursued with suicidal mania.<sup>143</sup> And on the other hand, the non-Greek lands were subjected to a policy of hellenization whereby native hierarchies were repressed, and Greek metropolitans celebrating the Liturgy only in Greek were imposed on non-Greek-speaking Arabic, Slavic and Romanian populations.

This process had already begun in the eighteenth century, when the increasing power of Greek Phanariote merchants (especially in Romania, where the voyevodes were Greek princes under Turkish sovereignty), and the privileged position of the Constantinopolitan patriarch in the Turkish millet system of government, spread Greek influence throughout the Balkans. Thus in September, 1766, the Serbian patriarchate of Pec was suppressed, and in January 1767 the Bulgarian Church was absorbed with the forced retirement of the archbishop of Ochrid. However, the ability of the Constantinopolitan patriarchate to impose its will in this way was limited, during the next century, by two factors: the gradual liberation of these non-Greek areas from Turkish rule, and the influence of the Russian Church.

These limitations can most clearly be seen in the controversial question of the Bulgarian schism. Already in 1860, before the liberation of their country by the Russian armies in 1877-78, the Bulgars had succeeded in obtaining the status of a millet, and therefore the right to have an autocephalous Church independent of the patriarch of Constantinople. However, not content with having an autocephalous Church for the territory of Bulgaria, in 1870 the Bulgars, with the active cooperation of the Turkish government, set up a bishop in Constantinople with the title of Exarch, who was to have jurisdiction over all the Bulgars in Turkey itself. This undoubtedly uncanonical act was resisted with fury by Patriarch Anthimus VI and his Synod, who in 1872 excommunicated the Bulgarian exarch and all those with him, branding them as schismatics and heretics, their heresy being the newly-defined one of "phyletism", that is, nationalism, the invasion of the national principle into the affairs of the Ecumenical Church. Hierarchs of the Antiochian and Alexandrian patriarchates were present at this council, but Patriarch Cyril of Jerusalem refused to sign its decision, and the Slavic and Romanian Churches remained in communion with the Bulgars.

Now such a condemnation of nationalism was certainly timely. For the Bulgarians' attempts to achieve ecclesiastical independence from Constantinople had given rise to another danger - the Vatican's attempt to introduce a uniate movement into Bulgaria.<sup>144</sup> However, for many the conciliar condemnation of nationalism carried little weight because it came from the patriarchate which they considered the first sinner in this respect. The conflict was therefore not resolved, although the mediation of the Russian Church, which remained in communion with both sides,

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<sup>143</sup> As when Abbot Gabriel of the monastery of Arkadiou in Crete blew himself and nearly a thousand other Greeks up in 1866 rather than surrender to the Turks.

<sup>144</sup> This attempt was foiled by enlightened hierarchs such as Clement of Trnovo. See Bishop Photius of Triaditsa, "Metropolitan Clement of Trnovo", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 46, no. 6, November-December, 1996, pp. 21-23.

somewhat softened it. The Churches of Constantinople and Bulgaria remained out of communion until 1945, when Constantinople accepted the Bulgarian patriarchate's autocephaly.<sup>145</sup>

We see, then, that in the nineteenth century national feeling was threatening to divide and rule the Church in the Balkans, and that the "Ecumenical" Patriarchate was herself a threat to the ecumenical character of the Church. As the famous theologian Nicholas Glubokovsky wrote in 1914: "Greek nationalism historically merged with Orthodoxy and protected it by its own self-preservation, while it in its turn found a spiritual basis for its own distinctiveness. Orthodoxy and Hellenism were united in a close mutuality, which is why the first began to be qualified by the second. And Christian Hellenism realized and developed this union precisely in a nationalist spirit. The religious aspect was a factor in national strivings and was subjected to it, and it was not only the Phanariots [the inhabitants of Greek Constantinople] who made it serve pan-hellenic dreams. These dreams were entwined into the religious, Orthodox element and gave it its colouring, enduing the Byzantine patriarch with the status and rights of "ethnarch" for all the Christian peoples of the East, and revering him as the living and animated image of Christ (Matthew Blastaris, in his 14th century *Syntagma*, 8). As a result, the whole superiority of the spiritual-Christian element belonged to Hellenism, and could be apprehended by others only through Hellenism. In this respect the enlightened Grigorios Byzantios (or Byzantijsky, born in Constantinople, metropolitan of Chios from 1860, of Heraklion in 1888) categorically declared that 'the mission of Hellenism is divine and universal'. From this source come the age-old and unceasing claims of Hellenism to exclusive leadership in Orthodoxy, as its possessor and distributor. According to the words of the first reply (in May, 1576) to the Tübingen theologians of the Constantinopolitan patriarch Jeremiah II (+1595), who spoke in the capacity of 'successor of Christ' (introduction), the Greek 'holy Church of God is the mother of the Churches, and, by the grace of God, she holds the first place in knowledge. She boasts without reproach in the purity of her apostolic and patristic decrees, and, while being new, is old in Orthodoxy, and is placed at the head', which is why 'every Christian church must celebrate the Liturgy exactly as she [the Greco-Constantinopolitan Church] does' (chapter 13). Constantinople always displayed tendencies towards Church absolutism in Orthodoxy and was by no means well-disposed towards the development of autonomous national Churches, having difficulty in recognising them even in their hierarchical equality. Byzantine-Constantinopolitan Hellenism has done nothing to strengthen national Christian distinctiveness in the Eastern patriarchates and has defended its own governmental-hierarchical hegemony by all means, fighting against the national independence of Damascus (Antioch) and Jerusalem. At the end of the 16th century Constantinople

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<sup>145</sup> See K. Dinkov, *Istoria na B'lgarskata Ts'rkva (A History of the Bulgarian Church)*, Vratsa, 1953, pp. 80-96; D. Kosev, "Bor'ba za samostoiatel'na natsionalna tserkva" ("The Struggle for an Independent National Church"), in *Istoria na B'lgaria (A History of Bulgaria)*, Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1987, vol. 6, pp. 124-188 (in Bulgarian); Fr. German Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, "Novij podkhod k greko-bolgarskomu raskolu 1872 goda" ("A New Approach to the Greek-Bulgarian Schism of 18712"), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie (Russian Regeneration)*, 1987 (I), pp. 193-200 (in Russian).

by no means fully accepted the independence of the Russian Church and was not completely reconciled to Greek autocephaly (from the middle of the 19th century), while in relation to the Bulgarian Church they extended their nationalist intolerance to the extent of an ecclesiastical schism, declaring her (in 1872) in all her parts to be 'in schism'. It is a matter of great wonder that the champions of extreme nationalism in the ecclesiastical sphere should then (in 1872) have recognized national-ecclesiastical strivings to be impermissible in others and even labelled them 'phyletism', a new-fangled heresy."<sup>146</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, it was becoming clear that the Ecumenical patriarchate, which had played such a glorious role during the Byzantine Empire, and had continued to lead the Orthodox under the Turkish yoke, was declining in spiritual authority. At the same time, the Greek State continued to pursue its "Great Idea" of the unification of all the Greek lands.

However, the Cretan uprising and the Greco-Turkish war of 1897 ended in disaster for the Greeks, although under pressure from the West the Turks had to cede effective control of Crete. Only when, in 1912, the Greeks joined with the Bulgarians and the Serbs against the Turks did they gain significant success. But this brief unity among the Orthodox nations was shattered when war broke out between them in 1913 for the control of Macedonia. An attack on Greece and Serbia by Bulgaria was met with firm resistance by the other nations, including Turkey. And the war ended in defeat for Bulgaria - and, still more tragically, for the idea of Orthodox Catholicism.

### *On the Eve of the Catastrophe*

On the eve of the First World War, therefore, Orthodox Christendom presented a paradoxical picture. On the one hand, the Muslim yoke, which had extended over almost all the Orthodox in 1453, had been all but broken - and it would be further weakened as a result of the coming War. The Russian Empire was at the height of her power and influence, and all the Orthodox peoples were rapidly increasing in numbers and self-determination. On the other hand, beneath this outer freedom and prosperity, one yoke was being exchanged for another - the yoke of westernism.

Westernism took two, apparently contradictory forms: socialism and nationalism. Thus in Russia, Orthodox were murdering Orthodox in the name of socialism and democracy - concepts having no root in the Tradition of the Orthodox Church. And in Greece and the Balkans, Orthodox were likewise murdering Orthodox in the name of nationalism and self-determination. Moreover, behind these fairly primitive idols of race and politics was looming a more subtle and still more dangerous western import - Ecumenism...

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<sup>146</sup> Glubokovsky, N.N. "Pravoslavie po ego sushchestvu" ("Orthodoxy according to its essence"), in *Tserkov' i Vremia (The Church and Time)*, 1991, pp. 5-6 (in Russian).

All this could not have come at a worse time; for the western nations were moving further and further away from Orthodoxy. Thus in 1854 the Pope proclaimed the new false dogma of the "immaculate conception" of the Virgin Mary from her parents Joachim and Anna, while in 1870 the first Vatican Council proclaimed the infallibility of the Pope, declaring: "The Pope is a divine man and human god... The Pope is the light of faith and reflection of truth." Meanwhile, German Protestantism was losing its faith in the Divinity of Christ and introducing new techniques of "higher textual criticism" which would become a favoured tool of all kinds of heresy in the twentieth century.

Thus the words of the Lord to the Church of Sardis apply also to the Church in 1914: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee..." (Revelation 3.2-3)

## 7. THE CATACOMB CHURCH: THE AGE OF THE ANTICHRIST

*And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write:  
... Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it;  
For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.*  
Revelation 3.7-8.

At present we are living, according to the prophetic witness of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, in the last period of the history of the Church on earth, the age of the Antichrist.

Now recent and contemporary history is the most difficult kind of history, lacking as it does the long hindsight that helps to pick out the critical events and tendencies in the past. However, our analysis of the nature of the Church would be incomplete and lacking an essential dimension if it did not attempt to evaluate that aspect of the Church's reality which the twentieth century has brought to the fore, especially since it is precisely this aspect which it is most essential for contemporary Christians to understand. Moreover, just as, in a classical tragedy, it is the last act of the drama which illuminates and puts into its fitting place every element that has preceded it, so it is the last phase in the history of the Church, as she stands on the edge of eternity waiting for the Coming of Her Divine Bridegroom, which reveals the true significance of all that has gone before.

And what is the truth about the Church which this terrible century has revealed? The truth that without faithfulness to Christ, without the Head that holds the whole Body together, nothing in the Church, neither her hierarchy, nor her kings, nor her elders, nor her temples, nor her theology, nor her art, nor her services, have any value, but can even serve as a snare and a temptation in the way of salvation. This truth has been revealed through the unparalleled destruction of the external Church that has taken place in this century, so that believers have indeed been stripped, at times, of all these things, but have managed to preserve faithfulness and mystical communion with Christ, and therefore the essence of the Church herself. Thus has the premonition of Hieromartyr Damascene, Bishop of Glukhov, been fulfilled: "Perhaps the time has come when the Lord does not wish that the Church should stand as an intermediary between Himself and the believers, but that everyone is called to stand directly before the Lord and himself answer for himself as it was with the forefathers!"<sup>147</sup>

At the same time, the "Catacomb Church" or "True Orthodox Church", as the confessing Church of our time has come to be called, has been faithful to all the traditions of historical Orthodoxy, those traditions which the Protestants tend to dismiss as inessential, "mere externals". She has witnessed to the truth and holiness of all the preceding stages in the history of the Church, including those of the

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<sup>147</sup> Quoted in E.L., *Episkopy-Ispovedniki (Bishop Confessors)*, San Francisco, 1971, p. 92 (in Russian).

Imperial and National Churches. In so doing she has both fulfilled the apostolic command: "Keep the traditions" (II Thessalonians 2.15) and witnessed that only the Church that keeps the traditions is capable of escaping the nets of the Antichrist and riding high above the universal flood of evil of the last times.

### *The Jewish-Russian Revolution*

The twentieth century began in a strikingly significant manner: with the martyrdom, in the capital of the greatest and least christianised of all the pagan empires, China, of 222 Chinese Orthodox Christians.<sup>148</sup> This clearly indicated that the twentieth century was to be not only an age of martyrdom, but also of mission, in which the last parts of the world which had hitherto been deprived of the preaching of the Gospel would be given the opportunity to enter the Christian family of nations, in accordance with the Lord's word: "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come" (Matthew 24.14). And if this ecumenical harvest has as yet only been foreshadowed - by the worldwide mission of the Russian Church Abroad - and not yet fully reaped, we must believe that it will soon take place as a consequence of the unparalleled spilling of martyric blood in our time, in accordance with the saying: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians".

The main source both of the martyrdom and of the mission of the Church in this century has been Russia. The twentieth century has indeed been, both for better and for worse, the Russian century; while the contributions of other national Churches, such as the Greek, the Serbian and the Romanian, have been far from insignificant, nevertheless the fortunes of Orthodoxy as a whole have followed the fortunes of Russia. Thus the fall-out from the Russian revolution has impacted on all the Orthodox Churches; and there can be little doubt that the future of Orthodoxy depends on the ability of the Russian people finally to break free from the paralysing influence of the revolution and revolutionary ways of thinking, and return, in penitence and joy, to the traditions of pre-revolutionary Russia.

But what was the Russian revolution? Much more than a political event. In essence, it was the culmination of a historical process that began with the falling away of the Roman papacy in the eleventh century and which consisted, first, in an attack on the traditional concept of the Church, replacing it with the essentially political concept of an organisation subject in all things to an infallible imperator-pontifex maximus, and then in an attack on the concept of Tradition as the source of truth not only in the Church, but in all branches of knowledge. Thus Papism led to Scholasticism and Humanism, then Protestantism, Scientism, Deism, Materialism, Romanticism, Hegelianism, Darwinism, Marxism, Freudianism, Ecumenism and, most recently, New-Ageism. Underlying this revolution in all its stages was a single antichristian, antitheist, man-centred philosophy which can be summarised as follows:-

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<sup>148</sup> See "The First Chinese Orthodox Martyrs", *The True Vine*, N 8, Winter, 1991, pp. 42-49.

Man is his own master. If there is a God, then he is a God in man's own image, perhaps even of man's own making; and man does not depend on Him to learn the truth, for his own unaided mind is capable of that. The wisdom of the ages is a myth; tradition is a brake on progress. As man is a product of evolution from the lower animals, so his social and religious and political institutions are in a process of constant upward evolution. Therefore there is no such thing as absolute truth, no sacred, unchanging, God-given authority. Everything is in flux, therefore everyone must change. The only unchanging, ineluctable fact is the fact of the revolution - the social revolution, the political revolution, the religious revolution, and above all the scientific revolution upon which all the other revolutions are based. Therefore the only unforgivable sin (if it is not simply a kind of illness, which can be treated by drug-therapy in a psychiatric hospital) is the sin of counter-revolution, the sin of being bigoted, intolerant of change, out-of-date. Everything is permitted - the craziest of beliefs, the most deviant of life-styles - so long as it does not stand in the way of the revolution, that revolution which is making man master of himself and of his environment. But for those who stand in the way of "progress", there will be no mercy; they will be cast onto the rubbish heap of history like the extinct species of Darwinian pre-history. For nothing must stand in the way of man's ascent to godlike status. Just as in physics the anthropic principle "seems to be on the verge of substituting man for God, by hinting that consciousness, unbound by time's arrow, causes creation"<sup>149</sup>, so in life based on the scientific revolution man must substitute himself for God, removing all those constraints associated with the Divine Creator...

