

ECUMENISM

Based on a talk by Hierodeacon Demetrius
Saturday, July 3, 2004
Saint Nahum of Ochrid

HOLY ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF BOSTON

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

St Paul the Apostle tells us the following in his epistle to the Romans: "*Brethren, I beseech you, mark them that cause divisions and scandals contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by fair words and flattering words deceive the hearts of the guileless*"¹.

These very words require a great depth of understanding and it is only given to those of us who are members of the Holy Orthodox Church to understand them in their true sense. The same is the case with all the teachings of the Church. To understand our Saviour and that which he taught, we need to be one with our Saviour. We need to experience Him as Luke and Cleopas did on the way to Emmaus (by our searching the scriptures), and to partake of Him as they did at the breaking of the Bread, (by our partaking of the Holy Communion). Only then will our eyes be opened to understand the scriptures, only then do we understand how our hearts burn within us. This understanding and oneness does not come from reading and writing alone, but from the Holy Spirit Himself who fills that which is lacking within us unworthy vessels by His enlightenment, and dispels the attacks of the evil one who is constantly warring against us. We are then able to fly up to the Heavenly Kingdom with the two wings that He provides for us. Those wings the Fathers call: *Orthodoxia* and *Orthopraxia*, that is, our diligent following of the teachings of the Church and by our living the teachings of the Church. The saints had these wings *par excellence*.

St Clement the Wonderworker of Ochrid, a disciple of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Equal to the Apostles, used to liken *those who*

¹ Rom. 16:17-18

were Orthodox in belief, but not in practice, as those who had eyes but were left with no hands and feet. Those who tried to live a virtuous life without actually being Orthodox on the other hand, were likened to those who had hands and feet, but were left without any eyes.

Saint John of the Ladder, one of the great saints of the Church, had this oneness with God to such a degree that the Holy Spirit spoke through him when he wrote: "Learn not from an angel, nor from man, nor from a book, but from Me, that is, from My indwelling, from My illumination and action in you; for I am meek and humble in heart and in thought and in spirit, and your souls shall find rest from conflicts and relief from thoughts". St Symeon the New Theologian says something similar: "As it is written 'They shall all be taught by God'², learning goodness not by writings and letters, but by being taught by the Holy Spirit." Not by word alone, but in the light of the word and in the word of the Light are they mystically initiated into things divine. For He says, "Then you will become teachers both for yourselves and for your neighbours; more than that, you will be the light of the world and the salt of the earth".

This "indwelling" is what the holy Fathers call "Theosis" or "Deification" wherein we become "gods by grace". Indeed through a little bit of repentance and acknowledgement of our sins, the gates of Paradise are opened unto us; many things are revealed to us. Only then do the words of St John the Theologian and Evangelist apply to us "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world"³.

TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We are all called to be temples of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is fully active only in the Church through the Holy Mysteries, thus only through Her do we genuinely find Holy Peace, which is our Saviour Christ Himself. In the hymns of the Church we chant "Establish Thy Church in Orthodoxy O Christ, and make our life peaceful, since Thou art Good and the Friend of Man." Please note that we first pray that the Church be established in Orthodoxy, and after this we ask for a peaceful life.

We can obtain a truly peaceful life only in the Orthodox Church. We know that Christ is the head of the Church, the Church is the Body of Christ and we are all members in particular; that is, all of us who are

² Jn. 6:45

³ 1 John 4:4

faithful to Him. One could only conclude therefore that as "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever"⁴, so the Church of Jesus Christ is also "the same yesterday, today and forever". Since however "the imagination of man is intently bent upon evil things from his youth" as the Church teaches⁵ and as we see from our own experience, our minds are not enlightened; in fact, we grieve the Holy Spirit who is within us by our actions. Once we start coming to some type of an understanding as Orthodox Christians, the first thing we learn is that we need to learn a lot more, or rather, we know nothing. The second thing we learn is that we need to go to those who were enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is most necessary for us to look at our spiritual heroes, those whose minds and hearts were purified through years of struggle and through humility; that is, our holy Fathers. As Saint Euthymius the Great directs, "Be careful and heed the teaching of the Fathers as though it were the word of God Himself."⁶

This is the term used for the Saints of the Church who are our teachers. May God grant that we always pay heed to that which the holy Fathers teach us. Unfortunately, as will be clearly pointed out, the ecumenists do not listen to the voice of the holy Fathers, and therefore among them there are leaders who are very evidently wolves, while others are wolves in sheep's clothing.

A GREAT BLASPHEMY

It is a great blasphemy and an insult to those of us who truly believe in Christ when we see others who call themselves Orthodox Christian leaders, denying the God-inspired teachings of our holy Fathers which have been handed down to us from generation to generation, all the while suggesting that these Fathers were wrong. Those who were considered heroes for the faith and were martyred, whose relics exhume myrrh, whose icons work wonders, whose very names bring the demons to terror, these, according to the ecumenists, were wrong, and they are right. The Saints were sanctified through the Church, not through being heretical. Actually, by denying heresy, many were martyred.

⁴ Heb. 13:8

⁵ Gen. 8:21 LXX

⁶ The Life of Our Holy Monastic Father Euthymius the Great Vol. V: January Chrysostom Press House Springs MO 63051 Translation © 2002 p. 345.

The ecumenical hierarchs are poisoning many simple souls with the venom of things very contrary to the teachings of the holy Fathers while appearing to be Orthodox and even telling others that they preach the Orthodox faith undefiled—a very subtle way of pulling people away from the Church. In this way they lose the pearl of great price which our Saviour talks about in the Gospels and they exchange it for some cheap metal which in fact is very harmful. One cannot be Orthodox if one does not believe the theology of the Orthodox faith.

Since the leaders have the greater responsibility they will be judged more severely than their followers since *by fair words and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the guileless*⁷.

ETERNAL SALVATION

The teachings of the Orthodox Church are much easier to understand when one has his eternal salvation as his priority. When our priorities are not straight however, when we have a different agenda, when we wish to follow the “spirit of the times” or “the spirit of the world” which in no way is related to the Spirit of God, or when we have ambitious desires to make an ecclesiastical political career, we then find ourselves moving away from the course which we should be on. Unfortunately, this seems to be the case with the ecumenist Bishops and their clergy. On the other hand, when one comes closer to God, he wishes to be with God, he does not fear death since death brings us to life in Christ. The holy Fathers define this *remembrance of death* not a sick or morbid remembrance, but a very healthy one, since it leads us to nothing more than reality; it knocks some sense into us. We constantly pray for a “Christian ending to our life” in the services of the Church to remind us about our approaching death. When this and other realities make enough of an impact on us, we then find that we are called to a more spiritual life, or perhaps even called to the monastic way of life.

EVEN AN IOTA

The holy Fathers teach us that we are not to change even an iota in the doctrines of the faith—and this precisely so that we can safeguard the teachings of our holy Church, otherwise thousands of false religions take their form. Many have not obeyed the voice of the Church and through their pride have invented those thousands of religions. We are warned of this by our Saviour when he says “Behold, I have told you beforehand” (Mt. 24:25). The God-inspired Fathers

⁷ Rom. 16:17-18

obeyed the God-inspired Fathers before them, who in turn were obeying the God-inspired Fathers before them, who were obeying Christ our Lord and Saviour. Thus, only in the Orthodox Faith, do we have this chain, this spiritual succession which takes us back to the days of our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself. In fact many people who are not Orthodox will even testify to this.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH

I remember my Grade 12 English teacher who was a very dedicated Roman Catholic admit to the authenticity of the Orthodox Faith. Very often we hear from new-calendarists (at least from those who have not been affected by their leaders) that the traditional Orthodox, are the "true Orthodox". While some convert to Orthodoxy, others wish to follow the ways of the world, or what some would classify as the "easy way" precisely for the aforementioned reason given, namely to follow the spirit of the times. It is more comfortable and a lot easier if you are a Roman Catholic or a new-calendarist, that is in terms of the world. But Christ suffered, and we must also suffer if we wish to be with Him. The more we struggle, the easier the struggle becomes and Christ makes His abode in us as we have already said. The holy Fathers teach us that God gives us grace according to our volition and according to our humility. We then learn truly to love Him, and when one loves someone, he is then gladly ready to make any kind of sacrifice for his Beloved; he will do anything to prevent separation from his Beloved. It takes more than just believing in the existence of God. Even the demons believe as we are taught in the Bible⁸. Many of the Jews believed, beholding the many miracles of Christ right before their very own eyes, but when it came time for the crucifixion, some of those very same people shouted out "crucify Him, crucify Him"⁹, since they were waiting not for a heavenly King, but for an earthly King. Their minds and hearts were far removed from God and on the base things of this world. "Seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not"¹⁰ we are reminded very often in the Holy Scriptures. Alas, we should not be surprised when we see how people are so blind. Pride is the source of this blindness.

⁸ James 3:19

⁹ Lk. 23:21

¹⁰ Mt. 13:13; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10

Man is a mystery. Man has an amazing capability of becoming sanctified and enlightened, unfortunately however, most do not even wish to take such a route. If we all had a true understanding, as St Isaac the Syrian says, there would be no succession in the world because all would run to caves and dens of the earth; they would run to the monasteries to give up their entire lives to God. This understanding is given to us as a gift, but it takes much humility and self-abasement and self-knowledge. Naturally anyone who truly knows himself will be a humble person, and the humble person truly knows himself since we are all filled with sin. We are rejuvenated when we come to prayer, when we make contact with God, and especially through the holy mysteries. According to St Macarius the Great "there (in the heart) is God, there are angels, there is life and the Kingdom, there is light and the Apostles, there are the treasures of grace..." Of course, the Saint makes no mention of Buddha or Mohammed. Buddha, Mohammed or any of the Hindu pagan gods belong only in the hearts of those who are far away from God as we hear in the psalms "All the gods of the pagans are demons"¹¹. The purification of the heart as we have said is a primary work for all Orthodox Christians.

THE FATHERS OF OUR FAITH WERE NOT IGNORANT IN THE LEAST

Purification comes through obedience, humility, confession, repentance, tears and other ways, *all* in an *Orthodox fashion*. It is not through patting each other on the back and telling each other that "we have found God and that's great, or that the way you found God is different from the way I found God which is fine, and the Fathers of my faith were ignorant of this but now is the time of renewal in the ecumenical church and we need to prepare for one great church". The Fathers of our faith were not ignorant in the least, they dealt with heresy in an Orthodox manner as ones whose minds were enlightened and focused on God. Some of them dedicated their entire lives to defending the faith. As Orthodox Christians we need to take advantage of all the means we have in the Church for us to encounter God, then we will truly understand Orthodox Patristic Theology.

