

THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

In Its External Aspect

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In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

What are the externals of Christian worship? Well, to begin with, you cannot have externals without internals. What, then, are the internals of Christian worship? Orthodox faith and doctrine. Orthodox faith and doctrine are the internal combustion in the internal combustion engine that turns the wheels of our worship. Our Saviour explained this nicely to the Samaritan Woman: "God is Spirit; therefore He must be worshipped in spirit and in truth." Now the Fathers point out that this does not mean simply that we must worship God spiritually and truthfully, that is, sincerely. It means also that He must be worshipped in *the* Spirit, that is, in the Holy Spirit—since He is the Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth and the Bestower of every good. Likewise, God must be worshipped "in truth," that is, in *the* Truth, in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Truth, in Christ, Who is Truth itself, and in His True Church.

At this point, it would be helpful for us to examine the history of the Greek word *dóxa*, from which we derive the word 'Ortho-*doxy*'. Originally, in Homeric times, *dóxa*, meant "expectation". Later, however, especially during the time of the classical period of Greece — the "Golden Age"* — the word came to signify 'opinion' or 'notation', a philosophical 'maxim' or 'axiom', a 'conjecture' or 'supposition'. It

* The Golden Age. This is when the Greeks were building the Parthenon, cultivating philosophy, the arts, the sciences, and had pretty accurately calculated the circumference of the earth. During this same period, they say, the British were still painting themselves with blue stripes and running about in the all-together. I don't know how true this is.

also meant 'reputation' or the opinion, which one had of another — the 'popular estimation' of this or that person or idea. Later, it came to mean 'good repute' or 'honor'.

Then, as Greek spread throughout the known world and came to be the 'common', that is, the *koine*, language of the empire of Alexander the Great, and later of the Roman Empire, the word *dóxa* finally came to mean also 'glory', 'the splendor of external appearance' or 'magnificence'.

The primary meaning of the word *orthodoxy* as it appeared in the early patristic writings was 'right opinion' or 'right belief' — and from this it followed that those who *believe* correctly must also, as a natural consequence, *glorify* God correctly.

In English, the word *orthodox* has acquired additional connotations. That is to say, when we say that someone has 'an unorthodox' approach to doing things, what is meant is that he has an 'unconventional' approach to doing something. An 'orthodox Protestant' is a 'conservative' Protestant. However, these later meanings of the word *orthodox* are of no particular significance to us, except for the fact that, from time to time, we have to point out that they are of no particular significance to us.

Orthodoxy, then, this right - believing, rightly - glorifying Orthodoxy, is the fire in our spiritual internal combustion engine. It *is* possible to run your internal combustion engine on synthetic or fossil fuels for a time. But fossil fuels had a beginning in time, and therefore, must also come to an end. And synthetic fuels are, after all, synthetic (and oftentimes, they too pollute the air). They are concoctions. This too is what heresy is: a human concoction. The non-Orthodox use synthetic and fossil fuel to create energy for their worship. That's why they run out of gas every so often. Then they have to have a "renewal," that is, they have to start looking about for

"renewable" sources to keep them going. But these "energy sources" too are created.

Orthodoxy's energy source on the other hand, is *uncreated*. It is the beginningless, unoriginate and unendurable fire and grace and power of the Godhead. This is no fossil. This is Life Itself, and the Source of all life. This uncreated source of power has no beginning; therefore, neither will it ever end. It was here before time began; it will continue to be after time evaporates and ceases to exist.

Powered by this internal and inexpendable Source of energy, therefore, are the externals of our Orthodox Catholic worship—the external reflecting the internal, and vice versa. What *are* these externals, which also reflect the internal? They are the sacred rites and mysteries, the vestments, the iconography, the chant, the architecture, the *typicon*, even the very appearance and garb of our clergy, the way we decorate our churches, and even the style of language we use in church. And since we the faithful, and the Faith and our worship are — or should be — one, it is also the way we sit, stand, eat, walk, and talk: it is the way we live. Our attendance at church does not end when we walk out of the church building. It does not end because we *ourselves* are temples of the Living God. And that, incidentally, is one of the reasons why the priest censures us during the church services.

Regarding the external aspects of our worship, the one basic thing that must be said is that all of them must be of a sacred character — sacred here meaning "set apart," set aside for a very special and divine purpose.

The arts of the world have their own particular message, their own peculiar purpose. Basically, their message is:

"Let us tickle and delight your senses for a time."

"Let us dazzle and distract your soul for a season."

