THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION OF THE
ORTHODOX SAINTS: HISTORICAL AND
THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Expanded and Revised, Second Edition

by

James Maillis
Certainly, a significant reason, though by no means the only reason, for this expanded and revised second edition of the work, *The Philosophy of Education of the Orthodox Saints: Historical and Theological Perspectives*—which was, in its original form, my Masters thesis completed in 2006—was to correct some significant mistakes that I had made in the original work. These mistakes were later brought to my attention when I read some of the beautiful work, full of great faithfulness to the incomparable Holy Orthodox Tradition, of Fr. John Romanides of blessed memory. Generally and obviously, throughout every aspect of my life, I am sure that I am in need of much more correction and I am sure that I will be in this great need for the rest of my life. May God have mercy upon all of us and may we always continue to learn, by the grace of God!

There are research and elements of my original thesis that are very faithful to the Orthodox Theology of the Fathers—when I was fortunate enough to have followed those Fathers closely and not done anything showing my ignorance. Those elements will remain emphasized in this second edition of the work, to the best of my ability; while hopefully at the same time in this second edition at least some of the striking mistakes that I made initially can be be corrected in the light of the God inspired wisdom of the Orthodox Saints, seen directly in their life and works. We also learn about such matters in the brilliant commentary and discussion pertaining to these Orthodox Saints by those who were renowned for their great faithfulness to Orthodox Christian Theology.
I need at this point also to greatly thank Father Athanasios Papagiannis for his kind words and great encouragement pertaining to my effort here—I very much admire Father Athanasios’ hard work and great patience in his service to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. I have talked to and written to numerous people over the years about my original thesis, both in regard to what by the grace of God had gone right with it and what sources could have made it better—sources which only came to my knowledge after the original Masters thesis was published, unfortunately. My original Masters thesis itself was a substantial amount of work for me, under often less than ideal conditions—certainly that with which I dealt was nothing compared to what very many other people have to face every day. By far however that which was my greatest obstacle and which prevented me from writing a better thesis was the fact that I was, and remain, a very cowardly and sinful man.

From the standpoint of at least academically confessing the Orthodox Faith and its unmatched Theology, I would have had substantially more success in the exposition of Orthodox teaching (albeit only from the academic standpoint, because of my not living the Faith as I should due to my laziness and sinfulness) had I at the time read some of the work of St. Gregory of Nyssa, such as Against Eunomius, and other remarkable works of this great Orthodox Saint which are amazing expositions of Orthodox Theology and the Orthodox confession of the absolute transcendence of God.

I also can definitely say that I would have made fewer major mistakes in my original Masters thesis had I been familiar with the great research and work of Father John S. Romanides, whose work was certainly very faithful to the Orthodox Fathers and their unmatched confession of Orthodox Theology.
Incidentally, Father Romanides was very impressed by the writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa, and recommended his students to study those writings in order for people to get some genuine sense of the great and unparalleled beauty of Orthodox Theology—and of course, this is something certainly to be found, in one way or another, throughout the life and works of all the Orthodox Saints throughout the ages, in the one and only true Church, the Holy Orthodox Church.

Father Romanides’ brilliant exposition of Orthodox doctrine against the very significant error of “personalism” is of profound importance in its faithfulness to Orthodox Patristic Theology where the absolute transcendence of God is unequivocally confessed by the Orthodox Saints throughout the ages—in Father Romanides’ words, “there is absolutely no similarity whatsoever between the created and the uncreated”. This absolute transcendence of God, forever faithfully confessed by Orthodox Christianity, was used by Fr. Romanides, as he followed the Fathers, to expose and refute the error of personalism.

An explanation of personalism, as understood by some Orthodox theologians who embrace this error (an error which I also unfortunately embraced in my Masters thesis), is brilliantly offered by Father Romanides (and others) in the book *Patristic Theology, The University Lectures of Fr. John Romanides*—other heresies and errors are also refuted in this very useful and informative book.

Also of great significance for our Orthodox Christian education, and that of our young people, is the outstandingly brilliant work of Metropolitan Hierotheos of Naupaktos, faithful to the unconquerable Holy Orthodox Tradition: *Empirical Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic*
Church, according to the Spoken Teaching of Father John Romanides (Volumes 1 and 2)—both volumes of this work can be found in both Greek and English.

And both of these aforementioned works: Patristic Theology, The University Lectures of Fr. John Romanides and Empirical Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church, according to the Spoken Teaching of Father John Romanides (Volumes 1 and 2) are definitely a “must” read for any Orthodox Christian or anyone interested in Orthodox Christianity—they are beautifully done and they comprehensively summarize the unmatched Theology of the only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. In fact, these two works just mentioned could be utilized as core material—along with other works from Father Romanides and others—to make a course or courses of study for Orthodox Christian young people in our youth programs and in other outreach of our Holy Orthodox Church. These and certainly other works of Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos are very faithful to and consistent with our Holy Orthodox Tradition and as such can be of great use for Orthodox Christian education.

With that in mind, Father Romanides’ work “Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics”, which can be found on the great website www.romanity.org, beautifully discusses Orthodox Theology and responds to some of the errors in Fr. John Meyendorff’s book, A Study of Gregory Palamas. Another very significant work of Father Romanides, also to be found on www.romanity.org, is “Franks, Romans, Feudalism, and Doctrine” which contains an outstanding historical and theological discussion of the heresy of the Filioque; and this same article brilliantly references Patristic sources (as Fr. Romanides always does) pointing to the absolute transcendence of God—indeed this is something always uncompromisingly confessed
by the Holy Orthodox Church throughout the ages. These two aforementioned articles are also
definitely in the “must” read category for any Orthodox Christian or for anyone interested in
Orthodox Christianity—as are the other works, by Fr. Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos
of Nafpaktos, that were mentioned earlier. These two articles of Fr. Romanides are among the
numerous other great articles to be found on www.romanity.org and they are a beautifully done
and very faithful presentation of Orthodox Patristic Theology.

Father Romanides’ work The Ancestral Sin is also a wonderful presentation of Orthodox
Christianity—brilliantly translated by Dr. George S. Gabriel. Much of Father Romanides’ work
in Greek, to my knowledge, has not been translated into English yet—Fr. Romanides wrote
outstandingly in both Greek and English. Let us hope that what remains to be translated from Fr.
Romanides’ work will be done so soon, for it would, in my opinion, benefit Orthodox Christian
education immensely among English speaking people. And so many other works from Orthodox
writers need to be translated into English—obviously and especially the writings of the Fathers,
and certainly much significant work has already been done in this regard.

There is certainly great flexibility in constructing a curriculum on Orthodox Theology,
given all of the great Orthodox literature that is available to us. As such, though I made my thesis
as a curriculum, we easily could substitute from all of Father Romanides’ and Metropolitan
Hierotheos of Nafpaktos’ aforementioned works in place of my thesis and teach very much from
those works of these brilliant Orthodox theologians—people would certainly get much more out
of their work than from anything that I could ever write. And generally, there are many such
great books and works on the only true Faith, Orthodox Christianity, to be found—obviously the
works of the Orthodox Fathers and other Saints of our Church are of the most profound
significance; and, with that in mind, those who faithfully follow the Orthodox teaching of these Fathers, in their research and writing, deserve our attention—Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos very prominently come to mind in this regard, as was mentioned above.

With these things in mind, I feel that I did many things that were right in my original Masters thesis or at least I moved in the right direction (and this through no merit of my own, but by the grace of God, because I drew from some great works of Orthodox Saints and others); I also know that I made many mistakes in that original thesis, both in terms of approach and content, and I am hoping to correct at least a significant portion of them in this second edition of my thesis. At least some of these errors in the original thesis were quite major. My embrace of personalism in my Masters thesis, sometimes implicitly done while at other times done quite explicitly, before I was corrected by Father John Romanides, is perhaps the most major of the errors in my thesis—I will in this present work correct my mistake, following Father Romanides' brilliant work on the topic. There is not much more to say beyond that, pertaining to this earlier error of embracing personalism and any others that I have made or will make, other than the following, which I am fond of saying: "I would much rather be wrong and know that I am wrong and be corrected, than be wrong and think that I am right". I am sure that I am in need of much more correction, for as long as I will live; and there is a Patristic saying, which I am sure with no doubt greatly influenced my above saying (this Patristic saying, though not identical to what I said above, is something that I had seen in an Orthodox Church bulletin), that goes something like this: “It is better for a man to have sinned and know that he has sinned,
than not to have sinned and think of himself as righteous.” As we said earlier, may God have mercy upon us and may we always continue to learn.

One should definitely view much of the bibliography and references in this second edition of my thesis and read those works, most especially the works of St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Gregory Palamas, St. John of Damascus, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Athanasios the Great, St. Justin Popovich, St. Nikolai Velimirovich and also, obviously, read from much of the works of so many other Orthodox Saints, so many of which are not here listed in this work of mine. We also should look at the works from our incomparable Orthodox Liturgical Tradition. It is also suggested that one read the works mentioned earlier, very faithful to our Holy Orthodox Tradition, of Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos. By looking at these great resources available to us, with significant effort and attention, we will gain a great deal of knowledge, academically; and may this further inspire all of us Orthodox to follow God beyond academics—myself most in need of this.

Anything of any worth, without exception, in this current work of mine is drawn from such of the aforementioned wonderful resources, some of which I referenced in this present edition of the thesis. There are a multitude of other resources that can be found elsewhere in the Holy Orthodox Tradition (which I simply did not have the time to reference or in many other instances I simply missed them due to my ignorance). As such, if a person chooses to ignore my work here and simply go straight to many of these beautiful Orthodox resources (both mentioned in this thesis, or to other wonderful Orthodox resources not found in this current work), then they will certainly gain a tremendous amount educationally, and arguably lose absolutely nothing from having passed over my work here.
Having sincerely made the above remarks in regard to my substantial personal limitations—in contrast to the infallibility of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, about which I attempt to speak—it is nevertheless my hope, for anyone willing to look at this thesis, that this revised work to some level points to at least some of the beautiful and incomparable aspects in the life and work of the unconquerable Orthodox Saints, who, in their God inspired courage and wisdom, teach us the absolute transcendence of the Triune God and who teach us how, within the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, to pursue the sanctification which they themselves were able to attain by the grace of God.

Dimitri (James) Maillis

To God Belongs All Glory!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FROM THE ORIGINAL THESIS:

What will follow, after this paragraph, are the original acknowledgements from the first thesis, as they originally appeared. I sincerely thank all the people originally listed. But I must give special mention to Dr. Paul Yvarra here. I cannot especially thank Dr. Paul Yvarra enough for his objectivity, friendship, and fairness during the course of the original work. Dr. Paul Yvarra’s willingness to fairly evaluate and respect the research and views of another person with whom he did not necessarily agree, and defend that person, if necessary (and he was certainly willing to do so, in the academic setting) showed great character and respect for academic freedom, freedom of conscience, and freedom of speech—things which are tragically under attack in today’s world, as much as ever before.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (From the Original Thesis, 2006)

I must thank some people who helped me in my endeavor to write this thesis. I thank Dr. John M. Zbikowski, my thesis advisor, for all his time, hard work, and patience--in what proved to be a much more difficult and lengthy process than practically anyone (including myself) anticipated. Dr. Zbikowski’s outstanding insight into the logical process of constructing a viable argument in a thesis--vital for the success of any thesis (whether people agree with what is said or not)--was of great value. Dr. Zbikowski’s strong insight into the logic, structure, and use of the english language was also very useful to me. Dr. Zbikowski pushed me to write a paper that I believe is better than I otherwise could have written had he not challenged me as he did. I thank him very much. I also must thank Dr. Paul Yvarra. Dr. Yvarra’s insight and encouragement were amazing.
At a time when I was struggling with numerous challenges in my life and it looked as though I might never finish this work that I had set for myself, Dr. Yvarra’s compassion, insight, and encouragement were of immense importance in the successful completion of this arduous process. I thank Dr. Yvarra, very much. I want to thank Dr. Anthony L. Truog for remaining on my committee and evaluating my work, it is very much appreciated. I want to thank Marina Kovyryalova Karabelas for helping me to type numerous quotations which I had found in my research. I want to thank my brother-in-law, Peter Magdalinos, for all his computer expertise that he freely shared, which made the writing of this thesis so much more manageable. I want to thank my wife, Nicolette, for her computer and typing skills, who, oftentimes, with her very hard work on my behalf made the difficult and tedious work of editing much easier to handle. I want to thank my mother, Athanasia, for believing in me and for all her advice and hard work which has greatly helped me and my family--I am forever indebted to her. I want to thank my wife, once again, not just for her tremendous effort on my behalf, but for her great encouragement and support which were vital in my completing this work. Most of all, I thank God for allowing me to finish this long work; I hope that this work can be of some use to those interested in the subject matter.
To My Children,

Christos, Sotirios, and Athanasia
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ORIGINAL ABSTRACT OF THESIS from 2006:

What follows are the original abstract title page and the abstract itself from the original thesis of 2006. The original abstract is consistent with many of the goals of this second edition of the thesis, and therefore is here presented again.

Abstract of Thesis

James Maillis

The Philosophy of Education of the Orthodox Saints:

Historical and Theological Perspectives May 8, 2006

Dr. John M. Zbikowski, Thesis Chair

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
ABSTRACT

This thesis, presented as a curriculum, discusses the profound and inspiring educational example, which is given to the world by the Orthodox saints, who have completely submitted themselves to God, the Holy Trinity. The Orthodox saints and martyrs, unmatched in their God-inspired courage, wisdom and holiness of life, have taught and defended the unique, absolute truth that is Orthodox Christianity, without change and throughout history, for the good of all mankind. The discussion contrasts the cowardly subservience and relativism practiced, and consequently taught to the world, by many Orthodox ecumenists and others, with the great courage and holiness of life, in the face of immense danger and suffering, that is practiced, and consequently taught to humanity, by the Orthodox saints.
CURRICULUM FOR A COURSE ON ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

What immediately follows for the next several pages is a similar course outline to that of my original thesis of 2006, with some changes to the original course outline in order to reorganize some of the topics and to accommodate the increased content. In fact, the current content to which this updated outline points is filled with very many additional quotations from some of the great Orthodox Saints and writers to whom I earlier alluded in the Preface. The curriculum here constructed, based on the work The Philosophy of Education of the Orthodox Saints: Historical and Theological Perspectives, 2nd Edition, is an outline of a possible way to proceed in a course on Orthodox Christianity—certainly this is not the only way, nor, most certainly, is it necessarily the best way to proceed. But the work is an attempt to answer issues and questions which Orthodox Christians and others may have—utilizing much of the God inspired wisdom of the Orthodox Saints and the brilliance of some remarkable Orthodox theologians who were faithful to Orthodox teaching.

As such, and this is extremely important to note, it is brought to the reader’s attention that what was said in the Preface about many of the great works on Orthodox Christianity—by unconquerable Orthodox Saints and others very faithful to Orthodox teaching—and our capability of making courses of study for Orthodox Christian education from these great works, when accomplished correctly, is indeed something far superior to anything that most people (myself included) could ever write. As such, any of these aforementioned great works could by themselves serve as the curriculum, far surpassing anything that I could ever write—as was mentioned in the very beginning, in the Preface to this second edition.
THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION OF THE ORTHODOX SAINTS:
HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

**Course Information**

*Course Description*

This course of study being presented for Orthodox Christians and for those interested in Orthodoxy is intended to be a part of an Adult Education ministry for Orthodox parishes and for Orthodox schools of Theology, as deemed applicable by particular Orthodox parishes and schools. The intent of this course of study is to offer an Orthodox perspective on the philosophy of education lived and taught by the Orthodox saints throughout history—a philosophy of education that is clearly theanthropic (Christ-centered) in which all heresies, past and present, are contradicted by the exposition of the unique truth of Orthodox theology taught by the Orthodox saints, in both word and deed, throughout history. This course of study in examining

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1 Very many of the ideas pertaining to the structure of this entire Course Outline being presented—its format and terminology—were obtained from an excellent Course Outline template offered the University of New South Wales (Sydney, Australia). The web site to search pertaining to the above mentioned Course Outline template and related matters is http://www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/ref4-2-4–course–outline–template.cfm (retrieved 1/14/06).

2 The idea for this was given to me by Dr. Paul Yvarra, Professor of Education, when he saw something similar to what I was trying to accomplish being done by people associated with Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church in Linthicum, Maryland. Pertaining to this matter, the following websites were very useful references: http://www.holycrossonline.org/adult-education/ and http://www.holycrossonline.org/worship-trinity/. This last website listed is a course on Orthodox Christianity called “Worshipping the Undivided Trinity” developed by Subdeacon Robert Miclean.
the Orthodox theanthropic philosophy of education\(^3\)--exemplified by the Orthodox saints, in their
great wisdom and heroic lives--discusses much of what and how the Orthodox saints teach to the
world.

*Philosophical Considerations and Approach to this Course of Study*

In much of the discussion, particular attention will be given to the “panheresy of
ecumism”\(^4\)--to some of its underlying assumptions, and to those who religiously embrace
ecumism--and how its basic beliefs and assumptions, mired in relativism, radically differ from
the unique truth of Orthodox theology faithfully taught by the Orthodox saints, in both word and
deed, throughout history. The basic beliefs and assumptions underlying the so called validity of
ecumism radically differ from those of Orthodox Christianity, as does the conduct (very often)
of those mired in ecumenism compared to the faithful and heroic teaching of the Orthodox saints.
In short, the basic beliefs and assumptions that underlie ecumenism, and those of any other
heresy, are radically different from those of Orthodox Christianity; and subsequently, not only
what, but how, many of the adherents of ecumenism and the other heresies teach to others--
through their conduct (their words and actions)--is something, very often times, profoundly
different from the truthful and courageous teaching of the Orthodox saints.

\(^3\) This terminology of “theanthropic philosophy of education” is very accurate and powerful, and is borrowed from St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije.

\(^4\) I first encountered this expression when I saw it used in some of the writing of an Old Calendar Greek Orthodox Bishop, Metropolitan Cyprian, (Cyprian, 1995, p. 6).
Especially among people of faith pertaining to matters of their faith, more often than not, knowledge of profound theological matters is regarded as something which is divinely revealed—and ultimately unattainable by human logic and deduction alone. Any philosophy of education pertaining to a particular faith, would almost certainly have to keep this mind. Certainly, the Orthodox saints in their defense throughout history of what they believed to be the one and only true Faith, Orthodox Christianity, acknowledged divine revelation as the source of the Orthodox theology which they taught and regarded as perfect—something that was clearly seen in their theanthropic philosophy of education. With this in mind, regarding any philosophy of education for the teaching of a particular faith, the basic beliefs or presumed realities of great importance of that faith motivate the proponents of any particular educational philosophy pertaining to their faith, and are used for the justification of the particular philosophy being advocated. For any particular religion and the teaching of that religion, the basic beliefs or presumed realities of great importance consist of all the most significant and fundamental elements or beliefs of the religion, i.e. its theology. A philosophy of education for the teaching of a particular faith cannot be separated from the faith itself, from its most significant and basic beliefs, its theology. Having said this, the Orthodox saints’ theanthropic philosophy of education will be examined within the context of human history and considered within the light of Orthodox theology; when this is done, it will be seen that the Orthodox saints’ philosophy of education is something radically different from all other philosophies—both in regard to what the Orthodox saints taught and how they taught it.
Course Aims

The aims of this course consist of the following:

1) To explain and discuss the theanthropic philosophy of education of the Orthodox saints--seen within the context of human history and the unique truth of Orthodox theology.

2) To discuss, clarify and teach numerous important aspects of Orthodox theology.

3) To contrast the great uniqueness and truth of Orthodox Christianity and its theology with all the falsehood and heresies of the world and of history.

4) To explain and discuss the panheresy of ecumenism, and its relationship to all the other humanisms--and to all the other falsehoods and deceptions of the world and of history.

5) To explain and discuss the dreadful educational example given to the Orthodox faithful, and to others, by some Orthodox leaders’ participation in ecumenism.

6) To contrast the Orthodox saints’ heroic teaching, in both word and deed, of the Orthodox Faith and its Theology, with the subservience and falsehood often taught by others.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, you should be able to do the following:

1) Summarize the Orthodox theanthropic philosophy of education--exhibited by the saints in their teaching of Orthodox theology--with reference to the Orthodox doctrine of theosis.

2) Recognize and express the numerous important topics of Orthodox theology discussed in this course; and with this knowledge of Orthodox theology be able to defend, at least academically, the Orthodox Faith against heresy.

3) Differentiate Orthodox Trinitarian Theology from the theology of the other faiths discussed.
4) Summarize the view presented regarding ecumenism and the other philosophical systems (i.e. the various humanisms and other heresies); and compare these systems--based on the argument presented in the course--to the philosophy of education of the Orthodox saints.

5) Compare the Orthodox saints’ heroic teaching, in both word and deed, of the Orthodox Faith and its Theology, with the subservience and falsehood often taught by others.

Teaching Strategies

The predominant teaching methods in this course will consist of the following:

1) The entire work, *The Philosophy of Education of the Orthodox Saints: Historical and Theological Perspectives*, will be required reading for the course. Before the completion of each unit to be discussed, it is expected that students will have read that entire unit from the text. Thus, by the end of the course, it is expected that this text--*The Philosophy of Education of the Orthodox Saints: Historical and Theological Perspectives*--will have been read in its entirety.

2) Daily—according to, and consistent with, the Schedule of Topics to be discussed--there will be a lecture and group discussion on particular sections from the particular unit being covered during that time. By the end of the course, all sections from all units will have been covered in class, in a lecture and group discussion format.

3) The lecture and group discussion format to be used in this course will strongly emphasize the content and subject matter of the text being used for course. Thus, because the expected Learning Outcomes for this course are closely aligned to the content of the text--which itself largely forms much of the structure of the course--the successful completion of the course should bring the student to the expected Learning Outcomes.

4) Within the lecture and group discussion format to be used throughout the course, strong
emphasis will be given to open discussions related to the subject matter and to various forms of question and answer exercises--between teacher and students, and between students themselves in small groups. In short, within the lecture and group discussion format, a strong emphasis on cooperative learning will certainly be pursued.

Assessment

To help the student determine his (or her) progress in the knowledge of the subject matter of this course, each student will be asked to adequately complete the following means of assessment (to be used in this course):

1) Individual project

The Individual project will be a roughly 5 to 10 page paper and/or presentation pertaining to one or more of the five expected Learning Outcomes outlined earlier. The teacher will meet individually with students to advice students regarding their proposed choice of project. (This assignment will be due at approximately the middle of the semester.)

2) Group project

Groups of students will be formed. Each group of students will give a presentation in front of class pertaining to one or more of the five expected Learning Outcomes outlined earlier. The teacher will meet individually with each group to advice the group of students regarding their proposed choice of project. Each group will present an approximately 1 to 4 page summary or outline of their presentation to all the members of the class before the presentation of their

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5 Given that this particular course is a non-credit course designed for the personal enrichment and education of Orthodox Christians and those interested in Orthodoxy, there is at the end of the course no formal grade assigned to the student. However, this assessment component, which is presented here, can easily be modified to make this same course into a course that is offered for credit.
project. The presentation of the project and any associated activities should be expected to take anywhere from about 20 minutes to an hour. (This assignment will be due during the final week of class.)

3) Class Participation

Attendance and class participation in discussions, question and answer sessions, and the other activities of the class are taken into consideration regarding the final assessment of progress. Much of the discussion, and many of the questions asked by the teacher of the students (questions asked of individual students and collectively asked of all the students) will emphasize the expectation of a strong academic knowledge pertaining to the five Learning Outcomes mentioned earlier for this course.

Note: Further details of these assessment components, here outlined, will be presented in class.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

It is expected that students hold themselves to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. As such, plagiarism will not be tolerated. To help clarify this, the following is excerpted, word for word, from the excellent Course Outline template offer by the University of New South Wales (Sydney, Australia):

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the presentation of the thoughts or work of another as one’s own. Examples include:

6 This information--like so much of the other structure and terminology of my Course Outline--is to be found at http://www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/ref4-2-4-course-outline-template.cfm (retrieved 1/14/06).
• direct duplication of the thoughts or work of another, including by copying material, ideas or concepts from a book, article, report or other written document (whether published or unpublished), composition, artwork, design, drawing, circuitry, computer program or software, web site, Internet, other electronic resource, or another person’s assignment without appropriate acknowledgment;

• paraphrasing another person’s work with very minor changes keeping the meaning, form and/or progression of ideas of the original;

• piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole;

  presenting an assessment item as independent work when it has been produced in whole or part in collusion with other people, for example, another student or a tutor; and

• claiming credit for a proportion of a work contributed to a group assessment item that is greater than that actually contributed.

For the purposes of this policy, submitting an assessment item that has already been submitted for academic credit elsewhere may be considered plagiarism. Knowingly permitting your work to be copied by another student may also be considered to be plagiarism.

Note that an assessment item produced in oral, not written, form, or involving live presentation, may similarly contain plagiarised material. The inclusion of the thoughts or work of another with attribution appropriate to the academic discipline does not amount to plagiarism.

(University of New South Wales, 2005)
Course schedule

This is the schedule of topics to be covered in this course, following the Table of Contents which were earlier presented:

UNIT 1: FOREWORD

PROLOGUE

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

(Appendices A and B will be studied and referenced to supplement Unit 1.)

UNIT 2: CHAPTER 2 THE ABSOLUTE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD, THE SUPRASUBSTANTIAL TRINITY

(Appendices B, C, and E will be studied and referenced to supplement Unit 2.)

UNIT 3: CHAPTER 3 THE PROBLEM OF ECUMENISM

UNIT 4: CHAPTER 4 THE HEROIC CONFESSION OF ORTHODOXY

(Appendix A will referenced in order to supplement Unit 4.)

UNIT 5: CHAPTER 5 ECUMENISM AND OTHER HERESIES EMBRACE FALSEHOOD

UNIT 6: CHAPTER 6 ECUMENISM: SUBSERVIENT TO THE PHILOSOPHY AND POWER OF THIS WORLD
UNIT 7: CHAPTER 7 ORTHODOX THEOLOGY CONTRADICTS THE HERESY OF THE *Filioque* INNOVATION

(Appendix D will be studied and referenced to supplement Unit 7.)

UNIT 8: CHAPTER 8 ORTHODOX ECUMENISTS’ RELATIVISM

UNIT 9: CHAPTER 9 ORTHODOXY CONTRADICTS THE ERROR OF PERSONAL INFALLIBILITY

UNIT 10: CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

References

Bibliography

APPENDIX A THE LAST JUDGMENT

APPENDIX B THE HOLY EVER-VIRGIN MARY

APPENDIX C CAPITA 96 AND 97 FROM ST. GREGORY PALAMAS, ANOTHER TRANSLATION

APPENDIX D THE ORTHODOX VENERATION OF THE SAINTS AND THEIR ICONS

APPENDIX E THE INCARNATION OF GOD THE WORD
GLOSSARY

Appendix and Glossary References

**Resources for students**

1) The text for this course will hopefully be of at least some small value for the Orthodox education of the students who choose to read it and who are interested in the subject matter of Orthodox theology and the Orthodox theanthropic philosophy of education of the saints.

2) All the resources listed in the Reference and Bibliography sections of the text (at the end of the body of the text and at the end of the Appendices and Glossary) are, for the most part, outstanding resources to consult to further one’s Orthodox education.

3) The resources just mentioned from the text are by no means exhaustive, and further examples of excellent resources pertaining to the subject matter of this course will continually be mentioned in class.

**Continual course improvement**

Throughout the course, and at the end of the course, the teacher will gather feedback regarding what students think of this class (i.e. its structure, content, delivery, etc.) and how it can be improved. All feedback will be voluntary, and when not publicly offered (such as spoken in front of class, for example), will be confidential. Means will be taken for the voluntary and confidential written feedback--intended to take place at the end of the semester--to not be seen by the teacher until the final evaluation of students’ progress is complete.
FOREWORD

This thesis is presented as a curriculum and is about what and how the Orthodox saints and martyrs teach to humanity, which can be seen, academically, in all that Orthodox Christianity, by the grace of God, professes to the world, but which potentially and most significantly can also be lived, as much as humanly possible, as the Orthodox saints lived Orthodox theology—through pursuing and ultimately fulfilling all that Christ commands of us to pursue, salvation and sanctification (offered to us by God Incarnate, Christ the Theanthropos, within His Holy Orthodox Church). I have written this thesis by drawing from the God-inspired wisdom of the unconquerable Orthodox saints and martyrs whose confession of the eternal Holy Orthodox Faith—which these saints and martyrs were able to courageously bring forth, by the mercy of the Triune God, united to Christ the Theanthropos—is forever true and unconquerable. Drawing from some of the God-inspired wisdom found throughout the Holy Orthodox Tradition—though I am a cowardly, unworthy and sinful man—the discussion of Orthodox theology in this thesis is faithful to the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. This is so not through any merit of my own, but rather because I have drawn immensely from highly regarded Orthodox theologians, who were immersed in the teachings of the Fathers (the Patristic writings and the entire Holy Orthodox Tradition). Additionally, I have sought guidance in Orthodox theology from many Orthodox Priests throughout the years and I have also directly drawn a great amount from the writings of numerous Orthodox Fathers, both ancient and modern. As such—and with Orthodox Christians being forever cognizant of the great honor and veneration rightfully offered to the God-inspired Orthodox saints and martyrs whose heroic confession of
the one and only Truth, Christ the Theanthropos, and whose heroic confession of the one and only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity, is clearly seen throughout history—this thesis is offered for any and all Orthodox educators (Orthodox Hierarchs, Priests, and Lay people) as a brief educational resource on certain topics of Orthodox theology and as an exhortation to all Orthodox Christians (myself included) to strive to one day be able to follow the heroic sacrifice of all the Orthodox saints and martyrs, both known and unknown, who throughout history, in an unparalleled fashion, have confessed the one and only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity, and never compromised with the falsehood, which is to be abundantly found in this world.

It can be said that every Orthodox Christian (whether that person be an Orthodox Hierarch, a Priest or a Lay person) is called to be a saint and thus called to be an educator. For in the strictest and most true sense of the word only an Orthodox saint is an educator, by word and deed, and by the very projection of his or her sanctity united to Christ in the unique truth of the Holy Orthodox Church, which is His Body. And all of this is accomplished by the Orthodox saint through his or her cooperation with the grace of God, which God freely offers to humanity—for without God nothing is possible. Ideally, the Orthodox Hierarch as a spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians must, through his words and conduct, remain faithful, publicly and privately, to the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and be willing, if necessary, to give his life in martyrdom—following the example of his Master, Christ the Theanthropos—for his flock, which has been entrusted to him by the Lord Christ Himself. An Orthodox Hierarch is called by Christ to righteously teach the Orthodox Faith, through his correct glorification of the Triune God (Orthodoxia)—manifested in his words of truth, and in his works of righteousness (Orthopraxia)—courageously following the Holy Tradition of all the Orthodox saints and martyrs who have
lived and died for Christ the Theanthropos throughout history. The Orthodox Hierarch is called to do this in order to defend, with his own life, if necessary, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ against all false teaching. The Orthodox person who has taken monastic vows, and is either a Priest or a Lay person, has essentially this same aforementioned obligation as the Orthodox Hierarch does, only obviously without the same spiritual leadership and authority associated with his or her calling; nonetheless, the monastics’ Orthodox confession of Christ the Theanthropos can be every bit as significant, and far reaching, as that of the Orthodox Hierarch, sometimes even more so. The same can be said for the Orthodox Priest who is the spiritual leader of a particular parish, and much the same can be said for every other Orthodox Christian. Each and every Orthodox Christian, in a sense, is called to be an Orthodox Christian educator, for every Orthodox Christian is called to seek salvation and sanctification in Christ the Theanthropos within His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body. In the process of doing so (seeking salvation and sanctification), Orthodox Christians have the potential--if they accomplish, by the grace of God, that for which God has created us in the first place (sanctification, theosis)--to truly educate themselves and others. We must note that, certainly, every Orthodox Christian is called to learn as much as he or she can possibly learn about their Faith, academically, if you will--through the study of the Holy Scriptures, and through the study of all the rest of the Holy Orthodox Tradition (the teaching of the Fathers and all the other saints, the decisions and teachings of the Holy Ecumenical Councils, the guidance of Orthodox Priests and theologians, etc.)--but this knowledge which is available for us to experience, academically, 

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7 Orthodox Priests will often tell their congregations, “Orthodoxia means Orthopraxia”. What this means is that the correct glorification of God, Orthodoxia, is accomplished not just through words of righteousness, but must be accompanied by works of righteousness, Orthopraxia, as well, .
by the infinite grace of God, within the Holy Orthodox Church, is also knowledge that God calls us to experience and live with every aspect of our very being, as much as is humanly possible—as the Orthodox saints and martyrs did, united to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. The very sanctity which the Orthodox saints attained, by the grace of God, not only gave them great knowledge and holiness of life with which they could, as no one else could, educate others, academically, in Orthodox theology; but, even more profound than the profession of this knowledge, academically, that same sanctity also enabled these saints, in both word and deed, to call people to pursue and attain that same knowledge pertaining to Orthodox theology, not just academically, but with every aspect of their very being, as much as humanly possible—as the Orthodox saints themselves were able to do, by the grace of God.

For as St. Justin Popovich faithfully teaches us in accordance with Holy Orthodox Tradition:

Education (enlightenment) is simply the projection of sanctity, the radiation of light; the saint shines and, thereby, enlightens and sanctifies. Education is entirely conditioned by sanctity; only a saint can be a true educator and enlightener. Without the saints, there can be no enlighteners; without holiness, there can be no education; without enlightenment there can be no sanctification. Sanctity is sanctity only by divine light. True enlightenment is simply the radiation of holiness; only the saints are truly enlightened and sanctified, for they have poured out the divine light over all their being by the practice of the evangelical virtues and have thereby purified themselves of all the darkness of sin and vice. ... Education without sanctity, without sanctification by the Holy Spirit,
education without the perfecting and completing of man by the God-Man, education
without God, was invented by Europe in its humanistic idolatry. (Popovic, 2000, pp.
130-132)

Every Orthodox Christian is indeed called to become educated (enlightened), for himself
(herself) and others, by pursuing sanctification, theosis, in Christ the Theanthropos within His
Holy Orthodox Church which is His Body (and which Christ Himself established here on earth
to provide for all of humanity the path to sanctification, theosis).

Orthodox Christianity through its saints and unmatched Holy Tradition confesses that
Christ the Theanthropos is the Only-Begotten Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity,
our Creator and the only Way to salvation and sanctification. The Church which Christ Himself
established to offer humanity the path to salvation and sanctification is one and only one, and it
is His theanthropic Body here on earth, the Holy Orthodox Church. We see that within Christ,
within His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body, in the light of His
commandments: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and
with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself” (cf. Lev. 19 : 18; Deut. 6 : 5; Matt. 22 :
37-39)8, (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 171, ch. 29), every Orthodox Christian is called
to pursue theosis, sanctification. But what does this mean exactly? The Orthodox saints and
martyrs--through their great words of God-inspired wisdom and through their great actions of

8 In whatever is quoted from the Philokalia in this thesis, if the terminology “cf.” occurs, it is a note from
the editors (Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware) saying that “Where authors in the Philokalia merely refer to a
passage or paraphrase it, but do not quote it exactly, ‘cf.’ is added before the reference.” This quotation
12)
God-inspired courage, kindness and all other sanctity-- teach Orthodox Christians (and the rest of the world) Orthodox Theology and they teach us that only Christ the Theanthropos can save us. All of these things--Orthodox Theology and all the virtues to which Christ calls us--which the Orthodox saints and martyrs teach us, these saints and martyrs truly know and live, in the fullest sense, not like the overwhelming majority of the rest of us in this world (myself included, because of my great cowardice and sinfulness), who may know Orthodox theology academically but not in their heart and soul, as the Orthodox saints knew it. For indeed the Orthodox saints, unlike the overwhelming majority of the rest of us (myself included), truly confessed the Orthodox Christian Faith in every aspect of their life, in both word and deed, and were willing to suffer all manner of hardship and all manner of death for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, courageously fighting against all evil. This is why the Orthodox saints are the great educators that they are. Whereas the rest of us (myself included) are only capable of confessing Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church academically, the Orthodox saints, throughout history, confessed Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church with their very flesh and blood, even unto death, in the most torturous circumstances imaginable, when they were called to do so.

Throughout history, countless Orthodox saints have died for Christ, and there will always be Orthodox saints to do so until the end of time, gloriously proclaiming Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. And, of course, the Orthodox saints (the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Confessors and all the other Saints) have their power only by the grace of God, for God did not need to create anything or anyone, and as St. Justin Popovich tells us: “Sanctity is sanctity only by divine light” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132). We also observe that the Orthodox
saints and martyrs educate the world not just with great academic knowledge and brilliance--something which many of them certainly had, but which many other people who were not saints also had; the great significance of the Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the grace of God, is that they have, in all humility and faith, obeyed Christ by “taking up their cross”. They have followed Christ the Theanthropos always remaining faithful to Him and not falling into heresy. Even in the most difficult and dangerous of circumstances, the Orthodox saints and martyrs, with unmatched courage, would remain united to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body. In this way, the Orthodox saints and martyrs are the great educators of humanity, for through every aspect of their life in Christ they epitomized the courageous and uncompromising fulfillment of the Lord’s commandment ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself’, (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 171, ch. 29).

With the great courage, wisdom and power that God gives to the Orthodox saints and martyrs enabling them to overcome all evil, God, once again, demonstrates His great love for mankind, for He invites all people to pursue this same salvation and sanctification in Christ the Theanthropos which, by the grace of God, the Orthodox saints and martyrs pursued and ultimately attained. The power of God makes all the Orthodox saints the great educators that they are, and they invite all of us to “take up our cross” and follow Christ, as Christ commanded us to do, and as the Orthodox saints, in the fullest sense, truly did. But how does God call us to “take up our cross” and follow Him--for indeed, when God voluntarily became Incarnate, He did tell us just that? The answer is found in the Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely the Body of Christ. Every baptized Orthodox Christian is called to remain Orthodox forever and never stray
into the false teachings, philosophies, and religions of this world, no matter what temptations and difficulties that person may face in life. Every Orthodox Christian is called to remain united to Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church, through following all the teachings and commandments of Christ the Theanthropos--teachings and commandments which have been lived by countless Orthodox saints throughout history, and are forever preserved, unaltered and undefiled, for all humanity to clearly see and experience, in the one and only Body of Christ, established by the Lord Christ Himself, the Holy Orthodox Church. One cannot adequately explain this reality, which uniquely encompasses and describes the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ (and someone as cowardly and as sinful as I am, certainly cannot adequately explain it). And this education, which is “entirely conditioned by sanctity” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132) and which a person, by the grace of God, can receive and give to others--as the countless Orthodox saints throughout history have done, through the pursuit and attainment of salvation and sanctification, united to Christ the Theanthropos in His Body, the Holy Orthodox Church--is certainly not something which can be deduced, quantified or otherwise rationalized. Instead, we can only point to where salvation and sanctification are certainly to be found: the Holy Orthodox Church, the Body of Christ, where God offers to every person the opportunity to strive, with all their created being and in all humility, for that which God created us in the first place, sanctification, theosis.

We say that we are given this opportunity to pursue sanctification by our Creator, and we must do so in all humility, for God did not need to create us, nor did He need to offer us the opportunity for salvation and sanctification after He created us--and for which He voluntarily became Incarnate. God, our Creator, voluntarily became Incarnate to save us and sanctify us and
the Orthodox saints are an unmatched and unbroken testimony to this reality throughout history. The martyric life and death struggles miraculously accomplished, by the grace of God, within the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, by countless Orthodox saints, are an incomparable testimony, which educates the entire world, to God’s saving and sanctifying dispensation. Without Christ the Theanthropos the saints could do nothing, nor would they even exist, nor would anyone else even exist--for as God, Christ, without any necessity to Himself (without needing to create), created everything and everyone. It is with this in mind, that we must understand the words of Christ, the Pre-eternal Son of God, God Himself, Who is of one essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, when He tells us: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). The Orthodox saints, throughout history, have demonstrated--with their great love for God and humanity, seen in both their words and heroic deeds, seen in their holiness of life--that only Christ our God can save us. And Christ Himself established His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body, and as such, the Orthodox Church, with Christ Himself as its Head, uniquely possesses the fullness of all truth, for all humanity to experience within its embrace. And no matter how much the Holy Orthodox Church is persecuted, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:16-18). Orthodox Christians are called to imitate the Orthodox saints, in both word and deed, by pursuing the commandments of Christ within the one and only Body of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church. This is a profound process, in many ways defying any sort of exhaustive description. For who can adequately describe Christ our God, or the mystery of salvation and sanctification offered to the entire human race to be pursued within the one and only Body of Christ, the Orthodox Church? The education of Orthodox Christians consists in this pursuit of salvation and
sanctification offered by the Creator of all, Christ the Son of God. The mystery of our salvation and sanctification in Christ is accomplished for us by Christ Himself, when we, in all humility and love before Him, cooperate with His divine will for us, within His Holy Orthodox Church. Again, this process in many ways defies any sort of exhaustive description, and it certainly defies any rationalistic methodology. For to attempt to somehow deduce, rationalize or formulate some kind of “recipe” for salvation and sanctification is tantamount to much of the absurdity of all the heresies and false religions of this world.

