AGAINST ROMANIDES

A Critical Examination of the Theology of Fr. John Romanides

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INTRODUCTION

We may distinguish between three types of heretical ideas. The first is heresy in the classical sense, an attack on a specific teaching of the faith, such as the Divinity of Christ, the Procession of the Holy Spirit, the uncreatedness of Grace, or the Unity of the Church. A second type is constituted by the modern heresy of ecumenism, which does not so much attack any specific teaching of the faith, but rather adopts a new attitude to heresy in general, arguing that there is no such thing as One True Faith preserved by the One True Church, that the difference between truth and heresy is unimportant or even non-existent, that all denominations or religions are equally true (or untrue), or that, as one reviewer put it, "the greatest heresy is to believe that there is such a thing as heresy". A third type consists in taking a true formula, declaring it to be the central truth of the faith, and then "restructuring" all the other dogmas around it – without specifically denying them, but nevertheless distorting them through the creation of this new dogmatic centre of gravity. This is the path adopted by the most influential thinker in modern Greek Orthodoxy, Fr. John Romanidis, and the large number of his disciples, including Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos), Protopresbyter George Metallinos, Christos Yannaras and others.

There are links between these different types of heresy. Thus it is likely that the Protestant loss of faith in the dogma of the Church led to the disintegration of the Western Christian world, which in turn led to the need to "recreate" the Church in the form of a kind of coalition of denominations, which in turn led to the need to create a kind of doctrinal "lowest common denominator", which in turn led to the despising of the concept of the One Faith that is characteristic of the heresy of ecumenism. And then there are links between ecumenism and "Romanideanism"…

Fr. John Romanides (1927-2001) was a member of the new calendarist State Church of Greece, an admirer of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, a participant in many ecumenical conferences and a key supporter of the Chambésy union between the Ecumenical (World) Orthodox and the Monophysite heretics. However, while being actively engaged in the ecumenical movement in this way, and subordinate to hierarchs who prayed with and recognized both the eastern and the western heretics, Romanides constructed a theological system that virulently rejected not only Catholicism and Protestantism, but also certain traditional Orthodox teachings on the grounds that they were "Augustinian" and "scholastic" – that is, heretical. Romanides taught that the theology that was taught in Greece in his day "is of western and Russian origin. No relationship with Byzantium."[1] And so he saw his own work

[1] Romanides, in Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos), *Empeiriki Dogmatiki tis Orthodoxou Katholikis*

as a revolutionary return to the true Orthodox teaching from the heresy of contemporary Greek and Russian theology.

In order to justify this "mission" of his, Romanides constructed an historical narrative whereby almost all the dogmatic deviations of the West are laid at the door of St. Augustine of Hippo. From the time of Charlemagne and the false council of Frankfurt (794), the leaven of Augustinianism gradually penetrated the whole of the Franco-German West. Then, from the establishment of the Franco-German papacy in 1046, it infected the rest of the West – with the significant exception, according to Romanides, of the supposedly enslaved West Romans of France and Italy. Then, with the discovery of Aristotle in the later Middle Ages, this false leaven gave birth to heretical scholasticism – a mixture of Aristotle and Augustine systematized especially in the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas. The Augustinian-Aristotelian-Aquinian "pseudomorphosis" of Holy Tradition first infected the Orthodox Church in Russia from about the fifteenth century[2], and from the Russian Church penetrated the Greek Church after the Greek War of Independence.

This historical theory seriously distorts the truth both of Western and Eastern ecclesiastical history. However, I have relegated discussion of Romanides' historical theories to an appendix as being less important than his dogmatic errors.[3] The main body of this essay is devoted to a critique of his dogmatic teaching, beginning with his ideas on Holy Scripture and Science, and going on to discuss his ideas on the Holy Trinity, Original Sin, the Cross and Baptism, and Heaven and Hell.

Romanides has been called "the supreme new-calendarist theologian".[4] But no man can be called a true theologian who does not continue in the unchanging and never-interrupted Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church. As for those who think, like the Protestant Reformers, to make a revolution in theology and return to a supposedly purer "Early Church", their efforts only demonstrate to the truly Orthodox that they have not understood the faith of the Church and have

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Ekklesias kata tis Proforikes Paradoseis tou p. Ioannou Romanidi (The Empirical Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church according to the Oral Traditions of Fr. John Romanides), Levadeia: Monastery of the Nativity of the Theotokos, 2011, volume 1, p. 343.

[2] "The Russians looked on their Russian tradition as higher than the patristic and scholastic traditions. The hesychastic tradition, which is the basis of the Scriptural and patristic tradition, was overlooked." (Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 342). So much for the great flourishing of hesychasm in Russia from the time of St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. Paissy Velichkovsky and the Optina elders!

[3] See Appendix I, and Andrew J. Sopko, *Prophet of Roman Orthodoxy: The Theology of John Romanides,* Dewdney, B.C.: Synaxis Press, 1998, pp. 10-11, 116-118.

[4] By Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens, "Eikonomia kai oikoumenismos" (Iconoclasm and Ecumenism), http://www.ecclesiagoc.gr/el/diafora/140-eikonomahia-kai-oikoumenismos,February, 2011.

deviated from the straight and narrow path of the Holy Scriptures and Holy Fathers.

February 24 / March 8, 2012; revised December 7/20, 2014 and January 6/19, 2018.
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I. ROMANIDES ON HOLY SCRIPTURE AND SCIENCE

The central idea of Romanides, is that the whole of Orthodox theology and Orthodox life can be reduced to the formula "purification, illumination, deification" (or, as he prefers to say, divinization). "*Apart from purification, illumination and deification*," he writes, "*nothing else exists. No theology, that is.*"[5]

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

Deification, or glorification, according to Romanides, is the same as the vision of God in His Uncreated Energies; that is, theosis (deification) = theoria (the vision of God). Alternatively, it may be defined as "the perfection of personhood in the vision of the uncreated glory and rule of Christ in and among his saints, the members of his body, the church. Faith, prayer, theology, and dogma are the therapeutical methods and signposts on the road of illumination to perfection which, when reached, abolishes faith, prayer, theology, and dogma, since the final goal of these is their abolition in glorification and selfless love."[6]

The therapeutic process by which the soul is purified, illumined and deified through God's Grace is the touchstone of all theological truth. Truth is known as such because it "works" therapeutically, bringing the soul and body of man to the condition of deification/glorification for which he was created. All heresies and "pseudomorphoses" of the truth in the contemporary Christian world, including the Orthodox Christian world, are to be explained in terms of ignorance of, or deviation from, this saving path. True doctrine is recognized by the fact that it helps men to travel the path of purification, illumination and deification. False doctrine is recognized by the opposite: the failure to achieve, or make progress towards, deification. The possessors of truth, therefore, are, first and foremost, the glorified saints, the Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs and Fathers, who have met the Lord of Glory face to face in the Light of His Uncreated Energies. This meeting gives them a knowledge of God that is certain and unerring, and is the source of all true knowledge of God. Such knowledge is beyond all words and concepts; the deified/glorified cannot convey their knowledge of God to those who have not been purified and illumined. The best they can do is provide *signposts* to the truth in the form of created words and symbols. Among such symbols are the Holy Scriptures, the Symbol of the Faith, the writings of the Holy Fathers and the Definitions of the Ecumenical and Local Councils.

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[5] Vlachos, op. cit., volume 2, p. 295.

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

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

There is much that we can agree with here. The true theologian is truly, as the patristic saying goes, "the man who prays". And insofar as the end of true prayer is the complete union with God that we call deification, the title of "theologian" can worthily be given only to those who have prayed well and achieved this end – that is, the saints. The saints' knowledge of God is not theoretical, but "theoric", to use Romanides' term; for it is based, not on "theory", or hypothesis, but on theoria, or direct vision of God. Most "theologians", by contrast, being still mired in sin and in need of purification, are called such only by condescension. For while they speak and write about the same Being as the true theologians, they do so "through a glass, darkly," without the immediate, face-to-face apprehension of the truth possessed by the theologian-saints. This does not mean that their work is not necessary or useful, - if it *is* true, - but only that it is difficult, dangerous, and to a certain degree derivative…

Nevertheless, it is not *completely* derivative. For even the lowliest of believers, insofar as he *is* a believer, has a certain direct, definite and certain knowledge of God. For faith is possessed in differing degrees by all believers, and faith, as the Apostle Paul says, is "the substance [hypostasis] of things hoped for, the proof [elegkhos] of things not seen" (Hebrews 11.1). This "proof" provides certainty, and even if that which is proven is not seen it is nevertheless known in a real sense. For "ye have an anointing from the Holy One," says the Apostle John, "and ye *all* have knowledge" (I John 2.20).

Of course, the knowledge of God by faith alone cannot compare with the knowledge of Him that was given to the Apostles on Mount Tabor. For they through a transmutation of their senses actually *saw* God in His uncreated Glory – and lived to tell the story. And yet the lowlier "unseeing" knowledge is not to be scorned, and was actually blessed by Christ when He said to Thomas: "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20.29).

Romanides has very little to say about the "unseeing vision" of God that is *faith*, and far more about the direct vision of God in theoria-theosis. As a correction of an under-emphasis on deification in western theologians, this is understandable. Nevertheless, the correction has gone too far in his system. It is important that we – and especially we who are converts from the western

heresies – should be reminded of the ultimate goal of all faith and works in the complete union with God and the deification of human nature. But no less important is it to know what are the first steps in the ascent to God. These are, according to St. Maximus the Confessor, faith and the fear of God. Faith engenders the fear of hell, which engenders the struggle against the passions, which leads eventually to the supreme state, love.[7] Romanides' system suffers from its over-emphasis on the higher stages of the ascent to God at the expense of the lower. The lower steps of faith, and justification by faith, are one of the central themes of the New Testament. But Romanides says very little about faith, and seriously distorts the dogma of justification by faith…

Romanides controversially insists that the traditional sources of the faith - the Holy Scriptures, the Symbol of the Faith, the writings of the Holy Fathers and the Definitions of the Ecumenical and Local Councils - must not be "idolized" as the word of God. Thus at the Anglican-Orthodox ecumenical conference in Moscow in 1976 he said: "In what sense can a book embody the revelation of God? The Bible speaks to us of revelation, but is not itself to be identified with revelation."[8] And again: "Holy Scripture is not the word of God, it is *about* the Word of God. Everywhere 'about', not revelation itself or the word of God."[9] There are uncreated, ineffable words of Revelation, such as those that St. Paul heard in Paradise. But the words of Scripture are created, and therefore not Revelation, but *about* Revelation. "God's revelation to mankind," he writes, "is the experience of theosis. In fact, since revelation is the experience of theosis, an experience that transcends all expressions and concepts, the identification of Holy Scripture with revelation is, in terms of dogmatic theology, pure heresy."[10]

And yet the Holy Fathers (and not only Augustine) appear to have embraced this "pure heresy"! For while they were perfectly aware of the distinction between the Uncreated and the created, and understood that the words of Holy Scripture are created in origin, nevertheless they insisted that they *are* the words of God. This applies not only to the words uttered by Jesus Christ Himself, the hypostatic Word of God: they apply to every word of Holy Scripture. For the Holy Spirit "spoke through the Prophets", as the Symbol of Faith says: the Scriptures are the created words spoken through the lips of a created man by the Uncreated Spirit, and as such completely reliable and accurate. Thus St. Basil the Great writes: "Plainly it is a falling away from faith and an offence chargeable to pride, either to reject anything that is in Scripture, or to introduce anything that is not in Scripture".[11] Again, St. Gregory the Theologian writes: "We who extend

[7] St. Maximus, *First Century on Love*, 2-3.
[8] Romanides, in Archimandrite Kallistos Ware and Rev. Colin Davey (eds.), *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: The Moscow Agreed Statement,* London: SPCK, 1977, p. 51.
[9] Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 292.
[10] Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, The Dalles, Oregon: Uncut Mountain Press, 2008, p. 109.
[11] St. Basil, *On the Faith, P.G.* 31, col. 677.

the accuracy of the Spirit to every letter and serif [of Scripture] will never admit, for it were impious to do so, that even the smallest matters were recorded in a careless and hasty manner by those who wrote them down."[12] Again, St. Epiphanius of Cyprus writes: "Nothing of discrepancy will be found in Sacred Scripture, nor will there be found any statement in opposition to any other statement."[13]

The more modern Fathers say the same things. Thus shortly before the Russian revolution, St. Barsanuphius of Optina wrote: "In the Apocalypse it is said: 'Blessed is he that readeth the words of this book.' If this is written, it means that it is really so, for the words of the Sacred Scripture are the words of the Holy Spirit."[14]

And St. John of Kronstadt writes: "When you doubt in the truth of any person or any event described in Holy Scripture, then remember that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," as the Apostle says, and is therefore true, and does not contain any imaginary persons, fables, and tales, although it includes parables which everyone can see are not true narratives, but are written in figurative language. The whole of the Word of God is single, entire, indivisible truth; and if you admit that any narrative, sentence, or word is untrue, then you sin against the truth of the whole of Holy Scripture and its primordial Truth, which is God Himself. "I am the truth," said the Lord; "Thy word is truth," said Jesus Christ to God the Father. Thus, consider the whole of the Holy Scripture as truth; everything that is said in it has either taken place or takes place."[15]

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

"But now the Orthodox Church has to face a certain paradox. When you read the Old Testament, the New Testament, and even writings from Tradition, you will run across opinions that science proved to be false at least 150 years ago, especially on account of the breakthroughs in research made in the exact sciences. Naturally, this creates a serious problem for someone who does not fully grasp what the Fathers mean when they speak about divine inspiration. This problem mainly applies to the study of the Bible."[16]

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[12] St. Gregory, *In Defence of his Flight to Pontus*, 2, 105.
[13] St. Epiphanius, *Panacea against all Heresies*, 70, 7.
[14] St. Barsanuphius, in Sergius Fomin, *Russia before the Second Coming* (First Edition), Sergiev Posad, 1993, p. 79.
[15] St. John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ.*
[16] Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, p. 111.

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

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What are these sciences that we can trust, supposedly, more than the Holy Scriptures? First of all, palaeontology. "For we now know that there exist human bones which are proved to have existed for three and a half million years.[17]" And then anthropology. "The cosmology of Genesis when compared with the Babylonian cosmology presents striking similarities…"[18]

In general, Romanides has a great respect – too great a respect - for science. He appears to believe in the "big bang", and evolution, and psychoanalysis, and seems completely oblivious of the powerful objections brought against all these theories by more independent-minded scientists… He believes that the process of purification, illumination and deification can be reflected in the future findings of neurobiology… Several times he compares his "empirical dogmatics" or "experiential theology" with medicine and psychiatry…[19]

Heresy itself is defined as "a form of quackery (κομπογιαννιτισμου), through which there is no healing [θεραπεια]".[20]

Theology is close to science, he says, because both are based on experience – the first, the experience of the Uncreated God, and the second, the experience of created nature. The Holy Scriptures, however, are inspired by God only when they speak about the experience of the Uncreated God and how to arrive at it through purification, illumination or deification. But when they speak about historical events, created things or the creation of the universe, they are unreliable and therefore not God-inspired. Then they should be corrected by the findings of modern science. For Holy Scripture "uses the science of its time, which is why it should not be seen as the revelation of God."[21]

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

"Holy Scripture is not the source of knowledge of created truth, but of

[17] Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 294.
[18] Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 294.
[19] "Ancient Orthodox theology is very similar to contemporary psychiatry" (in Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 275).
[20] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 448.
[21] Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 295.

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

"The place where Holy Scripture is infallible and a guide for the life of men is in the sections concerning purification, illumination and deification, which deification is the basis of the knowledge of God possessed by the Prophets, the Apostles and the saints of the Church."[22]

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

As a consequence of his scientism Romanides believes (following Thomas Aquinas!) that the intellect should not be considered fallen; "for this," as Sopko writes, interpreting his thought, "would be difficult to maintain in light of the many advances of modern science"[23]… And yet, as Solomon the wise says, "a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind. We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labour; but who has traced out what is in the heavens, and who has learned Thy counsel, unless Thou give him wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from on high?" (Wisdom 9. 15-17). In other words, the mind of man is fallen, and needs correction and enlightenment from the Holy Spirit in the scientific endeavour of "guessing at what is on earth" and "tracing out what is in the heavens".

Indeed, while we talk about "the advance of science", this must be understood in a strictly relative sense; for while we know enormously more about microbes and sub-atomic particles and all kinds of natural phenomena than in the past, "the scientific world-view" of today represents a catastrophic regression from the world-view of Newton or Descartes, let alone that of the Holy Fathers. Thus modern scientists, with some exceptions, do not believe in God or the soul or angels, and embrace the purely mythical idea that the whole of creation, including man himself and his highest religious, artistic and scientific achievements, derives by chance from an infinitesimally small particle of matter that exploded some fourteen billion years ago. In fact, one of the few encouraging features of the modern world is that the evolution myth is being itself exploded by the findings of real science in many spheres.[24] For, as one

[22] Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 301.
[23] Sopko, op. cit., p. 139.
[24] See, for example, Vance Ferrell, *Science vs. Evolution,* Altamont, TN: Evolution Facts, 2006.

scientist said, "Small science separates from God and great science returns one to God". [25] But Romanides was until his death naively oblivious of these developments.[26]

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

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

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

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

"'And from this one is already exalted in his mind to that which preceded the

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vol. 2, p. 120.

[25] Quoted by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, in Fr. Milorad Loncar (ed.), *Missionary Letters of Saint Nikolai Velimirovich*, Grayslake, Il.: New Gracanica Monastery, 2009, vol. 2, p. 149.

[26] Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 120.

composition (making) of the world, when there was no creature, nor heaven, nor earth, nor angels, nothing of that which was brought into being, and to how God, solely by His good will, suddenly brought everything from non-being into being, and everything stood before Him in perfection.'

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

"St. Ambrose writes: 'Moses "spoke to God the Most High, not in a vision nor in dreams, but mouth to mouth" (Numbers 12:6-8). Plainly and clearly, not by figures nor by riddles, there was bestowed on him the gift of the Divine presence. And so Moses opened his mouth and uttered what the Lord spoke within him, according to the promise He made to him when He directed him to go to King Pharaoh: "Go therefore and I will open thy mouth and instruct thee what thou shouldest speak" (Exodus 4:12). For, if he had already accepted from God what he should say concerning the liberation of the people, how much more should you accept what He should say concerning heaven? Therefore, "not in the persuasive words of wisdom," not in philosophical fallacies, "but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power" (I Corinthians 2:4), he has ventured to say as if he were a witness of the Divine work: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth."'

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

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

"He then has a fascinating description of how Moses does this. We know that the Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. In the Book of the Apocalypse (Revelation), St. John the Theologian prophesied about the events of the end of the world and the future of the Church. How did they know what was going to happen? Obviously, God revealed it to them. St. John Chrysostom says that, just as St. John the Theologian was a prophet of things of the future, Moses was a prophet of things of the past. He says the following: 'All

the other prophets spoke either of what was to occur after a long time or of what was about to happen then; but he, the blessed (Moses), who lived many generations after (the creation of the world), was vouchsafed by the guidance of the right hand of the Most High to utter what had been done by the Lord before his own birth. It is for this reason that he begins to speak thus: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," as if calling out to us all with a loud voice: it is not by the instruction of men that I say this; He Who called them (heaven and earth) out of non-being into being - it is He Who has roused my tongue to relate of them. And therefore I entreat you, let us pay heed to these words as if we heard not Moses but the very Lord of the universe Who speaks through the tongue of Moses, and let us take leave for good of our own opinions.'

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

"Let us then try to enter the world of the Holy Fathers and their understanding of the Divinely inspired text of Genesis. Let us love and respect their writings, which in our confused times are a beacon of clarity which shines most clearly on the inspired text itself. Let us not be quick to think we 'know better' than they, and if we think we have some understanding they did not see, let us be humble and hesitant about offering it, knowing the poverty and fallibility of our own minds. Let them open our minds to understand God's revelation."[27]

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It is important to realize also that Romanides' distinction between "uncreated truths" and "created truths" is quite irrelevant in the context of Holy Scripture. Romanides himself describes Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai as his entering into the Divine Light of God's uncreated Energies, where "uncreated

[27] Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, http://startingontheroyalpath.blogspot.com/2009/09/genesis-creation-and-early-man.html.

truths" were revealed to him. And yet this uncreated truth was received by him in a specific historical time and place and speaks about specific historical events. Therefore they must be considered to be "created truths", which, if not verified by science, would place the "uncreated truth" itself in doubt, according to Romanides' logic.

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

By denying that Holy Scripture is revelation in the true sense, and by asserting that large parts of Holy Scripture – the "created truths" concerning history, etc. – must be considered to be less reliable than other parts – the "uncreated truths" that "transcend all expressions and concepts", Romanides provides himself with a tool whereby he can degrade or completely reinterpret certain scriptural expressions and concepts that he does not like – for example, "justification" (which he reinterprets as "vivification") or "justice" (which he reinterprets as "love"). For he thereby introduces the idea that there is a "higher" theology, that of deification, which is without words, expressions and concepts, and a "lower", Biblical theology with words, expressions and concepts. And he who has the higher theology can correct, or even do without, the lower theology.

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

truths from God or about God.

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

"So you cannot hope to theologize correctly simply because you have read the Bible and base your theology on the Bible. If you do this, you cannot avoid becoming a heretic, because Holy Scripture can be correctly interpreted only when the experiences of illumination or theosis accompanies the study or reading of the Bible. Without illumination or theosis, Holy Scripture cannot be interpreted correctly."[28]

Let us separate the wheat from the chaff here. It is true that Holy Scripture cannot be correctly interpreted without the help of the Holy Spirit. That help comes to us both directly and through the whole of the Holy Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church.

However, it is not true that "you cannot avoid becoming a heretic" if you have not had the experience of illumination (by which Romanides means the conscious experience of the Holy Spirit praying in one's heart) or theosis. If that were the case, then the vast majority of Orthodox Christians would in fact be heretics…

Orthodoxy or heresy is not determined by the presence or absence of a specific spiritual experience: it is determined by the public acceptance of the official doctrinal pronouncements of the Orthodox Church. For, as the Apostle Paul says: "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10.10). Of course, every dogma has an infinite depth; and that depth is plumbed only to the degree that one has made progress in the spiritual life; and those saints who have acquired prayer of the heart and seen the Divine Light undoubtedly plumb the depths of the dogmas to a far greater degree than us sinful mortals. Nevertheless, the criterion of Orthodoxy remains *for all* the "*holding fast the pattern of sound words*" (II Timothy 1.13), which is, as the Holy Church chants, "the garment of truth woven from the theology on high".[29]

Secondly, it is not true to say that since there is no similarity between God and

[28] Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, p. 129.
[29] *Pentecostarion*, Kontakion for the Sunday of the Holy Fathers.

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

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

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

envy nor to any passion".[30] And, as St. Gregory the Theologian says, by virtue of our limitations and imperfection as human beings we introduce "something human even into such lofty moral definitions of the Divine essence as righteousness and love".[31] "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55.8). And yet, provided we guard ourselves by this apophatic warning, our thoughts *can* ascend closer to the thoughts of God by accepting with gratitude and faith those words and images that God Himself has given us for our understanding, remembering that they are now not merely human words, but the Word of God, and that "the words of the Lord are pure words, silver that is fired, tried in the earth, brought to sevenfold purity" (Psalm 11.6). Moreover, we ourselves, by studying the Word of God in this way, become purer, loftier, more spiritual, more understanding. Such understanding cannot be accomplished by replacing the vivid words of Holy Scripture with the dry categories of secular philosophy – or even of Romanidean theology. The Word of God is above all human attempts to explain it. And any attempt to "improve on" or "explain away", still less "set aside", the Word of God in Holy Scripture can only lead to distortions and heresies.

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

"When divine truth is expressed in human language, the words themselves are transformed. And the fact that the truths of the faith are veiled in logical images and concepts testifies to the transformation of word and thought – words

[30] St. John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, book I, chapter 1.
[31] St. Gregory the Theologian, *Sermon 28*.

become sanctified through this usage. The words of dogmatic definitions are not 'simple words', they are not 'accidental' words which one can be replaced by other words. They are eternal truths incapable of being replaced."[32]

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

II. ROMANIDES ON THE HOLY TRINITY

As we have seen, Romanides' "theology of experience" places enormous stress on the impossibility of true knowledge of God unless that knowledge is acquired through direct experience of God in deification. Now deification, according to Romanides, was possible in the Old Testament, as well as the New – that is, even before the Incarnation of the Word and His saving Sacrifice on the Cross. Nevertheless, he asserts that we can have no direct, personal knowledge of Christ *before* His Incarnation, but only *after*. And we can have no direct, personal knowledge at any time of the Father and the Holy Spirit. In other words, our relationship with God, even at the highest stage of spiritual development, deification, is *impersonal* – in spite of the fact that it is defined as "the perfection of personhood"![33]

As he writes: "Since God became man, the Incarnation brought about a special relationship between God and man or Christ and man, a relationship that is nevertheless non-existent when we consider the Holy Trinity as a whole. We do not have a relationship with the Holy Trinity or with the uncreated Divinity that is like our relationship with Christ. In other words, our relationship with the Father or with the Holy Spirit is not like our relationship with Christ. Only with Christ do we have a personal relationship. The Holy Trinity came into personal contact with man only through the Incarnation, only through Christ. This relationship did not exist before the Incarnation, because we did not have a relationship with God as we do with other people before the Incarnation…"[34]

Since many will find it hardly credible that a famous Orthodox theologian should say such blasphemous things, and may suspect that Romanides has been taken out of context, it will be useful to cite the whole of the passage from which the above text has been quoted. My comments are in italics:-

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

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

"Western tradition makes similar statements."

God is most certainly a personal God. The Holy Fathers, the Russians and the Westerners until the most recent times are unanimous on this.