They pout and say, "Why are you always hung up on that other world of yours?" They flutter their false eyelashes and cry, "Look at me; I can give you a temporary high. Touch me and feel my fleeting texture [*aside*: before I disintegrate]. Smell my momentary fragrance [*aside*: before I dry up and evaporate] "

The liturgical arts and the other external aspects of our worship also use the senses to convey their message. After all, we are not disembodied spirits. We are one integral unit: body and soul. The one cannot be comprehended without the other. Our bodies need to be saved just as much as our souls do. And that, precisely, is why Our Saviour became *incarnate*. He did not come into our midst as a bodiless phantom. Our Church does not worship friendly ghosts.

However, the purpose of all the liturgical arts is *first*, to wash and scrub us of all the dazzling, distracting, bemusing, and temporal flood of sensations which inundate us in the secular world, and *second*, to replace all that noise and "brouhaha" with the peace of God that passes all human understanding and to instill in us the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Or, as Saint Paul so compunctionately told the faithful Galatians:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such things as these, there is no law. But they that are of Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. [Gal. 5:22-25]

This is what our worship seeks to achieve; to help guide us to live and to walk in the Holy Spirit, and not in the spirit of the world. The externals and the internals work together; they always go hand in hand.

Let us begin with the architecture of the Church.

During a visit and pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain in 1963, many of us were particularly impressed by the main church of the Skete of Kafsokalyvia. At first glance, it is an unassuming structure — hardly noticeable as far as the outside is concerned. However, the humble fathers who built it probably did not realize that they had built a church on the basis of sound Orthodox liturgical principles. Like good worker bees, they probably went about their task with the inbred instincts of Holy Tradition. What impresses you is that when you enter the door, you sort of expect to find yourself in the narthex. However, you are wrong. You have only entered a porch-like, low-ceilinged room where another door awaits you. You walk a few more steps, turning slightly in order to enter the next door. Surely, *this* is the narthex. Wrong again. The room you are standing in now is a bit bigger, but other doors still lie ahead. Again, you take a few more wary steps, turn slightly again, and pass through one of the doors. Is this the narthex or isn't it? You're not quite sure anymore, because more steps, another slight turn and some more doors await you. Not quite sure where you are heading, you pass through one of the doors and discover at last that you are finally in the church. Furthermore, you discover that — thanks to all those preceding rooms, slight turns and multiple doorways — you are now completely and utterly disorientated.

By a simple architectural devise you find yourself feeling completely cut off from the outside world. You have entered a holy place, a place set apart, a place that somehow has no connection with the world outside or with time.

Also, by the use of the dome, the Byzantines sought to convey the concept of heaven on earth, God the *Pantocrator* — the Supreme Ruler — gazing down from the awesome vault of heaven, symbolized by a dome that seemed suspended in mid-air. But there was more to it

than this. While standing in the nave — the main, central part of the church — the worshipper found that, apart from the first row of pillars, he could not see a completed arch anywhere in the church. One arch seemed to blend into another, into another, into another, and so on. This was done purposely. Again, the feeling that overcomes one is one of infinity and of separation from the things and affairs of the world.

Here the Church's doctrine — so well expressed in the words of the Cherubic Hymn, "Let us lay aside all earthly care" — finds expression in the actual structure and design of the church building itself.

In iconography, the same sense of sacredness is conveyed. The message of the icons is: "God became man so that man might become god" and also, "Lo, another creation awaits us." Secular art seeks to represent the world in a realistic or photographic, or even in abstract, or cubistic, or impressionistic ways, etc. This art is either world-centered, man-centered or, in more recent times, no-centered. You now have "artists" who dip earthworms into paint and then drop them onto their canvas and let them squirm about a bit and — *voilà!* — another masterpiece! You have to have a sense of *humus* in order to appreciate this sort of art.*

In contrast, sacred iconography centers on the divine; it seeks to bear witness, as far as is possible in colors, to the fact that God became man in truth, that the Indepictable One became depictable, that the Uncircumscribable One received a human body and soul. And the saints, who have attained to the stature of Christ, and who can say together with Saint Paul, "I no longer live but Christ liveth in me" (cf. Gal. 2:20), are also portrayed since they have become "little Christs," gods by grace. In this sense, *every* icon that we have in church is an

* Some years ago, the United States Academy of Design held an art competition, and the prize went to a work by Edward Dickinson. Imagine the judges' chagrin when they later learned that the prize-winning piece was hanging upside down ..

icon of Christ.