One may wonder why I have stressed this "spiritual aspect" in a talk concerning ecumenism. The reason for this is because (as has already been mentioned) *Orthodoxia* and *Orthopraxia* are an

¹¹ Ps. 95:5 LXX

inseparable means of our pathway to Heaven. They are very closely intertwined, as we will continue to demonstrate.

WHAT ECUMENISM IS, WHY IT IS WRONG

Today we will discuss: what ecumenism is, why it is wrong, what caution is needed by us as Orthodox Christians in dealing with this contemporary danger, the "conservative" ecumenists as opposed to the "liberal" ecumenists (and their so-called spirituality), and how it affects us as the Holy Orthodox Church of North America. We will look at these topics in different lights.

"THEY DON'T BELIEVE ANYTHING OVER THERE."

A few months ago, a priestmonk from Mount Athos visited our monastery for a short while. While the elder of our monastery told him a few things about Patriarch Bartholomew, the monk agreed by stating, "They don't believe anything over there" (meaning the Church leaders of Constantinople). One then wonders how can one commemorate someone who doesn't believe in God?

Search the scriptures, read the lives of the Saints, read the teachings of the Saints; there you will find total dedication to the faith, and repulsion of that which is alien to it. Above all, the saints of the Holy Church preserved our spotless faith, even to the shedding of their blood, and they gained the Kingdom in return for their faith. Beloved Orthodox Christians we must follow their example. According to Saint Photius the Great, *"Is the shepherd a heretic? Then he is a wolf! Flee from him; do not be deceived by him even if he appears gentle and tame. Avoid communion with him even as you would flee from a poisonous snake."* Countless are the examples and much can be said, but unfortunately we do not have much time. We will just mention a few interesting points.

When someone grows spiritually in the Orthodox faith, he has the mindset (or what is commonly called "phronema") of an Orthodox Christian. This mindset is not the mindset of the "world". The term world here as defined by the holy Fathers means "passions" "carnality" "pride" or in short, that which is contrary to the Church. Since the devil is the prince of this world as Holy Scripture testifies, the word "world" and the word "passions" become very closely intertwined. To quote St John the Theologian, "Now is the judgment of this world: now

shall the prince of this world be cast out"¹² . "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"¹³. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you"¹⁴.

"And when He is come,
He will reprove the world of sin,
and of righteousness, and of judgment:
Of sin, because they believe not on me;
Of righteousness, because I go to my Father,
and ye see me no more;
Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" ¹⁵

St Paul states:

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect:
yet not the wisdom of this world,
nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:
But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery,
even the hidden wisdom,
which God ordained before the world unto our glory:
Which none of the princes of this world knew:
for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which
is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of
God"¹⁶.

Again St John the Theologian tells us "Ye are of God, little Children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth, and the spirit of error"¹⁷.

*The difference between the world and God's Heavenly Kingdom
is the same as the difference between light and darkness.*

¹² Jn. 12:31

¹³ Jn.14:30

¹⁴ Jn. 16:7

¹⁵ Jn. 16: 8-11

¹⁶ I Cor. 2:6-7,12

¹⁷ I Jn. 4:4-6

A STRANGER

According to Archbishop Averky of The Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York, "...the Lord said to His disciples at the Mystical Supper 'Ye are not of this world' ¹⁸. We must hold to these words if we are to remain faithful to true Christianity—the true Church of Christ has always been, is, and will always be, a stranger to this world. Separated from it, she is able to transmit the divine teachings of the Lord unchanged, because that separation has kept her unchanged, that is, like the immutable God Himself" ¹⁹.

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IS... THE SPIRIT OF THIS WORLD.

So we see that there is a difference or rather enmity between the things of God and the things of the world. In short, the ecumenical movement is precisely that: the spirit of this world.

The word ecumenism stems from the Greek "oikoumene" which means the whole inhabited earth, the universe, the world. This term comes up many times in the Gospel. For example our Saviour tells his disciples in the Gospel of St Matthew: "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the Oikoumene (or inhabited earth), for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come"²⁰. In today's usage of this text, this is usually meant in terms of the togetherness or unity of the different religions of the entire world. Ecumenism actually prepares the way for "the end to come" in that it denies the uniqueness of the Church. It embraces all the different manmade or rather demon-made religions of the world. In this setting, very possibly, the anti-Christ could be at its throne since the ecumenists await the future great religion, which will bring all religions together—precisely the most opportune moment for the prince of this world to manifest himself as such.

A little while ago, Metropolitan Ephraim told us about a certain meeting he had in Canada. Around fifteen or so years ago, His Eminence visited our little parish in Calgary and while he was there, he met an Anglican who was interested in Orthodoxy. During the conversation the Anglican told the Metropolitan "Your Grace, I'm very

¹⁸ Jn. 15:19

¹⁹ Ecclesiastes 3:14

²⁰ St. Mt. 24:14

interested in Orthodoxy, but I am grieved when I see what is happening in the contemporary Orthodox world. I see the Anglican way of destroying a carpet, but then I also see the Orthodox way of destroying a carpet". The Metropolitan told him, "Please tell me what you mean; I'm very interested in hearing what you have to say". So the man continued, "Well, in the Anglican Church, the way to destroy a carpet is to put gasoline on it and set it on fire. It goes into flames in an instant. The Orthodox way however is somewhat different. Since you people are more or less eastern people, you have a much more subtle way of destroying a carpet, and that is by pulling out the strings one by one until eventually you have a big pile of string with no carpet". In response to this the Metropolitan told him "I assure you, we are not in the business of destroying rugs, but in preserving them."

And so it is today, beloved Orthodox Christians, among those who belong to the so-called "Official Orthodox Churches" throughout the world. Pull out one string, which is the string of fasting; why should we fast? Pull out another string which is the sacred cassock of the clergy, or another string which is musical instruments in Church, or another which is incorrect form of baptism; and so on and so forth.

Eventually, with the pulling out of the strings, more and more important things are taken out of the Church as one cannot treasure the carpet properly since it becomes a big pile of strings—something hardly attractive. With that in mind, one may say, "Since my carpet is not much better than your carpet, why not get together with your burnt up carpet, or another person's cut up carpet, and see if we can redesign a beautiful new carpet"! Those so-called "orthodox" ecumenists think in this way. Those who belong to their jurisdictions are in a very dangerous position in that their carpet is being ruined. In order for us to safeguard that sacred carpet of ours, meaning the Holy Church, we have separated from them. Nothing else could be done. It is not as if we are happy to be separated.

This separation was not a small issue, we did not do it without careful examination and much prayer, since we are called to keep the unity of the Church as we just heard in St Paul's own words. This is why we always pray for the "union of all the faithful" in our sacred services. In the Divine Liturgy we pray "having asked for the unity of the faith and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commit ourselves and one another unto Christ our God". This union however is the union of all those who are faithful to Christ.

This union was not broken by us, but it was first broken by the then Patriarch of Constantinople Meletius Metaxakis and his followers in 1924. Since they showed that they were not interested in following the traditions of the Church, many of the faithful separated themselves

from the Patriarch of Constantinople after seeing that the direction which the Patriarch was leading them was not to the Jerusalem on high. *The communion of the Holy Spirit cannot be both with God our Saviour and Creator, and also with the false gods of the heathen.*

We will hear the voice of the Church during this talk, and the voice of those who claim that they are hierarchs of the Church, and we will see that the voice of these latter does not in any way match the voice of the Fathers of our Church. In fact, the voices of those contemporary hierarchs condemn the Fathers of our Church, and are, in turn, condemned by the Fathers of the Church. In order to do this one must be a hypocrite. For example, how can these so-called hierarchs venerate the icon of St Kosmas of Aetolia and also kiss the face of their "brother" the pope of Rome while St Cosmas called the pope of Rome an anti-Christ? The sad thing is that these same hierarchs offer not only a kiss but, as traitors, they join in common worship with the Papists.

St Isidore of Pelusium says of them *"Just as the fishermen hide the hook with bait and covertly hook the fish, similarly, the crafty allies of the heresies cover their evil teachings and corrupt understanding with pietism and hook the more simple, bringing them to spiritual death"*.

THE CALENDAR CHANGE

According to popular belief, the first step towards ecumenism was the change of the ecclesiastical calendar. This certainly was a big step toward "reconciliation" which the ecumenists so eagerly await, yet it is not the first sign of ecumenism in the Church. They had to do a little bit of preparation before the change of the calendar took place. The first documentation we have of the Orthodox included in an ecumenical gathering was when in 1893 the first meeting of what was called "The World's Parliament of Religions" took place. At that meeting Archbishop Dionysius Latas of the Church of Greece took an active part. It is noteworthy to mention that not once in his talk does he mention the "Greek Orthodox Church". On the other hand he says the "Greek Church" or he will say the "Greek Christian Church". He starts his talk by saying "Reverend Ministers of the High Idea and the Eminent Name of God, the Creator of the World and of Man; most Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen..." Much mention is made of Greek history, in fact, pagan history. It was very patriotic, yet not very patristic. The praise was on Greece, not on Jesus Christ our Lord. Behold the worldliness. This is why we must also beware of the danger of Philitism.

Throughout the history of the Church there may have been certain people with an ecumenical way of thinking, but one thing is clear, it is not, and has never been, the teaching of the Church to be ecumenical in that prayers are offered together with heretics, nor is it consistent with the teaching of the Church for the Patriarch to visit Rome or for the Pope to visit Constantinople. *Anyone who knew or knows the teachings of the Church cannot be ecumenical.*

In the year 1920 yet another step was made with the Ecumenical Patriarch's encyclical "To the Churches of Christ Wheresoever They Might Be". The encyclical of 1920 suggested that:

- 1) The adoption by all the Churches of one single calendar for the common celebration of the great Christian feasts
- 2) The exchange of fraternal letters
- 3) Fraternal contact between the representatives of the Churches
- 4) Establishment of relations among the divinity schools and exchange of documents and periodicals "of each church"
- 5) Student exchange
- 6) The convocation of pan-Christian assemblies
- 7) An objective, historic examination of doctrinal differences
- 8) Mutual respect of practices and customs of the various "churches"
- 9) Mutual sharing of houses of prayer and cemeteries, for the burial "of adherents of other confessions"
- 10) Implementation of common rules regarding mixed marriages, and
- 11) Mutual support in the realm of religious edification, philanthropy, etc.