After a couple of "trial runs" in the English and French revolutions, the revolution received its most complete incarnation in the Russian revolution of 1917, which at the same time overthrew the primary stronghold of traditional thinking in the world. Just as all the apostate trends of European history from the eleventh century onwards lead up to, and find their culmination in, the Russian revolution, so all world history since 1917 has evolved from it and under its shadow.

Now it is commonly thought that the anti-communist coups of 1989-91 brought this phase of history to a close. But this is a mistake. If some of the economic ideas of the revolution have been discredited, its fundamental concepts - the replacement of the Christian Church by the atheist State, God by the people, Tradition by science, Spirit by matter - remain as firmly entrenched as ever. The Russian revolution was like a nuclear explosion, splitting the elements not only of religious, but also of all cultural and social life; it attempted to destroy the faith, the family, the nation and the individual.<sup>150</sup> And just as the fall-out from a nuclear explosion is felt over a wide area and over a long period of time, so has it been with the fall-out from the Russian revolution. For as the hierarchs of the Russian Church Abroad said in their epistle of October, 1991: "If the results of the Chernobyl catastrophe are still making themselves known in the bodies of the children of the surrounding region, the

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<sup>149</sup> Marek Kohn, "Joyfully back to Church?", *New Statesman and Society*, May 1, 1992, p. 32.

<sup>150</sup> See I. Shafarevich, *Sotsializm kak Yavlenie mirovoj istorii (Socialism as a Phenomenon of World History)*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, and his contributions to A. Solzhenitsyn (ed.) *Iz-Pod Glyb (From under the Rubble)*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1974 (in Russian).

spiritual catastrophe of all Russia will show its effects for a far longer period of time. Just as Chernobyl's radiation will continue for many years to annihilate the lives of the children of our land with its sinister, invisible fire, it is clear that the consequences of the spiritual catastrophe will not quickly depart from us."<sup>151</sup>

Now the Russian revolution has its roots, not only in the European revolutions of the past one thousand years, but also in the Jewish revolution that took place one thousand years before that. This perception is not a manifestation of "anti-semitism", as the West would have it. It is the product of the simple, but basic and incontrovertible fact that the Russian revolution in its initial phase was the work mainly of Jews inspired by a philosophy of history that is in essence Jewish; and that the later revolutionary leaders continued to be motivated by essentially Jewish ideas.

When Abraham left his earthly homeland in search of a promised land in which God alone would be King, world history began a series of violent oscillations between the two poles: Zion and Babylon, the God-Man and the man-god, theocracy and satanocracy.

Two thousand years later, the God-Man Himself visited His Kingdom, and a second series of violent oscillations took place. First, the kings of the East came to worship Him - Babylon bowed down before Zion. Then the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the temple itself was destroyed and the people of God were scattered over the face of the earth - Zion became spiritually Babylon, and in the Babylonian Talmud the Jews worked out the apostate creed of Zionism. But then the new Israel, "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6.16), the Church of Christ, was born in Zion, and the former children of wrath from the Babylon of the West, the pagan Greeks and Romans, came to bow down at her feet. And when Constantine became king of Old Rome, even the pivot and crown of the Babylonian system, the worship of the god-man-emperor, was transformed into its opposite; the God-fighting satanocracy of Old Rome became the God-loving theocracy of the New Rome.

Now, nearly two thousands years after Christ, we are in the middle of the third great series of violent oscillations in world history. For in 1917 the God-loving theocracy of the Third Rome, Russia, was transformed into the God-hating satanocracy of the new Babylon, the Soviet Union. And the apostate Jews took revenge on the Third Rome for the destruction of their State by the First, Old Rome.

That this was indeed the significance of the Russian revolution was demonstrated by an extraordinary "coincidence" that has been little noted. On November 9, 1917, the London *Times* reported two events in the same column of newsprint: above, the Bolshevik revolution in Petrograd, and immediately below it, the British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour's promise of a homeland to the Jews in Palestine.

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<sup>151</sup> *Orthodox Life*, vol. 41, no. 6, November-December, 1991, p. 10.



To the unbeliever, the two events seem to have no relation to each other; the fact that they happened at exactly the same time, and under the leadership of men from the same race and class and locality - the Jewish intelligentsia of Western Russia and Poland - seems purely coincidental. To the believing eye, however, they are two aspects, in two geographical areas, of one and the same event - the event called in the Gospel "the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24.8), in the epistles of St. Paul - "the removal of him that restraineth" (II Thessalonians 2.7), and in the Apocalypse of St. John - "the releasing of the beast from the abyss" (Revelation 20.3). For 1917 marked the end of the age of the Orthodox Christian empires which began with St. Constantine the Great in 312 and the beginning of the age of the Antichrist.

Now if we look at the event from its Jewish aspect, it looks like the triumph of a purely national movement - Zionism. From the Russian aspect, on the other hand, it looks like a purely political-social coup motivated by a purely secular vision of world history - Marxism-Leninism. In truth, however, Zionism and Marxism-Leninism are two aspects of a single movement which is neither purely nationalist nor purely political in essence, but religious - or rather, demonic.

This is most clearly seen in the killing of the Tsar on July 4/17, 1918. On the wall of his death-chamber was found an inscription which fittingly sums up the deed from the point of view of the Jewish revolution. It was a quotation from the German Jewish poet Heine, slightly altered to bring out the word "tsar" and identifying the tsar with Belshazzar:

*Belsatzar ward in selbiger Nacht      On the same night Belshazzar  
Von seinen knechten umgebracht.      Was killed by his own slaves.<sup>152</sup>*

But the truth was quite the opposite. Belshazzar hated the people of God, and his removal opened the way for the rebuilding of the Temple of God in Zion by Zerubbabel (which means "alien to Babylon, or confusion"). The killing of Tsar Nicholas, on the other hand, opened the way to the destruction of Orthodox Russia and its transformation into Babylon; and it was the Jews, taking the place of Belshazzar, who feasted in the looted chalices of God's Temple.

As Winston Churchill wrote: "It would almost seem as if the Gospel of Christ and the gospel of anti-Christ were designed to originate among the same people; and that this mystic and mysterious race had been chosen for the supreme manifestations, both of the Divine and the diabolical... From the days of 'Spartacus' Weishaupt to those of Karl Marx, and down to Trotsky (Russia), Bela Kun (Hungary), Rosa Luxembourg (Germany) and Emma Goldman (United States), this worldwide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilization and for the reconstitution of society on the basis of arrested development, of envious malevolence and impossible equality, has been steadily growing. It played, as a modern writer, Mrs. Nesta Webster, has so

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<sup>152</sup> See Nicholas Kozlov, *Krestnij Put' (The Path of the Cross)*, Moscow, 1993; Enel, "Zhertva" ("The Sacrifice"), *Kolokol' (The Bell)*, Moscow, 1990, N 5, pp. 17-37, and Michael Orlov, "Ekaterinburgskaia Golgota" ("The Ekaterinburg Golgotha"), *Kolokol' The Bell*, 1990, N 5, pp. 37-55 (in Russian).

ably shown, a definitely recognizable part in the tragedy of the French Revolution. It has been the mainspring of every subversive movement during the nineteenth century; and now at last this band of extraordinary personalities from the underworld of the great cities of Europe and America have gripped the Russian people by the hair of their heads and have become practically the undisputed masters of that enormous empire. There is no need to exaggerate the part played in the creation of Bolshevism and in the bringing about of the Russian Revolution by these international and for the most part atheistical Jews. It is certainly a very great one; it probably outweighs all others."<sup>153</sup>

Of course, the Jewish Bolsheviks were not religious Jews, and were in fact as opposed to Talmudic Judaism as any other segment of the population.<sup>154</sup> Moreover, as Pipes points out, "the results of the elections to the Constituent Assembly indicate that Bolshevik support came not from the region of Jewish concentration, the old Pale of Settlement, but from the armed forces and the cities of Great Russia, which had hardly any Jews".<sup>155</sup> So blame for the Russian revolution must fall on Russians as well as Jews; and in fact hardly any of the constituent nations of the Russian empire can claim to have played no part in the catastrophe. Nevertheless, the extraordinary prominence of Jews in the revolution is a fact that must be related, at least in part, to the traditionally anti-Russian and anti-Christian attitude of Jewish culture. For, as Chaim Weitzmann, the first president of Israel, wrote, the atheist Bolshevik Jews and the theist Zionist Jews often came from the very same families; so that his mother was able to witness her sons' triumph in both Bolshevik Moscow and Zionist Jerusalem...<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Churchill, *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, February 8, 1920; quoted in Douglas Reed, *The Controversy of Zion*, Durban, S.A.: Dolphin Press, 1978, pp. 272-273. Reed proved this point with some statistics: "The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, which wielded the supreme power, contained 3 Russians (including Lenin) and 9 Jews. The next body in importance, the Central Committee of the Executive Commission (or secret police) comprised 42 Jews and 19 Russians, Letts, Georgians and others. The Council of People's Commissars consisted of 17 Jews and five others. The Moscow Che-ka (secret police) was formed of 23 Jews and 13 others. Among the names of 556 high officials of the Bolshevik state officially published in 1918-1919 were 458 Jews and 108 others. Among the central committees of small, supposedly 'Socialist' or other non-Communist parties.. were 55 Jews and 6 others" (p. 274). Even Lenin was partly Jewish. His grandfather was called Israel before his baptism by an Orthodox priest, and his father's name was Moishe Blank. See Lina Averina, "Evrejskij koren" ("The Jewish Root"), *Nasha Strana (Our Country)* (Israel), January 22, 1997 (in Russian). Even the "pro-Semite" historian Richard Pipes admits: "Jews undeniably played in the Bolshevik Party and the early Soviet apparatus a role disproportionate to their share of the population. The number of Jews active in Communism in Russia and abroad was striking: in Hungary, for example, they furnished 95 percent of the leading figures in Bela Kun's dictatorship. They also were disproportionately represented among Communists in Germany and Austria during the revolutionary upheavals there in 1918-23, and in the apparatus of the Communist International" (*Russia under the Bolshevik Regime, 1919-1924*, London: Fontana Press, 1995, pp. 112-13).

<sup>154</sup> However, that it was quite possible for a leading communist to be at the same time a rabbi is shown by the example of Moses Rozen, who became a member of the Romanian Communist Party after the Second World War, and continued to serve the Romanian Communists even after becoming Chief Rabbi of Romania in 1948, and continued to have a strong influence after the fall of Ceausescu in 1989. See *Piatnitsa (Friday)* (Israel), N 69, January 22, 1997, p. 8 (in Russian).

<sup>155</sup> Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>156</sup> Weitzmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weitzmann*, New York: Harper, 1949.

Moreover, so complete was the Jewish domination of Russia as a result of the revolution that it is really a misnomer to speak about the "Russian" revolution; it should more accurately be called the anti-Russian, or Russian-Jewish revolution. Indeed, the Russian revolution may be regarded as one branch of that general triumph of Jewish power which we observe in the twentieth century in both East and West, in both Russia and America and Israel. It is as if, by God's permission and for the chastisement of the sins of many nations, there arose in the Pale of Settlement an avenging horde that swept away the last major restraining power and ushered in the era of the Apocalypse.

The great saints of the nineteenth and early twentieth century foresaw all this, which is why they insisted on the necessity - the religious necessity - of faithfulness to the Tsar. Thus St. Seraphim of Sarov said that after Orthodoxy, faithfulness to the Tsar was "our first Russian duty and the chief foundation of true Christian piety".<sup>157</sup> Again, St. John of Kronstadt said: "The autocracy is the sole condition of the piety of Russia; if there is no autocracy, there will be no Russia; power will be taken by the Jews, who greatly hate us..."<sup>158</sup> And Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow, the apostle to the Altai, said: "You don't want your own Russian authority, so you will have a foreign power over you."<sup>159</sup>

### *The Moscow Council and the Civil War*

The Masonic democratic revolution of February, 1917, which was the essential pre-condition for the Bolshevik totalitarian revolution of October, met with a muted response from the Church. There was no general mourning for the passing of the Lord's Anointed, and much rejoicing at the advent of "freedom". Among the hierarchs, only Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow refused to recognize the new Provisional Government, for which he was uncanonically removed.<sup>160</sup>

Soon, however, the hierarchs realized that the revolution could sweep them away, too. A series of diocesan assemblies demanded the removal of several canonical hierarchs (and some uncanonical ones, such as Rasputin's nominee, Pitirim of Petrograd). The winter session of the Holy Synod, presided over by the venerable metropolitan of Kiev and first bishop-martyr of the Soviet yoke, Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky), refused to sanction the results of the elections, because they recognized, correctly, that whatever the immediate good results, the spirit behind these changes was the spirit of the revolution. This led the new procurator of the Holy Synod appointed by the Provisional Government, Prince V.N. Lvov, to petition for the early disbanding of the Synod and the appointment of a new Synod for the summer session. Only two members of the old Synod - Metropolitan Sergius

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<sup>157</sup> Quoted in Serge Fomin, op. cit., 1993, p. 100.

<sup>158</sup> Fomin, ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Fomin, ibid.

<sup>160</sup> See Bishop Arsenius (Zhadanovsky), *Vospominania (Memoirs)*, Moscow: St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, 1995, pp. 186-246 (in Russian).

(Stragorodsky) of Vladimir and the Exarch of Georgia, Metropolitan Platon - agreed to serve in the new Synod; and ten years later, as we shall see, Sergius became the main architect of the Sovietization of the Russian Church, while Platon became the architect of the schism of the American Metropolia...<sup>161</sup>

The new Synod presided over by Metropolitan Platon sanctioned all the changes that had taken place in the Church administration as a result of the revolution from below. And it helped organize the convening of a Church Council, the first in the history of the Russian Church since 1666, which assembled in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow on August 15/28. This Council, which was convened under the influence of a tide of revolutionary feeling in the Church, was composed of 564 delegates, including 350 laymen. The liberals in it hoped that it would push through reforms which, as well as sealing the break with the pre-revolutionary past, would bring the Russian Church into the mainstream of twentieth-century ecclesiastical life, by which they meant, in effect, her protestantisation. But in this hope they were to be disappointed...

Now that the State's hold on the Church was broken, the traditionalists hoped that the Council would restore the patriarchate, which Peter the Great had uncanonically abolished. Paradoxically, the liberals opposed this, considering it a reflection of "episcopal monarchism". However, on November 21 / December 4 Metropolitan Tikhon (Bellavin) of Moscow was enthroned as Patriarch of Moscow and all the Russias.