Secular or profane art says, "Look. This is all that man is: an animal, an intelligent animal." But the icon says, "Yes, he is this. But look at *this*. This is what man — that 'shifty animal' as Saint Gregory the Theologian calls him — can become." We have photographs of Saint John of Kronstadt and of Saint Nectarios of Pentapolis; but in church, we do not use photographs of them. We are not so much interested in the "earthly" Saint John or Saint Nectarios as we are in the earthly Saint John and Saint Nectarios who became transfigured and changed by grace, and became sons of God, and gods by adoption. *This* is the Saint John and the Saint Nectarios which their icons portray. A photograph is only a frozen mirror-image, a split second of time that was stopped dead in its tracks and permanently affixed to a piece of paper. In contrast, by its sacred symbolism, the icon portrays eternity.

Even the execution of an icon must be done in a sacred manner, with prayer and fasting and humility. After all, all art — including the iconographic art — bears the stamp of its creator, and therefore the iconographer himself must be a pious and meek and God-loving soul. The conceited or eccentric snob artist has no place in the iconographic studio. Indeed, technique is only one aspect of iconography. The only way one can learn to be an iconographer is to spend many, many hours in humble and earnest prayer during the services of the Church and in private, in vigils, in prostrations, and in frequent participation in the Holy Mysteries.

Fotis Kontoglou, perhaps one of the more famous iconographers and painters of Byzantine liturgical art in our era, fought almost single-handedly for the restoration of this art in Greece and the Near East, and he succeeded to a very great degree. Here is what he has to say about this sacred art:

Only this art nourishes my soul, with its deep and mysterious powers; it alone quenches the thirst that I feel in the arid desert that surrounds us.

I am in a position such as few are to analyze the artistic works of other epochs and to exhibit the feelings that they produce in us, because I too am a man of my era, under the influence of secular art. I am not uninitiated. Indeed, I can say things worthy of note regarding the Flemish painters, about the Florentines, about the Venetians, about Goya, about the moderns, about Chinese art, and many others. And if I wanted to occupy myself with these things I could pass as a savant. But . . . in comparison with Byzantine liturgical art, the others appear somewhat light to me.* They trouble themselves about many things, when but one thing is needful. As for that one thing, however, whoever has understood it has understood it.

I often ask myself how man, through divine grace, has succeeded in grasping the intangible, in expressing the inexpressible, and moreover in expressing it through such positive and simple means: neither vain wisdoms, nor perspective, nor sham immaterialization with vaporous hues, nor theatrical and foolish sentimentality. Everything [in the iconographic art] is austere, awe-inspiring. Mysterious worlds show through its apparent naivete and simplicity. A lead line descends into the depths of the ocean of the soul, and at the moment when many think that it will not descend deeper, it reaches a world that no one can approach. "Let the hand of the uninitiated in no wise touch it" [as the hymns of the Church say]. Whoever has not understood this mysterious language, "having laid aside all earthly care," shall not understand it till the end of his life; the root of his soul shall remain dry of the Heavenly dew.

The sweetness of this art is apocalyptic. The men who have need of small talk do not find anything to say about

* And here I would add to Kontoglou's words, "They have much ado about nothing."

this art, but they can only make rational — as they suppose — observations about the crooked feet, the unnatural bodies, and things of that sort. By such means, how can they approach its profound human content, which is the holy of holies? And whenever they praise it, they say even worse things; they make silly and trite observations.

If man is to commune with that "fire that burns the unworthy," then to no avail are any of those crude instruments that are called smartness, culture, oratory, cleverness, analysis, and so on. One needs a most precious thing, which is sometimes found in the simplest man, and which reveals to man the abyss of the divine harmony of the world. " Upon whom shall I look save upon him that is meek and lowly of heart." Profound and contrite souls have the privilege of being initiated into this revelation.*

Thus spake Kontoglou.

The sacred art of psalmody also is of such importance, the holy Fathers have been careful to set down a number of canons and exhortations regarding its proper execution. The traditional manner of chant in the Church is monophonic, together with the use of the ison — the sustained tonic note, which, incidentally, was used also in Gregorian Chant. In addition, the chant — properly speaking — should be chanted antiphonically, as the early practice of the Church attests, and as was evidently the practice in Solomon's Temple. This practice has both practical and aesthetic purposes.

Furthermore, the fifteenth canon of the Council of Laodicia specifies that only the canonical — that is, only the tonsured — chanters who stand at the ambo and read from the liturgical books should chant in Church. However, since Saint John Chrysostom and Saint

* Fotis Kontoglou, *Byzantine Sacred Art*, ed. C. Cavarnos, pp. 24-25.