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[33] Romanides, "A Therapeutic Theme", op. cit., p. vi.
[34] Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, pp. 139-140.

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

The latter statement is true, but does not justify the first two statements, which are false. We have already mentioned that the inevitable imprecision of human language in speaking about the things of God in no way invalidates the attempts of men, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to make true statements about God. And one of these true statements is indubitably the statement that God is *personal, and that He enters into a personal relationship with men.*

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

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

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

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

What are these if not deeply personal relationships? – and all before the Incarnation of Christ. Of course, the relationship between God and man has been raised to a new level now that sin has been abolished through the Cross and

Baptism, we have received the Holy Spirit through Chrismation and have participated in the Body and Blood of Christ in the Divine Eucharist. But the relationship existed also before the Fall, albeit in an imperfect way. Even then, God entered into relationships of great intimacy and love with the Righteous of the Old Testament. To call such relationships "non-personal" is an abuse both of language and of the facts.

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

Another possibility – again, purely speculative – is that personhood in God and personhood in man are for Romanides so different as to be in fact two quite distinct concepts. A Divine Person would then be unable to have a personal relationship with a human person. But the Incarnate Word is able to have a personal relationship with men, because His Personhood is composite, being not only Divine, but also human – "theandric". However, the Person of the Word is the same before as after the Incarnation; it was not a different Person who communicated "impersonally" with the Prophets before the Incarnation and "personally" with men afterwards. Indeed, this idea comes close to the heresy of Nestorianism, to the theory that there are in fact two Persons in the Word, one Divine and the other human.

"Since God became man, the Incarnation brought about a special relationship between God and man or Christ and man, a relationship that is nevertheless non-existent when we consider the Holy Trinity as a whole. We do not have a relationship with the Holy Trinity or with the uncreated Divinity that is like our relationship with Christ. In other words, our relationship with the Father or with the Holy Spirit is not like our relationship with Christ. Only with Christ do we have a personal relationship. The Holy Trinity came into personal contact with man only through the Incarnation, only through Christ. This relationship did not exist before the Incarnation, because we did not have a relationship with God as we do with other people before the Incarnation…"

This is the height of impiety and the destruction of the whole of Christianity! The whole essence of our faith lies in our belief in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and in the possibility of our entering into a perfect and personal union with all Three Persons of the One God for all eternity. God the Holy Trinity entered into a personal relationship with us already when He said: "Let US create man…" (Genesis 1.26). And all Three Persons already showed that they were "in the same business" with us, as Romanides puts it, when they said: "Let US go down and confuse their language" (Genesis 11.7). And all Three Persons appeared to Abraham in the form of men or angels at the Oak of Mamre (Genesis 18).[35]

For, as St. Gregory Palamas writes: "I shall remind you of Abraham's most wonderful vision of God, when he clearly saw the One God in Three Persons, before He had been proclaimed as such. 'The Lord appeared unto him by the oak of Mamre; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and he ran to meet them.' He actually saw the One God Who appeared to him as Three. 'God appeared to him,' it says, 'and lo, three men.' Having run to meet the three men, however, he addressed them as one, saying, 'My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away from thy servant'. The three then discoursed with him as though they were one. 'And he said to Abraham, Where is Sarah thy wife? I will certainly return unto thee about the same time of year: and Sarah thy wife shall have a son.' As the aged Sarah laughed on hearing this, 'the Lord said, Wherefore did Sarah laugh?' Notice that the One God is Three Hypostases, and the Three Hypostases are One Lord, for it says, 'The Lord said'."[36]

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

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

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[35] See appendix II.

[36] St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily Eleven*, "On the Cross", 9.

The "empirical theology" of Romanides is a many-headed hydra that strangles our faith at many points, and even strikes it at its very heart – the fact of our real, personal, empirically experienced communion with the One God in Three Persons.

III. ROMANIDES ON ORIGINAL SIN

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

This being the case, it is not surprising that attempts to reinterpret the idea of sin and its expiation have crept into the Orthodox Church and Orthodox theology. Romanides is the main exponent of the revisionist or renovationist attitude towards sin. He has attacked the traditional concepts of sin and expiation from sin at three points: the doctrine of original sin, the doctrine of the Sacrifice for sin on the Cross, and the doctrine of Holy Baptism. Let us first examine his teaching on original sin…

Can Sin be Inherited?

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

However, it is not *personal* responsibility for Adam's *personal* sin that is inherited. For how can we be personally responsible for something that happened before we were even born? What *is* inherited by all those who have the same nature as Adam is a certain sinful pollution of human *nature*. As St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: "Human nature is sinful from its very conception. God did not create man sinful, but pure and holy. But since the first-created Adam lost this garment of sanctity, not from any other sin than pride alone, and became corruptible and mortal, all people also who came from the seed of Adam are participants of the ancestral sin from their very conception and birth. He who has been born in this way, even though he has not yet performed any sin, is already sinful through this ancestral sin."[37]

[37] St. Symeon, *Homily 37*, 3.

This is the teaching of the Orthodox Church. And that is why babies are baptized "for the remission of sins", not because they have committed any *personal* sins – they are too young for that – but because they have inherited *original* sin. So a certain mystery remains: the mystery of *inherited, collective guilt* that is manifest in the fact that every human being comes into this world *already polluted by sin.*

Now the idea of collective guilt is accepted by many even of those outside the Church. Thus there are many in the contemporary generation of Germans who feel guilt for the sins of the Nazis even though they were not born at that time. The Fathers of the Russian Church Abroad – St. John Maximovich and Archbishop Averky (Taushev) - taught that all Russians are responsible for the sin of allowing the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. The sin of a single man can be felt to taint his whole family or even his whole nation. But the idea that the sin of the father of mankind could have tainted the whole of the human race is rejected by Romanides and the Romanideans.

Of course, this rejection is not new. The British monk Pelagius (ca. 354-420) was perhaps the first openly to question original sin. And although the ideas of Pelagius are not identical to those of Romanides, there is much in the old polemic between Pelagius and his main opponent, St. Augustine of Hippo, that is relevant to an evaluation of this neo-Pelagian teaching. Thus St. Augustine defends the idea of collective guilt as follows: "Why did Ham sin and yet vengeance was declared against his son Canaan? Why was the son of Solomon punished [for Solomon's sin] by the breaking up of the kingdom? Why was the sin of Ahab, king of Israel, visited upon his posterity? Now we read in the sacred books, 'Returning the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them' (Jeremiah 32.18) and 'Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation' (Exodus 20.5)?... Are these statements false? Who would say this but the most open enemy of the divine words?"[38]

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

[38] St. Augustine, *Against Julian*, 6.25.82.

instance he bears the curse on account of his father's sin, nevertheless it was likely that he was atoning for his own failings…"[39]

Again, Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich wrote to a "Mrs. J.": "You complain about the bad fate of your cousin. Her suffering, you say, is unexplainable. Her husband, an officer, contracted a vile disease and died in a mental institution. She caught the disease from her husband and now she is in a mental institution as well. You praise her as a good and honourable woman and you marvel, how could the all-knowing God allow such a marriage to even happen, and then for such an innocent creature to suffer so much? If your cousin is indeed so innocent and honourable as you believe, then her suffering has befallen her, of course, without her own sin. Then you have to look for a cause in the sin of her parents. It is said for the Most High that He is 'visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation' (Exodus 34.7). I know you will say that which is usually said – why should children suffer for the sins of the parents? I will ask you also – how else would the Lord God scare the people from sinning except by visiting their children with the punishment for the sin?" [40] As he writes in another place: "All men from the first to the last are made from the same piece of clay, therefore they all, from the first to the last, form one body and one life. Each is responsible for all, and each is influencing all. If one link of this body sins, the whole body must suffer. If Adam sinned, you and I must suffer for it…"[41]

However, the Romanideans reply to this: "We do not deny that Adam's descendants *suffer for* his sin. But we cannot accept that they are *guilty of* his sin. Rather, they inherit, not the sin itself, but its punishment." This sounds plausible at first, and yet it does not go to the heart of the matter. For there is a distinction between *personal sin* and *the sinfulness of nature* or "the law of sin" (Romans 7.23). This is the same as the distinction between sin as the *act* of a human *person,* and sin as the *state* or *condition* or *law* of human *nature. Personal sin* cannot be transferred to another human being. But *the sinfulness of nature* can.

Archbishop Theophan of Poltava points out that St. Paul "clearly distinguishes in his teaching on original sin between two points: παραπτωμα or transgression, and αμαρτια or sin. By the first he understood the personal transgression by our forefathers of the will of God that they should not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, by the second – the law of sinful disorder that entered human nature as the consequence of this transgression. When he is talking about the inheritance of the original sin, he has in mind not παραπτωμα or transgression, for which only they are responsible, but αμαρτια, that

[39] St. John Chrysosom, *Homilies on Genesis*, 29.21.
[40] Velimirovich, in Fr. Milorad Loncar (ed.), *Missionary Letters of Saint Nikolai Velimirovich*, Grayslake, IL.: New Gracanica Monastery, 2009, part 2, Letter 177, p. 215.
[41] Velimirovich, "The Religious Spirit of the Slavs", *Sabrana Dela* (Collected Works)), vol. 3, p. 124.

is, the law of sinful disorder which afflicted human nature as a consequence of the fall into sin of our forefathers. And ημαρτον - 'sinned' in Romans 5.12 must therefore be understood not in the active voice, in the sense: 'committed sin', but in the middle-passive voice, in the sense: αμαρτωλοι in 5.19, that is, 'became sinners' or 'turned out to be sinners', since human nature fell in Adam."[42]

We find essentially the same distinction in St. Maximus the Confessor: "There then arose sin, the first and worthy of reproach, that is, the falling away of the will from good to evil. Through the first there arose the second – the change in nature from incorruption to corruption, which cannot elicit reproach. For two sins arise in [our] forefather as a consequence of the transgression of the Divine commandment: one worthy of reproach, and the second having as its cause the first and unable to elicit reproach."[43]

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

We have inherited the law of sin, in the most basic way: through sexual reproduction. For "in sins," says David, - that is, in a nature corrupted by original sin, - "did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 50.5).

It follows that even newborn babies, even unborn embryos, are sinners in this sense. For "even from the womb, sinners are estranged" (Psalm 57.3). And as Job says: "Who shall be pure from uncleanness? Not even one, even if his life should be but one day upon the earth" (Job 14.4).

St. Ambrose of Milan writes, commenting on the Lord's washing of Peter's feet: "Peter was clean, but his feet must be washed, since he had the sin inherited from the first man, at the time when the serpent felled him and misled him into error. Thus Peter's feet were washed to remove the hereditary sin."[44]

Again, St. Anastasius of Sinai writes: "In Adam we became co-inheritors of the curse, not as if we disobeyed that divine commandment with him but because he

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

[43] St. Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 42.

[44] St. Ambrose, *De Mysteriis*, 32. St. Ambrose goes on: "Our personal sins are removed by baptism." In the rite of baptism as practiced by the saint in Milan, there was a washing of the feet performed after the full immersion. However, the consensus of the Fathers is that both original sin and personal sin are removed in the threefold immersion of baptism.

became mortal and *transmitted sin* through his seed. We became mortals from a mortal…"[45]

Again, St. Gennadius Scholarius, Patriarch of Constantinople, writes: "Everyone in the following of Adam has died, because they have all inherited their nature from him. But some have died because they themselves have sinned, while others have died only because of Adam's condemnation – for example, children."[46]

Christ was born from a virgin who had been cleansed from all sin by the Holy Spirit in order to break the cycle of sin begetting sin. As St. Gregory Palamas writes: "If the conception of God had been from seed, He would not have been a new man, nor the Author of new life which will never grow old. If He were from the old stock and had inherited its sin, He would not have been able to bear within Himself the fullness of the incorruptible Godhead or to make His Flesh an inexhaustible Source of sanctification, able to wash away even the defilement of our First Parents by its abundant power, and sufficient to sanctify all who came after them."[47]

That is why, when Christ entered the waters of the Jordan at His Baptism, he gave that water, through His Spirit, to wash away even the defilement of our First Patents. For, as the Church sings, "He washes [man] clean from the ancient shame of Adam's sinfulness".[48] Evidently there is an original sin, incurred by Adam, from which not only he, but also WE have to be cleansed through baptism.

This is possible because, while human persons are multiple and distinct from each other, human nature is *one*. For, as St. Basil the Great writes, what we inherit from Adam "is not the personal sin of Adam, but the original human being himself", who "exists in us by necessity".[49] That is why St. Gregory Palamas calls Adam's sin "*our* original disobedience to God", "*our* ancestral sin in Paradise".[50] It follows, as St. Athanasius the Great writes, that "when Adam transgressed, his sin reached unto all men…"[51] And this, as St. Cyril of Alexandria writes, "not because they sinned along with Adam, for they did not then exist, but because

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[45] St. Anastasius, quoted in Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, Ridgewood, NJ: Zephyr, 2002, p. 34, note 64.
[46] St. Gennadius, in K. Staab (ed.) *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church: Collected and Edited Catena,* Munster in Westfalen, 1933, 15:362.
[47] St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 14, 5; in Christopher Veniamin, *The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002, volume 1, p. 159.
[48] *Festal Menaion,* January 6, *Holy* Theophany, Mattins, Canon, Ode 5, troparion.
[49] St. Basil, quoted in Demetrios Tzami, *I Protologia tou M. Vasileiou*, Thessaloniki, 1970, p. 135.
[50] St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 31*, col. 388C.
[51] St. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Four Discourses against the Arians*, I, 12.

they had the same nature as Adam, which fell under the law of sin".[52]

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

What is Sin?

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

"In the Augustinian tradition sin has appeared under an ethical form, whereas in the Fathers of the Church it has the form of illness and the eradication of sin is presented under the form of therapy. When we have illness, we have therapy. Sin is an illness of man and not simply a disorder of his when he does not obey God like a subordinate. For sin is not an act and transgression of the commandments of God, as happens with a transgression of the laws of the State, etc. There exist laws, a transgressor transgresses the law and must be punished by the law. Augustine understood sin in this way, that is, that God gave commands, man transgressed the command of God and consequently was punished."[53]

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

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[52] St. Cyril, *Commentary on Romans, P.G.* 74: 788-789; quoted in Romanides, op. cit., p. 168.
[53] Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 2, pp. 186, 187-188.

Secondly, the darkening of the mind and the loss of noetic prayer are the *consequences* of the original sin, not the sin itself. Romanides defines the fall as "the identification of the energies of the mind [νους] with the energies of the logical faculty [της λογικης]. When the mind was darkened, [it] was identified in energy with the logical faculty and the passions."[54] Maybe. But this is the *consequence* of the fall, not the fall itself. Nor does St. Symeon the New Theologian teach anything different. As we have seen, his teaching on original sin is completely traditional - what Romanides calls "Augustinian"!

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

For, as Alan Jacobs writes, "Many of us would agree that sin, like the more communicable diseases, transfers to other people; few of us have strong immunity to its ravages. But we would also agree that the affliction of disease is not moral in character. Although it is possible to act in such a way that one becomes more prone to illness, surely there is no sin in being ill."[55]

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

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

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[54] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., volume 2, p. 190.
[55] Jacobs, *Original Sin: A Cultural History*, New York: HarperOne, 2008, p. xiii.

Sin and Death

According to Romanides, what is passed down from Adam to his descendants is not sin, but *death.* And death is not considered to be a punishment for sin, but God's mercy. "God did not impose death on man as a punishment for any inherited guilt. Rather, God allowed death by reason of His goodness and His love, so that in this way sin and evil in man should not become immortal."[56]

This is half true. What *is* true is that God did not create death, and it is not God but the devil who is the cause of the entrance of death into the world. Moreover, death is a mercy insofar as it stops the continuation of sin, and allows sinful human nature to be dissolved into its elements and resurrected in a sinless form at the General Resurrection from the dead. But none of this entails that death is not *also a punishment*. That death is *both* punishment *and* mercy is indicated by St. Athanasius the Great: "By punishing us with death, the Lawgiver cut off the spread of sin. And yet through that very punishment He also demonstrated His love for us. He bound sin and death together when He gave the law, placing the sinner under punishment of death. And yet He ordered things in such a way that the punishment might in itself serve the goal of salvation. For death brings about separation from this life and brings evil works to an end. It sets us free from labour, sweat and pain, and ends the suffering of the body. Thus the Judge mixes His love for us with punishment."[57]

So what we inherit from Adam and Eve, according to Romanides, is not sin in any shape or form, but only *death*, including the process of corruption and ageing that leads to death. It follows that for him every human being is born in complete innocence, and only becomes sinful later. "The Fathers emphasize that every man is born as was Adam and Eve. And every man goes through the same fall. The darkening of the mind happens to everyone. In the embryo, where the mind [nous] of man exists, it is not yet darkened. Every man suffers the fall of Adam and Eve by reason of the environment."[58]

However, Romanides here contradicts the teaching of the Fathers, who assert that every man is *not* born as was Adam and Eve. On the contrary, Adam and Eve were born in innocence, but their descendants in sin - "I was conceived in iniquity" (Psalm 50.5). Nor is it true that the embryo is not yet darkened, for "even from the womb, sinners are estranged" (Psalm 57.3)… As St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: "Human nature is sinful from its very conception". Again, Nicholas Cabasilas writes: "We have not seen even one day pure from sin, nor have we ever breathed apart from wickedness, but, as the psalmist says, 'we

[56] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., volume 2, p. 193.
[57] St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 6.1.
[58] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., volume 2, p. 197.

have gone astray from the womb, we err from our birth' (Psalm 58.4)."[59] And St. Gregory Palamas, writes: "Before Christ we all shared the same ancestral curse and condemnation poured out on all of us from our single Forefather, as if it had sprung from the root of the human race and was the common lot of our nature. Each person's individual action attracted either reproof or praise from God, but no one could do anything about the shared curse and condemnation, or the evil inheritance that had been passed down to him and through him would pass to his descendants."[60]

Since Romanides regards every human being as pure when he first comes into the world, without any specifically sinful inheritance, he is forced to see the consequent fall of every man as coming, not from *inside* his nature, but from *outside,* from his *environment.* "The fall of the child comes from the environment, from parents, from uncles, from friends, etc. If the child is in the midst of a good environment, this child can grow without a problem, with noetic prayer. The child has less of a problem than the adults. He learns quickly. The child is destroyed by the environment…"[61]

Only one thing from *within* human nature contributes to man's fall, according to Romanides: the process of ageing and corruption. For this engenders the *fear* of death, which in turn engenders the multitude of passions. This was Romanides' revolutionary thesis in his first major work, *The Ancestral Sin* (1957), but became less prominent in his later work. There he writes: "Because of the sins that spring forth from the fear of death 'the whole world lieth in wickedness'. Through falsehood and fear, Satan, in various degrees, motivates sin."[62] Again he writes: "All human unrest is rooted in inherited psychological and bodily infirmities, that is, in the soul's separation from grace and in the body's corruptibility, from which springs all selfishness. Any perceived threat automatically triggers fear and uneasiness. Fear does not allow a man to be perfected in love… The fountain of man's personal sins is the power of death that is in the hands of the devil and in man's own willing submission to him."[63]

Now there is an important element of truth in this thesis, which is valuable and should not be denied. But before discussing this element of truth, let us cite his thesis in full: "When we take into account the fact that man was created to become perfect in freedom and love as God is perfect, that is, to love God and his neighbour in the same unselfish way that God loves the world, it becomes apparent that the death of the soul, that is, the loss of divine grace, and the

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[59] Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, II, 7; Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974, p. 77.
[60] St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 5: On the Meeting of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ*, in Veniamin, op. cit., p. 52.
[61] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., volume 2, p. 197.
[62] Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 77.
[63] Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, pp. 116, 117.

corruption of the body have rendered such a life of perfection impossible. In the first place, the deprivation of divine grace impairs the mental powers of the newborn infant; thus, the mind of man has a tendency toward evil from the beginning. This tendency grows strong when the ruling force of corruption becomes perceptible in the body. Through the power of death and the devil, sin that reigns in man gives rise to fear and anxiety and to the general instinct of self-preservation or survival. Thus, Satan manipulates man's fear and his desire for self-satisfaction, raising up sin in him, in other words, transgression against the divine will regarding unselfish love, and provoking man to stray from his original destiny. Since weakness is caused in the flesh by death, Satan moves man to countless passion and leads him to devious thoughts, actions, and selfish relations with God as well as with his fellow man. Sin reigns both in death, and in the mortal body because 'the sting of death is sin'.

"Because of death, man must first attend to the necessities of life in order to stay alive. In this struggle, self-interests are unavoidable. Thus, man is unable to live in accordance with his original destiny of unselfish love. This state of subjection under the reign of death is the root of man's weaknesses in which he becomes entangled in sin at the urging of the demons and by his own consent. Resting in the hands of the devil, the power of the fear of death is the root from which self-aggrandizement, egotism, hatred, envy, and other similar passions spring up."[64]

In another work, Romanides writes: "Because [a man] lives constantly under the fear of death, [he] continuously seeks bodily and psychological security, and thus becomes individualistically inclined and utilitarian in attitude. Sin… is rooted in the disease of death."[65] But this is an exaggeration: the fear of death is not the root of *all* evil. Many pagan vices have nothing to do with the fear of death. When the warrior risks his life in order to rape and plunder, is his motivation the fear of death? No, it is lust and greed and hatred – which are stronger than the fear of death that threatens rapists and plunderers. As for the more subtle but still more serious sins, such as pride, these are much more primordial than the fear of death. The devil did not rebel against God out of fear of death, but simply out of pride.

There is no doubt that the fear of death, which is natural to man in his corrupted state, provides an incentive to sin. Nevertheless, this fear is *not* sin in itself, which is proved by the fact that Christ, having assumed a corruptible but sinless body, allowed Himself to feel the fear of death in the Garden of Gethsemane. The fear of death is an innocent passion in itself, otherwise Christ, Who is completely sinless, would not have allowed Himself to feel it. Personal sin begins only when out of fear of death we turn away from God's

[64] Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, pp. 162-163.
[65] Romanides, "The Ecclesiology of St. Ignatius of Antioch".

commandments. Christ feared death in the Garden, but He did not allow this fear to turn Him away from the feat of dying for the salvation of the world, but trampled on His fear, showing Himself to be perfect in love. The holy martyrs also conquered the fear of death in their martyric exploits. But the exploit was not in the fact that they did not fear death, but in that they did not allow this fear to turn them away from the confession of Christ.

The root of all evil is the desire to live in defiance of God and His law, which is pride. That was the motivation of Eve when she took of the forbidden fruit. She feared neither God nor the death that God prophesied would take place if she disobeyed Him. If we look for a cause of her pride in her own nature or in her environment, we look in vain. For sin, as Dostoyevsky powerfully demonstrated in *Notes from Underground*, is ultimately irrational. If sin were not irrational, but the determined effect of a definite cause, it would not be sin. Thus if all the blame for Eve's sin could be placed on the devil, it would not be her sin, but the devil's. And if the blame could be placed on her nature alone, again it would not be her sin, but simply an inevitable product of her nature, like the behaviour of animals. But her nature was not fallen and not purely animalian, and could be led in the right direction by the image of God in her – *freewill* and *reason*. The mystery and the tragedy of sin – both before the fall and after the fall – lies in the fact that, whatever incitements to sin exist in our nature or in our environment, they do not explain the sin, and therefore do not excuse it. The much-maligned St. Augustine was surely right in attributing the cause of the fall to pride, and in not seeking any cause of that pride in anything beyond itself.

Romanides continues: "In addition to the fact that man 'subjects himself to anything in order to avoid dying', he constantly fears that his life is without meaning. Thus, he strives to demonstrate to himself and to others that it has worth. He loves flatterers and hates his detractors. He seeks his own and envies the success of others. He loves those who love him and hates those who hate him. He seeks security and happiness in wealth, glory, bodily pleasures, and he may even imagine that his destiny is a self-seeking eudaemonistic and passionless enjoyment of the presence of God regardless of whether or not he has true, active, unselfish love for others. Fear and anxiety render man an individualist. And when he identifies himself with a communal or social ideology it, too, is out of individualistic, self-seeking motives because he perceives his self-satisfaction and eudaemonia as his destiny. Indeed, it is possible for him to be moved by ideological principles of vague love for mankind despite the fact that mortal hatred for his neighbour nests in his heart. These are the works of the 'flesh' under the sway of death and Satan."[66]

In support of his thesis Romanides quotes from St. John Chrysostom on the

[66] Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, pp. 163-164.

phrase "sold under sin" (Romans 7.14): "Because with death, he is saying, there entered in a horde of passions. For when the body became mortal, it was necessary for it also to receive concupiscence, anger, pain, and all the other passion which required much wisdom to prevent them from inundating us and drowning our reason in the depth of sin. For in themselves they were not sin, but in their uncontrolled excess this is what they work."[67]

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

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

More in favour of Romanides' thesis are the words of St. Cyril of Alexandria: "Because he [Adam] fell under sin and slipped into corruptibility, pleasures and filthiness assaulted the nature of the flesh, and in our members was unveiled a savage law. Our nature, then, became diseased by sin through the disobedience of one, that is, of Adam. Thus all were made sinners, not by being transgressors with Adam, something which they never were, but by being of his nature and falling under the law of sin… Human nature fell ill in Adam and subject to corruptibility through disobedience, and, therefore, the passions entered in."[68]

However, even here it is not said that death and corruptibility are the cause of our nature's sickness, but the other way round: our nature's sickness is the cause of death and corruptibility, and the cause of that sickness is sin ("our nature… became diseased *by sin*"), which is, of course, a perfectly Orthodox thought. So the only difference between St. Cyril and St. John Chrysostom is that while Cyril prefers to speak about our nature falling under *the law of sin*, Chrysostom prefers

[67] St. John Chrysostom, quoted in Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 167, note 45.
[68] St. Cyril, *Commentary on Romans, P.G.* 74: 788-789, in Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin,* p. 168.

to speak about the introduction of *passions* (concupiscence, anger, pain) which, if not checked by our reason, lead to sinful acts, but which are not sinful in themselves. This difference, as Romanides himself admits, is only a matter of terminology.[69]

Romanides tries to encapsulate the argument that death is the cause of sin by asserting that "death is a kind of parasite in which sin dwells".[70] This is an elegant phrase, but it is not immediately clear what it means. He comes close to a clarification a little later: "Because of the action of the devil through the death of the soul, that is, the loss of divine grace, and the infirmity of the flesh, men are born with a powerful inclination toward sin. And all, whether in knowledge or in ignorance, violate the will of God. All are born under captivity to the devil, death, and sin. Moreover, as a result, they fail to attain to their original destiny, that is, to moral perfection, immortality, and theosis, and are bereft of the glory of God."[71]

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

Romanides reverses the true relationship between sin and death. "Instead of the wages of sin being death," writes Patrick Pummill, "it is turned upside down and the wages of death becomes sin. No doubt, death fuels the fire of sin, but the inner fallenness/corruption we inherit from Adam is the root of human sin".[72]

St. Augustine expressed essentially the same thought, against a very similar error of the Pelagians, as follows: "People speak in this way, who wish to wrest men from the apostle's words into their own thought. For where the apostle says, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so passed upon all men', they wish the meaning to be not that sin passed over, but death… [But] *all die in the sin, they do not sin in the death*."[73]

The Council of Orange (529) also condemned the Romanidean thesis: "If anyone asserts that Adam's transgression injured him alone and not his

[69] Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 167, note 45.
[70] Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 164.
[71] Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 165.
[72] Pummill, personal communication.
[73] St. Augustine, *Contra duas Epistolas Pelagianorum*, IV, 4.7.

descendants, or *declares that certainly of the death of the body only, which is the punishment of sin, but not sin also, which is the death of the soul, passed through one man into the whole human race, he will do an injustice to God*, contradicting the Apostle who says: 'As through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, so also death passed into all men, in whom all have sinned'" (canon 2).