Well, at least here in 1920, they make a distinction by mentioning "The Churches of Christ". Since then, we will see how far they have progressed from "Christ". This worldly spirit is what prompted the beginning of schism among the ecumenists, which is the change of the calendar. The reasons behind this were political and certainly ecumenical, to be with the rest of the world, to follow Christmas and other feasts with the other so-called Christians. Could this be a resolution of Orthodox Bishops?

MONASTICISM AND THE EPISCOPATE

It is not without reason that the church has instituted that the bishop must be a monastic. Through the years of his training in a monastery, the bishop has learned the spiritual life and the theology of the Church, he has come to know God, rather than to know about

God. The monastery is the best theological training ground and that is why we find that throughout history it is the monastic's, which defend the Church from heresy. Today, most of these ecumenical bishops become monks in a day or two, commonly on the day of their ordination to the diaconate, with no prior training except for perhaps a few exams at a Theological School which is usually very affected by ecumenical thought. In most cases these schools are actually anti-monastic. Some students even attend Roman Catholic seminaries in Rome or elsewhere. Many are members of the Masonic Lodge.

THE MASONIC LODGE

We do not have time fully to discuss the Masonic Lodge, but just briefly it is a secret organization of different people from different religions who get initiated by secret rituals. Once they enter the Masonic Temple, they are to put away all personal religious belief and all confess the one great "High Idea", as Archbishop Dionysius Latas mentioned in his talk at the World Council of Religion in 1893. Masonry is ecumenism *par excellence*. According to the book put out by the Masons called "Morals and Dogma" for 28th Degree Masons we read "The only personal God Freemasonry accepts is humanity... Humanity therefore is the only personal God that there is". We also find this text in one of their books: "In his private petitions a man may petition God or Jehovah, Allah or Buddha, Mohammed or Jesus; he may call upon the God of Israel or the First Great Cause. In the Masonic Lodge he hears petitions to the Great Architect of the Universe, finding his own deity under that name. A hundred paths may wind upward around a mountain; at the top they all meet"²¹.

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

According to the 45th Apostolic Canon "Let a bishop, presbyter, or deacon who has only prayed with heretics be excommunicated; but if he has permitted them to perform any clerical office, let him be deposed". The ecumenical movement of the World Council of Churches was originally just for Christians of different denominations, however it later embraced the celebration of pagan rites. Some ecumenical bishops boast that the Orthodox are co-founders with the Protestants of the World Council of Churches.

The World Council of Churches (WCC), according to the definition given by the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, is "an international, interdenominational organization of most major Protestant, Anglican,

²¹ *Introduction to Freemasonry* by Carl H Claudy, p. 38

and Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches; founded in Amsterdam in 1948, its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland". The idea of a world fellowship of Christian churches took concrete form in 1937, when two ecumenical conferences—on Life and Work and on Faith and Order— elected a joint committee to formulate plans for a world council. This provisional committee met at Utrecht in 1938 under the organization's first general secretary, Willem Adolf Visser't Hooft, but it was not until after World War II that the first assembly took place in 1948 in Amsterdam, and formally ratified the constitution. At Amsterdam there were 147 Christian churches from 44 countries; today there are 341 member churches from over 100 countries. The governing body of the council is the assembly, which meets every seven years. The assembly appoints a central committee of 150 members, which meets five times between assemblies; this committee in turn elects a 26-member executive committee. The council also has a presidium to which eight persons are appointed. The council, which has no legislative power over its member churches, provides an opportunity for its constituents to act together in matters of common concern under their common calling "to accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour". The World Council of Churches is concerned with international relations, environmental justice, education, and mission. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the council but sends delegated observers to its assemblies; it has full membership on the council's "Commission of Faith and Order and on its Joint Working Group". You will hear many people who are members of this group telling you that we all have the same God, but that one religion may work better than another religion depending on the person, as the Dali Lama stated at the last assembly. One of the current Presidents of this Council is Metropolitan Chrysostom of Ephesus who belongs to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

They will talk about world peace. This is a constant excuse given by ecumenists for their ecumenical actions. Yet, if we search the scripture, God always protected the faithful with peace particularly when they were faithful to the teachings of the Church, on the other hand, when they were not so faithful, he allowed them to be given over to their enemies. Constantinople, the once glorious center of the Byzantine Empire, now has less than 1000 so-called Orthodox. If they had kept the faith, rest assured, Constantinople would be in the hands of the Orthodox. Elder Hieronymus of Aegina used to say "When we are out of order (that is the Greeks) God uses the Turks as a whip to set us back in order". When a child is being naughty he needs correction, he cannot be allowed to do whatever he wants otherwise he will end up becoming a spoiled little terror. God likewise teaches us. Some children learn quickly, others take time, while others never

understand how wrong they are since pride blinds them. Let no one be mistaken, salvation is not gained on our own, but by the grace of God which is abundant in His Holy Church.

One thing that has prompted converts to convert to Orthodoxy is that they gave heed to the words of our Saviour: "Seek, and ye shall find"²². Looking at the Church in a historical aspect, nowhere else do you find a perfect continuation of succession in the Church, to our very days, as you find in the Orthodox Church. When our Saviour told St Peter "Thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build My Church and the gates of hades shall not prevail over it"²³, He clearly demonstrates that the Church will not cease to exist since the gates of hades shall never prevail over it. Otherwise our faith is in vain and Christ was mistaken. Modern Protestant sects, emerging during the 1500's, 1600's, 1700's, 1800's and 1900's have all lost that continuation.

The very Bible, which the Protestants use was taken from the Orthodox Church. Since during the first years after our Saviour's Resurrection, many texts which were not genuine were being circulated (such as the apocryphal book of the "Gospel of St Thomas"), the Church convened councils, being guided by the Holy Spirit, in order to determine which texts were genuine and which were not, and in this way the Bible took its present form. The Church determined which scriptures are Canonical; simply put, certain of the Canons of the Church determine what scriptures are in the Bible. Protestant professors know this.

There is established a succession of Orthodox teachers, as well. Church history clearly illustrates that Christ had His disciples, who neither added anything nor took anything away from what Christ taught²⁴ and these disciples trained their own disciples neither to add to nor to take anything away from what they had been taught, for "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful".²⁵ St Paul taught St Ignatius and St. Dionysius the Areopagite; St. John taught St Polycarp, who taught St. Irenaeus. Thus holy Tradition was transmitted in the Church. This faithful succession of true teachers continues in the Orthodox Church to this day by the power of the Holy Spirit. We find an architectural tradition, too. There stand today

²² Lk. 11:9

²³ Mt. 16:18

²⁴ Mt 28:18 – 20; Ecclesiastes 3:14.

²⁵ 1 Cor. 4:2

ancient Churches in modern day Italy, a predominately Roman Catholic country, which totally resemble modern day Orthodox Churches such as in Ravenna; this similarity extends to icons, censers, chalices etc. In reading Eusebius' history of the Church, you find the same canonical institution, Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons doing the work of the Church.

St. Paul teaches us, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."²⁶ The Protestants teach that one should adhere to the Reformation prescription, "sola scriptura," that is, teach only that which is written in the Bible. Yet since St Paul tells us in those very scriptures to hold to the traditions, which we have been taught, either by word or epistle, are not the Protestants missing something very important? How do those traditions, which, as scripture itself states, are transmitted not only by letters in an epistle, but also by the spoken word—how do these traditions live in the Church? The Protestants have no answer for this question. Thus, there is no holy tradition in the Protestant sects.

This "word" which St Paul tells us about is the living tradition, candles, incense, the holy water, and much else. The Bible rests on the Church and not the Church on the Bible. Thus the Book of the Gospels rests on the holy Table in the altar. During the Divine Liturgy, the holy Chalice containing the body and blood of Christ takes the place of the Book of the Gospels, and we offer our prayer in this Church. *Holy Communion, the Gospels and prayer are an inseparable means of communicating with our God— a holy trinity indeed!*

DEVELOP THE MIND OF THE CHURCH

Therefore it is a spiritual work for us consciously to develop the mind of the Church, which means to be enlightened, and the opposite is naturally darkness. In the Church it becomes very clear to us that "ecumenism," as we know it today, is alien to Orthodoxy. We are called to be temples of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit dwells in us, there is no doubting. It would be easier to doubt in the existence of your neighbour whom you behold with your eyes, than in God, whom although you do not behold with your physical eyes as you behold your neighbour, yet no one can dwell in you the way God can. As the Christian exists, so God coexists in him, and one would do anything for the love of his beloved Lord. The means through which one receives that oneness with the Lord are provided for us by the Church alone.

²⁶ 2 Th. 2:15

Heresy is a deviation or a perversion, which is caused by a mind that is perverted. St John Chrysostom teaches us that a depraved life gives birth to evil doctrines, thus you have heresy.

Fr Justin Popovich, a Serbian Theologian who reposed in 1959, had the following to say concerning Orthodoxy: "In its heart of hearts, our people know Christ and Orthodoxy, our people know just what it is that makes an Orthodox person Orthodox. Orthodoxy will always generate ascetic rebirth. She knows no other. The Ascetics are Orthodoxy's only missionaries. Asceticism is her only missionary school. Orthodoxy is ascetic effort and it is life, and it is thus by effort and by life that her mission is broadcast and brought about. The development of asceticism: this ought to be the inward mission of our Church amongst our people. The parish must become the ascetic focal point. But this can only be achieved by an ascetic priest."

Ecumenism is the culmination of many heresies put together in what is called the spirit of love. This "spirit of love" is in reality the spirit of deception. Love by our Saviour is not taught in this way. By disregarding the teachings of the Church, and embracing all the different faiths, which are directly against the Orthodox faith, ecumenism can rightly be called the pan-heresy of our times, and the greatest threat to the Church. One should not be tricked into believing that any type of friendship means love. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God"²⁷. In the Gospel accounts of the Crucifixion mention is made of Herod and Pilate becoming friends "for they were at enmity with one another" only after Pilate delivered Christ to Herod. This is not what we could call "love" in the Church. Some ecumenists think we have no love when we do not allow non-Orthodox to receive Holy Communion from us. An easy way to find out the answer to this problem would be to ask those converts who were denied these mysteries and afterwards became Orthodox. By being denied the mysteries, they started to question why they were denied the mysteries even being censured by their consciences. By doing this, the Church is showing real love in order to bring the erring into the fold of the Church. The Church is not just for those of us who are born into some ethnic group that has Orthodox roots, but it is for all. Our Saviour wishes that all men be saved.