Basil bear abundant witness that the people also participated in the chanting, the canon is understood as meaning that the tonsured and canonical chanters at the ambo, *led* the chanting, in which the people joined in at the commonly known responses, while the choirs executed the more difficult or lesser-known parts of the service.

Remember, we are talking about days when not everyone held a missal in his hand. Hand-copied manuscripts were rare and very expensive, and not many local parishes had more than one or two, or three at the most, copies of any given service.

The purpose of the chant, again, is sacred, not carnal, or sensual, or sentimental, or theatrical. The purpose of secular music is secular; it stirs up the passions. On the other hand, the purpose of sacred chant is to transform our merely human and earthly passions into a fervent and burning and *purified* love and yearning for God.

Again, as in regard to his words concerning liturgical iconography, allow me to quote you Kontoglou's words regarding liturgical chant:

Liturgical chant is peaceful, sad but consoling, enthusiastic but reserved, humble but heroic, simple but profound. It has the same spiritual essence as the Gospels, the hymns, the psalms, the books of the lives of the saints, and the iconography of Byzantium.

That is why sacred chant is monotonous for one to whom the Gospels are monotonous, naive for one to whom the Gospels are naive, circumscribed for one to whom the Gospels are circumscribed, mournful for one to whom the Gospels are mournful, antiquated for one to whom the Gospels are antiquated. But it is joyful for one to whom the Gospels are joyful, filled with compunction for one to whom the Gospels are filled with compunction, enthusiastic but humble for one to whom the Gospels are enthusiastic but humble, and peaceful for one

who experiences the peace of Christ.

Its melody is not unholy, ostentatious, despondent, shallow, tasteless, or aimless; it is meek, humble, sweet with a certain bitter-sweetness, and full of contrition and mercy. It bestows an unwaning spiritual glory upon souls that have become worthy of the eternal mysteries and the compassion of God. It expresses thanksgiving; it causes the flow of tears of gratitude and spiritual joy.

Liturgical chant is, in comparison with the music of the West, exactly as Orthodox iconography is in comparison with the religious painting of the West.

It would have been better if church music had been eliminated altogether and the troparia and hymns were simply read, instead of having those hermaphroditic combinations of liturgical chant and European music.

Those who execute liturgical music properly chant melodiously and "with understanding," *interpreting* the holy texts with a musical feeling that evokes *contrition* rather than pleasure.*

Perhaps it should also be noted that the eminent musician Dimitri Mitropoulos, the conductor of the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, once expressed the view that he "personally did not agree with the European harmonization of Byzantine melodies.**

One other liturgical art is the very language, which we use in Church. Every language has its weak points and its strong points, its pluses and its minuses. It is, after all, only a human contrivance. Greek and Slavonic, being inflected languages, have somewhat of an advantage here because of their greater flexibility as regards poetry.

* Ibid., pp. 97,99. Contrast this last statement of Kontoglou's with that of a choir director of a parish near Boston, who maintained that "a church choir should not pray while it is singing"! Obviously, for him the choir was there only to "perform" musical pieces.

** Cynthia Pearl Maus, ed., *The Church and the Fine Arts* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960), p. 161.

Their syntax is like a rubber band; the words can be shifted about in almost any order in the sentence and still make sense. Also, because of the inflected masculine, feminine and neuter endings of the words, it is almost impossible to avoid using words that rhyme one with another. This particular attribute is often used to great advantage and with great effectiveness in many of the hymns, and the result can be a poetry of exceptional intricacy and expression. For example, the Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos is an outstanding example of the use of words that rhyme, even within the sentence. In the *Oikos* which begins with the words, "When Symeon was nigh unto departing from this age of deception ... ," the Greek text runs as follows:

*Méllontos Symeónos tu paróntos eónos
methístasthe tu apateónos ...*

No translation could ever hope to be accurate and, at the same time, duplicate this internal rhyme.

But English has its own strengths, one of them being conciseness. If Greek and Slavonic are like rubber bands, English is like a link chain.

There is some flexibility in the syntax, but for the most part, every word has its proper place — otherwise you may wind up saying something other than what you intended to say. For example, in translating some rubrics for the *Triodion* some time ago, our Fr. Seraphim back in Boston came up with a sentence that read as follows:

Here we read the Homily of Saint Ephraim the Syrian concerning the fathers who have reposed in three parts.