This spiritual triumph seemed to give new strength to the Council, which proceeded to reject the new Bolshevik government's decrees nationalising Church property and schools and secularising births, deaths, marriages and divorces. On January 19, 1918 the Patriarch anathematised Soviet power, commanding the faithful "not to commune with such outcasts of the human race in any matter whatsoever." In other words, the government were to be regarded, not only as apostates from Christ, but also as having no moral authority, no claim to obedience whatsoever - an attitude taken by the Church to no other government in the whole of Her history.

The Council endorsed the Patriarch's anathema, declaring: "The Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia in his epistle to the beloved in the Lord archpastors, pastors and all faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ has drawn the spiritual sword against the outcasts of the human race - the Bolsheviks, and anathematized them. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church adjures all her faithful children not to enter into any communion with these outcasts. For their satanic deeds they are cursed in this life and in the life to come. Orthodox! His Holiness the Patriarch has been given the right to bind and to loose according to the word of the Saviour... Do not destroy your souls, cease communion with the servants of Satan - the Bolsheviks.

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<sup>161</sup> See B. Bakulin, "Nesvoevremennie vospominania" ("Untimely Memoirs"), in Bessmertny, A.R. and Filatov, S.B. *Religia i demokratia (Religion and Democracy)*, Moscow: Progress, 1993, pp. 149-163; Bishop Gregory Grabbe, *Russkaia Tserkov' pered litsom gospodstvuiushchago zla (The Russian Church before the Face of Dominant Evil)*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1991 (in Russian).

Parents, if your children are Bolsheviks, demand authoritatively that they renounce their errors, that they bring forth repentance for their eternal sin, and if they do not obey you, renounce them. Wives, if your husbands are Bolsheviks and stubbornly continue to serve Satan, leave your husbands, save yourselves and your children from the soul-destroying infection. An Orthodox Christian cannot have communion with the servants of the devil... Repent, and with burning prayer call for help from the Lord of Hosts and thrust away from yourselves 'the hand of strangers' - the age-old enemies of the Christian faith, who have declared themselves in self-appointed fashion 'the people's power'... If you do not obey the Church, you will not be her sons, but participants in the cruel and satanic deeds wrought by the open and secret enemies of Christian truth... Dare! Do not delay! Do not destroy your soul and hand it over to the devil and his stooges."<sup>162</sup>

Although, as we have said, it was unprecedented for a Local Church to anathematize a government, there have been occasions in the history of the Church when individual hierarchs have not only refused to obey or pray for a political leader, but have actually prayed against him. Thus in the fourth century St. Basil the Great prayed for the defeat of Julian the Apostate, and it was through his prayers that the apostate was killed, as was revealed by God to the holy hermit Julian of Mesopotamia. This and other examples show that, while the principle of authority as such is from God (Romans 13.1), individual authorities or rulers are often not from God, but are only allowed by Him, in which case the Church must offer resistance to them out of loyalty to God Himself.<sup>163</sup>

On January 23, the Bolsheviks issued their "Decree on the Freedom of Conscience". This was the Bolsheviks' fiercest attack yet on the integrity of the Church; for it forbade religious bodies from owning property, from levying dues, from organizing into hierarchical organizations, and from teaching religion to persons under 18 years of age. Thus, far from being a blow struck for freedom of conscience, it was, as the Council put it, a decree on freedom from conscience, and an excuse for large-scale pillaging of churches and murders, often in the most bestial manner.<sup>164</sup> The Council forbade the faithful to help in the publication or realisation of this decree in any way whatsoever, on pain of excommunication from the Orthodox Church. Thus the decrees of the Bolshevik State followed by the counter-decrees of the Orthodox Church established a state of war between the two institutions.

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<sup>162</sup> "Iz sobrania Tsentral'nogo gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Oktyabr'skoj revoliutsii: listovka byez vykhodnykh dannykh, pod N 1011" ("From the Collection of the Central State Archive of the October revolution: a sheet without exit data"), *Nauka i Religia (Science and Religion)*, 1989, no. 4 (in Russian); partly translated in Arfed Gustavson, *The Catacomb Church*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1960, p. 9.

<sup>163</sup> V.A. Konovalov, *Otnoshenie Khristianstva k Sovyetskoj Vlasti (The Relationship of Christianity to Soviet Power)*, Montreal, 1936, p. 35 (in Russian).

<sup>164</sup> Professor Ivan Andreyev, "The Catacomb Church in the Soviet Union", *Orthodox Life*, March-April, 1951. For details of the destruction wrought against the Church in these years, see Vladimir Rusak, *Pir Satany (The Feast of Satan)*, London, Canada: Zarya, 1991 (in Russian).

The Bolsheviks' destruction of the Church continued throughout the Civil War period. Thus by 1921, according to Bolshakov, 637 out of 1,026 monasteries had been liquidated. And in 1918-19, according to Ermhardt, 28 bishops and 1,414 priests were killed; while by the end of 1922, according to Shumilin, 2233 clergy of all ranks and two million laymen had been executed.<sup>165</sup>

The Patriarch continued his condemnation of the regime for a time. Thus in March, 1918 he condemned the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which handed over vast areas of Russian territory to the Germans, and in July he condemned the killing of the Tsar and his family. In October, 1919, in an epistle to the Council of People's Commissars, he more or less openly declared that Soviet power was not a legitimate authority in the Apostle Paul's use of the word (Romans 13.1).

The murder of the Tsar brought home to all right-believing Christians what a great treasure the nation and the world had lost when it overthrew the last Orthodox Autocrat in the name of "democracy". Now, as Trotsky said, there was no going back: ahead lay only a savage war with the collective Antichrist, which had been brought to power by the removal of "him that restraineth". The main achievements of the Tsar-Martyr consisted in his resisting the resurgent power of the Jews and Papists, and in his overcoming, in his own person, of the caesaropapist legacy of the 18th century. Of course, his 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessors paved the way for the restoration of true symphony in Church-State relations. However, it was Tsar Nicholas II who showed the most exceptional devotion to the Church, building churches, glorifying saints and, most significantly, approving the restoration of the patriarchate.

The fact that the patriarchate was not restored during his reign, but some months later, was not his fault, but the fault of those who, having inwardly broken their ties with the Church, were trying to undermine the foundations of the State as well. Some claimed that it was the overbearing power of the monarchy which inhibited the restoration of the patriarchate, which therefore became possible only after the monarchy's fall. But this was not in fact the case: rather, it was the weakness of the Church, especially in its more educated strata, that undermined the strength of the monarchy, which in turn necessitated the restoration of the patriarchate if Christian society was to have a clear focus of unity and leadership. For, as one peasant delegate to the Local Council of 1917-18 put it: "We have a Tsar no more; no father whom we love. It is impossible to love a synod; and therefore we, the peasants, want a Patriarch." Indeed, the restoration of the patriarchate may be seen as the first-fruits of the shedding of the Tsar-Martyr's blood.

For a time the Patriarch carried the colossal burden of representing and defending the Christian people in the absence of a tsar. This inevitably involved certain quasi-political acts, such as the anathematization of Soviet power and the condemnation of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. However, the accusation of "politicking" that was hurled against the Patriarch was misplaced, not only because these acts were necessary in

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<sup>165</sup> Gustavson, op. cit., p. 34.

the interests of the Church, and were therefore within the Patriarch's competence, but also because, in the absence of a tsar, someone had to bear the cross of witnessing to the truth and condemning the revolution publicly and on the world stage.

Nevertheless, the strain of this unnatural situation began to tell, and the witness of the Church against the revolution began to grow muted. Again, this was not so much the fault of the Patriarch as of the whole of Christian society; for just as the Tsar could not govern if nobody obeyed him, the Patriarch could not witness effectively if civil society pursued other ideals. Thus he felt unable to give his unequivocal blessing to the leaders of the White armies, probably because "the spirit was not right," as Elder Aristocleus of Moscow said<sup>166</sup> - many of them were aiming, not at the restoration of the Romanov dynasty, but at the reconvening of the Constituent Assembly or the restoration of the landowners' lands.<sup>167</sup>

Thus by the end of the Civil War the spirit of Orthodox Monarchism, without which the restoration of Holy Russia was inconceivable, had been driven largely underground and overseas. And so all hope of restoring Great Russia was lost...<sup>168</sup> From this time open opposition of the Church in Russia to the Bolshevik regime ceased - with disastrous consequences, as we shall see. Outright opposition in the spirit of the 1918 Council continued only in Underground or "Catacomb" Orthodoxy, which began to be formed from the early 1920s, and in the Russian Church in Exile, which in its Council in Karlovtsy, Serbia in 1921 called for an armed crusade against the Bolsheviks and the restoration of the Romanov dynasty.<sup>169</sup> The children of the New Israel, having betrayed the Lord's Anointed and compromised with the Antichrist, were now condemned to wander for much more than forty years in the desert of Sovietism. For, as the Lord said through the Prophet: "They have made themselves kings, but not by Me... Therefore shall they be delivered up to the

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<sup>166</sup> Quoted in Sergius Fomin, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>167</sup> Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev wrote: "Unfortunately, the most noble and pious leader of this [the White] army listened to those unfitting counsellors who were foreign to Russia and sat in his Special council and destroyed the undertaking. The Russian people, the real people, the believing and struggling people, did not need the bare formula: 'a united and undivided Russia'. They needed neither 'Christian Russia', nor 'Faithless Russia', nor 'Tsarist Russia', nor 'the Landowners' Russia' (by which they will always understand a republic). They needed the combination of the three dear words - 'for the Faith, the Tsar and the Fatherland'. Most of all, they needed the first word, since faith rules the whole of the state's life; the second word was necessary since the tsar guards and protects the first; and the third was needed since the people is the bearer of the first words" ("Tserkovnost' ili politika?" ("Churchness or Politics?"), *Pravoslavnaia Rus' (Orthodox Rus')*, N 1558, May 1/14, 1996, p. 4 (in Russian)).

<sup>168</sup> However, as Grand-Duchess Elizabeth, the future martyr, wrote in April, 1918: "Completely destroyed now is the 'Great Russia without fear and reproach', but 'Holy Russia', the Orthodox Church against which 'the gates of hell shall not prevail', exists and exists as never before" (in Lubov' Millar, *Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia*, Redding, Ca., 1993, p. 201).

<sup>169</sup> For the early history of the Russian Church in Exile, see Grabbe, *op. cit.*; A.F. Traskovsky, "Istoria Russkoj Zarubezhnoj Tserkvi, 1921-1939 gg." ("A History of the Russian Church Abroad, 1921-1939"), *Pravoslavnij Put' (The Orthodox Way)*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1995, pp. 20-24 (in Russian).

nations.. And they shall cease for a little to anoint a king and princes..." (Hosea 8.4,10).

### The Living Church

In 1921 a terrible famine broke out in the Volga region. The Bolsheviks seized on this to demand that the Church hand over her valuables to a State commission so that they could be sold and the proceeds given to the starving. The Church was, of course, by no means unwilling to help the starving and had already sent out appeals both within and outside the country; but she preferred that her own servants should distribute the aid. But the Bolsheviks insisted, and early in 1922 the Patriarch compromised: he agreed that the proceeds from the sale of church valuables should be given to the Bolsheviks, but on condition that those valuables did not include the most sacred vessels used in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Most commentators have interpreted this as a wise compromise on the part of the Patriarch. However, this was not the opinion of no less an authority than the holy Elder Nectarius of Optina, who said: "You see now, the patriarch gave the order to give up all valuables from the churches, but they belonged to the Church!"<sup>170</sup>

It is easy to see why the elder was right and the patriarch wrong in this matter. First, the money gained from the sale of the valuables did not go to feed the poor, but to promote the socialist revolution worldwide. Secondly, the patriarch's decision placed the parish priests in the very difficult situation of having to choose between disobedience to the patriarch and cooperating in what many of them must have considered to be a near-sacrilegious stripping of the churches for the benefit of the collective Antichrist. And thirdly, the patriarch's decision did not in any case prevent bloodshed, as he had hoped. Thus according to one estimate, 2,691 married priests, 1,962 monks, 3,447 nuns and an unknown number of laymen were killed on the pretext of resistance to the seizure of church valuables in the country as a whole.<sup>171</sup> In fact, the patriarch's decision fell between two stools. It neither saved the lives of the starving, on the one hand, nor protected the churches from attack, on the other.

Soon after making this decision, the patriarch made another disastrous concession: on April 22 / May 5, 1922, at the insistence of the Bolsheviks, he convened a meeting of the Holy Synod and the Higher Church Council, at which he declared (decree no. 342) that "neither the epistle, nor the address of the Karlovtsy Synod [to the Genoa conference] express the voice of the Russian Church". And he ordered the dissolution of the Church in Exile's Higher Church Administration and the transfer of all power over the Russian refugees in Europe to Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris. Although all the emigre hierarchs (including Metropolitan Eulogius) agreed that the

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<sup>170</sup> Matushka Evgenia Grigorievna Rymarenko, "Remembrances of Optina Staretz Hieroschemamonk Nektary", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 36, no. 3, May-June, 1986, p. 39.

<sup>171</sup> Gregory Ravich, "Ograblennij Khristos, ili brillianty dlya diktatury proletariata" (Christ Fleeced, or Diamonds for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat"), *Chas-Pik (Rush Hour)*, no. 18, p. 26 (in Russian). According to another estimate, the anti-Church campaign cost the lives of 28 bishops and 1,215 priests - over 8000 people altogether (Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 355).



decree was issued under duress and was therefore not binding, it was later used by pro-Soviet hierarchs to cause serious divisions in the Russian Church in Exile.

Nor did the Bolsheviks show gratitude to the patriarch; for only a few days later, he was placed under house arrest. This gave the chance to a group of modernizing, pro-Soviet priests to seize control of the administrative machinery of the Church, which gave the renovationist heretics the chance to seize control of the administrative machinery of the Church. The renovationists, or "Living Church", as the heretics were called, received the full support of the Bolsheviks, and soon many leaders of the Patriarchal Church were languishing in prison or exile.

At one time the "Living Church" controlled about two-thirds of the churches in Russia, and large numbers of bishops joined the movement either voluntarily or under coercion. However, the majority of the people never supported the movement, mainly because of its modernist innovations, such as married bishops and the new calendar. And when the Patriarch was released from prison in June, 1923 in exchange for renouncing all opposition to the Soviet regime, renovationism went into sharp decline.

However, while the Church triumphed over this first attempt by the Bolsheviks to destroy her from within, the cost was high - specifically, the abandonment of the Church's uncompromising position in relation to the Antichrist and the introduction of an element of ambiguity and politicking in her relationship with the authorities. The people remained loyal to the Patriarch because they recognized that he had made compromises, not in order to save his own skin, but under the most intense moral pressure and in order to save the lives of his flock. But the bitter fact is that, from about the beginning of 1922, the Church inside Russia began to negotiate with Soviet power, attempting to win concessions from the anathematized authorities on the basis of precisely that decree on freedom of conscience whose application the Council of 1917-18 had declared to be irreconcilable with membership of the Orthodox Church!

That is why the Church began to falter in her struggle. In fact, the concessions won by the Church were negligible, while the concessions she made to the Bolsheviks were major and very damaging. They delayed but did not prevent the Church's eventual descent into the catacombs, which is the only place that the Church can survive in the time of the Antichrist. And they made that descent more difficult and more costly than it would otherwise have been. However, by God's Providence this led to the greatest and most glorious outpouring of sanctity, in the form of the holy new martyrs of Russia, in the whole history of the Church...