St Paul teaches us to flee all heresy, and the holy Fathers continue in that teaching throughout the centuries. Indeed, beloved Orthodox Christians, nowhere in church history do we find this approach of the ecumenists, and most definitely never do we find it in the lives of the Saints, but we find the opposite. We do find a certain dispensation or *economia* in dealing with heretics, but not in dealing

²⁷ James 4:4

with heresy. Heresy is a deviation of the doctrines and teachings of the Church, and ecumenism is a heresy or rather, the worst of heresies in that it brings all heresy together. Writing to St Titus, St Paul teaches us "a man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself"²⁸. This is most assuredly not something that the so-called "Orthodox" ecumenists do! Do they really believe that they are witnessing the truth of Orthodoxy to the world?

Perhaps some naïve people may believe so. It seems the official statement of the Orthodox delegates at the WCC Assembly in Nairobi in 1975 gives a clear answer to this question when they say "*The Orthodox do not expect the other Christians to be converted to Orthodoxy in its historic and cultural reality of the past and the present and to become members of the Orthodox Church*".

St John the Almsgiver says, "We shall not escape sharing in that punishment which, in the world to come, awaits heretics, if we defile Orthodoxy and the holy Faith by adulterous communion with heretics". Perhaps the words of St John of Damascus will shed light on the problem: "With all our strength let us beware lest we receive Communion from or give it to heretics. 'Give not what is holy to the dogs' says the Lord. 'Neither cast ye your pearls before swine', lest we become partakers in their dishonor and condemnation"²⁹. St Maximus has a little bit to say too: "Even if the whole universe (oikoumene) holds communion with the [heretical] Patriarch, I will not communicate with him. For I know from the writings of the holy Apostle Paul: the Holy Spirit declares that even the angels would be anathema if they should begin to preach another Gospel, introducing some new teaching". St Theodore the Studite tells us, "Guard yourselves from soul-destroying heresy, communion with which is alienation from Christ... Some have suffered final shipwreck with regard to the faith. Others though they have not drowned in their thoughts, are nevertheless perishing through communion with heresy". The examples are endless. Frankly, never, ever, ever do you find a Saint of the Church preaching the opposite.

And I want to stress: these are not my words, but the words of the Fathers of the Church, who worked, and continue to work, miracles, and whom I believe as every Orthodox should believe, are more enlightened than you or I am in the knowledge of how to deal with these issues.

²⁸ Titus 3:10

²⁹ *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*.

TRUE ORTHODOXY

In regards to ecumenism, Vladyka Averky of Jordanville had the following to say: "Repudiation of and preservation from the apostasy which has made such enormous progress demands that we stand apart from the spirit of the age (which bears the seeds of its own destruction). If we expect to withstand the world, it is first necessary to understand it and keep sensitively in mind that in this present age all that which carries the most holy and dear name of Orthodoxy is not in fact Orthodox. Rather, it is often "A fraudulent and usurped Orthodoxy" which we must fear and eschew as if it were fire. Unlike this spurious faith, true Orthodoxy was given and must be received without novelty and nothing must be accepted as a teaching or practice of the Church which is contrary to the Holy Scriptures and the dogma of the Universal Church. True Orthodoxy thinks only to serve God and to save souls and is not preoccupied with the secular and ephemeral welfare of men. True Orthodoxy is *spiritual* and not physical or psychological or earthly. In order to protect ourselves from "the spirit of the age" and preserve our fidelity to the true Orthodoxy, we ought firstly and with all our strength to live blamelessly: A total and rigorous commitment to Christ, without deviation from the commandments of God or the laws of His holy Church. At the same time, we must have no common prayer or spiritual liaison with the modern apostasy or with anything which "soils" our holy Faith, even those dissidents who call themselves "Orthodox." They will go their way and we will go ours. We must be honorable and tenacious, following the right way, never deviating in order to please men or from fear that we might lose some personal advantage."

A MODERN PARABLE

To give you an idea of what ecumenism is like, imagine that you belong to the Royal Family. The King, your father, has reposed, but has left you all of the treasures of his kingdom; the royal palace, plenty of food for nourishment, many servants, gold and all the delights which one can imagine. Life in this palace is blissful; you are living with your many brothers and sisters in harmony and love.

Since your father was the King, his fame spread throughout all the earth, and he became a very famous figure for his many accomplishments, especially in that he established his kingdom in peace and safety. Somewhere in a far away country however, certain poor people from another family started claiming that the King was actually their father and that they were his true successors. To make matters worse, many other families starting claiming that he belonged to them all the while changing many facts about him, some saying that he wasn't really a King, but just a wealthy person, others saying that he didn't really live in the palace which he really did live in, while

others said that the King didn't even exist; he was just a myth. And so chaos reigned. News got back to the royal palace and this caused a dispute among the royal family. Some of them said that they had to go and find these people since they claimed to be part of the family and have a family reunion in love. But others said "that is absurd, we are the heirs of our father, what more proof do you need? We live in his house; we ate with him, spoke to him, cried with him, made merry with him, and saw him daily. This is where he sat, this is where he had his meetings, this is where we ate together, this is where he slept, it would be crazy for us to go out of the palace in search of people who claim that they are really the heirs to the throne. You must be blind! In fact these false heirs are dangerous, they are fooling countless people, we need to put a stop to them. They are insulting our father, the King's memory, by falsely teaching people untruths about him! Once they repent, we will accept them into the palace, otherwise, we can not let this go on, in fact, we need to inform everyone of their treachery!"

Unfortunately the other members of the family did not pay heed to the wise ones, claiming that they had no love, and so they departed from the Royal Palace. Some of them said that they would just go to reconcile the false brethren by bringing them back to the palace and setting matters straight, while others said that they will just go in search of them in order to make one, big, happy family. Again, others left not because they wanted to find the false brethren since they knew that they were false, but because they saw the family members who left as more legitimate heirs than the heirs who belonged to the palace. Unfortunately, they also fell into the trap. In leaving, they all lost the treasures of the kingdom and they started starving since they did not have enough provision of food. *Their supply lasted for a little while, but eventually diminished.* A couple of the family members returned, but others who were very deluded said that it would be better to die of hunger out of love for the false brethren, which they believed were true. And thus they miserably perished—it was truly a pitiful sight.

So it is with our situation today. The King naturally is our Saviour; those who live in the palace are those who belong to the Church. The false brethren are the non-Orthodox, the ecumenists are the ones which leave the palace, the faithful are the ones who warn them, but they did not wish to take heed about putting themselves in grave danger through starvation as their supply of food only lasted for a while. The ones who left because they wished follow the family members who they thought were true heirs are what one would call the "conservative" who belong to the ecumenical jurisdictions. The

holy Fathers say, "To someone drowning in a river give him your staff and not your hand".

PRIDE DOES NOT PERMIT A MAN TO ACCEPT THE TEACHINGS HANDLED DOWN BY TRADITION.

On the Sunday of Orthodoxy one may wonder why the Gospel reading for liturgy is concerning St Nathaniel of whom our Saviour said "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile."³⁰ Truly, one who gives birth to heresy is full of guile, a treacherous and subtle monster filled with pride. St Ephraim the Syrian says, "Pride does not permit a man to accept the teachings handed down by tradition". Some of you may recall that when the iconoclast heresy first appeared, the iconoclasts guilefully said that they would put the icons up higher since we were not worthy to venerate them, the aim being to finally abolish the icons from the Churches altogether. In the same way, the ecumenists (and perhaps this is not true of every single one of them), started by saying "we need to bear witness to the truth of Orthodoxy to the nations; we will not compromise our faith, but we need to bear witness to it".

Certainly this applies to the late Archbishop Michael of North and South America, Father George Florovsky and Father John Romanides. It happened, however, in the case of Frs. George and John that they could not drop anchor in a safe harbor. It is all too easy to get lost at sea. Today however, the so-called ecumenical Orthodox jurisdictions profess that the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church are two lungs of one body; they are sister Churches. And the interesting thing is that the Roman Catholic Denomination is not a member of the World Council of Churches.

THE ECUMENICAL ORTHODOX SAY TWO THINGS

The ecumenical Orthodox say two things; they say one thing to those who are nervous about ecumenism, and another thing to those who are not. To the one group they say that they will never deny the Orthodox faith and to the other, they teach that other religions also lead to God and it is time for us to change some things in Orthodoxy. The following is what was said by the Orthodox delegation of the World Council of Churches in 1957: "We are bound in conscience to state explicitly what is logically inferred: that all other bodies have been directly or directly separated from the Church. Unity from the Orthodox standpoint means a return of the separated bodies to the historical Orthodox Catholic

³⁰ Jn. 1:47

and Apostolic Church". Unfortunately, things have changed since then. Now and then you may hear such statements from ecumenical Hierarchs, but it seems that these statements are made when the flock starts to protest. The very same people say the exact opposite things as is evident from witnesses and interviews or papers written by them as well as videos showing ecumenical events. Here we should repeat what the ecumenists said in 1975 at Nairobi: "The Orthodox do not expect the other Christians to be converted to Orthodoxy in its historic and cultural reality of the past and the present and to become members of the Orthodox Church".

To give you an example of the change in thought of the ecumenists since 1957 allow me to use the words of ecumenical Bishop John Kallos of Thermon a decade or so ago: "When I was ordained a Bishop some two years ago, His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos charged me that my ministry as a bishop should be characterized as a Christian revolution whereby the rebirth of the American soul will be realized. It is my firm conviction that such a religious revolution can find its fullest expression and reality within the Ecumenical Movement and in none other. Why you might ask is this the case? In the first place, Ecumenism is a dialogue about the same Lord, the same faith and the same Church. It is a dialogue, as opposed to being a confrontation. Therefore, there can be no gap of any shape or form, even though there are differences amongst the participants. It is a presentation of views, and not a presentation of demands. It is a movement of love, and not a movement of hate."

The Ecumenical Movement presupposes that the Holy Spirit abides in the whole body of Christianity and restores any defects after every temporary human failure. The division of Christendom with its hundreds of denominations, is a human failure, a human error and the greatest of all human follies....The instrument, so it is said, that has brought Churches together as a KOINONIA TON ECCLESION is the World Council of Churches, which in itself is neither a Church nor does it have an ecclesiology of its own. On the other hand, the World Council of Churches has had an ecclesiological impact on the Churches as is evidenced by the occasion of their praying together, revealing in action an already existing sign of unity, and by inter-church social action revealing an expression of common Diakonia for all. So you see that they believe that there is "an already existing sign of unity". Bishop John of Thermon is actually judged by his own words when he goes on to say "The tragic fact is that the Christian Churches were largely unconcerned about Christian unity until this century. Rather than being a unified force, the Christian Church has been a divisive force, having very little impact on our modern world. Today, ecumenism has brought about renewal within the Christian family of

Churches, wherein once again it is experiencing revitalization from within”.