The fact that original sin taints even children is the reason for the practice of infant baptism. And this practice in turn confirms the traditional doctrine of original sin. Thus the Council of Carthage in 252 under St. Cyprian decreed "not to forbid the baptism of an infant who, scarcely born, has sinned in nothing apart from that which proceeds from the flesh of Adam. He has received the contagion of the ancient death through his very birth, and he comes, therefore, the more easily to the reception of the remission of sins in that it is not his own but the sins of another that are remitted"… Still more relevant here is Canon 110 of the Council of Carthage in 419: "He who denies the need for young children and those just born from their mother's womb to be baptized, or who says that although they are baptized for the remission of sins they inherit nothing from the forefathers' sin that would necessitate the bath of regeneration [from which it would follow that the form of baptism for the remission of sins would be used on them not in a true, but in a false sense], let him be anathema. For the word of the apostle: 'By one man sin came into the world and death entered all men by sin, for in him all have sinned' (Romans 5.12), must be understood in no other way than it has always been understood by the Catholic Church, which has been poured out and spread everywhere. For in accordance with this rule of faith children, too, who are themselves not yet able to commit any sin, are truly baptized for the remission of sins, that through regeneration they may be cleansed of everything that they have acquired from the old birth."[74]

It follows that the teaching of Romanides on original sin falls under the anathema of the Orthodox Church.

Romans 5.12

Romanides' seemingly most powerful argument rests on his rejection of the translation of Romans 5.12 used by the Councils of Carthage and Orange above. His translation goes: "As through one man sin came into the world, and through sin death, so also death came upon all men, *because of which* [' in Greek] all have sinned." This implies that all men sin because of death; so death is the cause of sin. Another translation favoured by many theologians is as follows: "As through one man sin came into the world, and through sin death, so also death came upon all men, *because* all have sinned." This implies that sin is the cause of death,

[74] This Canon was confirmed by the Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils. Cf. Canons 114, 115 and 116 of the same Council.

but everyman's sin, not Adam's. The traditional translation, however, which was adopted not only in the Orthodox West but also in the Slavonic translation of SS. Cyril and Methodius, is as follows: "As through one man sin came into the world, and through sin death, so also death came upon all men, in whom [i.e. in Adam] all have sinned." This implies that all men are sinners because they are "in" Adam by nature.

If we open Joseph Thayer's authoritative *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, and look at the various usages of the preposition επι with the dative case, we find that both the second and third translations are possible from a purely grammatical and linguistic point of view, but not Romanides' translation. Thus επι, according to the *Lexicon,* is sometimes equivalent to επι τουτω, οτι, meaning "on the ground of this, because", and is used in this sense in II Corinthians 5.4 and Philippians 3.12. On the other hand, in other places – for example, Mark 2.4, Mark 13.2, Matthew 9.16, Luke 5.36, Mark 2.21, Matthew 14, 8, 11, Mark 6.25, Mark 6.55, Mark 6.39, John 11.38, Acts 8.16 and Revelation 19.14 - επι with the dative case is equivalent to the Latin in with the ablative case, indicating the place where or in which something takes place or is situated. This place can also be a person, as in the famous passage: "Thou art Peter, and on this rock (επι ταυτη τη πετρα) I will build My Church" (Matthew 16.18; cf. Ephesians 2.20).[75]

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

For, as Archbishop Eleutherius of Lithuania writes: "The two halves into which we can divide the content of this verse [Romans 5.12] through the conjunctions 'as' (ωσπερ) and 'so also' (και ουτως) represent, not a parallelism, and not a comparison, but a correspondence, according to which the first is the base, the common thesis, while the second is the conclusion from it. This logical connection is indicated by the conjunction 'also'… With the universalism characteristic of the Apostle, and the highly generalizing flight of his thought, St. Paul in the first half speaks about the sin of the forefathers as being the cause of death in the world generally, and not in humanity alone. For the whole of creation is subject to corruption and death, not willingly but 'by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same' (Romans 8.12-22), because of the sin of Adam… From this general proposition the holy Apostle draws the conclusion concerning people that for the very same cause, that is, because of the sin of one man, they

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

also die."[76]

Having established that, from a purely grammatical and linguistic point of view, the Greek conjunction ἐ can be translated as "because" or "in whom", but *not* as "because of which", let us try and determine which of the two linguistically possible translations is correct.

This decision will be made on grounds of (1) coherence with the context of the passage, and (2) conformity with the general dogmatic teaching of the Apostle Paul.

1. The Context of the Passage. In order to clarify his meaning in Romans 5.12, St. Paul goes on to say: "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Romans 5.19). This is the doctrine of original sin in a nutshell: Adam's sin made all his descendants sinners – not simply mortal, as Romanides would have it, but precisely *sinners.* And it is not because of death that all men have sinned, as Romanides would have it, but because of Adam – and more specifically, because of his "disobedience", that is, his sin, which, as the Fathers, explain is inherited by us.

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

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

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

[76] Archbishop Eleutherius, *On Redemption*, Paris, 1937 p. 47 (in Russian).

(Romans 5.18-19)

St. Paul goes on to say that "the law [of Moses] entered in, that sin might abound" (Romans 5.20), by which he meant that it is the existence of the law that makes sin to be accounted as sin. However, *before* the law the personal sins of men were not imputed to them; they were not counted as having committed them.[77] *And yet they died*. But death is "the wages of sin" (Romans 6.23). So of what sin was their death the wages? There can only be one answer: *Adam's*.

Thus those who died before the Law of Moses died in spite of the fact that no personal transgressions were imputed to them, so that their death was "the wages of sin", not in the sense of being the result of their personal transgressions, but of the sin of Adam. For before the Law only Adam was condemned to die because of his personal transgression. All the others died, not because of their personal transgressions, but because of Adam's sin…

As St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: "Evil was mixed with our nature from the beginning… through those who by their disobedience introduced the disease. Just as in the natural propagation of the species each animal engenders its like, so man is born from man, a being subject to passions from a being subject to passions, a sinner from a sinner. Thus sin takes its rise in us as we are born; it grows with us and keeps us company till life's term."[78]

[77] As St. Augustine writes: "He says not that there was no sin but only that it was not counted. Once the law was given, sin was not taken away, but it began to be counted" (*On Romans*, 27-28).
[78] St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Beatitudes*, 6, *P.G*. 44, 1273.

IV. ROMANIDES ON THE CROSS AND BAPTISM

The Old and the New Testaments

According to Romanides, the Prophets of the Old Testament had exactly the same gift of deification as the Apostles and Saints of the New Testament. "The Fathers of our Fathers in the Old Testament have deification without the human nature of Christ. After them the Apostles also have deification with the human nature of Christ."[79] Even non-Jewish Prophets, such as Job the Much-Suffering, are asserted to have attained deification: "the Old Testament Job reached theosis even though he was a heathen and not a Jew". [80] Again he writes, speaking of the Eucharist, which is the mystery of Christ's Sacrifice in the Church: "There is one Christ and He dwells in His entirety within every believer who has communed of the Immaculate Mysteries… This same mystery was also at work before Christ assumed flesh…"[81]

How are we to interpret this? That even those who lived before the Incarnation and the Crucifixion participated in the Immaculate Mysteries?...

St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches that at the Last Supper, the Apostles partook of the Sacrificed Body and Blood of Christ a few hours *before* that Body and Blood was actually – that is, spatiotemporally - sacrificed on the Cross. This is an instance of what has been called the mystery of liturgical time. Since the mystery takes place not only in time, but also in eternity, not only on an earthly altar, but also on the Altar of Heaven, its fruits can be received even before it was actually accomplished in space-time. However, the instance of the Last Supper must be seen as exceptional, and permitted, perhaps, because of the exceptional importance of the Apostles in the economy of salvation. The Church teaches that the Old Testament righteous went to hades after their deaths precisely because they had *not* yet received the mysteries of salvation that came only with the Coming of Christ…

Romanides sees two major differences between the Old and the New Testament. The first is that the Prophets saw the Word in His pre-incarnate form, whereas the Apostles saw Him incarnate. "Each Prophet received a revelation of the same Christ before He became Christ, when He was the Angel of the Lord only, the Word, etc., insofar as He became Christ with the Incarnation."[82]

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[79] Romanides, in Vlachos, *Empeiriki Dogmatiki*, volume 1, p. 214.
[80] Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, p. 168.
[81] Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, p. 161.
[82] Romanides, in Vlachos, vol. 1, p. 218.

The second is that the Prophets' experience of deification was interrupted temporarily by death. "In the Old Testament there exists a temporary participation [in God]; that is, the experience of deification is temporary. Those who saw the uncreated glory of the Word nevertheless died in both body and soul, whereas now, with the Incarnation, as many as have seen the glory of the Word participate in a stable way in the glory of the Holy Trinity, for with the death of the body the soul does not undergo death. For the death of the soul is the eclipse of deification, which means the vision of God."[83]

"After death," writes Romanides, "both the righteous and the unrighteous descend to the same place, to Hades, 'where, without exception, all the souls of the dead go down and are together', and there they anticipate the general resurrection and judgement, the only means of salvation or damnation. Death, which was initiated by the operations of Satan, constitutes a real though temporary diminishing of the divine plan for the world. Before the descent of Christ into Hades, Satan alone had the power of death. Once human nature was stricken by the disease of death, all the living and the dead became the devil's captives. For the righteous of the Old Testament, however, captivity to Satan was unjust. They were to be saved in the future; their justification was realized through Christ Who imparted life to them…"[84]

However, the idea that, for the righteous of the Old Testament, captivity to Satan was "unjust" is false. There is not a hint of such an idea in the Holy Fathers. None of the Old Testament righteous was without sin; and being in sin, they were not allowed to enter Paradise – a sentence whose justice no God-fearing man would dispute. Of course, this does not mean that they were in torment, or deprived of all consolation. The Prophet Jeremiah, though in hades, was seen by Judas Maccabaeus praying "in glory" for the people of Israel (II Maccabees 15. 12-16). But the all-holy God cannot be united with sinners; "without holiness no man shall see the Lord".

This holiness, complete freedom from sin, was given only with the Coming of the Lord, and the completion of His Sacrifice for sin on the Cross. That is why St. Paul, after listing the great virtues of the Old Testament righteous, adds: "And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise. For God had provided something better for us [the New Testament Christians], that they should not be made perfect apart from us" (Hebrews 11.39-40).

Romanides, however, considers, in direct contradiction to the apostle just

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[83] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 324. However, St. Symeon the New Theologian witnesses from his own life that it is possible even for a New Testament Christian to lose the Grace of God, even after having seen the Divine Light.
[84] Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin*, p. 86.

quoted, that perfection was possible also in the Old Testament. "The way of perfection, the means of perfection, do not exist only in the New Testament, but exists also in the Old Testament. Consequently, the Grace of perfection was in both Testaments…"[85]

Again, Romanides writes: "the Church was not founded on the day of Pentecost. The Church was founded from the time that God called Abraham and the Patriarchs and the Prophets. The Church was founded from then. The Church exists in the Old Testament. The Church existed in hades."[86]

Now there is nothing wrong with speaking about "the Church of the Old Testament". However, in the context of Romanides' theories, the phrase acquires a new and dubious meaning, for it appears to *exclude* the more traditional and more strictly accurate teaching that the Church in its fullness only began to exist in the New Testament, on the day of Pentecost. For the Church is the Body of Christ, and it was only from Pentecost that the Body of Christ in the Eucharist and the other mystical gifts that proceed from the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Ascension of Christ began to be distributed to the faithful…

It is not possible to be made perfect without being freed from original as well as personal sin, which was impossible for the Old Testament righteous but is possible for the New Testament Christians insofar as they belong to the Body of Christ. This shows that Romanides' rejection of the doctrine of original sin led him to distort the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. The gulf between the Old and the New was bigger than he admitted; and this fact led him to distort also the nature of the New Testament teachings on the Cross and Baptism…

The Sacrifice for Sin

Having abolished the idea of inherited, original sin, and having asserted that the Old Testament righteous were in essentially the same relationship to God as the redeemed of the New Testament, it is not surprising that Romanides grossly downplays, if not totally abolishes, the significance of Christ's Sacrifice for sin. Thus he objects to "the peculiar teachings of the Franco-Latin tradition concerning original sin as guilt inherited from Adam, or the need of satisfying divine Justice through the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross".[87] In other words, he rejects the central doctrine of the Christian faith, that we are saved only by the

[85] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 295.
[86] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 249.
[87] Romanides, *An Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics*, Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2004, p. 125.

Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, whereby the state of injustice, or sin, that acted as a barrier to the full communion between God and man was abolished, opening the path into Paradise.

This fact is obscured for some by Romanides' reference to "the mystery of the Cross". However, "the mystery of the Cross" for Romanides is not the Cross that Christ assumed at Calvary, *His* Sacrifice, which only He could take up, but the cross that we human beings take up in obedience to His command – that is, *our* sacrifice. The confusion is exposed if we look up the patristic text from St. Gregory Palamas that Romanides quotes in talking about "the mystery of the Cross".

The holy Father speaks of "the mystery of the Cross" in the context of St. Paul's words: "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6.14). The crucifixion of the world to me is the first mystery of the Cross: the second is the crucifixion of the world to me. "The first mystery of the Cross is flight from the world, and parting from our relatives according to the flesh, if they are a hindrance to piety and a devout life, and training our body, which Paul tells us is of some value (I Timothy 4.8). In these ways the world and sin are crucified to us, once we have fled from them. According to the second mystery of the Cross, however, we are crucified to the world and the passions, once they have fled from us. It is not of course possible for them to leave us completely and not be at work in our thoughts, unless we attain to contemplation of God. When, through action, we approach contemplation and cultivate and cleanse the inner man, searching for the divine treasure which we ourselves have hidden, and considering the kingdom of God within us, then it is that we crucify ourselves to the world and the passions."[88]

The saint says that even Old Testament righteous such as Abraham and Moses were initiated into these mysteries. And so, just as in a sense the antichrist exists even now, before his coming in the flesh (cf. I John 2.18), so "the Cross existed in the time of our ancestors, even before it was accomplished".[89] It is this fact that Romanides seizes on in order to justify his de-emphasizing of the main differences between the Old and New Testament eras, and, more particularly, his assertion that the Cross of Christ (and Holy Baptism, as we shall see) is not a Sacrifice for the remission of sins (this is a supposedly "scholastic" doctrine), and that such a Sacrifice is not the necessary condition of the salvation of every man. Of course, he does not say the latter explicitly. But, as we shall see, it is implicit in his teaching.

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[88] St. Gregory, *Homily Eleven, On the Precious and Life-Giving Cross*, 7; in Christopher Veniamin, ed.), *The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, South Canaan, PA: Saint Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002, vol. 1, pp. 117-118.

[89] St. Gregory, op. cit., 3; in Veniamin, op. cit., p. 115.

The main difference between the Old Testament righteous and the New Testament Christians according to the Orthodox teaching lies in the fact that whereas the Old Testament righteous attained great spiritual heights, such as Moses' seeing the Divine Light on Mount Sinai, sin and death had not been abolished in them, and still reigned in them. Thus Moses died, and went to hades; and he died just *outside* the boundaries of the Holy Land, signifying that he did *not* enter the Kingdom of heaven before the Coming of Christ, the new Joshua. The New Testament Christians, on the other hand, have the Kingdom of God dwelling in them through the Cross of Christ and Holy Baptism, as a result of which, although they die, they do not go to hades if they have pleased God, but straight into Paradise, like the good thief. The Lord emphasized the importance of this difference when comparing St. John the Baptist, who, though the greatest of all those born of women, still died before the Cross of Christ, and therefore went to hades, with the lowest-ranking New Testament Christian: "He that is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11.11).

Romanides, on the other hand, while acknowledging that the "unjustly condemned" Old Testament righteous went "temporarily" to hades, seeks to de-emphasize the importance of this fact. Moreover, he ascribes the deliverance of the Old Testament righteous from hades, not to Christ' Sacrifice on the Cross, which wiped out the sins, both original and personal, of all those who believe in Him, but to His Resurrection – in spite of the fact it was precisely the Cross that laid low the gates of hades, as we see on all icons of the harrowing of he, where Christ is depicted holding the Cross in His hands. This is in accordance with Romanides' persistent emphasis on death and the resurrection from the dead at the expense of sin and the propitiation for sin – although the former is the direct fruit of the latter and could not have taken place without it.

This is not to deny that the Cross of Christ was mystically present even in the times of the Old Testament, as St. Gregory Palamas explains. For in a mystical sense the Lamb of God "was slain before the foundation of the world", and its fruits extend backward as well as forward in time to all those worthy of appropriating them. But "the mystery of the Cross" as manifest in the ascetic activity and Divine contemplation in the lives of Abraham and Moses did not show its fruits until the moment that Christ said: "It is finished"… From that moment, *and only from that moment*, could the crosses taken up by all the great strugglers of history bring forth their fruit in their final deliverance from sin and death and entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.

Moreover, this deliverance took place, not through the power of *their own* crosses, but through that of Christ. "Desiring *His* [Christ's] Cross," sings the

Church of the Holy Martyr Theodulus, "thou didst endure crucifixion".[90] Similarly, the good thief truly bore his cross, but it was the Cross of the Man Who hung beside him that took him into Paradise…

The Language of Redemption

Why does Romanides reject the traditional understanding of the Cross of Christ as the Sacrifice for sin? According to him, it is because the words employed in this traditional understanding – words such as "wrath", "ransom", "sacrifice", "propitiation", "atonement" – presuppose an heretical, "scholastic", even pagan concept of salvation that is alien to the true (non-Augustinian) tradition. However, it is easily proved that both the Holy Scriptures, and the liturgical tradition of the Church (especially the Divine Liturgy), and the Holy Fathers from the earliest times employed these words to express precisely that teaching which Romanides condemns as heretical.

The Holy Scriptures of the New Testament are full of such words as "ransom" and "propitiation" to describe the Work of Christ on the Cross. Thus the Son of Man, came "to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20.28), "as a ransom for all" (I Timothy 2.6), "to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4.10), "as a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2.17). The concept of blood sacrifice is equally central. Since the Law was only "a shadow of the good things to come" (Hebrews 10.1), and "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ" (Galatians 3.24), the purpose of the Old Testament sacrifices was, by drawing a parallel between the Old Testament sacrifices (the types) and that of the New Testament (the anti-type), to instruct and prepare the people for the mystical meaning of the latter, the Sacrifice to end all sacrifices. For "if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the Blood of Christ, Who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9.13-14).

The word "wrath" is used so often that no demonstration is needed. As for "curse", in the Old Testament everyone who fails to fulfill every commandment of the Mosaic Law, and everyone who is hanged on a tree (i.e. crucified), is accursed. And in the New Testament St. Paul says that both these curses were voluntarily taken on Himself by Christ: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3.13). So the language is impeccably Scriptural.

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[90] *Menaion*, February 16, Commemoration of the Holy Martyr Pamphilus and those with him, Mattins, Canon, Irmos eight, troparion.

Nor are the Holy Fathers averse from using the same language. Thus on Holy and Great Friday we chant: "Thou hast redeemed us from the curse of the Law by Thy precious Blood".[91] And St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "In His own Person, He bore the sentence righteously pronounced against sinners by the Law. For He became a curse for us, according to the Scripture: For cursed is everyone, it is said, that hangeth on a tree. And accursed are we all, for we are not able to fulfil the Law of God: For in many things we all stumble; and very prone to sin is the nature of man. And since, too, the Law of God says: Cursed is he that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of this Law, to do them, the curse, then, belongeth unto us, and not to others. For those against whom the transgression of the Law may be charged, and who are very prone to err from its commandments, surely deserve chastisement. Therefore, He That knew no sin was accursed for our sakes, that He might deliver us from the old curse. For all-sufficient was the God Who is above all, so dying for all; and by the death of His own Body, purchasing the redemption of all mankind.

"The Cross, then, that Christ bore, was not for His own deserts, but was the cross that awaited us, and was our due, through our condemnation by the Law. For as He was numbered among the dead, not for Himself, but for our sakes, that we might find in Him, the Author of everlasting life, subduing of Himself the power of death; so also, He took upon Himself the Cross that was our due, passing on Himself the condemnation of the Law, that the mouth of all lawlessness might henceforth be stopped, according to the saying of the Psalmist; the Sinless having suffered condemnation for the sin of all."[92]

Let us now turn to the words "ransom", "propitiation" and "sacrifice". All the Holy Fathers used this language, including those who came before both the scholastics and St. Augustine, and those who lived at the time of scholasticism, and those who specifically warred against scholasticism. Thus in the third century, St. Cyprian of Carthage, writes: "If Jesus Christ our Lord and God, is Himself the Chief Priest of God the Father, and has first offered Himself as a sacrifice to the Father, and has commanded this to be done in commemoration of Himself, certainly that priest truly discharges the office of Christ who imitates that which Christ did; and he then offers a true and full sacrifice in the Church to God the Father."[93]

Again, Blessed Theophylact, writes: "Since the Lord offered Himself up for us in sacrifice to the Father, having propitiated Him by His death as High Priest and then, after the destruction of sin and cessation of enmity, sent unto us the Spirit, He says: 'I will beseech the Father and will give you a Comforter, that is, I will

[91] *Triodion*, Troparion for Great Friday.
[92] St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, 22.19.
[93] St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistle 62*, 14.

propitiate the Father for you and reconcile Him with you, who were at enmity with Him because of sin, and He, having been propitiated by My death for you and been reconciled with you, will send you the Spirit."[94]

Still more striking is the language of one of the greatest opponents of scholasticism, St. Gregory Palamas: "Man was led into his captivity when he experienced God's wrath, this wrath being the good God's just abandonment of man. God had to be reconciled with the human race, for otherwise mankind could not be set free from the servitude. A sacrifice was needed to reconcile the Father on high with us and to sanctify us, since we had been soiled by fellowship with the evil one. There had to be a sacrifice which both cleansed and was clean, and a purified, sinless priest…. God overturned the devil through suffering and His Flesh which He offered as a sacrifice to God the Father, as a pure and altogether holy victim – how great is His gift! – and reconciled God to the human race…"[95]

Romanides and his disciples do not accept this. Thus Fr. James Bernstein writes: "For the Jews, offering a sacrifice to God was an act of self-denial, an aspect of purification. Orthodoxy taught me a new view of sacrifice: The sacredness of the blood and its efficacy consists not in what the offering of the blood does to God (to influence or change God), but in what it does to the offerer (to influence and change him). When the offerer places his hands on the head of the animal to be offered, he indicates that the offering is being given in his name and for his benefit. It does not imply a magical transference of sins from the offerer to the animal being sacrificed. Discarding sin from one's heart and life should be so easy? So when Orthodox read a verse like 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures' (I Corinthians 15:3), it is understood to mean that Christ died for us - to heal us, to change us, to make us more godlike - not that He died instead of us. The ultimate purpose of His death is to change us, not to avert the wrath of God."[96]

This is half-true and half-false. It is true that the ultimate purpose of all the sacrifices, both of the Old and of the New Testaments, is not to change God, Who is immutable, but to change us – "to heal us, to change us, to make us more godlike". But it is false to say that there is no transference of sins, and no dying of one being instead of another. When Abraham, following the command of God, offered his son Isaac in sacrifice, God stopped his hand and gave him a ram "in the place of his son" (Genesis 22.13), which was a prefiguring of the Sacrifice of Christ in our place. Again, the concept at the root of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, is clearly the transference of sin…

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[94] Blessed Theophylact, *Explanation of the Gospel of John*, 14.16.
[95] St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 16*, 21, 24, 31; in Veniamin, op. cit., pp. 193, 195, 201.
[96] Bernstein, *Surprised by Christ*, Conciliar Press, 2008, pp. 252-253.