### *The New Calendar Schism*

The fall of the Russian Empire soon began to have adverse effects on the Church outside Russia. In the Ukraine, while many bishops remained loyal to the Patriarch, nationalist elements created a "Ukrainian Autocephalous Church" which united with

the Russian renovationists and was eventually closed down by Stalin.<sup>172</sup> In Georgia, too, the Church declared herself independent; but in 1921 the Bolsheviks invaded and overthrew the Menshevik government, and in 1924 they crushed a general resurrection in which the Church took part.<sup>173</sup>

In Constantinople, meanwhile, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, gripped by a nationalist fever that wished to profit from the Turks' defeat in the Great War and realize the "great idea" of the restoration of the Byzantine Empire, simultaneously broke relations with the Sublime Porte and made overtures for union with the western heretics. Thus in 1920, the patriarchal *locum tenens*, Metropolitan Dorotheus, and his Synod issued an encyclical which explicitly recognized the Catholics and Protestants as "co-heirs of God in Christ" with the Orthodox, and called for a number of measures to facilitate union with the heretics, notably the introduction of the new, Gregorian calendar which was used by the West. This encyclical marks the introduction into the life of the Orthodox Church of the heresy of ecumenism, which may be defined as the doctrine that there is no essential difference between the Orthodox and the heretics, that the Church embraces both truth and heresy, and that there is, in effect, no such thing as heresy.

Metropolitan Dorotheus died on a trip to England, and was succeeded by the notorious Freemason Meletius Metaxakis, who had already been defrocked by the Church of Greece. Taking advantage of the turmoil in Russia, he proceeded to carve out for himself large territories that belonged to the Russian and Serbian Churches in Western Europe, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Then he entered into communion with the heretical "Living Church" in Russia.

Meanwhile, the Greek invasion of Turkey had collapsed disastrously, and at the Lausanne conference (1922-23) a massive exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey was decided on, which resulted in the virtual elimination of Orthodoxy from the ancient province of Asia Minor. The Turkish representative at the conference secured a commitment from the Greek leader Venizelos that he would persuade Meletius, who had "scandalously mixed his spiritual mission with anti-Turkish politics"<sup>174</sup>, to resign from the patriarchate in exchange for the maintenance of the patriarchate as an institution in Constantinople. Meletius agreed to resign, but suggested the postponement of his resignation until the conclusion of the peace negotiations, which took place in June, 1923.

In February Meletius wrote to the Church of Greece urging her to adopt the new calendar in time for the "Pan-Orthodox Council" that he was planning for June. Hardly coincidentally, a few weeks later an ecclesiastical coup took place and

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<sup>172</sup> Archbishop Leontius (Philippovich), "Ukrainskiye shovinisty i samosvyaty" ("Ukrainian Chauvinists and Self-Consecrators"), *Russkij Pastyr (Russian Pastor)*, II-III, 1995, pp. 154-187 (in Russian).

<sup>173</sup> Fr. Elie Melia, "The Orthodox Church in Georgia", *A Sign of God: Orthodoxy 1964*, Athens: Zoe, 1964, pp. 112-113.

<sup>174</sup> Stavros Karamitsos, *O Synkhronos Omologitis tis Orthodoxias (The Contemporary Confessor of Orthodoxy)*, Athens, 1990, p. 26 (in Greek).

Chrysostom Papadopoulos was elected Archbishop of Athens by three out of a specially chosen Synod of only five hierarchs. A few years before Chrysostom had declared that any Church which adopted the new calendar would become schismatic; but he now supported his friend Meletius and in his enthronement speech said that for collaboration with the heterodox "it is not necessary to have common ground or dogmatic union, for the union of Christian love is sufficient".<sup>175</sup>

Meletius' "Pan-Orthodox Council" proposed the introduction of the new calendar, twice-married clergy and other innovations that were suspiciously similar to those of the Russian "Living Church". Its decrees were rejected by the Churches of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, and by the Russian Church Abroad, and in July Meletius himself was forced to withdraw to Mount Athos. In March, 1924, however, Chrysostom Papadopoulos introduced the new calendar into the Greek Church, and his example was quickly followed by Patriarchs Gregory VII of Constantinople and Myron of Romania.

The new calendar and paschalion was first introduced into the Christian world by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. It was supposedly more correct astronomically, but from a theological point of view it was a disaster, destroying the beautiful harmony between the solar and lunar cycles which the old or Julian calendar established, and contravening the decrees of the First Ecumenical Council convened by St. Constantine the Great in 325. The Eastern Patriarchs had anathematised it in three Pan-Orthodox Councils in 1583, 1587 and 1593, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, at the invitation of the Ecumenical Patriarch, each of the Autocephalous Churches had been invited to examine it but had rejected it.

The effect of its introduction was to create a schism between those Churches following the Old Calendar (the Slavic Churches, Jerusalem, Mount Sinai and Mount Athos) and those which came to accept the new (Constantinople, Antioch, Greece, Romania, Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia and (from 1968) Bulgaria). Eventually, as the Autocephalous Old Calendar Churches themselves came under the control of anti-Orthodox forces, this schism was healed; although the fact that the two groups of Churches celebrate the main feasts (except the Paschal cycle) at different times continues to create tensions.

However, in Greece and Romania from 1924 substantial minorities of priests and laymen separated from the official churches in their countries, forming the so-called "Old Calendar" or "True Orthodox" Churches. The Old Calendarists were immediately persecuted by the official churches, but their numbers multiplied, aided by manifest signs from heaven, such as the appearance of a Cross of light over an Old Calendar monastery near Athens on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (Old

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<sup>175</sup> Bishop Photius of Triaditsa, "The 70th Anniversary of the Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople", *Orthodox Life*, no. 1, January-February, 1994, p. 40.

Calendar), 1925. Moreover, from 1935 (in Greece) and 1955 (in Romania) the Old Calendarists acquired hierarchies which gave them a solid canonical foundation.<sup>176</sup>

### *The Sovietization of the Moscow Patriarchate*

On March 25, 1925 Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow died (he was probably poisoned by Soviet agents). Before he died, and in accordance with a decision taken at the 1917-18 Council, he had drawn up a list of three patriarchal locum tenentes, the senior of whom that was in freedom at the time of the Patriarch's death was to take over the administration of the Russian Church until a canonical Council could be convened. These were: Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan, Metropolitan Agathangelus of Yaroslavl and Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa. Since, at the time of the Patriarch's death, both Metropolitan Cyril and Metropolitan Agathangelus were in exile, Metropolitan Peter was duly confirmed as the leader of the Russian Church.

Metropolitan Peter resisted the attempts of the Bolsheviks to make him bring the Church under their power, and in December, 1925 he was imprisoned and sent into exile in Siberia. However, he had appointed deputies, and the senior of them, Metropolitan Sergius of Nizhni-Novgorod, now took over the administration, fighting off the challenge of a group of bishops called the Gregorians who seem to have had the backing of the Bolsheviks. In April, 1926 the second locum tenens, Metropolitan Agathangelus, returned from exile and tried to take over from Metropolitan Sergius, who, not being a locum tenens himself, should have handed over the reins of power. But Sergius resisted, and Agathangelus, for the sake of peace, yielded to him.

Soon Sergius himself was put in prison, and in the first months of 1927 the Church was ruled by Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich. However, when the Bolsheviks came to remove him, too, and asked Seraphim to appoint a deputy, he refused, saying:

"I lay the Church in the hands of God, our Lord. I am doing this, so that the whole world may know what freedom Orthodox Christianity is enjoying in our free State."<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> On the Old Calendarist movements, see Fr. Basile Sakkas, *The Calendar Question*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1973; Metropolitan Calliopius of Pentapolis, *Ta Patria*, Piraeus, published in several volumes in the 1980s (in Greek); The Zealot Monks of Mount Athos, *Syntomos Istoriki Perigraphi tis Ekklesias ton Gnision Orthodox Khristianon Ellados (A Short History of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece)*, Mount Athos, 1973 (in Greek); George Lardas, *The Old Calendar Movement in the Greek Church: An Historical Survey*, B.Th. thesis, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1983; Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos, "The True Orthodox Christians of Romania", *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 18, no. 1 (102), January-February, 1982; Hieromonk Theodoreitos (Mauros), *Palaion kai Neon: i Orthodoxia kai Airesis? (Old and New and Orthodoxy and Heresy)*, Athens, 1991 (in Greek); Vladimir Moss, *The Sacred Struggle of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece, 1919-1992*, Old Woking, 1992.

<sup>177</sup> See N.A., "Nye bo vragom Tvoim tajnu povyem" ("I will not give Thy secret to Thine enemies"), *Vestnik Germanskoj Eparkhii Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi za Granitsej (Messenger of the German Diocese of the Russian Church Abroad)*, 1992, no. 1, p. 18 (in Russian).

This was a decisive moment, for the central hierarchy of the Church was effectively declaring the Church's decentralisation, since the conditions for an effective centralised administration no longer existed.

And not before time. For with the imprisonment of the last of the three possible locum tenentes there was really no canonical basis for establishing a central administration for the Church before the convocation of a Local Council, which was prevented by the communists. The system of deputies of the deputy of the locum tenens had no basis in Canon Law or precedent in the history of the Church. And if it was really the case that the Church could not exist without a first hierarchy and central administration, then the awful possibility existed that with the fall of the first hierarchy the whole Church would fall, too...<sup>178</sup>

The communists also wanted a centralized administration; so Tuchkov now turned to Metropolitan Agathangelus with the proposal that he lead the Church. He refused. Then he turned to Metropolitan Cyril with the same proposal. He, too, refused. The conversation between Tuchkov and Metropolitan Cyril is reported to have gone something like this:-

"If we have to remove some hierarchy, will you help us in this?"

"Yes, if the hierarchy appears to be guilty of some ecclesiastical transgression... In the contrary case, I shall tell him directly, 'The authorities are demanding this of me, but I have nothing against you.'"

"No!" replied Tuchkov. "You must try to find an appropriate reason and remove him as if on your own initiative."

To this the hierarchy replied: "Eugene Nikolaievich! You are not the cannon, and I am not the shot, with which you want to blow up our Church from within!"<sup>179</sup>

The battle between the Church and the State had now reached a complete impasse. On the one hand, 117 bishops were in prison or in exile, and the administration of the Church was in ruins. On the other hand, the spiritual authority of the Church had never been higher, church attendance was up, and church activities of all kinds were on the increase.

In the words of E. Lopeshanskaya: "The Church was becoming a state within the state... The prestige and authority of the imprisoned and persecuted clergy was immeasurably higher than that of the clergy under the tsars."<sup>180</sup> Only betrayal on the

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<sup>178</sup> This was a point made in the sixth century by St. Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, in his correspondence with the Patriarch of Antioch concerning the title of "ecumenical", that is, "universal" bishop. Cf. Abbe Guettée, *The Papacy*, New York: Minos, 1866, p. 223.

<sup>179</sup> Lev Regelson, *Tragedia Russkoj Tserkvi, 1917-1945 (The Tragedy of the Russian Church, 1917-1945)*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, p. 413 (in Russian).

<sup>180</sup> E.L., op. cit., p. 70.

part of the first hierarch could threaten the Church - and that only if the rest of the Church continued to recognize his authority...

But betrayal is exactly what befell the Church now. On March 7/20 Metropolitan Sergius was released from prison, took over from Archbishop Seraphim, and by his actions clearly demonstrated that he was now ready to obey the Bolsheviks in all things. First he appointed a Synod composed of some of the most distrusted bishops in Russia. Then, on July 16/29 he issued his famous "declaration", which declared that the Soviet State's joys were the Church's joys and the State's sorrows - the Church's sorrows. The document as a whole breathed a spirit of complete submission to the militant atheist authorities, and was received in stunned silence by the believers. Meanwhile, a great earthquake took place in Jerusalem, as if to signify that a great spiritual earthquake was not shaking the foundations of the Church of Christ on earth.

At about the same time, Sergius asked the whole Synod of the Russian Church Abroad to sign an act of loyalty to the Soviet Union, threatening them with exclusion from the Patriarchate. With the exception of Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris, who soon went into schism and joined the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Synodal bishops refused, and were supported in their refusal by an epistle of the bishops imprisoned on Solovki, who wrote: "The epistle threatens those church-servers who have emigrated with exclusion from the Moscow Patriarchate on the grounds of their political activity, that is, it lays an ecclesiastical punishment upon them for political statements, which contradicts the resolution of the All-Russian Council of 1917-18 of August 3/16, 1918, which made clear the canonical impermissibility of such punishments, and rehabilitated all those people who were deprived of their orders for political crimes in the past."

Ominously similar events were taking place in Georgia at this time. "Between June 21 and 27, 1927," writes Fr. Elie Melia, "a Council elected as Catholicos Christopher Tsitskichvili. On August 6 he wrote to the Ecumenical Patriarch Basil III who replied addressing him as Catholicos. The new Catholicos entirely changed the attitude of the ecclesiastical hierarchy towards the Soviet power, officially declared militant atheist, in favour of submission and collaboration with the Government."<sup>181</sup>

Towards the end of 1927 opposition to, and separation from, Metropolitan Sergius began to grow within the Russian Church. In Leningrad, opposition centred round Metropolitan Joseph and his vicar, Archbishop Demetrius of Gdov; and the "Josephites", as they were called, linked up with other centres of opposition in Moscow, Tver and Voronezh. In the Urals nearly 90% of parishes rejected Sergius' declaration, and "non-commemorators" sprang up in many parts of the vast country, including about 30% of the bishops, mainly the older and more respected ones. Sergius responded harshly, with bans and defrockings; which gave the OGPU just the excuse they needed to round up the opposition on the charge of rebellion both

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<sup>181</sup> Regelson, *op. cit.*, p. 436. Adapted from the translation in Gustavson, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-73.

against Soviet power and against the "canonical" head of the Russian Church. Since Sergius branded those who opposed him as "political criminals", he in effect acted as Judas to the Bolsheviks' Sanhedrin, sending hundreds of thousands of Christians to torture and death.