So this ecumenical bishop himself admits that the Church has not been ecumenical in the past, and that this is the time for the Church to be reborn, it is a time for “Christian revolution”. But he greatly errs by saying that the Christians had a lack of concern for unity. All we need to do is search the Holy Fathers and see just how they were concerned.

Yet the ecumenists do not stop there. Behold the words of the ecumenist, His Eminence Metropolitan George (of Mount Lebanon and Byblos), who ranks high in the Patriarchate of Antioch, who delivered, on the feast of St Anthony the Great, regarding Christians and Muslims (and do forgive me for even repeating such words, yet for our instruction, they must be told): “But now that Ramadan—the asceticism of Muslims—has come close to an end and that the time for the feast of Fitr [*Muslim Passover, celebrated after the fast of Ramadan*] is at hand I implore God, that every day may become a feast for the Muslim—and that the Lord God may offer unto them all glory and honour, and bestow unto them His rich kindness and mercifulness, that this land and the paradise afterward, may become their good habitation. That He will lift up all calamity and humility from among them and that the fullness of their purification may come forth through their hearts. [We want] to imitate them, beloved in His way, and residing in His kindness, shadowed by His contentment. Our joy [*Christians*] at Fitr is to pray asking for them [*Muslims*], for ourselves, and for our common motherland peace. That God may relieve them and us in this world, from misery and weakness, that we may pray for them and for ourselves saying the prayer of Isa the son of Mariam: **“O Allah, our Lord! Send down to us food from heaven which should be to us an ever-recurring happiness, to the first of us and to the last of us, and a sign from Thee, and grant us means of subsistence, and Thou art the best of the Providers.”**³¹ O Lord God, give us in this coming Fitr, a table for all who believe in Thee and for those who are hungry, and that none may perish under tyranny—enabling them to rejoice in Thy blessings—Thou who holdest in Thy hand the Kingdom of all.

“While some rejoice today [*St. Anthony's*—and some others will rejoice tomorrow, or the day after [*depending on the moon's first-day appearance*—guide us O Lord, to Thy Benevolent Face”. Well, the new martyrs of the Ottoman Empire would have a lot to say to that. He also states that “We do owe to Protestantism the rediscovery of the living message of the Gospel”. He blasphemes the Holy Trinity by saying that “The Spirit operates and applies His energies in accordance with His own economy and we could, from this angle, regard the non-Christian religions as points where His inspiration is at work”. He went

³¹ The Dinner Table: 114

so far as to shock even many Protestants at the "World Council of Churches" sponsored conference in Lebanon between Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Moslems by calling on Christians to "investigate the authentically spiritual life of the unbaptized".

A CASE IN POINT: HINDU OCCULTS

An interesting point which can be made here is the case of two young men, both of whom I knew personally, who out of childish ignorance and rebellion decided that they were going to get involved with Hindu occults. One had a guru who was his trainer in martial arts and who had some strange supernatural abilities. Hindus are very ecumenical, but one day he asked him to take off his cross in order for him to learn a new technique. The technique wouldn't work if he wore his cross. Unfortunately both young men eventually were affected mentally and spiritually. The demons had taken possession over them. They were playing with fire since they would go to Church when they felt like it, and also do the other ecumenical, or more correctly, the other demonic, things. After a while, they were not even able to go to Church.

We cannot mix light with darkness. Is this perhaps what the ecumenists do? St Paul tells us:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"³².

THE WRITINGS OF HERETICS... "DARKENS THE MIND"

Perhaps this is how they become so darkened in mind, meaning all the relations they have with non-Christians. If St Isaac the Syrian warns us to stay away from the writings of heretics since it "darkens the mind" what can we say about common prayers with not only heretics, but also those who worship demons? Patriarch Demetrius the former patriarch of Constantinople made many statements in his

³² 2 Cor. 6:14-17

fraternal greetings to Muslims, and said of Christians and Muslims that they "worship and adore" the one Great God of all. Patriarch Parthenius, the former patriarch of Alexandria called Mohammed an "apostle of God". The new-calendar Archbishop of Albania sent some \$600,000.00 just a few months ago to the Serbian government so that they could rebuild a big mosque, as well as some of the Churches that were burned. Something is definitely wrong here. It is obvious that they have been affected both mentally and spiritually.

CHRIST AND MOHAMMED?

Is it possible that we are one with the Muslims? Are we taught to kill the infidels as Muslims do; and just who are the infidels? The Christians who do not believe in Mohammed, to the Muslim, they are the infidels. Can our fast equal that of the Ramadan of the Mohammedans? The modern day terrorist attacks should give us an idea of how the Muslim religion is centered on hate and crime. The Koran, the so-called "holy book" of the Muslims teaches that "Christ Jesus the son of Mary was no more than an apostle of God...Say not "Trinity": desist: It will be better for you: For God is One God: Glory be to Him (Far Exalted is He) above having a son ³³... 'Christ the Son of God'. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. God's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth! ³⁴.

So, if an Orthodox Christian wishes to recognize Muslims as being pious followers of God, the Muslim faith condemns them sharply for believing that Christ is the Son of God. So which one is it? Both cannot be right, we cannot serve both God and mammon. The Muslims are charged to kill all infidels "Fight those who believe not in God"³⁵, "Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But God knoweth and ye know not"³⁶.

In the life of St Paisius the Great, we find that one of his disciples went on an errand and in returning met with a Jew on the road. The Jew denied our Saviour and the disciple of St Paisius told

³³ Sura 4:173

³⁴ Sura 9:30

³⁵ Sura 9:29

³⁶ Sura 2:216

him “well, it may be as you say”. When he returned home, St Paisius, with the enlightened eye of his mind, understood that his disciple had a fall. In fact, he told him that he had lost the grace of Baptism. Therefore, these bishops have fallen, greatly have they fallen, not only from their orders, but also from their very baptism.

THE ELDER JOACHIM

When I visited Mount Athos just before I entered the monastery in 1994, I went primarily to visit a zealot father who was a holy man of God, the elder Joachim. On my way there, I had to spend the night at the monastery of Philotheou, which at that time, had Fr Ephraim as the abbot. Fr Ephraim now lives in Arizona. A couple of the monks there were from my hometown (Toronto) and I spoke with one of them about our parishes, as he would come to St Nectarios parish often. Another older monk saw us speaking and afterwards told me that he wished to speak to me. So, we went a little past the monastery gate, and started a conversation. He started by asking about my parish and so he figured we were with the old-calendar and then he said “I want to say something, but I don’t know if I should”. Of course I told him to speak on. He told me the usual “it’s not good to be in schism” etc., but then he told me something else which I had never heard before. He said: “you know, we can say that Patriarch Bartholomew does ecumenical actions, but we can’t say that he is an ecumenist”. Well, how does one respond to that? Rather than asking him what in the world was he talking about, I said: “Do you know that there are Canons which forbid us to pray with non-Orthodox?” He had another interesting thing to say to that: “Oh, really? I didn’t know that; I don’t know much about Canons”. Canons aside, *does not our Orthodox conscience clearly tell us the truth about these matters?*

THE DELUSION ABOUT “CORRECTING THE CHURCH”

St Gregory Palamas says of the heretics that they “serve their own bellies” repeating St Paul the Apostle³⁷. Of course, we all serve our own bellies literally, but the spiritual meaning behind this is once again getting back to the concept of the mind of the world, the carnal mind, the perverted mind. The greatest delusion one could have is the delusion of “correcting the Church”. Both the ecumenists believe this false dictum, by all their contacts with other religions, and also their

³⁷ cf. Rom. 16:18

“conservative” followers believe it, by fighting all those contacts from within. Today’s ecumenical clergy are found to cut their hair, shave their beards, wear a three piece suit with a collar, and all these alterations are made in order to not be “a spectacle to men”³⁸, to coincide with the times, and the fashions of the other “Christian” faiths. These are not doctrinal problems and we could certainly deal with this more than with the other issues that are matters of faith, but as our Saviour says “ye shall know them by their fruits”³⁹. This is the way the ecumenists think, being worldly minded, as pride does not allow us to “look funny”. We must be presentable, and in such a manner as to look the same as heretics such as Roman Catholics, Anglicans and other so-called Christian sects. Thus they also have pews in their Churches. The idea behind all this is ecumenical.

When our Saviour told the Samaritan woman “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship...”⁴⁰ an ecumenist today would have a lot to tell Him. For example, he would ask, “What kind of Love is this? Do we not both worship one God as opposed to the many gods of the nations? Even the gods of the nations are holy yet surely we have much more in common with the Samaritans”. They would say, “I’m sorry Jesus Christ, but you are wrong”. The Pharisees, being in the other camp also believed so—another danger which we must discuss.

DISCERNMENT AND ECONOMIA TOWARDS HERETICS

At this point I would like to put a little bit of a “balance” in what we have been talking about, that is, to bring up another aspect of our lives as Orthodox Christians struggling to uphold the faith, which perhaps is overlooked very often, yet in no wise can we overlook it. Recent events in our Holy Orthodox Church of North America force us to look at this matter carefully. After hearing what the holy Fathers have to say about the faith, and the zeal which they displayed in upholding the Church’s dogmas, one who is sincere naturally wishes with all his heart to be a full member of the Holy Orthodox Church fearing separation from her by following false Hierarchs. And this is the way it should be. However, we need to use our discernment and look at how our holy Fathers dealt with heretics in order to shed some light

³⁸ 1Cor. 4:9

³⁹ Mt 7:16

⁴⁰ Jn. 4:22

on our modern day situation. The Holy Fathers surely condemned heresy, yet for a certain period of time, until things became very clear, they used *economia* in many instances, towards heretics. What I am about to say here is not for the sake of *economia* (dispensation), neither for the sake of *akriveia* (strictness), but for the sake of balance; that is, that we need both *akriveia* and *economia*, and we need to know in which instance to apply the one, and in which instance we should apply the other. We should pray that God would grant unto us this understanding, which is very important. This understanding and balance is nothing more than discernment.

We must understand foremost that the enactment of our Saviour's putting on human flesh was a great *economia*, and that throughout His earthly life, He worked one *economia* after another, thus giving us an example and showing us that He wishes all men to be saved, and tries to accomplish this by his constant *economia* towards us. I have never heard in any of the services "Glory to Thy *akriveia* O Christ", but I have heard many times "Glory to Thy *economia* O Christ". We must beware lest by being using too much *akriveia*, "in what measure ye meet, it shall be measured unto you"⁴¹. When we are on the sea, depending on the wind, you need to turn the rudder one way or the other in order to keep the ship balanced. The same thing can be said in regards to *economia* and *akriveia*.