Perhaps the clearest witnesses to the truth of the traditional understanding of the Cross, as against the Romanidean understanding, come from the three holy hierarchs, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom.

St. Basil writes: "The Lord had to taste death for each, and having become a propitiatory sacrifice for the world, justify all by His blood".[97] Again, in his interpretation of Psalm 48, at the words: "There be some that trust in their strength, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches. A brother cannot redeem; shall a man redeem? He shall not give to God a ransom [] for himself, nor the price of the redemption of his own soul" (vv. 7-9), he writes: "This sentence is directed by the prophet to two types of persons: to the earthborn and to the rich…. You, he says, who trust in your own strength…. And you, he says, who trust in the uncertainty of riches, listen…. You have need of ransoms that you may be transferred to the freedom of which you were deprived when conquered by the power of the devil, who, taking you under his control, does not free you from his tyranny until, persuaded by some worthwhile ransom, he wishes to exchange you. And the ransom must not be of the same kind as the things which are held in his control, but must differ greatly, if he would willingly free the captives from slavery. Therefore a brother is not able to ransom you. For no man can persuade the devil to remove from his power him who has once been subject to him, not he, at any rate, who is incapable of giving God a propitiatory offering even for his own sins…. But one thing was found worth as much as all men together. This was given for the price of ransom for our souls, the holy and highly honoured blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He poured out for all of us; therefore we were bought at a great price (I Corinthians 6.20)….

"No one is sufficient to redeem himself, unless He comes Who turns away 'the captivity of the people' (Exodus 13.8), not with ransoms nor with gifts, as it is written in Isaiah (52.3), but with His own blood… He Who 'shall not give to God His own ransom', but that of the whole world. He does not need a ransom, but He Himself is the propitiation. 'For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, set apart from sinners, and become higher than the heavens. He does not need to offer sacrifices daily (as the other priests did), first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people' (Hebrews 7.26-27)."[98]

St. Gregory the Theologian writes that "Christ Himself offers Himself to God [the Father], so that He Himself might snatch us from him who possessed us, and so that the Anointed One should be received instead of the one who had fallen,

[97] St. Basil, *Letter to Bishop Optimus*; *Works*, Russian edition, Sergiev Posad, 1892, vol. VII, p. 224.
[98] St. Basil, *Homily 19 on Psalm 48*, 3, 4; Works, Russian edition, Sergiev Posad, 1892, vol. I, pp. 194-195.

because the Anointer cannot be caught".[99] And again: "He is called 'Redemption' because He set us free from the bonds of sin and gives Himself in exchange for us as a ransom sufficient to cleanse the world."[100]

St. John Chrysostom writes: "David after the words: 'Sacrifice and offering hast Thou not desired", added: "but a body hast Thou perfected for me' (Psalm 39.9), understanding by this the body of the Master, a sacrifice for the whole universe, which cleansed our souls, absolved our sins, destroyed death, opened the heavens, showed us many great hopes and ordered all the rest".[101]

The Effects of Baptism

Romanides makes the astonishing claim that "Baptism… is not a negative forgiveness of guilt inherited as a consequence of the sin of Adam. On the contrary, it is a release from the powers of the devil… In the entire service of baptism there is not one statement about the forgiveness of any kind of guilt that may have been inherited from Adam."[102]

This is not true. *The very first words* sung by the choir after the new Christian has emerged from the waters of Holy Baptism are: "Blessed are they *whose iniquities are forgiven*, and *whose sins are covered*" (Psalm 31.1). Moreover, three times he recites the Nicene Creed, which includes the words: "I acknowledge one Baptism for *the remission of sins*". Thus the baptismal rite reflects the fundamental belief of the Church that Holy Baptism is *first and foremost* the rite of the remission of sins. As St. Peter said to the repentant Jews on the Day of Pentecost: "Repent, and every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins* and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2.38).

Romanides makes this elementary and fundamental mistake because of his deep-rooted rejection of the Orthodox teaching on original sin and the Sacrifice for sin on the Cross. For if there is no original sin, then there is no Sacrifice necessary that would take away that sin, and no Baptism that communicates to us the fruits of that Sacrifice "for the remission of sins". Or if, nevertheless, personal sins are remitted in Baptism, this is a secondary, "negative" aspect of the sacrament, which is not to be compared in importance to "release from the powers of the devil" or "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit".

But why, then, does the Nicene Creed say only that baptism is "for the

[99] St. Gregory, *Works*, Russian edition, Moscow, 1889, vol. V, p. 42. Cf. *Homily 20* (*P.G.* 35.1068d).
[100] St. Gregory, *Sermon 30*, 20.
[101] St. John Chrysostom, *Against the Jews; Works*, Russian edition, vol. I, p. 722.
[102] Romanides, "Man and his True Life according to the Greek Orthodox Service Book", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, I (1955), pp. 70, 73.

remission of sins"? Because this is the necessary condition for the reception of the other gifts. For there can be no "release from the powers of the devil" if the sins that give the devil power over us are not remitted; and the Holy Spirit could not be given until Christ had suffered on the Cross (John 7.39, 20.22).

Another way to approach the question is to ask: *what* precisely does Holy Baptism remove or destroy? The traditional answer is: *all sin*, whether personal or original. However, it is obvious that mortality and corruption are not removed by Baptism: we all die, we are all corrupted, we all can feel within ourselves the workings of the old, fallen Adam. So if original sin, according to the new Romanideans, is mortality and corruption, then original sin (or whatever term they prefer) is not removed by Baptism, according to them. But this is contrary to the teaching of the Holy Church… It follows that there must be a difference between original sin, which is removed at Baptism, and mortality and corruption and fallen nature in general, which are not. The cause is removed, but its consequences are allowed to remain.

The reason why the Lord allows the consequences of original sin to remain is explained by St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite: "An internal cause of thoughts, however remote, is the passionate and corrupted condition of human nature which was brought about by the ancestral sin. This condition remains in our nature also after baptism, not as ancestral sin *as such* (for this is removed through baptism, according to Canon 120 of Carthage), but as a consequence of the ancestral sin, for the exertion and testing of our free will, and in exchange for greater crowns and rewards, according to the theologians. For after the fall the intellect lost its innocent memory and thought which it had fixed formerly only on the good; but now when it wishes to remember and think upon the good, it is immediately dispersed and also thinks upon the bad. For this reason the divine Gregory of Sinai said: 'The source and ground of our thoughts is the fragmented state of our memory. The memory was originally simple and one-pointed, but as a result of the fall its natural powers have been perverted: it has lost its recollectedness in God and has become compound instead of simple, diversified instead of one-pointed.'"[103]

Again, he writes: "Although baptism removes the ancestral sin and every other voluntary sin, it does not, however, remove the ignorance of the intellect, and lust, and the implanted inclination of the heart toward sin, and the other effects which that ancestral sin brought about in human nature; for these things remain as a consequence even after baptism in order to test our free will and for us to struggle and conquer, and for the baptized to receive their crowns."[104]

"An analogy," writes Jonathan Grossmeister, "is when an infection damages

[103] St. Nicodemus, *Exomologetarion, Instructions to the Spiritual Father*, chapter 6, section 4.
[104] St. Nicodemus, *Homily on Repentance*, part 3, section 2, subsection F.

an organ (like pneumonia can scar the lungs). After the infection is cured, nevertheless the scars remain, which permanently weaken the organ, rendering it more susceptible to future infections. In the same way, after baptism 'cures' original sin, nevertheless our nature remains scarred and susceptible to sin, which is why we must continue to struggle…"[105]

As St. Diadochus of Photiki writes: "Although baptism removes from us the stain resulting from sin, it does not thereby heal the duality of our will immediately, neither does it prevent the demons from attacking us or speaking deceitful words to us. In this way we are led to take up the weapons of righteousness, and to preserve through the power of God what we could not keep safe through the efforts of our soul alone."[106]

In the Old Testament, before the gift of Baptism was bestowed on us through the Cross of Christ, it was possible to struggle against fallen nature, but it was not possible to be saved, because it was not possible without baptism to conquer original sin. The greatest of the Old Testament saints, such as Enoch and Elijah, were even granted to be in "suspended animation", by being removed temporarily from this life of corruption. But they, too, will eventually die…[107]

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[105] Grossmeister, personal communication. "However," he goes on, "the medical analogy is not quite adequate. From what I understood of St Nicodemus, baptism does have a permanent effect. So even if you commit many serious sins after baptism, the innermost part of your soul remains clean. It is impossible ever to "catch" original sin again. Instead, all sins committed after baptism are like stains on the surface of the heart, which must be washed away by repentance, but which only cover the surface, never penetrating to the inside. Regarding the saints of the Old Testament, the opposite situation obtained: they struggled to wash away all the surface stains, but until Christ came and redeemed humanity, their innermost heart remained infected.

"At the same time, baptism, like the other sacraments, grants special grace to fight off future 'infections', future sins. So baptism can also to a certain degree 'heal' the scars of original sin. My understanding here is that to the extent you are spiritually prepared for baptism and the mysteries, to that extent you receive grace to fight off sin. In this sense, the strength of your faith and repentance when you approach the baptismal font matters, and why preparation in the catechumenate matters. This is in addition to the 'automatic' result of baptism, which is the forgiveness of sins. I believe this occurs no matter what the degree of preparedness, though correct me if I'm wrong.

"Finally, regarding the saints of the Old Testament, the opposite situation obtained: they struggled to wash away all the surface stains, but until Christ came and redeemed humanity, their innermost heart remained infected."

[106] St. Diadochus, *On Spiritual Knowledge,* 78.

[107] St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 21.13: "Since, after the fall of the first formed, a human being [Enoch] was found to ascend the very heights of virtue and to revoke the sin of our first parents through his own acceptable way of life, see the exceeding love of the good God. When he found someone capable of revoking Adam's sin, he showed through his very actions that it was not out of a desire to inflict death on our race for transgression of the command that he had condemned the person who had given the command: he took him away during his lifetime to another place… He took him away during his lifetime, he did not grant him immortality, in case this should diminish fear of sinning; instead, he let it remain strong in the human race." And yet Enoch, too, will die at the end of the world….

Even St. John the Baptist, "the greatest born of women", died. Even the Mother of God, the greatest of all rational creatures, died…

Death was finally conquered by Christ. Being alone without sin of any kind, whether personal or original, He alone did not have to die. But He destroyed "the sting of death", which is sin, by offering the perfect sacrifice for sin in His voluntary death, and thereby destroyed its effect, death itself.

For us "the sting of death" is removed, but not death itself – for the time being. And yet through baptism the antidote to death, "the medicine of immortality", has been implanted in us, and when Christ comes in glory, that medicine will bring forth its full fruits and show its full healing and restorative powers. Then "the last enemy, death", together with every remnant of corruption will be finally and permanently removed…

Love and Justice

Romanides and the Romanideans have a particular aversion to the concept of *justice* in the mystery of our redemption. They exhibit a kind of impatience when mention is made of the need for the satisfaction of God's justice. It is not simply the scholastic overtones that the word "satisfaction" have for them that annoy them: they are unhappy also with the emphasis on *justice* itself It is as if they are saying: "Why all this talk about justice? Is not love enough? Are we not saved through God's love for mankind, demonstrated to a supreme degree on Golgotha? All we need is love…"

As the echo of the Beatles' pop song suggests, this is a very modernist, ecumenist-Protestant attitude. In our ecumenist age love has become the catch-phrase and the cure-all. All we need is love…

But it is not true that all we need is love. We also need truth and justice. These three principles are one in God, but at the same time they are three. God is love, but He is also truth and justice, and His love is incompatible with all untruth and injustice. For, as St. John of the Ladder writes: "God is called love, *and also justice*."[108]

Romanides gets round the evidently very great importance of the concepts of justice and justification in our redemption by redefining the latter as "deification". Thus commenting on St. Paul's words in I Corinthians 6.11: "you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified", which are repeated in the rite

[108] St. John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 24.23.

of Baptism, Romanides redefines "justification" as "deification".[109] And this in spite of the fact that St. Paul himself clearly distinguishes the two concepts in the famous verse: "Those whom he justified (εδικαιωσεν), he also glorified (εδοξασεν)" (Romans 8.30) – where "glorification", as Romanides repeatedly asserts, has the same meaning as "deification". In other places, Romanides redefines "justification" as "*vivification*, or the imparting of life through His personal, uncreated energies."[110] Thus justice and justification are defined in terms of life and death, not of sin and sacrifice.

Romanides writes: "The Old Testament righteous were unjustly held by satan, and Christ's incarnation brings justice to them, a justice which is both the imparting of the life of Christ to man and the destruction of the devil's power of death. This Orthodox notion of justification as 1) theoric vision and immortalization of the saints of all ages in Christ, and 2) destruction of the power of Satan through human co-working with divine energy, is completely alien to the atonement Christology of Anselm, according to which God requires a sacrifice on the cross from Christ and meritorious works afterward from man which together constitute a literal deus ex machina for the vexing Western problem of how God, his absolute justice offended by the fall, could change his hatred of man back to love."[111]

We have already seen that to reject the concept of the Sacrifice for sin in this way is to reject, not a scholastic heresy, but the central dogma of the Orthodox Faith as expressed by the Holy Scriptures, all the Holy Fathers and the liturgical and Eucharistic tradition of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church… We shall therefore not waste time by a detailed refutation of this identification of justice and justification with vivification. More useful may be an attempt to explicate the scriptural and patristic understanding of justice…

What is justice? In its most primitive meaning, justice signifies order, equity and balance. In its loftier, religious meaning, it signifies the right functioning of all things in accordance with their God-given nature.

St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes: "God is named Justice because He satisfies the needs of all things, dispensing due proportion, beauty and order, and defines the bounds of all orders and places each thing under its appropriate laws and orders according to that rule which is most truly just, and because he is the Cause of the independent activity of each. For the Divine Justice orders and assigns limits to all things and keeps all things distinct from and unmixed with one another and gives to all beings that which belongs to each according to the

[109] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 288.
[110] James L. Kelley, *A Realism of Glory: Lectures on Christology in the Works of Protopresbyter John Romanides*, Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2009, p. 46.
[111] Ibid., p. 48.

dignity of each. And, to speak truly, all who censure the Divine Justice unknowingly confess themselves to be manifestly unjust. For they say that immortality should be in mortal creatures and perfection in the imperfect and self-motivation in the alter-motivated and sameness in the changeable and perfect power in the weak, and that the temporal should be eternal, things which naturally move immutable, temporal pleasures eternal, and to sum up, they assign the properties of one thing to another. They should know, however, that the Divine justice is essentially true Justice in that it gives to all things that which befits the particular dignity of each and preserves the nature of each in its own proper order and power."[112]

Injustice in rational creatures is what we call *sin*. It is a transgression of God's law, a deviation from His righteousness, an offence against His love. The attitude of God to sin and injustice is called in the Holy Scriptures *the wrath of God*. This term does not denote a sinful passion of anger, for God is completely pure and passionless, but the utterly inexorable determination of God to destroy that which is evil and unjust, that is, which is opposed to love. As Archbishop Theophan of Poltava puts it: "The wrath of God is one of the manifestations of the love of God, but of the love of God in its relationship to the moral evil in the heart of rational creatures in general, and of man in particular."[113]

The wrath of God is expressed in *vengeance*, which in God is not a sinful passion, but the expression of perfect justice: "The Lord is the God of vengeances; the God of vengeances hath spoken openly" (Psalm 93.1). The saints, too, being in all things like God, desire vengeance against sin, but in a pure, passionless manner. Thus in the Apocalypse the Apostle John sees "under the altar the souls of those who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord, holy and true, does Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6.9-10). That the motivation of these saints is pure is confirmed by the Venerable Bede, who writes: "The souls of the righteous cry these things, not from hatred of enemies, but from love of justice."[114]

Injustice in man is blotted out by repentance and the works of repentance, of which the most characteristic is sacrifice. Even before the Coming of Christ a partial blotting out of injustice through repentance was possible. Thus we know that God frequently forgave the sins of people in the Old Testament who

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[112] St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, VIII.

[113] Archbishop Theophan, *On Redemption*.

[114] St. Bede, *On Genesis* 4.10. In his commentary on the Apocalypse, Archbishop Averky (Taushev) of Syracuse and Jordanville says the same: "The prayer of the righteous is explained, of course, not by their desire for personal revenge, but by the speeding up of the triumph of God's justice on earth and of that rewarding of each according to his works which must be accomplished by the Terrible Judgement" (in Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Apocalypse in the Teachings of Ancient Christianity*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1998, pp. 129-130).

sincerely repented before Him, such as David. However, since man was mired in sin, - not only his personal sins but also "the law of sin" that had penetrated his very nature, - he was unable to justify himself; his personal repentance was insufficient and his personal sacrifices tainted. "A brother cannot redeem; shall a man redeem?" (Psalm 48.7).

That is why even the best men of the Old Testament were barred from entry into heaven and went to hades after their death. Thus the Patriarch Jacob said of his son Joseph: "I will go down to my son mourning to hades" (Genesis 37.35). For "[sinful] flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of heaven" (I Corinthians 15.50).

If the injustice of man was to be blotted out, and peace restored between God and man, a Mediator had to be found Who would take upon himself the sins of all men and blot them out through a supreme Sacrifice that would be completely untainted by sin. Such a Sacrifice was offered by the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. It was offered by Himself as man to Himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit as God. This teaching was officially dogmatized at the Councils of Constantinople in 1156 and 1157, and included in *The Synodicon of Orthodoxy*.[115]

The Romanideans deny that any Sacrifice in the full sense – that is, in the sense of vicarious, propitiatory atonement – took place, but only an outpouring of Divine energy, or love. All is mercy, nothing is justice… Now nobody denies that the motive power of our redemption was God's supremely merciful love for man. But God's love acted in a very specific manner without which we would not have been saved. God *acted* by offering a Sacrifice of Himself to Himself for the justification of man – that is, the restoration of justice in man's relationship with God through the destruction of sin. God's mercy was accomplished *in and through* His re-establishment of justice. The problem with speaking of God's love without speaking of His justice, of what He accomplished in and through the Cross, is that it becomes incomprehensible why God had to become man and die on the Cross. Why was it necessary for Christ to die? Did He not manifest His compassionate love long before the Cross in innumerable ways? Was He not the same God of love in the Old Testament? But then why did He not carry out His redemptive work long before? Why did He have to wait five thousand years before forgiving all the sins of men and destroying the chains of hades?

The answer to all these questions is: because only in this way, the way of the Cross, could *justice* be accomplished. As St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: "That the deceiver was deceived and got his deserts shows forth God's *justice*. The entire aim of the transaction bears witness to the goodness of its Author."[116]

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[115] The text is in *The True Vine*, issues 27 and 28, Spring, 2000, pp. 53-55.
[116] St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Great Catechetical Discourse*, 26.

Again, St. Gregory Palamas, the Romanideans' favourite Father but no supporter of theirs, explains: "The pre-eternal, uncircumscribed and almighty Word and omnipotent Son of God could clearly have saved man from mortality and servitude to the devil without Himself becoming man. He upholds all things by the word of His power and everything is subject to His divine authority. According to Job, He can do everything and nothing is impossible for Him. The strength of a created being cannot withstand the power of the Creator, and nothing is more powerful than the Almighty. But the incarnation of the Word of God was the method of deliverance most in keeping with our nature and weakness, and most appropriate for Him Who carried it out, *for this method had justice on its side, and God does not act without justice.* As the Psalmist and Prophet says, 'God is righteous and loveth righteousness' (Psalm 11.7), 'and there is no unrighteousness in Him' (Psalm 92.15). Man was justly abandoned by God in the beginning as he had first abandoned God. He had voluntarily approached the originator of evil, obeyed him when he treacherously advised the opposite of what God had commanded, and was justly given over to him. In this way, through the evil one's envy and the good Lord's just consent, death came into the world. Because of the devil's overwhelming evil, death became twofold, for he brought about not just physical but also eternal death.

"As we had been justly handed over to the devil's service and subjection to death, it was clearly necessary that the human race's return to freedom and life should be accomplished by God *in a just way*. Not only had man been surrendered to the envious devil by divine righteousness, but the devil had rejected righteousness and become wrongly enamoured of authority, arbitrary power and, above all, tyranny. He took up arms against justice and used his might against mankind. It pleased God that the devil be overcome first by the justice against which he continuously fought, then afterwards by power, through the Resurrection and the future Judgement. *Justice before power is the best order of events*, and that force should come after justice is the work of a truly divine and good Lord, not of a tyrant….

"A sacrifice was needed to reconcile the Father on High with us and to sanctify us, since we had been soiled by fellowship with the evil one. There had to be a sacrifice which both cleansed and was clean, and a purified, sinless priest… It was clearly necessary for Christ to descend to Hades, but *all these things were done with justice, without which God does not act*."[117]

"Justice before power", the Cross before the Resurrection. And "all things done with justice, without which God does not act." Clearly, justice is no secondary aspect of the Divine economy, but the very heart, the very essence of our salvation…

[117] St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 16*, 1, 2, 21; in Veniamin, op. cit., pp. 179-180, 194. Italics mine (V.M.)

There is no conflict between love and justice. To say that God should be loving but not just is like saying that the sun should give light but not heat: it is simply not in His nature. It is not in His nature, and it is not in the nature of any created being, for the simple reason that justice *is* the order of created beings, it is the state of being as it was originally created. When people say that God is loving but not just, or that His justice demonstrates a lack of love, they do not know what they are saying. For His love is aimed precisely towards the restoration of justice, the restoration of "the nature of each in its own proper order and power", in which alone lies its blessedness.

But justice can be restored, and injustice blotted out, only through suffering. "For it was necessary," writes Nicholas Cabasilas, "that sin should be abolished by some penalty and that we by suffering a proportionate punishment should be freed from the offences we have committed against God."[118] And if the restoration of justice involves suffering, this is not the fault of God, but of His creatures, who freely go against their nature as God created it and thereby create injustice.

Nor is justice a kind of cold, abstract principle imposed upon Him from without, as it were. As Vladimir Lossky writes: "We should not depict God either as a constitutional monarch subject to a justice that goes beyond Him, or as a tyrant whose whim would create a law without order or objectivity. Justice is not an abstract reality superior to God and imposing obligations on Him, as it were, but *an expression of His nature*. Just as He freely creates yet manifests Himself in the order and beauty of creation, so He manifests Himself in His justice: Christ Who is Himself justice, affirms in His fullness God's justice… *God's justice is that man should no longer be separated from God*. It is the restoration of humanity in Christ, the true Adam."[119]

Love and justice are the positive and negative poles respectively of God's Providence in relation to the created universe. Love is the natural, that is, *just* relationship between God and man. Sin has destroyed love and created injustice. Divine Providence therefore acts to destroy injustice and restore love. We would not need to speak of justice if sin had not destroyed it. But with the entrance of sin, justice is the first necessity – love demands it.

However, since love never demands of others what it cannot give itself, the justice of God is transmuted into *mercy*. Mercy is that form of justice in which the punishment of sin is not removed altogether, but placed on the shoulders of

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[118] Cabasilas, *The Life of Christ* I, *P.G.* 150:516B; quoted in Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987, p. 62.

[119] Lossky, "Christological Dogma", op. cit., pp. 114-115. My italics (V.M.).

another, who thereby becomes *a propitiatory sacrifice*. Thus, as Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov says, Christ "offered Himself as a redemptive Sacrifice to the Justice of God for sinful mankind – and the Holy Scriptures witness with all justice concerning Him: *Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world* (John 1.29)".[120] Thus the Cross is both love and justice, both mercy and sacrifice, the perfect manifestation of love, and the perfect satisfaction of justice. It is "the mercy of peace", in the words of the Divine Liturgy, the mercy that restores peace between God and man.

Christ's redemptive work can be described as *perfect love in pursuit of perfect justice*. The beginning of all God's works is without question *love*: God created the world out of love. But with the appearance of sin, or injustice, God directed His love towards the abolition of injustice and the justification of man. This He achieved through *a propitiatory sacrifice*. As the Apostle of love - who is also the son of thunder - writes: "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3.16). And again: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the *expiation* [or propitiation or atonement] (ιλασμον) of our sins" (I John 4.10). "Let our lives, then," chants the Holy Church, "be worthy of the loving Father Who has offered sacrifice, and of the glorious Victim Who is the Saviour of our souls."[121]

So the Cross is perfect justice - but justice of a supremely paradoxical kind. Sin, that is, injustice, is completely blotted out - but by the unjust death and Sacrifice of the Only Sinless and Just One. Christ came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8.3) and died the death of a sinner, uttering the words expressive of sinners' horror at their abandonment by God: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The innocent Head died that the guilty Body should live. He, the Just One, Who committed no sin, took upon Himself the sins of the whole world. When we could not pay the price, He paid it for us; when we were dead in sin, He died to give us life. "For Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (I Peter 3.18). And the self-sacrificial love of this sacrifice was so great in the eyes of Divine Justice that it blotted out the sins of the whole world - of all men, that is, who respond to this free gift with faith, gratitude and repentance.

The Church has expressed this paradox with great eloquence: "Come, all ye peoples, and let us venerate the blessed Wood, through which the eternal justice has been brought to pass. For he who by a tree deceived our forefather Adam, is by the Cross himself deceived; and he who by tyranny gained possession of the creature endowed by God with royal dignity, is overthrown in headlong fall. By

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[120] Brianchaninov, "Slovo o spasenii i o khristianskom sovershenstve" (Sermon on salvation and Christian perfection), *Polnoe Sobranie Tvorenij* (Complete Collection of Works), volume II, Moscow, 2001, p. 308 (in Russian).