Among the many who raised their voices in protest was Bishop, later Hieromartyr Victor of Glazov, the first hierarch to break communion with Sergius. He had especially noted the phrase in the declaration: "Only ivory-tower dreamers can think that a society as tremendous as our Orthodox Church, with its whole organization, can exist throughout the country hidden from the authorities of the State." He saw in this the same over-valuation of the Church's external organization at the expense of her inner faithfulness to Christ, as he had detected in a book of Sergius' in 1911, when he said that the time would come when he would shake the Church...<sup>182</sup>

And to Sergius himself he wrote: "The enemy has lured and seduced you a second time with the idea of an organisation of the Church. But if this organisation is bought for the price of the Church of Christ Herself no longer remaining the house of Grace-giving salvation for men, and he who received the organisation ceases to be what he was - for it is written, 'Let his habitation be made desolate, and his bishopric let another take' (Acts 1.20) - then it were better for us never to have any kind of organisation. What is the benefit if we, having become by God's Grace temples of the Holy Spirit, become ourselves suddenly worthless, while at the same time receiving an organisation for ourselves? No. Let the whole visible material world perish; let there be more important in our eyes the certain perdition of the soul to which he who presents such pretexts for sin will be subjected." And he concluded that Sergius' pact with the atheists was "not less than any heresy or schism, but is rather incomparably greater, for it plunges a man immediately into the abyss of destruction, according to the unlying word: 'Whosoever shall deny Me before men...' (Matthew 10.33)."<sup>183</sup>

The Church now entered a period unprecedented in her history since the time of Abraham, when most individual believers had to live their faith without reliance on, or obedience to, any of the usual pillars of the Church, whether kings or bishops or elders. As the great collective structures of Church life collapsed in the face of the collective Antichrist, believers had to defend their spiritual freedom, their individualism, to the last drop of blood - but never in an individualist spirit, but rather in mystical communion with the whole Church in heaven and on earth. "It is one or the other," wrote Martyr-Bishop Damascene of Glukhov: "either the Church is truly the immaculate and pure Bride of Christ, the Kingdom of truth, in which case the Truth is the air without which we cannot breathe, or, like the whole world which lies in evil, it lives in lies and by lies, in which case everything is a lie, every word is a lie, every prayer, every sacrament..."

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<sup>182</sup> Melia, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>183</sup> Quoted in I.M. Andreev, *Russia's Catacomb Saints*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood Press, 1982, pp. 141-43.

And again he wrote: "Let us bring our own little bricks to the unshakable foundation of the Christian Righteousness, Divine Truth, eternal salvation. Without many words, without loud phrases, let us first create a little cell of a few people striving for Christ and ready to begin the realisation of the evangelical ideal in their lives. Unite for grace-filled nourishment around one or other of the worthy pastors and let each person individually and all together prepare themselves for ever-greater service to Christ.. The union even of a few people in such a life already manifests a little Church - the Body of Christ, in which there dwells the Spirit and Love of Christ."<sup>184</sup>

From exile, both Metropolitan Peter, the real canonical leader of the Church, and Metropolitan Cyril, the first *locum tenens*, tried to bring Sergius to his senses. But the love of power - or the fear of prison - hardened his heart, and the OGPU saw to it that the exhortations of the confessing hierarchs did not reach the broad masses of the people. So these hierarchs were shot, while Sergius built up his position, taking to himself Metropolitan Peter's titles even before his death.

It is sometimes argued that Sergius' compromise was necessary in order to save the Church from extinction. However, quite apart from the deaths of hundreds of thousands of "Catacomb" or "True Orthodox" Christians, as the opposition came to be called, it did not save even the "Sergianists", as the members of the Sovietised Moscow Patriarchate came to be called. Thus in the single year of 1937, according to figures recently released by the Russian government, 136,900 clergy were arrested, of whom 85,000 were killed.<sup>185</sup>

Far from causing the government to look with mercy on the Church, Sergius' betrayal encouraged it to lose all restraint. By the end of the 1930s Stalin's terror had destroyed most of the churches and left only four Orthodox bishops at liberty in the whole of the country. Of the Sergianists it could be said, in the words of the Psalmist, that they fell into the pit which they had dug for their fellow Christians...

As for the True Orthodox Christians - those who were not suffering martyrdom in the camps, - they disappeared from the surface of Soviet life, not partaking in the public worship of the Soviet idols. Priests wandered from one catacomb community to another, performing secret services in the flats of believers, usually at night. Catacomb Church Councils anathematised the "Soviet church", as Sergius' church organisation was called, in Petrograd in 1928 and in Siberia in 1937. Secret ordinations preserved apostolic succession right up to the end of the Soviet period; but as time passed, and informers caused the liquidation of more and more catacomb communities, the Church grew weaker. Outside Russia, only the Russian Church Abroad kept faith, and a minimal contact, with the catacombs; but this Church, too, was rocked by schisms and weakened by a gradual loss of the

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<sup>184</sup> Andreev, *op. cit.*

<sup>185</sup> E.L., *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.



eschatological fervour that had united the whole of the confessing Russian Church in the 1920s and 30s.<sup>186</sup>

### *The Rise of Ecumenism and the Fall of Communism*

In 1941 the Nazis invaded Russia. This led to a brief resurrection of Church life in the territories occupied by the Germans, and forced Stalin to make a partial concession to the official church. In exchange for obtaining the church's propaganda support in the struggle with the Germans, the communists allowed the election of a patriarch and the opening of a limited number of churches and seminaries and one church journal.

However, this concession was less real than it seemed. In actual fact, what remained of official Orthodoxy in the Soviet Union came even more securely under the control of the atheists. The ranks of the episcopate were swelled by "penitent" renovationists hand-picked by the GPU, and every aspect of church life was controlled by what came to be called the Council for Religious Affairs.

After the war, these "KGB agents in cassocks" were sent abroad to convince gullible western Christians to perform various tasks on behalf of world communism. Thus Patriarch Alexis I called on the Greek royalists to surrender to the Greek communists, while Metropolitan Nicholas of Krutitsa and other leading bishops brought large parts of the Russian emigration, and the Orthodox Churches of Eastern Europe, within the orbit of the Soviet church. Thus the Serbian patriarchate, which had suffered the loss of 700,000 Christians at the hands of the Croat Catholics in 1941, now suffered a second martyrdom at the hands of Tito's communists.<sup>187</sup>

The Greek Old Calendarists, who had grown in numbers during the 1930s in spite of intermittent persecution, were weakened by serious divisions over whether the new calendarist State church still possessed the grace of sacraments, and in 1937 the smaller and stricter group, known as the "Matthewites" after their leader, the great ascetic Bishop Matthew (+1950), separated to form their own Church. After another period of persecution in 1951, the majority found themselves with only one bishop, Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina; and after his death in 1955 this group was forced to turn to the Russian Church Abroad to renew their episcopate. In Romania, in spite of fierce persecutions which destroyed all their churches twice and claimed many martyrs, the Old Calendarist Church flourished under the inspired leadership of Archimandrite, later Metropolitan Glykerie (+1985).

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<sup>186</sup> *Source Orthodoxe de Presse*, 204, January, 1996, p. 15 (in French). According to the same source, between 1917 and 1980, 200,000 clergy were executed and 500,000 others were imprisoned or sent to the camps.

<sup>187</sup> On the Catacomb Church in the 1920s and 30s, see Regelson, *op. cit.*; M.E. Gubonin, *Akty Svyateishago Patriarkha Tikhona (The Acts of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon)*, Moscow: St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, 1994 (in Russian); W. Fletcher, *The Russian Orthodox Church Underground, 1917-1970*, Oxford University Press, 1970.

Meanwhile, the greatest heresy of modern times, and perhaps of all times, Ecumenism, was making fresh inroads into the Orthodox. The beginnings of official Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement can be traced to the Ecumenical Patriarchate's encyclical of 1920. However, until well after the Second World War the Slavic Orthodox were hardly affected by the heresy; and at the founding assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, which was attended by most of the major Protestant and Anglican denominations, the only Orthodox participant was the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Here it was proclaimed that, as Gustav Aulen put it, 'The Church is as it were a synthesis of all churches' - in other words, the Church is not one particular historical confession, such as the Orthodox or the Catholic Church, but a synthesis of all Christian confessions and denominations. This declaration constituted a direct attack on the dogma of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church - but it was accepted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

However, in Moscow in the same year, at a council attended by all the autocephalous Churches except Constantinople, Ecumenism was condemned as an intrigue hatched by the Vatican and the Anglo-American imperialists - hardly an impressive theological reason for not participating in Ecumenism, but sufficient to put the brakes on it for the time being, at any rate in the Soviet bloc. But Constantinople carried on regardless, and in 1949 the new patriarch, the 33rd degree Mason Athenagoras, declared in his enthronement speech: "We are in error and sin if we think that the Orthodox Faith came down from heaven and that the other dogmas [i.e. religions] are unworthy. Three hundred million men have chosen Mohammedanism as the way to God and further hundreds of millions are Protestants, Catholics and Buddhists. The aim of every religion is to make man better."<sup>188</sup> This astonishing apostasy from the Orthodox Faith roused hardly a murmur of protest from the autocephalous Orthodox Churches...

So far, the Roman Catholics had abstained from participation in the ecumenical movement, but the Second Vatican Council (1958-64) acted as the catalyst for another great wave of ecumenical activity, combined with other, clearly demonic inspirations, such as the so-called charismatic movement, throughout the western world. Barriers between Christian confessions began falling with astonishing rapidity. But, in accordance with the promiscuous morals of the time, these unions were made, not in holiness and truth, but in an adulterous spirit of indifference to the truth and profound disregard of the dogmas and traditions of the Church.

At the same time, the Kremlin saw an opportunity to infiltrate its ecclesiastical agents into the Vatican and other denominations via the ecumenical movement. Thus in September, 1960, during a conference of the Orthodox Churches to establish a catalogue of topics to be discussed at a future Pan-Orthodox Council, the Soviet church's delegates first ensured that no topic which might prove embarrassing to the Soviet government would be discussed, either at any future Pan-Orthodox Council or at any ecumenical meeting - topics such as the struggle against atheism and

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<sup>188</sup> On the sufferings of the Serbian Church, see Joachim Wertz, "On the Serbian Orthodox Martyrs of the Second World War", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 33, no. 1, January-February, 1983, pp. 15-26.

Freemasonry. Then it supported the conference's decision to seek closer contacts with the Monophysites, Nestorian, Old Catholic, Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant Churches, as well as the World Council of Churches. In other words, the Orthodox henceforth were to abandon the struggle against Atheism, Freemasonry and other false religions, and were to engage in dialogue towards union with all the Christian heretics - while at the same time using ecumenical forums to further the ends of Soviet foreign policy in its struggle with the Capitalist West!

Three months later, the Soviet church joined the WCC at its general assembly of the WCC in New Delhi. The KGB-enforced entry of the Moscow Patriarchate had an immediate and devastating effect on the Orthodox position in the WCC. For the Russians not only constituted numerically the largest single Church in the WCC; they also controlled, through the KGB, all the other delegates from behind the iron curtain. Communism and Ecumenism therefore met in an unholy union. As Deacon Andrew Kurayev wrote: "Sergianism and Ecumenism intertwined. It was precisely on the instructions of the authorities that our hierarchy conducted its ecumenical activity, and it was precisely in the course of their work abroad that clergy who had been enrolled into the KGB were checked out for loyalty."<sup>189</sup>

While the Russian communists were uniting with the Protestants, the Greek masons were uniting with the Catholics. Thus in 1965 Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras "lifted the anathemas" of 1054 that separated the two Churches. From this time the Ecumenical Patriarchate must be considered to be in effect a uniate church (i.e. a part of the Roman Church with Orthodox rites). In the same year, the Serbian Church entered the World Council of Churches. Only Archimandrite Justin Popovich (+1978) and the Free Serbs of America offered any opposition to this apostasy from within the Serbian Church.

The 1970s witnessed an unholy competition between the leaders of the Greek and Russian Churches to see who could enter into communion with the most heretics. The leader of the Soviet church's ecumenical offensive was Metropolitan Nicodemus of Leningrad, who, as it has now been revealed, was both a major-general of the KGB and a secret bishop of the Catholic Church, whose real loyalties were revealed by his death at the feet of the Pope in 1978. He developed a whole new apostate theology of "Communist Christianity", which was criticised by none of the hierarchs of "World Orthodoxy". Moreover, it was Nicodemus who engineered the creation of the "Orthodox Church of America" in 1970, a schism from the Russian Church Abroad which has not been recognised by any other Orthodox Church.<sup>190</sup>

By the early 1980s, as the ecumenical movement plumbed ever-greater depths of apostasy through unions at the highest level between all the leading religions of the

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<sup>189</sup> Kuraev, "Vo dni pechal'nie Velikago posta", *Den'*, no. 13, March 29 / April 4, 1992 (in Russian).

<sup>190</sup> On Nicodemus, see Piers Compton, *The Broken Cross: The Hidden Hand in the Vatican*, Sudbury: Neville Spearman, 1983, pp. 158-159; "On the Death of a Soviet Bishop", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October 23 / November 5, 1978; Fr. Sergius Keleher, *Passion and Resurrection: The Greek Catholic Church in Soviet Ukraine, 1939-1989*, L'viv: Stauropegion, 1993, pp. 101-102.

world, including Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and pagans, only the Russian Church Abroad, the Russian Catacomb Church and the Greek and Romanian Old Calendarists still remained outside the WCC. In 1989 the Patriarchate of Jerusalem also withdrew, but remained in communion with the ecumenist Orthodox, including such apostates as Patriarch Parthenius of Alexandria, who declared that Mohammed was an apostle of God! In 1990 the Autocephalous Churches also signed a concordat with the Monophysites, whereby the anathemas against the Monophysites were lifted without the latter renouncing their heresy.

At this critical moment, communism fell in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This excited great hopes of a resurrection of Orthodoxy. But it was not to be – for the time being. In Russia, the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate, although clearly exposed by a parliamentary commission as being active agents of the KGB, retained a firm hold on ecclesiastical power. The Russian Church Abroad opened some parishes on Russian soil; but disagreements about the status of the Moscow Patriarchate, and some disastrous episcopal appointments, hindered her witness among the people. The real beneficiary of the fall of communism was the Vatican, which mounted a vigorous offensive for the hearts and minds of the former Soviet peoples, beginning with a more or less complete takeover of the Western Ukraine. Protestant denominations also began to make converts, as did many pagan sects. At the same time, in spite of the lack of truly Orthodox leadership, the polls showed a steady rise in the numbers of those professing to be one or another kind of Orthodox Christians (although the proportions are still very small).

At the time of writing, there is unfortunately no sign of the recovery by the True Orthodox Christians into some kind of organizational unity. Judging from history, such a recovery is unlikely to take place until God grants an Orthodox Tsar. However, the prophecies of the Orthodox Church foresee just such a recovery under a Tsar, who will depose the ecumenist hierarchs and encourage a final blossoming of the True Faith throughout the world, before another steep decline and the appearance of the personal Antichrist.<sup>191</sup>

But we must beware of a counterfeit, especially since the false Russian democracy and false Moscow patriarchate is already playing with the idea of creating a puppet “autocracy” with a Romanov at its head. For, as a Catacomb priest writes, for the genuine regeneration of Russia, “even if a tsar is elected, he must necessarily belong to the True Orthodox Church. And to this Church must belong all the people who represent the regenerate Russia... The first union of people... can arise at an extremely unpropitious historical and political moment on the territory of Russia or even on some small part of it... It is possible that such a union ‘into Russia’ can

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<sup>191</sup> See Sergius Fomin, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad, 1994, ch. 21; Andreev, *Russia’s Catacomb Saints*, *op. cit.*; Fr. Nilus Sotiropoulos, *The Coming Sharp and Two-Edged Sword*, Athens, 1975 (in Greek).

encompass only 100-200 people, who can be joined by other people later. At some point an Orthodox Tsar could even be elected in their midst..."<sup>192</sup>

Only a truly Orthodox tsardom can be a legitimate government for Russia – or a Provisional Government that consciously prepares the way for the return of Autocracy and unambiguously condemns the lawlessness of all that has taken place in Russian governmental life since February, 1917.<sup>193</sup>

But even if such a recovery is denied us because of our sins, we can be sure that the True Church will survive, albeit in desperately straitened circumstances and numbers, until the end of the world. For as the only Saviour of the Church has said: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her" (Matthew 16.18).