Ecumenism, the panheresy\(^9\) that it is, is the epitome of rationalistic methodology in religious matters, for it essentially equates all the religions of the world with one another (regarding their presumed validity). Additionally, irrespective of the falsehood inherent (to one extent or another) in each and every one of all the world’s religions (with the exception of the True Faith, Orthodox Christianity), we see ecumenism attempting to equate all these false religions of the world with the one and only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. Ecumenism, in a sense, gives life to all the dead ideologies and philosophies that have ever existed, for ecumenism attempts to validate and essentially equate all the false religions of the world, in its syncretism and relativism; and in the process it attempts to relativize Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body. To relativize Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church which is His Body and of which Christ Himself is the Head, is to deny Christ.

Ecumenism, in its various forms, does just that, and in that regard (its denial of the uniqueness of

\(^9\) This seems to be a common description of ecumenism by its critics. I heard a young Orthodox Priest, from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, call ecumenism a “Pan-heresy”. Likewise, an Old Calendar Greek Orthodox Bishop, Metropolitan Cyprian, uses the expression “the Pan-heresy of Ecumenism” (Cyprian, 1995, p. 6).
Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, ecumenism is simply an elaborate, all encompassing panheresy which has features as old as Orthodox Christianity itself. The great falsehood to be found abundantly in the world and throughout history, and well represented by the panheresy of ecumenism, is contrasted with the God-inspired humility, love, and courage of the Orthodox saints and martyrs. The forthcoming discussion is about these Orthodox saints and martyrs, and much of what they taught the world, which can be seen, academically, and, most significantly, can be lived with every aspect of a person’s being--if that person follows the Orthodox saints’ and martyrs’ heroic example. For indeed, these saints and martyrs, with incomparable sacrifice, pursued and ultimately attained that for which Christ the Son of God calls all humanity: sanctification (theosis)--united to Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church. The Orthodox saints and martyrs--with their God-inspired wisdom and with their God-inspired heroism--educate us, academically, and furthermore educate us to follow their incomparable example of courage and personal sacrifice leading to salvation and sanctification, in Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. This curriculum discusses much of what and how the Orthodox saints and martyrs teach us. The Orthodox saints and martyrs--with their God-inspired courage, wisdom and love for God, because they are truly united, as much as humanly possible, to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church--educate Orthodox Christians and the whole world as to how to follow and live the commandments of Christ. In the Orthodox saints and martyrs--with all that they accomplished by the grace of God, in their words and actions--we indeed see something which truly defies all the falsehood and power of this world. It is this great and necessarily courageous educational example--seen in the Orthodox saints and martyrs rejecting all falsehood and evil (no matter what the consequences), and forever remaining faithful to Christ and His
Holy Orthodox Church—that defies all worldly wisdom and power, including the Ecumenical Movement, and which will be examined in this curriculum.
PROLOGUE

This thesis will demonstrate the profound educational example given to the world by the Orthodox Christian saints, who, by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God, teach Orthodox Christians, and the rest of the world, Orthodox Trinitarian Theology—as is uniquely confessed within the Body of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church. This is something that, throughout history, these saints have accomplished miraculously, fearlessly and without compromise. By the grace of God, the Orthodox saints teach the world the eternal Holy Orthodox Faith, in the face of all oppression and persecution, not fearing nor serving anyone who hates Christ, but instead knowing, as St. Paul knew, that they could do all things in Christ Who would give them the strength that they needed to accomplish all things (Philippians 4:13)—for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body.

The Orthodox saints teach the world the unique and incomparable beauty that is Orthodox Christianity, by the grace of God, overcoming their own sinfulness and that of others (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132). The philosophy of education shown to the world by the Orthodox saints, as St. Justin Popovich faithfully relates to us, is the following: Only when a person is united to Christ can that person be saved, sanctified, enlightened and educated, and this is made possible by God Himself for His creation, humanity, with His own Incarnation and establishment of His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body—and which, by the unfathomable grace of God, preserves, defends and confesses all that God has uniquely given to it (Popovic, 2000, pp. 129-132). Through its saints, by the infinite mercy of the Triune God, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ seeks to educate and enlighten all its members (and all the rest of
humanity for that matter) preserving, defending, and teaching the fullness of all truth, which was uniquely given to it, as the one and only Body of Christ, by God Himself. Through its saints, by the grace of God, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, uniquely possessing the fullness of all truth, preserves, defends, teaches and lives Orthodox doctrine, as uniquely the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church—unchanged and unconquered throughout history. For the Orthodox throughout history, only the Orthodox saints are the true educators and they alone are the true educators (and this only by the grace of God); for the Orthodox saints completely submitted themselves to God Who became man, Christ the Theanthropos, as they remained united to His Body, the Holy Orthodox Church. The Orthodox saints and martyrs with unparalleled wisdom and courage taught Orthodox doctrine in the fullest sense, because, first and foremost, they struggled martyricly to do the will of God pursuing the sanctification and holiness which only God could give them. The great courage and wisdom with which Orthodox doctrine was taught to the world by the Orthodox saints and martyrs is accomplished by the unfathomable grace of God. For God gave the saints the courage, love and wisdom which they pursued, and which they needed (which all the Orthodox saints throughout the ages needed and acquired by the grace of God) in order to teach to the world Orthodox doctrine, undefiled and unaltered (Popovic, 2000, pp. 129-132).

Only because God gave the saints this wisdom, love, courage and holiness—in short only because God gave the Orthodox saints and martyrs the sanctification in Christ the Theanthropos, which they pursued with all their heart, soul and might, in their love for God and their fellow man (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 171)—are the Orthodox saints and martyrs the great educators that they are (Popovic, 2000, pp. 129-132). Without God we are nothing, and the
Orthodox saints and martyrs knew that truth and confessed it in every aspect of their life—united to Christ the Theanthropos, Who gave them the courage, strength, love and wisdom to accomplish the will of God for their own salvation, and for the salvation of those around them. Through their martyrlic life and death struggles for Christ (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11)—united to Christ in His Holy Orthodox Church, which is His Body—the Orthodox saints and martyrs have taught Orthodox Christian doctrine unchanged throughout history. For the Orthodox saints and martyrs knew that they had to remain united to Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body, in order to correctly give praise to, and teach the faithful regarding, the absolutely transcendent Suprasubstantial Trinity. As Orthodox theologians will often tell us, Orthodox Christianity is, Orthodoxia, the correct worship of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. And these same theologians will likewise tell us that Orthodox Christianity is also, Orthopraxia, correct actions—that is, if the Orthodox Faith is lived and confessed as the Orthodox saints and martyrs have taught us, through following the example of their heroic life, death, and rebirth in Christ the Theanthropos.

The Orthodox saints and martyrs confessed, lived and taught the Orthodox Faith undefiled and unaltered throughout history, united to the one and only Body of Christ, The Holy Orthodox Church. For these saints and martyrs knew that to fall away from the Holy Orthodox Faith, and succumb to the heresies ravaging the world throughout history (but unable to prevail against Orthodox Christianity), was an immensely grave matter. For contrary to much of the contemporary ecumenism and syncretism, which seems to dominate religious discussion in many instances, the Orthodox saints and martyrs knew the words of the Lord pertaining to heretics and
the falsehood which they propagate, and pertaining to everyone who is not sincere in their love for Christ the Theanthropos:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits will you know them. Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord”, shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matthew 7: 15-23) (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, pp. 22-23).

St. John Chrysostom comments on one of the verses from this passage, Matthew 7: 16. Here is some of what he had to say:

“The thistles and thorns are heretics. As a thistle or a thorn has prickles on every side, so have the servants of the devil, being filled on whatever side you consider them with perversity. Such thorns and thistles can never bring forth the fruits of the Church.” (The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume I), 1999, pp. 92-93)
We can see a striking similarity between what an ancient Orthodox Father, St. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), had to say regarding heretics, and what a modern day Orthodox saint, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, had to say about them. Here is some of what St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije had to say regarding heretics and the false teachings (heresies), which they propagate:

“The teaching of the Orthodox theanthropic Church of Christ through the holy apostles, the holy fathers and the holy Councils concerning heretics is this: heresies are not the Church and can never be it” (Popovic, 2000, p. 156). The Orthodox saints and martyrs are consistent with one another, throughout the unmatched and unbroken history of Orthodox Christianity. Their faithfulness to the Holy Orthodox Tradition has enabled them, through the unfathomable mercy of the Triune God, to successfully defend the Holy Orthodox Church against all the heresies which have risen up to destroy it.

The Orthodox saints and martyrs teach the world through their unmatched courage and faithfulness to Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church. The Orthodox saints are unwavering in their faithfulness to Orthodox Christianity and its eternal Holy Tradition. These saints heroically lived and died confessing Orthodoxy and teaching other Orthodox Christians to follow their example. This call to be faithful to Orthodoxy, and to all its written and unwritten Tradition, and to reject any and all heresy and innovation, is found throughout Holy Orthodox Tradition. For in the Holy Seventh Ecumenical Synod we are told: “If anyone breaks any ecclesiastical tradition, written or unwritten, let him be anathema” (Cavarnos, 1992a, p. 37).

10 Dates obtained from the Preface, p. xii, of The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume 1)
Orthodox Christianity’s unequaled consistency has been heroically guarded by every Orthodox saint throughout history. St. Athanasios the Great speaks in agreement with every Orthodox saint, when he tells us: “I have taught according to the Apostolic faith handed down to us by the Fathers, devising nothing outside it” (Cavarnos, 1992a, p. 14). Likewise, St. Photios the Great teaches us to follow Orthodox teaching, which has been handed down to us undefiled, and not attempt to alter it: “In matters of the Faith, even a small deviation is a sin that leads to death” (Bishop Angelos of Avlona, 1998, p. 42). These statements are certainly consistent with what the Holy Scriptures say, where for example the Apostle Paul teaches us, concerning written and unwritten tradition:

“Brethren, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which ye were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:15) (Cavarnos, 1992a, p. 37).

This thesis is about the unwavering confession of Orthodox Christianity made by the Orthodox saints in the face of all hardship, persecution and evil. This, of course, is contrasted with the cowardly relativism and syncretism of many of the world’s philosophies, including ecumenism. In this thesis, working under the Orthodox premise that the Holy Orthodox Church is indeed the one and only True Church of Christ—possessing the fullness of all truth in its Theology and worship (for it is uniquely the Body of Christ, established by Christ the Theanthropos Himself Who is its Head)—we contrast the absolute truth of Orthodox Christianity with all the other religions and philosophies of the world, which do not possess the fullness of all truth as Orthodoxy does. In our discussion in order to show what by the grace of God is the great educational accomplishment of the Orthodox saints in heroically living, confessing, and teaching
the Orthodox Faith to the world, we have to discuss, to at least some significant extent, the

Orthodox Faith itself, which (under Orthodox presuppositions) is the one and only True Faith.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is to discuss the incomparable educational example given to the world by the Orthodox Christian saints, who by their great courage and sanctity have throughout history confessed Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Holy Orthodox Church in the face of all adversity, persecution and oppression. The Orthodox saints through no intrinsic merit of their own, only by the unfathomable grace of God—for otherwise they, as all the rest of us, would be hopelessly lost in the evil and stupidity of this fallen world—teach all Orthodox Christians and all of humanity in general that only by the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, can man transcend the evil and stupidity that rules this world, and attain to the sanctification for which God has created us. The Orthodox saints, with their God-inspired fearlessness in the face of all evil, powerfully give a great educational example to the whole world through their holiness of life in Christ that defies all worldly power—no matter how frightful and all encompassing that worldly power may happen to be. This profound example of courage and holiness given to us by the Orthodox saints teaches us, warns us, exhorts us, and inspires us to seek God, the Holy Trinity, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. (cf. Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37-39)\(^{11}\) (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 171, ch. 29).

The Orthodox saints epitomize the pursuit and ultimately the fulfillment of the Lord’s commandment, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and

\(^{11}\) The “cf.”, in relation to all quotations from the *Philokalia*, as mentioned and outlined earlier, is the editors’ note.
with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself’ (cf. Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37-39) (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 171, ch. 29). In doing this, the Orthodox saints teach and encourage all of us by the grace of God, through their martyrlic witness (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11), to abandon our own willful wrongdoing and embrace of all the evil which dominates this fallen world. For indeed, evil is something into which we are all prone to fall, and is something into which we all are inevitably doomed to fall, whenever we willfully alienate ourselves from one another and our Creator, God, the Holy Trinity. With this in mind, it is the regrettable embrace of the ecumenical movement on the part of some Orthodox leaders and others, that is a clear example of people embracing some of the dead ideologies, and other evils of this fallen world, which are to be found abundantly in “the Pan-heresy of Ecumenism” (Cyprian, 1995, p. 6)—this rather than attempting to imitate the Orthodox saints in their courageous and uncompromising confession of the unique and unadulterated truth of Orthodox Christianity.

From an Orthodox Christian perspective, though I am sinful and cowardly, I will try to discuss the participation of various Orthodox leaders in the “Ecumenical Movement” and examine the effect and relationship that this participation has to Orthodox Christian witness and education worldwide (both to Orthodox and non-Orthodox persons). For indeed, Orthodox Christianity cannot be taught in the fullest sense apart from courageously witnessing to the world for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, independent of all evil and danger which is inevitably encountered in so doing. But who, by the grace of God, has taught and witnessed to the whole world for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is His Body, more courageously and eloquently than the Orthodox saints have? The answer is: no one. For many Orthodox
ecumenists and others do not confront much of the evil and falsehood of this world, but instead embrace it and validate it through their participation in the ecumenical movement. The striving for material comfort and self preservation apparently dominates the lives of such people—as it does the lives of most other people, myself included—as they pander to people and forces that have great worldly power, who often have profound hostility towards Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. Depending upon the extent to which it is pursued, ecumenism is, at its worst, an arrogant, false ideology that knowingly seeks to encompass and somehow give validity to all the false ideologies and religions of the world. Either way, ecumenism is indeed a false ideology that seeks to embrace and validate much of the falsehood of this fallen world. Who engages in ecumenism willfully to do these things with great evil intention in their hearts, and who does these things out of naivety and ignorance, and who does these things out of fear because they are confronted by overwhelming worldly power, and who does these things from whatever other reasons may exist? Only God can answer such things and only God can answer all other matters, and in the end His judgment will be perfect and final (see Appendix A).

The Uniqueness of Orthodox Christianity and the Absolute Transcendence of God

Orthodox Christianity makes the claim that it is the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church” founded by our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ through His apostles, who have led us to the right (Orthodox) worship of the Holy Trinity, the One God Who is the Three Divine Persons (Hypostases): the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Three divine hypostases: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are forever incomprehensible to us and to all the rest of creation, for God is forever a mystery to all of us (without exception), as Father John
Romanides’ brilliant research and discussion pertaining to such matters, faithful to the Orthodox Fathers, teaches us:

“[…]for the Fathers, no name or concept gives any understanding of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Saint Gregory the Theologian, e.g., is clear on this as we saw. He ridicules his opponents with a characteristic taunt: “Do tell me what is the unbegottenness of the Father, and I will explain to you the physiology of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, and we shall both of us be frenzy-stricken for prying into the mystery of God”[..] Names and concepts about God give to those who reach **theoria** understanding not of the mystery, but of the dogma and its purpose. In the experience of glorification, knowledge about God, along with prayer, prophecy and faith are abolished. Only love remains (1 Cor. 13, 8-13; 14,1). The mystery remains, and will always remain, even when one sees God in Christ face to face and is known by God as Paul was (1 Cor. 13.12). (Romanides, 1975)

St. Gregory the Theologian is beautifully consistent with Orthodox teaching—as only an Orthodox saint can be—in the above quotation, found in Father Romanides’ research; and we will discuss this profound statement of Orthodox doctrine pertaining to the absolute transcendence of the Triune God in more detail, later on in this paper.

Additionally, going hand in hand with what was just said, the Orthodox saints throughout the ages have taught us, as Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Father John Romanides tell us in their work, that God is forever inexpressible and incomprehensible to anything and anyone that is created, without any exception. God is forever a mystery to everything and
everyone that is created, without exception—God alone knows the mystery of God; only God knows God.

“Human beings can never understand the mysteries of God.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 78). Additionally—consistent with Romanides and others who are faithful to Holy Orthodox teaching pertaining to the absolute mystery of the Triune God and the experience of the unconquerable Orthodox saints—we know that there are no created means whatsoever by which we ever know the Uncreated God. This of course means that we cannot know the Uncreated Triune God through human language and not even through the words of Holy Scripture. St. Peter of Damaskos, around the 11th or 12th century, speaks of God, Who is absolutely transcendent and forever beyond human comprehension, beautifully when he tells us:

> It is indeed more correct to speak of God in Himself as inscrutable, unsearchable, inexplicable, as all that it is impossible to define. For He is beyond intellection and thought, and is known only to Himself, one God in three hypostases, unoriginate, unending, beyond goodness, above all praise. All that is said in divine Scripture is said with this sense of our inadequacy, that though we may know that God is, we cannot know what He is; for in Himself He is incomprehensible to every being endowed with intellect and reason. (St. Peter of Damascus, 1995, p. 143)

And, as such, there is not, in anyway whatsoever, any analogy between Who the absolutely transcendent Triune God is and what is seen in creation. There is no analogy whatsoever between Holy Scripture, regarding any and all of the words and concepts contained in Holy Scripture—all of which are words and concepts from our human language drawn from our created environment
—on the one hand, and the uncreated energies of God, which the glorified saints experience, on
the other hand. Even a person’s experience of the divine energy, which alone pertaining to God
we can have some knowledge of, is itself forever incomprehensible, for even this knowledge of
God is God being “known unknowingly”—for such knowledge is “a knowing which is beyond
knowing, God remaining a mystery even when man is united to Him and unknowingly knows
Him.” (Romanides, 1963-64)

Having seen this, it is clear to us that even the energies of God remain something literally
incomprehensible and indescribable to us, despite the fact that they are the only knowledge—and
that to a limited extent (for they are “known unknowingly”)—that we can ever have about God.
With that in mind, we note that—unlike with the limited possible knowledge, just mentioned,
pertaining to the energies of God (the divine energies)—it is never possible, in anyway at all, for
anything or anyone that is created to have knowledge of the divine hypostases and the divine
essence; for the divine hypostases and the divine essence are forever completely unknowable in
anyway to any of us, to all creation. Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos tell us this,
consistent with the teaching of the Orthodox Fathers:

“We know from Orthodox theology that we do not know the essence of God and
that we cannot know the hypostases of God. All we can know about God is a few things
about the energies of God.”

[…] “The subject-matter of theology cannot be the essence of God. It cannot be the
hypostases of God. The subject-matter of theology is the energies of God.” [Fr.
Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 75)
There is no analogy whatsoever between the contents of Holy Scripture, on the one hand—in regard to the words and concepts contained therein (for all of these words and concepts, without exception, are drawn from things created in order to point us to the Uncreated God)—and the Uncreated Triune God Who is forever incomprehensible and indescribable to creation, on the other hand. Certainly this is so—as Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Father John Romanides tell us in their brilliant work, consistent with the teaching of the Orthodox saints—for Holy Scripture is not the uncreated revelation of God (the uncreated energies); instead, Holy Scripture is created words, from our human language which was created by people to communicate with one another—of course our language is something that mankind was able to create by the grace of God our Creator, as St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches us. Our human language consists of concepts drawn exclusively from our created existence and experience, conveyed in created words which are inspired by God that discuss the experience of the saints throughout all the ages; these created words are about the uncreated revelation of God (the uncreated energies)—these created words and concepts are never the uncreated energies of God, nor are they in any way whatsoever the Three divine hypostases, nor the divine essence. The concepts, all of which are drawn (without exception) from our created experience, and the created words of our language (for there is no divine language, but instead it is a human creation by the grace of God, as St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us) are not and cannot ever be God, nor ever communicate Who God is to us (contrary to what the West thinks). The following quotations brilliantly convey some of what we are trying to say, in regard to these matters, and they certainly contradict the heretical thinking of Western Christianity. Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos comments brilliantly on such matters, as researched and discussed by Father John Romanides:
Fr. John accorded great significance and weight to the neptic tradition because, apart from the dogmas, it is there that the difference lies between the Orthodox tradition and the tradition of the Franco-Latins and the Protestants. He actually located this difference in the terms *analogia entis* (analogy of being) and *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith), which refer to different means of experiencing the revelation of God.

The *analogia entis* refers to the existence of an analogy between what is uncreated and what is created, that God created the world from archetypal forms, and man’s salvation consists in the return of his soul to the uncreated world of ideas. This is classical metaphysics, which influenced Franco-Latin theology. According to this theory, someone can know the essence of God, if he knows the essence of created things, by means of human reason (*logiki*). Barlaam expressed this tradition, which is why St Gregory Palamas reacted against this so-called “speculative analogy”.

The *analogia fidei* refers to man’s relationship with God through faith, as it is revealed in Holy Scripture. This tradition says that the revelation of God was given in words. It is not known through philosophy, but through Holy Scripture, which is the word of God. By studying Holy Scripture, one comes to know God and comes into contact with Him, because the revelation of God has been deposited in Holy Scripture, which is the word of God.

Fr. John Romanides asserted that both these traditions (*analogia entis* and *analogia fidei*) are characteristic of Western Christianity and alien to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. The Orthodox Church teaches that knowledge of God is gained by participating in God’s uncreated purifying, illuminating, and glorifying energy, which is
experienced within the Church through the Mysteries (Sacraments) and asceticism.

When someone who is glorified attains to the vision of the glory of God he encounters neither archetypal forms nor words, but participates in the uncreated Light and clearly discerns the difference between what is uncreated and what is created. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 24)

Father Romanides, in his brilliant work, consistent with the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church, tells us that through the uncreated energies of God—that is, through this uncreated Light which is the glory of the Triune God, which is experienced—the Orthodox saint discerns that the Uncreated God is the Holy Trinity and he discerns that one of the Three Lights has become incarnate and the other two are not incarnate. It is entirely uncreated reality that is experienced by the saint—with the exception, of course, that the uncreated Son of God became incarnate and this is something that was not seen by the saints of the Old Testament (for the Son of God had not condescended to become incarnate at that point in history). But certainly, and only after the Incarnation, the human nature assumed by the Son of God is seen by the Orthodox saints—the human nature is united to God the Word only after, certainly not before, the incarnation took place in history. The Son of God united our created human nature to His uncreated hypostasis; only God could accomplish this and only God knows how He did it—this is something that God condescended to accomplish for us, free of any compulsion or necessity on God’s part.
The human nature of Christ was not, and is not, eternally present in the divine nature. The human nature was certainly not something, in any way, eternally present in the divine nature\textsuperscript{12}—but instead the Incarnation, with God the Word uniting created human nature to His divine hypostasis (not to His divine nature), is something that God the Word condescended to accomplish in His divine hypostasis and within history. It is only because God freely condescends to accomplish the Incarnation within history that it is a reality at all—it is certainly not something eternally present in the divine nature—for the Incarnation is truly present and a reality only after the Son of God chose to do it, not before. As such, the Incarnation of God the Word being a reality only at the point in history, and afterwards, when He chose to accomplish it, accounts for the saints of the Old Testament not having seen the voluntarily assumed created human nature of God the Word—for God had not chosen to accomplish this yet for humanity. The saints of the Old Testament experienced, “saw”, God the Word, through His divine energies, through His uncreated glory—before He condescended to become Incarnate—though they did not experience God, in any way, through His divine essence, for this is forever impossible to anything and anyone created.

It is God the Word Who is called the Angel of Great Counsel, in the Old Testament; and He is the same One Who later, because of the Incarnation, is called “Christ”. God the Word, the Angel of Great Counsel, is called “Christ” and “Jesus” only after the Incarnation—only after God condescended to the level of created human existence. The Orthodox saints tell us this. The Son of God created the human nature which He voluntarily united to His divine hypostasis, 

\textsuperscript{12} Dr. George Gabriel writes pertaining to such matters beautifully, consistent with the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church.
having done so He thereafter is called by the human names “Jesus” and “Christ”\textsuperscript{13}—though, as the Orthodox saints teach us, in the strictest sense, all of our language is created and human. And since these human names, “Jesus” and “Christ” refer to what the same Uncreated God accomplished for us—in condescending to our human existence, within His very hypostasis—these same human names are used to refer to that same Uncreated Son of God, God the Word, even before His condescension to human existence. This is so because it is the very same Pre-eternal Son of God, God the Word, Who truly and freely condescended to become man for us—something that He was not in any way before—while remaining the Pre-eternal Son of God. This is so, of course, despite the fact that the application of the names pertaining to this condescension to human existence, namely, “Jesus” and “Christ”, pertain to a reality of human existence assumed in history by God the Word—certainly, this condescension to our created existence happened after God created the world and humanity. Additionally, before such condescension, human nature had nothing to do with the Son of God’s eternal existence as the Pre-eternal Uncreated God; and likewise, after such condescension the divine nature of God the Word remained completely foreign to human nature and all other created nature—for the union of the divine nature and human nature took place in the divine hypostasis of God the Word, and not at all in the divine nature of God the Word (and in a way known only to God, as the Fathers tell us).

So in the Creed when we say “in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made” we are certainly not confessing any form of pantheism by supposedly making the voluntarily assumed created human nature, at a

\textsuperscript{13} St. Gregory of Nyssa and other Orthodox saints tell us this.
point in time—after the creation of the world, by God the Word—something that is in any way co-beginningless with the same Uncreated God Who for us condescended to our human created existence. Instead, it is merely because the One Who truly condescended to human existence for us, and condescends to be named in our human language, is the same God Who is truly and absolutely incomprehensible, unnameable and indescribable in any language—and thus is named in our language by what He does for us, so that we can somehow point to the absolutely transcendent Triune God Who despite any names, language and thought nevertheless and utterly transcends all thought, comprehension, names, and language forever and in the most absolute sense.

After the historic event of the incarnation, the Orthodox saints see the human nature with which the Son of God condescended to be clothed; and this reality they can see only by the uncreated grace of God. It must absolutely be noted that the experience of the uncreated energies of the Triune God—which this same Triune God grants to the saints—has nothing whatsoever to do with created reality; as such, it has nothing to do with our human language, as is seen in the words below which discuss what an Orthodox saint sees when experiencing the glorifying energy of God: “He knows that the glory is uncreated, that the energies are uncreated. He does not see the essence. Within the glory he discerns the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Of course God is not these names.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 45)

This is certainly consistent with what Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos said earlier, in his faithful confession of Orthodoxy:
When someone who is glorified attains to the vision of the glory of God he encounters neither archetypal forms nor words, but participates in the uncreated Light and clearly discerns the difference between what is uncreated and what is created. (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 24)

Looking at the longer quotation from which the above quotation of Father Romanides is taken, we see the following:

“That is to say, one Light, which is three Lights. But these Lights are not three separate Lights. The glorified see the archetypal Light in one Light, by means of the other Light. This was the basis of their experience.” In other words, “in the Light (of the Holy Spirit) through the Light (of Christ) we see the source of Light (the Father).”

“The experience of glorification is something different (in contrast with philosophical speculation), which someone has before him and lives within the mystery of the Holy Trinity. He knows that the glory is uncreated, that the energies are uncreated. He does not see the essence. Within the glory he discerns the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Of course God is not these names. He sees Light, Light, Light. Light from Light, Light incarnate, Light not incarnate, which is Light from the first Light.

So the two Lights are from the first Light. The one Light has taken flesh, the other is not incarnate. This is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The fact that one Light is incarnate and the other two Lights are not incarnate means that this distinction exists between the three Lights. This needs to be formulated and expressed in some way, so
that the catechumen, who has no experience of glorification, knows about this matter.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 45)

So the Orthodox saints must somehow differentiate, through the use of our human language, regarding their experience of uncreated reality—namely, pertaining to their experience of the Holy Trinity seen as threefold Light, by means of created human language, they must give to the catechumen some knowledge pertaining to these matters—but in actuality no language can adequately convey anything pertaining to the experience of the uncreated energies of God.

To differentiate or distinguish between the Three divine hypostases of the Holy Trinity, God the Word Who condescended to become man—and is called “Christ” because of what He accomplished for us in condescending to become man—condescended to the use of our human language and having done so He chose to name the Three divine hypostases, in our human language, as “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit” and the Apostles and all the Saints followed this naming of the Three divine hypostases (Hierotheos, 2013, pp. 60, 66-67, 77). Certainly, God being the absolutely unapproachable, incomprehensible, and transcendent God—and forever known only to Himself and to no one else—had no need for Himself to utilize human language in order to somehow know Himself, as though fearful of forgetting Who He was (St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches us this, beautifully) (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 289); instead, God did this—condescending to our human condition, including speaking our created human language—for our benefit, and having condescended to using this very same human language of ours, He gave to us these names “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit” from this very same human language and created environment which He used for our benefit to point us to God. But we must never forget that in
reality no language or concept nor any word or name whatsoever can ever possibly comprehend in anyway whatsoever Who this God is to which these names point. Father Romanides following the Orthodox Fathers, conveys this Orthodox teaching in his brilliant work in numerous places. For example this faithfulness on Romanides’ part to this profound Orthodox teaching is found in the following:

Thus in the Patristic tradition and Palamas the incommunicable hypostatic properties of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or of unbegotten cause and source of divinity (Father), of the effect receiving its existence by the mode of begetting (Son), and of the effect receiving its existence by the mode of procession (the Holy Spirit), are neither names of the divine essence nor definitions of the three hypostases, but names of their relations which are known by revelation and at the same time inexplicable because beyond the categories of human reason. (Romanides, 1963-64)

Having said this, we of course know, as mentioned earlier, that there are no words whatsoever in our human language nor are there any concepts in our mind nor is there anything else, anywhere else, in all creation which can communicate to us Who God is in His very essence or nature; the same of course holds true in regard to the divine hypostases—as we said earlier. There are no names, no words, no concepts nor anything else which can communicate to us what the divine hypostases are. In fact, the words: “divine hypostases”, “Holy Trinity”, “God”, “Triune God”, “divine essence”, “divine nature”, “Supra-substantial Trinity”, “Father”, “Son”, “Holy Spirit” etc. are themselves all words, obviously from our human language, and as such are
all words which are the product of our created environment and created human existence, experience and conception—words are used to point to the mystery of the Supra-substantial Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; but no words or concepts can ever communicate or comprehend this mystery of the Triune God (as St. Gregory the Theologian told us and Father Romanides as well, following the holy Fathers). As we were told above, “We know from Orthodox theology that we do not know the essence of God and that we cannot know the hypostases of God. All we can know about God is a few things about the energies of God.” This has to be kept in mind when we look at the names of God in Holy Scripture and elsewhere—which are all, without exception, taken from our human language and human experience, and are all, without exception, taken from our created environment. Father Romanides speaks of this:

The Bible uses sayings in order to express concepts, and all the concepts that it uses are taken without exception from aspects of creation that can all be described. There is not even one created thing that is indescribable. (Romanides, 2008, p. 137)

Elsewhere, in many other places and very faithful to Orthodox teaching, Father Romanides often speaks of these matters, brilliantly:

“Do we have anything else in Holy Scripture apart from words and concepts? Is there anything else in Holy Scripture? There is nothing else. It is all words and concepts. There is nothing that is not in a word, unless someone sees the odd comma or hyphen between the words, everything else in Holy Scripture is words. These words convey
concepts. We have concepts and words, but we cannot attribute either words or concepts to God, because God transcends words and concepts.” (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 257)

With this in mind, we are able to better understand the following—which is faithful to Orthodox Patristic theology—from Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos:

To distinguish the Persons of the Holy Trinity, they were named ‘Father’, ‘Son’ and ‘Holy Spirit’ by Christ, the Apostles and the saints. Later, this experience was described in the language of that era, in order to oppose heretics. Thus the terms ‘essence’, ‘energy’, ‘person-hypostasis’ and ‘hypostatic property’ were used.

Nevertheless, in the vision of God, God is seen as light. (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 60)

As we said, our created human language with all of its concepts drawn exclusively from created reality was used by Christ Himself—for God the Word condescended to our created existence—and by the apostles and saints to point to the Uncreated God. And consistent with everything just said pertaining to these matters, this uncreated light, which was mentioned earlier, is not a created light nor does it resemble any created light. The Orthodox saints teach us, as Father Romanides tells us, the following: “There is no similarity whatsoever between the created and the uncreated.” We are told, by Romanides, that the Orthodox Fathers knew this and meant it entirely, for it is absolutely true.

“Following the Holy Fathers...,”

From its beginning, the Orthodox Church having the fullness of the Holy Spirit has taught and defended the Orthodox worship of God, the Holy Trinity, throughout the ages against
all false teaching (heresy). The question is therefore asked, why have numerous Orthodox leaders of recent times sought to establish union with people and religious confessions that clearly do not confess nor believe in the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church? It would seem by the actions and comments of some of these Orthodox leaders that they somehow regard Orthodoxy as a “relative truth” to be placed alongside other “relative truths” in the contradictory, syncretistic panorama and confusion that is the “Ecumenical Movement”, in all its forms and manifestations. Certainly, the syncretism and relativism of ecumenism is manifested in numerous ways and within numerous contexts, throughout the world, seen either in ecumenism’s overtly organized forms or seen simply in the pervasive logic and power of our fallen world, which so often opposes Christ and the only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church.

It seems that there are Orthodox leaders who themselves do not believe that the Orthodox Church is itself uniquely the Church and that the decisions of the Holy Seven Ecumenical Synods (and other Holy Synods) are infallible—having been guided by the Holy Spirit, through the attendance and participation of great God-inspired saints who courageously fought all the heretics and their man-made religions—14—and that the decisions from these Synods are therefore nonnegotiable and not subject to interpretation outside of the Holy Tradition once and for all given uniquely to the Orthodox Church on the day of Pentecost. Or is it simply that some of these same leaders do not have the courage—for I likely would not either, whereas the Orthodox saints were truly unbreakable, by the grace of God—to teach undefiled and without compromise the incomparable Orthodox Christian Faith. This last matter, that of courage, is of immense importance regarding the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Faith in the face of everything and

14 Romanides speaks of these matters often.
everyone that is against Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church.

At this point, we must clarify some terminology to avoid confusion, the Holy Seven Ecumenical Synods or Councils were convened by the ancient, undivided Church to defend against heresies which had arisen and threatened the Orthodoxy of the Church. Nothing new was formulated or confessed at these Holy Ecumenical Synods; simply the ancient Orthodox Christian Faith received from Jesus Christ through His Apostles was defended. These Seven Ecumenical Synods or Councils were held from 325 A.D. to 787 A.D. in the Byzantine Empire, an Empire which, by the mercy of the Triune God, defended Orthodox Christianity for more than 1,100 years before it fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453—by which time Byzantium had managed to confess and spread Orthodox Christianity to much of the world, in particular to Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Orthodox Christianity, with absolutely no intrinsic merit belonging to Orthodox Christians themselves, uniquely to this day and forever, follows (without innovation or change) the decisions of the Holy Ecumenical Synods and the entire Holy Orthodox Tradition given to the Church on the day of Pentecost. So, despite the same word “Ecumenical” used in both of the expressions: “The Holy Ecumenical Synods or Councils” and “The ecumenical movement”; the two expressions have absolutely nothing to do with one another. The Holy Ecumenical Synods or Councils have to do with the ancient defense of the unique truth that is Orthodox Christianity, whereas the ecumenical movement and ecumenism have to do with the attempt to trivialize practically all theological differences (no matter how profound they may be) in order to follow
the faithless, cowardly, pandering that is the “dialogue of love”, of which the ecumenists are so fond of speaking.

The ecumenical movement and ecumenism are well characterized by the Orthodox scholar, Dr. Constantine Cavarnos (1992a) when he writes, “Ecumenism is obviously not simply an innovation, but is a dreadful hodgepodge of innovations and heresies, a frightful syncretism which aims to overthrow the entire Divine edifice that is called the Orthodox Christian Church and to erect in its place the new Tower of Babel” (pp. 34-35).

The fathers of the Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory (Monastery of Gregoriou) Mount Athos (1996), Greece summarize the Orthodox view when they say:

The One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, that is, the Orthodox Church, is “the pillar and ground of the Truth” (I Timothy 3:15). It is impossible to confess the Christian Faith truly and fully, save in the Orthodox Church alone. How, then, can we Orthodox acknowledge the Truth of the Faith in places other than the Church?” … “In keeping with this spirit, the phrase: “We now clearly understand...,” has no place among Orthodox. The classical Patristic dictum, “Following the Holy Fathers...,” is the only one which expresses how Orthodox understand themselves. (p. 6)

At this point it must be noted that the fathers on Mount Athos are here addressing specifically the dialogues that have gone on and apparently are still going on with the non-Chalcedonian heretics, the Monophysites, but they clearly are also speaking of all dialogues with
any and all other non-Orthodox confessions, as we shall see. They go on to tell us, fully in conformity with Orthodox Christian Tradition:

We do not believe that the present theological engagement of heretics outside the Church serves the Truth. First, because the language of the Church with regard to heretics has always been, since Apostolic times, refutative: “Better, indeed, a laudable war than a peace which severs one from God” (St. Gregory the Theologian). This stand of the Church is actually charitable, for it both protects the Flock of Christ from heresy and provides heretics with motives and reasons for returning to the Church.

Let it be noted, in passing, that the Ecclesiastical Body is comprised of Baptized Orthodox Christians, and of them alone. The preservation of the unity of the Ecclesiastical Body means, consequently, the ensuring of their Orthodoxy and their perseverance to the end within the bosom of the Church; and this precisely constitutes an important part of the Church’s pastoral concern. We do not include within the Ecclesiastical Body, however, heretics outside the Church. The struggle and the concern of the Church reach even to them, but the intent of that struggle is their return to the Church and not the devising by contrived means of peaceful coexistence with them under some nebulous kind of ecclesiastical communion. (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 7)
As was just seen, faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. Gregory the Theologian teaches all Orthodox Christians: “Better, indeed, a laudable war than a peace which severs one from God”. The call to pursue this kind of uncompromising defense of the unique and unparalleled truth that is Orthodox Christianity is of immense importance for the truthful and courageous confession of the one and only Truth, Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body (Popovic, 2000, pp. 1, 48, 53, 154-155). Such a defense is characteristic of the life and death struggles of every Orthodox saint and martyr who has ever lived, and is accomplished by the infinite grace of God, in the face of all falsehood and evil. As such, and obviously, the above beautiful statement of St. Gregory the Theologian must never be misunderstood. And indeed, anyone familiar with the incomparable history of Orthodox Christianity will not misinterpret this statement. Unlike what has been characteristic of Islam, throughout its history, and which is also to be found within the more radical elements of Judaism, and which, generally speaking, is also to be found prominently among certain people from the various faith communities of the world, including many who identify themselves as Orthodox Christian, the Orthodox saints and martyrs never worked for the propagation and justification of violence to further political and religious goals. The glorification and justification of violence promulgated exclusively (or nearly so) for clearly non-defensive purposes, and serving expansionist political and religious ideologies is seen throughout history and to this very day. We see such non-defensive, and one could better say, “satanic”, violence (not that any violence is good, because it never is) as something which is glorified and perpetrated, throughout history, by many of the followers of the various humanistic philosophical and political systems (see Chapter
For example, many of the most ardent followers of Capitalism and Marxism have exalted aggression and non-defensive violence as something which is justified to accomplish their goals. We have seen, throughout history, humanity’s crimes and evil against humanity. We see this on an individual scale, person against person, and on an international scale as well, when more powerful nations attack weaker nations, unprovoked. People with great worldly power at a particular moment in history, whoever they may be, oftentimes use their political and economic power to support, defend and impose their philosophy and religion against others, in one way or another. And those very same powerful people oftentimes use their philosophy and religion as their justification for the economic and political exploitation of others, as well. Orthodox Christianity, as the Body of Christ, transcends all such evil and oppression. However, countless Orthodox Christians, and others, do not transcend all such evil and oppression, but instead cooperate with it. To find the people who have transcended all such evil and oppression, we again must look to the Orthodox saints who epitomize virtue for all of humanity to clearly see, and this only by the mercy God.

From an Orthodox perspective, Orthodox Christianity is the one and only true Church of Christ. From an Orthodox perspective, Orthodox Christianity is the one and only true Faith. Orthodox Christians believe that the Holy Orthodox Church was created and established by God Himself and as such, in terms of its Theology and its unmatched historical continuity, is without error, for it is uniquely the Body of Christ with Christ our God as its Head. Only by the mercy of the Triune God, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, in its Theology and historical continuity, is flawless. This does not change the fact that countless Orthodox Christians have sinned greatly throughout history and continue to do so. Nor does it justify the perpetration of evil by many
Orthodox Christians in both war and in peace, which has occurred throughout history and continues to this day. The statement of St. Gregory the Theologian: “Better, indeed, a laudable war than a peace which severs one from God”, is a call to each and every Orthodox Christian inspiring them to remain Orthodox forever, no matter what hardship and persecution will follow because of their rejection of heresy. When St. Sergius of Radonezh encouraged St. Dmitri Donskoï to fight the Islamic Mongols, in order to liberate Orthodox Russia from the persecution and oppression which was being inflicted upon countless Orthodox Christians, he was inspiring St. Dmitri Donskoï to stand and lead his people against almost insurmountable power and oppression. If St. Dmitri Donskoï had not heroically followed the advice of St. Sergius, the Mongols would have likely killed countless more people in their rampage through history, as they were seeking to destroy Orthodox Christianity in Russia, and replace it with Islam (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40).