Once a priest of our Synod told me "we must be very careful not to open the door to the demon who fights Orthodoxy, because, if the door is open even a small crack wide, the devil will use all his might afterwards to push right in".

True enough. However, we need to be extremely alert. There is also the back door by which the demons try to get in. There are also side doors. We cannot ignore those other doors. We need to be "all eye, as the Cherubim and Seraphim" as Abba Bessarion commands us to be. There is a very dangerous condition, which we should also be aware of, and which unfortunately has found its way into the Church; that is the question of zeal. Zeal can be a two-edged sword. Sadly enough, some of those who fight ecumenism appear to be pharisaical in that they are very careful about that front door, and perhaps another one or two doors, yet they totally ignore all of the other doors. One may wonder, how then is it possible to be delivered from all these temptations: who then can be saved? Our Saviour answers this shakiness with the confidence that "with men this is impossible, but

⁴¹ Lk. 6:38

with God, all things are possible"⁴². Again the Holy Theologian John tells us "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world"⁴³. We must believe that wholeheartedly. Our ancestors did, and they passed the faith on to us and we need to pass it on to the next generation.

In using the example of the Samaritan woman, I'd like to point out that on the other hand, there are also those who would have condemned our Saviour for speaking with the Samaritan woman altogether as she was a heretic. Strictly speaking, according to Jewish law, he was not supposed to be speaking to her; according to the Jewish law, our Saviour was "out of order". Some so-called zealots who go to the other extreme would also have to tell our Saviour that he was wrong although we know that our Saviour came to abolish the law, since the shadow of the law is passed away with the coming of Grace as we chant in the hymns of the Church. Much caution is needed with regards to zeal; we should never believe that we are perfectly safe just because we are zealous in upholding the canons of the faith. No one is infallible. In fact, many of the Jews who crucified Christ believed that they were zealous for the Jewish faith, yet they were deceived because, had they truly known the Father, they would have also known the Son. Many people today are also thus deceived or perhaps using zeal as a cover up with regards to pride, jealousy, envy or anger. We've seen this happen many times and we will mention a few examples. In fact Saint Isaac warns us about the pride, which is hidden in zeal. The devil has a lot of experience with people, with sin and with heresy—centuries and centuries worth of experience, he would have the upper hand were it not for God's grace covering us. The church teaches us that *the imagination of man is intently bent upon evil things from his youth*⁴⁴ therefore we need great spiritual alertness. We constantly need to censure ourselves as we are taught to do, and catch ourselves when we go off. We need constant repentance. We need to call upon our Heavenly Father as lisping, simple, helpless little children. **Safety is found in faithfulness to the Church.**

Zeal by its nature can very often excite certain passions within us, especially those of us who are beginners in the faith—those of us who do not have much spiritual experience. Please note that we do

⁴² Mt. 19:26; Mk. 10:27

⁴³ 1 Jn. 4:4

⁴⁴ Gen. 8:21 LXX

need to be zealous, but in its proper sense. If zeal is not used within the mindset of the Church, *we fall*. For example, anger or pride can be produced by this. This is the other extreme, not the royal or middle path the Holy Fathers tell us to take.

Our faith is a missionary faith; since it is the truth, we wish, as our Saviour wills, that all men be saved. Again we need to stress: this is why we need to have the mind of Christ, the mind of the Church. We obtain that not just by reading the holy Fathers, but also by practicing what they preach. Examine, search the scriptures as we are taught to do and there you will find *an economia accomplished by our Saviour which our feeble minds cannot comprehend*, likewise, when it was needed, He showed zeal and akriveia also, thus teaching us to use discernment. However, his enactment of becoming a man definitely stressed economia much more than akriveia. When the disciples asked if they should pray that fire come down from heaven to devour the ungodly as the zealous Prophet Elias did, He told them "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to but to save them"⁴⁵.

Therefore there are two paths that we need to beware of, and that is what the holy Fathers call "temptation from the right, and temptation from the left". While we are careful in the preservation of our holy faith, the devil can then try to tempt us with pride as very often zeal can be intertwined with it. We are never fully safe; we have an enemy who roams around like a lion "seeking whom he may devour"⁴⁶. Zealots who lack spiritual experience and are unlearned in the holy Fathers can develop a tendency to make some of the most insignificant issues dogmatic. At times it is as if they try to find more reasons to confess the faith. Some may have good intentions, but they lack a lot of inner peace. When one hears "for matters of faith" he automatically thinks that he must stand up to defend the faith, yet this term is used often for other matters as we have already pointed out.

For example, St John of the Ladder says, "In union with humility... it is impossible to have even a sniff of disobedience, unless perhaps the Faith is called in question"⁴⁷. Anyone could take such a quote, or many other such quotes, to suit his own purposes. Thus, many people make insignificant things "matters of Faith" when in reality they are more like "matters of passion" or "matters of

⁴⁵ Lk. 9:55, 56

⁴⁶ 1 Pet. 5:8

⁴⁷ Step 25:9

blindness” or “matters of pride”. Protestants always use such techniques in order to justify their beliefs as each individual has the right come up with his own theology. They quote scriptural references out of context. In this way they cover up their falsehood with their so-called zeal for Christ. This is however a great deception. It is very easy to apply the canons straight from the Rudder, yet not all the canons are meant to be applied in every single case the exact same way. St Hilary of Poitiers says *“Heresy lies in the sense assigned, not the word written; the guilt belongs to the expositor, not the text”*⁴⁸.

To give you a couple of examples of how one can go off through zeal not according to knowledge: many of the faithful during the time of the Nestorian heresy (as well as during the Arian heresy) which taught that Christ was merely a good man were infuriated with such a great blasphemy. They were zealous for the faith. However this zeal turned into “zeal not according to knowledge,”⁴⁹ when they went far enough to develop the Monophysite heresy which claimed the exact opposite; that Christ was perfect God *only*. He was both God and man, but his Divine essence eventually consumed His human essence, according to them. The Church on the other hand, kept the teachings that were handed down to her, that Jesus Christ was both perfect God, and perfect Man. We see by this example that this “zeal” actually gave birth to heresy. The Old-believer schism in Russia is yet another example. When the services of the Russian Church were somewhat modified a small group of Christians protested. This was not a dogmatic situation, but surely the Old-believers may have had a point. The result was that they separated from the Church and that today many of them do not even have apostolic succession since they didn’t have any bishops. They had priests, and the priests eventually died off, so all that they were left with were churches, often with no altar and no mysteries. No baptism, no holy communion, they did have the icons and they did have their services, but again with no priests. If there is no Bishop, there is no Church says St Ignatius the God-bearer.

I remember an instance in the life of our Elder Joseph the Cave Dweller who was the Elder of the Elder of our monastery—our Spiritual grandfather. His “beginner zeal” got him in trouble. Before entering Mount Athos he had read a book called “kalokairini” (or “Summertime” in English) which was a compilation of lives of Saints, which we celebrate in the summertime. In one of the lives he read that one must forgive his brother before the setting of the sun if he had an argument during the day. After entering the Holy Mountain he visited

⁴⁸ *On the Trinity*, II, 3

⁴⁹ Rom. 10:2

the ascetic Elder Daniel who was living at his kellion at the Scete of Katounakia, which is a dependency of the Monastery of Great Lavra. Young Francis (which was Elder Joseph's name in the world) noticed that two brothers had a little argument. They needed a little time to cool off, so the night passed and they still hadn't asked for each other's forgiveness. Francis, who was then not even officially a novice, complained to Elder Daniel that the two monks had not made up yet even though the sun had set. Elder Daniel told him not to worry about it, he knew them both spiritually and that things would be all right. But Francis kept insisting and saying that the book says that the sun shouldn't set on your wrath. Well, Elder Daniel told him to take his book and go find another place to stay, "did you enter the brotherhood to teach or to be taught?" he asked him. Elder Joseph at that time was very inexperienced and did not understand the spiritual life so he needed some experience.

As we said, many have a tendency to make the most insignificant details dogmatic; this can surely apply to many of our old-calendar brethren in Greece. To wit there are some who have made a dogma about the stars depicted on the clothing of the Mother of God in her holy icon (how many points each star has). Others would never allow you to take Holy Communion regularly; and a common practice is that they do not receive Holy Communion on Sunday. Another thing, which has been dogmatized by some is the veneration of an icon called the "Holy Trinity" which depicts God the Father as an old man with the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove although many Fathers of the Church such as St John of Damascus teach that God the Father is indepictable in essence. Some synods have made a ruling that this icon of the Holy Trinity should be put up in every Church. Imagine that. They did not look at the other door. All these are man-made traditions, not traditions of the Church, and unfortunately they are very zealous in keeping these traditions. On the other hand, many of the new-calendarists are a lot more informed about these issues than the traditionalist Orthodox, and they take one look at them and think that they are out of their minds. The fact remains though, the traditionalists do not pray with heretics and never would and in this we are together. The "traditions of men" can be overlooked somewhat in that they are not dogmatic, yet although we are ready to overlook them, many of the supporters of these man-made traditions are not ready to do so, having made them dogmatic as we have already pointed out.

Unfortunately, this costs us. This so-called zeal, as well as personal ambition is what has caused the catastrophe among the old-calendarists in Greece and that is their lack of unity. Let us take heed

while there is yet time and not fall into the same trap. Some Matthewite clergy are trying to get out of it themselves, but they have fanaticized their people so much, that such a move would be impossible. I have discussed this issue with some people who have expressed their dismay as to why we are not in communion with the other old-calendarists of Greece believing that we would be a much stronger force if we were. I surely can sympathize with this thought, because I know many clergy and people in Greece who follow the old-calendar and who are very decent and pious people, but frankly, when you are dealing with a synod of them, things can get very difficult due to the aforementioned reasons. I'm pretty sure our Bishops know this through much experience. May God grant that one day things will change. The faithful in Greece have become so tired of the division that most of them, including the clergy, just view it as administrative chaos, rather than a real schism. In *The Struggle Against Ecumenism*, an official publication of the Holy Orthodox Church of North America, it is wisely pointed out that there is "among the ecumenist and innovating jurisdictions, a visible doctrinal decline; among the traditional Orthodox, a relentless administrative decline. Here, it must be remembered that the Church has known administrative disorder before, as in the case of the fourth century Meletian schism in Antioch, in which Saints Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and Gregory of Nyssa and the bishops of Asia minor supported one candidate—Meletius; while Saint Athanasius the Great, and the bishops of Egypt and the West supported another candidate—Paulinus. Grievous as administrative disorder may be, it is of an entirely different order from apostasy from the Orthodox Catholic Faith". The book goes on to say something very significant "The first is a domestic squabble; the second is an adulterous departure from the House". We need to keep in mind that we are human beings and as such will make mistakes. In the Acts of the Apostles we read "And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed..."⁵⁰. St John Chrysostom and St Epiphanius of Cyprus also had a few misunderstandings just to mention a couple of instances.