### *Towards the Antichrist*

Can we draw any conclusions, from the period of Church history just described, concerning the likely forms of Church life during the reign of the personal Antichrist?

If the period 1453 to 1917 can be described as the period in which the Church became dangerously close to the State, but managed - just - to preserve her integrity, then the period 1917 to the present day can be described as the period in which the relationship between Church and State broke down altogether. The official Orthodox Churches became so close to the States with which they had to deal and their prevailing, antichristian ideology - Communism in the East, Democracy-Ecumenism in the West, that they lost their inner essence, faithfulness to Christ, and became, not simply State Churches, but Churches of and for the State, being servants of, and completely conformed to, the kingdom that is of this world, not the Kingdom of God. Thus in the communist countries the Churches became totalitarian structures serving the world revolution by preaching revolutionary morality and eschatology; while in the countries of the West they became members of a democratic, federal structure called the World Council of Churches, which similarly served the world revolution by preaching the relativity of all religious truth. From the 1960s these two streams of apostate Orthodoxy joined together in "ecocommunion".<sup>194</sup> First, the World Council of Churches, led by the Sovietised Moscow Patriarchate, became a mouthpiece of political revolution, funding terrorist movements in Africa and elsewhere; and then, after the fall of communism, Democracy-Ecumenism seized control of the communist heartland, while leaving intact the totalitarian structure and Soviet hierarchies of the communised churches.

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<sup>192</sup> Fr. Basil Redechkin, "Rossia voskresnet", *Pravoslavnaiia Rus'*, N 18 (1495), September 15/28, 1993, p. 11 ®.

<sup>193</sup> Alexander Nikitin, "Chto zhe trebuietsa ot pravitel'stva dlia priznania ego perekhodnym k zakonnomu?" *Vozvrashteniie*, N 2, 1993, pp. 6-8 ®.

<sup>194</sup> V. Moss, "Ecocommunion", *Living Orthodoxy*, September-October, 1989, vol. XI, no. 5, pp. 13-18.

The True Church, meanwhile, was forced to flee into the wilderness like the Woman clothed with the Sun of the Apocalypse (chapter 12). In countries within the western orbit, such as Greece, this entailed only intermittent persecution and permitted the Church to lead a semi-legal existence. But in countries that fell within the Soviet sphere of influence, most True Christians had to flee underground, leading an outlawed existence that was characterised as "counter-revolutionary" and subversive by the State.

This elicited a great debate among the Catacomb Christians. What was the nature of the State on whose territory they lived? Its hostility to Orthodoxy was obvious; but was it nevertheless still a power established by God, like the pagan Roman State of the first three centuries, or the Ottoman empire, or was it, in effect, the Antichrist, a power established, not by God, but by the devil (Revelation 13.2) - a power, therefore, which had to be resisted by all means if faithfulness to Christ was to be preserved? The answer given by the Russian Church Council of 1918 was unambiguous: the Soviet State is not established by God, but is the collective Antichrist, the direct forerunner of the personal Antichrist who is still to come and of essentially the same nature as him, to which the faithful must not submit in any way. Unfortunately, Church leaders did not always act consistently with this conciliar decision. Thus in 1922 Patriarch Tikhon compromised with the Soviets over the requisition of church valuables, which gave the opportunity to the renovationists to make the first major breach in the Church's defences. Then, in 1927, Metropolitan Sergius capitulated to Soviet power, which led to the almost complete destruction of the Church in the 1930s.

Thus the main lesson to be learned from this period of Church history is that, having entered the age of the Antichrist, the Church can hope for no support from any worldly power or from any kind of union with the world. Having rejected the power that was truly from God in 1917, the people have come to understand from bitter experience what is the power that is from the devil, and that no union with this power is possible. The unions that have been attempted - with Communism in the East, and with Democracy-Ecumenism in the West - have all ended in disaster, the loss of grace and the shackling of the Church's ability to preach the whole truth and nothing but the truth to a world "which lies in evil" (I John 5.19). Moreover, even if the Lord, in response to the prayers of the millions of new martyrs and confessors of our century, and for "a testimony to all nations" of the truth of Orthodoxy (Matthew 24.14), restores the throne of the Orthodox kings for a time, this will not still change the essential nature of our time, which is apocalyptic. Indeed, the main task of such a king will be to warn that that scourge that devastated Russia in the twentieth century is now about to come upon the whole world; he will prepare the Church for the coming of the Antichrist in his last and most terrifying form, the false messiah and king of the Jews, of whom the Lord said: "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive" (John 5.43).

The struggle against the personal Antichrist will be, if it were possible, even more difficult than that of the Catacomb Church against the collective Antichrist. For he will be - to begin with, at any rate - no crude atheist destroyer, like the Bolsheviks. He will be a genius who will bring peace and prosperity to a world close to despair. He will work false miracles that will dazzle the minds and corrupt the hearts of all but the most sober Christians. He will honour religion (according to St. Seraphim he will be born in Russia, so perhaps he will even be Orthodox), and seem to be a model of true piety.

But halfway through his reign, when he has gathered all power, both political and ecclesiastical, into his hands, he will suddenly tear off his mask of tolerance and goodwill and will declare himself for what he is - the vessel of satan and direct rival to the true God, "opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (II Thessalonians 2.4). Then will begin the last and greatest persecution of the faithful in the whole history of the Church. If already now, in the epoch of Ecumenism, the Grand Rabbi of Israel, Eliahu Baqshi Doron, can declare that "the Christians are idolaters, they commit acts of idolatry in the holy places... The commandment orders the idolaters to be persecuted and driven from the land of Israel"<sup>195</sup>, what can the Christians expect in those very last days of the existence of the world, when they represent the last remnants of resistance to the complete victory of the Antichrist?

In order to survive spiritually at that time, they will have had to absorb all the lessons of the struggle of the Russian Catacomb Church. That is, no compromise of any kind with the prevailing power will be possible; and the thought of salvaging anything tangible from the general maelstrom - a house, a job, or even a church and the possibility of above-ground services - will be a snare and a delusion. For "then let them which be in Judea [the Church] flee into the mountains; let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes" (Matthew 24.16-18).

As St. Seraphim of Sarov said of the temptations facing the faithful Christians of these last times: "When this age comes to an end, at first the Antichrist will remove the crosses from the churches and destroy the monasteries... Then life will be short. The angels will scarcely be able to collect the souls... In the days of that great sorrow of which it is said that no flesh could be saved unless, for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short - in those days the remnant of the faithful are to experience in themselves something like that which was experienced by the Lord Himself when He, hanging on the Cross, being perfect God and perfect Man, felt Himself so forsaken by His Divinity that He cried out to Him: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? The last Christians also will experience in themselves a similar abandonment of humanity by the grace of God, but only for a very short time, after the passing of which the Lord will not delay immediately to appear in all His glory, and all the holy angels with Him. And then will be performed in all its fullness

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<sup>195</sup> Quoted in *Foi Transmise et Sainte Tradition*, N 93, March, 1997, p. 20 (in French).

everything foreordained from the ages in the pre-eternal counsel of the Holy Trinity..."<sup>196</sup>

As the Church on earth becomes weaker, so the attention of Christians is directed more and more to the Heavenly Church, which becomes daily larger and stronger. "I have lifted up mine eyes to the mountains [the saints of the Heavenly Church] from whence cometh my help" (Psalm 120.1). "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21.28). Our redemption will come when the last member of the Church on earth who is destined to be saved will have finished his earthly course. Then the Body of Christ in heaven and on earth will be united round her Head; for "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven.. and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them" (I Thessalonians 4.16-17).

This intimate inter-communion between the Heavenly and Earthly Church is unknown outside Orthodoxy. It is non-existent in Protestantism, which has no communion of saints, no prayer for the dead and very little knowledge of the life after death; and severely distorted in Catholicism, with its false saints, purgatorial fire and system of indulgences dependent on the Pope. In Orthodoxy, on the other hand, the Ascension of Christ and the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost has opened up to us an immediate communion with the Church in heaven which is the very life of the Church on earth. For, as the Apostle Paul says, "if you are risen with Christ, seek that which is heavenly, where Christ sits at the right hand of God; think about that which is heavenly, and not about the earthly. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3.1-3). That is why that which seems childish in Orthodoxy to the wise of this world - stories of the intervention of angels and saints, of miraculous healings, wonder-working icons and relics - so delights us and is so congruent with our faith. For these signs and miracles demonstrate that our faith is based, "not on human wisdom, but on the power of God" (I Corinthians 2.5), and that our Church on earth is in living, and not merely theoretical, contact with the Church in heaven.

For did not the Lord, after the primary sign and foundational miracle of His Resurrection, declare that "these signs will accompany those who believe: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will take up snakes; and if they drink something poisonous, it will not harm them; they will lay hands on the sick, and will be healed" (Mark 16.17-18)? And did not the bones of the Prophet Elisha raise a man from the dead, like the relics of our Orthodox saints? And did not the very shadow of one apostle, and the handkerchief of another, heal the sick, like the wonder-working icons of our Orthodox Church?

Of course, visible signs are not the only demonstration of our faith, and the devil, too, can work miracles. And this should be particularly remembered today, when those servants of God who work miracles are hidden from sight, and when the devil

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<sup>196</sup> Quoted in Fr. Seraphim Rose, "The Future of Russia and the End of the World", *The Orthodox Word*, 1981, vol. 17, nos. 100-101.



is working all kinds of false miracles to deceive the unwary.<sup>197</sup> However, communion with the Church in heaven in word and deed, in prayer and signs and liturgy, remains as definitive of Orthodoxy as communion with the Pope is of Romanism. For, as Alexei Khomiakov says, "we know that when any one of us falls, he falls alone; but no one is saved alone. He who is saved is saved in the Church, as a member of her, and in unity with all her other members..."<sup>198</sup>

If communion in love with the Heavenly Church is definitive of the life of the Earthly Church, then the faith and hope of the Heavenly Church is definitive of her faith and hope. We have already seen how each new revelation of the nature of God in the Holy Scriptures is related to, and built on, previous revelations, to earlier saints of God. Thus "He Who Is" and appeared to Moses is the same as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" who spoke to the patriarchs and was confessed by Christ before the Sadducees; and the God Who revealed Himself to the apostles, "the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit", is precisely the God Who spoke through the prophets. This continuity of revelation is stressed also in the New Testament Church at each new stage in the struggle for "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). For our faith is precisely the same faith which was first preached by the apostles, witnessed to by the martyrs, and defined by the fathers at the Seven Ecumenical Councils. It is therefore not something new, but in complete conformity with the faith of all those who have gone before us - patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, fathers - to whom the One God revealed Himself and who now live together with Him in the unwaning light of the Heavenly Kingdom. And if the outward situation of the faithful has changed over the generations - from the tent of Abraham to the palace of Justinian to the cramped apartments of today's Catacomb Christians - its inner essence has in no way changed, being the life in Jesus Christ, Who is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Hebrews 13.8). And this inner and invisible unity will be revealed outwardly and visibly at the end of the world, "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed)..." (II Thessalonians 1.10).

It follows that if some new, or apparently new teaching arises, our first reaction is: is this the teaching of the apostles and the fathers, of those whose faith we know for certain was correct, and whom God glorified by manifold signs and wonders (for "whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Romans 8.30))?

Thus when, at the council of Florence in 1438, the Catholics attempted to justify the introduction of the Filioque into the Creed by many subtle arguments, St. Mark of Ephesus refused to enter into these arguments, but first sought agreement on the point which to the Orthodox was essential: had not the fathers of the Third Ecumenical Council forbidden any addition to the Creed? Of course, there are other weighty arguments against the Filioque - for example, that it destroys the unity of origin of the Godhead in the Father alone - and St. Mark later provided them. But the

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<sup>197</sup> See Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Monastery Press, 1979.

<sup>198</sup> Khomiakov, *On Prayer and the Communion of Saints*.

safest course is simply to rely on the authority of the Heavenly Church. And if this seems "stultifying" or "uncreative", so be it: we would rather be "uncreative" with the friends of the Creator than brilliant innovators with His enemies.

It is this life-giving conservatism which explains why the Orthodox refuse to concede on issues which to the heterodox often seem trivial. Take the issue of the new calendar. Why such a fuss, say our opponents, over a mere "thirteen days" difference? Because, we reply, the Apostle Paul said: "Hold the traditions" (II Thessalonians 2.15), and the tradition of the "old" Orthodox calendar was sealed by the fathers of the First Ecumenical Council and sanctified by many centuries of usage. To change the calendar, therefore, would be to break communion, not only with our brethren who keep the old calendar on earth, but also with all the saints who worship together with us in heaven. And this would be a great crime; for, as St. John Chrysostom says, "exactness in the keeping of times is not as important as the crime of division and schism".<sup>199</sup> For unity in heaven and on earth, in time and in eternity, is the supreme aim of our life in Christ - as the Lord said, "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17.21); and anything which disrupts that unity is anathema to us. As the *Synodicon* of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which is read every first Sunday of the Great Fast in the Orthodox Church, says: "All that was innovated and enacted, or that in the future shall be enacted, outside of Church Tradition and the teaching and institution of the holy and ever-memorable Fathers, Anathema (thrice)".

For we are commanded, as St. Athanasius the Great says, "to keep in step, not with the times, but with God". And as God does not change, - "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law" (Matthew 5.18), - we hold fast to His command. The conservatism of the Orthodox, therefore, is not a mindless fear of progress, but the wholesome fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom and the only hope of real progress, progress towards the Heavenly Kingdom. This world and everything in it will one day perish in the fire of the Last Judgement; only that will survive which is not of this world, having its foundation in that other world of which this world knows nothing and which it despises.

And so we, "receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire... [And let us not be] carried about with divers and strange doctrines... [But] let us go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (Hebrews 12.29, 13.9, 13-14)

As the Last Day approaches, the Church on earth will become smaller and smaller. However, St. Ephraim teaches that "many people will be found pleasing to God, for whom it will be possible, in the mountains and desert places, to save themselves by much prayer... For God, seeing their many tears and sincere faith, will have mercy

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<sup>199</sup> Quoted by Liudmila Perepelkina, "Yulianskij kalendar' - 1000-letnaia ikona vremeni na Rusi", *Pravoslavnij Put'*, 1988, p. 122 (in Russian).

on them, as a tender Father, and will keep them."<sup>200</sup> According to Tertullian, "the Christian society will never be depleted, and will become particularly strong when in its appearance it will seem to wane".<sup>201</sup> It will become particularly strong, as we have seen, because the numbers of intercessors in the Heavenly Church will be greater than ever. In our century alone millions have been added to those martyrs who cry: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6.10). "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand..." (Revelation 8.3-4)

And yet, even with this great weakness of the Church on earth by comparison with the Church in heaven, the Lord has ordained that the dependence should not be entirely in one direction. For "they without us cannot attain perfection" (Hebrews 11.40) - that is, the resurrection of the body and the entrance into the Heavenly Bridal Chamber of Christ. It is therefore incumbent on us on earth to hasten that glorious day by filling up the number of those in heaven until it has reached that total pre-ordained in the eternal Counsel of God. Then and only then will He descend to earth with all the heavenly powers, so as to unite the heavenly and the earthly and lead both Churches as one Body into the Bridal Feast of the Kingdom. "And the Spirit and the Bride say: come! And let him who hears say: come! And let him who desires it take of the water of life freely" (Revelation 22.17).