*The Strength of God Perfectly Manifested, Despite the Weakness of His Servants*

God will judge all people and their actions. Orthodox Christianity having been persecuted relentlessly throughout history by countless adversaries, and sometimes most significantly by Orthodox Christians themselves, remains alive forever as the one true Faith, by the mercy of God. When the Orthodox saints and martyrs were persecuted and overwhelmed by people and forces who were much more powerful than they, God never forsook them and even in their weakness in relation to others, which was a humbling reality that they were forced to bear, this further made them realize their complete dependence upon God, much more vividly than people who had more power than they. The Orthodox saints and martyrs were humbled, realizing that
they were powerless (as all people are) without the power that only God can give. In a sense the saints and martyrs were spared the blindness and delusion often seen throughout history (and to this very day) among those with great power. For the people who had great worldly power failed to humbly acknowledge the One Who had given them their power, God. For as God revealed to St. Paul and he understood, we can likewise say that all the rest of the Orthodox saints and martyrs “fought the good fight” (2 Tim 4:7), and they also understood what God revealed to them. The Orthodox saints and martyrs knew that in their struggles they could do nothing without God, and the grace of God was all that they needed. And indeed, this unfathomable grace of the Triune God is what has eternally sustained the Holy Orthodox Church through its incomparable history, and it always will. Confirming such things, we listen to the God-inspired wisdom of St. Paul the Apostle, as God taught him, and as God teaches all of us:

My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) (The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: according to the received Greek text together with the English authorised version, p. 464) (Translated from the Greek).

So, first and foremost, we can understand the earlier statement of St. Gregory the Theologian, as something which is consistent with the heroic struggles of all the Orthodox saints and martyrs, for they suffered and persevered and they all can say, along with St. Paul: “I have
fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”(2 Tim 4:7) (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 499).

Orthodoxy: Alone the True Faith, In Spite of the Profound Unworthiness of Orthodox Christians

When we Orthodox deny Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body, through our actions and embrace of beliefs foreign to our unconquerable Orthodox heritage, then we become more atheistic than everyone else—as proof, just look at practically the unmatched devastation wrought by nominally Orthodox Christians against their own people in just the twentieth century in their embrace of Marxism and other humanistic systems. When we Orthodox deny Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, the only True Church, then we who are nominally Orthodox (myself most guilty of this, in my cowardice and sinfulness) become more atheistic than any of the heretics—our disbelief becomes worse than that found in the heresies of Judaism, Islam, Papism, Protestantism, Hinduism and all the rest. The heretics have the excuse of ignorance and not being raised in the true Faith, Orthodox Christianity. But what is our excuse, as Orthodox Christians? We have none, for we have the only True Faith which we oftentimes choose not to live. As such, what Christ said of the Jews who had the True Faith but rejected Christ, the Son of God, their Creator—thereby rejecting Faith in the True God—applies equally to us nominally Orthodox Christians (myself included) who in name have the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity, but we refuse to live it as Christ God commands of us:

20 Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent:
21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you were done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 “But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

23 “And you Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 “But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.” [Matthew 11:20-24] (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and psalms, 1993, p. 33)

The following was written by great modern day Orthodox Saints, St. Justin Popovich and St. Nikolai Velimirovich, where they condemn European peoples’ allegiance, reliance, and subservience to great worldly power. These quotations that follow are certainly to be applied, one could even say predominately, to the Christian groups of the West, who long ago left Orthodox Christianity under heretical leadership—and thus their longstanding historic embrace of heresy, both in Europe and elsewhere. But, certainly, this same condemnation can be applied to us nominally Orthodox Christians who oftentimes embrace the same delusion of subservience to worldly power and culture—oftentimes with more voracity than the heretics (as we have seen), and in doing so we greatly disrespect Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church which is alone the True Church.
If Europe had remained Christian, it would have been praising Christ and not culture. Even the great peoples of Asia, unbaptised yet spiritually well-disposed, would understand this. For those peoples also take pride in their faiths, their deities and their religious writings: some of them in the Koran, some in the Vedas, or others. They do not boast of the works of their hands, their culture, but by something that they regard as higher than themselves, in fact the highest in the world. Only European peoples do not praise Christ or Christ’s Gospel, but boast by their dangerous machines and cheap products, i.e. their culture. The consequence of this European self-praise through their intrusive culture is that all non-Christian peoples came to hate Christ and Christianity. By hating the lesser, they came to hate the greatest. By hating European products and people, they came to hate the European God as well. But, alas, Europe does not care. It has, first of all, come to hate and reject its God. European humanity has been brought to this unenviable situation by its erroneous development under the influence of an erroneous Church during the past nine hundred years. This is not the fault of the European peoples; it is the fault of their spiritual leaders. The flock is not at fault; the shepherds are. [St. Justin Popovich quotes St. Nikolai Velimirovich] (Popovic, 2000, p. 169)

As we just saw, the heretics, despite their delusional beliefs, oftentimes show much greater humility, much less self adulation, and more respect for things which they regard as much higher
than themselves—despite the falsehood of their beliefs—than than most Westerners do who originally had Orthodox Christianity, the only True Faith.

The West has become childish. In this lies its ugliness and its tragedy. In its Christian period, when the West was Orthodox, it saw by the spirit and observed by the mind. But, the further it went from Christian truth and virtues, the shorter its spiritual sight became, until in the twentieth century it became altogether darkened. It now has only corporeal eyes left for sensual perception.

[...] [St. Justin Popovich quotes St. Nikolai Velimirovich] (Popovic, 2000, pp. 170-171)

St. Nikolai Velimirovich tells us that the West has the great technology to see the physical universe and environment, but has become spiritually blind—after having abandoned Orthodox Christianity.

And that is as far as it goes. As far as mental sight and spiritual insight into the hidden essence of things and the sense and the meaning of all creation in the vast cosmos surrounding us goes, oh my brethren, European humanity is today more blind than Muslim Arabia, Hindu India, Buddhist Tibet and spiritist China. Indeed, Christ has not suffered a greater shame in the last two thousand years than this: the baptised are blinder than the unbaptised. [St. Justin Popovich quotes St. Nikolai Velimirovich] (Popovic, 2000, pp. 170-171)
The power-hungry and arrogant peoples of Europe never admit their fault. They have lost the concept of sin, of sin and repentance. They blame others for every wrongdoing in the world, never themselves. How can they commit sin when they sit on God’s throne and have proclaimed themselves infallible gods? [St. Justin Popovich quotes St. Nikolai Velimirovich] (Popovic, 2000, p. 172)

One cannot help but see, from this very last quotation, at least: the extremely stupid and cruel conduct, throughout history and to this very day of the world’s power elite (certainly not just in Europe). And the same such conduct can be seen in all of us in general (myself included)—this oftentimes occurs when we feel that we have the power to be abusive towards other people in a particular situation. Obviously, for those of us who have much less worldly power, in a particular situation, compared to other people, and intending to do harm to others in some way, then this lack of great worldly power on our part results in our abusiveness towards others being on a much smaller scale compared to that inflicted by the world’s power elite—but, our evil conduct can very much remain equally stupid and cruel when compared to anyone else’s, in terms of intention, and even surpass it. The lack, or abundance, of great worldly power is more the determination of the scale of the fulfillment of people’s evil intentions than anything else is—just look at all the wars started, preemptively, in the name of world peace. Of course, when we choose to follow such powerful people who hate Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, believing or embracing their delusion, then we become equally stupid and cruel and can even out
do them in their depravity. Whenever we Orthodox deny the only true Faith, Orthodox
Christianity—as countless of us have throughout history—we are then more atheistic than
everyone else, by far.

Again, I absolutely must make it clear that I am a pretentious, lustful, hypocritical,
jealous, and cowardly man; in all my unworthiness and sinfulness I am not much different than
most other people, in fact in many regards I am sure that I am worse. As Orthodox Christians we
look to the countless Orthodox saints who have cooperated with the uncreated grace of God and
have been able to confront all evil courageously to the glory of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus
Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church which is His Body. Through no intrinsic merit of our own
do we Orthodox Christians possess this incomparable, absolute truth called Orthodox
Christianity, it is simply a gift from God. Orthodox Christians are under no circumstances any
better or any more worthy, than anyone else, we simply by the unfathomable grace of God, the
Holy Trinity, possess uniquely the fullness of all truth called Orthodox Christianity which is
found only in the Orthodox Church, the Body of Christ. We quote Bishop Kallistos Ware (1997)
to aid in the elucidation of this point:

Orthodoxy, believing that the Church on earth has remained and must remain
visibly one, naturally also believes itself to be that one visible Church. This is a bold
claim, and to many it will seem an arrogant one; but this is to misunderstand the spirit in
which it is made. Orthodox believe that they are the true Church, not on account of any
personal merit, but by the grace of God. They say with Saint Paul: “We are no better than
pots of earthenware to contain this treasure; the sovereign power comes from God and
not from us” (2 Corinthians IV, 7). But while claiming no credit for themselves, Orthodox
are in all humility convinced that they have received a precious and unique gift from God; and if they pretended to others that they did not possess this gift, they would be guilty of an act of betrayal in the sight of heaven. (p. 246)

Again, we also say with Bishop Kallistos Ware (1997):

Does it therefore follow that anyone who is not visibly within the Church is necessarily damned? Of course not; still less does it follow that everyone who is visibly within the Church is necessarily saved. As Augustine wisely remarked, “How many sheep there are without, how many wolves within!” [Homilies on John, xlv, 12]¹⁵ (p. 247)

Archbishop Paul of Finland speaks beautifully regarding the unmatched historical continuity of the Holy Orthodox Church:

The Orthodox Church simply calls itself “the Church,” just as the Greeks in the past used the word “Christians” to refer to the Orthodox. This follows naturally from the fact that the Eastern Orthodox Church is organically the same congregation or ecclesia which was born at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem on Pentecost. In many places already mentioned in the New Testament this congregation has remained the same throughout history. The Orthodox Church does not need to give proof of its historical authenticity; it is simply the direct continuation of the Church of the Apostolic Age.

¹⁵ Bishop Kallistos Ware mentions this as the source of the quotation from Augustine, in the form of a footnote. I have provided that information in bracketed form.
Does the Orthodox Church of today in fact correspond to the picture we get of the congregation of the Apostolic Age when we read the New Testament and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers? It does—as much as a grown-up person corresponds to a picture taken of him as a child. Although the Church has developed, it is the same in essence and spirit in the twentieth century as it has been from the beginning. (Archbishop Paul of Finland, 1999, p. 15)

[Archbishop Paul wrote this in the twentieth century, and of course the Orthodox Church will remain forever the only true Church.]

The coming of Christ when the time was “fulfilled” (Mk 1:15) was an appointed event; indeed, our calendar begins there. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the “promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4) was also an appointed, unique historical event. For the Church it meant “power from on high” and “the Spirit of truth” (Lk 24:49, Jn 16:13). On the strength of this we believe that although the grace of the Holy Spirit is at work in the later churches and communities according to their faith, the plentitude of grace once given to the Church in the historical outpouring of the Holy Spirit will not be given again. (Archbishop Paul of Finland, 1999, p. 15)

We can certainly see from the above confession of Archbishop Paul of Finland that Orthodox Christianity is truly the original Church, for its historical continuity and unbroken faithfulness to its heritage clearly testify to this—most significantly, the lives and heroic struggles, throughout history, of our countless unconquerable Orthodox Saints testify to this. The heterodox churches which came after the Orthodox Church, are simply religious organizations born of innovation
and heresy—having fallen away from Orthodoxy at various times (as St. Justin Popovic and other Orthodox Saints tells us). These made up churches attempt to claim apostolic authenticity while ignoring Holy Orthodox tradition—and the fact that these churches are simply a recent innovation prone to constant theological flux proves this. The Papal church subverts Holy tradition by placing the “infallible” Pope above it; and the multi-variant Protestant heresies claim that Holy Scripture alone saves, while ignoring that the ancient Orthodox Church is the one that determined, through divine inspiration, what the Canon of Holy Scripture would be (which books would constitute the Bible). Again, Archbishop Paul of Finland:

It is to the Church, which defined what the contents of the Bible would be, that the Orthodox Christian turns for his interpretation of the Bible. It is not merely a question of the authority of the Church; the promise was given only to the pure in heart that “they shall see God.” (Mt 5:8) In other words, the truths contained in God’s word are revealed to a man in the right light only insofar as his heart is purified. No individual person has possessed complete purity of heart and hence complete infallibility in interpreting the word of God. However, this gift has been granted to the Church as a whole through the Spirit of truth acting within it. In practice this means that when all or most of the Church Fathers known for their holy lives have been consistent with one another in their explanation of some point of Scripture, it has become truth to the members of the Church. Without such a criterion the authority of the Bible would rest upon the subjective opinion of each individual trying to interpret it. It is our belief that
the Bible by itself, without the Tradition as its living interpreter, is insufficient as a source of truth. (Archbishop Paul of Finland, 1999, pp. 18-19)

We continue with what Archbishop Paul can teach us on these matters:

Therefore we need the power of the Holy Spirit, which was given to the Church, to guide it to the truth and to protect it. The verbal formulations of the faith which was in the consciousness of the Church from the very beginning have developed over a long period.

(Archbishop Paul of Finland, 1999, pp. 16-17)

This reminds us of what Father Romanides and others, following the Fathers, have told us: the Church did not grow in its understanding, as the heretics claim in their ecclesiology, but rather expressed in words our theology, as much as was possible, in order to combat heresies so that it could further edify and guide the Orthodox faithful.

Similarly, the whole ecclesiastical life has found richer and richer expressions in the various parts of Christ’s Church which differ from one another in form but not in spirit. Thus every attempt to create an apostolic congregation, disregarding the work of the Holy Spirit which has gone on in the Church for two thousand years, seems artificial from the Church’s point of view. (Archbishop Paul of Finland, 1999, p. 16)

Archbishop Paul speaks very well on this matter. It is definitely artificial for a religious organization born of innovation and heresy to claim being apostolic in character—that is
obvious. All of the made-up religions do this—evangelicalism and televangelism, with their subservience to worldly power, epitomize this.

With all of this in mind, we also see that Archbishop Paul tells us—something very beautiful and inspiring and certainly faithful to our Holy Orthodox tradition—that the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ will endure forever as God has promised to us, despite our human weakness and failings:

Just as Christ has both a divine and human nature, so has the Church. On its human side the Church is susceptible to errors, weaknesses and failings, but it has consolation in the promise: “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Mt 16:18) This means that though the storms of time may ravage the human substance of the Church, they will not destroy the Church. The Church will endure until the next period of God’s rule over the world is ushered in, until the parousia or Second Coming of Christ. Until then the Church which was established at the first Christian Pentecost will endure as the protector of the truth, maintaining its characteristic features of apostolic priesthood, the Eucharist and other sacraments, and the common experience of the Church, its Tradition. (Archbishop Paul of Finland, 1999, pp. 16-17)

Again, in all sincerity and in no uncertain terms, it must be noted that Orthodox Christians are in absolutely no way, intrinsically, “better” or “more worthy” or “more significant” than any other people are. Regarding Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians from the innumerable denominations and sects which tragically are separated from Orthodox
Christianity, and any and all other peoples, the fact remains: Obviously, there are multitudes of people to be found in the innumerable faith communities (both Christian and non-Christian) throughout the world which, as we said, are not Orthodox Christian and yet these same non-Orthodox communities (both Christian and non-Christian) nonetheless have countless people who are kinder, more generous, more honorable and more courageous than multitudes of Orthodox Christians are. *Intrinsically* and *innately* Orthodox Christians possess what all other people possess: *absolutely nothing*. We, all of humanity *without exception*, in and of ourselves possess absolutely nothing, because our very existence, our very being, is a gift from God, with God having been under absolutely no necessity or compulsion whatsoever to create us. We, absolutely, do not have anything in and of ourselves. This having been said, Orthodox Christianity, also in no uncertain terms, believes itself to be *uniquely* the one True Church of Christ, founded by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Pre-eternal Son of God Himself. The Orthodox believe that the Holy Orthodox Church is—through no merit of their own—uniquely, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Body of Christ, and there is no other. The living, unconquerable and unchanging reality of Holy Orthodoxy, by the mercy of God, the Holy Trinity, teaches to the entire world the Orthodox (right) worship of God, the Holy Trinity.

All that has been said so far in the introductory paragraphs must be kept in mind throughout this entire thesis, otherwise I myself, and this entire discussion will be grossly misunderstood and misinterpreted.
CHAPTER 2

THE ABSOLUTE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD, THE SUPRASUBSTANTIAL TRINITY

The Uncreated remains Uncreated, and the created remains created.

In discussing the incomprehensibility and absolute transcendence of the Triune God, we will use as our guides the unconquerable Orthodox saints, who by the grace of God have become spiritual parents to all Orthodox Christians. The Orthodox saints, throughout human history, have each conformed their created human will to the uncreated will of God—in other words, these saints have each cooperated with the uncreated energies of God, while themselves forever remaining created and human and God forever remaining uncreated and God. The inherent attributes and limitations associated with being human (namely that we forever remain created and human) are truly the way that things are and always will be, both in this age and in the age to come (for all eternity), and this pertains to each and every human being, to all of humanity without exception. This includes and pertains to the Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God (Theotokos), herself a human being created by God, the Holy Trinity, from absolutely nothing—as we all were created from absolutely nothing (see Appendix B)—and likewise, obviously, these things also pertain to the Holy Apostles and to any other human being.

Regarding these things about all the Orthodox saints, and about all of humanity in general—and in fact pertaining to all of creation in general and its relationship to God, Who is absolutely transcendent—Orthodox Christianity confesses the following:
Since God is absolute existence, absolute goodness and absolute wisdom, or rather to put it more exactly, since God is beyond all such things, there is nothing whatsoever that is opposite to Him. Creatures, on the other hand, all exist through participation and grace, while those endowed with intelligence and intellect also have a capacity for goodness and wisdom. Hence they do have opposites. As the opposite to existence they have non-existence, and as the opposite to the capacity for goodness and wisdom they have evil and ignorance. Whether or not they are to exist eternally lies within the power of their Maker. But whether or not intelligent creatures are to participate in His goodness and wisdom depends on their own will....

But we maintain that only the divine essence has no opposite, since it is eternal and infinite and bestows eternity on other things. The being of created things, on the other hand, has non-being as its opposite. Whether or not it exists eternally depends on the power of Him who alone exists in a substantive sense. But since “the gifts of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29), the being of created things always is and always will be sustained by His almighty power, even though it has, as we said, an opposite; for it has been brought into being from non-being, and whether or not it exists depends on the will of God. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990b, pp. 87-88)

Certainly of great significance in our confession of Orthodox theology and teaching are the words which we just read from the great Orthodox saint, St. Maximos the Confessor, where clearly—as all the Orthodox saints teach us—he confesses the absolute transcendence of the Triune God in relation to creation and all of creation’s complete dependence upon that same
Triune God. For all of creation, without any exception whatsoever, was brought into being from absolutely nothing by God; and there is absolutely nothing in any creature, human or otherwise, that is not created and mortal by its very nature—having been created from absolutely nothing by God—not the nous, not the soul, nothing whatsoever in us, by it very nature, is immortal, except when by grace we participate in the uncreated energies of God. Our immortality is by grace, not by nature—only by God’s grace do we participate in immortality—our nous, through which we experience God, and our entire soul, and body, and all else associated with our created being is just that, created, and nothing but intrinsically mortal and not arising from the immortal, uncreated existence of God, in any way whatsoever. This is so despite what the error of Platonic philosophy teaches regarding the supposed natural or inherent immortality of the soul (rather than by the grace of God) and the supposed Archetypes in the mind of God—and it is much of these elements of Platonic philosophy, and other errors of the ancient Greek philosophy, that was subsequently embraced by the heresy of Western Christianity and others.

“Plato’s teaching was never acceptable to the patristic tradition, because the Fathers of the Church never accepted the natural immortality of the soul. For the Fathers of the Church the soul is mortal by nature and not immortal by nature.

It is naturally mortal and not naturally immortal because for the Fathers of the Church only God is immortal by nature. Only God is by nature without beginning and without end. Man has a beginning by nature, because he is a creature, but by nature he ought also to have an end. So man is not naturally immortal.” [Fr. Romanides]

(Hierotheos, 2013, p. 141)
However, the soul is immortal by grace, since God so willed. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 141)

Orthodox Christianity following the glorified Fathers and all the unconquerable, God-inspired saints throughout history, has never, and will never, justify any of the pantheistic tendencies in any of the heresies, including those found in heretical Western Christianity. Metropolitan Hierotheos and Father Romanides, faithful to Orthodox theology, brilliantly confess this:

“Before his baptism Augustine believed in the pre-existence of souls. He has the complete Platonic phraseology in there. He speaks about the need for the soul to return to its home country. The return of the soul means its return to the world of ideas, of the archetypes.”

“The great Frank, Thomas Aquinas, interpreted Aristotle as teaching the immortality of the individual human soul, not only of the creative soul, which means that every human being is immortal.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 142)

It is not possible for us nowadays to be apologists for Western Christianity on the subject of the soul, which has been influenced by the views of ancient classical metaphysics. The glorified Fathers of the Church knew from their experience that the
soul was God’s creation and did not originate from the uncreated world of God.

[Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 143)

“There are some pietistic textbooks that write that the human soul is from God. If the human soul were from God, then man would be God by nature. According to the Fathers, the human soul did not come from God but from nothing. Just as the body comes from nothing, that is to say, from non-being.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 143)

The glorified Fathers also teach that, because the soul originated from non-being, it is created and the soul’s immortality is not due to nature but to grace. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 143)

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_The Unconquerable Orthodox Saints, By the Grace of God_

Those same unconquerable Orthodox saints, about which we have spoken, confessed Christ and the teachings of His Holy Orthodox Church fearlessly, and throughout history, by the unfathomable grace of God. For but one example: the Turks could not break our Orthodox Martyrs and Saints, ever. When a former Orthodox Christian apostatized and converted to Islam, and then afterwards repented and came back to Orthodoxy and possessed prayer of the heart, noetic prayer, the Turks were unable to break him—as Father Romanides and others tell us, that is why the Balkans are still Orthodox, by the grace of God.

“Spiritual fathers knew that the Turks would seize him (the Christian who had repented) and try to make him deny Christ again, so they prepared him in such a way
that he would not deny Christ. And he went through the worst tortures. This is very important because the nous, when it has noetic prayer, is no longer influenced by anything. From then on the nous does not accept anything at all from the rational faculty, passions or the environment. This is the purification of the passions to which the Fathers refer: the nous is no longer influenced by anything.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 157)

Despite our created nature, and our having been created from absolutely nothing, if God empowers us by His uncreated grace, we Orthodox know that one so empowered can do and endure all things. But without God’s grace nothing is possible.

Since the nous, like the soul, is created, it is impossible for it to attain to the vision of God on its own, without the uncreated grace of God. When someone reaches the point of seeing God, he is in a natural state, like Adam and Eve after their creation and before their fall. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 159)

As the soul animates the body that is joined to it, so the Holy Spirit animates the soul, and the grace of God is transmitted through the soul to the body as well. Thus the whole human being becomes spiritual. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 161)

“That is why we have these strange phenomena in Orthodoxy: hermits, naked ascetics, stylites, tree-dwelling saints and so on, because Orthodox spirituality turns
people who are physically weak into lions as regards their souls and their endurance, even against the natural elements.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 161)

The Absolute Transcendence of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, in Relation to Creation

Orthodox Christianity, in confessing and emphasizing the absolute incomprehensibility and absolute transcendence of God, the Holy Trinity, uses, oftentimes, language and terminology such as this, which is found in the immensely influential work (from an Orthodox perspective) attributed to St. Dionysios the Areopagite, Mystical Theology: “Trinity superessential, more than divine and more than good” (Τριας υπερουσιε, και υπερθεε, και υπεραγαθε) (Lossky, 1976 p. 43). Such words about God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, are found throughout the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

It must clearly be noted that God is the Holy Trinity not in any way because of creation, creation does not determine the fact that God is the Holy Trinity nor is the Holy Trinity a means or a mode in which God chooses to communicate Himself and relate to His creation nor anything like that. God does not “express” Himself as Trinity, God is the Holy Trinity independent of all that is, not determined by anything or anyone. Speaking about the incomprehensible, undetermined and utterly transcendent reality of God, the Holy Trinity, Lossky confesses Orthodox Trinitarian Theology faithfully when he says: “The term ‘expresses itself’ is improper, for the divinity has no need to manifest its perfection, either to itself or to others. It is the Trinity, and this fact can be deduced from no principle nor explained by any sufficient reason, for there are neither principles nor causes anterior to the Trinity” (Lossky, 1976, p. 47).
Utilizing the God-inspired wisdom of the Holy Fathers, in this particular instance that of St. Athanasius of Alexandria and that of St. John of Damascus, Lossky (1976) contrasts creation with the Creator, God, the Holy Trinity.

If the very foundation of created being is change, the transition from non-being to being, if the creature is contingent by nature, the Trinity is an absolute stability. One would say an absolute necessity of perfect being: and yet the idea of necessity is not proper to the Trinity, for It transcends the antinomy of what is necessary, and the contingent; entirely personal and entirely nature; liberty and necessity are one, or, rather, can have no place in God. There is no dependence in relation to created being on the part of the Trinity; no determination of what is called “the eternal procession of the divine persons” by the act of the creation of the world. Even though the created order did not exist, God would still be Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—for creation is an act of will: the procession of the persons is an act “according to nature” [sic. “according to nature”] (κατὰ φύσιν). (p. 45)

Following Holy Orthodox Tradition, Fr. Michael Azkoul likewise confesses the absolute transcendence of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Fr. Azkoul speaks, regarding some of what God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, has revealed through divine inspiration to the Holy Orthodox Church:

According to the Fathers, all three Persons of the Trinity were involved in the creation, even as all Three will have some share in its judgment. The Father took no direct role in the formation of the cosmos, but He devised the plan for it and the Son
executed it. As the anonymous author (2nd c.) wrote in the seventh chapter of his *Letter to Diognetos*, God the Father “sent the very Artificer and Maker of the cosmos, He by Whom He created the heavens, the One by Whom He enclosed the ocean in its proper bounds, Him Whose mysterious laws all the elements faithfully observe, and by Whom the measures to the length of days was given to the sun to guard, Him Whom the moon obeys--the heavens and things in the heavens, the earth and the things on the earth...the things in the heights and in the depths and those things between, to them He sent Him...He sent Him to save the world.

Because the Son carried out the work of creation—and with Him the Holy Spirit—one must not draw the wrong conclusion about the dignity of each Person. “Let no one imagine that somehow our faith dims the glory of the Father.” cautions St. Niceta of Remisiana. “Rather it adds to the glory of the Father to refer to the creation of all things to the Word of which He is Father or to the Spirit to which He is the Source. The fact remains that when His Word and Spirit create, it is He Who creates all things. The Trinity, then, creates...” (Azkoul, 1986, pp. 66-68)

The Three Divine Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are each of equal dignity with one another. Each one is fully God, without any one of them being of more significance (or less significance) than the other two, and together they are the Suprasubstantial Trinity, the one true God. Consistent with Holy Tradition, Fr. Azkoul tells us this: “There is no subordination in the Trinity, no rank, only order of action. Why, in the mysterious council of the divine
Community, certain decisions were taken, we shall never know” (Azkoul, 1986, pp. 66-68).

Father Azkoul continues in his faithful presentation of Orthodox theology, saying the following:

We must not infer that because one Person is more conspicuous than the other, that somehow He is less powerful or less important. Thus, when the work of creation was performed and the Scriptures say only a few words about the Third Person—“The Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2)—we may not conclude that the work of the Holy Spirit is less significant than the work of the Father and the Son. “The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father,” writes St. Niceta, “...He creates along with the Father and the Son; He gives life; He has foreknowledge just as the Father and the Son; He makes revelations; He is everywhere; He fills the world....” The equality of the Spirit to the Son and the Father cannot be denied. He is the “life-giver” and “sanctifier” of the universe, a function which is neither of the other Persons fulfills. (Azkoul, 1986, pp. 66-68)

As we continue to look at Fr. Azkoul’s brilliant discussion of Orthodox theology, we find something which is commonly mentioned by Orthodox theologians, something which is found throughout the Holy Tradition and the Patristic writings, namely, the fact that the Triune God created in complete freedom. That is, God was in no way necessitated to create, He chose to create. Fr. Azkoul is consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition when he writes the following:

In connection with His actions—or more precisely the operations or energies of the Spirit, the Son and the Father—we must make another observation. Whatever their actions, whatever the motive for the creation, the Trinity acted from no necessity; in fact,
we have no way of knowing why God created, even if such noble sentiments as love may be inferred. To be sure, as the Fathers say, He wanted His creation to share His life, but God was not lonely and He did not need to create the world to comfort Himself. Nothing is added to Him by the existence of the cosmos.

God created mysteriously and freely. He might not have created at all. His choice was sovereign and what He created was only one choice in an infinite number. The universe and its inhabitants might have taken another form. Nevertheless, as St. Athanasios the Great so often said, God’s act of creation was an act of condescension. Creation was not a tour de force, a feat of accomplishment, a demonstration of power. It was not, as the Incarnation was not, something done for applause. The existence of the world is an example—even as the Incarnation—of self-limitation, an act of incredible humility. (Azkoul, 1986, pp. 66-68)

So, with this incomprehensibility and transcendence of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, being forever faithfully confessed by Orthodox Christianity, we observe the following quotations, which are a further confession of God’s absolute transcendence in relation to all creation—and all of these quotations are in complete agreement with the witness of countless Orthodox saints throughout history:

“God, full beyond all fulness, brought creatures into being not because He had need of anything, but so that they might participate in Him in proportion to their capacity and that He

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16 In Appendix E, there is further discussion of God’s condescension--seen in His voluntarily becoming Incarnate for humanity.
Himself might rejoice in His works, through seeing them joyful and ever filled to
overflowing with His inexhaustible gifts” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990b, p. 90).

The creature is thus, by virtue of its very origin, something which changes, is liable to
pass from one state into another. It has no ontological foundation either in itself (for it is
created from nothing), nor in the divine essence, for in the act of creation God was under no
necessity of any kind whatever. There is, in fact, nothing in the divine nature which would be
the necessary cause of the production of creatures: creation might just as well not exist. God
could equally well not have created; creation is a free act of His will, and this free act is the
sole foundation of the existence of all beings. (Lossky, 1976 p. 93)

St. Philaret of Moscow says: “All creatures are balanced upon the creative word of God,
as if upon a bridge of diamond; above them is the abyss of the divine infinitude, below them that
of their own nothingness.” (Lossky, 1976, p. 92, Quoted by Fr. Florovsky in The Ways of Russian
Theology, Paris, 1937, p. 180 (Translated from the Russian))

“Some say that the created order has coexisted with God from eternity; but this is
impossible. For how can things which are limited in every way coexist from eternity with Him
who is altogether infinite?” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990a, p. 101).

So far as we are able to understand, for Himself God does not constitute either an origin, or
an intermediary state, or a consummation, or anything else at all which can be seen to qualify
naturally things that are sequent to Him. For He is undetermined, unchanging and infinite,
since He is infinitely beyond all being, potentiality and actualization. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 114)

“Thus nothing whatsoever different in essence from God can be envisaged as coexisting with Him from eternity—neither the aeon, nor time, nor anything which exists within them. For substantive being and being which is not substantive never coincide” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 115).

No origin, intermediary state or consummation can ever be altogether free from the category of relationship. God, being infinitely beyond every kind of relationship, is by nature neither an origin, nor an intermediary state, nor a consummation, nor any of those things to which it is possible to apply the category of relationship. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 115)

Indeed, St. Maximos the Confessor elsewhere refers to the absolutely transcendent God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, as being forever inaccessible to Its creatures and calls the Holy Trinity, “The Good that is beyond being and beyond the unoriginate” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 164). With this in mind, we see St. Maximos the Confessor telling us the following about this God, the one and only God, the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity:

The Good that is beyond being and beyond the unoriginate is one, the holy unity of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is an infinite union of three infinites. Its principle of being, together with the mode, the nature and the quality of its being, is altogether inaccessible to creatures. For it eludes every intellection of intellective beings, in no way
issuing from its natural hidden inwardness, and infinitely transcending the summit of all spiritual knowledge. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 164)

St. Maximos the Confessor in speaking about the Creator calls God, the Holy Trinity, the “divine Cause of created beings” Who “does not exist as a being with accidents because if that were the case the divine would be composite, its own existence receiving completion from the existence of created beings. On the contrary it exists as the beyond-beingness of being”... “how much more does God Himself bring into existence out of nothing the very being of all created things, since He is beyond being and even infinitely transcends the attribution of beyond beingness” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 165).

Just like when Father Romanides, following the Orthodox Fathers, teaches us, as we saw earlier, pertaining to our potential participation with the uncreated energies of God—something which is completely distinct from the utter impossibility of participation in the essence of God—calling such participation and experience of the uncreated energies: “a knowing which is beyond knowing, God remaining a mystery even when man is united to Him and unknowingly knows Him.” (Romanides, 1963-64)

With that in mind, one cannot help but see, once again, the great beauty and consistency of Orthodox theology—in regard to the Orthodox Fathers’ unparalleled confession of the absolute transcendence of God—for St Maximos the Confessor, a great Orthodox Father himself, in what follows, says essentially the same thing as what Father Romanides (who was following the holy Fathers) had to say in his above faithfully confession of Orthodoxy:
God, in whose essence created beings do not participate, but who wills that those capable of so doing shall participate in Him according to some other mode, never issues from the hiddenness of His essence; for even that mode according to which He wills to be participated in remains perpetually concealed from all men. Thus, just as God of His own will is participated in—the manner of this being known to Him alone—in the surpassing power of His goodness, He freely brings into existence participating beings, according to the principle which He alone understands. Therefore what has come into being by the will of Him who made it can never be coeternal with Him who willed it to exist. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 165)

The Essence-Energies Distinction in God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity

“Distinguishing in God the three hypostases, the one nature and the natural energies”. These passages which were just seen should give us some sense of the absolute transcendence and incomprehensibility of God, the Holy Trinity, and with absolutely no doubt these quotations point to the reality forever confessed by Orthodox Christianity, that all of creation, without any exception, is completely dependent upon the Creator of all that is, God, the Holy Trinity. This as all creation, having been brought into being from absolutely nothing by the unfathomable power of the Triune God, in no way defines or determines that same God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, in any way whatsoever. Creation, as was said, was a free act of will accomplished by God. We also, in these above passages, see some reference to the Orthodox affirmation that there is a distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies in the One God, the Holy Trinity, without this in any way introducing any composition in God. For just
as the One God is the Three Divine Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, and yet this fact produces no composition, confusion or division in the One God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, so also the Essence-Energies distinction produces no composition, confusion or division in God, the Holy Trinity. Mindful of this, one can observe, from some of Vladimir Lossky’s work, the following Orthodox confession of the Essence-Energies distinction and note its significance in Orthodox soteriology:

While distinguishing in God the three hypostases, the one nature and the natural energies, Orthodox theology does not admit any kind of “composition” in Him. The energies, like the persons, are not elements of the divine being which can be conceived of apart, in separation from the Trinity of which they are the common manifestation, the eternal splendour. (Lossky, 1976, p. 79)

The distinction between the essence and the energies, which is fundamental for the Orthodox doctrine of grace, makes it possible to preserve the real meaning of St. Peter’s words “partakers of the divine nature”. The union to which we are called is neither hypostatic—as in the case of the human nature of Christ—nor substantial, as in that of the three divine Persons: it is union with God in His energies, or union by grace making us participate in the divine nature, without our essence becoming thereby the essence of God. ...We remain creatures while becoming God by grace, as Christ remained God in becoming man by the Incarnation. (Lossky, 1976, p. 87)

By His unfathomable grace, God allows for us to participate in His uncreated divine energies, so that by grace we may become what He is by nature. There is no pantheism
whatsoever in this Orthodox affirmation; we are not united to the Hypostasis of any One of the
Three Divine Hypostases (Persons), nor anything like that, nor are any of us added to the Holy Trinity as an additional Divine Hypostasis so that the Holy Trinity has a complement to It and increases in number—God forbid that any such insanity be proclaimed. We also know that there is no pantheism in the above Orthodox affirmation because this union with God, the Holy Trinity, is not a union with God in His absolutely transcendent, incommunicable, and forever unapproachable essence. God, the Holy Trinity, without any compulsion or necessity to have done so and without being defined or determined in any way—simply by an absolutely free act of will—allows for His creatures to participate in Him according to His energies, but not according to His unapproachable essence. While forever remaining creatures, while forever remaining created and never becoming anything other than what we are, created and human, we are allowed by the infinite grace of the Triune God to be become one with God by grace, not by nature (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). This is what Lossky meant when he said: “We remain creatures while becoming God by grace, as Christ remained God in becoming man by the Incarnation” (Lossky, 1976, p. 87).

We become one with God through cooperation with His uncreated divine energies, while forever remaining created and human, but we cannot ever participate in the very nature of the Triune God (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). We cannot ever participate in the unapproachable essence of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. God calls on us to pursue theosis, or deification, which means that we are called to pursue—with all our mind, body, and soul, and with all our might—union with God in His energies, but not in His essence, for that is impossible. This union ultimately is accomplished through a person’s synergy
(cooperation) with the uncreated energies of God, as we have said. And in fact this very opportunity for theosis to which we are all called and which is the glory for which we have been created in the first place is granted to us by grace, and not because it is necessitated, in any way, by anything in the very essence or nature of the Triune God. “For the salvation of the saved is by grace and not by nature (cf. Eph. 2:5).” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 127). For it is only by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God that we even exist.