[121] *Triodion*, Sunday of the Prodigal son, Vespers, "Lord, I have cried", verse.

the Blood of God the poison of the serpent is washed away; and the curse of a just condemnation is loosed by the unjust punishment inflicted on the Just. For it was fitting that wood should be healed by wood, and that through the Passion of One Who knew not passion should be remitted all the sufferings of him who was condemned because of wood. But glory to Thee, O Christ our King, for Thy dread dispensation towards us, whereby Thou hast saved us all, for Thou art good and lovest mankind."[122]

[122] *Menaion*, September 14, Great Vespers, "Lord, I have cried", "Glory… Both now…"

V. ROMANIDES ON HEAVEN AND HELL

The downgrading of the Cross by Romanides is accompanied, as we have seen, by a downgrading of *justice*. But we see this downgrading not only in the work of redemption on the Cross, but also in the Last Judgement. Thus he writes: "Should we identify religion with the final victory of universal justice? Are we obligated to have religion because there must be a God of justice Who will ultimately judge all mankind so that the unjust will be punished in Hell and the just (in other words, good boys and girls) will be rewarded in Heaven? If our answer is yes, then we must have religion so that justice will ultimately prevail and the human longing for happiness will be fulfilled. Is it conceivable for good boys and girls to be unhappy after their death in the life to come? It is inconceivable. And if they were wronged in this life, is it possible for these good boys and girls who suffered unjustly to receive no justice in the next life? It is impossible. And in Heaven shouldn't they lead a pleasant life, a life of happiness? Of course, they should. But for all this to happen, life after death has to exist as well as a good and righteous God Who will settle the score with good and just judgement. Isn't that how things stand? He has to exist, at least according to the worldview of Western theology in the Middle Ages.

"But then modern psychology comes along and discredits all of this. Modern psychology tells us that these views are products of the mind, because human beings have an inner sense of justice, which calls for naughty boys and girls to be punished and good boys and girls to be rewarded. And since compensation fails to take place in this life, the human imagination projects this idea into another life where it must take place. This is why someone who feels vulnerable becomes religious and believes in his religion's doctrines. It also applies to someone who is devoted to justice and has profound and earnest feelings about what is right. They both believe, because the doctrinal teaching that they have accepted satisfies their psychological need for justice to be done. Their reasons are not based on philosophy or metaphysics but on purely psychological considerations…"[123]

What a slander against the holy apostles, prophets and martyrs, who all longed for the final triumph of truth and justice! The Lord came "to proclaim good news to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to declare the acceptable year of the Lord, *the day of recompense*" (Isaiah 61.1-2). The whole burden of the Old Testament Prophets was an impassioned, yet holy lament against the injustice of man against God and against his fellow man, and a longing for the day of recompense when justice will be done by "the God of justice" (Malachi 2.17).

[123] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 474.

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

Romanides blames St. Augustine for "introducing into Christianity the idea that hell is the nether regions, under the earth, where men go to be punished… so that we should all be good kids and go to Paradise, above the stars and heaven, etc., while if we are bad kids we shall go under the earth to be punished in the nether regions (καταχθονια)".[124] But of course the idea of heaven above the earth and hell below it is far from being an invention of Augustine's: we find it in the New Testament, as, for example, where St. Paul tells us that every knee should bow at the name of Jesus, "of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things *under the earth* (καταχθονιων)" (Philippians 3.10). However, as we have seen, the witness of the Apostles and Fathers means nothing to Romanides if it contradicts the findings (or rather, prejudices) of modern science…

For Romanides "it is precisely here that we find the basic difference from the Protestant and Franco-Latin traditions that followed Augustine. In these same Protestant traditions, as in the Latin tradition, there is clear difference between Hell and Paradise. Paradise is one thing, and Hell – another." But the truth, according to Romanides, is that "the same God is Hell and Paradise"![125] "Paradise and Hell are the same thing"! And so, according to Romanides' interpreter and admirer, Vlachos, "Paradise and Hell do not exist from the point of view of God, but from the point of view of men".[126] How so? Romanides explains: "Hell is the glory of God, but those who contemplate it see the glory as glory while those being tormented see the same glory as eternal fire and outer darkness. Eternal fire and outer darkness. For the same fire both enlightens and burns. There is both a 'consuming fire' and a fire that enlightens 'every man that comes into the world'."[127]

These teachings of Romanides clearly derive from the Protestant and ecumenist scepticism about Heaven and Hell that has become so fashionable in

[124] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 477-478.
[125] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 480.
[126] Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 480, 496.
[127] Romanides, in Vlachos, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 481.

the modern world. He wraps them in Orthodox theological terminology, but that does not disguise their real origin. However, this wrapping had made it acceptable to many Orthodox theologians who are also infected by the spirit of modernism…

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Let us look briefly at the teachings of these Romanideans…

First, Christos Yannaras, who writes: "God is not the 'judge' of men in the sense of a magistrate who passes sentence and imposes a punishment, testifying to the transgression. He is judge because of what He is: the possibility of life and true existence. When man voluntarily cuts himself off from the possibility of existence, he is automatically 'judged'. It is not God's sentence but His existence that judges him. God is nothing but an ontological fact of love and an outpouring of love: a fullness of good, an ecstasy of loving goodness....

"Man is judged according to the measure of the life and existence from which he excludes himself. Sin is a self-inflicted condemnation and punishment which man freely chooses when he refuses to be a personal hypostasis of communion with God and prefers to 'alter' and disorder his existence, fragmenting his nature into individual entities-when he prefers corruption and death. For the Church sin is not a legal but an existential fact. It is not simply a transgression, but an active refusal on man's part to be what he truly is: the image and 'glory', or manifestation of God."[128]

There is an element of truth in this. It is true that "sin is a self-inflicted condemnation and punishment which man freely chooses". And it is true that a heretic, for example, who refuses to listen to a first and a second exhortation, is "self-condemned", as St. Paul says (Titus 3.11). This self-condemnation, as Bishop Theophan the Recluse explains, is the condemnation of his *conscience*: "In his conscience he is condemned for his disagreement with the truth, but he still does not listen to its voice, being ashamed to humiliate himself by making a concession. Thus he brings the clearly recognized truth as a sacrifice to his self-love, and sins in going against his conscience."[129]

However, the fact that sinners are condemned by their own conscience, "the eye of God in the soul of man", in this life in no way implies that they will not be condemned again in the next life. "It is appointed unto men to die once, and then [follows] the judgement" (Hebrews 9.27). And then "all the nations" will be

[128] Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, pp.36, 46.
[129] Bishop Theophan, *Tolkovanie Poslanij sv. Apostola Pavla* (Interpretation of the Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul), Moscow, 2002, p. 647 (in Russian).

judged again – this time in the sight of the whole universe - at the Last and Most Terrible Judgement, when God will indeed be a Judge Who passes sentence, as the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25) clearly demonstrates. For there is a difference between *the guilt and self-condemnation of the criminal* and *the sentence of the Judge*.

Another Romanidean, Fr. Luke Dingman, writes: "When we think of the Last Judgment the fathers say we are not to think of harsh justice, a strict angry judge, we should think rather of being in the presence of Supreme Love. In the presence of God that is of Supreme Love, that is our judgment. For God does not cause judgment at anytime, he doesn't do something vengeful to evil doers, nor does He prepare a place of punishment. God is Love and by His very nature He cannot do what is evil, hateful or destructive to anyone. Judgment and Hell are spiritual conditions of sin and darkness. Judgment results when someone is separated from God who is the source of life and light. Judgment results when we shut off ourselves from God's redeeming Love. Yes there is a Judgment, there will be a judgment day temporary and eternal, but we judge ourselves. What about the fearful descriptions of hell, fire and brimstone that are in the Bible. These are warnings and pictorial representations, but they are not to be interpreted literally as geographic or physical places created by God for the punishment of human beings. Rather they are admonitions with a serious message: Life outside of God results in evil, falsehood, hatred, guilt, alienation and pain. Life apart from God leads to an agony of darkness, in which people torment themselves and each other. It is a spiritual hell created not by God, but by the wilful refusal to turn to God who is Love, in order to be forgiven and cleansed and renewed and set free. Yes there is a judgment, but it is we who judge ourselves, by the thoughts we think, by the values we hold, the decisions we make, the things we do and do not do. The people we are today and in the afterlife."[130]

Here we find the familiar refrain of the Romanideans: "God does not judge us, we judge ourselves". But Dingman goes further than Romanides or Yannaras (at least as I have cited them above) in denying that hell is anything more than a spiritual condition, "created not by God, but by the willful refusal to turn to God who is Love". Moreover, the descriptions of fire and brimstone are merely "warnings and pictorial representations" of a non-physical state: in essence they are merely metaphors of a non-physical reality.

However, the Lord Himself tells us that the everlasting fire *is* created by Him - "for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25.41) and those men who follow the devil in their works. As for the description of hell as a purely spiritual state, this

[130] Dingman, a sermon delivered in 2009 (Sunday of The Last Judgment), at St. Lawrence Orthodox Church, transcribed from the official Church recording by Patrick Pummill.

fails to take into account the fact that it is the souls *and bodies* of men who are cast into the fire of gehenna (we shall have more to say on this below). Again, however "pictorial" the description of the torments of hell, they are not purely allegorical, just as the bodies cast into those torments will not be allegorical…

Perhaps the best-known attempt to deny the justice of God and God's status as Judge is made by the Old Calendarist Romanidean Alexander Kalomiros in his famous article, "The River of Fire". Kalomiros writes: "God never takes vengeance. His punishments are loving means of correction, as long as anything can be corrected and healed in this life. They never extend to eternity…" (p. 6)

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

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

out and left out of the Kingdom of Life at the Terrible Judgements of God because of his new sins?

"Our Saviour clearly spoke of the Terrible Judgement of God – of the day which 'burns as a furnace'. When the sun and the moon darkens, when the stars get confused and start falling, when the shining 'sign of the Son of Man' appears in that utter darkness, then the Lord Jesus will appear in power and glory to judge justly the living and the dead."[131]

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

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

Man is the ultimate cause of his own misery: but that by no means implies that God does not punish him. In fact, as St. John of Damascus writes, "a judge justly punishes one who is guilty of wrongdoing; and if he does not punish him he is himself a wrongdoer. In punishing him the judge is not the cause either of the wrongdoing or of the vengeance taken against the wrongdoer, the cause being the wrongdoer's freely chosen actions. Thus too God, Who saw what was going to happen as if it had already happened, judged it as if it had taken place; and if it was evil, that was the cause of its being punished. It was God Who created man, so of course he created him in goodness; but man did evil of his own free choice, and is himself the cause of the vengeance that overtakes him."[132]

Again, St. Photius the Great writes: "Let us comprehend the depths of the Master's clemency. He gave death as a punishment, but through His own death He transformed it as a gate to immortality. It was a resolution of anger and displeasure, but it announces the consummate goodness of the Judge…"[133]

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[131] Fr. Milorad Loncar (ed.), *Missionary Letters of Saint Nikolai Velimirovich*, Grayslake, Il.: New Gracanica Monastery, 2008, part 1, Letter 51, pp. 92-93.
[132] St. John of Damascus, *Dialogue against the Manichaeans*, 37.
[133] St. Photius, *Letter 3*, to Eusebia, nun and monastic superior, on the death of her sister;

Thus the truth is more complex than Kalomiros would have it. Death is *both* a punishment *and*, through Christ's own Death, a deliverance from death. It is *both* judgement *and* mercy. Nor could it be otherwise; for God is *both* love *and* justice. As St. John of the Ladder says, He is called *justice* as well as love.[134]

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

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

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

Again, Kalomiros distorts the nature of heaven and hell. In a characteristically modernist, rationalist manner he reduces them to *psychological states* only: a state of supreme joy and love enlightened by the fire of God's grace, on the one hand, and a state of the most abject misery and hatred, burned but not enlightened by the fire of God's grace, on the other. "This is hell: the negation of love; the return

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translated by Despina Stratoudaki White.

[134] St. John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 24.23.

of hate for love; bitterness at seeing innocent joy; to be surrounded by love and to have hate in one's heart. This is the eternal condition of all the damned. They are all dearly loved. They are all invited to the joyous banquet. They are all living in God's Kingdom, in the New Earth and the New Heavens. No one expels them. Even if they wanted to go away they could not flee from God's New Creation, nor hide from God's tenderly loving omnipresence…" (p. 20).

Like all heretics, Kalomiros mixes truth with falsehood. So let us first freely admit what is true in his account. It is true that a large part of the torment of hell will be psychological: the hatred and bitterness that continues to seethe in the sinner's heart – together with remorse, shame and the most soul-destroying despair. It is also true that that bitterness will be exarcebated by the thought of the "innocent joy" of the blessed in Paradise. It is true, furthermore, that in a certain sense it is precisely God's love that torments the sinners in hell. For, as Archbishop Theophan of Poltava writes: "In essence the wrath of God is one of the manifestations of the love of God, but of the love of God in its relation to the moral evil in the heart of rational creatures in general, and in the heart of man in particular."[135]

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

God is not as passive as Kalomiros makes out. He *acts* – and acts to expel the unrepentant sinner from His presence. Thus to the "inner darkness" of the sinner's hate-filled, graceless soul will be added the "outer darkness" of the *place* that is gehenna, where the river of fire will consume his *body* as well as his soul. This *outer* aspect of the eternal torments appears to have been ignored by Kalomiros in his over-sophisticated understanding of the torments of hell. And if

[135] Archbishop Theophan, *On Redemption*.

he were to object: "There is no space or time as we understand it in the life of the age to come", we may reply: "*As we understand it*, in our present fallen and limited state - yes. And yet we cannot get rid of the categories of space and time altogether. Only God is completely beyond space and time. The idea of a *body* burning in hell is incomprehensible if it is not burning *somewhere.* Nor is the idea of our earth being transfigured into Paradise comprehensible if it not located in *any* kind of space…"

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

And yet Holy Scripture is full of the idea of retributive justice as being the norm of existence, proceeding from the very nature of God. Thus: "To them there is no requital, because they have not feared God; He hath stretched forth His hand in retribution" (Psalm 54.22). And again: "The Lord is the God of vengeances; the God of vengeances hath spoken openly. Be Thou exalted, O Thou that judgest the earth; render the proud their due" (Psalm 93.1-2; cf. Psalm 98.8; Isaiah 34.8; Jeremiah 50.15, 51.6; II Thessalonians 1.8). And again: "They [the martyrs] cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord, holy and true, doest Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6.10). It goes without saying that in none of these quotations are God or the saints understood as being vengeful in a crudely human and sinful manner, as if they were possessed by a fallen passion of anger. As the Venerable Bede writes: "The souls of the righteous cry these things, not from hatred of enemies, but *from love of justice*."[136] So the desire that justice should be done is by no means necessarily sinful; it may be pure, proceeding not from the fallen passion of anger, but from the pure love of justice. Indeed, when the Lord says: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Romans 12.19), He is not saying that justice should not be desired, but that it should be sought, not through the exercise of the fallen human passions, but through *God,* Who acts with the most perfect and passionless impartiality.

Even St. Basil the Great, upon whom Kalomiros relies so heavily, does not deny the idea of retributive justice in God – and precisely in the context of the river of fire. As he writes, commenting on the verse: "The voice of the Lord divideth the flame of fire" (Psalm 28.6): "The fire prepared in punishment for the devil and his angels is divided by the voice of the Lord. Thus, since there are two

[136] St. Bede, *On Genesis* 4.10.

capacities in fire, one of burning and the other of illuminating, the fierce and punitive property of the fire may await those who deserve to burn, while its illuminating and radiant part may be reserved for the enjoyment of those who are rejoicing."[137]

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

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

"Paradise and hell are the same reality…"[138]

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

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[137] St. Basil, *On Psalm 28.6*.

[138] Metallinos, "Paradise and Hell in the Orthodox tradition". *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. XXVII, 3, 2010, pp. 12-19.

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

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

God planted Paradise, or Eden, "toward the east" in a definite part of planet earth (by tradition near Tabriz in North-West Iran), and "*placed* there the man that He had formed" (Genesis 2.8). Paradise had (and has) earth, and plants, and rivers, and birds and trees. After the fall of man, the entrance to Paradise was blocked by the sword of the Seraphim, and then Paradise itself was removed from the earth, in order that it should not be corrupted. But it has only changed *place*; it has not ceased to be what it was in the beginning. The Apostle Paul was taken up to Paradise, which is also called the Third Heaven (II Corinthians 12.1-4) – and he admits the possibility that he was there *in body* as well as soul, which implies that Paradise is *physical*, as well as a spiritual reality.

Again, St. Irenaeus writes that "Enoch of old, having pleased God, was translated in the body, foreshowing the translation of the righteous… The Elders… say that those who have been translated are taken to Paradise, and remain there until the consummation of all things, being the first to enter into incorruption."[139] If Enoch, who has not died, is in Paradise *in the body*, then Paradise is a *physical place* even now, after its translation from the earth.

Of course, the Fathers also understand Paradise in other ways: as the mind in which God dwells noetically, and as a type of future, eschatological realities.[140] But these spiritual interpretations should not be seen as contradicting the physical reality. Even in St. John's vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem, after "the first heaven and the first earth have passed away" (Revelation 21.1), there is still a place "in the middle of its street" for the tree of life, and for the river of Paradise (Revelation 22.2).

Similarly, Hell has always been understood to be a place. And just as Heaven

[139] St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, 5:1; cf. V, 36:1.
[140] St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: "Paradise He planted afterwards as a sign of the age to come" (*First Ethical Discourse*).

and Paradise have always been understood to be "up", above us, so Hell has always been understood to be below us, in the bowels of the earth. Thus St. Paul's words have a definite spatial connotation: "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those *under the earth*" (Philippians 2.9).

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

As C.S. Lewis writes, referring to the "New Nature" of Christ's resurrection Body, "the New Nature is, in the most troublesome way [for sophisticated rationalists], interlocked at some points with the Old. Because of its novelty we have to think of it, for the most part, metaphorically; but because of the partial interlocking, some facts about it [the local appearances, the eating, the touching, the claim to be corporeal] come through into our present experience in all their literal facthood – just as some facts about an organism are inorganic facts, and some facts about a solid body are facts of linear geometry."[141]

And in another place he writes: "The remark so often made that 'Heaven is a state of mind' bears witness to the wintry and deathlike phase of this process in which we are now living. The implication is that if Heaven is a state of mind – or, more correctly, of the spirit – then it must be only a state of the spirit, or at least that anything else, if added to that state of spirit, would be irrelevant. That is what every great religion *except* Christianity would say. But Christian teaching by saying that God made the world and called it good teaches that Nature or environment cannot be simply irrelevant to spiritual beatitude in general,

[141] Lewis, *Miracles*, London: Fount, 1974, p. 162.

however far in one particular Nature, during the days of her bondage, they may have been torn apart. By teaching the resurrection of the body it teaches that Heaven is not merely a state of the spirit but a state of the body as well: and therefore a state of Nature as a whole. Christ, it is true, told His hearers that the Kingdom of Heaven was 'within' or 'among' them. But His hearers were not *merely* in a 'state of mind'. The planet He had created was beneath their feet, His sun above their heads; blood and lungs and guts were working in the bodies he had invented, photons and sound waves of his devising were blessing them with the sight of His human face and the sound of His voice. We are never *merely* in a state of mind…"[142]

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

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

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

[142] Lewis, *Miracles,* London: Collins, 1947, 2010, pp. 263-264.

"Heaven, therefore, is certainly a place, and it is certainly *up* from any point on the earth, and hell is certainly *down*, in the bowels of the earth; but these places and their inhabitants cannot be seen by men until their spiritual eyes are opened… Further, these places are not within the 'coordinates' of our space-time system: an airliner does not pass 'invisibly' through paradise, nor an earth satellite through the third heaven, nor can the souls waiting in hell for the Last Judgement be reached by drilling for them in the earth. They are not *there*, but in a different *kind* of space that begins right here but extends, as it were, in a different direction…"[143]

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

Let us turn to Metallinos' statement that Heaven and Hell "are the same experience, except that they are perceived differently by man". As it stands, this statement makes no logical, let alone theological sense. An experience is an event in one man's subjective consciousness. If it is an experience in Heaven or of Heaven, then it must be joyful; if it is in Hell or of Hell, then it must be painful. But a joyful experience cannot be the same as a painful experience: they must be *different* experiences. The experience of Uncreated Grace as described by the saints could be called an experience of Heaven on earth. In any case, it cannot be described as an experience of Hell…[144]

As for one and the same experience being "perceived differently", this is possible, but only later, in recollection. But this is not what Metallinos is saying. He is saying that at the Second Coming of Christ, the righteous will look upon

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

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

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

All spiritual experiences, insofar as they involve an interaction between the uncreated God and created man, have a *dual* nature. It is a characteristic of Romanides and his followers, such as Kalomiros and Metallinos, that they tend to emphasize the uncreated, Divine aspect of these experiences at the expense of their created, human aspect. This "eschatological monophysitism" has the effect, as Fr. Seraphim Rose noted, of making our ideas about heaven and hell vague and indefinite, with disastrous consequences for the spiritual life.

CONCLUSION: SALVATION AND DEIFICATION

While undermining the traditional Christian concepts of sin, redemption and the Last Judgement, the Romanideans at the same time try to replace them with other concepts. The most popular of these is that of *deification* or theosis. In conclusion, therefore, let us briefly examine the relationship between salvation as traditionally understood and deification.

"God became man, so that men should become gods." This patristic dictum going back to the fourth century was rediscovered with enthusiasm by theologians of the twentieth century at the same time that they rediscovered the teaching of the Holy Fathers – especially Saints Maximus the Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian and Gregory Palamas – on the Divine Light and uncreated Grace. As a result, a "revolution" has been created in the teaching of the faith, with references to the Divine Light, uncreated Grace and deification peppering even the sermons of ordinary parish priests.

In itself there is nothing to be regretted in this "revolution". For many, including the present writer, it came as a revelation to learn that the aim of the Christian life is not only to escape hell, not only to become good, but to become *god*, to acquire the Holy Spirit in such fullness that our humble human nature becomes completely transfigured by the Divine Energies and is transformed "from glory into glory". We cannot attain the goal of the Christian life if we do not realize how lofty it is: "without a vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29.18). Losing sight of this goal carries with it the great danger of reducing Christianity to a kind of Victorian bourgeois morality that is satisfied with a level of attainment far short of holiness or deification. We must always bear in mind that God requires us to be holy as He is holy, and that unless our righteousness greatly exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5.20)…

The tragedy is that, in the Romanideans, the loftiness of this vision is combined with a pride that is in its own way no less pharisaical. They become intoxicated by the goal rather than humbled by their distance from it. They forget that while the goal of the Christian is indeed to become a god, it was the premature desire to attain precisely the same goal in a manner contrary to God's will that led to Adam and Eve being expelled from Paradise…

This is most clear in the writings of Romanides. He talks constantly about deification and the main means to attain it, noetic prayer. About the other commandments and dogmas he says comparatively little – of redemption through the Cross, for example, there is *no discussion at all* in his *Patristic Theology*, and very little in his *Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics.*

But Orthodox dogmatics has a definite order of exposition, and each step must be fully and correctly understood before going on to the next step. Thus the correct order of exposition is: creation – original sin – the Economy of the Son (the Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection) – the Economy of the Holy Spirit (the Life of the Holy Spirit imparted through the Church and Her Sacraments) – the Last Things (the Last Judgement, the General Resurrection, the Deification of Redeemed Nature). To concentrate almost exclusively on the later steps at the expense of the earlier is like attempting to place the roof on a house before the foundation has been dug and the walls have been completed: it threatens the collapse of the whole structure.[145]

Yet this is precisely what we see in Romanides. As a clear example let us return to his words: "the Old Testament Job reached theosis even though he was a heathen and not a Jew".[146] We pointed out earlier that if this were true, it makes Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross superfluous; for we can reach no other conclusion if a man can attain the highest goal of existence while living in original sin and before the conquest of sin and death by Christ. Of course, Job is a saint of the Church and lives in the glory of the Divine Light. But his salvation and complete deification, like that of all the Old Testament saints, took place only *after*, and in strict dependence on, the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and the Descent of the Holy Spirit, which, as St. John says, could not be given before the glorification of the Son (John 7.39).

Romanides' error involves him in two distinct heresies: Pelagianism and Ecumenism. His thinking is Pelagianist because it implies that a man can conquer sin and death, and attain deification, before the Coming of Christ and without the Holy Spirit Who was given only after the Resurrection of Christ. And it is

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[145] Take, for example the words of Chris Jensen in his otherwise excellent essay, "Shine as the Sun: C.S. Lewis and the Doctrine of Deification" (*Road to Emmaus*, vol. VIII, no. 2 (29), p. 48): "The concept of deification has challenged those who are accustomed to thinking of salvation as a once-for-all decision or as divine pardon in which God overturns out guilty verdict and lets us off the hook. As Vladimir Lossky has observed, a treatise of St. Anselm of Canterbury called *Cur Deus Homo* (completed in Italy in 1098 AD), deeply colored popular Western notions of salvation by presenting the idea of redemption in isolation from the rest of Christ's life and work. By so doing, the main focus of salvation became the cross and passion, where Christ is said to have effected a change in the Father's attitude toward fallen men. Oddly, this forensic model suggests that an angry God needs to be cured rather than sinful or mortal human beings. Salvation as deification, in contrast accents human healing and transformation, looking at the Cross but additionally to the Resurrection, the Ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit". However, the concept of deification in no way "challenges" the traditional Orthodox (which is not to say Anselmian) concept of salvation through the Cross. Christ did indeed offer a once-for-all Sacrifice for sin which was accepted by the Holy Trinity. It is on the basis of this Sacrifice, and the real change in the relationship between God and man that it secured, that the deification of Christians is possible. Without the Cross there could have been no Pentecost…

[146] Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, p. 168.

Ecumenist because it implies that there is salvation outside the Church – indeed, that the Church is not the only Ark of Salvation.