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<sup>200</sup> St. Ephraim, *Oration on the Coming of the Lord*.

<sup>201</sup> Tertullian, *Liber ad Scapulum*, 5.

## CONCLUSION. THE CHURCH AS THE BODY AND BRIDE OF CHRIST

*This is a great mystery: but I speak of Christ and the Church.*  
Ephesians 5.32.

We have considered many historical images of the Church: the Family Church, the Imperial Church, the Catacomb Church, etc. But what is the image of the Church as she exists for all time, in eternity? Holy Scripture gives us two images that in fact amount to one: the Church as the Body and Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5.32). In accordance with this image, Christ and the Church are united in the way that a bridegroom and a bride are united, consubstantial in the way that a Bridegroom and Bride are consubstantial, sharing not only in Christ's Humanity but also in His Divinity, since Christians are "partakers in the Divine nature", in the Apostle Peter's words (II Peter 1.4) Therefore the attempt to place an unbridgeable gulf in dignity between Christ and the Church that is characteristic of Protestantism and Ecumenism, is contrary to the sacred symbolism of the Holy Scriptures. Let us look at this symbolism a little more closely.

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

St. Cyril of Alexandria comments on this passage in an illuminating manner: "Christ, having taken as an example and image of that indivisible love, accord and unity which is conceivable only in unanimity, the unity of essence which the Father has with Him and which He, in turn, has with the Father, desires that we too should unite with each other; evidently in the same way as the Consubstantial, Holy Trinity is united so that the whole body of the Church is conceived as one, ascending in Christ through the fusion and union of two people into the composition of the new perfect whole. The image of Divine unity and the consubstantial nature of the Holy Trinity as a most perfect interpenetration must be reflected in the unity of the believers who are of one heart and mind" - and body, he adds, for this "natural unity" is "perhaps not without bodily unity".<sup>202</sup>

It is striking that St. Cyril here refers to the union in one flesh of a Christian marriage not simply as an image of the union of all believers in the Church, but as

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<sup>202</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On John* 17.21; quoted in Archbishop Ilarion Troitsky, *Christianity or the Church?* Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1971, p. 9. Italics mine.

the base, the lowest cell, as it were, of that union. It is not simply that the Christian family is a "house church", in St. Paul's phrase (Romans 16.4), or a "little church", in St. John Chrysostom's.<sup>203</sup> The Church is both made up of small families, or little churches, and is one big family or Great Church - "the whole family in heaven and on earth" that is named after Christ (Ephesians 3.15). And while, of course, not all Christians are united in the bond of marriage, they are all united, first through the bond of the marriage of Adam and Eve, which created our original, fallen human nature, and then through the bond of the marriage of the new Adam and the new Eve, Christ and His Church, which created the new, redeemed nature of mankind. Thus every Christian is born into the little church through the union in the flesh of his parents, and is reborn into the Great Church through the union in the flesh of his spiritual parents, Christ and the Church.

Indeed, if the union of Adam and Eve was the first "little church", the first unit in, and icon of, the Great Church of all redeemed humanity, we can take that union as defining the nature of the union between Christ and the Church, so that just as Eve was formed from the flesh of Adam, so the new Eve, the Church, was formed from the blood and water that flowed from the side of the new Adam, Christ. As the eighth-century English Orthodox Father, St. Bede the Venerable, writes: "The woman was made out of the side of Adam to show how strong that union must have been. But that it was done in his sleep, and flesh filled up the place whence the bone had been taken, was for a higher mystery. For it signified that the sacraments of salvation would come out of the side of Christ as He slept in death on the cross - that is, the blood and water from which the Church was created as His Bride... It was to typify this same mystery that Scripture says, not 'made' or 'formed' or 'created', as in all the previous works, but 'the Lord God *built* the rib which He had taken from Adam into a woman', not as if it were a human body, but rather a house, which house we are if we keep our faithfulness and glory of hope right up to a strong end."<sup>204</sup>

Again, the words "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2.18) indicate, not only that it is not good for fallen man to remain unmarried, but also that it is not good for man to be out of communion with the Church, the new Paradise. And the words "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2.23) signify, not only the oneness of a man and his wife, but the oneness of all Christians through participation in the new tree of life, "the true Vine" (John 15.1) - the Body and Blood of Christ. Finally, the words "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 1.28) signify, not only that marriage is meant to produce children and thereby populate the whole earth, but also that the union between Christ and His Church is meant to bring forth many new Christians and subdue the whole earth to the teachings and commandments of the Christian faith.

"But now I want to show," continues St. Cyril, "that there is what we might call a unity of nature by which we are bound to one another and are all bound to God... The Only-Begotten, through the wisdom which is His and through the counsel of the

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<sup>203</sup> St. Chrysostom, *Homily XX on Ephesians*, 3.

<sup>204</sup> St. Bede, *On Genesis*, 2.20-22.

Father, found and wrought a means by which we might come into unity with God and with one another - even we ourselves, although by our differences we are separate individuals in soul and body. For by one body, and that His own, He blesses those who believe in Him by a mystical communion and makes them of one body with Himself and one another... For if we all partake of the one loaf, we are all made one body; for it is not possible that Christ be divided. Therefore the Church is called 'the Body of Christ' of which we are individually members, according to Paul's understanding. For we are all united to the one Christ through His holy body, inasmuch as we receive Him Who is one and undivided in our own bodies... Now if we are all of one body with one another in Christ, and not only with one another but with Him Who assuredly is within us through His own flesh, clearly we are all one, both in one another and in Christ. For Christ, Who is both God and man in one person, is the body of unity."<sup>205</sup>

As a contemporary Father, St. John Maximovich, puts it: "For the full sanctification of man, the body of the servant of the Lord must be united with the Body of Christ, and this is accomplished in the mystery of Holy Communion. The true Body and Blood of Christ which we receive, becomes a part of the great Body of Christ... We partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, in the holy Mysteries, so that we ourselves may be members of Christ's Body: the Church."<sup>206</sup>

"Of course," continues St. John, "for union with Christ, the mere conjoining of our body with the Body of Christ does not suffice. The consumption of the Body of Christ becomes beneficial when in spirit we strive toward Him and unite ourselves with Him. Reception of the Body of Christ, with aversion to Him in spirit, is like the approach to Christ of those who struck Him and mocked and crucified Him. Their approaching Him served not for their salvation and healing, but for their condemnation. But those who partake with piety, love and readiness to bring themselves to serve Him, closely unite themselves with Him and become instruments of His divine will."<sup>207</sup>

"With regard to union in the Spirit," writes St. Cyril, "we shall say again that we have all received one and the same spirit, namely the Holy Spirit, and are, so to speak, mingled with one another and with God. For Christ makes the Spirit of the Father Who is also His own Spirit to dwell in each of us individually, many as we are, yet the Spirit is one and undivided; and in that individuality which is His by nature He holds together in unity those spirits which are separated from unity one with another, showing them all to be as one in Himself. For as the power of the holy flesh makes those in whom it may come to dwell to be of one body, in the same way,

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<sup>205</sup> St. Cyril, *On John* 17.21; translated in Eric Jay, *The Church: Its Changing Image through Twenty Centuries*, London: SPCK, 1977, p. 79.

<sup>206</sup> St. John Maximovich, "The Church as the Body of Christ", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 31, no. 5, September-October, 1981, pp. 16-17.

<sup>207</sup> St. John Maximovich, *op. cit.*

I hold, the one indivisible Spirit dwells in them all and binds them all into a spiritual unity."<sup>208</sup>

Thus we become one in the Body of Christ by partaking in His Body and Blood in the sacrament of the Eucharist, and we become one in the Spirit of Christ by partaking in His Spirit through being sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit at the sacrament of Holy Chrismation. This essentially sacramental, mystical concept of the Church is opposed both to the Catholic and Sergianist concept, which places organisational unity above sacramental unity, and to the Protestant and Ecumenist concept, which effectively eliminates any notion of sacramental unity and replaces it by a vague notion of faith alone.

Now unity of faith is, of course, fundamental to the Orthodox concept of the Church, and is the first criterion for distinguishing between the One True Church and the many false ones. For, St. Maximus the Confessor declared, "Christ the Lord called that Church the Catholic Church which maintains the true and saving confession of the faith"<sup>209</sup> But faith alone, without participation in the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist, that is, without union to Christ in spirit, soul and body, is not enough to make one a member of His Church.

Thus we read in the *Life* of the fourth-century St. Martin of Tours, that one of his catechumens died while he was on a journey. On returning, St. Martin raised him from the dead and baptised him. Then the catechumen related that "when he left the body he was taken to the court of the Judge and that he heard the grim sentence that he was to be condemned to the dark places [i.e., to hell] and to the hordes of common people. Then two angels pointed out to the Judge that this was the man for whom Martin was praying and so the order was given for him to be taken back the two angels, handed over to Martin and restored to his former life."<sup>210</sup> Thus true faith, with repentance, makes one eligible for entrance into the Church, enrolling one in the ranks of the catechumens; but it is participation in the sacraments that actually effects that entrance; for in a sense the sacraments *are* the Church - the Body (of Christ in the Eucharist) *is* the Body (of Christ as the Church).

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

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<sup>208</sup> St. Cyril, *On John*, 17.21.

<sup>209</sup> Fr. Christopher Birchall, *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1982, p. 14.

<sup>210</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *The Life of St. Martin of Tours*, 7. Translated in Caroline White (ed.), *Early Christian Lives*, London: Penguin Books, 1998, p. 142.

from Abel himself down to those who shall to the end be born and shall believe in Christ, the whole assembly of Saints belonging to one City, which City is Christ's body, of which Christ is the head."<sup>211</sup>

Union with Christ has several degrees, teaches the fourth-century Western Father, St. Hilary of Poitiers. It begins with unity in the one faith, continues with unity in the one baptism, whereby we become "one by regeneration into the same nature", and is consummated by unity in the one Eucharist, which is "the sacrament of perfect unity". "Now how it is that we are in Him through the sacrament of the flesh and blood bestowed upon us, He Himself testifies, saying, '... because I live ye shall live also; because I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you'. If He wished to indicate a mere unity of will, why did He set forth a kind of gradation and sequence in the completion of the unity, unless it were that, since He was in the Father through the nature of the Deity, and we on the contrary in Him through His birth in the body, He would have us believe that He is in us through the mystery of the sacraments?... I have dwelt upon these facts because the heretics [Arians] falsely maintain that the union between the Father and Son is one of will only, and make use of the example of our own union with God, as though we were united to the Son and through the Son to the Father by mere obedience and a devout will, and none of the natural verity of communion were vouchsafed us through the sacrament of the Body and Blood; although the glory of the Son bestowed upon us through the Son abiding in us after the flesh, while we are united in Him corporeally and inseparably, bids us preach the mystery of the true and natural unity."<sup>212</sup>

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

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

Now the oneness and unifying power of the Church can be derived from the meaning of the word "Church", *ἐκκλησία* in Greek. For this literally signifies the calling out (*εκ-κλησία*) of those who before were separated into unity with each other. As St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, "it is rightly called 'Church' [*ἐκκλησία*] because it calls forth and assembles together all men."<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> St. Augustine, *On Psalm 90*, ii, 1; in Erich Przywara, *An Augustine Synthesis*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1977, p. 217.

<sup>212</sup> St. Hilary, *On the Trinity*, VIII, 15, 17; translated in Jay, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>213</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XVIII.



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

"..[Archbishop Ilarion] Troitsky.. adds a profound observation. 'The Hebrew word which signifies ecclesia - Church - is qahal. Qahal is a solemn designation of a religious assembly, of society in its relationship to God. Therefore this name was applied to the Hebrew nation as a whole. The word ecclesia is encountered twice altogether in the Gospel and both times in the Gospel of St. Matthew which was written for the Jews and so clearly reflects the Old Testament world-view. The Gospel says only that Christ will found His Church, and not just a Church. The fact that from the very beginning the term which was chosen to designate the Christian Church was this very word ecclesia, which has a close connection with Old Testament terminology, speaks of the consciousness of unity which imbued the early Church. In the Old Testament there was a single qahal, the people of the Lord or the commonwealth of the Lord (Numbers 16.3; 20.2-4, 9). Equally in the New Testament there also is a single Church of God' [*New Testament Teaching on the Church*, St. Petersburg, 1904, p. 15].

"To this one can add Bolotov's observation: 'The circumstance that Christ called the society He founded an ecclesia has a special polemical significance against Protestantism. The Protestant conception is obsessed with an invisible Church. But the concept of the ecclesia includes a strong element of visibility. Therefore the expression 'invisible Church' contains a contradictio in adjecto (internal contradiction). There cannot be any sort of invisible Church. One can participate only spiritually in the invisible, but in the ecclesia not otherwise than with the body.' [*Lectures on the History of the Early Church*, part I, Introduction, St. Petersburg, 1907, p. 13]."<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Protopresbyter Gregory Grabbe, *The Dogma of the Church in the Modern World*, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1976, pp. 5-6.

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

In considering this problem, it is useful to examine a distinction made by the Russian New Martyr (perhaps Martyr-Bishop) Mark (Novoselov) between the Church as organism and the Church as organisation: "It is necessary to distinguish between the Church-organism and the Church-organisation. As the apostle taught: 'You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it' (I Corinthians 12.27). The Church-organism is a living person, and just as the cells of our body, besides having their own life, have the life that is common to our body and links between themselves, so a man in the Body of Christ begins to live in Church, while Christ begins to live in him. That is why the apostle said: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2.20).

"The basis for the affirmation of the Church-organism is love for Christ. The Lord Himself saw the basis of His Church precisely in love for Him. He asked Peter: did he love Him? And He added: 'Feed My sheep'. The Church of Christ is the union of mutual love of the believers ('United by the bond of love and offering themselves to Christ the Lord, the apostles were washed clean', *Canon of Holy Thursday*). Only in the Church organism can true democratism, equality and brotherhood come into being; we are equal and brothers only if we are parts of one and the same living body. In the organisation there is not and cannot be organisational equality and brotherhood."<sup>215</sup>

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

Now this distinction might seem to recall the Protestant definition of the Church as "the invisible community of all believers". However, if the Church-organism is defined in terms of participation in the sacraments, it is no less visible than the Church-organisation; for participation in the sacraments is a visible act. Moreover,

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<sup>215</sup> Novoselov, "Primety Vremeni", *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'*, N 5 (545), May, 1995, pp.23-24, letter 5 (in Russian).

there can be no participation in the sacraments, and therefore no Church-organism, where there is no priesthood, i.e. no Church-organisation. Therefore, as Hieromartyr Mark goes on to say, the Church as organisation and the Church as organism are in the end inseparable.