God grants us the opportunity to pursue union with Him in His energies. In so doing, God, the Holy Trinity, forever remains Uncreated and God, and we, all of us without exception, forever remain created and human. Contrary to what many in Western Christianity believe, we Orthodox confess the truth that we will never know or participate in the essence of God. Father Romanides speaks of these matters, contrasting the errors of the West with the unique truth of Orthodoxy:

One must bear in mind that whereas in the Latin West there is a strong mystical tradition which claims visions of the divine essence in this life (e.g…, the Eckhartians), there is certainly no such tradition in the Patristic and Byzantine literature of the Orthodox East. The Fathers are emphatic in denying the possibility of any vision of the divine essence not only in this life but also in the next. (Romanides, 1960-61)

Once again, the wisdom of St. Gregory Palamas and that of other Orthodox Fathers, to whom St. Gregory Palamas makes reference, is insightful to our discussion here:
St. Basil the Great says, “The energies of God come down to us, but the essence remains inaccessible.” And St. Maximos also says, “He who is deified through grace will be everything that God is, without possessing identity of essence.” Thus it is impossible to participate in God’s essence, even for those who are deified by divine grace. It is, however, possible to participate in the divine energy. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 397)

By looking at the following Orthodox confession of St. Gregory Palamas, we see that what was quoted a little earlier from Vladimir Lossky is in conformity with the Holy Fathers:

Three realities pertain to God: essence, energy, and the triad of divine hypostases. As we have seen, those privileged to be united to God so as to become one spirit with Him—as St. Paul said, “He who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with Him” (1 Cor. 6:17)—are not united to God with respect to His essence, since all the theologians testify that with respect to His essence God suffers no participation. Moreover, the hypostatic union is fulfilled only in the case of the Logos, the God-man. Thus those privileged to attain union with God are united to Him with respect to His energy; and the ‘spirit’, according to which they who cleave to God are one with Him, is and is called the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit, but not the essence of God, even though Barlaam and Akindynos may disagree. Thus God prophesied through His prophet saying, “I shall pour forth”, not “My Spirit”, but “of My Spirit upon the faithful” (cf. Joel 2:28. LXX). (Palamas, 1995c, p. 380)

Profound theological realities are mentioned in this last quotation. One sees reference to the fact that the uncreated energies of God are not the Divine Person (Hypostasis) of the Holy
Spirit, but instead are the energies of the Holy Spirit which are the same energies equally possessed by the Father and the Son. In fact, the divine energies are not to be identified as being any, nor all, of the Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity nor are they to be identified as being the absolutely transcendent divine essence common to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is so, for the divine, uncreated energies are not hypostases (persons) nor are they essences, nor do they have any individual existence by themselves apart from God, the Supra-essential Trinity; instead, they are eternal processions from the Triune God which are common to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 10, 3a). The divine energies in no way define or determine God, the Supra-essential Trinity, but they do manifest His presence and make knowledge of God possible for humanity, this while God remains forever unknowable in His essence. So when we speak of God, the Holy Trinity, we know that He is absolutely transcendent, incomprehensible and unapproachable in His essence and at the same time we know that by His grace, God is approachable in His divine, uncreated energies. For as St. Gregory Palamas (1995c) tells us:

For to God pertains both incomprehensibility and comprehensibility, though He Himself is one. The same God is incomprehensible in his essence, but comprehensible from what He creates according to His divine energies: according, that is, to His pre-eternal will for us, His pre-eternal providence concerning us, His pre-eternal wisdom with regard to us, and—to use the words of St. Maximos—His infinite power, wisdom and goodness. But when Barlaam and Akindynos and those who follow in their footsteps hear us saying these things which we are obliged to say, they accuse us of speaking of many gods and many uncreated realities, and of making God composite. For they are ignorant of the fact
that God is indivisibly divided and is united dividedly, and yet in spite of this suffers neither multiplicity nor compositeness. (p. 384)

To avoid any confusion, it must be clearly emphasized, and understood, that the one and only true God is the Suprasubstantial Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Palamas, 1995b, p. 323). God the Father—by the very nature of Who He is, and not by any act of will—is pre-eternally the source of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 13, 1). The Three Divine Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are “undivided in nature, will, glory, power, energy, and all the characteristics of divinity” (Palamas, 1995b, p. 323). Each of the Three Divine Persons is fully God when considered by Himself, and is not partially God or merely a part of God (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990e, pp. 137-138). Each of the Three Divine Persons is fully God when considered by Himself, and is not lacking in anything that the other Two Persons possess, because They all are eternally united with another, yet They remain distinct as the Three Persons of the Suprasubstantial Trinity—the one true God. St. Maximos the Confessor beautifully teaches this when he says:

For the whole Father is completely in the whole Son and Spirit; and the whole Son is completely in the whole Father and Spirit; and the whole Holy Spirit is completely in the whole Father and Son. Therefore the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God. The essence, power and energy of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one, for none of the hypostases or persons either exists or is intelligible without the others. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990e, pp. 137-138)
The one true God is the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And it is from this one true God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, that the divine energies eternally proceed. As was mentioned earlier, these divine energies have no existence by themselves apart from God, from Whom they eternally proceed. The divine energies of the Suprasubstantial Trinity are not, in any way, any of the Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, nor are they the essence of the Suprasubstantial Trinity. For as St. Gregory Palamas teaches, faithful to Orthodox Tradition, “God’s processions and energies are uncreated, and none of them is either divine essence or hypostasis” (Palamas, 1995c, p. 389). These divine energies proceed from all Three Persons of the Suprasubstantial Trinity (Palamas, 1995c, pp. 389-390), and have no existence apart from the Suprasubstantial Trinity from Whom they proceed. Again, these divine energies in no way are to be identified as being any of the Three Divine Hypostases (Persons) nor as being the essence of the Suprasubstantial Trinity; instead, they are simply the eternal energies of God—proceeding from God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, as their source—with which we can have some experience and yet, these divine energies remain unknowable to us even when we have some experience of them. For, as Father Romanides said, the experience of the divine energies constitutes “a knowing which is beyond knowing, God remaining a mystery even when man is united to Him and unknowingly knows Him.” (Romanides, 1963-64).

The uncreated divine energies neither define nor determine who God is in His essence; for the energies which pre-eternally proceed from the Triune God, pre-eternally proceed from the very essence of God—but they are nonetheless ineffably distinct from that very essence. With this in mind, one can see St. Gregory Palamas, in conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition, commenting on the wisdom of St. Dionysios the Areopagite pertaining to the Essence-Energies
distinction. St. Gregory Palamas comments that St. Dionysios refers to the energies of God as “the distinction of the Godhead”; and St. Gregory comments further that St. Dionysios teaches “that according to the divine processions and energies God multiplies Himself and makes Himself manifold, and he [St. Dionysios] states in this respect that the procession may be spoken of both in the singular and in the plural” (Palamas, 1995c, p. 386). This “distinction of the Godhead”—manifested “in the divine processions and energies” of God, according to which “God multiplies Himself and makes Himself manifold”—pertains to the divine energies eternally proceeding from the Suprasubstantial Trinity, the one true God (Palamas, 1995c, p. 386). The Suprasubstantial Trinity, the one true God, “multiplies Himself and makes Himself manifold” regarding His divine energies, but (as was said earlier) these divine energies are not in any way the Three Divine Hypostases. For the Three Divine Hypostases, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are not energies of God proceeding from God; instead, They are the one and only true God, They are who God eternally is. For God does not “multiply Himself and make Himself manifold” regarding who He eternally is, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. “God simply is what He is” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 8), the Triune God—but what this Triune God is is forever beyond our comprehension, both in this life and the next (as Romanides and others tell us).

St. Gregory Palamas’ God-inspired wisdom—seen in his commentary on St. Dionysios’ exposition of the Essence-Energies distinction—is brilliant and immensely useful at this point: “In regard to the distinction of the hypostases, however, the Deity certainly does not multiply Himself, nor as God is He subject to distinction. For us God is a Trinity, but not triple” (Palamas, 1995c, p. 386). God simply is Who He is. God is nothing other than what He eternally is, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. And this Suprasubstantial
Trinity is Something to which we can only point, through the use of the aforementioned names—from our human language and created environment—“Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit” and through the use of other names, words, and concepts, also from this same created environment and human created language of ours. As such, and nevertheless, as we have said, the Triune God is forever a mystery to us.

_The divine energies are not creation, nor are they created._ Also, the uncreated energies of the Triune God are absolutely different from anything which is created; creation is not among the energies of God—but instead creation is that which God, the Holy Trinity, has created from absolutely nothing by His divine uncreated energies. We see this confessed in the Holy Orthodox Tradition:

Thus that which is created is not God’s energy—this is impossible—but what is effected and accomplished by the divine energy. This is why St. John of Damaskos teaches that the energy, although distinct from the divine nature, is also an essential, that is to say, a natural activity of that nature. Since, then, it is the property of the divine energy to create, as St. Cyril has said, how could this energy be something created, unless it was activated by another energy, and that energy in turn by still another, and so on ad infinitum? In this way we would always be looking for the uncreated source of the energy. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 379- 380)

The divine energies are absolutely different from, and independent of, creation. Though God created all things by His divine energies, the divine energies’ existence does not, in any way, make creation necessary to God, the Holy Trinity, nor does the fact that God, the Holy Trinity,
chose to create cause, in any way, the existence of the eternal processions or manifestations of God, otherwise known as the divine energies. For as Vladimir Lossky tells us, faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition:

There are in fact two main errors into which it is possible to fall in regard to the divine energies:

First, the energy is not a divine function which exists *on account* of creatures, despite the fact that it is through His energies, which penetrate everything that exists, that God creates and operates. Even if creatures did not exist, God would none the less manifest Himself beyond His essence; just as the rays of the sun would shine out from the solar disk whether or not there were any beings capable of receiving their light. Indeed, expressions, such as “manifest Himself” and “beyond” are really inappropriate, for the “beyond” in question only begins to exist with the creation, and “manifestation” is only conceivable when there is some realm foreign to Him who is manifested. In using such defective expressions, such inadequate images, we acknowledge the absolute, non-relative character of the natural and eternal expansive energy, proper to God.

But, secondly, the created world does not become infinite and coeternal with God because the natural processions, or divine energies, are so. The existence of the energies implies no necessity in the act of creation, which is freely effected by the divine energy but determined by a decision of the common will of the three Persons. Creation is an act of the will of God which makes a new subject outside the divine being, *ex nihilo*; to the
sphere of God’s manifestation comes into being. As for the manifestation itself, it is eternal, for it is the glory of God. (Lossky, 1976, pp. 74-75)

“God Reveals Himself to Himself From All Eternity”

Giving us further insight into the Essence-Energies distinction which exists in God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, we see Lossky, in his brilliant research, utilizing the God-inspired wisdom of St. Philaret of Moscow:

Philaret of Moscow expresses this doctrine of the Eastern Church in a Christmas sermon, in which he speaks of the angels’ hymn “Glory to God in the highest”: “God”, he says, “has from all eternity enjoyed the sublimity of His glory...His glory is the revelation, the manifestation, the reflection, the garment of His inner perfection. God reveals Himself to Himself from all eternity by the eternal generation of His consubstantial Son, and by the eternal procession of His consubstantial Spirit; and thus the unity, within the Holy Trinity shines forth imperishable and unchangeable in its essential glory. God the Father is the Father of glory (Eph. i, 17); the Son is the brightness of His glory (Heb. i, 3) and He Himself has that glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John xvii, 5); likewise, the Holy Spirit of God is the Spirit of glory (I Pet. iv, 14). In this glory, uniquely proper to Himself, God dwells in perfect felicity above all glory, without having need of any witness, without admitting of any division. But as in His mercy and His infinite love He desires to communicate His blessedness, to create for Himself beings capable of sharing in the joyfulness of His glory, He calls forth His infinite perfections and they disclose themselves in His creatures; His glory is manifested in the celestial powers, is
reflected in man, and puts on the splendour of the visible world; He bestows it, and those
who become partakers thereof receive it, it returns to Him, and in this perpetual
circumvolution, so to say, of the divine glory, the blessed life, the felicity of the creature
consists.” (Lossky, 1976, p. 75)

In the above quotation from St. Philaret of Moscow, the statement, “His glory is the revelation,
the manifestation, the reflection, the garment of His inner perfection”, refers to the eternal
uncreated energies of the Triune God which proceed from the very essence of the
Suprasubstantial Trinity, but which are, of course, not the absolutely unknowable and
transcendent essence of the Triune God. In the line which immediately follows in the quotation,
“God reveals Himself to Himself from all eternity by the eternal generation of His consubstantial
Son, and by the eternal procession of His consubstantial Spirit; and thus the unity, within the
Holy Trinity shines forth imperishable and unchangeable in its essential glory”, St. Philaret of
Moscow is faithful to Holy Tradition, as only an Orthodox saint can be, when he confesses the
Orthodox teaching that God the Father uniquely and eternally begets God the Son, and uniquely
and eternally sends forth God the Holy Spirit. God the Father eternally begets His consubstantial
Son and eternally sends forth His consubstantial Spirit, and this pertains to the very nature of
Who God the Father is; it is not an act of His will. God the Father, by the very nature of Who He
is and not by any act of will, eternally begets God the Son and eternally sends forth God the Holy
Spirit. In short, according to Orthodox teaching, “God the Father begets the Son and sends forth
the Holy Spirit by nature and not by will” (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 13, 1).
God is eternally the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is no other God but the
Suprasubstanstial Trinity. The One true God is the consubstantial Holy Trinity, there is no other
God. For “God reveals Himself to Himself from all eternity by the eternal generation of His consubstantial Son, and by the eternal procession of His consubstantial Spirit”, and this is so not by any necessity or act of will, rather this is Who God is, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. God is the Holy Trinity not, in any way, because of creation; creation was brought into being by the common will of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, without any necessity for the Triune God to have created at all. God is eternally the Suprasubstantial Trinity, because that is Who God is. For when we speak of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, we say: “In this glory, uniquely proper to Himself, God dwells in perfect felicity above all glory, without having need of any witness, without admitting of any division.”

The very essence or nature which is common to the Suprasubstantial Trinity, is absolutely transcendent, whereas the energies common to the Holy Trinity can, by the infinite grace of God, be approached by God’s creatures. We see St. Philaret of Moscow confessing this when he tells us: “But as in His mercy and His infinite love He desires to communicate His blessedness, to create for Himself beings capable of sharing in the joyfulness of His glory, He calls forth His infinite perfections and they disclose themselves in His creatures”. The last part of the above statement, “He calls forth His infinite perfections and they disclose themselves in His creatures”, must not be misunderstood. “He calls forth His infinite perfections and they disclose themselves in His creatures” means that God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, eternally and freely willed to create; God was not necessitated, in any way, by anything in the divine essence which would have somehow made creation something compulsory or inevitable to God. God eternally willed that He would create at some point and indeed He did fulfill His eternal will, and created, when (and as) He chose to do so. “His infinite perfections” pertain to the eternal divine will for
creation to take place. “His infinite perfections” refer to the divine ideas for creation which are associated with the divine will; all of this pertains to the energies of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, but not to the absolutely transcendent essence. God freely willed to create from all eternity, but He was not compelled nor necessitated to will this, in any way, just as He was not compelled nor necessitated to actually create, when He chose to do so. God eternally planned creation, but creation did not receive its existence until God actually created it. Creation is not coeternal with God, in any way whatsoever. Creation was brought into being by God, according to His eternal free will to do so, at the point when God actually created. The divine ideas for creation belong to the eternal will of God, they belong to the divine energies, but not to the very nature or essence of God (Lossky, 1976, p. 95). Additionally, “His infinite perfections”, these divine ideas, are part of the uncreated divine energies and are therefore not creation itself, in any way. Additionally, these divine ideas (and all the divine energies, in general) do not in any way belong to the very nature or essence of the Triune God (Lossky, 1976, p. 95). Thus there is no pantheism in the above statement, “He calls forth His infinite perfections and they disclose themselves in His creatures”. God created all of us from absolutely nothing and by His unfathomable grace we are given the opportunity to approach Him in His energies—but not in His essence which is absolutely transcendent and beyond any participation.

*The Statement, “Partakers of the Divine Nature”, Must Not be Misunderstood*

Continuing our discussion, consistent with what we have said, regarding these divine energies by which God created us, sustains us and allows us to approach Him, we once again draw from Lossky’s faithful presentation of Orthodox theology, where we observe the following:
The divine energies are within everything and outside everything. One must be raised above created being, and abandon all contact with creatures in order to attain to union with “the rays of the Godhead”, says Dionysius the Areopagite. Despite this, these divine rays penetrate the whole created universe, and are the cause of its existence. ... God has created all things by His energies. The act of creation established a relationship between the divine energies and that which is not God, and constituted a limitation, a determination (προορισμος) of the infinite and eternal effulgence of God, who thereby became the cause of finite and contingent being. For the energies do not produce the created world by the mere fact of their existence, that they are the natural processions of the essence of God; if they did, either the world would be as infinite and eternal as God Himself, or the energies would be only His limited and temporal manifestation. Thus the divine energies in themselves are not the relationship of God to created being, but they do enter into relationship with that which is not God, and draw the world into existence by the will of God. For, according to St. Maximus, the will is always an active relationship towards another, towards something external to the subject which acts. This will has created all things by the energies in order that created being may accede freely to union with God in the same energies. “God”, says St. Maximus, “has created us in order that we may become partakers of the divine nature, in order that we may enter into eternity, and that we may appear like unto Him, being deified by that grace out of which all things that exist have come, and which brings into existence everything that before had no existence.” (Lossky, 1976, p. 88-90)
The phrase, “God has created us in order that we may become partakers of the divine nature”,
must not be misunderstood as an indication of some sort of pantheism, where we would
participate in the very nature or essence of the Triune God. Instead, in this context, “partakers of
the divine nature” is understood, in Orthodox Teaching, to mean that we can participate in the
energies of God, but certainly not in the very nature or essence of God, which is absolutely
transcendent and forever unapproachable to any creature.

Keeping in mind these things which have just been mentioned, pertaining to the Essence-
Energies distinction, we are able to better understand the following from the Holy Father, St.
Maximos the Confessor, as he faithfully teaches us Holy Orthodox Tradition—regarding the
salvation which the absolutely transcendent God freely offers to us: “He encompasses all that
comes from Him, but nothing enjoys kinship with Him by virtue of natural relationship. For the
salvation of the saved is by grace and not by nature (cf. Eph. 2:5).” (St. Maximos the Confessor,
1990d, p. 127).

Elsewhere, closely related to the passage just quoted, St. Maximos tells us:

Ages, times and places belong to the category of relationship, and consequently no object
necessarily associated with these things can be other than relative. But God transcends
the category of relationship; for nothing else whatsoever is necessarily associated with
Him. Therefore if the inheritance of the saints is God Himself, he who is found worthy of
this grace will be beyond all ages, times and places: he will have God Himself as his
place, in accordance with the text, “Be to me a God who is a defender and a fortified
place of my salvation” (Ps.71:3. LXX ). (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 127-128)
Faithful to the Holy Tradition just confessed pertaining to humanity’s God given opportunity for salvation and sanctification—sanctification is also referred to by the following words: deification, theosis, glorification—St. Gregory Palamas, drawing from the wisdom of St. Maximos the Confessor, tells us how the Orthodox saints cooperated with the uncreated energies of God, when he writes: “According to St. Maximos ‘Moses and David, and whoever else became vessels of divine energy by laying aside the properties of their fallen nature, were inspired by the power of God’; and, ‘They became living ikons of Christ, being the same as He is, by grace rather than by assimilation’” (Palamas, 1995c, p. 381). Elsewhere, St. Gregory Palamas tells us:

If we have conformed ourselves to God and have attained that for which we are created, namely, deification—for they say that God created us in order to make us partakers of His own divinity (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4)—then we are in God since we are deified by Him, and God is in us since it is He who deifies us. Thus we, too, participate in the divine energy—though in a different way from the universe as a whole—but not in the essence of God. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 393)

Orthodoxy confesses that God is in no way determined by what or whom He has created; creation was and is in no way necessary for God, the Holy Trinity, nor does it determine or define God, the Holy Trinity, in any way—not before creation existed is God in any way determined, defined, or comprehended by the eternal free will of God to create nor after God freely created “all things visible and invisible” is God in any way defined. Consistent with what has been mentioned pertaining to the grace of God being associated with the energies, and not
the absolutely transcendent nature, of the Triune God, we forever keep in mind the words of St. Gregory Palamas as he teaches about the Essence-Energies distinction as it points to the absolute transcendence of God, regarding the divine nature or essence, and as it points to the immanence of God, regarding the divine energies:

Every created nature is far removed from and completely foreign to the divine nature. For if God is nature, other things are not nature; but if every other thing is nature, He is not a nature, just as He is not a being if all other things are beings. And if He is a being, then all other things are not beings. And if you accept this as true also for wisdom, goodness, and in general all things that pertain to God or are ascribed to Him, then your theology will be correct and in accordance with the saints. God both is and is said to be the nature of all beings, in so far as all partake of Him and subsist by means of this participation: not, however, by participation in His nature—far from it—but by participation in His energy. In this sense He is the Being of all beings, the Form that is in all forms as the Author of form, the Wisdom of the wise and, simply, the All of all things. Moreover, He is not nature, because He transcends every nature; He is not a being, because He transcends every being; and He is not nor does He possess a form, because He transcends form. How, then can we draw near to God? By drawing near to His nature? But not a single created being has or can have any communication with or proximity to the sublime nature. Thus if anyone has drawn close to God, he has evidently approached Him by means of His energy. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 382)
Indeed, St. Gregory Palamas is consistent with Orthodox teaching when he tells us that “not a single created being has or can have any communication with or proximity to the sublime nature.” Likewise this same great saint and teacher of Orthodoxy remains faithful to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church when he makes the following powerful statement about the eternally incomprehensible Triune God:

The supra-essential, supra-existential nature that transcends the Godhead and goodness, in that it is more than God and more than goodness, and so on, can be neither described nor conceived nor in any way contemplated, since it transcends all things and is surpassingly unknowable, being established by uncircumscribed power beyond the supracelestial intelligences, and always utterly ungraspable and ineffable for all. Neither in the present age nor in the age to come is there any name with which it can be named, nor can the soul form any concept of it or any word express it; and there can be no contact with or participation in it, whether sensible or noetic, nor any imagining of it at all. Thus the theologians hold that the closest idea we can have of this nature is that of it perfect incomprehensibility attained by means of negation, or apophasis, since this nature is transcendently privative of all that exists or can be expressed. Hence he who possesses knowledge of the truth beyond all truth, if he is to name it correctly, cannot legitimately call it either essence or nature. Yet it is the cause of all things and all things pertain to it and exist on its account; and it is prior to all things and in a simple and undetermined manner it precontains all things in itself. (Palamas, 1995c, pp. 393-394)
The last sentence of this last quotation—from the great teacher of Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas—must not be misunderstood as a promotion, in any way, of any pantheistic tendencies whatsoever (may God forbid). God is absolutely transcendent over all that He has created and brought into being and over any eternal idea pertaining to creation—for the eternal ideas for creation are certainly eternally present in the uncreated energies of God, but are never present in, nor in any way associated with, the Supra-essential essence of the Triune God. God is not defined by anything that He created nor by anything or anyone that He eternally willed to create, nor is God defined or determined in any way whatsoever by the eternal idea to create—which is eternally present in the will, but not the essence, of God—for as the Orthodox theologians will tell us, “God’s will is eminently free” (Father Florovsky said this). God’s will, which is one of eternal divine energies, is absolutely free, and in no way necessitated or compelled by creation nor by anything pertaining to the idea of creation being supposedly somehow eternally present in the essence of God—as the heresy of Western Christianity often proclaims. God truly wills to create and creates freely, necessitated by nothing—so we must certainly not understand any pantheistic tendencies whatsoever in the latter part of the foregoing quotation from the great Orthodox saint, Gregory Palamas.

*The Essence-Energies Distinction Confessed Throughout the History of Orthodox Christianity*

Fr. George Florovsky gives us brilliant insight, fully consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition, pertaining to the Essence-Energies distinction in the Supra-essential Holy Trinity:

“One insults God who seeks to apprehend His essential being,” says Chrysostom. Already in St. Athanasius we find a clear distinction between God’s very “essence” and His
powers and bounty: Kai en pasi men esti kata ten heautou agathoteta, exo de ton panton palin esti kata ten idian physin. [He is in everything by his love, but outside of everything by his own nature (De Decretis II)]\textsuperscript{17}. The same conception was carefully elaborated by the Cappadocians. The “essence of God” is absolutely inaccessible to man, says St. Basil (Adv. Eunomium 1:14). We know God only in His actions, and by His actions: Hemeis de ek men ton energeion gnorizein legomen ton Theon hemon, te de ousia prosengizein ouch hypischnometha hai men gar energeiai autou pros hemas katabainousin, he de ousia autou menei aprositos. [We say that we know our God from his energies (activities), but we do not profess to approach his essence--for his energies descend to us, but his essence remains inaccessible (Epist. 234, ad Amphilochium)]\textsuperscript{18}. (Florovsky, 1987, p. 7-8)

Florovsky continues in his faithful presentation of Orthodox theology when he tells us:

\textit{It starts with the clear distinction between “nature” and “will” of God.} This distinction was also characteristic of the Eastern tradition, at least since St. Athanasius. It may be asked at this point: Is this distinction compatible with the “simplicity” of God? Should we not rather regard all these distinctions as merely logical conjectures, necessary for us, but ultimately without any ontological significance? As a matter of fact, St. Gregory Palamas was attacked by his opponents precisely from that point of view. (Florovsky, 1987, p. 9)

\textsuperscript{17} Bracketed entry from the cited text.

\textsuperscript{18} Bracketed entry from the cited text.
Western theology acknowledged the truth forever confessed in Orthodox Trinitarian Theology regarding the simplicity of the Triune God, but it erred by introducing the divine energies into the very Being of the Holy Trinity. The West erred in introducing the divine energies into the very Essence of God, the Holy Trinity, thereby denying the real Essence-Energies distinction in God. Those who deny the Essence-Energies distinction, in effect, deny the absolute transcendence of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, by introducing necessity and contradiction into the Triune God, as we shall later clearly see. Western Christianity’s denial of the Essence-Energies distinction in God, starting from at least Augustine, continues to this day, and its argument for this denial of Orthodox doctrine goes something like this: “God’s Being is simple, and in Him even all attributes coincide” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 9). Father Florovsky insightfully comments on this particular error which St. Augustine made—an error which had, in this regard, put him outside of the Patristic concensus of Orthodox Christianity—an error which was subsequently embraced, and, according to some Orthodox theologians, magnified, by Western Christianity (Papademetriou, n.d.): “Already St. Augustine diverged at this point form the Eastern tradition. Under Augustinian presuppositions the teaching of St. Gregory is unacceptable and absurd” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 9).

But let us look at the error of the West, in its denial of the Essence-Energies distinction, seen in the light of Orthodox teaching which exposes the contradiction of the above claim, ‘God’s Being is simple, and in Him even all attributes coincide’. This last quotation essentially says that the energies are no different from the essence and are no different from one another since they all coincide, ‘in Him even all attributes coincide’. St. Gregory Palamas (1995c) in conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition teaches us differently:
If the energies of God do not in any respect differ from the divine essence, then neither will they differ from one another. Therefore God’s will is in no way different from His foreknowledge, and consequently either God does not foreknow all things—because He does not will all that occurs—or else He wills evil also, since He foreknows all. This means either that He does not foreknow all things, which is the same as saying that He is not God, or that He is not good, which is also the same as saying that He is not God. Thus God’s foreknowledge does differ from His will, and so both differ from the divine essence. (p. 392-393)

If the divine energies do not differ from one another, then God’s creative power is not distinct from His foreknowledge. But in that case, since God began to create at a particular moment, He also began to foreknow at a particular moment. Yet if God did not have foreknowledge of all things before the ages how could He be God? (p. 393)

If God’s creative energy does not differ in any respect from divine foreknowledge, then created things are concurrent with God’s foreknowledge. Thus because God unoriginately has foreknowledge and what is foreknown is unoriginately foreknown, it follows that God creates unoriginately, and therefore that created things have been created unoriginately. But how shall He be God if His creatures are in no way subsequent to Him? (p. 393)

If God’s creative energy in no respect differs from His foreknowledge, then the act of creating is not subject to His will, since His foreknowledge is not so subject. In that
case God will create, not by an act of volition, but simply because it is His nature to create. But how will He be God if He creates without volition? (p. 393)

Regarding the real, and not just conceptual, Essence-Energies distinction in the Triune God:

‘St. Gregory himself anticipated the width of implications of his basic distinction. If one does not accept it, he argued, then it would be impossible to discern clearly between the “generation” of the Son and “creation” of the world, both being the acts of essence, and this would lead to utter confusion in the Trinitarian doctrine. St. Gregory was quite formal at that point.

If according to the delirious opponents and those who agree with them, the Divine energy in no way differs from the Divine essence, then the act of creating, which belongs to the will, will in no way differ from generation (gennan) and procession (ekporeuein), which belong to the essence. If to create is no different from generation and procession, then the creatures will in no way differ from the Begotten (gennematos) and the Projected (problematos). If such is the case according to them, then both the Son of God and the Holy Spirit will be no different from creatures, and the creatures will all be both the begotten (gennemata) and the projected (problemata) of God the Father, and creation will be deified and God will be arrayed with the creatures. For this reason the venerable Cyril, showing the difference between God’s essence and energy, says that to generate belongs to the Divine nature, whereas to create belongs to His Divine energy. This he shows clearly saying, “nature and energy are not the same.” If the Divine essence in no way differs from the Divine energy, then to beget (gennan) and project (ekporeuein) will in no
way differ from creating (*poiein*). God the Father creates by the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Thus He also begets and projects by the Son and in the Holy Spirit, according to the opinion of the opponents and those who agree with them. (*Capita* 96 and 97.)

St. Gregory quotes St. Cyril of Alexandria. But St. Cyril at this point was simply repeating St. Athanasius. St. Athanasius, in his refutation of Arianism, formally stressed the ultimate difference between *ousia* [essence] or *physis* [substance], on the one hand, and the *boulesis* [will], on the other. God exists, and then He also acts. There is a certain “necessity” in the Divine Being, indeed not a necessity of compulsion, and no *fatum*, but a necessity of being itself. God simply is what He is. But God’s will is eminently free. He in no sense is necessitated to do what He does. Thus *gennesis* [generation] is always *kata phisin* [according to essence], but creation is a *bouleseos ergon* [energy of the will] (*Contra Arianos* III. 64-6). These two dimensions, that of being and that of acting, are different, and must be clearly distinguished. Of course, this distinction in no way compromises the “Divine simplicity.” Yet, it is a real distinction, and not just a logical devise. St. Gregory was fully aware of the crucial importance of this distinction. At this point he was a true successor of the great Athanasius and of the Cappadocian hierarchs.

(*Florovsky, 1987, p. 8*)

One cannot help but see in the foregoing quotation—in Florovsky’s brilliant commentary and research, faithful to Orthodox teaching—that the denial of the real distinction between the

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19 See Appendix C

20 Regarding the quotations from Florovsky, all the bracketed entries are from the text that is cited.
Divine Essence and Divine Energy can lead to an embrace of pantheism, in its various forms, or to the degradation of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit to the status of creatures (something of course which the various Arian heresies did and have done). Additionally, Western Christianity, with its denial of the real Essence-Energies distinction, introduces the “ideas” of creatures and the “ideas” of all creation (the Archetypes of Platonic philosophy) into the very Essence of God; and consequently makes the claim that we can have knowledge or contemplation of the Essence of God through supposed knowledge of these Archetypes. So once again, the various branches of the heresy of Western Christianity, in their denial of Orthodox theology, have pantheistic tendencies—whether they realize it or not.

These things here mentioned by Father Florovsky in his reasearch, and many others not here mentioned, point to profound truths which are confessed by the Holy Tradition of Orthodox Christianity. These truths have not been derived nor deduced through any philosophical reasoning, but rather—as Orthodox theologians will rightful tells us—they have, by the infinite grace of God, been lived by the Orthodox saints throughout history, and put into words, as much as is possible with our deficient human language, for our education and enlightenment, so that we can pursue the same experience which absolutely transcends all words, concepts, and knowledge. By the mercy of God, these truths have been revealed to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ through the innumerable Orthodox saints’ participation with the uncreated energies of the Triune God throughout history—then this experience, which literally is beyond all words and knowledge (as Romanides and others tell us) is spoken about in our created human language found in the Holy Scriptures, the writings of the Holy Fathers and decisions of the Holy Synods. Certainly, along the very same lines, we are also educated pertaining to these matters through the
God-inspired martyric witness and lives of the countless Orthodox saints who, throughout history, have fearlessly confessed Christ, the God-Man, and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is His Body (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11).

*Language, Science, and the Infallibility of Holy Scripture*

As we have said, and will continue to say throughout our discussion, God is forever inexpressible and incomprehensible regardless of any and all names that are applied to Him—and regardless of any other words, for that matter, that could possibly be applied to Him; for names, without exception, are themselves words or expressions. In fact—following Father Romanides’ brilliant presentation of Orthodox theology, which is very faithful to Patristic theology and consequently is very faithful to our entire Holy Orthodox tradition—all words and concepts, with absolutely no exception, are forever unable to express or comprehend the absolutely transcendent Triune God. None of the proponents of the many heresies—both in Western Christianity and elsewhere—understand this very basic premise found throughout the unconquerable and incomparable Holy Orthodox Church and its Theology.

Now when we examine the entire Patristic tradition, we note that the Fathers stress that idolatry begins when someone identifies expressions or concepts about God with God Himself. They make this claim because God cannot be identified with any human concept. The uncreatedness of God literally cannot be expressed through concepts. (Romanides, 2008, p. 69)
This beautiful reality regarding the absolute transcendence of God, confessed by the Holy Orthodox Church, of course, even applies to the Bible (the Holy Scriptures) and this is something that the theologians of Western Christianity do not understand in regard to the Bible—additionally, the theologians of Islam also do not understand this reality pertaining to the absolute transcendence of God, claiming the Koran to be of an uncreated nature (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 271). In the sharpest contrast to such heresy found in Western Christianity and Islam (and certainly also to be found abundantly among other heretical ideologies and religions), Orthodox Christianity truly confesses the absolute transcendence—forever beyond all comprehension and expression—of the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity. In the sharpest contrast to the aforementioned heresies, for Orthodox Christians, God transcends all the names, words, expressions and concepts found throughout the Holy Scriptures:

“Holy Scripture is not divinely inspired in the sense that God wrote it. There is no such divine inspiration as the Muslims believe in respect of the Koran or the Franks in the West of Holy Scripture. Divine inspiration of that sort does not exist. Divine inspiration to the letter has never been accepted by any Orthodox Christian, even the most conservative. That sort of divine inspiration is out of the question for us.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 273)

Father Romanides continues to speak brilliantly regarding these matters:
In their tradition, the Franks followed Augustine in identifying revelation with the revelation by God of concepts to man. In fact, they identified revelation not only with concepts, but also with the expressions, that is, terms and words, that conveyed these concepts. But if you accept this opinion, then you have already subscribed to the so-called literal divine inspiration of the Bible. This means that God manifests Himself in order to dictate, as it were, expressions and concepts to the writers of the Bible. Once you adopt this train of thought, however, you inevitably reach the conclusion that God is really the author of the Bible rather than the prophets and evangelists. Since Western theology followed this way of thinking, the appearance of modern science created a serious problem when it overturned certain positions found in the Bible. It was as if modern science were proving that God is a liar, since He Himself had earlier dictated or said something else. (Romanides, 2008, pp. 111-112)

Unfortunately, at various times, some political and religious leaders in Russia and Greece, either knowingly or unknowingly, were greatly influenced by Western politics, philosophy, and theology with the result that, at times, Russian and modern Greek theology were influenced by the aforementioned heretical thinking of Western Christianity pertaining to Holy Scripture:

In the Papal tradition Holy Scripture was asserted to be God’s revelation and this created many problems in science. At the same time, Holy Scripture was linked with the theology of Thomas Aquinas, who was a scholastic philosopher, with the result that
Russian and modern Greek theology were also influenced. [Metropolitan Hierotheos]

(Hierotheos, 2012, pp. 269-270)

Despite heretical influences trying to find their way into Orthodoxy, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, which is alone the True Church, has survived the ravages of all the heresies throughout history—and Christ promised us that this same Church (the Orthodox Church) always will survive, regardless of what hell will bring against it (Archbishop Paul of Finland, 1999, p.16-17).

For, only by the unfathomable grace of God, there have always been great Orthodox saints, throughout the ages, to help guide the Orthodox Church and its people from falling into complete disaster from the heretical influences besieging the Church. This is why, by the grace of God—despite the loss of great numbers of people to the heresies—great numbers of Orthodox have also, in the end, remained, Orthodox. The Orthodox saints, by the grace of God, have always confessed, with their unmatched heroism and holiness of life, what the heresies are and, in contrast, what Orthodoxy, the only True Faith, is—and these same multitudes of Orthodox saints (both known and unknown) were never conquered, ever, despite the manifold heresies and other forces which have attacked and continue to attack the Holy Orthodox Church.

Certainly, an error found throughout all of the heresies which comprise Western Christianity—from Papism to all of the manifold Protestant heresies born of Papism (including mainline Protestant denominations and the recent innovation of Pentecostalism in its innumerable varieties)—is a literalistic view, to one extent or another, of everything found in Holy Scripture. In Western Christianity, which is heavily influenced by Platonic thought and Augustine—whether many in the West, realize it or not—there is the view that the words and
concepts of Holy Scripture are literally the revelation of God to humanity and nothing else is left to be revealed in this regard—for much of Western Christianity Holy Scripture is alone the revelation of God. Additionally, historically and to this day, many of the proponents of these same heresies hold that the Holy Scriptures are themselves intended as an infallible guide regarding scientific topics such as medicine, the age and functioning of the universe, the earth, and all else in creation—in short, these same people generally speaking hold that the Bible is an infallible reference book on practically all scientific matters. Though this mistake of viewing Holy Scripture as a scientific reference book in the West is not as prevalent as it once was, nevertheless, it is still very commonly found in Western Christianity.

Additionally, the equating of the words and concepts of Holy Scripture—which point to the indescribable and incomprehensible revelation of the Triune God to the Prophets, Apostles, and Saints—with the actual revelation itself is something that is very problematic, because essentially we are then claiming to describe the indescribable, ineffable, and incomprehensible Triune God through our created words and concepts which are drawn from our created environment—this, of course, has inherent pantheistic tendencies and is idolatrous. And Western Christianity and others definitely continue along these same aforementioned heretical paths. Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos, brilliantly and faithfully, follow Orthodox teaching in their refutation of this heretical thinking common to Western Christianity, Islam, and other faiths:

“Since the revelation is identified in the West with Holy Scripture, this means that God reveals words and concepts to humankind. So essentially the revelation is words
and concepts, which means that the essence of theology is for someone to study concepts and terminology concerning God. There is no other revelation beyond concepts and words. So in this world we are left with the words of Holy Scripture and nothing more.

Western theology in the Middle Ages was led in this direction, and Holy Scripture was identified in this way with the revelation. So the revelation is the words of Holy Scripture.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 256)

“For us Holy Scripture is words and concepts; it is some of the words and concepts about God. For us, when we say that words and concepts about God are abolished in the experience of glorification, this also applies to Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture too is abolished in the experience of glorification.

Western theologians take St Gregory Palamas and the Eastern Fathers and accuse them on this account, because they are scandalised that the Fathers regard Holy Scripture as something temporary. Why? For Western Christians Holy Scripture is the revelation. It is as if you were to abolish the Koran for Muslims. Would that be possible? Because the Koran for Muslims is not just a revelation, but came done from heaven. The Koran is even uncreated. The Koran exists for ever with God.

The Franks believed something similar in the Middle Ages and Western Christians continue on these lines. They are shocked when an Orthodox Christian tells them that Holy Scripture is not revelation and not the word of God.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 271)
Holy Scripture is not the revelation of God, but a word about the revelation given to the saints. Nor is it the word of God, but a word about the Word. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 271)

Again, the very faithful confession of Orthodoxy of Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos is very powerful, and certainly points out the falsehood inherent in much of Plato’s philosophy (and that of his followers) and in that of the belief systems of the other ancient heretics, such as Eunomius—heretics and false belief systems which were essentially embraced and followed in numerous ways by both Western Christianity and Islam. For, Eunomius, Plato, and Augustine made similar, essentially, pantheistic—and, as such, idolatrous—claims which later were embraced by Western Christianity and Islam. To what extent the various heresies were and are influenced by one another is in the end, of course, irrelevant—the fact that they share so much in common with their embrace of certain pantheistic and idolatrous tendencies is striking.

So when the created words of the Koran are claimed to be forever with God and the claim is made by Muslims that the Koran is uncreated (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 271) what is this other than a form of pantheism and idolatry? Likewise, when an adherent to Judaism views the salvation offered by God as being something to be found in the Law, something contained in the Holy Scriptures, but rejects Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God—Who gave the Law to those whom He created from absolutely nothing to prepare them for His coming—then this rejection of the Pre-eternal Son of God, God Himself, Who condescended to become Incarnate for us, in favor of something else, is clearly nothing but idolatry also.

“The Fathers of the Church refuse to identify God with the words and concepts of human thought.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 256)
What is uncreated can never be identified with the concept, because that would be idolatry. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 259)

“For this reason the Fathers say that anyone who identifies concepts, texts or created meanings with uncreated things is an idolater. It is idolatry to identify God with some idea that we have about God within ourselves. We think that our idea about God is God. When we identify our idea with God, idolatry begins. This is an idol.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 259)

God created us all from absolutely nothing, and none of us are any better or more worthy than anyone else—again, one only has to look at our origins (for, we were all created from absolutely nothing) to know this. What we rightfully say of the Jews and the Muslims, and of all others estranged from the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity, we tragically often have to say for ourselves, though we are nominally Orthodox—for certainly, countless of the heretics are more courageous, more generous, and kinder than we who possess the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity, but only nominally adhere to it. For, in our often blatant denial of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church (the only True Church)—in our own often godless, atheistic conduct toward Christ our God and fellow man—we nominally Orthodox (myself most guilty) frequently become the worst idolators. We, who are nominally Orthodox, ourselves frequently reject Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church worse than many of the heretics do. Despite the fact that Orthodox Christianity is the only True Faith, very many of us who call ourselves Orthodox, myself most guilty, refuse to love Christ and our fellow human beings. And what is our excuse?
We have Orthodoxy, the only True Faith, so we cannot even claim ignorance—whereas all the heretics arguably can do so.

Again, to some albeit very limited extent, when compared to the aforementioned heretics, these same sorts of errors were, at various times, embraced by the Greeks and Russians, and doubtless by other Orthodox Christians also—and, by the unfathomable grace of God, there always have been great Orthodox Saints to correct us when we fall into error and to always be an example of Orthodoxy, the only True Faith, so that we never forget our unconquerable Orthodox heritage (and, by the mercy of God, there will always be such great Orthodox Saints). Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos are faithful to the confession of the unconquerable Orthodox Saints and to Holy Orthodox Tradition when they speak pertaining to our incomparable Orthodox theology. We again look at Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos as they continue to contrast Orthodox presuppositions regarding Holy Scripture with the errors inherent in Western Christianity’s presuppositions pertaining to Holy Scripture:

“Together with Russian conservatism, the modern Greek theological teaching dominated in Greece, as this teaching had always dominated in the Papal tradition, mainly because of Augustine, that the revelation from God is contained in Holy Scripture. If we want to say what revelation is (according to Augustine), revelation is essentially Holy Scripture, or at least it is included within Holy Scripture. In the act of divine inspiration, God revealed these concepts that are included in the Old and New Testaments to the Prophets and to the Apostles and since they are revealed by God, Holy Scripture cannot possibly contain any errors. As he is the mouth of God, and God knows
everything as the Creator of the world, the divinely inspired writer who wrote the words of Holy Scripture cannot make the slightest mistake.