This was a literal translation of the Greek. What the text *really* said was:

Here we read in three parts the Homily of Saint Ephraim the Syrian concerning the fathers who have reposed.

The one basic problem with modern English is that it was molded in

the hands of a heterodox people, and not in the bosom of the Church. In contrast, the Hebraic Greek of the Septuagint Old Testament and New Testament would have made Thucydides, Pericles and Euripides shudder and turn in their sarcophagi. The Hebraic usages and idioms had transformed the language. Literally. Likewise, whatever early Slavic literature did exist was formed and given content *in* the Church. Even today, the most fanatic of Marxists cannot say "Thank you" in Russian without mentioning the Name of God.

But in English, the theological and monastic tradition differed from that of the Orthodox Catholic Church, and hence, the whole ethos of the language was molded in Protestant or Papal hands. That is why we have to carefully re-define many words for our use in Church, much as the Church Fathers adopted but re-defined several Greek philosophical terms. For example, "contemplation" and "meditation" do not mean the same thing for Orthodox Christians as they do for the heterodox. The word "compunction," also, in its usual English usage means "to be pricked in heart," "to feel remorse because of some wrong doing." But in our Orthodox usage, the term means "to be moved deeply to the point of tears, because of God's love for us, and our unworthiness of this love." Oftentimes in English we simply have to circumlocute, or borrow words from other languages because no English equivalent exists for them, as for example with *kenosis*, *prelest*, *theoria*, *hesychasterion*, *symphonitae*.

Also, in view of the fact that the New Testament was written in the *common* language of the day, some do not understand why we now insist on using the older idiom of English, with its "thee's and "thou's."

But the common Greek language of Our Saviour's day did not have the Protestant overtones of the common English language of *our* day. True, it may have had its own particular problems, but at least they were not peculiarly Protestant problems. Addressing Our Saviour as

"You" instead of "Thou," for example, conveys the very distinct flavor of a Nestorian-type Jesus, so characteristic of Protestantism. It is not instilled with that blend of awe and love and reverence, and above all, sacredness, that the older idiom of the language conveys. An excessive chumminess in addressing God will not help me learn how to revere and worship Him. Even the way we say "A-men!" or "Hallelujah!" or "Praise the Lord!" labels us.

Furthermore, the language of the Church and the way it was used was not the language and usage of the street. Even the language became a sacred vehicle, together with the iconography and the chant and the architecture and the vestments, and all the other traditions of the Church. Moreover, the Gospel and the Epistle are never simply read in church the way one might read a newspaper or a telephone book; they are always intoned in a *special* way, precisely because they are *sacred* texts. Even when we read the Psalms or the lections from the Old Testament, we do not simply *read* them; we recite them with a very slight musical intonation in our voice. The same is true with everything that is recited in church, precisely because of the sacredness of the text and of the nature of the Church's worship.

There are, of course, so many other "external" aspects of our worship, one could never hope to investigate them all, for example, the candles, the icon lamps, the holy relics, the *typicon* — even the very appearance of our liturgical texts. In any case, other than being aware of the origin and history of some of these "externals," our task as Orthodox Christians is not so much to "investigate" them as it is to understand their significance for us, and to live and experience them. Those who have had the opportunity to travel to Greece, Russia, the Holy Land, or the Holy Mountain have probably also met many simple monks and nuns who knew a lot more about Orthodox worship and doctrine than

most "licensed" theologians do.* Regarding this very point, there's a very appropriate little poem that comes to mind. It goes something like this:

A young theologian named Tweedle
Refused to accept his degree.
He said: It's bad enough being called Tweedle
Without being Tweedle D. D.

Now *that* could be a good name for licensed theologians: Tweedle D. D.

When all is said and done, at least even the simplest monk or nun can probably get through a service without botching it up completely as your "licensed theologian" might do in all likelihood.**

To sum things up, however, what *is* important is that we realize that the most humble and apparently most insignificant thing in church has its sacred place and message, to wit: "I am set apart for the Lord God. The place where you are standing, O mortal man, is holy." Therefore, the basic requirement for the sacred arts is that they be truly "sacred" — set apart. And let what has been said up to this point suffice for this part.