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

Whether a man is a member of the Church-organism depends, ultimately, on whether he continues to commune of the true Body and Blood of Christ. Such communion does not exist outside the single, undivided Church-organism, and does not exist in heretical bodies which have been expelled from the Church organism by a lawful act of the Church hierarchy. But it can continue to exist outside a particular Church-organisation, as has been shown many times in history when saints have appeared in different Church organisations having no communion with each other.

Bishop Ignatius (Brianchaninov) compared the organisational divisions within the Church of the last times to the different parts of a shipwreck: "God desires and seeks the salvation of all. And He is always saving all who wish to be saved from drowning in the sea of life and sin. But He does not always save in a boat or in a convenient, well-equipped harbour. He promised to save the holy Apostle Paul and all his fellow-travellers, and He did save them. But the Apostle and his fellow-passengers were not saved in the ship, which was wrecked; they were saved with great difficulty, some by swimming and others on boards and various bits of the ship's wreckage."<sup>216</sup>

Elder Anatolius (Potapov) of Optina used the same analogy to describe the divisions within the True Church of Russia after 1917: "There will be a storm. And the Russian ship will be destroyed. Yes, it will happen, but, you know, people can be saved on splinters and wreckage. Not all, not all will perish..." But he also prophesied that canonical unity would be restored: "A great miracle of God will be revealed. And all the splinters and wreckage will, by the will of God and His might, be gathered together and united, and the ship will be recreated in its beauty and will go along the path foreordained for it by God. That's how it will be, a miracle manifest to all..."<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Bishop Ignatius, *The Arena*, chapter 10, Madras, 1970, pp. 24-25.

<sup>217</sup> Elder Anatolius, cited in *Russkij Palomnik*, N 7, 1993, p. 38 (in Russian).

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

The distinction between the Church as organism and the Church as organisation is useful again here. Thus Hieromartyr Mark writes: "Only to the Church-organism can we apply such titles as we meet in the Word of God, for example: 'glorious, holy, spotless' (Ephesians 1.4); 'the Bride of the Lamb' (Revelation 19.7; 21.9); 'the Body of Christ' (Ephesians 1.23; Colossians 1.24); 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (I Timothy 3.15). These concepts are inapplicable to the Church-organisation (or applicable only with great qualifications); they lead people into perplexity and are rejected by them. The Church-organism is the pure 'Bride' of Christ (Revelation 21.2), but the Church-organisation has all the faults of human society and always bears the marks of human infirmities... The Church-organisation often persecutes the saints of God, but the Church-organism receives them into her bosom... The Church-organisation rejects them from its midst, deprives them of episcopal sees, while they remain the most glorious members of the Church-organism. It is possible to belong externally to the visible Church (organisation), while one belongs only inwardly to the Body of Christ (organism), and the measure of one's belongingness is determined by the degree of one's sanctity."<sup>218</sup>

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

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

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<sup>218</sup> Novoselov, op. cit., letter 18.

sinners came to touch Him. But once He was established as Lord, the fear which He inspired was the fear of God."<sup>219</sup>

Just as, in a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, the unbelieving partner is sanctified through the union with the believer, and their children, too, are sanctified (I Corinthians 7.14), so in the marriage between God and man that takes place in the Church, man is sanctified through his union with God. St. John Chrysostom puts it as follows: "God desired a harlot... and has intercourse with human nature, [whereby] the harlot herself... is transformed into a maiden."<sup>220</sup> Again, Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes: "It is a great mystery when a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. The Apostle himself, who has been raised to the third heaven and beheld many heavenly mysteries, calls the marriage of natural man on earth a great mystery. It is the mystery of love and life, and the only mystery that exceeds it is the mystery of Christ's bond with His Church. Christ calls Himself the Bridegroom and the Church His Bride. Christ so loves the Church that He left His heavenly Father for her - though remaining equal with Him in unity of essence and divinity - and came down to earth and clave to his Church. He suffered for her sake that He might, by His Blood, cleanse her from sin and from all impurity and make her worthy to be called His Bride. He warms the Church with His love, feeds her with His Blood, and enlivens, enlightens and adorns her with His Holy Spirit."<sup>221</sup>

The Church remains holy as long as she remains faithful to her Bridegroom. The holiness of the Church which is communicated through the sacraments is not tarnished by the personal sinfulness of the priest who administers them as long as he remains within the Body. But immediately he steps outside the Body and commits spiritual adultery with a heretical body, he ceases to be a channel of holiness, and the so-called "sacraments" he administers are not a source of holiness, but of defilement. Thus, as the Martyr-Bishop Cyprian of Carthage wrote in the third century: "Whoever breaks with the Church and enters on an adulterous union cuts himself off from the promises made to the Church; and he who turns his back on the Church of Christ will not come to the rewards of Christ: he is an alien, a worldling, an enemy. You cannot have God for your Father if you no longer have the Church for your mother. If there was any escape for one who was outside the ark of Noah, there will be as much for one who is found to be outside the Church. The Lord warns us when He says: 'He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth'. whoever breaks the peace and harmony of the Church acts against Christ; whoever gathers elsewhere than in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ."<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> St. Ephraim, *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, XXI, 26.

<sup>220</sup> St. Chrysostom, *On Eutropius*, II, 2.

<sup>221</sup> Bishop Nikolai, *The Prologue of Ochrid*, Birmingham: St. Lazar's Press, 1986, May 29.

<sup>222</sup> St. Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, 6. Cf. St. Ambrose of Milan, *On Repentance*, II, 24; St. Augustine of Hippo, *Homily 21 on the New Testament*; St. Basil the Great, *First Canonical Epistle*; St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 11 on Ephesians*.

The individual Christian participates in the holiness of the Church as long as he remains faithful to her and does not enter into communion with heretics. Thus St. John the Almsgiver writes: "If, having legally married a wife in this world of the flesh, we are forbidden by God and by the laws to desert her and be united to another woman, even though we have to spend a long time separated from her in a distant country, and shall incur punishment if we violate our vows, how then shall we, who have been joined to God through the Orthodox Faith and the Catholic Church - as the Apostle says: 'I have espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ' (II Corinthians 11.2) - how shall we escape from sharing in that punishment which in the world to come awaits heretics, if we defile the Orthodox and Holy Faith by adulterous communion with heretics?"<sup>223</sup> For the heretical communions "have ceased to be holy Churches," writes Nicetas of Remesiana, "inasmuch as they have been deceived by doctrines of demons, and both believe and do otherwise than is required by the commands of Christ the Lord and the traditions of the Apostles."<sup>224</sup>

This teaching is confirmed by all the Fathers of the Church. Thus St. John of Damascus writes: "With all our strength let us beware lest we receive Communion from or give it to heretics. 'Give not what is holy to the dogs', says the Lord. 'Neither cast ye your pearls before swine', lest we become partakers in their dishonour and condemnation."<sup>225</sup> St. Theodore the Studite writes: "Chrysostom calls enemies of God not only the heretics, but also those who communicate with such people."<sup>226</sup> And again: "Some have suffered complete shipwreck in the faith. But others, even if they have not drowned in their thoughts, nevertheless perish through communion with heresy."<sup>227</sup> As we chant in the Divine Liturgy: "Holy things to the holy!"

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

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<sup>223</sup> *Life of St. John the Almsgiver*, translated by E. Dawes & N.N. Baynes (eds.), *Three Byzantine Saints*, London: Mowbrays, 1977.

<sup>224</sup> Nicetas, *De Symbolo*, 10.

<sup>225</sup> St. Damascene, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV, 13.

<sup>226</sup> St. Theodore, *P.G.* 99, 1049 A.

<sup>227</sup> St. Theodore, *P.G.* 99, 1164 A.

one henceforth to take into consideration the many and profound differences which are their lot. In that way all are raised up and united in a truly catholic manner."<sup>228</sup>

This understanding of Catholicity was developed especially by Russian Slavophile theologians, especially Alexis Khomiakov. They saw in Cyril and Methodius' translation of the Greek word καθολικη by the Slavonic word sobornaia a divine inspiration illuminating the meaning of the Greek original. For sobornaia is derived from sobor, meaning "council" or a large church with two or three altars; and the Slavophiles saw in the Church's "catholicity" or sobornost - her conciliarity, the vital quality that distinguishes her from Roman pseudo-Catholicism and Protestantism. Now, as Protopresbyter 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>229</sup> Nevertheless, the lack of a philological connection does not exclude a deep semantic or theological connection, a connection which Saints Cyril and Methodius saw when they chose this translation.

Khomiakov's argument was as follows: "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 καθολικος, 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 realised in the New Testament - in one word, the Church as it was defined by St. Paul."<sup>230</sup>

The essential difference between Orthodoxy and the West, according to Khomiakov, consists in Orthodoxy's possession of Catholicity, whereas the Papists have substituted for it *Romanism*, mechanical obedience to the Pope, and the Protestants - the papism of each individual: "The Apostolic Church of the ninth century (the time of Saints Cyril and Methodius) is neither the Church καθ' εαυτον (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

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<sup>228</sup> St. Maximus, *Mystagogy*, I, P.G. 91, 665-668.

<sup>229</sup> Pomazansky, "Catholicity and Cooperation in the Church", in *Selected Essays*, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1996, p. 50.

<sup>230</sup> Khomiakov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij*, Moscow, 1907, vol. II, pp. 312-313 (in Russian).

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>231</sup>

Among the Papists, the Church is expressed by the fiat of one man, which guarantees external unity, but no inner consensus. Among the Protestants, however, every man believes as he thinks fit, which guarantees neither unity nor consensus. Only among the Orthodox is there true Catholicity, which is expressed in Councils that express the Consensus of the Church, not only in the present, but in all generations. For, as Fr. Michael Pomazansky writes, "Catholicity refers to the fact that the Church is not limited to space, by earthly boundaries, nor is it limited in time, that is, by the passing of generations into the life beyond the grave. In its catholic fullness, in its catholicity, the Church embraces both the Church of the called and the Church of the chosen, the Church on earth and the Church in Heaven."<sup>232</sup>

According to another Slavophile, Khomiakov's friend Ivan Kireyevsky, just as, in a marriage, separation or divorce takes place when one partner asserts his or her self against the other, so in the Church schisms and heresies take place when one party asserts itself over against catholic unity. Thus the Roman patriarchate tore itself away from the unity and catholicity of the Church by an unbalanced, self-willed development of its own particular strength, the logical development of concepts. It introduced the Filioque into the Symbol of the Faith against the theological consciousness of the Church as a whole, and was then compelled to justify it by other false dogmas, such as the infallibility of the Pope, thereby destroying her catholicity – but not the catholicity of the Eastern Patriarchates that remained faithful to the Truth. As Khomiakov put it: "having appropriated the right of independently deciding a dogmatic question within the area of the Ecumenical Church, private opinion carried within itself the seed of the growth and legitimation of Protestantism, that is, of free investigation torn from the living tradition of unity based on mutual love."<sup>233</sup> Or, as Kireyevsky put it: "In the ninth century the western Church showed within itself the inevitable seed of the Reformation, which placed this same Church before the judgement seat of the same logical reason which the Roman Church had itself exalted... A thinking man could already see Luther behind Pope Nicolas I just as... a thinking man of the 16th century could foresee behind Luther the coming of 19th century liberal Protestantism..."<sup>234</sup>

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

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<sup>231</sup> Khomiakov, op. cit., p. 313.

<sup>232</sup> Pomazansky, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>233</sup> Khomiakov, "On the Western Confessions of Faith", translated by Schmemmann, A. (ed.), *Ultimate Questions*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965, p. 49.

<sup>234</sup> Kireyevsky, quoted by Fr. Alexey Young, *A Man is His Faith: Ivan Kireyevsky and Orthodox Christianity*, London: St. George Information Service, 1980.



to Christ; as the Apostle Paul says: "I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one Husband" (II Corinthians 11.2).

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

Those who assert that it is possible to be joined to the Apostolic Church - even "resurrect" the Apostolic Church - without being organically joined to that Church which has existed since the time of the Apostles, are like those who say that it is possible to be married to someone without having participated in the sacrament of marriage. Their claim to be already united to Christ will be seen by Him, the True Bridegroom, as spiritual fornication; for they have united themselves, not with Christ, but with a figment of their imagination, or with a demon posing as Christ. For, as St. Basil the Great says, "fornication is not marriage, nor even the beginning of marriage".<sup>235</sup>

It is impossible for a believer to be united in spiritual marriage with Christ if he has not been joined to him by the Apostles or their lawful successors, having first studied and fully accepted the teaching of the Apostles and Fathers of the Church. The West's superficial and flippant attitude towards apostolicity, and therefore to all those schisms and heresies which violate apostolicity, is a consequence of its essentially amoral attitude to sexual relations in general. For now that fornication is hardly considered to be a sin, and even homosexuality is deemed acceptable, it is hardly surprising that spiritual fornication and the wholesale spiritual promiscuity and perversity of such organisations as the World Council of Churches are also condoned.

For spiritual chastity is required in order to perceive the spiritual beauty of Christ's marriage to His Church. And only when chastity has been regained through repentance, the recognition that the years of wandering outside the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Unity of the Church have been barren and fruitless, will the individual soul or community be able to say: "I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better for me than now" (Hosea 2.6).

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<sup>235</sup> St. Basil, *Canon* 26.

Therefore just as a bridegroom has only one bride, with whom he lives in an unbroken spiritual and physical union through the grace given them in the sacrament of marriage and their determination to remain faithful to each other, so the Apostolic Church is that one Church which has lived in an unbroken spiritual and physical union with Christ through the grace of the Spirit that was bestowed upon her at Pentecost and the determination to remain faithful to the teaching of the Apostles to the end of the age. This One Apostolic Church is the Orthodox Church. For, as Bishop Theophanes the Recluse writes: "There is no truth outside the Orthodox Church. She is the single faithful keeper of all that was commanded by the Lord through the holy Apostles, and she is for that reason the only really Apostolic Church. The others have lost the Apostolic Church, and since according to their Christian conscience they have the conviction that only the Apostolic Church can faithfully keep and point to the truth, they have thought of constructing such a church themselves, and they have constructed it, and given this name to it. They have given the name, but the essence they have not been able to communicate. For the Apostolic Church was created in accordance with the good will of the Father by the Lord Saviour with the grace of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. It is not for men to create such a thing. Those who think to create such a thing are like children playing with dolls. If there is no true Apostolic Church on earth, then there is no point in wasting effort on creating her. But thanks to the Lord, He has not allowed the gates of hell to prevail over the Holy Apostolic Church. She exists and will continue to exist, in accordance with His promise, to the end of the age. And this is our Orthodox Church. Glory to God!"<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Bishop Theophan, *Mysli na Kazhdij Den' Goda (Thoughts for Every Day of the Year)*, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1982 (in Russian).