So then how do we deal with the ecumenists? We must look at the answer to this problem from a patristic and spiritual standpoint. Let us look at the way the Holy Fathers dealt with heresy. There is one way to deal with those who separated from the Church in 1054, and

⁵⁰ Acts 15: 37-40

another way with those who have separated themselves for less than 100 years. We cannot look at new calendarists, Protestants, Roman Catholics and Monophysites all in the same light.

SAINT THEODORE THE STUDITE AND FOUR DEGREES OF ECONOMY

A suggested example of one Saint of the Church, St Theodore the Studite, comes to mind. In his dealings with the heretics of his day, the iconoclasts, the Saint distinguishes four degrees of economy in dealing with these heretics. They are as follows: 1) The presbyter commemorates his Orthodox bishop, and at the same time "out of fear" he also commemorates a heretical metropolitan: with such presbyters (but not with bishops) full communion, including Eucharistic communion, is possible. 2) The presbyter commemorates his own bishop, but the latter is himself a heretic. However, the presbyter does not, factually speaking, concelebrate with the bishop. Eucharistic communion and those services in which the heretical bishop has to be commemorated are categorically forbidden. But "psalmody" (prayer services without commemoration of clergy or with commemoration of Orthodox authorities) and "blessings" are permitted". 3) The presbyter does in fact concelebrate with his heretical bishop. However, he does not do this "consciously", knowing of his heresy. The same recommendations follow here as in the previous case. 4) A priest consciously does in fact concelebrate with his heretical bishop (out of fear). Such a presbyter is not to be distinguished in any way from one who has deviated into heresy out of conviction, so with him there can be no communion".

This teaching of St Theodore was at the beginning stages of the heresy, until things became clear enough. This is just to show that in dealing with these issues, things are not as black and white as they may seem. During the iconoclast period within the Church there were two factions: one that supported akriveia in receiving the heretics back into the Church and the other was supporting economia. They were however still in communion one with another. In Africa they accepted the Arian clergy back through concelebration alone, although some time had passed. In our situation today, some time has passed from the schism of 1924 with the new-calendarists, but from the lifting of the Anathemas between Pope and Patriarch in 1965, 40 years or so

have passed, and from the Anathema Against Ecumenism, over twenty years have passed.⁵¹

THE ECONOMIA OF METROPOLITAN CYRIL

In what he admits is only his own personal opinion, Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan speaks in his Fifth Epistle of correctly ordained clergy within the Sergianist church, and of the efficacy of their mysteries for those who approached them in simplicity and ignorance, and who did not suspect that anything was incorrect in the Sergianist order of the Church. Saint Cyril, however, goes on to say very unambiguously that the Sergianist mysteries nevertheless serve for judgment and condemnation for the very performers of them and for those who approach them well understanding the untruth that exists in Sergianism, since by their lack of opposition to it they reveal a criminal indifference towards the mocking of the Church. This is why it is essential for an Orthodox bishop or priest to refrain from communion with Sergianists in prayer. The same thing is essential for laymen who have a conscious attitude to all the details of church life.

ECUMENICAL DOUBLE-SPEAK

One of the main problems with which we are confronted is that the leaders of the ecumenistic jurisdictions continually inform people that they are not denying the Orthodox faith and that they would never do that. You may say that that is the case with all heretics, but here, they actually preach Orthodoxy, and they call real heresy—heresy. According to Professor Constantine Cavernos “Ecumenism is a very complex and elusive phenomenon... whose aim or goal the Ecumenists have not endeavored to explain in clear, unambiguous forms”. You hear them speaking of the truth of Orthodoxy and the superiority of Orthodox spirituality. And when you hear them saying this, you may even think that they have not apostatized at all. When on the other hand you see clear footage in videos or newspapers about ecumenical gatherings and hear what these very same leaders have to say from the official documents of the ecumenical sessions, you sometimes wonder if they are the same people. So many people hear their supposed “confession of faith” and do not hear as much about their denying the faith while others hear the denial and no confession of

⁵¹ Metropolitan Philaret, together with the entire Holy Synod of the Church Abroad, issued the Anathema Against Ecumenism on the Sunday of the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which that year coincided with the feast of Saint Gregory Palamas, October 14/27, 1983.

faith. It must be noted however that there are many people in these ecumenistic jurisdictions who are very anti-ecumenical and that includes clergy as well. Much could be said about them, the most logical being that we should let God be the judge.

It seems to us though that many of them cause most of the damage since, if they had not been reassuring the faithful that they are still Orthodox, most of them would have been part of the True Church. This category of so-called conservatives has the most bizarre ecclesiology. For example, some of them will say that the Patriarch of Constantinople a heretic, but you still must commemorate him since he is the head of the Church— anyone who separates from him is a schismatic. Sounds like Roman Catholic scholastic ecclesiology to me; the Pope is the head of the Church no matter what.

That is not Orthodoxy though. Unfortunately as St Paul says, they, “by fair words and flattering words deceive the hearts of the guileless”⁵². God therefore does not judge the followers as he judges the leaders. St Dorotheus of Gaza gives us an interesting example on his chapter concerning judging our neighbour. He states that there were two slave-girls who were very young; one of them was bought by a righteous woman, the other by a harlot. Their foster mothers brought both up accordingly. Will God judge them both in the same manner? Definitely not!

His Grace, Bishop Sergios Black, the abbot at our monastery in California once told me that he himself did not know just how deeply involved his bishops were with ecumenism, until he came to our monastery for a visit and saw the video we had on ecumenism. This happens particularly in the case of the monastics, especially those who live on Mount Athos. I am pretty sure though that the majority of monastics and clergy of the innovating jurisdictions now know that there are some close relations with their Patriarch and the non-Orthodox; whether they know that there is actual denial of faith, I am not sure. Some of the older laity and monastics don’t know what’s going on. Others stay with the innovators knowing about the apostasy and among this group, a great many are part of the Masonic Lodge. Of these, one wonders who does and who does not even believe in God.

There is a small monastic community in New York state called New Scete, which has a very interesting type of ecclesiology. A few years ago they painted their Church with frescos and had one painted of Francis of Assisi who is a saint to the Roman Catholic Church. One of the Fathers at our monastery stayed with them for a while before he converted and told us about how they only wear their monastic habits

⁵² Rom. 16:17-18

in Church, they eat meat, they cut their hair and in general, are quite an interesting brotherhood. This is the spirit of the new age, which is tired of the holy traditions of our faith. We will not jeopardize our salvation by being in communion with them even if some of them may seem to be very Orthodox, since we know better than that.

To conclude what we have said about zeal, recently we have heard of some clergy that have left the Holy Orthodox Church of North America. They made this move, out of their so-called zeal, but perhaps there was another reason, perhaps the "zeal" for the faith was a cover up, and perhaps they were not even aware of it themselves; perhaps they were so blinded that they believed that they were right, or wanted to believe so. St Dorotheus of Gaza says that there are three levels of lying. One is to simply lie, two is to lie so much that one believes one's own lies and, three, one's whole life becomes a big lie. These clergy left very hastily. The hierarchs asked for a reason and only after that did they receive a reply. They gave a couple of interesting reasons. One complaint was that we give Antidoron to new-calendarists. This is most definitely not dogmatic, but my question is, if this was such a problem then why, after leaving us, did they join a jurisdiction which openly gives Antidoron to new-calendarists also? In fact I do not know of any old-calendarist jurisdiction, which as a whole does not give Antidoron to new-calendarists. I have a couple of relatives who are new-calendarists who often go to these churches as a convenience (since the Church is close by) and they receive Antidoron all the time. There is another problem. The hero of these three was Vladyka Andrei of Spring Valley, New York since one of these priests met him. The jurisdiction that they eventually joined would never recognize Vladyka Andrei as a holy man, as his ecclesiology was not the same as theirs. They accused us of innovation, of which there was none, but when asked to give examples of how we have fallen in our confession of faith, invalid points were given. Something is wrong here.

On another occasion three other clergymen left us and their main complaint was that we were uncanonical because we have still not elected an Archbishop. But they eventually joined a group, which did not have an Archbishop either, not even a locum tenens for that matter! What are the real reasons? This reminds one of the protestant sects. Not paying heed to the commandment of our Saviour "to observe all things"⁵³, they pick what is to their liking and as the human beings, which we all are, you will always find something wrong when

⁵³ Mt. 28:20.

you are earnestly searching for it. The Pharisees were always listening to our Saviour, not for the sake of their salvation, but so that they could “catch Him in His words”⁵⁴. Let us take these examples and beware. I realize that these are sensitive issues since some people in our parishes are friends with those who belong these jurisdictions, which have left us, yet these two examples are given for us to be watchful. After all, when our Saviour wanted to get a message across, at times, he spoke very sharply against the Pharisees. Let us not become sectarians. Once that happens, then it is difficult to get back to the healthy reality of proper Church administration. Just because we have separated ourselves from the innovators does not mean that we should keep finding reasons for yet more separations lest we forget our Saviour’s commandment that we must all be one. Let us watch those other doors.

WE HAVE NO “GRACE—OMETERS”.

Once a certain Orthodox Christian was telling me about the date when he believed that grace left the new calendarist jurisdictions and I challenged his view by stating certain facts and concluded that we do not know the instance when grace departs. God is the knower of all things, not us. Just to give one of many examples, at the meeting and “common prayer” between the Pope and Patriarch of Constantinople (which was done in Jerusalem) the Church of Jerusalem absolutely refused to take part. Not only that, but when asked if they could make the official “prayer” at one of the Holy Shrines, Patriarch Benedict refused them this privilege. He also forbade all the members of his Patriarchate to be present. One may say “so what, Jerusalem was still in communion with Constantinople”, yes this is true, but what Patriarch Benedict did was at least *a little something* in regards to showing that he was in disagreement. Most definitely I am not supporting the Jerusalem Patriarchate. Surely God is the judge as we have said and therefore we cannot say when grace absolutely departs. I’m not saying that grace remained, neither am I saying that it departed but what I am saying is that we don’t know when grace departs (Our Bishops have written some valuable information about the subject of “Grace” and those who haven’t read it and are interested in reading it can easily obtain copies by asking). Many of our clergy and faithful left the innovators at the lifting of the anathemas believing that that was the last big step in compromising the faith. Some of our people had hopes and stayed until that point.