So far, I have presented the ideal picture. The way I have described things is the way everything should be, and occasionally, this is the way it actually is. However, now that you have listened to

* In her two thousand year history, the Church has had only three Church Fathers on whom She has bestowed the title "theologian" (St. John the Evangelist and Theologian, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. Symeon the New Theologian). Today, the universities of Athens and Salonica, and the other theological academies churn out thousands of "licensed theologians." I too am a licensed theologian. Some years ago, one of the fathers at the monastery asked, "What do you do with your license?" I thought for a moment, and said, "Well, I try to make sure I'm wearing it every time I go out for a walk ..."

** Like our *molieben* last Sunday. Fr. Nektas had mentioned that we would do a *molieben*; Fr. Panteleimon, however, was signaling for a *paraklesis*. So when everything went wrong, who gets yelled at? Me. It's a terrible thing being the low man on the totem pole.

the good news, be a little patient and try to listen to the bad news. This too can be instructive for all of us.

To begin with, there is always the danger that the "externals" may remain just that — simply externals, with little or no content. Specifically, we may succumb to the self-satisfied attitude and notion that, if we go through the right motions, we are pious. Putting up a facade of godliness is a temptation many people succumb to. If we are not careful, our worship may become like a fireworks display, or rather, like the pleasures of this world: a lot of bursts of light and sparks and noisy explosions and flashing and dazzling colors which have nothing but darkness behind them. Admittedly, it is difficult for an indifferent person to keep up a pious front for a six or seven or twelve or fourteen hour vigil. If nothing else, an Orthodox Christian has to have physical endurance, and — especially for beginners — the will to survive the services!

Likewise, a person who is left exhausted and prostrate, dizzy and starving and staggering from the Great Fast is not so likely to feel pharisaical. Most likely, he will feel like crying out for mercy — which is the whole point of the Fast to begin with anyway.

However, even going through the right motions — even though we feel nothing inside — can have its benefits. The devil, who is always trying to find out what we are up to, can be hoodwinked by our spirited spiritual exercises. It is possible that we might even fool ourselves into becoming pious — or, as the desert fathers used to say, "Trick me, O God, and save me."*

So, even going through the right motions at the right moment can have a

* There is a song that comes to mind which conveys this very sentiment. It was popular back in the forties or thereabouts, and it went something like, "I whistle a happy tune, and no one will suspect I'm afraid." (Please note that this is *not* an endorsement for whistling *anything*, including happy tunes.)

beneficial effect.

In regard to the liturgical arts, we have many abuses. Let us begin with architecture.

We have said that the design of the church building should be such so as to separate our minds from the things of earth and turn them to the other, the spiritual world. The problem here is that this sense of other-worldliness that a church should have has oftentimes been distorted into a science fiction type of other-worldliness, where the church building looks like it's about to blast off at the end of the countdown, or like it's just landed from an intergalactic flight. At any moment, you expect a robot to come gliding down the front ramp in order to test our atmosphere for breathability! *

The trouble with these structures is that, though they look modern today, in twenty-five or thirty years they will look dated and homely. They have tried to be "fashionable" without realizing that fashions are always changing. Other Orthodox church structures have been modeled on baroque or renaissance prototypes, and thus betray another type of influence which speaks for itself.

Of course, we are faced with the reality that few parishes today have the imperial backing to erect a thirteen-domed structure. Nevertheless, the basic *concept* of "heaven on earth" and of separation from the affairs and cares of this world, and of the sense of *sacredness* which have determined the church's architecture should, whenever possible, serve as a guiding principle, and inspiration, and guide for us. These basic principles of Orthodox Christian church architecture have a very definite, spiritual, and dogmatic nature and purpose.

* Our atmosphere would probably fail the test.

Of course, the day is coming when we shall have no churches at all in which to worship, but that is a whole subject in itself.

Much has been written about the "Westernization" of iconography. For some centuries, this "Westernization" was a very serious problem, and was also a reflection of much deeper spiritual and doctrinal problems. Remember: the externals and internals always reflect one another. Fortunately, the situation has improved dramatically in the last twenty-five or thirty years — but not without resistance. How many of us have seen icons painted in the twenties and thirties, according to the standards of beauty that were fashionable at that time? The female saints have plucked eyebrows, and their eyes have a dreamy look with all the power and strength of a wilted cabbage. The male saints painted during those years looked like their hair had been pasted down with a gallon or two of Brill Cream. One other good example of this "anti-iconographic" style is the art used in the Church of St. Sophia in Los Angeles, which was painted in the fifties.