The irony is that although Romanides is possessed by an especially fierce anti-western pathos, Pelagianism and Ecumenism are two quintessentially *western* heresies. That this is not an accident is proved by the fact that several other leading Romanideans display the same combination of fierce anti-westernism with susceptibility to western modes of thinking. Thus Alexander Kalomiros, who railed so much against westernism that he doubted whether a person brought up in Catholicism or Protestantism could ever become truly Orthodox, nevertheless believed in the western heresy of Darwinism. It is a case of "Physician, heal thyself!" The new soteriologists protest too much against precisely that heretical West from which their own errors emanate. While fiercely condemning flawed but Orthodox thinkers of the West, like Augustine, they themselves separate themselves from Orthodoxy…

It is not for nothing that the Church in her prayers cries: "O Lord, save us!", not: "O Lord, deify us!" While we long for both salvation and deification, and while the two undoubtedly go together in the end, as sinners for whom deliverance from sin is by no means yet assured we cry out humbly for that before we ask for the still greater gift of glorification. It is the new soteriologists' reversal of this relationship, and their concentration on the more "exciting" and exalted teaching on deification at the expense of the more basic and better-known teaching on salvation, that reveals that inner pride which is the cause of their heretical assault on the Justice of God.

They could learn from the story of a famous anchorite who came to see Abba Poemen in the Egyptian desert. "Abba Poemen received him with joy. They greeted one another and sat down. The visitor began to speak of the Scriptures, of spiritual and of heavenly things. But Abba Poemen turned his face away and answered nothing. Seeing that he did not speak to him, the other went away deeply grieved and said to the brother who had brought him, 'I have made this long journey in vain. For I have come to see the old man, and he does not wish to speak to me.' Then the brother went inside to Abba Poemen and said to him, 'Abba, this great man who has so great a reputation in his own country has come here because of you. Why did you not speak to him?' The old man said, 'He is great and speaks of heavenly things and I am lowly and speak of earthly things. If he had spoken to me of the passions of the soul, I should have replied, but he speaks to me of spiritual things and I know nothing about that.' Then the brother came out and said to the visitor, 'The old man does not readily speak of the Scriptures, but if anyone consults him about the passions of the soul, he replies.' Filled with compunction, the visitor returned to the old man and said to him, 'What should I do, Abba, for the passions of the soul master me.' The old man turned towards him and replied joyfully, 'This time, you come as you should.

Now open your mouth concerning this and I will fill it with good things...'"[147]

[147] Benedicta Ward (ed.), *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection,* London: Mowbray, 1975, pp. 140-141.

APPENDIX I: ROMANIDES, ROMANITY AND THE FALL OF OLD ROME

When Emperor Basil II died in 1025, New Rome had reached its peak – politically, militarily and culturally. Some fifty years later, after the disastrous defeat at the hands of the Seljuk Turks at Manzikert in 1071, she started upon the path of decline that would lead to the Fall of the City in 1204, and again, more permanently, in 1453. In between these two events lay another: the loss of the West's unity with the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and the religio-political civilization of Orthodox Christian Romanity. This fall was accomplished in the historical capital of the West, Old Rome, in the year 1054, when the Patriarchate of Old Rome fell under the anathema of the Great Church of Constantinople. Simultaneously it was announced symbolically in the heavens by the collapse of the Crab nebula (a fact noted by Chinese astronomers of the time). Thus the great star that had been Western Christianity now became a black hole, sucking in a wider and wider swathe of peoples and civilizations into its murky depths. And the New Rome, too, suffered: one of the two "lungs" of Orthodox Christian Romanity had collapsed, and the whole body was now weaker, more prone to disease and less capable of vigorous recovery…

Such an important event has naturally elicited much study and analysis; and in what is now a very well-known lecture, Fr. John Romanides put forward a new and highly controversial thesis: that the schism between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism was not a schism between Eastern (Greek) and Western (Latin) Christianity, but between the Romans understood in a very broad sense and the nation of the Franks. By the Romans he understands the inhabitants of Gallic Romania (Southern France), Western Romania (Rome and Southern Italy) and Eastern Romania (Constantinople and its dependencies). By the Franks he appears to understand all the Germanic tribes of North-Western Europe – the Franks, the Visigoths, the Lombards, the Saxons and the Normans - with the exception of the "Romanized Anglo-Saxons" (although the Anglo-Saxons were in fact less Romanized than the Franks). Romanides' argument is that the schism was not really caused by theological differences, - at any rate, between Rome and Constantinople, - but by political manipulations on the part of the Franks, the only real heretics: "The Franks used church structure and dogma in order to maintain their birthright, to hold the Roman nation in 'just subjection'."[148] The West Romans, he claims, were never really heretics, but always remained in union with the East Romans of Constantinople, with whom they always formed essentially one nation, in faith, in culture and even in language.

[148] Romanides, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism and Doctrine: An Interplay between Theology and Society*, Boston: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981, p. 29.

In other articles, Romanides argues that "since the seventh century the Franco-Latins usually received their apostolic succession by exterminating their West Roman, Celtic and Saxon predecessors, having reduced the West Romans to serfs and villeins of Frankish feudalism. This happened not only in Gaul, but in North Italy, Germany, England, South Italy, Spain and Portugal."[149] And that the Reformation, together with the American and French revolutions, constituted the birth of "Re-Greco-Romanisation, but not in its Apostolic form"![150]

Thus concerning the American and French revolutions he wrote: "From this viewpoint the real beginning of Western Civilization is the American Revolution of 1775-81 which was completed by the abolition of slavery in 1865. The French Revolution of 1789 was also a beginning of Western Civilization since it immediately liberated the serfs and villains from their captivity to the 40,000 castles which the peasants enjoyed burning together with their castellani inhabitants. But democracy itself was squelched by Napoleon in 1800. After he fell from power the rest of the nobility returned from mostly self-imposed exile. Both the Napoleonists and the other royalists got down to work and re-enslaved the 85% of Gallo-Romans. Of course they were no longer called serfs and villains. However, they are still called "peasants" (paysan) which had been the collective name for the "serfs" and "villains" before the revolution. Now all Gallo-Roman children are being brainwashed by the comic figure "Asterix" into believing that they are the "Celts" who were enslaved to the Romans as though they were not Gallo-Roman citizens during Imperial and Merovingian times. It was the ancestors of these children now being brainwashed by "Asterix" who are the descendants of the 85% of Gallo-Roman serfs and villains liberated in 1789."[151]

Romanides begins his lecture with a tribute to Patriarch Athenagoras and Archbishop Iakovos – two notorious Freemasons who tried to unite Orthodoxy with the heresies of the West. Having failed to see that these two leading contemporary "Romans" are in fact spiritually "Franks", we should not be unduly surprised to find that he also fails to prove his case with regard to the Romans and Franks of yesteryear.

But we may agree with the comment of Fr. Michael Vaporis in his foreword to Romanides' lecture, that while "some might not agree with Romanides' presentation, analysis or evaluation of the events leading to and causing the Schism", "few will not be challenged to re-think the unfortunate circumstances which led to the tragic division". Romanides' presentation *is* challenging - though deeply flawed, as we shall try to demonstrate. And we shall try to rise to the challenge by presenting a more plausible account of the causes of the schism.

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[149] Romanides, "Orthodox and Vatican Agreement", Balamand, 1993.
[150] Romanides, "Church Synods and Civilisations", *Theologia,* 63, July-September, 1992, p. 428.
[151] Romanides, The Cure of the Neurobiological Sickness of Religion, part 2.

The Merovingian Franks

If Romanides had limited his thesis to explaining the pernicious influence of the Frankish Emperor Charlemagne on East-West relations, and on the development of the schism between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, he would have done everyone a service. For Charlemagne not only created a political schism with Constantinople, but also introduced the heresy of the Filioque into his kingdom and rejected the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. This is undisputed.

But Romanides casts aspersions even on those servants of Charlemagne who opposed the Filioque, like his English "minister of education" Alcuin. Moreover, he casts the Franks as the villains of the piece much earlier than Charlemagne, quoting St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany (+754) to the effect that the Frankish bishops were immoral warmongers. But he fails to mention that for two-and-a-half centuries before that the Frankish kingdom had been strongly Romanised and had produced many saints.

Thus Thomas F.X. Noble and Thomas Head write: "Over the course of the seventh century… numerous men and women of the Frankish aristocracy came to be viewed as saints…

"One of the first of these… was Queen Radegund (518-587)…. The Frankish female saints of the seventh century were, like Radegund, largely abbesses; the men were almost all bishops. Many had distinctly Germanic names: Balthild, Sadlberga, Rictrude, Wandrille, and Arnulf. Others bore traditional Roman names: Sulpicius, Eligius, and Caesaria. This evidence suggests that the old Roman elite had by now been almost entirely absorbed through intermarriage into the Frankish ruling classes. In the process the Franks had largely adopted a form of Latin as their spoken tongue, known as a Romance vernacular…"[152]

Again, he asserts that the Franks enslaved the Orthodox Gallo-Romans of France, and sees the whole of their subsequent history in terms of failed attempts by the Orthodox Gallo-Romans to recover their independence from their heretical masters. But there is no historical evidence for such enslavement… Rather, the Franks were unique among the Germanic tribes of fifth-century Europe in being *Orthodox*. All the other Germanic tribes were *Arians.* So when Romanides speaks of the *enslavement* of the Orthodox Gallo-Romans to the "Franks", his words can be accepted if they refer to the Franks before they became Orthodox, or to the Arian Ostrogoths and Visigoths (although the

[152] Noble and Head, "Introduction" to *Soldiers of Christ,* London: Sheed & Ward, 1995, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

evidence appears to indicate that the Gothic yoke was not severe). However, when Clovis (Louis), the king of the Franks, was converted to Orthodox Christianity by his Burgundian (i.e. Germanic) wife St. Clothilde, this was welcomed by the Gallo-Romans as a *liberation* and a *return to Romanity*. Thus St. Avitus, Bishop of Vienne, congratulated Clovis on his baptism in terms that showed that he regarded his kingdom as still part of the Eastern Roman Empire: "Let Greece rejoice indeed in having chosen our princeps".[153]

Moreover, this is also how the East Romans also perceived it. Thus St. Gregory of Tours wrote that Clovis received letters "from the Emperor Anastasius to confer the consulate on him. In Saint Martin's church he stood clad in a purple tunic and the military mantle, and he crowned himself with a diadem. He then rode out on his horse and with his own hand showered gold and silver coins among the people present all the way from the doorway of Saint Martin's church to Tours cathedral. From that day on he was called Consul or Augustus."[154]

After his baptism Clovis proceeded to subdue the Arian Goths to the south and west and *liberate* the Orthodox there from the Arian yoke. Undoubtedly his Orthodox wife St. Clothilde played an important role in this, but there is no reason to suspect the sincerity of Clovis himself. Everywhere he introduced good laws. "Established at Paris, Clovis governed this kingdom by virtue of an agreement concluded with the bishops of Gaul, according to which natives and barbarians were to be on terms of equality... The Frankish kingdom thereupon took its place in history under more promising conditions than were to be found in any other state founded upon the ruins of the Roman Empire. All free men bore the title of Frank, had the same political status, and were eligible to the same offices. Besides, each individual observed the law of the people among whom he belonged; the Gallo-Roman lived according to the code, the barbarian according to the Salian or Ripuarian law; in other words, the law was personal, not territorial. If there were any privileges they belonged to the Gallo-Romans, who, in the beginning were the only ones on whom the episcopal dignity was conferred. The king governed the provinces through his counts, and had a considerable voice in the selection of the clergy. The drawing up of the Salian Law (*Lex Salica*), which seems to date from the early part of the reign of Clovis, and the Council of Orléans, convoked by him and held in the last year of his reign, prove that the legislative activity of this king was not eclipsed by his military energy."[155]

Our main source for early Frankish history, *The History of the Franks* by St. Gregory of Tours (+594), confirms this account. As Chris Wickham writes, St. Gregory, "although of an aristocratic Roman family, seems hardly aware the

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[153] St. Avitus, *Letter 4*.
[154] St. Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, London: Penguin Books, 1974, II, 38, p. 154.
[155] "New Advent" Catholic encyclopaedia, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06238a.htm

empire has gone at all; his founding hero was Clovis, and all his loyalties Frankish."[156] Nowhere does he dispute the legitimacy of Frankish rule; and the rebellions that take place are of Franks against Franks rather than Gallo-Romans against Franks. One exception to this rule was the attempt of Bishop Egidius of Rheims to kill King Childebert (book V, 19). But St. Gregory shows no sympathy for him, and records his trial and exile by his fellow-bishops without criticism. As for the independence of the bishops in the Frankish kingdom, this is demonstrated by the completely free election of St. Gregory himself to the episcopate by the people, with no interference by the king.[157]

As if sensing that his thesis is contradicted by the authoritative testimony of St. Gregory, Romanides seeks in another lecture to downgrade his witness, declaring, on the basis of four supposed "mistakes" in his *History of the Franks*, that "Orthodox spirituality and theology… were not very well understood by the new class of aristocratic administrator bishops created by the Frankish kings".[158] It would take us too far from our theme to discuss these "mistakes" in detail. Suffice it to say that, far from undermining the authority of St. Gregory, - a miracle-worker and close friend of St. Gregory the Dialogist, - Romanides only shows that it is he who does not very well understand Orthodox spirituality and theology…

Another great merit of the Frankish Orthodox kingdom was the help it provided in the conversion of neighbouring kingdoms to Orthodoxy. Thus in the late sixth century the Visigothic Prince Hermenegild was converted to Orthodoxy from Arianism by his Frankish wife Ingundis. Not only did Ingundis stubbornly refuse to become an Arian even when subjected to torture by the Queen Mother Goisuntha. On arriving in Seville, she and the Hispano-Roman bishop of the city St. Leander succeeded in converting Hermenegild to Orthodoxy. Then several thousand Goths were converted. For the sake of his new-found faith, Hermenegild rebelled against his Arian father King Leogivild, but, though aided by the Orthodox Sueves in the north-west (who converted to Orthodoxy in the 550s) and the Byzantines in the south-east, he was crushed by Leogivild (the Byzantine general was bribed to stay in camp[159]). Hermenegild himself was killed at Pascha, 585 for refusing to accept communion from an Arian bishop in prison.

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[156] Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*, London: Penguin Books, 2009, p. 200.

[157] Abbot Odo, *The Life of St. Gregory of Tours*, translated by Fr. Seraphim Rose in *Vita Patrum,* Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1988, p. 45.

[158] Romanides, "Empirical versus Speculative Theology", in *Franks, Romans, Feudalism, and Doctrine*, p. 53.

[159] St. Gregory of Tours writes that Hermenegild "joined the party of the Emperor Tiberius, making overtures to the Emperor's army commander, who was then invading Spain", but that "as soon as Leovigild ordered his troops to advance Hermenegild found himself deserted by the Greeks" (*History of the Franks,* V, 38).

The influence of the Franks was hardly less beneficial in the conversion of the pagan Anglo-Saxons. The mission of St. Augustine to England was greatly helped on its way by Frankish bishops; and his conversion of King Ethelbert of Kent was undoubtedly helped by Ethelbert's wife, the Frankish Princess Bertha and her chaplain, the Frankish Bishop Liutprand. A little later the Burgundian Bishop Felix became the apostle of East Anglia. The seventh and eighth centuries were the golden age of the English Orthodox Church, and the frequent interchange of holy bishops, abbots and abbesses across the Channel was no small factor in this triumph of Orthodoxy in England.

Another great contribution of the Franks to Orthodoxy and civilization in general was the destruction of the Muslim Arab armies by the Frankish leader Charles Martel at Poitiers in 732. However, Romanides argues that the battle of Poitiers was in fact a suppression of a Gallo-Roman revolution that was supported by Arabs and Numidian Romans![160] And yet there can be no question that Charles Martel's victory was a great triumph of Orthodoxy; for if he had lost, then the Muslims might well have gone on to conquer the whole of Western Europe, which in turn would have put enormous pressure on beleaguered Constantinople. One is tempted to think that Romanides cannot be serious in bemoaning the great victory of Charles Martel, who was given the title of "Patrician" by Pope Gregory II and saved Orthodox civilization in the West. And yet a reading of his lecture convinces us that he was!

Romanides' obsession with proving that the Franks were the root of all western evil even leads him to claim that the French revolution was the final, successful rising of the Gallo-Romans against the Franks!

Romanides applies the same scenario to Spain, where the conversion of the Visigoths to Orthodoxy in the late sixth century was supposedly "nominal". But then why were there so many Spanish saints well into the ninth century?..

West Rome Breaks with East Rome

A generation after Charles Martel's victory Charlemagne came to power in Francia and set about building that empire that was to be the ancestor, spiritually and geographically, both of the "Holy Roman Empire" of the Catholic Middle Ages and of the European Union of today. This was an extremely important historical development; and there is no doubt that the influence of the Franks on both Western and Eastern Romanity in the centuries that followed until the schism was often negative. Nevertheless, historical justice requires us to take issue with Romanides' excessively one-sided account and contest his assertion

[160] Romanides, "Church Synods and Civilisation", p. 425.

that the fall of the West from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church was entirely the work of men of Germanic race who were deliberately trying to destroy Romanity, and not to a large extent the work of men of Italian (and sometimes even Greek) race who were often Romans only in name…

Let us begin with the first act that "brought the Franks into Italy": the blessing by Pope Zachariah of a dynastic coup d'état in Francia. The last Merovingian rulers were weak and ineffective: real power was concentrated in the hands of their "mayors" or prime ministers. Pope Zachariah had already been heavily engaged in the reorganization of the Frankish Church through his legate in Francia, St. Boniface, the English Apostle of Germany. In 751 the Frankish mayor, Peppin III, Charles Martel's grandson, sent envoys to him to ask "whether it was just for one to reign and for another to rule". Zachariah took the hint and blessed the deposition of Childeric III and the anointing of Peppin by St. Boniface in his place.

We may wonder whether this act was right in God's eyes, and whether Zachariah, the last of the Greek popes[161], was interfering rightly in the politics of the West. Be that as it may, his successor, Stephen II, a Roman aristocrat, greatly increased the links with "the most Christian king of the Franks". Having been deserted at a moment of great peril by the iconoclast Emperor Leo, who also deprived the Church of Rome of many bishoprics and their patrimonies, he crossed the Alps and in the summer of 754 gave Peppin the title of "patrician" and blessed him and his successors to rule in perpetuity. Pope Stephen also re-consecrated Peppin and his Queen - perhaps Peppin's first consecration was deemed to have been illegitimate in that the last Merovingian king, Childeric, was still alive. Or perhaps this second anointing had a deeper significance. For, whether Stephen had this in mind or not, it came to signify *the re-establishment of the Western Roman Empire*, with its political capital north of the Alps, but its spiritual capital, as always, in Rome. For in exchange, the Franks became the official protectors of Rome instead of the Eastern emperors, whose subjects the Popes now ceased to be.[162]

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[161] Andrew Louth writes: "From 680 to 751, or more precisely from the accession of Agatho in 678 until Zacharias' death in 751 – the popes, with two exceptions, Benedict II and Gregory II, were Greek in background and speakers of Greek, which has led some scholars to speak of a 'Byzantine captivity' of the papacy. This is quite misleading: most of the 'Greek' popes were southern Italian or Sicilian, where Greek was still the vernacular, and virtually all of them seem to have made their career among the Roman clergy, so, whatever their background, their experience and sympathies would have been thoroughly Roman" (*Greek East and Latin West,* Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007, p. 79).

[162] Moreover, from this time the popes stopped dating their documents from the emperor's regnal year, and began to issue their own coins (Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple: Rulers of Medieval Byzantium,* London: Phoenix Press, 2001, p. 47).

It is important to note the Pope's attitude towards the Eastern Emperor at this time: "We earnestly entreat you," he wrote to Peppin, "to act towards the Greeks in such a manner that the Catholic faith may be for ever preserved, that the Church may be delivered from their malice, and may recover all her patrimony."[163] As Romanides correctly points out, to call someone "Greek" in this period was an insult, implying that he was not "Roman", i.e. an Orthodox Christian, but rather a pagan or heretic. Of course the iconoclast Leo fully deserved the insult, but the more significant point here is that the insult was hurled, not by a Frank, but by a West Roman of impeccable genes from Romanides' point of view… Peppin more than fulfilled his side of the bargain with Pope Stephen: he defeated the Lombards, restored the Pope to Rome and gave him the former Byzantine exarchate of Ravenna – the beginning of the Papal States and the role of the Popes as secular as well as spiritual rulers.

At about this time the forgery known as *The Donation of Constantine* was concocted by someone in the papal chancellery. This alleged that Constantine the Great had given his throne to Pope Sylvester and his successors because "it is not right that an earthly emperor should have power in a place where the government of priests and the head of the Christian religion has been established by the heavenly Emperor". For this reason he moved his capital to the New Rome, Constantinople. "And we ordain and decree that he [the Roman Pope] shall have rule as well over the four principal sees, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, as also over the Churches of God in all the world. And the pontiff who for the time being shall preside over the most holy Roman Church shall be the highest and chief of all priests in the whole world, and according to his decision shall all matters be settled."[164]

Now Romanides argues that the purpose of this forgery was to prevent the Franks from establishing their capital in Rome. Much more likely, however, is that its immediate purpose was directed, not against the Franks, - who, after all, were Orthodox and great benefactors of the papacy, - but against the heretical emperor in Constantinople, being meant to provide a justification for the papacy's stealing of the exarchate of Ravenna from the emperor in exchange for his earlier depredations. But in the longer term its significance was deeper: it represented a quite new theory of the relationship between the secular and the ecclesiastical powers. For contrary to the doctrine of the "symphony" of the two powers which prevailed in the East and the Byzantine West, the theory encapsulated in the *Donation* essentially asserted that the head of the Roman Church had a higher authority, not only than any other "priest", but also than the head of the Empire; so that the Emperor could only exert his authority as a kind of vassal of the Pope.

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[163] Abbé Guettée, *The Papacy,* New York, 1866, p. 255.

[164] Translated by Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church,* Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 52.

Of course, there is an inherent contradiction in this theory. If it was St. Constantine who gave the authority to St. Sylvester, then the ultimate authority in the Christian commonwealth rested, not with the Pope, but with the Emperor. But this consequence was ignored in the face of the urgent necessity of finding some justification for the papacy's expansionist plans. [165]

In the context of this article, however, the major significance of the *Donation* consists in the fact that this foundation-stone of the papist heresy was concocted, *not in Francia, but in Rome* – and when the papacy was still in the hands of impeccably West Roman Popes who had, as far as we know, not a drop of Germanic blood in their veins!

The Popes and the Carolingians

Towards the end of the century two further West Roman Popes – Hadrian I and Leo III – placed further solid stones in the edifice of the papist heresy. Now Romanides praises these Popes because they opposed the incipient heresies of Charlemagne – his rejection of the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council on icon-veneration (although this appears to have been the result of a mistranslation rather than deliberate heresy[166]), and the Filioque.

This is fair enough. But Charlemagne's heresies soon collapsed with the collapse of his empire, whereas the heresy of papism continued to strengthen. And, as we shall see, the heresy of papism – the most fundamental cause of the Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches – continued to be pursued in

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[165] Centuries later, in 1242, a pamphlet attributed to Pope Innocent IV corrected this flaw in the theory of papism by declaring that the Donation was not a gift, but a *restitution* (Charles Davis, "The Middle Ages", in Richard Jenkyns (ed.), *The Legacy of Rome*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 86.)

[166] Louth writes: "The Frankish court received a Latin version of the decrees of Nicaea II in which a central point was misrepresented: instead of an assertion that icons are not venerated with the worship owed to God, the Latin version seems to have asserted exactly the opposite, that icons are indeed venerated with the worship due to God alone. There is certainly scope for misunderstanding here, especially when dealing with a translated text, for the distinction that the iconodules had painstakingly drawn between a form of veneration expressing honour and a form of veneration expressing worship has no natural lexical equivalent. Proskynesis, which in Greek at this time probably carried a primary connotation of bowing down, prostration – a physical act – and latreia, the word used for worship exclusively due to God – a matter of intention – are derived from roots, which in their verbal forms are used as a hendiadys in the Greek version of the second commandment in the Septuagint (προσκυνήσείς… λάτρέυσής: 'you shall not bow down… you shall not worship': Exod. 20.5). Latin equivalents add further confusion, not least because the Latin calque of proskynesis, adoratio, was the word that came to be used for latreia. But whatever the potential confusion, the distinction explicitly made by the Nicene synod simply collapsed into identity by the faulty translation that made its way to the Frankish court" (op. cit., pp. 86-87).

this period, not by the Franks, but by the West Roman Popes - most notably, by Pope Nicholas I.

The attitude of Pope Hadrian can be seen in his reply to an Epistle of Empress Irene and her son. Abbé Guettée writes: "We will quote from his letter what he says respecting the Patriarch of Constantinople: 'We are very much surprised to see that in your letter you give to Tarasius the title of *oecumenical* Patriarch. The Patriarch of Constantinople would not have even the second rank WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF OUR SEE; if he be *oecumenical*, must he not therefore have also the primacy over our church? All Christians know that this is a ridiculous assumption.'

"Adrian sets before the Emperor the example of Charles, King of the Franks. 'Following our advice,' he says, 'and fulfilling our wishes, he has subjected all the barbarian nations of the West; he has given to the Roman Church in perpetuity provinces, cities, castles and patrimonies which were withheld by the Lombards, and which by right belong to St. Peter; he does not cease daily to offer gold and silver for this light and sustenance of the poor.'