This became the basic reason why modern science went through difficult years with the Papal Church, as you are well aware. There were people who were burnt as heretics because they made scientific discoveries that were not in accordance with what the Papal Church and Holy Scripture said, at least in the way the Papal Church interpreted it.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 270)

It should be noted, as we proceed further in this part of the discussion, that Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos are certainly not making any claims regarding the validity of all science and the consequent supposed undermining of the validity of the Holy Scriptures because of scientific discoveries. To the contrary, faithful to the Orthodox Fathers, Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos, in their research and discussion of Holy Scripture and Orthodox teaching, affirm that Holy Scripture—though certainly not uncreated, though certainly not the uncreated energies of God, and therefore not the uncreated truth itself—is created words pointing us to the uncreated truth. Holy Scripture is created words pointing us to the Uncreated Triune God—Who forever absolutely transcends all the words and concepts of Holy Scripture, and forever transcends all words, concepts and all thought whatsoever—helping to guide us to seek experience of this same God in His uncreated energies. For Orthodox Christians, the revelation of God is the uncreated energies of God—not the created words of Holy Scripture which nevertheless help guide us to that revelation—as such and as we said, created words are certainly not, in any way, the uncreated revelation of God. And when we
somehow identify or confuse created reality with the uncreated reality of the forever incomprehensible Triune God, then we arrive at all the heresies. Metropolitan Hierotheos speaks of this, in what follows:

The view that Holy Scripture is identical with the revelation created all the heresies. It even caused conflicts with science. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 269)

Here Metropolitan Hierotheos quotes Father Romanides pertaining to these matters:

“It is clear that the teaching that Holy Scripture is the revelation created many serious problems for the Church from the point of view of the positive sciences. Because we now know that there are human bones which have been proved to be from three and half million years ago.” (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 269)

Father Romanides continues to speak about science—further underscoring that Holy Scripture was not in any way written as a scientific textbook, but was written in order to point us to the Uncreated Triune God Who created us from absolutely nothing; and it is this same incomprehensible God Who forever transcends all science and any other knowledge, Who alone is our salvation and sanctification.

“The furthest star that has been discovered to date—from an article that I read, I don’t know since then up until today what has happened—is ten billion light-years away. A light-year is six trillion miles and is the distance that a photon travels in one year.
Well, now that we have these perceptions of time, the things that the Hebrews used to say about, for instance, five thousand and sixty years from the creation of the world are foolishness. Because, if we take the Old Testament, the world, the whole universe, is about six thousand years old.

It is obvious that the chronology given by Holy Scripture does not correspond with reality. Yet apologists are still trying to say that Holy Scripture describes everything wonderfully, without any mistakes…” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 277)

Now, specifically, if we look again at just the previous four quotations from the brilliant work of Metropolitan Hierotheos and Father Romanides—pertaining to any alleged relationship between Holy Scripture on the one hand and scientific inquiry and knowledge on the other hand—we also certainly must admit and understand the following obvious fact, namely, that “with God all things are possible”(Matthew 19:26); and, as such, God Who is the Author of the natural laws, can apply them at anytime or have them not apply in any particular circumstance (and certainly, we can proceed in numerous instances with this line of thought). Additionally, in these same last four quotations, Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos are certainly not making any claims which would affirm the supposed validity of any theory that mankind evolved
from some lower, non-human, life form, or anything else of that nature—nor have I ever seen anything from either Father Romanides' or Metropolitan Hierotheos' brilliant and faithful work on Orthodox theology which would definitively make such a claim.

Additionally, regardless of whatever scientific view of the created universe would seem plausible to the scientific community, at a particular time, one can be sure that Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos—though not infallible, for no one is completely infallible but God—were and are very faithful to the unconquerable Orthodox Fathers and the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ; this great faithfulness to Orthodox teaching is something that is very clearly seen, at the very least, in a great deal of Father Romanides' and Metropolitan Hierotheos’ outstandingly beautiful work—where they brilliantly and meticulously follow the Orthodox Fathers discussing and presenting Orthodox theology to so many people—something which has undoubtedly helped great numbers of Orthodox Christians.

The absolutely transcendent Triune God Who created everything and everyone from absolutely nothing is never comprehended nor defined by anything or anyone, ever—again, following from what we just said, this obviously includes the fact that science will also never fathom the forever incomprehensible Supra-substantial Trinity; in fact, science will never even fathom created things, let alone the uncreated Supra-substantial Holy Trinity. Science will never

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21 As we will see more from St. Justin of Chelije later, here we mention this same modern day Orthodox saint’s condemnation of any theory which dehumanizes humanity—an example would certainly be any theory alleging that man descended from the lower, non-human, life forms: “Shrivelled, stunted, alienated and degenerate humanistic man has rightly claimed, through his sages, to be descended from apes. Having made himself equal in descent to the animals, what reason has he not to make himself equal to them in morality?” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 93-94)

Certainly, our embracing any scientific theory giving us descent from the animals, gives us more of an excuse to act like animals—an Orthodox Priest, Father Joseph Copeland, spoke of matters related to this, among other things, at a talk which I was fortunate to attend; Father Joseph spoke very well and inspiring.
comprehend creation and all created things; and, indeed, the God inspired writers of Holy Scripture are themselves silent pertaining to how God created all creation and pertaining to the very nature of all created things, which the Triune God created from absolutely nothing, as St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us: “but what each is in itself, and how and whence, on these points they are silent”. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 260)

Again, as we said, Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos are faithful to Orthodox teaching, following the Orthodox Fathers—in this instance, St. Gregory Palamas—when they teach us that Holy Scripture was not intended as a source of knowledge pertaining to scientific discovery and other created matters, but rather to guide us toward the experience of the uncreated energies of God.

“Some people believe to this day that the positive sciences are opposed to Holy Scripture. This discussion ought to cease once and for all, if we take St Gregory Palamas’ word as law, and understand what divinely inspired concepts are and what their aim is. The Fathers of the Church tell us that the aim of these concepts is not to reveal to us the mystery of created things, as the only way the divinely inspired concepts can be of service to us is for us to use them ascetically, in order to have the experience of glorification.

Therefore the aim of the concepts in Holy Scripture is purely ascetical, not scientific. It is not intended that we should track down from scriptural concepts what matter or the heavenly bodies are composed of, or how the structure of the universe functions.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 281)
Contrary to what the heretics teach—either explicitly or implicitly—the Orthodox Fathers confess that “there is no similarity at all between uncreated and created things” (Hierotheos, 2012, pp.275-276).

Clearly, as Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos, faithful to Orthodox teaching, confess to us: there is no similarity whatsoever between created truth and uncreated truth. As such, the uncreated truth identified with, and experienced through, the uncreated energies of the Triune God, by the Orthodox saints, has nothing to do with the created words of Holy Scripture—though nevertheless by means of these created words in Holy Scripture we are guided, within the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church, to this uncreated reality of the divine energies. The uncreated reality and truth pertaining to the absolutely transcendent and incomprehensible Triune God is in no way represented by anything created; as such, certainly Holy Scripture points to this uncreated reality and truth, but the created words of Holy Scripture itself certainly are not this uncreated reality and truth—this Orthodox confession of the Fathers, and of all the Orthodox saints, is certainly in sharp contrast to the heretical Augustinian-Platonic thinking of Western Christianity.

“The stance that St Gregory Palamas takes against Barlaam is very important. Barlaam maintains that there is one single truth, and we can know this truth either from Holy Scripture or from philosophy or from the positive sciences. Because Barlaam lived in an era when scientific activity had begun.

In opposition to Barlaam, St Gregory Palamas has certain specific views: there is no similarity at all between uncreated and created things. Consequently no one can
confuse created truths with uncreated truths. They are not the same thing. Created truths are different from uncreated truths. As there is no similarity, created truth cannot be the means by which we know uncreated truth.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, pp. 275-276)

This means that Holy Scripture is not a source of scientific information. The divinely inspired writers used the scientific knowledge of their era, without getting involved in science. They had a different aim. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos]

“In the 14th century, there was an extremely interesting conflict between St Gregory Palamas and Barlaam the Calabrian. Barlaam asserted then that Holy Scripture was the source of scientific knowledge and St Gregory Palamas made fun of him, because he pointed out to him that there are two truths. There is created truth and uncreated truth. Holy Scripture is not a source of knowledge of created truth but of uncreated truth, which is the revelation of the uncreated glory of God. It is not a reference book on medicine or any other science. It is a book that was written in the context of the knowledge of the era in which it was written.

Where Holy Scripture is infallible and a guide for our life is on the subjects of purification, illumination and glorification, where glorification is the foundation of the knowledge of God possessed by the Prophets, Apostles and saints of the Church.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, pp. 275-276)
The foregoing research and discussion of Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos are, as usual, very remarkable and brilliant. And in case there is any possible misunderstanding from the statement in the above quotation, “Holy Scripture is not a source of knowledge of created truth but of uncreated truth”, we recall the earlier part of this particular discussion where we affirm—consistent with Father Romanides’ and Metropolitan Hierotheos’ faithful discussion of Orthodox teaching—that Holy Scripture is not itself uncreated truth, but created words which point us to uncreated truth; and it is in this sense that we obviously must understand this last quotation.

Holy Scripture—Father Romanides and others will brilliantly tell us, consistent with Orthodox teaching—is not the revelation of God, but words about the revelation of God. Words and concepts drawn from our created environment—which, in fact, exclusively comprise Holy Scripture—are used to point to the uncreated reality of the Triune God, but these words and concepts are not the absolutely transcendent Holy Trinity and are never the revelation of this indescribable and incomprehensible Triune God. We have analogies, descriptions, and profound lessons in Holy Scripture—through the use of all the words and concepts contained in Holy Scripture, drawn exclusively from our created environment and our created existence—pertaining to the inexpressible Triune God; but these words and concepts are exclusively from our created existence and experience, as we said, and are used by the God inspired prophets and apostles to point to the forever unknowable God, about Whom these prophets and apostles, and all the other Orthodox saints, only know very little—and that little which they do know, is from their experience, in some extremely limited measure, of the unfathomable uncreated energies of God. As such, all of these words and concepts of Holy Scripture are not the revelation of God, but about the revelation of God. The God inspired writers of Holy Scripture, and all the rest of
us, of course, cannot ever fully describe even our own created reality and created existence in our environment—let alone all of us, without any exception, being forever utterly ignorant of the mystery of the incomprehensible Uncreated Holy Trinity. Whatever words and concepts that the God inspired writers of Holy Scripture use to point to the Triune God is drawn from—and is related to—our created human existence, experience, and from our environment (which of course is also created).

For whereas they have set forth respecting all other things that they were created, the heaven, the earth, the sea, times, ages, and the creatures that are therein, but what each is in itself, and how and whence, on these points they are silent; so, too, concerning God Himself, they exhort men to “believe that He is, and that He is a rewarde of them that diligently seek Him,” but in regard to His nature, as being above every name, they neither name it nor concern themselves about it. For if we have learned any names expressive of the knowledge of God, all these are related and have analogy to such names as denote human characteristics. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 260)

Father Romanides, consistent with Orthodox teaching, speaks of this as well:

“The more the Papal and Protestant theologians examine the vocabulary of the Old Testament, the more convinced they become that almost all of it is to be found in the environment. It has now been proved by contemporary archaeology that even the Hebrew language originates from the language of the Phoenicians—that is to say, the Canaanites—and is the language of those conquered by the Hebrews.
When the Hebrews returned to the Promised Land, they found a people who spoke the Canaanite language. They mixed with them and the result was the emergence of the Hebrew language. It is clear that in the time of Abraham the faithful Hebrews did not speak Hebrew, but spoke the Syriac of that era and that region.” (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 283)

All of the words of Holy Scripture, without exception—and, all of the words throughout our entire language, for that matter—pertain and entirely belong to our created existence and created environment. Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos speaks of this:

Some people, in order to interpret Holy Scripture, study the words. But the words used by God-seers belong to the world around them […] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 283)

In regard to this particular section of our discussion, Father Romanides beautifully summarizes much of what we have already quoted from him, and from Metropolitan Hierotheos, in the following brilliant quotation:

The Fathers stress that all the expressions and concepts that a person can have are products of human thought. Concepts and expressions do not come down from heaven and God did not personally create concepts and expressions in the human mind. The Fathers base this teaching on their experience of *theosis*, which leads them to stress that every human language is a human invention. Man is the creator of the language with which he communicates with his fellow man. There is no divine language. God does not have His own language that He gave to man and He does not even communicate with man via some special language that He gives to those with whom He communicates.
Language is the result of human needs. People formed it in order to help them communicate and interact.

So language is not what it was made out to be by Dante, a good number of Protestants, and the Frankish theologians of the Middle Ages. It is also not what the Muslims claim for the Koran—that the Koran and its language came down from heaven. The Muslims even maintain that there exists an uncreated Koran in heaven. On this very issue, there is an important discussion that took place between St. Gregory of Nyssa and the Eunomians. The Eunomians believed in the existence of a divine language that God revealed to the prophets and that included the names for God that the prophets mentioned. So the Eunomians were claiming that the names for God were the essence of God and that these names for God mentioned in Holy Scripture conveyed concepts that corresponded to the reality that is God. Of course, this is not the case.

In line with the above, we cannot make any distinction between a divine language and human languages, because there is no divine language with which God speaks to mankind. (Romanides, 2008, pp. 80-81)

_The Absolute Transcendence of the Triune God and the Inadequacy of All Language to Describe God._

St. Gregory of Nyssa, when he was fighting against Eunomius and his version of the Arian heresy, had the following to say pertaining to language (consistent with Orthodox
tradition)—teaching us that language is necessary to humanity, but certainly not something which is in any way necessary to God:

He says that God was what He is, before the creation of man. Nor do we deny it. For whatsoever we conceive of God existed before the creation of the world. But we maintain that it received its name after the namer came into being. For if we use words for this purpose, that they may supply us with teaching about the things which they signify, and it is ignorance alone that requires teaching, while the Divine Nature, as comprehending all knowledge, is above all teaching, it follows that names where invented to denote the Supreme Being, not for His sake, but for our own. For He did not attach the term ungeneracy to His nature in order that He Himself might be instructed. For He Who knoweth all things has no need of syllables and words to instruct Him as to His own nature and majesty. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 266)

The Word of God needs no words—and this is something that many of the ancient and current heretics do not understand. God needs no words nor the concepts which they signify; humanity needs words and their associated concepts in this life to somewhat point to God, Who nevertheless absolutely transcends all words and concepts whatsoever, without exception.

For, if He has in Himself all that is the Father’s, there is nothing of the Father’s that He cannot have. If, then, He has all things that are the Father’s in Himself, or, say we rather, if He has the Father Himself, then, along with the Father and the things that are the Father’s, He must needs have in Himself the whole of the Father’s will. He needs not, therefore, to know the Father’s will by word, being Himself the Word of the Father, in the highest acceptation of the term. What, then, is the word that can be addressed to Him
who is the Word indeed? And how can He Who is the Word indeed require a second word for instruction?

But it may be said that the voice of the Father was addressed to the Holy Spirit. But neither does the Holy Spirit require instruction by speech, for being God, as saith the Apostle, He “searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God.” If, then, God utters any word, and all speech is directed to the ear, let those who maintain that God expresses Himself, in the language of continuous discourse, inform us what audience He addressed. Himself He needs not address. The Son has no need of instruction by words. The Holy Ghost searcheth even the deep things of God. Creation did not yet exist. To whom, then, was God’s word addressed? (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 272)

God created all things about which we can speak in our language and He gave us the capacity to create our language to use in our communication within ourselves and with others. And we use our language to communicate with one another pertaining to things created and pertaining to the absolutely transcendent Triune God, Who forever transcends our language. But God is not the Creator of words; we, who are created by God, are the creators of all the words that we use, without exception—and this, our capability to create language, is by the grace of the same God Who created us from absolutely nothing.

St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us, certainly consistent with Holy Scripture, that our language is a human invention, by the grace of God—our language is not something devised by God for us.

And so, again, we maintain that the intellectual faculty, made as it was originally by God, acts thenceforward by itself when it looks out upon realities, and that there be no
confusion in its knowledge, affixes some verbal note to each several thing as a stamp to indicate its meaning. Great Moses himself confirms this doctrine when he says that names were assigned by Adam to the brute creation, recording the fact in these words: “And out of the ground God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to all the beasts of the field.” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 290) As, then, the heavens declare, though they do not speak, and the firmament shows God’s handy-work, yet requires no voice for the purpose, and the day uttereth speech, though there is no speaking, and no one can say that the Holy Scripture is in error—in like manner, since both Moses and David have one and the same Teacher, I mean the Holy Spirit, Who says that the fiat went before the creation, we are not told that God is the Creator of words, but of things made known to us by the signification of our words. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 273)

Once again, God did not create our words or concepts; and God absolutely transcends all words and concepts and all other created existence. Father Romanides rightfully, and beautifully, speaks of St. Gregory of Nyssa’s and other Orthodox Fathers’ defense against heresies which deny the absolute transcendence of God. Indeed, the Orthodox Fathers, and all the Saints, fought against heresies which attempt to make God the Creator of language and/or attempt to make language and any other created reality part of the very nature of God. As such, we look at the God inspired wisdom, once again, of St. Gregory of Nyssa.
[...] the Creator of human reason has gifted us with speech proportionally to the capacity of our nature, so that we might be able thereby to signify the thoughts of our minds; but that, so far as the Divine nature differs from ours, so great will be the degree of difference between our notions respecting it and its own inherent majesty and godhead. And as our power compared with God’s, and our life with His life, is as nothing, and all else that is ours, compared with what is in Him, is “as nothing in comparison” with Him, as saith the inspired Teaching, so also our word as compared with Him, Who is the Word indeed, is as nothing. For this word of yours was not in the beginning, but was created along with our nature, nor is it to be regarded as having any reality of its own, but, as our master (Basil) somewhere has said, it vanishes along with the sound of the voice, nor is any operation of the word discernible, but it has its subsistence in voice only, or in written characters. But the word of God is God Himself, the Word that was in the beginning and that abideth for ever, through Whom all things were and are, Who ruleth over all, and hath all power over the things in heaven and the things on earth, being Life, and Truth, and Righteousness, and Light, and all that is good, and upholding all things in being. Such, then, and so great in being the word, as we understand it, of God, our opponent allows God, as some great thing, the power of language, made up of nouns, verbs, and conjunctions, not perceiving that, as He Who conferred practical powers on our nature is not spoken of as fabricating each of their several results, but, while He gave our nature its ability, it is by us that a house is constructed, or a bench, or a sword, or a plough, and whatsoever thing our life happens to be in need of, each of which things is our own work, although it may be ascribed to Him Who is the author of our being, and
Who created our nature capable of every science,—so also our power of speech is the work of Him Who made our nature what it is, but the invention of each several term required to denote objects in hand is of our own devising. And this is proved by the fact that many terms in use are of a base and unseemly character, of which no man of sense would conceive God the inventor: so that, if certain of our familiar expressions are ascribed by Holy Scripture to God as the speaker, we should remember that the Holy Spirit is addressing us in language of our own, as e.g. in the history of Acts we are told that each man received the teaching of the disciples in his own language wherein he was born, understanding the sense of the words by the language which he knew. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 274)

For God is not in any way described by our human language nor is our language in any way a part of God, nor is it in any way necessary to God—and those who try to tell us otherwise are heretics. And there are very many adherents to such heresy, which denies the absolute transcendence of the Triune God—and they are to be found abundantly within Western Christianity and elsewhere—and they all essentially have pantheistic tendencies.

[…] surely it is trifling and mere Jewish folly, far removed from the grandeur of Christian simplicity, to think that God, Who is the Most High and above every name and thought, Who by sole virtue of His will governs the world, which He brought into existence, and upholds it in being, should set Himself like some schoolmaster to settle the niceties of terminology. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 274)
God condescends to be spoken of in our greatly limited language and according to our greatly limited capacity.

[...] we maintain that the grace of God at sundry times and in divers manners spake by the Prophets, ordering their voices conformably to our capacity and the modes of expression with which we are familiar, and that by such means it leads us, as with a guiding hand, to the knowledge of higher truths, not teaching us in terms proportioned to their inherent sublimity, (for how can the great be contained by the little?) but descending to the lower level of our limited comprehension. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 274)

Language is a human invention, by the grace of God; and humanity uses it and needs it—but our language can neither define God nor does God need it for Himself.

But if any one maintain that light, or heaven, or earth, or seed were named after human fashion by God, he will certainly conclude that they were named in some special language. What that was, let him show. For he who knows the one thing will not, in all probability, be ignorant of the other. For at the river Jordan, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, and again in the hearing of the Jews, and at the Transfiguration, there came a voice from heaven, teaching men not only to regard the phenomenon as something more than a figure, but also to believe the beloved Son of God to be truly God. Now that voice was fashioned by God, suitably to the understanding of the hearers, in airy substance, and adapted to the language of the day, God, “who willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,” having so articulated His words in the air with
a view for the salvation of the hearers, as our Lord also saith to the Jews, when they thought it thundered because the sound took place in the air. “This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes.” But before the creation of the world, inasmuch as there was no one to hear the word, and no bodily element capable of accentuating the articulate voice, how can he who says that God used words give any air of probability to his assertion? God Himself is without body, creation did not yet exist. Reason does not suffer us to conceive of anything material in respect to Him. They who might have been benefited by the hearing were not yet created. And if men were not yet in being, neither had any form of language been struck out in accordance with national peculiarities, by what arguments, then, can he who looks to the bare letter make good his assertion, that God spoke thus using human parts of speech? (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 275)

Our human language was used in the writing of the God inspired Holy Scriptures—there was no special language that was created by God for this purpose; it was human, created language that the God inspired prophets and apostles used to point to the uncreated reality of the Triune God—an uncreated reality which in the end forever defies all language and comprehension.

For a stone or a stick does not seem one thing to one man and another to another, but the different peoples call them by different names. So that our position remains unshaken, that human language is the invention of the human mind or understanding. For from the beginning, as long as all men had the same language, we see from Holy Scripture that men received no teaching of God’s words, nor, when men were separated into various differences of language, did a Divine enactment prescribe how each man should talk. But
God, willing that men should speak different languages, gave human nature full liberty to formulate arbitrary sounds, so as to render their meaning more intelligible. Accordingly, Moses, who lived many generations after the building of the tower, uses one of the subsequent languages in his historical narrative of the creation, and attributes certain words to God, relating these things in his own tongue in which he had been brought up, and with which he was familiar, not changing the names for God by foreign peculiarities and turns of speech, in order by the strangeness and novelty of the expressions to prove them the words of God Himself. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 276)

Father Romanides' research and writing are consistent with St. Gregory of Nyssa’s Orthodox confession—and to that of the preponderance of the other Orthodox Fathers—pertaining to language and the absolute transcendence of God.

The Fathers insisted against the Eunomian heresy that language is a human development and not created by God. Arguing from the Old Testament itself, Saint Gregory of Nyssa claimed that Hebrew is one of the newer languages in the Middle East, a position considered today correct. Compare this with Dante’s claim that God created Hebrew for Adam and Eve to speak, and preserved it so that Christ would speak this language of God also. Of course, Christ did not speak Hebrew, but Aramaic.

Nyssa’s analysis of Biblical language has always been dominant among East Roman writers. (Romanides, n.d.)
St. Gregory of Nyssa's confession of the Triune God Who transcends any and all languages is certainly consistent with the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church.

If, then, Moses was a Hebrew, and the language of the Hebrews was subsequent to the others, Moses, I say, who was born some thousands of years after the Creation of the world, and who relates the words of God in his own language—does he not clearly teach us that he does not attribute to God such a language of human fashion, but that he speaks as he does because it was impossible otherwise than in human language to express his meaning, though the words he uses have some Divine and profound significance? (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, pp. 276-277)

Humanity, all of humanity and all of creation, without exception, was brought into being from absolutely nothing by God—and, as we have often said, the Triune God had no need whatsoever to create anything or anyone. And, as such, nothing created can define or comprehend God—none of us can comprehend God, ever; nor can anything that we have devised, including our language, enable us to understand God—nor does anything that we have, including our language and concepts, correspond to anything that God is. This profound inadequacy of our language, and concepts, in relation to our Creator is spoken of by St. Gregory of Nyssa throughout so much of his God-inspired work. In what follows, St. Gregory of Nyssa—fighting the heretic Eunomius, and the multitudes of past and current heretics who are likeminded—draws from Holy Scripture, and from his own experience as a glorified Orthodox saint, to speak of our language and concepts being forever deficient and wholly unable to describe or comprehend the absolutely transcendent Triune God.
“I said unto the Lord,” saith the Prophet, “Thou art my God, my goods are nothing unto Thee.”22 How then are we glorifying the most blessed life of God, as this man affirms, when (as saith the Prophet) “Our goods are nothing unto Him”? (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 265)

Truly, “Our goods are nothing unto Him” as St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us, drawing from Holy Scripture and in agreement with his own experience of the uncreated energies of God. In what follows, we continue with St. Gregory of Nyssa as he further confesses the deficiency of all language, despite its necessity to us—though language and concepts are certainly of no necessity to the absolutely transcendent Triune God Who created us from nothing:

For to suppose that God used the Hebrew tongue, when there was no one to hear and understand such a language, methinks no reasonable being will consent. We read in the Acts that the Divine power divided itself into many languages for this purpose, that no one of alien tongue might lose his share of the benefit. But if God spoke in human language before the Creation, whom was He to benefit by using it? For that His speech should have some adaptation to the capacity of the hearers, with a view to their profit, no one would conceive to be unworthy of God’s love to man, for Paul the follower of Christ knew how to adapt his words suitably to the habits and disposition of his hearers, making himself milk for babes and strong meat for grown men. But where no object was to be gained by such a use of language, to argue that God, as it were, declaimed such words by Himself, when there was no one in need of the information they would convey—such an

22 In the translated text from which we are quoting, we are told that this beautiful quotation is from the Psalms, Ps.xvi (Masoretic Text). And we note that in reference to the Septuagint Text, LXX, it is Psalm 15 from which this passage is quoted.
idea, methinks, is at once both blasphemous and absurd. Neither, then, did God speak in
the Hebrew language, nor did He express Himself according to any form in use among
the Gentiles. But whatsoever of God’s words are recorded by Moses or the Prophets, are
indications of the Divine will, flashing forth, now in one way, now in another, on the
pure intellect of those holy men, according to the measure of the grace of which they
were partakers. Moses, then, spoke his mother-tongue, and that in which he was
educated. But he attributed these words to God, as I have said, repeatedly, on account of
the childishness of those who were being brought to the knowledge of God, in order to
give a clear representation of the Divine will, and to render his hearers more obedient, as
being awed by the authority of the speaker. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, pp. 276-277)

Even those things which God did create, and which are exceedingly beautiful and wonderful,
despite all with which God has endowed them, are themselves forever incapable of adequately
praising God—let alone our human-created language having any adequate capability of so doing.

For to think it the essential point in piety to attribute the invention of words to God,
Whose praise the whole world and the wonders that are therein are incompetent to
celebrate—must it not be a proceeding of extreme folly so to neglect higher grounds of
praise, and to magnify God on such as are purely human? (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b,
p. 277)

Thus in every way our argument is confirmed, though not, perhaps, drawn out in strict
logical form—showing that God is the Maker of things, not of empty words. For things
have their names not for His sake but for ours. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 279)
St. Gregory of Nyssa beautifully asserts that our language was created by us, certainly not by God—he does this faithful to Orthodox teaching and contradicting all the heretics who teach otherwise—though we are, without a doubt, incapable of anything good, including the creation of our language, without God’s grace.

“God called,” he says, “the firmament Heaven, and He called the dry land Earth, and the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.” How comes it, then, they will ask, when the Scripture admits that their appellations were given them by God, that you say that their names are the work of human invention? What, then, is our reply? We return to our plain statement, and we assert, that He Who brought all creation into being out of nothing is the Creator of things seen in substantial existence, not of unsubstantial words having no existence but in the sound of the voice and the lisp of the tongue. But things are named by the indication of the voice in conformity with the nature and qualities inherent in each, the names being adapted to the things according to vernacular language of each several race. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 278)

We were created by God from absolutely nothing and language is our invention, by the grace of God—and language is for our sake, not at all for God. For God is absolutely transcendent and forever above all language, words, names, and definition; and God is forever beyond any comprehension.

Faithful to the theology of the Holy Orthodox Church, St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches us that the heretic Eunomius’ claims—among which is the claim that our language is God’s invention for us to use in order to comprehend Who God is—are truly absurd. The heresies of Western Christianity, seen in manifold varieties (found in Protestantism and Papism), make
similar assertions to that of Eunomius, and as a result, in a sense, have pantheistic tendencies.

For as St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches us: If, as the heretics claim, the invention of words is proper to God, then our also being able to invent words brings us to equal honor with God. What is this other than a form of pantheism? St. Gregory of Nyssa beautifully discusses this matter in what follows:

For to think of securing the dignity of rule and sovereignty to the Divine Being by a form of words, and to show the great power of God to be dependent upon this, and on the other hand to neglect Him and disregard the providence which belongs to Him, and to lay it to our reproach that men, having received from God the faculty of reason, make an arbitrary use of words to signify things—what is this but an old wife’s fable, or a drunkard’s dream? For the true power, and authority, and dominion, and sovereignty of God do not, we think, consist in syllables. Were it so, any and every inventor of words might claim equal honor with God. But the infinite ages, and the beauties of the universe, and the beams of the heavenly luminaries, and all the wonders of land and sea, and the angelic hosts and supra-mundane powers, and whatever else there is whose existence in the realm above is revealed to us under various figures by Holy Scripture—these are the things that bear witness to God’s power over all. Whereas, to attribute the invention of vocal sound to those who are naturally endowed with the faculty of speech, this involves no impiety towards Him Who gave them their voice. Nor indeed do we hold it to be a great thing to invent words significative of things. For the being to whom Holy Scripture in the history of the creation gave the name of “man” (ανθρωπος), a word of human devising, that same being Job calls “mortal” (βροτος), while of profane
writers, some call him “human being” (φως), and others “articulate speaker” (µεροψ)—
to say nothing of other varieties of the name. Do we, then, elevate them to equal honour
with God, because they also invented names equivalent to that of “man”, alike signifying
their subject. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, pp. 279-280)

Also, just as the adherents to Judaism and Islam deny the divinity of the Only-begotten Son of
God, God the Word—instead giving immeasurably more significance to their own words than to
the forever incomprehensible and absolutely transcendent Word of God, Who created them from
absolutely nothing—likewise, Eunomius preached essentially the same theology as these
aforementioned heretics.

To think of his assertion that the most becoming cause for God’s begetting the Son was
His sovereign authority and power, which may be said not only in regard to the universe
and its elements, but in regard to beasts and creeping things; and of our reverend
theologian teaching that the same is becoming in our conception of God the Only-
begotten—or again, of his saying that God was called ungenerate, or Father, or any other
name, even before the existence of creatures to call Him such, as being afraid lest, His
name not being uttered among creatures as yet unborn, He should be ignorant or
forgetful of Himself, through ignorance of His own nature because of His name being
unspoken! (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 289)

The Triune God absolutely transcends all concepts and words, and everything else. And it
is because of our created and limited existence that we even have language and use it. As such,
we certainly do not have language because it is most proper to God nor because it is His
invention for us as the most noble means of knowing Him. Instead, we Orthodox are taught and
know that God transcends all language and concepts. In the following St. Gregory of Nyssa speaks of this:

Why no one, I imagine, can be so densely stupid as to be ignorant that God the Only-begotten, Who is in the Father, and Who seeth the Father in Himself, is in no need of any name or title to make Him known, nor is the mystery of the Holy Spirit, Who searcheth out the deep things of God, brought to our knowledge by a nominal appellation, nor can the incorporeal nature of supramundane powers name God by voice and tongue. For in the case of immaterial intellectual nature, the mental energy is speech which has no need of material instruments for communication. For even in the case of human beings, we should have no need of using words and names if we could otherwise inform each other of our pure mental feelings and impulses. But (as things are), inasmuch as the thoughts which arise in us are incapable of being so revealed, because our nature is encumbered with its fleshly surrounding, we are obliged to express to each other what goes on in our minds by giving things their respective names, as signs of their meaning. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 289)

But if it were in any way possible by some other means to lay bare the movement of thought, abandoning the formal instrumentality of words, we should converse with one another more lucidly and clearly, revealing by the mere action of thought the essential nature of the things which are under consideration. But now, by reason of our inability to do so, we have given things their special names, calling one Heaven, another Earth, and so on, and as each is related to each, and acts or suffers, we have marked them by distinctive names, so that our thoughts in regard to them may not remain
uncommunicated or unknown. But supramundane and immaterial nature being free and
independent of bodily envelopment, requires no words or names either for itself or for
that which is above it, but whatever utterance on the part of such intellectual nature is
recorded in Holy Writ is given for the sake of the hearers, who would be unable
otherwise to learn what is to be set forth, if it were not communicated to them by voice
and word. And if David in the spirit speaks of something being said by the Lord to the
Lord, it is David himself who is the speaker, being unable otherwise to make known to
us the teaching of what is meant, except by interpreting by voice and word his own
knowledge of the mysteries given him by Divine inspiration. (St. Gregory of Nyssa,
1892b, pp. 289-290)

As we just saw—and also consistent with Father Romanides’ faithful and brilliant research and
confession of Orthodoxy throughout his work—St. Gregory of Nyssa (in the last part of the
foregoing quotation) confesses that God reveals, in some measure, His uncreated glory to the
saints (in this instance to the Prophet, and King, David) which, pertaining to their experience, the
saints later to try, albeit very imperfectly, to communicate in our language to those seeking the
same experience of God. As Father Romanides brilliantly confesses, fully consistent with
Orthodox theology, the uncreated reality of God is forever indescribable by any language or any
concepts whatsoever.

God condescending to become man for us and partake in all that is ours, including in our
human-created language—and condescending to communicate with us in this same language of
ours—is in no way any indication that God created our language, for He did not (as we have said
many times), but rather it is an indication of the unfathomable love and mercy of God towards us
His creatures, in His condescending to share with us in all that pertains to our created human existence.

But, says he, since God condescends to commune with His servants, we may consequently suppose that from the very beginning He enacted words appropriate to things. What, then, is our answer? We account for God’s willingness to admit men to communion with Himself by His love towards mankind. But since that which is by nature finite cannot rise above its prescribed limits, or lay hold of the superior nature of the Most High, on this account He, bringing His power, so full of love for humanity, down to the level of human weakness, so far as it was possible for us to receive it, bestowed on us this helpful gift of grace. For as by Divine dispensation the sun, tempering the intensity of his full beams by the intervening air, pours down light as well as heat on those who receive his rays, being himself unapproachable by reason of the weakness of our nature, so the Divine power, after the manner of the illustration I have used, though exalted far above our nature and inaccessible to all approach, like a tender mother who joins in the inarticulate utterances of her babe, gives to our human nature what it is capable of receiving; and thus in the various manifestations of God to man He both adapts Himself to man and speaks in human language […] (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 292)

But just as we cannot call a man deaf who converses with a deaf man by means of signs,—his only way of hearing,—so we must not suppose speech in God because of His employing it by way of accommodation in addressing man. For we ourselves are accustomed to direct brute beasts by clucking and whistling and the like, and yet this, by
which we reach their ears, is not our language, but we use our natural speech in talking to one another, while, in regard to cattle, some suitable noise or sound accompanied with gesture is sufficient for all purposes of communication.

But our pious opponent will not allow of God’s using our language, because of our proneness to evil, shutting his eyes (good man!) to the fact that for our sakes He did not refuse to be made sin and a curse. Such is the superabundance of His love for man, that He voluntarily came to prove not only our good, but our evil, and if He was partaker in our evil, why should He refuse to be partaker in speech, the noblest of our gifts? (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 292)

[...] for it is plain to every one that there is no single name that has in itself any substantial reality, but that every name is but a recognizing mark placed on some reality or some idea, having of itself no existence either as a fact or a thought. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 309)

Indeed, it is from our language—which is an entirely human invention and something which is entirely drawn from our created environment, by the grace of God—where we find all the words and names to refer to everything, created and uncreated. It is from this, our human-created language, where we find all the words and names to refer to all that is in creation and where we find all the words and names referring to the Uncreated Triune God, Who forever transcends all words, names, and comprehension. In fact, when God became man for us, He condescended to the use of our human-created language for us—not because He created our language (for He did not), nor because He was necessitated by anything; but instead God condescended to the level of
our created existence, including to the use of our language, for our edification, salvation, and sanctification.

“*It is Impossible to Express God and Even More Impossible to Conceive Him.*”

We will never understand Who God, the Holy Trinity is—not in this life nor in the next, ever.

“The essence of God is known only to God. Not only now but for ever and ever God’s essence will be known only to Him.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, pp. 71-72)

Let us look at some of the God inspired wisdom of St. Dionysius the Areopagite—from two chapters (IV and V) of his work *Mystical Theology*—to discuss the absolute transcendence of the Triune God, as confessed throughout the ages by the Holy Orthodox Church:

Chapter IV proceeds as follows:

WE say then- that the Cause of all, which is above all, is neither without being, nor without life—nor without reason, nor without mind, nor is a body—nor has shape—nor form—nor quality, or quantity, or bulk—nor is in a place—nor is seen—nor has sensible contact—nor perceives, nor is perceived, by the senses—nor has disorder and confusion, as being vexed by earthly passions,—nor is powerless, as being subject to causalities of sense,—nor is in need of light;—neither is It, nor has It, change, or decay, or division, or deprivation, or flux,—or any other of the objects of sense. (St. Dionysius the Areopagite, 2014)
Chapter V proceeds as follows:

ON the other hand, ascending, we say, that It is neither soul, nor mind, nor has
imagination, or opinion, or reason, or conception; neither is expressed, nor conceived;
neither is number, nor order, nor greatness, nor littleness; nor equality, nor inequality;
nor similarity, nor dissimilarity; neither is standing, nor moving; nor at rest; neither has
power, nor is power, nor light; neither lives, nor is life; neither is essence nor eternity,
nor time; neither is Its touch intelligible, neither is It science, nor truth; nor kingdom, nor
wisdom; neither one, nor oneness: neither Deity, nor Goodness; nor is It Spirit according
to our understanding; nor Sonship, nor Paternity; nor any other thing of those known to
us, or to any other existing being; neither is It any of non-existing nor of existing things,
nor do things existing know It, as It is; nor does it know existing things, qua existing;
neither is there expression of It, nor name, nor knowledge; neither is It darkness, nor
light; nor error, nor truth; neither is there any definition at all of It, nor any abstraction.

But when making the predications and abstractions of things after It, we neither
predicate, nor abstract from It; since the all perfect and uniform Cause of all is both
above every definition and the pre-eminence of Him, Who is absolutely freed from all,
and beyond the whole, is also above every abstraction. (St. Dionysius the Areopagite,
2014)

Indeed, in our human created language drawn from our created environment and created
existence we see words and have concepts, from that same experience and existence which is
within our created reality, used to speak of the divine hypostases of the Supra-substantial Trinity.
—for, in our human created language we refer to the Supra-Substantial Trinity by the names “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit”. But we are informed by St. Dionysius the Areopagite, as we just saw, that the Supra-substantial Trinity transcends these same names, “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit”, and their associated meanings—in addition to transcending any and all other names, words, and concepts—according to any understanding of any existing being: “nor is It Spirit according to our understanding; nor Sonship, nor Paternity; nor any other thing of those known to us, or to any other existing being”.

In what follows, we look at another inspiring quotation of St. Dionysius the Areopagite confessing the ineffable and incomprehensible Supra-substantial Trinity. In fact, St. Dionysius the Areopagite informs us that we cannot even call the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity “Trinity” or “Unity” or a “Being” or anything else—for the incomprehensible Triune God is a Being (if indeed we use this word from our language) “Which is beyond Being” and exceeds “all Name, Reason, and Knowledge”.

For Unity, as found in the creatures, is numerical; and number participates in Essence: but the Super-Essential Unity gives definite shape to existent unity and to every number, and is Itself the Beginning, the Cause, the Numerical Principle and the Law of Unity, number and every creature. And hence, when we speak of the All-Transcendent Godhead as an Unity and a Trinity, It is not an Unity or a Trinity such as can be known by us or any other creature, though to express the truth of Its utter Self-Union and Its Divine Fecundity we apply the titles of “Trinity” and “Unity” to That Which is beyond all titles, expressing under the form of Being That Which is beyond Being. But no Unity or Trinity
or Number or Oneness or Fecundity or any other thing that either is a creature or can be
known to any creature, is able to utter the mystery, beyond all mind and reason, of that
Transcendent Godhead which super-essentially surpasses all things. It hath no name, nor
can It be grasped by the reason; It dwells in a region beyond us, where our feet cannot
tread. Even the title of “Goodness” we do not ascribe to It because we think such a name
suitable; but desiring to frame some conception and language about this Its ineffable
Nature, we consecrate as primarily belonging to It the Name we most revere. And in this
too we shall be in agreement with the Sacred Writers; nevertheless the actual truth must
still be far beyond us. Hence we have given our preference to the Negative method,
because this lifts the soul above all things cognate with its finite nature, and, guiding it
onward through all the conceptions of God’s Being which are transcended by that Being
exceeding all Name, Reason, and Knowledge, reaches beyond the farthest limits of the
world and there joins us unto God Himself, in so far as the power of union with Him is
possessed even by us men. (Rolt, 1920, pp. 188-189)

Clearly, as Father Romanides tells us, consistent with Orthodox teaching, we can have no union
with the divine hypostases of the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity nor with the divine essence of
the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity—we only can have some experience of the uncreated energies
of this same absolutely transcendent God; as such, the part of the above quotation, which reads,
“and there joins us unto God Himself, in so far as the power of union with Him is possessed even
by us men” pertains to our potential for union—only by the grace of the Triune God—with the
divine uncreated energies of Supra-substantial Trinity; whereas, union with the divine
hypostases, or with the divine essence, of the absolutely incomprehensible and unapproachable
Supra-substantial Trinity is something that is forever completely impossible to any created being
(as the experience of all the Orthodox saints confesses).