⁵⁴ Mk. 12:13; Lk. 11:54

The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad on the other hand had some pretty close relations with the Jerusalem and Serbian Patriarchates as long as we were in communion with her. And these Patriarchates were in full communion with Constantinople. For some, that would have made us heretics. It actually would have made all traditional Orthodox Synods heretical at one point or another since both the Matthewites and the Florinites were regularized of their uncanonical status by the Russian Church Abroad. Does that make everyone a heretic? Does that mean we were in communion with Constantinople even if through the "back door"?

This same person who was telling me about when grace left the Official Churches on another occasion told me about the repose of his mother. He said that his mother was a very righteous woman who prayed constantly and continuously went to Church. As a result, on the day of her repose she had taken communion and with prayers on her lips she fell asleep. Being edified by this story I told him that that was amazing but I wasn't aware of the fact that there was a parish which followed the old-calendar in that part of Greece. He told me there wasn't. She had reposed with the new calendar. I then reminded him that he told me that there was no grace with the new calendarists and he replied, "She did not know any better, she was just an old grandmother!" So, I thought, when it comes to family there still can be grace but otherwise there is no grace! We cannot just have a "pick and choose" theology, neither can we base everything on our own emotions, which as we know can be manipulated by the demons. We do not have any "grace-ometers" available.

What must be understood is that certain canons were written for certain situations at certain periods of time in which they were applicable. An example of this is the canon that forbids one to go to a Jewish doctor. The ecumenists use this all the time to justify their actions by saying that no one follows the canons properly today since obviously there are many Jewish doctors around. Yet this was written at a time when Jewish doctors were using Jewish incantations on their patients, and thus the faithful were warned not to go to them. Today this particular canon does not apply because we do not have this problem. Matters of faith however are a whole different issue. Therefore caution and discernment are needed. We must keep in mind that the canons are there to guide us; they are guidelines, not law.

ECUMENICAL "ELDERS"

Another dangerous issue which we must address is that of the contemporary "elders" which belong to the ecumenical jurisdictions. I

can speak mostly of the ones from Greece. A few things must be understood. One of them would be of course to pay heed to the Apostle's words "even if an angel from heaven preached to you another gospel, do not obey him"⁵⁵. Yet, one wonders how "angelic" many of these elders are. Surely we at our monastery in Boston know of a few whom we deeply respect. One was our elder Joseph the Cave-dweller. Of course, our elder Joseph reposed before the lifting of the anathema, so this makes a difference for us. But his co-ascetic, elder Arsenios did not. He reposed in the beginning of the 1980's. I know of some clergy who are very "strict" in their ecclesiology, but one thing they cannot deny is that Elder Arsenios was a special person, who was blessed with gifts of the Holy Spirit, they knew that because they met him. Perhaps the life of St Gerasimus of the Jordan would shed some light on this problem. In the life of St Gerasimus, we are told that he was fooled into following the Monophysite heresy. Thanks to the efforts of St Euthymius the Great he was again restored to the Church. However, one thing confused St Gerasimus namely, how did he have the grace to work miracles through his prayers even when he was in communion with the Monophysites. It was then revealed to him that the reason for this was because he followed the heresy out of ignorance. Notice however, St Euthymius the Great still cared to restore him to the Church. It was not enough that he was working miracles. Among some contemporary so-called elders of the ecumenistic jurisdictions, most of them speak out against ecumenism. But one wonders hearing about some of the "signs" which are worked by them. Surely, there is a place in the Church for signs and miracles, yet the Holy Fathers teach us to beware, to be very cautious in believing these signs. St Maximus the Hut burner gives us an explanation of how we can recognize what is from God and what is from the evil one.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS IN THE SKY OVER ATHENS SEPTEMBER 14, 1925

To give an example of a "true" sign in the Church, we have on a few occasions made mention of the appearance of the Cross in the sky. The Synaxarion bears witness to this as well. The last time this happened was in 1925 when 2000 confessing traditionalist Orthodox Christians witnessed this miracle as the faithful were worshipping at the Church of St John the Theologian outside of Athens for the feast of the exaltation of the Cross, September 14 on the Church calendar.

⁵⁵ Gal. 1:8

Some of us have even met people who were present at this awesome miracle. I do not know about you, but when 2000 people give witness to something whether it be a miracle or a judicial case in the courts, I would much sooner believe them than two or three "elders" who say they spoke to the Mother of God, especially if the elders' visions have been proven false. Besides, miracles are for the weak. The sign of the cross in the sky was an encouragement for the faithful who already understood what was happening, and for those who were not so sure. Sign or no sign, things should be clear to us. But since it was a sign, let us ask those who belong to the ecumenist jurisdictions: can it be that God made a mistake? Did God not know that those people who witnessed this miracle would remain faithful to the Church calendar? I do not think God wished to make them schismatics. On the other hand, one "sign" from a reposed elder of Athos belonging to Constantinople comes to mind. As he was at his kellyon (or monastic house), a group of pilgrims wanted to visit him to receive his blessing. They all got his blessing except for one of them whom this elder refused. When asked why he did not give the man a blessing he told them that the man was a mason, and he did not want to receive him. This was exactly the case. Yet one then wonders, if this is the case, why be so adamant about commemorating a pronounced mason of a Patriarch? This definitely raises some questions.

Some of us have been deemed worthy to meet some very holy people. I've been told about certain of them by the elder of our monastery, but also, have been deemed worthy to meet a few of them myself. One of them was Tarso the Holy Fool for Christ. If you wish to speak of signs, she worked some unbelievable signs. Yet, she was faithful to the Church calendar, and faithful to the Church. However, the observation I made with her and others, was a very similar observation made by the elder of our monastery and that is that although they were faithful to the Church, they were not hostile towards new-calendarists, but even in certain cases, very sympathetic towards the people. There was also Elder Joachim of Mount Athos. Many of those who commemorated the Patriarch of Constantinople believed that one day, Elder Joachim would see the light since he was a very spiritual man, and would start to commemorate the Patriarch of Constantinople. They thought this because he did not constantly rebuke them as other zealot monks did.

Once our elder told me about a certain elder Theodoulos who was a Matthewite, and of the strictest of them. In his early years as a priest, if anyone entered his Church who was not known to him, he would stop his service to find out if that person was a Matthewite. Years later, after he had matured in the faith and experienced much of

the spiritual life, when Fr Panteleimon visited him with our synodia, he read a prayer of forgiveness over them all, even though they were still in communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople. I mention this about the new-calendarists because I think that much can be done in bringing the faithful ones back into the fold of the Church where they belong. If you will excuse the expression, they are “easy bait”. With humility yet firmly, we can help the simple folk come back to their roots, and I don’t think that will be done by constantly shutting the doors on them.

Many of the Clergy and laity in HOCNA were not born in HOCNA. We should remember how we entered the Church. With some it took a lot of time, with others not so much time. We should remember that when we see new-calendarists who are interested in us and who are tired of what is happening in their jurisdictions. There are even some who do not care at all about the issues, but in time after coming to Church, they are enlightened. We pray to our Saviour in the service of the Hours “purify our intentions”. Not everyone has the best intentions right away. Enlightenment takes time. We need to show firmness, balance and unity, and when speaking to them, we should concentrate on matters of faith rather than personal sins of their leaders. The sins we can always find everywhere but we are taught not to judge. When it comes to matters of faith on the other hand, St Basil the Great tells us we need to judge, or rather, discern the situation.

HOLD THE FLAG OF ORTHODOXY ON HIGH

I would like to point out in conclusion that division and scandal in the church is a very serious matter. Echoing the words of St Paul we are taught to avoid them. The division between the so-called “old-calendarists” and “new-calendarists” was not caused by the traditional Orthodox, but by the innovating ones.

The 15th Canon of the first-second Council of Constantinople should make this very clear, as it has direct application to our situation today:

“As for those persons, who, on account of some heresy condemned by holy Councils, or Fathers, withdraw themselves from communion with their president (who is preaching heresy publicly, and teaching it bareheaded in church), such persons not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from any and all communion with the one called a bishop before any conciliar or Synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honour which befits them among Orthodox Christians. For they have defied, not bishops, but false bishops and false teachers;

and they have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions".⁵⁶

The so-called "conservatives" of the Ecumenical Patriarchate should read that canon before making any claims about who is and who is not in schism.

Time does not suffice us to quote the holy Fathers on the position of the Bishop in the Church. I would suggest to those who are interested to read the writings of St Ignatius of Antioch concerning the Bishops, clergy and order in the Church. This is very necessary reading. What I will say though is that the Bishop is an icon of Christ according to Orthodox Theology. Where the Bishop is there the Church is as we have already pointed out. Therefore, we respect our Bishops greatly. I can assure you that our Bishops not only hold the flag of Orthodoxy on high, but they also preach the faith and practice the faith having experience both in the spiritual life and also in the pastoral life.

I would like to take this opportunity to ask you all to remain faithfully under their direction. It is clear what our ecclesiastical stand is – it has always been the same – we are not going to change that since the very purpose of our existence is to maintain the teachings of our faith despite the obstacles. If anyone has any thoughts or doubts about our stand, go to the sources (the Hierarchs) to discuss the matter rather than letting your thoughts build up since the devil will take advantage of that. The father of lies manipulates our emotions and if we give in to him, he will have the ability to make the thoughts very strong, that is if we do not tell our thoughts to the more experienced. Pride is the only thing that prevents us from doing that. The more we give in to thoughts, the stronger the force of the demons becomes, therefore: **beware**.

We do not know what the future holds for us, but we sincerely pray that God grant that we faithfully remain in the Church to the very end of our lives, and that we may live in an Orthodox fashion. If we truly wish to be saved God will provide this. Then we will be able to say with all confidence as true servants of God "Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world"⁵⁷. Amen.



⁵⁶ The First and Second Council of 879 was held in Constantinople under Our Father Among the Saints and Equal to the Apostles Photius the Great. The 15th Canon is quoted in full together with its antecedents in the Canons of the Ecumenical Councils.

http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/councils_local_rudder.htm#_Toc72635076

⁵⁷ 1 Jn. 4:4