"Here is language quite new on the part of Roman bishops, but henceforth destined to become habitual with them. It dates from 785; that is, from the same year when Adrian delivered to Ingelramm, Bishop of Metz, the collection of the *False Decretals* [which gave the Popes all authority to convene councils and judge bishops]. There is something highly significant in this coincidence. Was it Adrian himself who authorized this work of forgery? We do not know; but it is incontestable that it was *in Rome itself* under the *pontificate of Adrian*, and in the year in which he wrote so haughtily to the Emperor of the East, that this new code of the Papacy is first mentioned in history. Adrian is the true creator of the modern Papacy…"[167]

That it was the papacy, rather than the Franks, who were behind the major developments in Church-State relations in this period is confirmed by a close analysis of the famous coronation of Charlemagne on Christmas Day, 800. The context was a grave personal crisis of Pope Leo III, in which he very much needed the support of Charlemagne. For "even though his election had been unanimous," writes Tom Holland, "Leo had enemies: for the papal office, which until recently had brought its holder only bills and overdrafts, was now capable of exciting the envious cupidity of the Roman aristocracy. On 25 April, as the heir of St. Peter rode in splendid procession to Mass, he was set upon by a gang of heavies. Bundled off into a monastery, Leo succeeded in escaping before his enemies, as had been their intention, could blind him and cut out his tongue. Lacking any other recourse, he resolved upon the desperate expedient of fleeing

[167] Guettée, op. cit., pp. 258-261.

to the King of the Franks. The journey was a long and perilous one – for Charlemagne, that summer, was in Saxony, on the very outer reaches of Christendom. Wild rumours preceded the Pope, grisly reports that he had indeed been mutilated. When he finally arrived in the presence of Charlemagne, and it was discovered… that he still had his eyes and tongue, Leo solemnly asserted that they had been restored to him by St. Peter, sure evidence of the apostle's outrage at the affront to his vicar. And then, embracing 'the King, the father of Europe', Leo summoned Charlemagne to his duty: to stir himself in defence of the Pope, 'chief pastor of the world', and to march on Rome.

"And to Rome the king duly came. Not in any hurry, however, and certainly not so as to suggest that he was doing his suppliant's bidding. Indeed, for the fugitive Pope, humiliation had followed upon humiliation. His enemies, arriving in Charlemagne's presence only days after Leo, had publicly accused him of a series of extravagant sexual abuses. Commissioners, sent by Charlemagne to escort the Pope back to Rome and investigate the charges against him, drew up a report so damning that Alcuin preferred to burn it rather than be sullied by keeping it in his possession. When Charlemagne himself, in the early winter of 800, more than a year after Leo's arrival in Saxony, finally approached the gates of Rome, the Pope humbly rode out to greet him twelve miles from the city. Even the ancient emperors had only required their servants to ride out six.

"But Leo, a born fighter, was still resolved to salvage something from the wreckage. Blackened though his name had certainly been, he remained the Pope, St. Peter's heir, the holder of an office that had been instituted of Christ Himself. It was not lightly to be given to any mortal, not even Charlemagne, to sit in judgement on Rome's bishop. In token of this, when the proceedings against Leo formally opened on 1 December, they did so, not within the ancient limits of the city, but in the Vatican, on the far side of the Tiber, in implicit acknowledgement of the rights of the Pope, and the Pope alone, to rule in Rome. Papal officials, displaying their accustomed talent for uncovering ancient documents just when they were most needed, presented to Charlemagne papers which appeared conclusively to prove that their master could in fact only be judged by God. Charlemagne, accepting this submission, duly pronounced the Pope acquitted. Leo, placing his hand on a copy of the New Testament, then swore a flamboyant oath that he had been innocent all along.

"And now, having triumphed over his enemies in Rome, he prepared to snatch an even more dramatic victory from the jaws of all his travails. Two days after the Pope's acquittal, Charlemagne attended Christmas Mass in the shrine of St. Peter in the Vatican. He did so humbly, without any insignia of royalty, praying on his knees. As he rose, however, Leo stepped forward into the golden light cast by the altar candles, and placed a crown on his bare head. Simultaneously, the whole cathedral echoed to the ecstatic cries of the

congregation, who hailed the Frankish king as 'Augustus' – the honorific of the ancient Caesars. Leo, never knowingly less than dramatic, then prostrated himself before Charlemagne's feet, head down, arms outstretched. By venerable tradition, such obeisance had properly been performed only for one man: the emperor in Constantinople.

"But now, following the events of that momentous Christmas Day, the West once again had an emperor of its own.

"And it was the Pope, and no one else, who had granted him his crown…"[168]

Now Charlemagne's biographer Einhard claims that he would never have entered the church if he had known what the Pope was intending to do. And there is evidence that in later years Charlemagne drew back from too sharp a confrontation with Constantinople, dropping the phrase "of the Romans" while retaining the title "Emperor". Moreover, he dropped his idea of attacking the Byzantine province of Sicily.

Instead he proposed marriage to the Byzantine Empress Irene (or perhaps it was her idea[169]), hoping "thus to unite the Eastern and Western provinces", as the chronicler Theophanes put it[170] - not under his sole rule, for he must have realised that that was impossible, but perhaps on the model of the dual monarchy of the fifth-century Roman empire. In any case, all these plans collapsed with Irene's overthrow in 802…[171]

The important point in the context of this article is that although Charlemagne and his successors went along with the glorification of their role by the Popes, the real initiator of the process, and gainers from it, were not the Frankish kings, but the Popes, who obtained a "pocket emperor" in place of the Eastern Emperor, who could be used against the latter if necessary. As Judith Herrin writes: "Of the three powers involved in the coronation event of 800, the Roman pontiff emerges as the clear winner in the triangular contest over imperial authority. By seizing the initiative and crowning Charles in his own way, Pope Leo claimed the superior authority to anoint an imperial ruler of the West, which

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[168] Holland, *Millenium,* London: Abacus Books, 2009, pp. 30-32.

[169] Herrin, op. cit., pp. 117-118.

[170] Quoted in A.A. Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958, p. 268.

[171] The Byzantines at first treated Charlemagne as yet another impudent usurper; for, as a chronicler of Salerno put it, "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." As Russell Chamberlin writes: "The Byzantines derided the coronation of Charlemagne. To them he was simply another barbarian general with ideas above his station…" (*Charlemagne, Emperor of the Western World*, London: Grafton books, 1986, p. 52).

established an important precedent… Later Charles would insist on crowning his own son Louis as emperor, without papal intervention. He thus designated his successor and, in due course, Louis inherited his father's authority. But the notion that a western rule could not be a real emperor without a papal coronation and acclamation in ancient Rome grew out of the ceremonial devised by Leo III in 800."[172]

"Thus was the *Roman empire* of the West re-established. Rome, who had always looked with jealousy upon the removal of the seat of government to Constantinople, was in transports of joy; the Papacy, pandering to her secret lusts, was now invested with power such as she had never before possessed. The idea of Adrian was achieved by his successor. The modern Papacy, a mixed institution half political and half religious, was established; a new era was beginning for the Church of Jesus Christ – an era of intrigues and struggles, despotism and revolutions, innovations and scandals."[173]

The increased power of the papacy vis-á-vis the Franks after 800 is confirmed by Andrew Louth, who writes: "The Constitutio Romana sought to establish a bond between the Frankish Empire and the Republic of St. Peter, but it was a very different relationship from that which had formerly held between the pope and the Byzantine emperor. The Frankish emperor undertook to protect the legitimacy of the electoral process, but claimed no right, as the Byzantine emperor had done, to confirm the election itself. What we see here, in inchoate form, is a way of protecting the legitimacy and independence of the pope…"[174]

However, after the death of Charlemagne his empire began to break up. And "it was precisely after the fall of the artificial empire of Charles" writes K.N. Leontiev, the disciple of St. Ambrose of Optina, "that the signs which constitute, in their integrity, a picture of a special European culture, a new universal civilization, become clearer and clearer. The future bounds of the most recent western States and particular cultures of Italy, France and Germany also begin to become clearer. The Crusades come closer, as does the flourishing age of knighthood and of German feudalism, which laid the foundations of the exceptional self-respect of the person (a self-respect which, passing by means of envy and imitation first into the bourgeoisie, produced the democratic revolution and engendered all these modern phrases about the boundless rights of the person, and then, penetrating to the lower levels of western society, made of every simple day-time worker and cobbler an existence corrupted by a nervous feeling of his own worth). Soon after this we hear the first sounds of Romantic poetry. Then Gothic architecture develops, and soon Dante's Catholic epic poem will be created, etc. Papal power grows from this time. And so the reign of

[172] Herrin, op. cit., p. 128.
[173] Guettée, op. cit., pp. 268-269.
[174] Louth, op. cit., p. 81.

Charles the Great (9th century) is approximately the watershed after which the West begins more and more to bring its own civilisation and its own statehood into prominence. From this century Byzantine civilisation loses from its sphere of influence all the large and well-populated countries of the West."[175]

However, the power of the papacy began to grow again when Nicholas I ascended the papal throne in 858. He was a West Roman by birth (his father was the regionarius Theodore[176]), who spent his pontificate in violent conflict with the Frankish Emperor Louis II. According to Romanides' criterion, therefore, he should have been a "good" pope, in that he opposed the "tyranny" of the Franks. But in fact, he was one of the worst of all the popes, trying to impose *his* tyranny on everyone, kings and bishops, easterners and westerners. The history of his championship of the Filioque and his struggle with St. Photius the Great, ending in his excommunication, is well-known to Orthodox readers. Less well-known is his war against Archbishops John of Ravenna, Hincmar of Rheims and others, that brought the Franks briefly into an alliance with the Eastern Church against him.

So serious were the tensions that in 862 Emperor Louis II and the dissident archbishops marched on Rome. "As the Frankish army approached," writes Llewellyn, "Nicholas organized fasts and processions for divine intervention. One of these was attacked and broken up in the street by Louis' supporters in the city; the crosses and relics, including a part of the True Cross, were thrown to the ground and the pope himself was barely able to escape by river to the Leonine City. He remained there for two days until, with the promise of a safe-conduct, he went to interview Louis. In the Emperor's camp the archbishops overwhelmed him with reproaches and accused him, in Louis' presence, of trying to make himself emperor and of wishing to dominate the whole world – the expressions of resentment felt by a national episcopate in conflict with a supranational authority. Nicholas's excommunication of the bishops was rejected and they in turn anathematized him."[177]

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[175] Leontiev, "Vizantinizm i Slavianstvo" ("Byzantinism and Slavism"), in *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo (The East, Russia and Slavism)*, Moscow, 1996, pp. 94-95.

[176] Peter Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages,* London: Constable, 1996, p. 112.

[177] Llewellyn, op. cit., pp. 274-275. The archbishops of Trèves and Cologne wrote to Nicholas: "Without a 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 are the first to 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…" (in Guettée, op. cit., p. 305, note).

Nicholas won that particular battle – and promptly opened up the war on other fronts – in Bulgaria, and in Constantinople. In 863 he defrocked St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, in typically papist language.[178] The Frankish *Annals of St. Bertin* for 864 responded by speaking of "the lord Nicholas, who is called pope and who numbers himself as an apostle among the apostles, and who is making himself emperor of the whole world".[179] Nothing daunted, in 865 Nicholas declared that the Pope had authority "over all the earth, that is, over every other Church", "the see of Peter has received the total power of government over all the sheep of Christ". As he wrote to Emperor Michael III: "The judge shall be judged neither by Augustus, nor by any cleric, nor by the people… The First See shall not be judged by any…"[180]

In 867 St. Photius convened a large Council in Constantinople, to which he invited the archbishops of Ravenna, Trèves and Cologne who had appealed to him against Nicholas. Nicholas was defrocked. However, Nicholas' successor, Hadrian II, rejected the Photian Council's decree and burned its Acts. Then in 869 he convened a Council in Constantinople led by his legates that reversed the decisions of the earlier Council. Papists have often counted this anti-Photian council as the Eighth Ecumenical – not least, one suspects, because Hadrian demanded that all its participants recognized him as "Sovereign Pontiff and Universal Pope". "The Pope," he said, "judges all the bishops, but we do not read that any have judged him."[181] St. Photius refused to defend himself at the Council, saying that its thirty-three bishops could not presume to reverse the decision of the three hundred and eighteen bishops who had proclaimed him legitimate Patriarch, and condemned Nicholas, in 867.

In 872 Hadrian II was succeeded by John VIII. His language in relation to Constantinople was scarcely less authoritarian than his predecessors'. But in time he came to recognize St. Photius's episcopate as lawful, and in 879-880 sent his legates to the Great Council of Constantinople, which anathematized the Filioque… In 903 Photius' successor St. Nicholas the Mystic broke communion with Pope Christopher because the latter reintroduced the Filioque into the Creed of the Roman Church. In 904, however, communion between the two Churches was again restored. But the reappearance of the Filioque in Rome in 1009 under Pope Sergius IV caused the names of the Popes to be removed from the East Roman diptychs indefinitely…

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[178] "We declare him," he says, "deprived of all sacerdotal honour and of every clerical function by the authority of God Almighty, of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, of all the saints, of the six general councils, and *by the judgement which the Holy Spirit has pronounced by us*" (in Guettée, op. cit., p. 298). Note the reference only to *six* ecumenical councils.

[179] Quoted in Louth, op. cit., p. 168.

[180] Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., pp. 103, 104.

[181] Guettée, op. cit., p. 307.

Rome and the German Emperors: (1) The Ottonian Dynasty

In the first half of the tenth century both the Frankish empire and the Roman papacy descended into chaos – the Franks because of the invasions of the Vikings, which precipitated the decentralization of political power on the more primitive and localized basis of feudal vassalage (this was the real cause of feudalism, not Romanides' idea that it was for the sake of herding the Gallo-Roman Orthodox into slave-labour camps![182]), and the Popes because of the moral degradation of "the pornocracy of Marozia", the famous whore who exercised so much power over the Popes that were her sons or lovers. This disastrous situation had at least this advantage, that it both enabled the East to recover its strength unhindered by the machinations of the Popes and halted the spread of the papist heresy in the West. For how could anyone take the papacy's claims seriously when it was plunged in a degradation fully equal to that of the Borgias in Renaissance times?

In 955 two critical events took place. First, the German King Otto I, who had inherited the eastern part of the Carolingian empire, defeated the Magyars in open battle, thereby laying the basis for a powerful kingdom. And secondly the de facto ruler of Rome, Marquis Alberic of Spoleto, died and his son Octavian became Pope John XII at the age of sixteen.

"Even for a pope of that period," writes De Rosa, "he was so bad that the citizens were out for his blood. He had invented sins, they said, not known since the beginning of the world, including sleeping with his mother. He ran a harem in the Lateran Palace. He gambled with pilgrims' offerings. He kept a stud of two thousand horses which he fed on almonds and figs steeped in wine. He rewarded the companions of his nights of love with golden chalices from St. Peter's. He did nothing for the most profitable tourist trade of the day, namely, pilgrimages. Women in particular were warned not to enter St. John Lateran if

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[182] According to Ivan Solonevich, feudalism could be defined as "the splintering of state sovereignty among a mass of small, but in principle sovereign owners of property". Contrary to Marx, it had nothing to do with 'productive relations' and was far from being an advance on previous forms of social organisation. "It is sufficient to remember the huge cultural and unusually high level of Roman 'production'. Feudal Europe, poor, dirty and illiterate, by no means represented 'a more progressive form of productive relations' – in spite of Hegel, it was sheer regression. Feudalism does not originate in productive relations. It originates in the thirst for power beyond all dependence on production and distribution. Feudalism is, so to speak, *the democratisation of power* [my italics – V.M.] – its transfer to all those who at the given moment in the given place have sufficient physical strength to defend their baronial rights – Faustrecht. Feudalism sometimes presupposes a juridical basis of power, but never a moral one." (*Narodnaia Monarkhia (Popular Monarchy),* Minsk: Luchi Sophii, 1998, p. 270 (in Russian))

they prized their honour; the pope was always on the prowl. In front of the high altar of the mother church of Christendom, he even toasted the Devil…"[183]

Retribution was coming, however. Berengar of Lombardy advanced on Rome, and the pope in desperation appealed to Berengar's feudal lord, Otto of Germany. This was Otto's opportunity to seize that imperial crown, which would give him complete dominance over his rivals. He marched into Italy, drove out Berengar and was crowned Emperor by John on February 2, 962. However, when Otto demanded that the inhabitants of the Papal states should swear an oath of allegiance to him, Otto, and not to the pope, thereby treating the Papal states as one of his dependencies, the Pope took fright, transferred his support to Berengar and called on both the Hungarians and the Byzantines to help drive Otto out of Italy. But Otto saw this as treachery on the part of the pope; he summoned a synod in Rome, deposed John, and placed Leo VIII in his place. Then he inserted a clause into his agreement with Leo whereby in future no pope was to be consecrated without taking an oath of loyalty to the Emperor. Although Otto was crowned in Rome, he did not call himself "Emperor of the Romans", but preferred simply "emperor". This was probably because he did not wish to enter into a competition with the Byzantine emperor. [184]

However, Otto did gain the Byzantines' recognition of his imperial title, and persuaded them to send Princess Theophanou, the niece of Emperor John Tzimiskes, to be the bride of his son, Otto II. The marriage was celebrated in Rome in 972. Theophanou then introduced another Byzantine, John Philagathos, as godfather of her son, Otto III; he later became head of the royal finances and finally - Pope (or antipope) John XV. This led to a sharp increase in Byzantine influence in the western empire[185], and the temporary eclipse of the new papist theory of Church-State relations. Thus in an ivory bas-relief Christ is shown crowning Otto II and Theophanou – a Byzantine tenth-century motif expressing the traditionally Byzantine concept of Church-State symphony. [186]

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[183] Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam Press, 1988, p. 51. Romanides thinks that this description is biased, coming from the Pope's Frankish enemies. But even allowing for possible exaggerations, the general degradation of the papacy in this period cannot be doubted.

[184] It may also have been because he had little admiration for Old Rome, just as Old Rome had little time for him. See Charles Davis, "The Middle Ages", op. cit., pp. 82-83. He instructed his sword-bearer to stand behind him as he kneeled at the tomb of the Apostle, "for I know only too well what my ancestors have experienced from these faithless Romans" (Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 62).

[185] Holland, op. cit.. pp. 75-76. Byzantine influence had already been increasing under Alberic, whose "insistence on the forms of Byzantine administration and court hierarchy… checked the growth of any real feudal devolution of government such as the rest of Europe [outside Rome] was experiencing" (Llewellyn, op. cit., p. 307).

[186] "The image," as Jean-Paul Allard writes, "was more eloquent than any theological treatise. It illustrated a principle that the papacy and the Roman Church have never accepted, but which was taken for granted in Byzantium and is still held in Orthodoxy today: Christ and Christ alone crowns the sovereigns; power comes only from God, without the intercession of an institutional

In 991 Princess Theophanou died and Otto III became Emperor under the regency of his grandmother. He "dreamed of reuniting the two empires into one one day, so as to restore universal peace – a new imperial peace comparable to that of Augustus, a Roman Empire which would embrace once more the orbis terrarum before the end of the world that was announced for the year 1000."[187] To signify that the Renovatio Imperii Romani (originally a Carolingian idea) had truly begun, he moved his court from Aachen to Rome, introduced Byzantine ceremonial into his court on the Aventine hill, gave a stimulus to the rediscovery of Roman law, and began negotiations with the Byzantine Emperor for the hand of a daughter or niece of the basileus, which union would enable him to unite the two empires in a peaceful, traditional manner.

The plan for union with Byzantium was foiled (the Byzantine princess he was to marry arrived in Italy just as Otto died). But Otto sought and followed the advice of holy hermits[188], and Byzantine influence continued to spread outwards from the court. And when Gerbert of Aurillac became the first Frankish Pope in 999 and took the name Sylvester II, he revived memories, in those brought up on the forged *Donation of Constantine,* of the symphonic relationship between St. Constantine and Pope Sylvester I.[189]

However, Sylvester loved the true symphony, not the forged variety: in 1001 he inspired Otto to issue an act demonstrating that the *Donation of Constantine* was a forgery.[190] Moreover, this very unpapist Pope did not believe that he was above the judgement of his fellow-bishops. Thus he wrote in 997: "The judgement of God is higher than that of Rome… When Pope Marcellinus offered incense to Jupiter [in 303], did all the other bishops have to do likewise? If the bishop of Rome himself sins against his brother or refuses to heed the repeated warnings of the Church, he, the bishop of Rome himself, must according to the commandments of God be treated as a pagan and a publican; for the greater the dignity, the greater the fall. If he declares us unworthy of his communion because none of us will join him against the Gospel, he will not be able to separate us from the communion of Christ."[191]

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representative of the Church, be he patriarch or pope. The anointing and crowning of the sovereign do not create the legitimacy of his power; but have as their sole aim the manifestation of [this legitimacy] in the eyes of the people." ("Byzance et le Saint Empire: Theopano, Otton III, Benzon d'Albe", in Germain Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, *Regards sur l'Orthodoxie* (Points of View on Orthodoxy), Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1997, p. 39 (in French).

[187] Allard, op. cit., p. 40

[188] Both the Greek Nilus of Calabria and the Germanic Romuald of Ravenna (Holland, op. cit., pp. 120-121, 125-126). See also Louth, op. cit., pp. 277-281.

[189] R. Lacy & D. Danzinger, *The Year 1000*, London: Little, Brown and Company, 1999, p. 190.

[190] Charles Davis, op. cit., p. 84. In this exposure he was correct, even if he was wrong in his dating of the forgery to the middle of the tenth century (Allard, op. cit., pp. 45-46).

[191] Pope Sylvester, *Letter 192*, quoted in Fr. Andrew Phllips, "The Three Temptations of Christ and the Mystical Sense of English History", *Orthodox England,* vol. I, □ 2, December, 1997, p. 6.

This must count as a formal abjuration of the papist heresy that had held the papacy in thrall for over two hundred years. Unfortunately, Sylvester was not imitated by his successors. But the courage of his right confession deserves appreciation - even if, to Romanides' chagrin, he was a Frank!

Otto and Sylvester imitated the Byzantine concept of a family of independent kings under one Christian Emperor.[192] Thus they handed out crowns to King Stephen of Hungary and the Polish Duke Boleslav. And in a Gospel book made for Otto four states – Roma, Gallia, Germania and Sclavinia (Poland) – are represented as women doing homage to him.[193] "Otto even opened up friendly relations with Vladimir, prince of the powerful Russian state of Kiev, who had accepted his Christianity from Byzantium. One can only speculate how different the future history of Eastern Europe might have been had Otto's policy of pacification been followed by subsequent German rulers…"[194]

The forty-year Ottonian period has been viewed in sharply contrasting ways. According to Voltaire in his *Essay on history and customs* (chapter 36), and some later writers, "the imprudence of Pope John XII in having called the Germans to Rome was the source of all the calamities to which Rome and Italy were subject down the centuries…"[195] However, an unprejudiced view that tries to avoid racial stereotypes must accept that the intervention of the German monarchy in Roman affairs – until at least the death of Otto III in 1002 – was not wholly unbeneficial. *Someone* had to put a stop to the scandalous degeneration of the first see of Christendom. And if the Ottonian emperors did not finally succeed in cleansing the Augean stables[196], it was hardly their fault alone.

The rivalries between the Roman aristocratic families, - which were only partly influenced by the desire to keep Rome free from foreigners, - appear to have made the city virtually ungovernable in this period. The Ottonians at least seem to have had good intentions, and the partnership of the German-Greek Otto III and the Frankish Sylvester II – a collaboration "unique in medieval history", according to J.B. Morrall[197] - looked on the point of restoring a true unity between the Old and the New Romes. Indeed, for a short period it even looked as if Byzantinism might triumph in the West…

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[192] J.M. Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon Publishing, 1992, p. 321.
[193] Louth, op. cit., p. 249.
[194] J.B. Morrall, "Otto III: an Imperial Ideal", *History Today,* 14 January, 2011.
[195] Cyriaque Lampryllos, *La Mystification Fatale (The Fatal Mystification)*, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1987, pp. 59-60 (in French).
[196] Thus in 991, at a Council in Rheims attended by English as well as French bishops, Arnulph, bishop of Orleans, said that if Pope John XV had no love and was puffed up with knowledge, he was the Antichrist… See John Eadie, "The Man of Sin", in *Greek Text Commentaries: On Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1877, 1979, p. 341.
[197] Morrall, op. cit.

"But the Romans," writes Chamberlin, "rose against [Otto], drove him and his pope out of the city, and reverted to murderous anarchy. He died outside the city in January 1002, not quite twenty-two years of age. Sylvester survived his brilliant but erratic protégé by barely sixteen months. His epitaph summed up the sorrow that afflicted all thoughtful men at the ending of a splendid vision: 'The world, on the brink of triumph, in peace now departed, grew contorted in grief and the reeling Church forgot her rest.' The failure of Otto III and Sylvester marked the effective end of the medieval dream of a single state in which an emperor ruled over the bodies of all Christian men, and a pope over their souls."[198]

Rome and the German Emperors: (2) Descent into Darkness

After the death of Otto and Sylvester, the papacy descended into a moral morass almost as bad as during the "pornocracy of Marozia". Some writers see this as exclusively the fault of the Germans, who, as Aristides Papadakis writes, turned "the papacy… into a sort of imperial Eigenkirche or vicarage of the German crown. The pope was to be the instrument and even the pawn of the Germans, as opposed to the Romans."[199] Again, in 1009, according to Ranson and Motte, "the last Roman Orthodox Pope, John XVIII, was chased away and a Germanic Pope usurped the Orthodox patriarchate of Rome: Sergius IV, an adulterer-bishop of Rome who, on ascending the episcopal throne, wrote to the four other patriarchs a letter of communion which confirmed the doctrine of the double procession [of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son – the Filioque heresy] and immediately provoked a break. The four Orthodox patriarchs then broke communion with the pope. Some years later [in 1014], Benedict VIII, who was close to the emperor of Germany, Henry II, had the Filioque inserted into the Creed."[200]

However, this is a one-sided point of view. The first half of the eleventh century was characterized by a powerful reform movement against abuses in the Church, and foremost among them: simony and the interference of the laity, including kings, in the appointment of bishops. It was led by the famous Burgundian monastery of Cluny, and supported by the German kings. Thus Louth writes: "The impetus for the reform of the Church came from the German

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[198] Chamberlin, "The Ideal of Unity", op. cit., p. 62.