One can almost be certain that Father Romanides is at least partially referring to the
above beautiful quotations of St. Dionysius the Areopagite—regarding the absolute
transcendence and incomprehensibility of the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity—in the following,
from his brilliant research and discussion of Orthodox theology:

During theosis, concepts about God have to be set aside. This experience discloses the
fact that no created concept corresponds to the uncreated reality of God. There is
absolutely no identity or similarity between our concepts or names for God and the
reality that is none other than God Himself.

And this explains what is ascertained during the experience of theosis—that God
is not Unity, He is not One, He is not Trinity. There are some lovely passages on
precisely this issue by St. Dionysius the Areopagite and St. Gregory of Nyssa. All the
other Church Fathers agree with these passages, because all the Fathers share the same
experience[.] (Romanides, 2008, p. 69)

We know that there is no similarity between the created and the uncreated. The existence
of something in creation does not imply that it also exists in God. When we speak about
God, we use human language and human concepts, but nothing implies that these words
and concepts are fitting for God, literally speaking, simply because during the experience
of theosis, all prophesies and interpretations of Holy Scripture, all languages and
concepts as well as all human language that refers to God, passes away, because God transcends all things human.

There is a beautiful passage in St. Dionysius the Areopagite’s writings in which he tells us that, during the experience of theosis, man discerns that God is neither Unity nor Trinity, that God is not One, that God is not God, is not Love, and so forth. And the reason for this is that no name or concept exists that is capable of conveying what God is. Man cannot grasp God. It is impossible. Concepts and words are used only to guide man to God, but not to convey or explain anything about God. (Romanides, 2008, pp. 277-278)

All of the words and names that we use, without exception, pertaining to the divine hypostases and divine essence point to the uncreated Triune God but never comprehend or describe Who this unknowable God is—and St. Gregory the Theologian beautifully tells everyone, as we saw earlier in the discussion, that it is delusional to think otherwise:

“Do tell me what is the unbegotteness of the Father, and I will explain to you the physiology of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, and we shall both of us be frenzy-stricken for prying into the mystery of God”[.] (Romanides, 1975)

Other than to the incomprehensible and absolutely transcendent Holy Trinity, the mystery of the Triune God is and forever will be a mystery to everything and to everyone, without exception. The brilliant aforementioned quotation from St. Gregory the Theologian: “Do tell me what is the unbegotteness of the Father, and I will explain to you the physiology of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, and we shall both of us be frenzy-stricken for prying into the mystery of God”, is here provided in the original Greek, in what follows:
Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos are fully consistent with, and very faithful to, Orthodox teaching in their brilliant research and discussion of Orthodox Trinitarian theology. As Orthodox Christians, we know that we can never know the absolutely transcendent Triune God; as such, we will never know the divine hypostases nor the divine essence, only a few things about the uncreated divine energies are knowable to us—as Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, tell us.

“We know from Orthodox theology that we do not know the essence of God and that we cannot know the hypostases of God. All we can know about God is a few things about the energies of God.

But we only know that after we have passed through the stage of purification and reached the stage of illumination. Then, at the stage of illumination, there is the gift of discernment of spirits, which means the discernment of energies. Then someone learns, from discernment and experience, under the guidance of a spiritual father, to distinguish between the uncreated energies of God and created energies, mainly of the devil.

When he reaches this point and knows how to discern between these two types of energy, this is theology. The subject-matter of theology cannot be the essence of God. It
cannot be the hypostases of God. The subject-matter of theology is the energies of God.
And as the energies of God are only known when they are discerned by the illuminated
nous, everything is conditional on us learning when God is acting in us and when the
devil is active. This is theology. No other theology exists.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hieroteos,
2013, p. 75)
And what very little that we can know about the absolutely transcendent Triune God is known to
us through purification, illumination, and glorification (theosis) as is lived, in an unparalleled
manner, by the unfathomable grace of God, by the holy Orthodox saints and martyrs. We
certainly do not attain to even the very limited knowledge of God possible for us through
philosophical speculation nor through any other thought process—regardless of what the heretics
think. Instead, our very limited knowledge of theology is accomplished only by the grace of God
through participation in the uncreated divine energies; and as such, we certainly do not know
theology through speculation or words. Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos speaks of
Orthodox theology being experiential, empirical—rather than consisting of empty words and
philosophical conjecture:

    That the distinction between essence and energy in God is not philosophical and
the outcome of conjecture is clear from the fact that, when the Fathers were granted
divine vision, they did not see the words ‘essence’ and ‘energy’, but participated in the
glory of God, which they called ‘energy’. And when they used the word ‘essence’ they
were speaking about the ‘supra-essential divinity’. (Hieroteos, 2013, p. 69)
The Orthodox saints nevertheless used the words of our human-created language—the same
language and words which the Son of God condescended to use when He became incarnate—to
point to their experience of the uncreated energies of God for others to learn something and for
them to also seek God.

In the experience of glorification-divine vision the Apostles and Fathers do not
see some sort of essence or nature, but three Lights as one Light. They see the “divinity
of threefold Light”, “so they see as one and as three”. One Light is the cause of the two
other Lights.

This whole theology is expressed in the vocabulary of the language of the time.
Thus the God-seers, in order to describe the relationships of the Persons of the Holy
Trinity, used the words ‘Father’, ‘Son-Word’ and ‘Holy Spirit’, which were also in
accord with the words of Christ. In addition, they used the expressions ‘cause’ and
‘manner of existence’. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 77)

In this above quotation, and certainly in numerous others, we see that “glorification-divine
vision” has no relationship whatsoever with anything created nor has any semblance whatsoever
to created reality; and, with that forever in mind, our human created language is used to
somewhat point to the truly incomprehensible and indescribable Triune God—for our language,
as with all else in created reality, is something that is forever incapable of comprehending or
describing the Suprasubstantial Trinity. As such, here is why “personalism”—a philosophy
running contrary to the Orthodox saints’ experience of the uncreated energies of God, and as
being a philosophical system clearly and ultimately rooted in created existence—fails terribly
and falls into heresy, for it ultimately and very obviously makes reference to created reality to
supposedly describe the forever incomprehensible and absolutely indescribable Suprasubstantial
Triune God.
According to the Evangelists’ account, as well as the testimony of the Apostle Peter, the three Disciples on Mount Tabor saw the glory of God pouring forth from the Body of Christ, heard the voice of the Father and saw the Holy Spirit by means of the radiant cloud. In any case, Christ is never separated from the Father and the Holy Spirit.

This is repeated in every experience of divine vision. During the vision of God, the saints do not see the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They see ‘a divinity of threefold Light’, where the three have the same glory, the same Light, but also have something personal, that is to say, the particular hypostatic property. This is the ‘unbegottenness’ of the Father, the ‘begottenness’ of the Son and the ‘procession’ of the Holy Spirit. All three Persons have a common essence and energy, and Their energy is seen as Light. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 217)

The Orthodox saints experienced theosis, whereas I and most other people have not, so one outside of that experience, such as myself, cannot speak as the Orthodox saints can of “the ‘unbegottenness’ of the Father, the ‘begottenness’ of the Son and the ‘procession’ of the Holy Spirit”—but even the Orthodox saints are also truly forever ignorant of these matters; for they know of these matters “unknowingly”, with a “knowing which is beyond knowing” as we have already said:

“Human beings can never understand the mysteries of God. For that reason the Fathers of the Church speak about the generation of the Word from the Father, but they emphasise that they do not know what this generation is. They know that it is the manner of existence of the Word from the Father, but what this manner of existence is cannot be
described. It is something we say and nothing more.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 78)

This ignorance of even the Orthodox Saints pertaining to the pre-eternal generation of the Word from the Father, also, obviously, applies pertaining to the “unbegottenness” of the Father and to the “procession” of the Holy Spirit; for in these matters also, we forever remain profoundly ignorant—even the Orthodox Saints, as all the rest of us, are forever ignorant of these matters (as Father Romanides and others have faithfully discussed). Additionally, this having been said, we also must never forget that God condescending to use our language and share in all of our human created existence, for us and our salvation, does not change the reality that God is forever absolutely transcendent over all that is created, including over all of our language and concepts—including over all names and terminology pertaining to God found in our language. This certainly includes the Triune God’s absolute transcendence over all language, words, and names found throughout Holy Scripture and elsewhere, such as God’s absolute transcendence over the following words and names: “Father”, “Son”, “Holy Spirit”, “Word”, “unbegotten”, “begotten”, “procession”, and, of course, also including the words that we just saw a little earlier, “unbegottenness”, “begottenness” etc. In short, God remains utterly and forever indescribable and incomprehensible to His creation which He has brought into being from absolutely nothing. Our language and concepts—all of our language and concepts, without any exception—will never describe nor give us comprehension of Who the Triune God is. At the same time, all of these words, names, and concepts used throughout our Holy Orthodox Tradition—found throughout the Holy Scriptures, in the decisions of the Holy Ecumenical Synods, found
throughout our Orthodox Liturgical tradition, and in writings of the Fathers and elsewhere—
written and discussed by God-inspired people, definitely point us to Who the incomprehensible
Triune God is; and, by the grace of God, these words, names, and concepts guide us within the
Holy Orthodox Church in our pursuit of theosis (glorification) through participation with God’s
divine uncreated energies—nevertheless, this Triune God will forever remain incomprehensible
to us.

The Orthodox saints never ceased to give glory to the incomprehensible God and to His
condescending to our created existence; and the Orthodox saints always gave glory to God for
giving the Holy Orthodox Church the Holy Spirit to guide it into “all truth”.

“This is the key to the patristic interpretation, that He will send another
Comforter, Who will ‘guide you into all truth’. What is this ‘all truth’? In the Old
Testament we have the unincarnate Christ Who was revealed. After that we have the
incarnate Christ, Who is revealed and Who reveals Himself through human words, but is
also revealed through His glory to some Apostles, to certain Disciples. Then we come to
the Resurrection. After the Resurrection He is revealed now in glory to His Disciples, to
the women, and so on. We have all these appearances of Christ after the Resurrection.
Later we have the Ascension, and then we have Pentecost.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos,
2013, p. 235)

Again, we see that the Son of God, when He condescended to become man for us, used our
human-invented language to communicate with us, in His condescension—in addition to
revealing His uncreated glory to various saints; and this glory of God, in addition to the divine
hypostases and divine essence, are forever indescribable by any language and by any words—and
and forever transcend all concepts and all thought.
CHAPTER 3

THE PROBLEM OF ECUMENISM

The problem with ecumenism, the ecumenical movement, is essentially the same problem that every other rationalistic, humanistic social theory and philosophy has, and that is the erroneous belief that humanity has the answers to, and can solve all of, humanity’s problems (or at least most of them), independent of God, The Holy Trinity. A great number of avid ecumenists, tragically many of them calling themselves Orthodox Christians, tend to speak of God and discuss theology with purposely ambiguous, dechristianized, non-Orthodox Christian terminology at ecumenical gatherings and consultations. This can be seen throughout the history of the ecumenical movement for example at interfaith and inter-religious dialogues that address theological, or even environmental, issues—as a pretext for syncretism (Agiokyprianites, 2000, p. 90). Some Orthodox leaders’ purposeful vagueness in relation to Orthodox Trinitarian Theology, frequently seen in ecumenical encounters, apparently is pursued so as not to offend our “ecumenical brothers and sisters”. This theological vagueness, entrenched in relativism and minimalism, serves greatly the goal of building the “spirituality” that is ecumenism and further contributes to “mutual understanding and agreements” of the kind which essentially deny the uniqueness of Orthodoxy. In my humble opinion, these Orthodox ecumenists would do much more for their own salvation and for the salvation of their spiritual children whom God has given to them if they would strive to confess the eternal truth that is Orthodox Christianity unapologetically, without compromise and with the courage of the Orthodox saints whom they should be attempting to imitate.
It would, in the opinion of many Orthodox (myself included), be advisable for Orthodox leaders to completely withdraw from active participation in ecumenical encounters and organizations because such entities, *by their very nature*, clearly do not nor will they ever embrace Orthodox Christianity for what it is: The “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church” of Christ. Ecumenism, *by its very nature and goals*, explicitly and implicitly, denies the incomparable uniqueness of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and all that Holy Orthodoxy has uniquely received from God, the Holy Trinity. So, with the sorrowful goals and attributes of ecumenism in mind, the opinion of many Orthodox Christians for the faithful witness of Orthodoxy throughout the world tends to follow along the lines of the advice given by people such as Alexander Kalomiros (1967) when he says:

The Fathers did not enter into discussions with heretics. They confessed the truth and refuted their claims without courteousness and compliments. They never arrived at mutual understandings with heretical “churches.” Their dialogue was always public and had a view to the salvation and edification of souls. The Orthodox Church did not converse with “churches” of the heretics. It was not a discussion of the Church with churches, but a dialogue between the Church and souls who had lost their way. The Church does not discuss, for she does not seek. She simply gives—because she has everything. (p. 6)

*Metropolitan Nicholas of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki Speaks Against Ecumenism and Admonishes All Orthodox to Live their Faith, Orthodox Christianity, Which Alone is the True Faith.*
Metropolitan Nicholas of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki speaks powerfully regarding the heresy of ecumenism and against all other heresies; but he also speaks strongly regarding how so often we Orthodox have, from time to time, and throughout much of our lives, not lived the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. We are informed in a beautiful encyclical, from which we are about to draw, by Metropolitan Nicholas of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki, pertaining to a meeting, in Jerusalem, of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Pope, and various reactions that it drew. The encyclical speaks of this meeting, among other matters of concern regarding the heresy of ecumenism; and Metropolitan Nicholas speaks of our reactions to such heresies as Orthodox Christians—what these reactions frequently are and what they perhaps should be, in our sincere confession of the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity.

His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas, very rightfully, but certainly not self-righteously, condemns all heresy—including the heresy of Western Christianity (Papism, Protestantism, Pentecostalism, etc.)—and at the same time admonishes us Orthodox who alone have the True Faith, and yet so frequently have chosen not to live it.

We would not be unfair to the truth if we said that the West, after the break in communion with the Churches of the East, and in essence its secession from the ecclesiastical body, became alienated, was inevitably driven to errors, and distorted the faith both in its confession and experience and weakened the activity of grace, since it replaced it with a moral struggle. This is what saints said like Gregory Palamas and Mark Evgenikos, who struggled so much to highlight the differences between Orthodoxy and papal cacodoxies.

23 Originally written in Greek, and issued on June 1, 2014—translated from the Greek by John Sanidopoulos.
[...]

The West has lost its faith. The East until today holds on to the Orthodox faith, but I ask how much we Orthodox live it? And if our lives are foreign to our faith, perhaps we are worse than them because they lost it out of ignorance?

Instead of yelling with offensive tones against the West, perhaps the object of our rebuke should be ourselves? Truly, to what benefit is it to advocate a faith that is not confirmed in our life?

What good is it to harshly rebuke another who was born and educated that way, when there is no corresponding rebuke for our inconsistency? (Nicholas, 2014)

Those who have fallen into heresy or are simply heirs to these heresies—for they were raised in these heretical traditions and are simply ignorant of the only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ—can be helped by the Orthodox when Orthodox Christians themselves live their unconquerable, unique, and unmatched, Faith: Orthodox Christianity the only True Faith. Great humility and repentance is needed on the part of the Orthodox for this to happen—something that we Orthodox have not always been very good at doing.

Ultimately, perhaps what is needed mainly in inter-Christian relations, is not the the relentless rebukes of the “delusions of the West”, nor exuberant manifestations of immature friendships, but rather the outspoken confession of the Orthodox faith and our humble invitation towards Westerners. Eventually perhaps they will live the faith more
consistently than we who have kept it yet did not live it with our lives, the ethos and teaching they are ignorant of, but possibly are looking for the truth.

What we need is unity in humility for us Orthodox and the confession of our love for the world and the heterodox.

Not so much the rebuke of others for their errors, as much as our repentance for the deficit in our lived testimony. If they do not see a difference in our lives how will they come to recognize our doctrines? (Nicholas, 2014)

Indeed, as Orthodox we need to never forget what is essentially an old saying, namely that “our actions will always speak louder than our words”. This of course is something that has always been confessed in Orthodoxy, for “Orthodoxia is Orthopraxia”—in other words, “Right belief means right actions”—as Orthodox priests so often, and rightfully, tell us.

If the West does not humbly confess its doctrinal aberrations and its need to return to “the fulness of the truth”, and on the other hand if the Orthodox East does live the blessing of its theological wealth for which it is responsible, and does not discern the need for repentance for its inconsistent testimony, then dialogues, premature prayers and joint meetings will have just a secular character of communication, while essentially deepening confusion and distancing all of us from the one saving truth.

Brethren, “be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love” (1 Cor. 16:13-14). (Nicholas, 2014)

In this last quotation from Metropolitan Nicholas, as in his other remarks which proceeded, we cannot help but see what Dostoevsky said in so much of his work, confessing as an Orthodox Christian, that we all share a substantial responsibility—in regard to our sinfulness
and willful ignorance—for what is wrong in the world. Orthodoxy alone is the True Faith, there is no other, but when we Orthodox do not live our Faith then we do not help ourselves or others. As such, ecumenism has nothing to do with the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity—nor does any elitism, willful ignorance, or lack of repentance, on our part, as Orthodox Christians, have anything to do with our unconquerable and unmatched Faith, Orthodox Christianity.

Orthodox ecumenists would do well to courageously heed the foregoing advice which we saw from Metropolitan Nicholas—as we all would do well to do so, myself foremost in need of this—with humility and love for all humanity, without fear for the consequences of so doing.

Regarding ecumenical activities and associations in which some Orthodox leaders involve themselves, one must ask how it is possible to deny Christ and the uniqueness of His Holy Orthodox Church in numerous, sometimes blatantly disrespectful ways at these consultations (which are mired in syncretism and relativism) and still claim to be giving an Orthodox Christian view and call oneself Orthodox. Such conduct frequently confuses and scandalizes Orthodox Christians, leading many astray into disbelief and ignorance, taking them away from the incomparable beauty and truth that is Orthodox Christian Theology.

Orthodox Patriarch, Diodoros I, of Jerusalem and his defense of Orthodoxy

Orthodox Patriarch, Diodoros I, of Jerusalem and his defense of Orthodoxy

The Orthodox Patriarch of blessed memory, Diodoros I, Patriarch of Jerusalem, rightfully, condemned the Ecumenical Movement on the Sunday of Orthodoxy in 1992 at the Phanar in Constantinople, in the presence of other Orthodox leaders from throughout the world. Here is some of what Diodoros I, Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, had to say, may his memory be eternal:
... “we think that theological dialogues with the heterodox have no positive outcome. Already some of the heterodox have diverged from their original position, adopting innovations alien to the spirit of the Church. Some of the Orthodox Bishops are engaging in dialogues with them, and worse than this, are praying with them, which causes scandal to the faithful and damage to their souls.” (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 44)

Diodoros I continues along these lines in his defense of Orthodox Christianity when he further describes the sorrowful reality that is ecumenism as he tells us the following:

“In this hodgepodge of Christian confessions, the voice of Orthodoxy is desperately raised, but disappears in the ocean of resolutions of the World Council of Churches, the style and content of which are far removed from true confession. With particular reference to the pitiful image—from an Orthodox perspective—evoked by the inaugural sessions, the festivals at the conclusion of the proceedings and its manifestations in general, which have a peculiar liturgical character and form a pandemonium of joint prayer and worship of anti-Orthodox syncretism,” ... (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 46)  

Through their comments and actions, many Orthodox ecumenists and their non-Orthodox “spiritual brethren” communicate to the world that no faith has all the answers and therefore these dialogues and consultations seemingly become “necessary” for there to be

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24 Dr. Constantine Cavarnos informs us of the following, regarding the comments made by Orthodox Patriarch Diodoros I, comments which inspire and educate Orthodox Christians: “The full text of the unwavering positions and Orthodox convictions of the Most Holy Mother of the Churches, the Ancient Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which was deposited and entered into the minutes of the assembly of Orthodox leaders at the Phanar on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1992, by His Most Reverend Beatitude, the Venerable Patriarch Diodoros I.”
“mutual understanding and agreement” in theological matters. This is all done so as to better humanity as these leaders faithlessly reject the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Holy Orthodox Church. Seeing these things, many Orthodox cannot help but be confused and confounded by the actions of some of their leaders. Given this ecumenical climate of glorified relativism, it should not be surprising to anyone that many Orthodox Christians do not marry other Orthodox Christians and consequently many do not raise their children Orthodox, given the message sent and taught by some of their most prominent leaders, who have embraced the contradiction and confusion of the ecumenical movement. Many Orthodox leaders with their ecumenical activities, essentially, communicate that their unparalleled, eternal Holy Orthodox Faith is somehow a “relative truth”. This apparent attempt on the part of numerous Orthodox ecumenists-- undoubtedly much to the delight of their non-Orthodox “ecumenical brethren”--to relativize Orthodox Christianity does nothing to serve the unique truth, for which countless Orthodox saints and martyrs have given their lives: The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

Ecumenism, a Falsehood and Stumbling Block Embraced By Many

When Orthodox ecumenists and their non-Orthodox “spiritual brethren” and allies attempt to make Orthodoxy into a “relative truth” by their confused and confusing actions and comments, they are in effect looking to place the incomparable Holy Orthodox Christian Faith (which for them apparently is relative) alongside other “relative truths” in the contradictory sea of confusion that is one of the New World Order’s most faithful servants--the contemporary Ecumenical Movement.
At this point, we should define the term “New World Order”, as it will be understood for the purposes of this discussion. The term New World Order itself, in many usages, is rather ambiguous—seeming purposely so—used by politicians, mass media power elite, and other very influential and powerful people to explain, legitimize, and justify the oppression, exploitation, and devastation of other people for the furthering of the goals of this same power elite who are striving for world domination. This attempt at world domination by some of the world’s most powerful people has an embrace and promotion of humanism at its heart, and a consequent rejection of the Triune God. Thus, in this discussion, the term New World Order will be understood as this far reaching attempt to build a new “Tower of Babel” of global proportions founded on humanism and the rejection of the Triune God—following many of the same strategies used by earlier attempted New World Orders, such as Marxism and Nazism. This latest New World Order, apparently announced by George Bush Sr., ironically enough on September 11 of 1990 (Evans and Newnham, 1992, pp. 219-220)—with subsequent administrations faithfully adhering to it, including that of his son, George W. Bush, who used the events of September 11, 2001 as his pretext for New World Order—uses exploitative capitalism as the economic means for this order to be obtained.

This global economy of exploitative capitalism is clearly international in character and works to undermine the sovereignty of nations. With this in mind, ironically, oftentimes nations’ leaders work to promote a misplaced nationalism among their people—when these leaders feel that it will further the globalism of the New World Order to which they are subservient. So with a misplaced nationalism, fostered by ignorance and mass media propaganda, people—serving an agenda which undermines the very sovereignty of their own nation and that of others—are
encouraged to sometimes “defend” their nation against people who have done them no harm, and fight other people’s wars under false pretexts. Relatively few very powerful people, from a few nations, have at their disposal unprecedented and continuing advances in all forms of technology, and they have control of unequaled military power, as well; this helps them to insure that the current New World Order’s implementation will proceed, at all costs to humanity.

The research of D. L. Cuddy points to a long history of the term “New World Order” (Cuddy, n.d.). And Cuddy’s research points to more recent attempts of some of the world’s power elite to not use the term New World Order, because of the “political liability” associated with it; so instead, it sometimes gets called something else, such as “global governance” (Cuddy, n.d., paragraph 115), for example. In Cuddy’s research (Cuddy, n.d.), one sees an indication that the current New World Order is a continuation of an historic phenomenon, dating from at least the early 20th century, describing a deliberate process among the world’s power elite to move the world towards an ever increasing globalization--to be manifested economically, culturally, politically and militarily--culminating in the goal of one world government founded on the principles of humanism. D. L. Cuddy’s research speaks to this. Here are some examples:

June 28, 1945 -- President Truman endorses world government in a speech:

“It will be just as easy for nations to get along in a republic of the world as it is for us to get along in a republic of the United States.” (Cuddy, n.d., paragraph 30)

1950 -- In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, international financier James P Warburg said:
“we shall have a world government, whether or not we like it. The question is only whether world government will be achieved by consent or by conquest.” (Cuddy, n.d., paragraph 43)

1959 -- The Mid-Century Challenge to U.S. Foreign Policy is published, sponsored by the Rockefeller Brothers’ Fund. It explains that the U.S.: “...cannot escape, and indeed should welcome...the task which history has imposed on us. This is the task of helping to shape a new world order in all its dimensions -- spiritual, economic, political, social.” (Cuddy, n.d., paragraph 51)

Perhaps, ecumenism is that “spiritual dimension” of the new world order, for in its unmatched relativism and syncretism, subservient to great worldly power, it should prove inoffensive and harmless enough to any very powerful people to be allowed to exist, even flourish, and thus be promoted as some sort of global spirituality or religion.

Regarding the phrase “the new world order” and its current usage, one has to go back to the preparations which were being made for the first Gulf War in order to begin to appreciate its frightful significance—only made more clear by the second Gulf War:

This phrase is usually associated with President George Bush and came into prominence in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990.... In a speech to a joint session of both houses of Congress on 11 September 1990, President Bush outlined five ‘simple principles’ which should form the framework of an evolving international order: ‘Out of these troubled times, our fifth objective—a new world order—can emerge: a new
era—freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice and more secure in
the quest for peace, an era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and
South, can prosper and live in harmony.’ (Evans and Newnham, 1992, pp. 219-220)

The terminology, “the new world order”, was often used by President George Bush Sr.—as he
and his allies demonstrated that this new world order was really nothing but the same order of
old, the well known and ancient practice of “Might makes right”. Again, this has been made only
more clear by the second Gulf War and the catastrophe which has followed. President George
Bush Sr. spoke of “a new era—freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice
and more secure in the quest for peace” (Evans and Newnham, 1992, pp. 219-220), to do this he
and his powerful allies advocated and started a war. President George Bush Jr. and his powerful
allies have done the exact same thing, by preemptively starting a war in order to promote peace.
This is baffling, but excuses need to be made to justify “the law of the jungle”. As an ancient
Greek, Thucydides, once said: “We both alike know that into the discussion of human affairs the
question of justice only enters where the pressure of necessity is equal, and that the powerful
exact what they can, and the weak grant what they must” (Spykman, 1942, p. 11).

The hypocrisy, deception, will to control, and violence of much of the world’s power elite
—which is augmented by the ever-present and ever-advancing technology available to them, and
is coupled to their unmatched military might—makes them frightful advocates of fallen
humanity’s law of the jungle, only on a scale never before seen. This is the New World Order,
nothing new, only more pervasive than ever before. Nicholas Spykman once wrote: “Plans for
far-reaching changes in the character of international society are an intellectual by-product of all
great wars” (Spykman, 1942, p. 458). This certainly seems to be true; great plans for a “better world” always seem to follow great wars. But did some of these “great plans” exist before some of the conflicts, only needing the conflicts as an excuse for their implementation. Theoretically and obviously, a crisis can be caused in many ways. Remember a war was fought to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism connections—the weapons of mass destruction and terrorism connections, it was clear to many, never even existed. Yet, this unnecessary war has plunged the world into great fear with the problems that it has now truly created, providing governments with an excuse to exercise more control over people than ever before. A crisis provides governments with an opportunity to find and implement great plans to help people, this is certainly true. A crisis also provides governments the opportunity to exploit and devastate people for the ruling elite’s own agenda.

At this point, an editorial from a college newspaper from February 28, 1991, is very useful in its honesty of opinion and boldness, contrasting it from the deceptive and shameless pro-war propaganda that was to be found in so much of the mass media of that time. The insight of the editorial staff regarding the cycle of war that the New World Order was bound to create and their condemnation of the delusion, stupidity, and hypocrisy of the might makes right mentality deserves our attention.

*Novus Ordo Seclorum*, Latin for “New World Order”, appears below the pyramid on the back of the one dollar bill. The Latin hearkens back to the conquest by the greatest of all empires; its appearance with a Masonic symbol alludes to that other greatest conquest—the triumph of capitalism.
The New World Order, Bush’s attempt to assure himself a place in history’s footnote, is neither new nor orderly—merely the Pax Americana of military superiority.

Championing this slogan, Bush alludes to himself as Caesar leading the Roman Legions, as well as to Hitler and to God. Hitler’s New World Order was to recreate a never-existent Aryan supremacy. It also resonates with the language of Genesis—of God bringing order out of chaos.

“Order” also means to command with authority based upon the threat of violence.

As this skirmish with Iraq indicates, the New World order creates a cycle of war. Conquest and redivision of territory and hegemony brings only an illusion of stability.

(The UWM Post, 1991, p. 8)

Later on the editorial concludes thus, in its condemnation of the New World Order and the suffering which it brings to people:

Rome was a slave society with a small, “ethnically-pure” Roman aristocracy wielding all power of toiling millions of nationalities. The oligarchs decided which of their number would be the next emperor.

The U.S. popular mythology conflates military success with moral righteousness. The Good Guys always win. God rewards the righteous with material success.
World leadership by virtue of having the most powerful army is a poor substitute for leadership by virtue of the most powerful economy. Neither has anything to do with justice or moral leadership.

Being the Roman Legions of the 21st Century promises only suffering and instability to the people of the U.S. as well as for the great majority of the people of the world. (The UWM Post, 1991, p. 8)

Of great significance are the following sentences from the above quotation: “The U.S. popular mythology conflates military success with moral righteousness. The Good Guys always win. God rewards the righteous with material success” (The UWM Post, 1991, p. 8). Such thinking exemplifies the delusion and subservient beliefs characteristic of the heresy of Evangelicalism, in its manifold varieties. So many of the evangelical and tele-evangelical leaders came out unequivocally in support of both Gulf wars, with practically no regard for the suffering that countless people were about endure because of war. One could have easily thought that these evangelical leaders were little more than propaganda outlets for the government and its allies. The Orthodox saints would have never done this, they would have condemned evil, no matter who was guilty of it, whether those guilty were weak or strong. The Orthodox saints would have condemned the conduct of all the guilty parties, both weak and strong alike, and would have heroically witnessed to Christ the Theanthropos in any suffering that would have befallen them for their righteous confession. This is so because the Orthodox saints knew and confessed, with their entire created being, what St. Aleksandr Nevskii once said, “God is not in might, but in the right” (Kulybin, 1997, paragraph 4).
The New World Order exacted a heavy toll against Orthodox Christians in the 20th century; one only has to look at the example of the catastrophe which Orthodox Russia suffered at the hands of those who embraced Marxism to see this:

Especially difficult trails and travails beset the Russian Nation and Orthodoxy in the XX-th century. Throughout the course of the entire century there occurred persecutions on so great a scale as had never before been seen in the history of humanity; and warfare was also waged by the forces of world-evil against Orthodoxy and the Church, with an aim toward establishing their New World Order, with antichrist—“the prince of this world”’, at its head. The overthrow of the Tsar’s authority in February 1917 and the destruction, thereby, of the Orthodox form of government, laid the groundwork for an entire epoch of militant atheism, which, to this day, wages both open and concealed warfare against the Church and the Faith, alike, its objective being to uproot and annihilate them entirely.

(Hold fast the Orthodox Faith, O Holy Rus, 2000, paragraph 2)

Orthodox Christianity has suffered greatly under the New World Order, and continues to do so to this day. The sinfulness of Orthodox Christians themselves (myself included) has contributed greatly to this reality, as has the sinfulness of the entire human race. With this in mind, we observe that “Mankind, not wanting to unite in Christ, is now uniting in the ‘New World Order,’ that it might greet the antichrist with ardent enthusiasm—and few there be who oppose this” (Kulybin, 1997, paragraph 3). For even with the abomination of Marxism behind them, Orthodox Christians are still beset by the attacks engendered by New World Order politics. One can see this by again looking at the example of Russia—though the same thing is essentially
happening in other predominately Orthodox nations—where modernism, ecumenism and other influences foreign to Orthodoxy attempt to undermine and erode the presence of the Orthodox Faith from among the people. These next two quotations point to this reality of the continuing attacks against Orthodoxy:

Today, a new stage has begun in their war against Holy Orthodoxy. We have become witnesses to a wide-scale religious expansion on the part of Catholicism, occultism, Protestant heresies and sectarianism, the aim of all of which is the gradual spiritual colonization of the Russian Nation. (Hold fast the Orthodox Faith, O Holy Rus, 2000, paragraph 5)

For the second of the two quotations, which is about to follow, as with the first quotation, the difficulties facing Orthodox Russia in the contemporary new world order are mentioned, but these certainly are the same sort of difficulties faced by any predominately Orthodox nation. Mindful of this we observe the following: “The corruption of the Church through modernism and ecumenical activity continues. The country is despoiled; immoral mass- ‘culture’ is dominant; Russia is descending ever deeper into a masonic-mondialistic ‘world-association’” (Kulybin, 1997, paragraph 7).

But in spite of anything that happens, Orthodox Christians know that the Holy Orthodox Church will forever remain unconquerable and will emerge victorious. This is so through no merit on the part of Orthodox Christians, but rather because the One who established the Orthodox Church is Christ the Theanthropos Himself, the immortal King and God. When Christ comes again to judge the world, no one will escape His judgment and nothing will be hidden
from Him, all worldly power will be brought to nothing. The Orthodox Church confesses this reality throughout its life and worship. For example, this is seen in the following Kontakion (Tone One):

When Thou comest, O God, upon the earth with glory, the whole world will tremble. The river of fire will bring men before Thy judgment seat, the books will be opened and the secrets disclosed. Then deliver me from the unquenchable fire, and count me worthy to stand on Thy right hand, Judge most righteous. (Sunday of the Last Judgment, 1994)

The phrase mentioned earlier, “The corruption of the Church through modernism and ecumenical activity continues” (Kulybin, 1997, paragraph 7), is significant, in that it can refer to the actions of people explicitly external to Orthodoxy, but it can also refer to the actions of people ostensibly within Orthodoxy who through their conduct are seemingly more loyal to forces external to the Orthodox Faith than to anything else. With this in mind, the oftentimes irresponsible, ignorant, and cowardly striving to compromise and be politically correct in matters of Faith, on the part of numerous Orthodox ecumenists, does nothing to serve the unique truth of Jesus Christ and His Church, the Orthodox Church. In fact, such conduct by people sworn to defend and teach Orthodoxy without change does more than not just serve the truth, it is a mockery of the countless Orthodox martyrs and saints who have suffered throughout history to bring, undefiled, the Holy Orthodox Faith to all people and to all generations. To those Orthodox hierarchs and leaders, to all clergy and lay people alike (myself included, because of my cowardice), and to any
and all to whom this applies, who choose to not confess Orthodox Christianity with courage for the salvation of the spiritual children entrusted to them, the words of Christ are clear:

St. Luke 17:1-2: Then He said to His disciples, “It is impossible that the stumbling blocks should not come, but woe to him through whom they come! “It is more profitable for him if a millstone turned by an ass is put about his neck, and he is cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble. (The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume 1), pp. 265-266)

The Orthodox Saints Venerated and Respected as Teachers in the Face of Ecumenism

Orthodox through respect for, and cognizance of, Holy Tradition honor and venerate their saints and martyrs who by the grace of God remained united to Christ, the Son of God and His Holy Orthodox Church, despite oftentimes being confronted with the most dreadful persecution and death imaginable. We note that Orthodox Christians venerate their saints but, of course, do not worship them, for worship is due to God, the Holy Trinity, alone and to no one else and this fact has always been confessed in Orthodox Christianity (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 800). It is with this in mind that the Orthodox venerate their saints and look to them for guidance and instruction, because these saints (through their cooperation with the grace of God, the Holy Trinity) teach all of mankind (and not just Orthodox Christians) that the Truth is unchangeable and can never be conquered no matter how powerful the people and forces are who fight, in vain, against that same immortal Truth: Christ our God. By the grace of God, the Orthodox saints teach their spiritual children and the entire world, not only with their words, but more significantly through their humility, kindness, and great courage.
These Orthodox saints, through their actions and comments, through their holiness of life and willingness to die for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, educate their Orthodox brethren and the whole world regarding what it is to believe, in the fullest sense, the words of Christ when teaches us: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

It is as we keep in mind the great sacrifice of the Orthodox martyrs and saints that the following poem by a Serbian Orthodox priest is very illustrative of the God-inspired courage and wisdom that these same martyrs and saints possessed and inspired others to pursue:

LIFE
Just to be alive
Is a victory.
To be created and to be
Makes life long enough.
Those who choose the length of life
Live briefly.
Those who learn what life is
Have no fear of death.


By the power and mercy of God, the Orthodox saints are a living, unbroken testimony (unmatched in human history) exemplifying holiness of life and complete submission to the will
of God, the Holy Trinity, as they fearlessly teach the whole world that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate, Who has established His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church and through their great
courage and martyric witness (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11) they teach all of humanity that there is no
persecution, inflicted by powerful people and forces who hate Christ, which can ever change that
reality. The countless Orthodox saints (both known and unknown), through their courage and
martyric witness (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11), teach humanity that the Truth is indestructible and
immutable, and that no worldly power or cowardly subservience to great worldly power can ever
change that fact. The Orthodox saints teach the world that this is so, because they know and
confess, through every aspect of their life in Christ, that “the Truth is a Person, the Person of
Christ” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 154-155). Bowing down to their Creator--God, the Holy Trinity--and
to no one else, the Orthodox saints, courageously and free of hypocrisy, teach Orthodox
Christians and the whole world that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Pre-eternal Son of God, the
Second Person of the Holy Trinity Who, without change and without any necessity to His
Person\(^\text{25}\), became Man and established His Holy Orthodox Church on Himself, for the salvation
of all humanity.

These Orthodox saints by the unfathomable mercy of God, the Holy Trinity, taught the
Orthodox Faith fearlessly and without regard for the great danger to themselves in so doing. The
great educational example and legacy of the Orthodox saints--from which we can always learn
and be inspired--is that the Orthodox saints and martyrs never taught humanity in general and

\(^{25}\) For there was no necessity to the Person of the Son of God which would have somehow made it
inevitable or compulsory that He become Man. Of course, consistent with that fact, there was no such
necessity to the Holy Trinity which would have somehow compelled or “forced” the Incarnation to take
place, as something inevitable or necessitated by the very nature of God.
Orthodox Christians in particular to compromise regarding the indisputable, unique truth that is Orthodox Christianity. For them, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Holy Orthodox Church which He has uniquely established and which is His Body, is absolute Truth which the saints by the unfathomable grace and power of God never forsook. In the face of the most horrific persecutions, tortures and agonizing means of death imaginable these countless Orthodox saints have, in an unparalleled and unbroken continuity throughout history, confessed Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church against all His enemies, and there will always be such saints to do so until the end of time. For, as Christ promised:

St. Matthew 16:16-18: And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (New Testament: Greek and English, pp. 43-44)

This rock, in Orthodox theology, is none other than the Only-Begotten Son of God, Who became man, the Lord Jesus Christ (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 46).