Although the situation is improving, the struggle for good iconography still goes on. The spirit of "free-for-all" still persists in some quarters. In Michigan, we saw one church, which looked like a blimp hanger. It had a "peek-a-boo" icon screen mounted with stained glass icons, which had spotlights behind them. The icon of Saint George is *a frontal* view of the Saint coming *toward* you on his horse. There is *no way* you can kiss the Saint on this icon. The only thing you can kiss is the horse. We've all heard the expression "Holy Cow," but this is ridiculous!

Nevertheless, despite all these comic or tragic abuses, it is now possible to obtain authentic liturgical — *sacred* — icons today, and more and more parishes are doing so.

As regards liturgical chant, sad to say, in recent centuries — alas — too many churches have abandoned the Church's sacred music and

have adopted a purely worldly, or secular, or heterodox mode of singing. Four-part compositions and techniques borrowed from Protestant or Roman Catholic prototypes are rife. In fact, the similarity is such that, oftentimes, if you are not specifically aware of the fact that you are listening to a recording of an Orthodox service, you might think that you had just caught a broadcast from Westminster Abbey, or St. Patrick's in New York City. Sometimes it's even worse than this. Some pieces seem to have been taken lock, stock, and barrel from the stage of *Aida* or *Madame Butterfly*. The only thing that is missing is the costumes. Also, among "Byzantine" style chanters, you will find many who sound like they're getting ready to take off for Bagdad on their flying carpet!

At the other end of the spectrum, you have the folksy type of Protestant harmony that usually needs an organ to drown it out.*

Also, regarding the "soloists" that one hears in church from time to time, Fotis Kontoglou used to say that the sounds they emit made you wonder whether you were in a church or a haunted castle.

All these "masterpieces," whether they be of operatic or heterodox origin, whether they sound as if they've been inspired by the *Barber of Seville* or by the *I Wanna Be a Cowboy In the Holy Ghost Corral* type of hymn, or by the wail that appears to emanate from your neighborhood minaret, should all be gently nudged out the narthex door. Actually, a good swift kick is what they really need, but you have to take people's sensibilities into account.

As the studies in ancient liturgical chant continue, more and more

* This reminds me of a Dennis the Menace cartoon I once saw many years ago. The scene is the entrance of a Protestant church, where the minister, with Bible in hand, is greeting the congregation as they leave the church. Little Dennis is addressing the minister and telling him, "Gee, Reverend, you'd sure get a lot more kids here if you didn't always play that spooky ghost music."

material is coming to light and, as usual, scholars are forever revising their positions. For example, one school of scholars — centered primarily in Copenhagen — maintained for a long time that ancient Byzantine Chant was strictly diatonic — that is, having no sharps or flats — like Gregorian Chant, as it is known and used today. Today, some of these same Danish scholars are assailing this very position.*

Other scholars maintained that ancient Byzantine Chant was primarily and chiefly Greek music, based on the classical Greek musical modes of antiquity. But research today upholds the position that the Church's chant is of Semitic, or more specifically, Hebraic origin.

In any case, the Holy Mountain especially is a veritable treasure house of Byzantine music manuscripts, and in the years to come, if the world lasts long enough, we shall see a tremendous increase in the publication of ancient liturgical music texts which were unavailable or indecipherable up until now. In the field of Russian liturgical chant, a tremendous amount of excellent work has been spearheaded by Johann von Gardner. In fact, St. Vladimir's Press has just recently

* E.g., the Byzantine music scholar, Milos Velimirovic writes, "Another point of basic agreement among the Western scholars by 1950 was that Byzantine melodies should be transcribed in a diatonic system, thus ignoring the existence of chromatically changed intervals (specifically the augmented second) which may be encountered in the present day Greek church music practice" ("Present Status of Research in Byzantine Music" in *Acta Musicologica*, p. 5). The foregoing was written by Velimirovic in his history of the modern studies of Byzantine chant, and it applies to the years between 1950 and 1960. However, he also admits the truth regarding the studies of a group of scholars, during the decade of 1960 to 1970, especially Jorgen Raasted and Christian Thodberg, both Danes. He writes: "The studies of Raasted and Thodberg (their doctoral dissertations) have opened new possibilities of research in Byzantine chant, even to the point of totally revising what had been accepted and was unchallenged since the founding of the MMB. Although dealing with seemingly unrelated topics, they share the viewpoint that the Byzantine chant may have under specific circumstances, been subject to chromatic alterations and modulations even in the medieval tradition ... regardless of the attitudes of other scholars who may at first react to these studies as if they were almost `heretical'" (ibid. 12-15).

published the first volume of the English translation of his work, *Russian Church Singing*.