[199] Papadakis, *The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994, p. 28. However, Papadakis dates this transformation to 962 rather than 1002, on the grounds that "during the century following the revival of the empire [in 962], twenty-one popes from a total of twenty-five were virtually hand-picked by the German crown" (p. 29). Romanides dates it to 983 ("Church Synods and Civilisation", p. 423). They were both wrong. The pernicious influence of the Germans began only after 1002.

[200] Patric Ranson and Laurent Motte, introduction to Lampryllos, op. cit., p. 14.

("Salian") emperors, Henry II (1002-1024) and Henry III (1039-56), their reliance on the imperial Church (the Reichskirche) in the running of the empire giving them an interest in having a Church free from corruption."[201]

Moreover, even if the popes were often hand-picked by the German emperors, they were usually of mixed Italian and German blood, as almost all the aristocratic families of Italy were by this time. Thus in the period before 1045 "the papal office had been held by one or other of the great Roman family of Tusculum."[202] And this family was notoriously immoral…

Thus Peter De Rosa writes: "In 1032, Pope John XIX of the House of Tusculum died. Count Alberic III paid a fortune to keep the job in the family. Who better to fill the vacancy than his own son Theophylactus? Raoul Glaber, a monk from Cluny, reports that at his election in October of 1032 his Holiness Benedict IX was 'a mere urchin… who was before long to become actively offensive'…

"St. Peter Damian, a fine judge of sin, exclaimed: 'That wretch, from the beginning of his pontificate to the end of his life, feasted on immorality.' Another observer wrote: 'A demon from hell in the disguise of a priest has occupied the Chair of Peter.'

"He often had to leave Rome in a hurry. The first time, on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul 1033, an eclipse of the sun that turned the interior of St. Peter's into an eerie saffron was sufficient pretext for ejecting him. On his return, a few nobles tried to cut him down during mass. They failed. When Benedict was next swept out of Rome, the army of Emperor Conrad swept him back in. In 1046, having been driven out once more for plunder, murder and oppression, he went home to his native Tusculum. In his absence, the Romans chose another pontiff, Sylvester III, a man from the Sabine Hills. Far better, they decided, to break canon law and offend the deity than put up with Benedict IX. After fifty blissful days, the boy-pope was restored by his family, who persuaded Sylvester to go elsewhere."[203]

Then Benedict wanted to resign in order to marry. Having dispensed himself of the vow of chastity, and been rewarded with two thousand pounds in weight of gold (the whole of Peter's Pence from England), he abdicated in favour of his godfather, John Gratian, who became Pope Gregory VI. But Benedict's amour rejected him, so he came back to claim the throne again.

There were now three claimants to the papal throne: Benedict IX, Gregory VI and Sylvester III. The Emperor Henry III convened a Council at Sutri in 1046 at

[201] Louth, op. cit., p. 297.
[202] Louth, op. cit., p. 297.
[203] De Rosa, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

which all three were deposed. Clement II was ordained in their place. However, both he and Gregory VI soon died, so Benedict returned for another eight months. The emperor ordered Benedict to leave. The new pope, Damasus II, soon died – poisoned, it was rumoured, by Benedict. Eventually, Benedict retired to a monastery…

In such conditions of scarcely believable chaos and depravity, it is very difficult to believe in the exclusive purity or Orthodoxy of any single faction or national tradition. The truth is that the see of Rome was falling away from Christ because of the general corruption of the Eternal City's inhabitants. And in a few years its final fall would become manifest to all in the career of the most papist of all the Popes – Hildebrand, or Gregory VII…

In April, 1073, Pope Alexander II died. "The people of Rome, rather than wait for the cardinals to nominate a successor, were soon taking the law into their own hands. They knew precisely whom they wanted as their new pope: 'Hildebrand for bishop!' Even as Alexander was being laid to rest in the Lateran, the cry went up across the whole city."[204]

So a democratic revolution in the Church effected by the native West Romans brought to power one of the greatest despots in history and the effectual founder of the heretical papacy…

Hildebrand – Hőllenbrand, or "Hellfire", as Luther called him - was a midget in physical size. But having been elected to the papacy "by the will of St. Peter", he set about ensuring that no ruler on earth would rival him in "spiritual" grandeur. Having witnessed, in 1046, the Emperor Henry III's deposition of Pope Gregory VI, with whom he went into exile, he took the name Gregory VII in order to emphasise a unique mission: to subdue the secular power of the emperors to that of the Popes.

Romanides admits that Gregory VII was Italian (strictly speaking he was an Italian Jew from the Jewish Pierleone family[205]) but still tries to tar him with the Frankish brush by saying that he was "descended from the Frankish army of occupation".[206] If he means by that phrase that he sympathized with the reform programme that originated in Francia, and was supported by the German emperors, then he is right. But in fact he turned out to be the fiercest enemy of the German emperors.

Of Gregory VII Henry Charles Lea wrote in *The Inquisition in the Middle Ages*: "To the realization of this ideal [of papal supremacy], he devoted his life with a

[204] Holland, op. cit.. pp. 348-349.
[205] David Allen Rivera, *Final Warning,* chapter 10. http://www.viewfromthewall.com/.
[206] Romanides, op. cit., p. 29.

fiery zeal and unshaken purpose that shrank from no obstacle, and to it he was ready to sacrifice not only the men who stood in his path but also the immutable principles of truth and justice."

Gregory claimed that the Roman Church was "mother and mistress" of all the Churches. But this was a commonplace claim since the time of the West Roman Popes Hadrian I and Nicholas I. His real originality consisted in his claim to have jurisdiction, not only over all bishops, but also over all *kings*. Of course, the idea that the priesthood was in essence higher than the kingship was not in itself heretical, and could find support in the Fathers. However, the Fathers always allowed that kings had supremacy of jurisdiction in their own sphere, for the power of secular rulers comes from God and is worthy of the honour that befits every God-established institution. Indeed, Gregory's colleague and fellow-reformer Peter Damian had written: "In the king Christ is truly recognised as reigning".[207] What was new, shocking and completely unpatristic in Gregory's words was his disrespect for the kingship, his refusal to allow it any dignity or holiness, his denial to Caesar of the things that are Caesar's – because he considered himself to be Caesar!

In Gregory's view *rulers had no right to rule unless he gave them that right*. The corollary of this was that *the only rightful ruler was the Pope*. For "if the holy apostolic see, through the princely power divinely conferred upon it, has jurisdiction over spiritual things, why not also over secular things?"

In 1066, while still Archdeacon of the Roman Church, he had probably been the driving force behind Pope Alexander's blessing William of Normandy to invade England and depose her lawful king, Harold II. In 1073 he wrote to the rulers of Sardinia that the Roman Church exerted "a special and individual care" over them - which meant, as a later letter made clear, that they would face armed invasion if they did not submit to the pope's terms. In 1077 he wrote to the kings of Spain that the kingdom of Spain belonged to St. Peter and the Roman Church "in rightful ownership". And in 1075 he threatened King Philip of France with excommunication, having warned the French episcopate that if the king did not amend his ways he would place France under interdict, adding: "Do not doubt that we shall, with God's help, make every possible effort to snatch the kingdom of France from his possession."[208]

But this would have remained just words, if Gregory had not had the ability to compel submission. He demonstrated this ability when wrote to one of King Philip' vassals, Duke William of Aquitaine, and invited him to threaten the king. The king backed down… This power was demonstrated to a still greater extent

[207] Peter Damian, *Letter 8*, 2, *P.L.* 144, 436.
[208] I.S. Robinson, "Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ", *History,* vol. 58, □ 193, June, 1973, pp. 174-175.

in his famous dispute with Emperor Henry IV of Germany. It began with a quarrel between Gregory's predecessor, Alexander II, and the Emperor over who should succeed to the see of Milan. Gregory, following the line of his predecessor (which he had probably inspired), expected Henry to back down as King Philip had done. And he did, temporarily – not because he recognized Gregory's right, but because from the summer of 1073 he had to face a rebellion in Saxony.

"So it was that, rather than rise the slightest papal sanction being granted to his enemies' slurs, he brought himself to grovel – even going so far as to acknowledge that he might possibly have backed the wrong horse in Milan. 'Full of pleasantness and obedience', a delighted Gregory described the royal tone to Erlembald [his demagogic supporter in Milan]. The likelier alternative, that the king might be stringing him along and playing for time, appeared not to have crossed the papal mind…"[209]

And sure enough, having subdued the rebellion in Saxony, Henry prepared to hit back. He was helped by the fact that many German bishops "had developed an active stake in thinking the worst of the new pope. 'The man is a menace!' sniffed one archbishop. 'He presumes to boss us around as though we were his bailiffs!' Others, recoiling from Gregory's brusque demands that priests be obliged to abandon their wives, demanded to know whether he planned to staff the Church with angels. Such a show of sarcasm had absolutely zero effect on Gregory himself. Indeed, by 1075, his prescriptions against married priests, and simony too, were attaining a new level of peremptoriness. In February, four bishops were suspended for disobedience. Then, in July, one of them, a particularly inveterate simonist, was deposed. Finally, as the year drew to its close, Gregory unleashed against the sullen and recalcitrant imperial Church the reformers' most devastating weapon of all. 'We have heard,' he wrote in an open letter to King Henry's subject, 'that certain of the bishops who dwell in your parts either condone, or fail to take notice of, the keeping of women by priests.' Such men, rebels against the authority of St. Peter, he now summoned to the court of popular opinion. 'We charge you,' Gregory instructed the peoples of the Reich, 'in no way to obey these bishops.'"[210]

To add insult to injury, in February by a formal synod of the Roman Church the King's right to confer bishoprics was prohibited. This directly threatened Henry's power-base, since the bishops of the Reich were also important imperial lieutenants and administrators. Finally, a letter came from the Pope demanding that Henry repent of his offences and do penance for them, or else "not only would he be excommunicated until he had made due restitution, but he would also be deprived of his entire dignity as king without hope of recovery".

[209] Holland, op. cit., p. 362.
[210] Holland, op. cit., p. 365.

In January, 1076, Henry convened a Synod of Bishops at Worms which addressed Gregory as "brother Hildebrand", demonstrated that his despotism had introduced mob rule into the Church, and refused all obedience to him: "Since, as thou didst publicly proclaim, none of us has been to thee a bishop, so henceforth thou shalt be Pope to none of us".[211] The Pope had "introduced worldliness into the Church"; "the bishops have been deprived of their divine authority"; "the Church of God is in danger of destruction". Henry himself declared: "Let another sit upon Peter's throne, one who will not cloak violence with a pretence of religion, but will teach the pure doctrine of St. Peter. I, Henry, by God's grace king, with all our bishops say to you: come down, come down."[212]

Gregory replied to Henry's challenge in a revolutionary way. In a Synod in Rome he declared the emperor deposed. Addressing St. Peter, he said: "I withdraw the whole kingdom of the Germans and of Italy from Henry the King, son of Henry the Emperor. For he has risen up against thy Church with unheard of arrogance. And I absolve all Christians from the bond of the oath which they have made to him or shall make. And I forbid anyone to serve him as King."[213] By absolving subjects of their allegiance to their king, Gregory "effectively sanctioned rebellion against the royal power…"[214]

He followed this up by publishing the famously megalomaniac Dictatus Papae: "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 bishops 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 own 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."[215]

Robinson continues: "The confusion of the spiritual and the secular in Gregory VII's thinking is most marked in the terminology he used to describe the laymen whom he recruited to further his political aims. His letters are littered with the terms 'the warfare of Christ', 'the service of St. Peter', 'the vassals of St. Peter'…, Military terminology is, of course, commonly found in patristic writings.. St. Paul had evoked the image of the soldier of Christ who waged an

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[211] Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 113.
[212] Holland, op. cit., p. 368.
[213] Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 114.
[214] Robinson, op. cit., p. 175.
[215] R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages,* London: Penguin, 1970, p. 102.

entirely spiritual war… In the letters of Gregory VII, the traditional metaphor shades into literal actuality… For Gregory, the 'warfare of Christ' and the 'warfare of St. Peter' came to mean, not the spiritual struggles of the faithful, nor the duties of the secular clergy, nor the ceaseless devotions of the monks; but rather the armed clashes of feudal knights on the battlefields of Christendom…"[216]

And so open warfare – military as well as spiritual – broke out between the secular and ecclesiastical powers – and it was the Pope's fault!.. Now Henry began to lose support, and the Saxons rebelled again – this time with the support of Duke Rudolf of Swabia. In October a letter from Gregory was read out to a group of rebellious princes in Tribur suggesting that they elect a new king. Desperate, the king with his wife and child was forced to march across the Alps in deepest winter and do penance before Gregory, standing for three days almost naked in the snow outside the castle of Canossa. Gregory restored him to communion, but not to his kingship…

We shall not trace the rest of the papacy's struggle with the German emperors, which in any case continued for centuries, except to point out that Gregory's revolution against lawful political power contained in itself the seeds of the whole future development of western revolutionary thought.[217] For it was here, as Tom Holland writes, that "the foundations of the modern Western state were laid, foundations largely bled of any religious dimension. A piquant irony: that the very concept of a secular society should ultimately have been due to the papacy. Voltaire and the First Amendment, multiculturalism and gay weddings: all have served as waymarks on the road from Canossa…"[218]

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[216] Robinson, op. cit., pp. 177, 178.

[217] As the Russian poet F.I. Tiutchev wrote in 1849: "The revolution, which is nothing other than the apotheosis of that same human I having attained its fullest flowering, was not slow to recognise as its own, and to welcome as two of its glorious ancestors – both Gregory VII and Luther. Kinship of blood began to speak in it, and it accepted the one, in spite of his Christian beliefs, and almost deified the other, although he was a pope.

"But if the evident similarity uniting the three members of this row constitutes the basis of the historical life of the West, the starting-point of this link must necessarily be recognised to be precisely that profound distortion to which the Christian principle was subjected by the order imposed on it by Rome. In the course of the centuries the Western Church, under the shadow of Rome, almost completely lost the appearance of the originating principle pointed out by her. She ceased to be, amidst the great society of men, the society of believers, freely united in spirit and truth under the law of Christ; she was turned into a political institution, a political force, a state within the state. It would be true to say that throughout the whole course of the Middle Ages, the Church in the West was nothing other than a Roman colony planted in a conquered land…" (Tiutchev, "Papstvo i Rimskij Vopros" ("The Papacy and the Roman Question"), in *Politicheskie Stat'i (Political Articles),* Paris: YMCA Press, 1976, pp. 57-58 (in Russian)).

[218] Holland, op. cit., p. xxii.

Conclusion: The Fall of Old Rome

The fall of any Local Church as large as the Roman is a very complex phenomenon that cannot be reduced to a few factors: cultural, ethnic or even doctrinal. For it is not only the Church as a collective organism that falls, but also every individual nation and person that chooses to remain with it in its fall; so that all the various unrepented sins and passions of all the members of the Church contribute to the final catastrophe, to God's allowing the candlestick to be removed from its place and the angel of the Church to be recalled from its altar. If a certain false teaching, such as the Filioque or the papist heresy, becomes the official reason why the True Church cuts off the rotting member, this is only the most visible and measurable symptom of a disease whose depths remain largely unsearched and undiagnosed.

The Roman Church until about the middle of the eighth century was indisputably the senior Church of Christendom with an unequalled record of Christian holiness. Though battered and bowed by successive pagan persecutors and barbarian invaders, she had survived them all and had even managed to convert them to the saving faith. By 754, the date of the martyrdom of St. Boniface of Germany, even the savage German tribes beyond the Rhine were being converted in large numbers with the encouragement and under the banner of the Roman Church. Martyrs and confessors, theologians and hierarchs, hermits and kings of many nations had all entered the ranks of the saints under her omophorion. The papacy itself had produced many saints and martyrs, as well as theologians to match the best that the East could offer: St. Leo the Great, St. Gregory the Dialogist, St. Martin the Confessor, St. Agatho, St. Gregory II. With regard to the consistency and purity of her Orthodox confession, no Church could rival Rome, as even Eastern confessors such as St. Theodore the Studite acknowledged. And in the year 754 *only* the Roman Church stood firm against the heresy of iconoclasm that was raging in the East.

At this critical moment, when the Roman Church stood at the pinnacle of her glory, she began to decline. The most visible symptoms of her decline were: a proud exaltation of herself above other Churches, an opportunist use of her prestige to elicit political protection and secular possessions (the Papal States), and the producing of forgeries to bolster and increase that prestige and those possessions. By 854 the papist heresy was entrenching itself in Rome, together with the Filioque. By 954 moral depravity had turned her into an object of disdain by her former admirers. By 1054 she had been anathematized by the Great Church of Constantinople, and the period of the medieval Roman Catholic papacy so well known for its crusades and inquisition and megalomaniac lust for power was under way…

When contemplating the depth of the fall of the Roman Church, and by contrast the continuance of the Eastern Patriarchates in Orthodoxy for many more centuries, it is tempting, on the one hand, to search for some flaw in the former that predestined her to fall, and on the other, to see some special genius in the latter that predestined them to survive. Thus the Latins are said to have fallen because of their supposedly "legalistic" mentality, lack of mystical feeling – and lack of knowledge of Greek, while the Greeks are said to have survived precisely because of their lack of legalism, their mystical feeling – and their knowledge of Greek. This approach fails to explain how some of the greatest of the Roman Christians, such as Popes Leo the Great and Gregory the Dialogist, were both great lawgivers and theologians - and appear not to have known Greek… But more fundamentally, this approach fails to understand that God will never allow a man or group of men to fall away from Him because of some cultural or psychological defect for which he or they are not responsible. If a man falls, he falls because he has failed to struggle as best he can against the sin that is in him – and for no other reason...

This is not to discount the importance of education, culture and even language in helping to strengthen and preserve the Orthodox faith and life. Periods of spiritual and moral decline often – though not invariably – coincide with periods of cultural decline. This is certainly the case with the pre-schism West, where the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries represent a clear decline, both spiritually, morally and culturally, by comparison with the "golden age" of Western Orthodoxy: the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries.

However, we must be careful not to confuse cause and effect here. Did the cultural decline cause the spiritual and moral decline, or vice-versa? The argument of this article has been that it was spiritual factors – above all, pride and the heresies that pride begets – that caused the decline of the Roman papacy, which in turn produced a gradual cultural deterioration.

Now the basic culture of the whole of Christian Europe was the Byzantine or East Roman; and the West Roman, Frankish, Hispanic, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic cultures were all variations on that theme. So the cultural deterioration that set in throughout the West from the ninth century can be called the "debyzantinization" of the West, its gradual alienation from the sources and inspiration of Byzantine civilization. However, this gradual alienation, which many historians have remarked on and documented, was not the *cause* of the decline of the West, but its *consequence*.

According to the cultural theory of the fall of the West, the West died because it lost its link with the life-giving streams of Byzantine culture. Romanides' thesis is a variation on this theme, consisting in the argument that West Rome, as opposed to the Germanic north, never in fact lost that link, but resisted the break

to the end, and that West Rome's eventual separation from her eastern twin was not her fault, but the fault of the evil Franks. I have argued that this thesis is false, that the West, including the city of Rome itself, had been for centuries a Romano-Germanic synthesis, and that West Rome fell away from God and from East Rome because of the evil in herself – in particular, her pride in her own position as head of the Christian world – and not because evil was imposed upon her by barbarians from outside. Although Frankish kings such as Charlemagne had their own ambitions and played their own part in the tragedy, it was the West Roman Popes who manipulated the Franks rather than the other way round.

In particular, Romanides' racial thesis that only men of Frankish descent led the West away from Christ, rather than men of Italian descent, must be rejected. The builders of the new and heretical papist ideology were mainly of West Roman descent, as were several of the most depraved of the Popes. This is not to say that the Franks were not guilty, too. Indeed, insofar as the whole of the West followed Rome into schism and heresy, the whole of the West was guilty. But while the blind who follow the blind also fall into the pit, and by their own fault, it is the blind *leaders* who must take the main burden of responsibility…

June 11/24, 2011.

APPENDIX II: THE OLD TESTAMENT THEOPHANIES

Having effectively abolished the idea of inherited original sin, Romanides naturally de-emphasizes the difference between the Old Testament, in which original sin reigned unopposed, and the New Testament, in which it was conquered by the Cross. Thus for him the Old Testament righteous were deified just as the New Testament saints were; they saw the same God, Jesus Christ, in the same Uncreated Light; and they, too, were saved by this vision. The only, relatively minor difference, in his view, is that the Old Testament righteous had to go temporarily to hades after their death, whereas the New Testament saints go straight into Paradise…

Romanides lays great emphasis on the idea that every Old Testament appearance of God was in fact the pre-incarnate Word, the Second Person of the Trinity. He appeared to the Old Testament righteous under the appearance of what Holy Scripture calls "the Angel of the Lord". St. Augustine is accused (as usual) of introducing the idea that these visions may have had created elements, and created angels as well as the Uncreated Angel of the Lord.

It is unclear why Romanides wanted to insist that absolutely *all* the Old Testament Theophanies were of the Second Person of the Trinity. Undoubtedly the great majority were. But many of the Holy Fathers saw the vision of the Prophet Daniel in Daniel 7, in which the Son of Man is seen going towards "the Ancient of Days", as being a vision of both the Father *and* the Son, with God the Father under the appearance of "the Ancient of Days"[219]; which shows that they did not see it is a dogma that *only* God the Son appeared to the Old Testament righteous.

It is also unclear why Romanides insisted on the complete absence of any created element in the Old Testament Theophanies. That the Prophets saw God Himself in His Uncreated Energies is a fact accepted by all – the appearances of God to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre, and to Moses at the Burning Bush, are the most famous examples. However, there is no "dogma" that declares that the phrase "the Angel of the Lord" always applies to the Uncreated Lord and not sometimes to a created angel, or even both at the same time – the liturgical tradition of the Church (cf. the *Akathist to the Holy Archangel Michael*) appears to admit both possibilities.

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[219] Cf. Hieromartyr Hippolytus of Rome (*P.G.* 10, 37), St. Athanasius the Great (*V.E.P.* 35, 121), St. John Chrysostom (*P.G.* 57, 133; *E.P.E.* 8, 640-2), St. Augustine of Hippo (*On the Trinity*, book II), St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Letter 55, P.G.* 70, 1461), St. Gregory Palamas (*Homily 14*, 11, *E.P.E.* 9, 390), St. Symeon of Thessalonica (Interpretation of the Sacred Symbol), and St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite (*The Rudder*).

Nor did the images and likenesses of God seen by the Prophets necessarily have no created elements. Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow suggests that there was a mixture of the two that even the seers of the visions could not distinguish. "The union of God in His appearance with an Angel, the medium of the appearance, is sometimes so profound that one and the same act of revelation is ascribed without distinction to the one and to the other (Exodus 20.1; Acts 7.38, 53; Galatians 3.19; Hebrews 2.2), and he who sees it cannot distinguish the active cause from the medium, as happened with John (Revelation 22.6-9)."[220]

Let us consider the vision at Mamre. One or two of the Western Fathers (for example, St. Justin the Martyr) say that Abraham saw Christ and two angels – that is, a combination of the Uncreated and the created. But the Greek Fathers and St. Augustine say that he saw the Holy Trinity in the form of three young men or angels. They all agree that Abraham saw God. Thus St. Gregory the Theologian says that "the great Patriarch saw God not as God but as a man". Again St. John Chrysostom writes that God appeared to Abraham, but not with "the nature of a man or an angel", but "in the form of a man". And St. Gregory Palamas writes that Abraham "clearly saw the One God in Three Persons... He actually saw the One God Who appeared to Him as Three."[221] Finally, St. John of Damascus, the great defender of the icons, writes: "Abraham did not see the Nature of God, for no one has seen God at any time, but an icon of God, and falling down he venerated it."

Now we would not normally equate an *icon* of God with God Himself, any more than we would equate the icon of Christ with Christ Himself. But we *venerate* it, because, as St. Basil the Great says, the veneration accorded the icon is attributed to the prototype that it represents. Can an icon of the Uncreated God be itself uncreated? The present writer cannot presume to answer this very subtle question. The best we can do is refer to the Lord's own words through the Prophet Hosea: "I will speak to the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and in the hands of the prophets I was likened (ομοιωθέν)" (12.11)...

Perhaps the most sober view of these Old Testament Theophanies is provided by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow: "The general basis of the *Theophanies* of the Old and New Testament, especially in human form, is the incarnation of the Son of God: for the root and beginning of His holy humanity is in men from the very first forefathers; and the Son of God was on the earth even before His birth in the flesh, just as *the Son of Man was in the heavens* even before His ascension (John 3.13). But the specific images and grades of revelation, as we can see from the examples, corresponded to the circumstances and capacities of those who received them.

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[220] Metropolitan Philaret, *Notes leading to a basic understanding of the Book of Genesis*, part 2, Moscow, 1867, p. 57 (in Russian).
[221] St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily Eleven on the Precious and Life-Giving Cross*, 9.

"The distinguishing sign of the truly Divine appearance must be sought in: (a) its purity and greatness, (b) its impacts on the man, which are: an increase of faith, love, humility, and (c) in its direct and undoubted leading to the glory of God. However, *the essential nature of such appearances for the natural man is no more comprehensible than the nature of flowers is for a blind man*…"[222]

[222] Metropolitan Philaret, op. cit., p. 57. The italics in the last sentence are mine (V.M.).