St. Justin Popovich and Others Confess the Uniqueness of Orthodoxy

The God-inspired confession of St. Peter is an unshakable rock of faith (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 46), and the Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, having become man and as the God-Man (Theanthropos) establishing His Church, the
Orthodox Church, is for Orthodox Christians an indisputable, unique historical reality. The modern day Orthodox saint, St. Justin Popovich (2000) helps us to see this when he tells us:

Ecumenism is a movement that generates a multitude of questions. All these questions, in fact, spring from and flow into a single desire for only one thing: the True Church of Christ. The True Church of Christ supplies, as it should, the answers to all the primary and secondary questions posed by ecumenism. For if the Church of Christ does not solve the eternal questions of the human spirit, it serves no purpose. ... This is why God came down to earth and became man: to give us, as the God-Man, the answers to all our tormenting, eternal questions. For this reason He remained in His fullness on earth in His Church, of which He is the Head and which is His Body: the True Church of Christ, the Orthodox Church. (p. 1)

St. Justin Popovich (2000) goes on to tell us:

Like the holy apostles, the holy fathers and teachers of the Church, with a godly wisdom and zeal like that of the cherubim and seraphim, confess the unity and uniqueness of the Orthodox Church. ... As the Lord Christ cannot have several bodies, there cannot, in Him be several Churches. According to its theanthropic nature, the Church is one and one only, as the God-Man Christ is one and one only. ... The Church has never been divided, nor can it ever be, but fallings away from the Church have taken place and will again, as the dry and barren branches fall away by themselves from the eternally-living theanthropic Vine, the Lord Christ (Jn. 15:1-6). At various times, heretics and schismatics
have separated and fallen away from the one and only indivisible Church of Christ, and
have thus ceased to be members of the Church and parts of its theanthropic Body. The
Gnostics first fell away, then the Arians, the Nestorians, the Monophysites and the
Iconoclasts, the Roman Catholics, Protestants and Uniates, then, in their turn, the other
adherents of the heretico-schismatic legion. (p. 48)

The Orthodox saints teach us to seek Christ in His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church, and we
need not look elsewhere into empty rationalistic systems, such as the ecumenical movement,
which seem to merely serve very powerful political forces that are very hostile to Christ and His
Orthodox Church. The fullness of truth is found in the Holy Orthodox Church and in its
incomparable Holy Tradition, it is thus that St. John of Damascus teaches all Orthodox Christians
when He says:

Therefore, my brethren, let us stand on the rock of faith and in the Tradition of the
Church, not removing the landmarks set by our holy Fathers; not giving room to those
who wish to introduce novelties and destroy the edifice of God’s holy, universal and
apostolic Church. For if everyone is allowed to do as he pleases, the entire body of the
Church will, little by little, be destroyed. (Popovic, 2000, p. 53)

St. Justin Popovich (2000) gives us further insight when he teaches us the following:

Holy Tradition comes entirely from the Theanthropos, from the holy apostles, from the
holy fathers; from the Church, in the Church and by the Church. The holy fathers are
nothing other than “the guardians of apostolic tradition”. They are all, as are the holy
apostles, only “witnesses” of the one and only Truth, the ultimate Truth: Christ the Theanthropos. (p. 53)

With that same Truth in mind, St. Justin Popovich, in full conformity with Orthodox Tradition, goes on to tell us that we have no existence whatsoever, in and of ourselves, we exist only because the Son of God created us and gave us existence. And the Second Person (Hypostasis) of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is alone the Truth. We say with St. Justin Popovich (2000): “Until His advent and in His absence, both now and always, it seems as if truth has no existence. And indeed it has none, for the theanthropic Hypostasis is alone the Truth: I am the truth (John 14:6). Man has no truth without the God-Man, for man does not exist without the God-Man” (p. 146).

The problem that the ecumenical movement has, as was mentioned earlier, is that it essentially attempts to make Christ into a “relative truth”, thereby exposing its depraved, “withered humanistic roots” (Popovic, 2000, p. 155). Contemporary ecumenism, in one way or an other, attempts to deny Jesus Christ and the uniqueness of His Church, the Orthodox Church. Orthodox participation in such humanistic philosophies, tragically and understandably, gives to many in the world the unwarranted impression that such philosophies with their false, heretical assertions are somehow valid. And how could such impressions not be given when numerous Orthodox leaders themselves, knowingly and willingly, in violation of Orthodox canons, engage in actions and statements that seemingly deny Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the incomparable beauty, richness and uniqueness of His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church?
The fullness of truth and unity that Christ gave, once and for all, uniquely, to His Holy Orthodox Church, cannot be constructed by humanity or found elsewhere. We quote the modern day Greek Orthodox saint, St. Nectarios who writes: “Unity is *internal*, mystical, direct... and does not need any external bond” (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 37).

No man-made philosophy, system, or organization (including ecumenism), regardless of how powerful the worldly and political interests being served, can ever replace, overcome or destroy the Orthodox Church of Christ.

*The Orthodox Saints Teach People About the Futility and Falsehood of All the World’s Humanisms*

*Seen in the light of Orthodoxy: Marxism and all other humanisms, because of their propagation of evil and falsehood, are doomed to failure.* If we consider the great atrocities of Marxism (see Chapter 6), we clearly see an example of *the futility of all man-made systems and philosophies* and of their incapability to save humanity or even to bring justice to all human beings, for only Christ can do this. Whether one speaks of Marxism, Nazism, fascism, ultra-nationalism, racism, political correctness, exploitative capitalism, New Age philosophy, the New World Order, the doctrine of preemptive war or any other philosophy or system that is contrived by humanity in its self-worship to exploit people and to further the goals of very powerful people who hate Christ and His Orthodox Church, we know that in the end Christ and His Orthodox Church will never be defeated. The Orthodox saints teach us that overwhelming power which hypocritically is used to intimidate, lie to, torture and destroy people is doomed to fail, because
in the end God will completely destroy all such power. We see this confirmed throughout Holy Scripture:

Revelation 6:15-17: And the kings of the earth, and the grandees, and the tribunes, and the rich, and the strong, and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, “for the day, the great one, of His wrath is come, and who is able to stand?” (The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2), 1999, p. 520.)

The Orthodox saints were never “politically correct”; they rejected and confronted all worldly power and the hypocrisy and exploitation that came with such power. They, by the grace of the Triune God, stood in the face of terrible hardship and death. The saints stood in the face of overwhelming power, exploitation and oppression and heroically set the example for the rest of humanity. The saints educate the world that injustice, lies, hypocrisy and the cowardly pandering to people with great worldly power is clearly wrong; even though practically everyone of us (myself included in my cowardice) have at one time or another bowed to the power of this world.

Until the end of time there will be Orthodox saints to give their lives for Christ:

Revelation 6:9-11: And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who were slain on account of the word of God and on account of the testimony of the Lamb which they were holding; and they cried with a great voice, saying, “Until when, O Master, the Holy One and the True One, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood from those dwelling on the earth?” And there was given to each of them a white
robe; and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little time, until there should be fulfilled also their fellow slaves and their brethren, those being about to be killed even as they. (The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2), 1999, pp. 519-520)

As Orthodox Christians, Christ commands each of us to “fight the good fight” (2 Tim 4:7) and not to be cowards in the face of evil. He tells us the following through St. John the Theologian:

Revelation 21:6-8: And He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to the one thirsting out of the fountain of the water of life freely. To him, the one overcoming, shall be these things, and I will be God to him and he himself shall be to Me a son. But to the cowardly and unbelieving and those having become abominable and murderers and fornicators and users of drugs, potions and spells, and idolaters, and all the liars, their part shall be in the lake, the one burning with fire and brimstone which is the death, the second one.” (The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2), 1999, p. 546.)

Relativism is inherent to all the humanisms and associated with their inevitable fall into evil. Looking at the humanistic political and philosophical systems that have come to dominate the world in modern times, and of which the Ecumenical Movement is undoubtedly a part, we see that these systems reject Christ and embrace relativism. Let us see what St. Justin Popovich (2000) says regarding these matters: “All the humanisms of European man are essentially an unceasing rebellion against Christ the God-Man” (p. 149).
Shrivelled, stunted, alienated and degenerate humanistic man has rightly claimed, through his sages, to be descended from apes. Having made himself equal in descent to the animals, what reason has he not to make himself equal to them in morality? ... As there is nothing immortal and eternal in man, all ethics are ultimately reduced to instinctive desires. ... It could not be otherwise, as only a sense of man’s immortality can be the basis of a higher and better morality than that of the animals. (Popovic, 2000, pp. 93-94)

Relativism in the philosophy of European humanistic progress necessarily resulted in relativism in ethics, and relativism is the source of anarchism and nihilism. Consequently, the practical ethics of humanistic man are nothing other than anarchy and nihilism. They are the inevitable, terminal and apocalyptic phase of European humanistic progress. (Popovic, 2000, p. 94)

“European man is catastrophically stupid if he is able, while not believing in God and the immortality of the soul, to believe in progress as the purpose of life, and work on that. What good is progress to me if it ends in death?” (Popovic, 2000, p. 94).

“When there is neither the eternal God nor an immortal soul, then there is nothing absolute; there are no universal values. Everything is relative, ephemeral and mortal” (Popovic, 2000, p. 102).

Looking at these foregoing quotations, pertaining to the immortality of the soul—which man has only by the grace of God, and not by nature (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 143)—we see that Dostoevsky, certainly influenced by the unconquerable Orthodox Saints and Holy Orthodox Tradition, said
very much the same things as what we just saw from St. Justin of Chelije, pertaining to people’s belief or disbelief in their immortality (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 70). Again, as we said, this immortality is something that we certainly possess—and it is certainly not something which is intrinsically part of our nature—but instead is something that we possess only by the grace of God.

In this climate of relativism, all sorts of atrocities and crimes become “justified”; only the world’s power elite do not need to acknowledge their own perpetration of these crimes when they commit them but instead, go to great pains to point out the commission of the same kind of crimes when perpetrated by weaker nations and members of society. Truly, “The big fish eats the small fish”. It’s the same “Law of the jungle” that has always ruled the world and humanity’s relationship to itself. It’s as though we (both the earth’s most powerful people and the earth’s weakest people and everyone else in between, in short all of humanity) do not believe in the immortality of the soul. But Christ, the God-Man, through His glorious Resurrection taught us that He created us for glory and immortality, not to devour one another. We only need to look at some of the fruits of humanistic political philosophies and systems to see that these systems cannot bear to have Christ in their midst. Again, looking at the atrocities and crimes against humanity perpetrated by Marxism for the “good of the people”, we see that the instigators of the abomination that is Communism had no belief in God and therefore they had no moral problem murdering tens of millions of people and creating the biggest police state that the world had ever seen.
In the same way that those who hated Christ wanted Him dead and removed from the world altogether and so they crucified Him, so also, the leaders of Marxism attempted, with all their formidable might, to erase all memory of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church from Orthodox Christians in the communist controlled lands. Historically, there have always been people who hate Christ and who love to attack Him, some people substantially more guilty of this than others. In fact, in our sinfulness and unworthiness, we are all guilty of this evil, to various extents, and (as was said) with some of us being much more guilty of this than others. And in the end, God alone will be the Judge of everyone. At this point, a few words from St. Justin Popovich will give us much insight into the futility and inherent deception common to all humanisms, past and present, as we continue to see people attack Christ, in vain:

Death is a dreadful mystery, brother, but it is more dreadful still when men condemn God to death and want to kill Him entirely, completely eliminate Him, so that He would be altogether dead, without any trace remaining. On this day men are more to be dreaded than God, for they torment God although He never tormented anyone; for they spit on God although He never spat on anyone; for they strike God though He never beat anyone. Let all be silent, who call themselves men! “Let all mortal flesh be silent!” (Cherouvikon, Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, Great Saturday) Let no one praise man, let no one praise humanity, for behold: humanity does not bear God to be in its midst, it kills God. Can anyone boast of such a humanity? Let no one praise humanism! It is nothing more than Satanism, Satanism, Satanism... (Popovich, 1998, pp. 7-8)
The experience of the Orthodox saints teaches the world that Orthodoxy is the one true Faith, and that it defeats all falsehood and evil. The cultural, and vast physical, genocide suffered by Orthodox Christians, perpetrated by Marxism and by the stupidity, ignorance and sinfulness of Orthodox Christians themselves, is a catastrophe of the magnitude that has practically never been seen before. St. Justin Popovich goes on to tell us, that despite the catastrophes that the Holy Orthodox Church has experienced throughout history (many of them brought on by Orthodox Christians themselves), Orthodox Christianity is uniquely the Church of Christ and is present now and always will be for all of humanity:

Contemporary, godless social humanism is, ideologically and methodologically, engendered and invented by a pseudo-Christian Europe bound by our sinfulness. How did it get onto the soil of Orthodoxy? God tests the forbearance of the righteous, visits the sins of the fathers on the children and confirms the strength of His Church by leading it through fire and water. According to the words of Macarios of Egypt, wise in God, this is the only path for true Christianity: “Wherever the Holy Spirit is, there follows, as a shadow, persecution and strife... It is necessary that the truth be persecuted”. What are the fruits of theanthropic society? The saints, the martyrs, the confessors. This is its goal and its purpose, and is also the proof of its indestructible strength, not the books or libraries, systems and cities that exist today and are gone tomorrow. Various pseudo-Christian humanisms fill the world with books, but Orthodoxy fills it with saints. Thousands and hundreds of thousands, millions, of martyrs and New Martyrs who have perished for the Orthodox faith--these are the fruits of theanthropic society. Hence the famous Francois Mauriac, a Roman Catholic, sees on the dark horizon of the contemporary world, that is
sinking more and more into the darkness of European soul-destroying man-worship, one single bright point that gives hope for the future of that world: the Orthodox faith, washed by the blood of martyrs and New Martyrs. (Popovic, 2000, p. 125)

As St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije has written in the passage above: The Orthodox Church is unconquerable and eternal, through no intrinsic merit possessed by Orthodox Christians themselves, only by the unfathomable grace of God, the Holy Trinity. St. Justin informs us of a prominent non-Orthodox Christian, Francois Mauriac, and his profound respect for Orthodox Christianity. From such people we Orthodox can learn much. Referring to the research of Dr. Constantine Cavarnos, let us look at the following comments of two other people who are also not Orthodox, but who, like Francois Mauriac, have deep respect for Orthodox Christianity:

The Protestant E. Seeberg, Professor at the University of Berlin, says: “The Orthodox Church is the one Church, the Catholic Church, the Apostolic Church. She has remained faithful to the Apostolic teaching and the Apostolic canons, and through uninterrupted succession has preserved undiminished the connection to the Apostles.” (quoted in Cavarnos, 1992a, p. 14)

John Brownlie, a distinguished Anglican hymnologist, in his book Hymns of the Holy Eastern Church, makes the following important observations: “They tell us that the Greek Church is a dead Church, without missionary zeal. But how can a Church be characterized as not missionary, which stretched out her hands to the Far East, giving the blessing of the Gospel to the Tatars and the Indians; in a southerly direction, putting up
the Cross in Arabia, Persia and Egypt; and in a northerly direction, spreading the light to
the ends of Siberia? How can a Church be called dead, which engaged in hand-to-hand
combat with idolatry, not only in the first centuries, but also in the last six centuries,
under the abominable superstition of the Turks, preserving her faith in Christ throughout
this interval? No Church offered so many martyrs to the Christian faith.... If under the
persistent, ceaseless persecution--not for generations, but for centuries--a Church can
maintain her Faith and preserve her witness, then the term “dead” cannot be applied to
her (John Brownlie, *Hymns of the Holy Eastern Church* [Paisley, 1902], pp. 18-19).

(Cavarnos, 1992a, p. 17)

Regarding this last quotation, in particular, it would be of great significance if the facts
contained therein were to be respected by “evangelical”, tele-evangelical and other “Christian”
groups which in their imaginary “Church” regard themselves as uniquely being in possession of
the title “Christian” and in their delusion of self-righteousness, and in their ignorance, view
practically everyone else as having fallen away from that same imaginary “Evangelical”,
“Apostolic Church”. This imaginary “Apostolic”, “Evangelical”, “Christian Church”, which is
nothing other than an innovation and a constantly changing, ever mutating conglomerate of
heresies and heretics, has much in common with the Ecumenical Movement which also has been
categorized by Orthodox scholars as being “a collection of heresies” (Popovic, 2000, p. 153).

Regarding the Ecumenical Movement and its similarity to any one of the various
heresies, in fact regarding its inherent connection to all of them, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije
(2000) tells us:
“Ecumenism” is a collective name for pseudo-Christianities, for the pseudo-Churches of Western Europe. All European humanisms, headed by papism, have given it their wholehearted support. And all these pseudo-Christianities, all these pseudo-Churches, are nothing other than a collection of heresies. ... There is, in fact, no substantial difference between papism, protestantism, ecumenism and the other sects whose name is legion. (p. 153)

Orthodox ecumenists confuse and undermine Orthodox faithful. Again, in connection with all of this, one cannot help but come back to this foolish propensity which some Orthodox hierarchs and leaders have to pursue and embrace the ecumenical movement and its inherent glorification of relativism, seemingly oblivious to the ammunition that such conduct provides to the enemies of Orthodox Christianity, seemingly oblivious to the fact that their actions arm those who wish to undermine and replace Orthodox Christianity itself. For what better empowerment to the enemies of Orthodoxy can there be, than for people to see Orthodox hierarchs and leaders themselves denying the incomparable mystery and profound uniqueness of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ through involvement in the relativism of the Ecumenical Movement? It is truly irresponsible, to say the least, for some Orthodox hierarchs and leaders to be willingly manipulated and zealously engaged in the syncretism and glorified relativism that is ecumenism, all this seemingly without concern for the immense confusion and harm that it causes to the Orthodox faithful. We take for example what the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople said about the Holy Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism in a “Joint Communiqué” of 1995 at the Vatican:
“...the Joint Commission was able to proclaim that our Churches are recognized mutually as Sister Churches, responsible together for the preservation of the one Church of God” (quoted by Bishop Angelos of Avlona, 1998, p. 38).

This same Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, goes on to essentially criticize the Holy Orthodox Faith and its Tradition by making remarks such as these to a Roman Catholic delegation on November 30, 1998--where at the very least, according to the Orthodox monks who are quoting him, he is speaking of Orthodox Christianity’s history and ecclesiastical leadership since the Great Schism: “‘We are obliged from this...to reconsider our policy, to clean away the old yeast, to become new dough...’” and elsewhere, “Our repentance for the past is indispensable’ ” (quoted in The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 9).

**The Orthodox Fathers on the Holy Mountain Defend Orthodox Christianity Against the Relativism and Subservience of Ecumenism**

In response to Patriarch Bartholomew’s remarks, such as the ones that we have just quoted, and in response to other equally outrageous remarks and actions, which we will shortly see, the Orthodox Fathers on the Holy Mountain of Athos answer any such compromise and syncretism with the following beautiful statements and questions, to which Orthodox ecumenists, and the rest of us, need to pay attention:

Are we obliged then, Your All-Holiness, to reconsider the Tradition of our Saints, from Photios, Gregory Palamas and Mark of Ephesus, up until Nikodemos of the Holy
Mountain and Athanasios of Paros, whose struggles against the heterodox teachings of Rome and whose unrelenting persistence in the holy dogmas and ethos of Orthodoxy constitute our legacy from them? Can we ignore the words of Gregory Palamas that: “Our confession (of faith) is secure in all things and is for us a crown of pride and our hope which cannot be put to shame”? (The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 10)

Using the God-inspired wisdom of St. Gregory Palamas, here the Athonite monks essentially are making reference to the fact that Orthodoxy, as the One and Only True Church of Christ, is continuous and completely unbroken throughout history, from ancient times into the present, and Orthodoxy forever will stand as uniquely the Church of Christ, by the mercy of God.

Furthermore, we can also get a sense, from the following remarks of St. Gregory Palamas, that Orthodoxy, as the One and Only True Faith, rejects the heresies of all the other faiths:

Is then our holy Tradition “old leaven” and must we now reconsider this mindset (phronema) and adopt the “new dough” of a false union with Rome, in as much as she continues to be heterodox? And is not the same Saint Gregory’s [St. Gregory Palamas]\(^{26}\) characterization of Western heretical dogmas still timely in our day: “These are the deep secrets of Satan, the mysteries of the Evil One” and his words to those in the West “We will never accept you in communion as long as you confess the Spirit to be also from the Son.” (The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 11)

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\(^{26}\) This bracketed entry has been made by me.
The statement of St. Gregory Palamas, “We will never accept you in communion as long as you confess the Spirit to be also from the Son”, is of course a reference to the heresy of the *Filioque*, which is followed by Roman Catholicism. The Athonite monks continue their discussion, as they bring to our attention the following:

Furthermore, how can we rectify with our conscience the following statement from your address: “Those of our forefathers from whom we inherited this separation were the unfortunate victims of the serpent who is the chief of all evils; they are already in the hands of God, the righteous judge”?(quoted by The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 12)

This last statement by Patriarch Bartholomew is inexplicable; it seems to both equate Orthodoxy with Roman Catholicism, and at the same time it lays equal blame on both Orthodoxy and the heretics of the West for the Great Schism. The Athonite monks refute such relativism, pandering, and syncretism with the following Orthodox affirmation which confesses that those in the West, who had embraced heresy, were indeed the ones who had brought about the schism:

According to the Holy Fathers, the Popes of Rome and their representatives are the true cause of the West’s schism from the Universal (Katholike) Orthodox Church. Your All-Holiness, you are aware that Saint Mark says literally: “For they have given cause for the schism, having obviously carried out the addition...We had previously broken from them, or rather had cut them off and separated them from the common body of the Church, as being of an improper and impious mindset (phronema) and for
irrationally having made the addition. Therefore, we turned away from them since they were heretics and for this reason separated from them.” And in our century, Saint Nectarios wrote: “Thenceforth the separation of the Churches began, which came into completion quite rightly under Photios, since the Church was in danger of going away from the One, Catholic, and Apostolic Church to become a Roman Church, or rather a papist Church, professing no longer the dogmas of the holy Apostles, but those of the popes”.

And these men, being the causes for the schism, are now in the hands of God, the righteous judge. But is it possible that the holy Fathers, who rightfully cut heretical Rome off from the body of the Church as one would amputate an incurable body part, and stitched back together the seamless tunic of Christ--is it possible that they are “unfortunate victims of the serpent, chief of all evils?” What Orthodox Christian cannot help but grieve just by hearing those words alone? (quoted in The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraphs 13-14)

As we proceed in the discussion, we see Patriarch Bartholomew in what appears to be his continuing efforts to equate the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ with Roman Catholicism, and we see that such ecclesiology is definitely not Orthodox, as the Fathers on the Holy Mountain point out to us:

And how then can we accept the following statement from your address “Since in as much as one Church recognizes another Church to be a repository of divine grace,
capable of granting salvation,... the attempt to break believers off from the one and attach them to the other is impossible”?

Have we then ceased to believe that only the Orthodox Church constitutes the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church?

Are we returning to the unorthodox ecclesiology of the Balamand document, which You yourself admitted to Austrian journalists, was not accepted by any Orthodox Church save the Church of Romania, and which, as you are aware, was condemned conciliarly by the Church of Greece and rejected by our Holy Community and by many bishops and theologians as being unorthodox?

But even if one interprets the above statement as being against Rome’s proselytism via the Unia, its formulation denies to the Orthodox Church the right to consider herself the only true Church.

Are we then condemning the Unia solely because by its actions it undermines the theory of the “sister churches” and the recognition of Rome as the complete Church of Christ which arises from this theory? Are we not condemning the Unia because it has been the devious enemy of the Orthodox for centuries and because it is impossible, based on Orthodox ecclesiology, for even the existence of Uniate groups to be acceptable?

How can we accept as being consistent with Orthodox ecclesiology the statement that “each local Church is not a competitor with other local Churches, but of one body with them...” when it is totally impossible to consider heterodox Rome as being one of
the most holy Orthodox Local Churches and of one body with them? (quoted in The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraphs 15-20)

Similar to what we have seen earlier, it appears that the Patriarch is denying the fact that the Holy Orthodox Church is uniquely the Body of Christ, with Christ our God as its Head. For indeed, as the Body of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church uniquely possesses the fullness of all truth. With this in mind, the Athonoite Fathers are right to be “deeply pained” when they point out:

Finally, how can we not but be deeply pained by the epilogue of the address: “May the Lord make us worthy to see the resurrection of unity of His One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church” when by this statement the impression given is that since the time of the schism with Rome, the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church ceased to exist, so that we must pray for her “resurrection?” In other words, were we not born into, baptized, and reared in the embrace of the One Holy Catholic Church, but are anticipating her resurrection? Is then our faith in vain? Are we dashing off into the void? (The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 21)

We also see in this discussion that the monks on the Holy Mountain are right to condemn “pan-religious common prayers”, as being clearly against Orthodox Christianity. In the following quotation, we observe that these “pan-religious common prayers” are condemned by the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church:
We are also grieved and in anguish by the occurrence of pan-religious common prayers whose syncretistic nature is obvious.

From the first such common prayer which took place in Assisi (1986), these pan-religious spectacles have never ceased to be celebrated annually, reaching distressing proportions for the Orthodox during the 12th pan-religious common prayer on the 30th of August 1998 in Romania. Why must we Orthodox be dragged into such common prayers by the Roman Catholic agents who mastermind them, when their goals are to serve papal pretensions for, at the least, spiritual leadership in Europe?

In addition, common prayers, such as are practiced, stand clearly against the Holy Canons of the Church. To be sure, You have not personally participated in such common prayer, but Orthodox Hierarchs and indeed, Heads of Churches have participated. In Romania, the papal cardinal and the Patriarch together blessed a mixed congregation of Roman Catholics, Uniates, and Orthodox.

The common prayer in Romania opens the Kerkoporta, through which the Orthodox Church will be in danger of spiritual capture. The Most Blessed Presiding Hierarch of the Church of Romania is too weak, it would seem, to stand up to the politics of his nation’s leaders who are making provisions to open towards the West; in this context an official visit of the Pope to an Orthodox nation recently took place for the first time in history. Are they suffering amnesia when it comes to the crimes committed by the Uniates against the Orthodox for centuries? Are we now to accept de facto the existence and activities of Uniate groups?
Besides, since there seems to be no chance that heterodox Christians will abandon their heretical dogmas and unbiblical teachings, what purpose do common prayers serve, except to blunt Orthodox sensitivity and to create a syncretistic convergence? Finally, how can we justify common prayer with heterodox? Do the Orthodox representatives who partake in these common prayers recognize that the rest of the heterodox and those of other religions properly give praise to and worship God? Is not such a position antithetical to the holy Gospel and thus, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

We would reverently recommend to Your attention the prohibition of common prayer with heterodox and to be sure, with non-Christian religions by means of a pan-orthodox decision, in as much as this common prayer stands against the commands of the Old and New Testament as well as the Holy Canons, as they prepare the way for the pan-religion of the so-called “New Age” in denial of the uniqueness of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (quoted in The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part B, paragraphs 26-32)

We also share, along with the Orthodox Fathers on Mount Athos, who in their moving defense of Orthodoxy inspire us, the same great disappointment and sorrow regarding remarks and actions of other Orthodox hierarchs, who are likewise entangled in ecumenism’s glorified relativism. For example, in complete disregard for Holy Orthodox Tradition and the sufferings of countless Orthodox saints, we see the following: ... ‘ in June of 1998 when in Rome, the Most Reverend
Metropolitan of Pergamon spoke of the so-called “two lungs” with which the Universal Church of Christ breathes’ (quoted in The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 5).

The Metropolitan of Pergamon was attempting, inexplicably and in complete contradiction to Holy Orthodox Tradition, to give equal validity to, and place side by side with one another: Roman Catholicism, which abides in heresy, and The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ which alone and forever uniquely is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. The Metropolitan of Pergamon’s June, 1998 remark claiming that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church, is but one part or “lung”, if you will, to the Universal Church of Christ, along with the heresy of Roman Catholicism, is obviously absurd. The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is not a part of any church, it, uniquely and by itself, is the Church, in all its fullness and in all its entirety, despite the fact that some Orthodox ecumenists seem bent on trying to undermine that unconquerable reality.

The Experience of the Orthodox Saints is a Condemnation of Heresy and all Other Falsehood

We must again note to avoid any misunderstanding, and in conformity with what was said earlier (in the introduction to this work), that this condemnation of heresy and this condemnation of many Orthodox ecumenists’ conduct--related to their ignoring, minimizing, and seeming validation of, heretical beliefs--is not a judgment on the morality and integrity of Roman Catholics, in general, nor of anyone else, in general. It is simply a condemnation of heresy, and the relativism and syncretism, pursued by many Orthodox ecumenists and their non-Orthodox “spiritual brethren”, as they seek to compromise with, and somehow validate, falsehood and heresy, at the expense of teaching, and confessing, the one and only True Faith, Orthodox
Christianity, to the world. And with this in mind, there are countless Roman Catholics, and others (both Christians and non-Christians), who are kinder, more honorable, more generous, and more courageous than countless Orthodox Christians are. There are countless people, who are not Orthodox Christian, who have greater moral character than multitudes of Orthodox Christians.

As such, this discussion, to a large extent, is not a condemnation of people for believing something, it is a condemnation of falsehood and heresy, from an Orthodox perspective, argued by a very cowardly, hypocritical, and sinful man: myself. For as we will see elsewhere, the Orthodox attitude regarding heresy, deception and sin, and regarding heretics, the deceived, and sinners (a group of which we are all a part) is beautifully summarized by the following: “God loves mankind, but He does not love falsehood and deception.” .... “All Christians do the same. They love the sinner but hate the sin. They love the heretics but hate the heresy. They love the deceived but hate the deception” (quoted in Degyansky, 1997, pp. 87-88).

When Orthodox Christians throughout the world hear of and see some prominent Orthodox hierarchs and their ecumenical, non-Orthodox, spiritual “brethren” all involved in their faithless, cowardly “theology of love” discussing--effectively on equal terms (and seemingly negotiating)--the theological traditions of numerous faiths, including the Orthodox Faith, then understandably many Orthodox and others become baffled with such conduct as they wonder what is unique, significant and absolute about Orthodox theology, if it is discussed on equal terms with theological traditions which clearly do not agree with Orthodox Trinitarian Theology? The absolute, incomparable truth that is Orthodox Trinitarian Theology found uniquely in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ cannot be relativized, compared, negotiated nor discussed on equal terms with the theology of the heterodox nor with the theology of the non-Christian
religions. Consequently, those Orthodox hierarchs responsible for attempting to relativize Holy Orthodoxy should know better.

When an Orthodox hierarch proclaims that a church, which has not renounced its innovations and heresies and which consequently has different theology and beliefs than those of Orthodox Christianity, is, nonetheless, a “Sister Church” to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ then no one should be in the least bit surprised (least of all, Orthodox ecumenists themselves) when we see the loss of many Orthodox Christians as they leave their eternal Holy Orthodox Church and go to the “Sister Church” or to some other “Church”. None of this should surprise anyone given the apostasy, ignorance, confusion and relativism that abides in the world and which is reflected and promoted by the ecumenical movement itself. In contrast to the great courage, steadfastness and humility of the Orthodox saints and martyrs, who are the great teachers of Orthodoxy to all humanity, Orthodox are confronted with the reality of some prominent Orthodox hierarchs and leaders slavishly embracing and expounding the confusion and relativism of this world which is clearly represented in the ecumenical movement, among other places. In all honesty, this cowardly, hypocritical subservience to people and forces with great worldly power, which is exhibited by numerous Orthodox hierarchs and leaders, especially evident in their ecumenical activities, is simply a reflection of the ignorance, confusion, apostasy and cowardice which is generally to be found in the overwhelming majority of people throughout the world (myself included). It is with these sorrowful realities in mind that we turn for inspiration and guidance to those same Orthodox saints and martyrs, about whom we spoke earlier, who by the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, transcend the cowardice, stupidity and hypocrisy of this world in order to teach and confess to the whole world concerning the absolute
Truth that is the Theanthropos (the God-Man), Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Holy Orthodox Church.

The countless Orthodox saints and martyrs teach all humanity to bow down to the Suprasubstantial Trinity, and to no one else, for no one else but God, the Holy Trinity, can save humanity. This fact, the Orthodox saints and martyrs prove to all of humanity (once again, by the unfathomable grace and power of the one and only God: the Holy Trinity) through their unmatched kindness, wisdom, humility and courage unto even unspeakable tortures and death. In sharp contrast to the heroism of the Orthodox saints, we see how people who leave Orthodoxy are essentially encouraged to do so by the pronouncements and actions of some Orthodox leaders themselves, who religiously promote the relativism of the ecumenical movement, obviously at the expense of Orthodoxy, as they and their non-Orthodox ecumenical brethren communicate to everyone that it all really does not matter, with any real significance, regarding what people believe or where they go to worship. This, the Orthodox and non-Orthodox ecumenists faithfully communicate to the whole world in accordance with the all-encompassing, man-made, syncretistic principles of ecumenism. This sort of recklessness, irresponsibility, willful ignorance, and cowardly syncretism, on the part of many Orthodox ecumenists, is inexcusable. All these sad things (seen reflected in the actions and pronouncements of some prominent Orthodox leaders, who are grossly involved in “the Pan-heresy of Ecumenism” (Cyprian, 1995, p. 6.)) we saw exposed earlier by the Athonite monks in their beautiful and inspiring letter to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew as they admonish him and others to firmly confess Orthodoxy and not forsake it. The significance of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and its Theology is called into question by many, obviously and understandably, because of the
cowardly subservience and relativistic compromise inherent to Orthodox participation in ecumenism.

Many Orthodox ecumenists, seemingly mindful and fearful of powerful people and political forces, purposely attempt to compromise the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Faith in their, inevitably, relativistic, inter-faith endeavors, which are more commonly known as ecumenism. No man-made, humanistic system, which is what ecumenism is, has the power to unite humanity in peace and love nor does it have the power to unite divided Christendom. Only Orthodox Christianity which is, by itself, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ has the power to do such things by the grace of God. This is all true only by the grace of God and not by any power or merit that Orthodox Christians have by themselves. This is so, because each and every person has absolutely nothing except for what God has given to him or her. And regarding groups of people, any and all persons, the same obviously holds true.
Certainly, we Orthodox Christians must make sure to raise our children within the unconquerable and only true Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. As such, Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church must never be relativized; for this is not only grossly inappropriate to attempt, but also, in the strictest sense, it is something truly impossible to do—given what we have said and learned of our Orthodox Faith. We Orthodox must educate our children correctly to the best of our ability by living our Faith, with the strength that only Christ our God can give to us. Dostoevsky, who was a devout Orthodox Christian, speaks inspiringly of our need to educate our children and for us to make sure that they receive from us beautiful childhood memories. Dostoevsky—through one of the saintly characters, Alexei Karamazov, in his book *The Brothers Karamazov*—has the following to teach us, regarding the upbringing of children, which is certainly consistent with Orthodox teaching:

[...]my dear children, perhaps you will not understand what I am going to say to you, because I often speak very incomprehensibly, but still you will remember and some day agree with my words. You must know that there is nothing higher, or stronger, or sounder, or more useful afterwards in life, than some good memory, especially a memory from childhood, from the parental home. You hear a lot said about your education, yet some such beautiful, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. If a man stores up many such memories to take into life, then he is saved for
his whole life. And even if only one good memory remains with us in our hearts, that alone may serve some day for our salvation. (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 774)

Parents, and other family, and Orthodox priests and other faithful can all greatly inspire and help children in our Orthodox community and elsewhere. Indeed, the African proverb that “It takes a village to raise a child” is very true. And, what is more beautiful for our children than for us to raise our children within the only true Faith, Orthodox Christianity. We Orthodox must educate our children correctly—protecting them from much of the evil in the world and give them beautiful childhood memories. What better way to educate our children and others is there than to live our Orthodox Christian Faith correctly to the best of our ability, by the grace of God?

There is no better education which we can give to our children than our living the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity.

Indeed, what is more “sacred” in a child’s life than a strong Orthodox Christian upbringing by devout Orthodox Christian parents and family who truly show love of Christ to the child; and ideally, this would work best in an Orthodox Christian society—something which was certainly epitomized by the truly great Byzantine Empire.

What was the national anthem of the Byzantine Empire? Wasn’t it—“O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. Grant victories to the kings over the barbarians and by Thy Cross preserve Thy civilization”?

This hymn gives expression to an ideology, if we can call it such, for putting into practice Orthodox teaching, faith, and life at a national level on a multi-ethnic scale.

Since the government could foresee how implementing Orthodox therapeutic teaching and methods could be beneficial and contribute to society, the government passed
legislation sanctioning and promoting the Orthodox faith as the official state religion, so that the empire would be filled with parishes in which priests would provide this therapeutic treatment. So in time, the number of healthy citizens in the parishes would increase, and by extension the number of healthy citizens throughout the nation itself.

(Romanides, 2008, p. 213)

Dostoevsky—speaking through the character Elder Zosima, in the *Brothers Karamazov*, who is based on a real life Orthodox Saint with whom Dostoevsky would converse—tells us, consistent with Orthodox teaching, that for the accomplishment of what is right and good, we must first not lie to ourselves or to others. The Orthodox saints definitely teach us to never compromise the truth, if we want to not fall into evil:

> Above all, do not lie to yourself. A man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to a point where he does not discern any truth either in himself or anywhere around him, and thus falls into disrespect towards himself and others. Not respecting anyone, he ceases to love, and having no love, he gives himself up to passions and coarse pleasures, in order to occupy and amuse himself, and in his vices reaches complete bestiality, and it all comes from lying continually to others and to himself. A man who lies to himself is often the first to take offense. (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 44)

The heroic confession of Orthodoxy, as taught to the world by the Orthodox saints, is radically different from the empty relativism which is promoted and taught by many Orthodox ecumenists. To demonstrate this, we will look at some more examples of how some Orthodox leaders, in their fervent striving to embrace ecumenism, seem to be willing to compromise Orthodox canons for the goal of furthering their relations with people, both Christian and Non-
Christian, who reject Orthodox Christianity. We will also continue to look at what some people who reject ecumenism have to say regarding the actions and comments of Orthodox ecumenists, and, generally speaking, we will continue to attempt a strong Orthodox defense in this discussion—albeit only from an academic standpoint, in my case; whereas, the Orthodox Saints confessed Orthodox Christianity with their entire created being in their unmatched love and heroism for Christ, by the grace of God. All of this with the goal of furthering Orthodox Christian awareness and education.

*Orthodox Leaders Not Courageously Confessing Orthodoxy*

As has been mentioned, among the great challenges facing Orthodox education and witness is the relativism of some prominent Orthodox leaders on various occasions. Examples of such relativism (and syncretism) are the following statements made by two late Patriarchs of the Orthodox Church which are to be found in some of Father Daniel Deyansky’s excellent research:

... In December of 1972, the late Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I shocked the Christian world with the following message to the Moslem community, on the occasion of their feast of *Bairam*: “The one Great God of all- all we who worship and adore Him are His children- desires us to be saved and to be brothers. Though we belong to different religions- and have nonetheless learned of and acknowledge the Holy God as the beginning and end of all things- He desires that we should love one another. This is the present hour’s commandment for the world: love and goodness. Of course, all faithful and good Muslims are filled with this same ideal, and with the same joy will accept this
message of brotherhood in God, which is addressed to you on this great feast day of Islam.” (quoted in Degyansky, 1997, p. 87)

The late Patriarch Parthenios of Alexandria made the following declaration: The prophet Mohammed is an apostle. He is a man of God, who worked for the Kingdom of God and created Islam, a religion to which belong one billion people.... Our God is the Father of all men, even of the Moslems and Buddhists. I believe that God loves the Moslems and Buddhists.... When I speak against Islam or Buddhism, then I am not found in agreement with God.... My God is the God of other men also. He is not only the God for the Orthodox. This is my position. (quoted in Degyansky, 1997, p. 87)

The words of Patriarch Parthenios in the above quotation are indeed found in his responses to various questions which were asked of him in an interview with the German reporter Harold Brandt. The Greek Orthodox periodical Orthodoxos Typos, having translated the interview word for word into the Greek Language, concludes by expressing its disappointment with Patriarch Parthenios, saying, “These ecumenical words speak for themselves” (translated from Greek) (Orthodoxos Typos, 6, Oct., 1989). In fact it must be noted that in both these previous quotations: these are Orthodox Patriarchs glorifying relativism and pandering to powerful non-Christian and oftentimes anti-Christian forces. These are Orthodox Patriarchs to whom Orthodox Christians throughout the world look for inspiration and guidance in matters of faith. Their remarks are more suited to a Freemason or politician devoted to secular humanism, rather than to Orthodox Patriarchs sworn to defend the Orthodox Faith, even with their lives, if necessary. In all fairness, it must be said that most other people—including myself in my
faithlessness, laziness and cowardice—would also cave in to overwhelming political pressure and power, if they were in the hostile environment in which the two former Orthodox Patriarchs found themselves, surrounded by militant political and Islamic forces, which have historically persecuted Orthodox Christianity immensely.

Orthodox Christianity is confessed and taught to the whole world by the Orthodox saints and martyrs, who do so with love and compassion for all humankind, with humility and with great courage, but never through cowardly subservience to people who hate Christ and His Orthodox Church. By the mercy of God, the Holy Trinity, when it was their time, the Orthodox saints and martyrs never bowed down to great worldly power, regardless of how terrifying the consequences were of confessing Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. For most of the rest of us, myself included, the defense of the Orthodox Faith is possible, due to our cowardice, only from places of relative safety.