Many of these problems related to the sacred and liturgical arts, which we have spoken about are closely tied to the problems that came with the collapse of the Byzantine Empire, and later, the enforced "Westernization" instituted by Peter the Great in the Russian Empire.

In the newly-established Ottoman Empire, the Moslems took harsh measures against the Christians, who were not permitted to have schools. In Albania, countless thousands of Orthodox Christian parents had their tongues cut out precisely so that they would not be able to teach their children the Christian Faith. Hence, except in those areas where secret schools were established, a profound ignorance slowly came to prevail among the Orthodox Christian flock. Together with this blight came also the Jesuits and other papal monastic orders, spreading, disseminating, and publishing their own propaganda, later to be followed by the Protestant missionaries and the Bible Society. Oftentimes, the Roman Catholics even printed liturgical books that were so carefully and cleverly done, they were purposely made to look just like Orthodox service books — with, however, a couple of small but significant alterations here and there in the texts.

In the north, great political upheavals during the Time of Troubles, and later, the programs of Peter the Great (many Russian people are careful to point out that, in Russia, he was known as Peter the *First*) brought new woes and temptations from the West. Baroque church buildings, filled with baroque "icons" and baroque music, began to dot the landscape, and, going hand in hand with the spirit that prevailed, the theology in the seminaries also took a turn for the worse and began to sound baroque. Again, the externals and the internals go hand in hand. Or, as Saint John of Damascus expressed it, "Show me your icons, and I will show you your faith."

These were the bad times for the Orthodox everywhere — these were *our* Dark Ages and we are still smarting from the effects of those dreadful years.

Fortunately, the voice of Holy Tradition could still be heard — dimly sometimes, to be sure — but nonetheless, it could still be heard.

For example, there is an incident from the life of Saint Seraphim of Sarov — which I have quoted elsewhere also in another little dissertation — which demonstrates clearly how, despite the popular trends and fashions of those times, Saint Seraphim himself did not approve of these developments. A certain Ivan Tikhonovich, a man with great ambitions and even greater ideas concerning himself, asked Saint Seraphim to make him choir leader of the nun's community at Diveyevo. After much hesitation, the saintly elder yielded to his request. Then, taking advantage of his new title, Ivan began introducing to Diveyevo the new trends inspired by Italian four-part music which was then all the vogue. Everything traditional in monastic chant seemed to him old-fashioned. "Oh, how it grieves me!" said Father Seraphim to a close friend, "Look how he's bringing this new way of singing here!" At the same time, significantly enough, Ivan Tikhonovich was beginning to initiate the sisters into "another, new way" of painting icons. (Taken from Valentine Zander's book *St. Seraphim of Sarov*, which, in turn, is based on the *Chronicles* of the Diveyevo Convent.)

So, although things were, and in some cases still are, bleak as regards the sacred arts, there was and is a healthy reaction on the part of those who treasure and understand the Church's liturgical tradition.

Basically, what is needed in preserving and cultivating the liturgical arts is the same thing that is needed in maintaining and upholding the Orthodox Faith itself: great care and reverence. Furthermore, as in matters of faith, we must always ask the question: does this truly reflect the Church's tradition? In short, we must always go back and

check our primary sources. Here our own personal interpretations, and opinions, and tastes must recede. A great deal of humility is needed here. At the same time, we should be aware that, just as in matters of faith, so in this matter also, it is possible that distortions of the Tradition *can* and *have* taken place, and it is our duty as Orthodox Catholic Christians to protest politely and respectfully at first — and if that doesn't work, to shout and stamp our foot until we finally get results. Chocolate soldiers do not make good Orthodox Christians.

In all this, we must remember — and this is critical — that the Church itself remains inviolate, spotless, free of blemish, infallible. If there are flaws and weak points, they are found not in the Church, but in human beings, who though members of the Church, sometimes do err and make slips — and this, only because of the craftiness of the evil one, who is the author of all evil and deceit.

With *this* in mind, we close this little talk by listening to the words of Saint Basil the Great. In his fourth homily on the *Hexaemeron*, where he has described the ocean, he finishes with the following words:

If the ocean is good and worthy of praise before God, how much more beautiful is the assembly of a Church like this, where the voices of men, of children, and of women, arise in our prayers to God, mingling and resounding like the waves which beat upon the shore. This Church also enjoys a profound calm, and malicious spirits cannot trouble it with the breath of heresy. Be deserving, therefore, of the approbation of the Lord by remaining faithful to good guidance, in Our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen. [*Hexaemeron* 4:7]