An Orthodox Confession From Relative Safety

With this in mind, never forgetting the countless Orthodox martyrs and saints throughout history, we are also inspired (though understandably oftentimes to a lesser extent) by numerous defenses of the Orthodox Christian Faith that have been made by people not under any visible, immediate danger. As an example of this, we observe the strong defense of the Orthodox Faith by the Greek periodical *Epignosis*, responding with irony to Patriarch Parthenios’ outrageous remarks, as they write: ‘So “Mohammed is an apostle” and the New Martyrs [who were slain because they would not accept Islam]27 , then, are “not found in agreement with God”’(quoted in

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27 This bracketed entry is found in Deygansky’s work, from where the above quotation was obtained. The bracketed entry helps explain the quotation, and is not found in the original source.
Dergyansky, 1997, pp. 87-88). This same periodical calls Patriarch Parthenios to task for the great falsehood that he spoke, when they write the following Orthodox response to the late Patriarch’s unbelievable remarks:

We also believe... that God is the Father of all men and that He loves both the Muslims and the Buddhists. God loves mankind, but He does not love falsehood and deception. He loves the Muslims and the Buddhists, but He does not love Mohammedanism and Buddhism. All Christians do the same. They love the sinner but hate the sin. They love the heretics but hate the heresy. They love the deceived but hate the deception. (quoted in Dergyansky, 1997, pp. 87-88)

Alexander Kalomiros is the one who wrote this response in his periodical *Epignosis*—with Athanasios Katsikis as editor. This publication and the people responsible for it were based in a predominantly Orthodox nation, Greece. So, one has to ask, would the people responsible for this moving statement even have written it were they living under similar oppressive and hostile circumstances as the Patriarchs in question were having to live, as they failed to courageously confess the Orthodox Faith? Would most other Orthodox have stood their ground courageously in similar hostile circumstances? Would I have done so? Obviously, in the strictest sense, no one can speak for sure about what someone else (or about what they

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28 Fr. Basil at Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Old Calendar) in Boston, MA, told me [March, 2006] that typically Alexander Kalomiros was the author of the articles in *Epignosis*, for it was his periodical and he was responsible for its publication—though when he wrote the articles he would not put his name to the articles. Athanasios Katsikis was the editor. The quotation in Dergyansky’s work, originally from *Epignosis*, is an accurate translation of the original Greek. In the original text, Kalomiros writes, “We also believe, sir Parthenios, that God is the Father of all men” (*Epignosis*, no. 20, Dec., 1989). In Dergyansky’s work we see that the phrase “sir Parthenios” is taken out; this takes nothing away from the meaning of the original statement in *Epignosis*. 
themselves for that matter) would or would not do in extremely dangerous circumstances.

However, from the experience of human history, it is rather obvious that most people, most of the time, do things which they feel that they can do and which they believe will subsequently leave them surviving, unharmed and safe. As I have alluded to earlier: Because of my grossly lacking the perseverance, faith, hope, love and courage which are required to witness boldly and truthfully to the one and only Truth that is Christ the Theanthropos, it is very likely that I would, in a cowardly manner, fail to stand my ground for the Orthodox Faith.

*The Heroic Orthodox Confession of St. Maximos*

The moving defense of the Orthodox Faith, found in the periodical *Epignosis*, written by people who do not live in the same danger in which the two aforementioned Patriarchs lived, still is very impressive and inspiring. This defense reminds one of something that St. Maximos the Confessor once said. And he, indeed, did live under very dangerous circumstances and suffered tremendously for his Orthodox confession of Christ. In the following courageous and uncompromising Orthodox confession from St. Maximos the Confessor we see that which epitomizes the Orthodox attitude towards the various heresies and towards those who follow any of those heresies:

> I do not wish heretics to suffer, nor do I rejoice in any evil that befalls them; God forbid!--but I take the greatest joy and pleasure in their conversion. For what can be dearer to the faithful than to see God’s scattered children gathered together? I am not so insane as to suggest that mercilessness should be valued above love for mankind. On the contrary, I advise that we should, with care and experience, do good to all men, and be all
things to all men according to their need. Together with this, I desire and advise that heretics as such should not be supported in their senseless beliefs, but in that case one must be firm and implacable. For I do not call it love, but hatred and a falling-away from theanthropic love, when someone supports a heretical fallacy to the ruination of those who hold that fallacy. (Popovic, 2000, p. 156)

It would be beautiful for all Orthodox Christians, including Orthodox hierarchs, to follow this advice of St. Maximos.

*The Heroic Confession of Orthodoxy Made By the Orthodox Saints, Throughout History*

*A look at some ancient Orthodox saints.* Let us look at some Orthodox saints, who courageously lived and taught the Orthodox Faith, as Christ commanded of everyone who would follow Him. And these Orthodox saints, about whom we will speak, in the forthcoming discussion, both ancient and more recent, are obviously but a few of the countless saints and martyrs whom we can find within the unmatched history of Orthodox Christianity. Let us begin this part of the discussion by briefly looking at the lives of five great ancient Orthodox saints: St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Polycarp of Smyrna, St. Haralambos29, St. George, and St. Demetrios.

We first briefly look at St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, a great Orthodox saint and courageous martyr for Christ, who fearlessly proceeded to his martyrdom in Rome where he was torn to pieces by the lions. He went out of his way to request and make sure that no one intervened on his behalf to prevent his martyrdom; for such intervention would have possibly

29 The text from which we will quote spells “St. Haralambos”, as “St. Charalambos”.
prevented this great saint’s martyric witness for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church against the atheism of the heretics and pagans from taking place—something that would have greatly disappointed this holy man. One cannot help but notice that the Orthodox saints fearlessly sacrificed themselves for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church and for the good of all people, even for their enemies, but most certainly they did not sacrifice others in their place—as the hypocrite politicians and their powerful handlers do when they start wars, where they spare themselves and their friends but eagerly kill innocent men, women, and children; nor did the Orthodox saints sacrifice innocent others and themselves—as the mindless Islamist suicide bombers do, frequently also killing innocent men, women, and children. The contrast is truly striking and inescapable. The Orthodox saints’ and martyrs’ great love for the Triune God and their fellow man was clearly and unmistakably manifested in their unmatched heroism and kindness—they spoke and acted for themselves and sacrificed no one who was innocent, but themselves, in their unmatched holiness of life and courage while witnessing for Christ. What follows is a beautiful synopsis, from the Orthodox Church in America, of the life and heroic death of the great Martyr for Christ, St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch.

The Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-Bearer, was a disciple of the holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian, as was also St Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (February 23). St Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch, and successor to Bishop Euodius, Apostle of the Seventy (September 7). Tradition suggests that when St Ignatius was a little boy, the Savior hugged him and said: “Unless you turn and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven” (Mt. 18:3). The saint was called “God-Bearer” (Theophoros), because he bore
God in his heart and prayed unceasingly to Him. He also had this name because he was held in the arms of Christ, the incarnate Son of God.

St Ignatius was a disciple of the Apostle John the Theologian, together with St Polycarp of Smyrna. As Bishop of Antioch, St Ignatius was zealous and spared no effort to build up the church of Christ. To him is attributed the practice of antiphonal singing (by two choirs) during church services. He had seen a vision of the angels in heaven alternately singing praises to God, and divided his church choir to follow this example. In the time of persecution he was a source of strength to the souls of his flock, and was eager to suffer for Christ.

In the year 106 the emperor Trajan (98-117), after his victory over the Scythians, ordered everyone to give thanks to the pagan gods, and to put to death any Christians who refused to worship the idols. In the year 107, Trajan happened to pass through Antioch. Here they told him that Bishop Ignatius openly confessed Christ, and taught people to scorn riches, to lead a virtuous life, and preserve their virginity. St Ignatius came voluntarily before the emperor, so as to avert persecution of the Christians in Antioch. St Ignatius rejected the persistent requests of the emperor Trajan to sacrifice to the idols. The emperor then decided to send him to Rome to be thrown to the wild beasts. St Ignatius joyfully accepted the sentence imposed upon him. His readiness for martyrdom was attested to by eyewitnesses, who accompanied St Ignatius from Antioch to Rome.

On the way to Rome, the ship sailed from Seleucia stopped at Smyrna, where St Ignatius met with his friend Bishop Polycarp. Clergy and believers from other cities and towns thronged to see St Ignatius. He exhorted everyone not to fear death and not to grieve for
him. In his Epistle to the Roman Christians, he asked them to assist him with their prayers, and to pray that God would strengthen him in his impending martyrdom for Christ: “I seek Him Who died for us; I desire Him Who rose for our salvation... In me, desire has been nailed to the cross, and no flame of material longing is left. Only the living water speaks within me, saying, ‘Hasten to the Father.’”

From Smyrna, St Ignatius went to Troas. Here he heard the happy news of the end of the persecution against Christians in Antioch. From Troas, St Ignatius sailed to Neapolis (in Macedonia) and then to Philippi.

On the way to Rome St Ignatius visited several churches, teaching and guiding the Christians there. He also wrote seven epistles: to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, and Smyrna. He also addressed a letter to St Polycarp, who mentions a collection of the letters of St Ignatius in his letter to the Philippians (Ch. 13). St Irenaeus of Lyons quotes from St Ignatius’s letter to the Romans (AGAINST HERESIES 5:28:4). All these letters have survived to the present day.

The Roman Christians met St Ignatius with great joy and profound sorrow. Some of them hoped to prevent his execution, but St Ignatius implored them not to do this. Kneeling down, he prayed together with the believers for the Church, for love between the brethren, and for an end to the persecution against Christians.

On December 20, the day of a pagan festival, they led St Ignatius into the arena, and he turned to the people: “Men of Rome, you know that I am sentenced to death, not because of any crime, but because of my love for God, by Whose love I am embraced. I long to be
with Him, and offer myself to him as a pure loaf, made of fine wheat ground fine by the teeth of wild beasts.”

After this the lions were released and tore him to pieces, leaving only his heart and a few bones. Tradition says that on his way to execution, St Ignatius unceasingly repeated the name of Jesus Christ. When they asked him why he was doing this, St Ignatius answered that this Name was written in his heart, and that he confessed with his lips Him Whom he always carried within. When the saint was devoured by the lions, his heart was not touched. When they cut open the heart, the pagans saw an inscription in gold letters: “Jesus Christ.” After his execution St Ignatius appeared to many of the faithful in their sleep to comfort them, and some saw him at prayer for the city of Rome.

Hearing of the saint’s great courage, Trajan thought well of him and stopped the persecution against the Christians. The relics of St Ignatius were transferred to Antioch (January 29), and on February 1, 637 were returned to Rome and placed in the church of San Clemente. (Orthodox Church in America, n.d.)

We can see from the above that even some of St. Ignatius’ enemies (Trajan) were moved to some degree by the heroism and purity of heart of this great saint; and, as a result, St. Ignatius once again greatly helped his flock—and countless people thereafter have been helped by this saint and by all other Orthodox saints; that is why we Orthodox call such God inspired people saints.

Clearly, this great fearlessness and holiness of life epitomized by the Orthodox saints is not something that is merely academically and philosophically confessed; but instead is lived by the grace of God through the fulfillment and practice of Orthodox asceticism. The unmatched
holiness of life and great heroism of the Orthodox saints is unmistakable in its miraculous manifestations, by the grace of God. And this always causes great rejoicing for the Orthodox faithful, clearly showing us—who have not pursued this same holiness which our saints have attained—that the Orthodox faith is the True Faith and that we are all called to also pursue the holiness of life which these Orthodox saints have already attained by the grace of God. Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos brilliantly confess these matters—regarding the Orthodox saints throughout the ages.

A distinction is made between faith that comes by hearing and faith based on theoria. Those at the stage of illumination of the nous have this second type of faith, which is why they confess it. Thus they endured all forms of martyrdom, as the Light of Christ had entered their whole being. If someone was unable to endure martyrdom, if he did not confess the faith and did not want to become a martyr, that was a sign that he was not in the state of illumination of the nous. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, pp. 304-305)

“It was natural, based on the experience of illumination, for them not to give way and to undergo martyrdom. In the period of Turkish domination we have the same tradition with the New Martyrs.

Those who had denied Christ and had [temporarily] become Muslims, or even those who had been born Muslims but became Christians, were helped to escape to monasteries. They went through ascetic training to enable them to go and confess their faith in Christ publicly, and to undergo martyrdom without giving way. Their martyrdom
caused great celebration in the Church, because it was a testimony to the continuing existence of the truth of Christ.

This perception of martyrdom is very clearly recorded by Ignatius of Antioch. If one reads St Ignatius carefully, it is clear that he is writing about noetic prayer and approaching martyrdom with this inner conviction.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, pp. 304-305)

The Orthodox saints—by the grace and power of Christ our God, Who became Incarnate and conquered death for us men and for our salvation and sanctification—have acquired selfless love and as such were made unconquerable by Christ our God.

The Apostle Paul defines the incarnation of Christ in terms of man’s liberation from the fear of death. “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15). [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 263)

“Without participating in the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, by which—through purification, illumination and glorification—one overcomes the selfishness or self love rooted in the fear of death, one cannot arrive at participation in the glorifying love of God through which one becomes a friend.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 263)
“Because these people existed throughout the period of Turkish domination, Orthodoxy was not wiped out. If the Orthodox in those days, under Turkish domination, had been like they are today, Orthodoxy would have disappeared. This is the bitter historical fact.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 303)

This great God-given grace which permeates all of the Orthodox saints throughout their entire created being is what gives these saints the power to endure every form of torture and hardship imaginable, for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. God works this miracle in the lives of the Orthodox saints, for these saints to live this reality by grace and for all of us to clearly see and one day aspire to also experience this same reality in our own lives. The miraculous lives of the Orthodox saints is present for all of the Orthodox to see, and for the rest of the world to see as well. With all of this in mind, we see that the Orthodox saints, by the grace of God, are the greatest educators in the history of humanity—they lived and died for what they taught, and no power of this world, whatsoever, could break them. The unmatched God-given heroism, wisdom, and holiness of life of the Orthodox saints is a major reason that, by the grace of God, we can still identify ourselves as Orthodox Christians—as Father Romanides tells us in the last quotation.

With these profound matters of God’s grace kept in mind, we proceed to the Holy Martyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who—we are told, in an earlier quotation—was a friend of St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. St. Polycarp’s life and death confession of Christ was also beautiful and forever inspiring to Orthodox Christians throughout the ages. Let us see some of what St. Nikolai Velimirovich has to say of this fearless Orthodox saint.
Polycarp, this great apostolic man, was born a pagan. St. John the Theologian converted him to the Christian Faith and baptized him. […] Three days before his death, St. Polycarp prophesied: “In three days I will be burnt in the flames for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ!” And on the third day, when the soldiers arrested him and brought him to trial, he cried out: “Let this be the will of the Lord my God.” When the judge counseled him to deny Christ and to acknowledge the Roman gods, Polycarp said: “I cannot exchange the better for the worse!” The Jews especially hated Polycarp and endeavored to have him burned alive. When they bound him at the stake, he prayed to God for a long time. He was very old and gray, and radiant like an angel of God. The people witnessed how the flame encircled him but did not touch him. Frightened by such a phenomenon, the pagan judges ordered the executioner to pierce him with a lance through the fire. When he was pierced, so much blood flowed from him that the fire was completely extinguished, and his body remained whole and unburnt. At the persuasion of the Jews, the judge ordered that Polycarp’s lifeless body be incinerated according to the custom of the Hellenes. So the evil ones burned the dead body of the one whom they could not burn while alive. St. Polycarp suffered on Great and Holy Saturday in the year 167. (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, p. 185)

By the grace of God, because of great Orthodox saints like St. Polycarp, and countless others, the Holy Orthodox Church will never be conquered.

Let us look at some of the history and discussion, offered by an Orthodox Priest, the Reverend Father George Poulos, pertaining to the Great Martyr, St. Haralambos, whose fearless
Orthodox confession of Christ, in the face of those who hated Christ, is never forgotten by Orthodox Christians:

What has prompted the Orthodox Christians throughout the world to display such love and affection for St. Charalambos [St. Haralambos] 30? Why has he been so very close to the hearts of all of us for over 1700 years? Perhaps it is because of the fact that no other Priest in the history of Christianity suffered so much in one lifetime for his religious convictions. In the city of Magnesia, the Governor of the province, Loukianos, inflicted great pain upon St. Charalambos because he refused to worship the idols of the Empire. The saintly Priest was first tied to a post in the public square and ridiculed by the pagans. His body was slashed by heavy cutting irons used by the Governor’s soldiers. St. Charalambos in spite of the terrible pain, refused to deny Christ and accept the pagan gods. After much torture, he was dragged by his beard through the streets of Magnesia by soldiers on horseback. Many forms of torture were used to force Charalambos to give up his faith, yet he would not. During the ensuing months, St. Charalambos miraculously survived all forms of torture. Eventually the people called him “the man they cannot kill.” People spoke of many miracles attributed to St. Charalambos during his imprisonment. Thousands came to the jail to seek his blessing. Hundreds of afflicted souls came to be healed of their sicknesses. (Poulos, 1974, pp. 50-51)

The Orthodox saints used their entire created being given to them by God to selflessly serve their Creator and their fellow man with great love and courage. This great love and courage was

30 The bracketed entry is my addition.
something which continually and miraculously grew in them, by the grace of God, through their life in Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church. This is certainly seen in the miraculous life and death struggles of St. Haralambos [St. Charalambos] and in countless other saints. And there really is no greater educational example given to Orthodox Christians by their spiritual leaders than this. Again, we consider the life of St. Haralambos:

Charalambos became known also as the miracle-worker. He caused the lame to walk and the blind to see. Some thought he was the Resurrected Christ who had returned to earth. St. Charalambos proclaimed to all that he was not the Messiah but that he was only the instrument of the Lord’s Divine Grace.

The Roman Emperor, Servius, was enraged by the action of Charalambos and ordered the Saint brought to the capital of the Empire which was then located in the ancient city of Antioch (192 A.D.) Syria. In the city of Antioch, Charalambos was led about the city with a horse bridle in his mouth. This was done to ridicule both him and the Christian faith, which he continued to uphold. The soldiers of the emperor then nailed Charalambos to a cross with over 100 large spikes which pierced the skin of the pious Saint. Other forms of torture were administered, and yet Charalambos did not relent nor die. In his great anger, the Emperor ordered Charalambos beheaded. As the two executioners raised their swords to kill the Saint, suddenly a voice was heard from heaven saying, “well done my faithful servant, enter into the kingdom of heaven.” At this moment, St. Charalambos passed away without a blow being struck. The executioners were dumbfounded. They knelt at the body of the Saint and asked God for forgiveness. The Emperor became more enraged
and ordered the two would-be executioners of Charalambos beheaded. Their names were Porphirios and Baptos, whose feast day we celebrate today also. Thus the beloved Saint Charalambos truly had become “the man they couldn’t kill,” for he was taken by God himself into the Kingdom of Heaven. (Poulos, 1974, pp. 50-51)

Now, we will once again refer to the research of Father George Poulos, to learn some things about the life of another Great Orthodox Martyr, St. George, whose great courage and love for Christ, in the face of great evil and oppression, is an inspiration and lesson to all Orthodox Christians, and to the whole world:

St. George is called the “Victorious Great Martyr,” and he was the most famous Saint of Syria. He was an officer in the army of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, the great persecutor of the Christians. As a Christian, George refused to make pagan sacrifice, and he gave up his military commission. For this, and because he was against the cruel persecution, he was tortured by being beaten with spears; cuts were inflicted upon his body, and he was bound to the rim of a wheel set with sharp spikes. These tortures had no effect on his steadfastness, and his example persuaded many Christians to hold fast in the faith and many pagans to be converted. He was finally beheaded at Nicodemia, a town in Asia Minor on an inlet of the Sea of Marmora, about the year 303 A.D.

The fame of St. George spread throughout the Eastern world, and he came to be invoked in time of trouble by Christian and Moslem alike. The Emperor Constantine is said to

31 The Feast Day of St. Haralambos and these other two saints is February 10th.
have dedicated a Church to St. George not long after the martyr’s death, and devotion to
him soon spread to the West and increased greatly after the Crusaders returned to their
homes after touring the Holy Lands of the East.

The cheerful Christian fortitude of the warrior Saint inspired those who came after him,
and from the time of Constantine to the Crusades, St. George symbolized the struggle
against paganism. In later years he became the type of the never-ending combat between
good and evil, one of the Sons of Light who ever strive to vanquish the ancient Dragon of
Darkness. With the passage of the years so many legends were woven about him that his
original personality was obscured beneath a cloud of romance. St. George is not a myth,
although many of the stories told about him are. His courage and strength, however, will
continue to support his admirers for many years to come. (Poulos, 1974, p. 66)

To conclude this part of the discussion (pertaining to St. Haralambos, St. George, and St.
Demetrios), we now refer to the web site of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, where,
faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, some of the remarkable details of the life of the Great
Martyr St. Demetrios are given to us. We will see in this discussion of the heroic life and death of
St. Demetrios, that this glorious saint, by the unfathomable grace of God, truly taught the
Orthodox Faith, by both word and deed, as all the Orthodox saints have done throughout history.
The God-inspired holiness of life which St. Demetrios led--his great courage and faith, his
humility, kindness and great love for Christ the Theanthropos--was something clearly seen by
many people during his lifetime, and it truly inspired these people and educated them. For, we
are reminded of the words of great wisdom offered to us by St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, as
he faithfully confesses the Orthodox understanding of education and its intrinsic relationship to sanctity, when he tells us: “Education (enlightenment) is simply the projection of sanctity, the radiation of light; the saint shines and, thereby, enlightens and sanctifies. Education is entirely conditioned by sanctity; only a saint can be a true educator and enlightener” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132). We will see that this is so, in the story of St. Demetrios, which we are about to present. Certainly, from considering the following about St. Demetrios, we can understand some of the significance of what St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije has told us:

Despite the persecution directed against Christians by the Emperor, Saint Demetrios brought a large number of pagans to the faith. His words convinced them because they saw in the righteousness, peace and brotherly love that marked his life an illustration of the truth of which he spoke. (Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Saint Demetrios, the Myrrh-Streamer, 1998)

By the grace of God, St. Demetrios’ words of wisdom were consistent with Orthodox teaching and worship, Orthodoxia, and so were his actions and life, Orthopraxia, which validated for people much of what he said. Indeed, the words of St. Demetrios had real significance to many people and “convinced them because they saw in the righteousness, peace and brotherly love that marked his life an illustration of the truth of which he spoke” (Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Saint Demetrios, the Myrrh-Stream, 1998). Regarding all the Orthodox saints, their great love for Christ the Theanthropos was manifested, by the grace of God, in every aspect of their life, in their great words of wisdom and heroic deeds. With these things in mind—that
only the Orthodox saints are the true educators and enlighteners (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132)—we look at some of the story of the Great Martyr St. Demetrios:

Saint Demetrios suffered in Thessalonica during the reign of Galerius Maximian (c. 306). He belonged to one of the most distinguished families of the province of Macedonia and was widely admired not only because of his noble ancestry and grace of bearing, but also for virtue, wisdom and goodness of heart surpassing that of his elders.

The military expertise of Saint Demetrios led Galerius, as Caesar of the Eastern Empire, to appoint him commander of the Roman forces in Thessaly and Proconsul for Hellas. But for all this, Demetrios remained ever aware of the underlying realities of life.

Since faith in Christ had touched his heart, all the glory of this world meant nothing to him, and there was nothing he preferred to teaching and preaching the word of God.

(Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Saint Demetrios, the Myrrh-Streamer, 1998)

St. Demetrios heroically taught the Orthodox Christian Faith, as was mentioned earlier, in both word and deed. By the grace of God, what he taught to people in word, he lived in every aspect of his life, in all humility and courageously, with great love for God and his neighbor. He was soon to prove his great love for God and humanity, by rejecting great worldly power, which had been given to him, and by suffering martyrdom confessing Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church:
The Emperor Maximian had just won a series of brilliant victories over the Scythians and was on his way back to Rome when he halted at Thessalonica to receive the acclamations of the populace and to offer sacrifices in thanksgiving to the idols. A number of pagans, envious of the success of the Saint, took advantage of the Emperor’s presence in the city to denounce Demetrios as a Christian. Maximian’s astonishment gave way to violent indignation when he was told that Demetrios’ was making use of his official position to spread the faith. Demetrios was summoned and confined in a cell, located in the basement of nearby baths.

Maximian arranged for games and gladiatorial combats to take place in the amphitheater of the city. He had brought with him a man of gigantic stature and Herculean strength called Lyaios, a Vandal by origin. Such was this man’s strength and skill in single combat that no one could withstand him. There was in the city a young Christian called Nestor, who observing the empty pride of the Emperor in the victories of his champion, made up his mind to show him that real power belongs to Christ alone. He ran to the baths where Demetrios was imprisoned and asked for the protection of his prayer in going to confront the giant. The Martyr made the sign of the Cross on the brow and the heart of the boy, and sent him like David before Goliath. He reached the amphitheater just as the heralds were crying out on all sides for any who would stand against Lyaios.

Advancing towards the Emperor, Nestor threw his tunic to the ground and shouted, “God of Demetrios, help me!” In the first encounter, at the very moment the giant rushed upon
him, Nestor slipped aside and stabbed him to the heart with his dagger. There was uproar and amazement at the marvel, and people asked themselves how a mere child, relying neither on strength nor weapons, could so suddenly have brought down the barbarian.

Rather than yield to the sign of the sovereign power of God, the Emperor flew into a rage and ordered the immediate arrest of Nestor and his beheading outside the city. He had heard Nestor calling upon the God of Demetrios and, supposing the Saint had used some kind of witchcraft, Maximian ordered his soldiers to go and thrust Demetrios through with their lances, without trial, in the depths of his prison cell. There were some Christians, including Demetrios’ servant Lupus, present at his martyrdom, and when the soldiers had gone, they reverently buried the Saint’s body. (Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Saint Demetrios, the Myrrh-Streamer, 1998)

By the grace of God, the Orthodox saints educate and enlighten people through their holiness of life. And even after their earthly life, God in His grace, gives life to the saints, so that they can intercede on behalf of, and help, people. Only by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God, do the Orthodox saints have the power to intercede on people’s behalf and help them, even after these saints have departed this earthly life. Mindful of this, we consider the example of St. Demetrios, who, by the grace of God, has continued to work miracles and help people, long after his life here on earth:

It was God’s will that the grace with which He filled Saint Demetrios should remain active even after his death. This is why He caused to flow from his body a myrron with a delightful scent, which had the property of healing all who took it as an unction, with
faith in the intercession of the Saint. Time and again, during sixteen hundred years, Saint Demetrios has given proof of his benevolent care for the city of Thessalonica and its inhabitants. He has defended them from the attacks of barbarians, he has preserved them from plague and famine, healed the sick and comforted the afflicted. (Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Saint Demetrios, the Myrrh-Streamer, 1998)

_The Holy Forty-two Martyrs from Ammoria_

The great forty-two Orthodox martyrs of Ammoria were Byzantine commanders who suffered great hardship for several years at the hands of the Moslems, for their not accepting the false religion of Islam; ultimately these fearless saints suffered martyrdom for Christ and for their Holy Orthodox Faith, the only True Faith, in the year 845. These Orthodox saints knew that the doctrine of “might makes right” was delusional and truly of a temporary nature in this fallen world; and they also knew that the Moslems’ claim of possessing the true religion in Islam was and is grossly ill-found by the history found throughout the Holy Scriptures—both in the Old and New Testaments—for there was simply no testament or witness to support the claims of Mohammed. These Orthodox saints, as countless others have done throughout history, confessed Christ as the Son of God Who condescended to become Incarnate; and in Him alone is salvation and sanctification for all humanity.

This salvation and sanctification is certainly not to be found in any of the heresies and fraudulent religions, such as Islam, Judaism, Papism, Protestantism and all the other false

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32 Both words “Moslem” and “Muslim” mean the same thing, and refer to people who follow the faith of Islam.

33 Something that cowards, such as myself, would be very unlikely to do.
religions throughout the world. This salvation and sanctification is to be found uniquely in the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. This reality, obviously, as we have mentioned, does not make Orthodox Christians better or worse, intrinsically, than any one else, for we were all without exception created from absolutely nothing—and, in fact we Orthodox Christians have countless times failed to live the only True Faith, and confess Christ and the only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church. We Orthodox generally do not make claims of who goes to heaven or hell—for we have our own tremendous challenges in trying to work out our own salvation—but we absolutely also do not deny that the Orthodox Faith is alone the True Faith; the fearlessness of the Orthodox saints and martyrs proves this throughout history despite, so oftentimes, the tremendous failures of the rest of us Orthodox Christians. Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos, consistent with Orthodox teaching, speak of Orthodoxy’s confession of salvation being found in the only True Church alone, The Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely the Body of Christ; and they speak of how God can show mercy to anyone and save them—without any of the heretical religions being at all validated.

Christ saves people through His Church and in any other way known to Him, but we know the way to be saved: through the Mysteries of the Church and Orthodox devotion, which means purification, illumination and glorification, or, differently stated, praxis and theoria. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 248)

“There is no salvation outside the Church. Christ offers saving grace to everyone. When someone is saved outside the visible Church, this means that Christ Himself saves him. If he is a non-Orthodox member, he is saved because Christ saves him; the ‘offshoot’ to which he belongs does not save him. His salvation is not accomplished by
the ‘Church-offshoot’ to which he belongs, because the Church that saves is one, that is, Christ.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 248)

Let us come back to the great and heroic confession of the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity, which was given by the Holy Forty-two Martyrs of Ammoria, in the face of heresy and those blinded by the delusion of great worldly power. Truly, by the grace of God, the Orthodox saints shatter all the delusional power of this world. St. Nikolai Velimirovich speaks beautifully of these profound matters.

They were all commanders of the Byzantine Emperor Theophilus. When the Emperor Theophilus lost the battle against the Saracens at the city of Ammoria, the Saracens captured the city and enslaved many Christians. Among them were those commanders. The remaining Christians were either killed or sold into slavery. The commanders were thrown into prison, where they remained for seven years. Many times the Moslem leaders came to them. They counseled and advised the commanders to embrace the Islamic faith, but the commanders refused to listen. When the Saracens spoke to the commanders, saying, “Mohammed is the true prophet and not Christ,” the commanders asked them: “If there were two men debating about a field and the one said, ‘This field is mine’, and the other, ‘It is not, it is mine’, and one of them had many witnesses nearby saying it is his field, and the other had no witnesses, but only himself—whose field would you say it was?” The Saracens answered: “Indeed, it is his who had many witnesses!” “You have judged correctly,” the commanders answered. “That is the way it is with Christ and Mohammed. Christ has many witnesses: the Prophets of old, from Moses to John the Forerunner, whom you also recognize and who witness to and
about Him, whereas Mohammed witnesses to himself that he is a prophet and hasn’t a single witness.” The Saracens were ashamed and again they tried to defend their faith in this manner: “Our faith is better than the Christian Faith, as is proved by this: God gave us the victory over you and gave us the best land in the world and a kingdom much greater than Christianity.” To this the commanders replied: “If that were so, then the idolatry of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Hellenes, Romans, and the fire worship of the Persians would be the true faith, for at one time all of these people conquered the others and ruled over them. It is evident that your victory, power and wealth do not prove the truth of your faith. We know that God, at times, gives victory to Christians and, at other times, allows torture and suffering so as to correct them and bring them to repentance and purification of their sins.” After seven years they were beheaded, in the year 845. Their bodies were thrown into the Euphrates River, but they floated to the other shore, where they were gathered and honorably buried by Christians. [The Holy Forty-two Martyrs from Ammoria] (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, pp. 229-230)

In another place, St. Nikolai Velimirovich says essentially the same thing about the same heroic actions of these Martyrs of Ammoria—but with somewhat different words and details; as such, this additional very inspiring quotation is also here provided.

When the forty-two Greek commanders from Ammoria were in the Hagarene prison (see March 6), certain Moslem sages came to counsel them to embrace the faith of Mohammed and thereby receive their freedom. These sages stressed to the Christian commanders the two advantages of Islam over Christianity: first, Mohammed is a more recent prophet than Christ, and second, the Moslems were victorious on all sides over
Christianity, by which God clearly points out the truth of their religion. To the first point, the commanders replied: “If two men were debating over a field, and one has many witnesses that the field is his, and the other does not have any witnesses except his own personal testimony, what do you think? Whose field is it?” To this the Hagarenes replied: “Undoubtedly, the field is his who had many witnesses.” To this the commanders replied: “By yourselves you have judged in favor of Christ and against Mohammed, for Christ had with Him the witness of all the prophets and apostles, but Mohammed alone witnesses to himself.” To the second point, the commanders replied: “If you would gauge the truth of a faith by victories in wars, then this would mean that all the idolatrous nations who from time to time have conquered the world, such as the Persians, Greeks, Romans, and others, possessed the true faith. This, even you Moslems would never acknowledge. And because you have been victorious over the Christians now, this does not mean that your faith is better, but that our sins our great, because of which God punishes us through you.” (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, p. 245)

The later part of this last quotation is very telling. The Orthodox saints throughout history—and these particular Orthodox Martyrs, whom we are here considering—affirm the complete equality of all of humanity in terms of potential for good and evil. Notice that these Orthodox saints, in all humility and truth, affirm our periodic great failures—in our not serving God faithfully as Orthodox Christians—they do this without denying the only True God, the Supra-substantial Trinity, and without denying the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity.

*A look at some Orthodox martyrs from the time of the Ottoman empire.* Let us also look at some Orthodox saints who lived during the Islamic occupation of traditionally Orthodox lands in
what was then the Ottoman empire. Obviously, these are but a few of the countless New-Martyrs for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, but their example of faith, love, and fearlessness which they set for us and teach us is something that is in the sharpest contrast to the cowardly pandering and subservience that is often observed in the world. One will see that the previously quoted remarks of the two late Patriarchs, Parthenios of Alexandria and Demetrios I of Constantinople, Ecumenical Patriarch, are far removed, unfortunately, from the courageous confession and witness of these saints. Let us observe the heroic confession of these Orthodox saints which resulted in their being martyred for Christ. Let all Orthodox Christians learn from their courage:

St. Euthymios the Student from Demitsana, Peloponnesos, martyred for our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ the Son of God on March 22, 1814; said the following as he confronted people with great worldly power who hated Christ and who oppressed Orthodox Christians:

> Jesus Christ was true God who became man for the salvation of all people. He will come again to judge all people and to render to each according to their works! [Moreover]34 there is only one true faith, that of the Orthodox Christians, and one God with three hypostases, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one undivided nature of divinity, in whose name I was baptized and became a son of God by Grace. How then can I [Euthymios asks] believe in your false prophet, Muhammad the antichrist? (Vaporis, 2000, p. 27)

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34 Vaporis has apparently made this bracketed entry, as well as having apparently made all the other bracketed entries in his work, related to the saints whom he quotes.
St. Gabriel the Deacon from Alloni, Proikonesos, martyred for the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church on February 2, 1676; likewise in similar circumstances to those of St. Euthymios said the following in his fearless defense of Orthodoxy:

God forbid I should be so crazy and ignorant as to call my Lord Jesus Christ a mere man when he is the true son of God, true God and true man. [As for] your Muhammad, I declare he is not a prophet but an ordinary man, an illiterate, a falsifier, an enemy of our Savior Jesus Christ. Consequently, I feel contempt and I detest him and his faith.  

(Vaporis, 2000, p. 127)

St. Constantine the Servant From the Island of Hydra, martyred for Christ on November 14, 1800; said this in his uncompromising defense of Orthodox Christianity, while in great danger the whole time, and like countless other Orthodox saints was ready to suffer fearlessly for Christ:

Lord Jesus Christ, our God, You condescended to descend from the heavens and to put on flesh from the ever-virgin Mary to save the human race from the oppression of the devil, and You were spit upon. Help me in this hour and strengthen me, Your unworthy servant, that I may confess boldly that You are the Son of God and true God, and that You created the heavens and earth and the sea and all visible and invisible creation. Yes, King of the ages, sweetest Jesus Christ, hear me the sinner and give me the strength to defeat the enemy who has defeated me and to step upon all his servants for the glory and honor of Your holy name. (Vaporis, 2000, p. 242)
St. Constantine the Servant from the Island of Hydra continues in his defense of Orthodox Christianity, as he follows all the Orthodox saints who preceded him, fighting against all the deception and oppressive power of this fallen world, in this particular instance, heroically fighting against the falsehood that is Islam, by saying:

I told you to believe in Christ who is the true God because your faith is abominable and false, because you believe in a liar who never performed any miracle, nor did he teach you any truths or anything good. He only taught you myths and instructed you to engage in adulterous conduct and homosexuality and other evils. You the blind believe he is a prophet. Because of this you will go to eternal hell and eternal fire with him to burn forever together with your brethren the demons. Only now come and become an Orthodox Christian so you may enjoy Paradise eternally with Christ. (Vaporis, 2000, pp. 242-243)

And elsewhere we continue to see the great courage and love for Christ which this same St. Constantine had, by the mercy of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, as he fearlessly accepted suffering and death to confess the truth of Orthodoxy against the falsehood of Islam, by saying:

... “I don’t speak nonsense but believe and confess Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three Persons and one true God. Him I worship. Him I glorify, and I anathematize your religion” (Vaporis, 2000, p. 243).

Well, as we can see—very clearly, beyond any possible doubt—there is no ambiguity or comprise in the fearless Orthodox confession of these particular saints (who were just
mentioned), nor is there any such compromise or ambiguity, whatsoever, in the confession of the countless other Orthodox saints throughout history. And, by the unfathomable grace of God, this great courage is what inspired and saved countless Orthodox Christians and their families from abandoning the only true Faith, Orthodox Christianity. For example, under hundreds of years of Turkish domination—and of course not just then but throughout history—the Orthodox saints were beyond being just good people but were glorified, in participating in the uncreated grace of God within their entire created being. And of course, even within this glorification, as we have said, all the saints (and all of us in general) remain forever nothing other than created, without exception. Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, teach us pertaining to some of what the difference is between the Orthodox saints and the heretics, when he tells us:

The saints, therefore, are not just good people but those who are glorified. There are some who pretend to be saints, but in reality they are hypocrites who lead people astray. Even heretics are good people and may lead moral lives, but because they do not have Orthodox theology and the ascetic teaching of the Church, they go no further than an ethical way of life. They do not share in the glorified energy of God and are unable to cure others. [Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 246)

This glorification given to them—and this, of course, only by the grace of God—enabled them to endure the most horrible tortures imaginable and never renounce Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. So, when Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos tell us that most of the Romans [Greeks] became Muslims when the Turks conquered them, which is certainly tragic—but believable, given the circumstances—they also tell us that a remnant of these Orthodox
Christians indeed remained and even thrived, and these peoples remain to this day. Father Romanides speaks of some of this:

“The lives of the New Martyrs are a proof that the state of illumination, as it existed in the early Church in the years of persecution, continued to existed as the heart of Orthodoxy in the years of Turkish domination. This power of the faithful to undergo martyrdom is what saved Orthodoxy in the years of Turkish domination, so that not all the Romans [Greeks] became Muslims. Most Romans became Muslims. Why did the small minority who remained not become Muslims? They had great confidence in the saints of the Church, that they were bearers of divine grace and that divine power really existed within them. And what is divine power? It is this power to be able to undergo martyrdom and physical tortures so as not to deny Christ. This was the proof of the true faith.” (Hieroteos, 2012, pp. 245-246)

The unmatched and unconquerable holiness of life and great courage of the Orthodox saints inspired and educated a remnant of the Orthodox Christians, so that they stayed Orthodox—as have great numbers of their descendants to this very day. The entire Holy Orthodox tradition with its monasticism and asceticism and associated prayer of the heart, noetic prayer, (and everything else associated with hesychasm) all—by the grace of God—saved Orthodoxy in the Balkans. Father Romanides teaches us this:

“In the era of the destruction of Byzantium the Church was highly successful. The Church was flourishing when the state fell. Everywhere in those days there were Bishops who had noetic prayer, because hesychasm predominated. That was why the nation was
saved. If there had not been hesychast Bishops under Turkish domination, the phenomenon of the New Martyrs and the Muslims who became Orthodox and then went to their martyrdom would not have been so prevalent. We would all be Muslims now, as happened with the Orthodox Christians in the Middle East, who have been reduced to a mere handful. In the area of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which ruled the Holy Mountain, many Orthodox remained. All the Balkan states are Orthodox.” (Hierotheos, 2013, pp. 438-439)

The great courage and holiness of life of the Orthodox saints has made them the world’s most believable and greatest educators. Metropolitan Hierotheos speaks of this:

When a Martyr during the ancient persecutions, or a New Martyr in the period of Turkish domination, endured tortures and did not deny Christ, this was proof that his faith was true. This was the best sermon. (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 248)

Indeed, what the Orthodox saints said they also lived; and nothing and no one, whatsoever—no matter how terrifying—could ever defeat them, and this only by the grace of God.

The Orthodox saints viewed every religion, apart from the Holy Orthodox Faith, as a heresy, as atheistic and as a denial of Christ—and consequently to deny the divinity of the Son of God, or to confess it in a heretical way, is to deny the worship, which Christ revealed to us, of the only true God, the Holy Trinity. With this in mind, to one degree or another, any denial of Christ such as is found in Islam—in addition to being found in both Arianism and Judaism, to which Islam is very much akin—or which can be found in any other heresy, is a denial of the Son of
God akin to that found in Judaism with its consequent denial of the only true God, the Holy Trinity. St. Athanasios the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa, among a multitude of other Orthodox saints, speak of these matters.

But you, persuaded as you are of what and how great things the Holy Spirit is the Giver, do you neglect the asking them from Him, taking refuge in the law which bids you ‘worship God and serve Him only?’ Well, how will you worship Him only, tell me, when you have severed Him from His intimate union with His own Only-begotten and His own Spirit? This worship is simply Jewish. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892c, p. 324)

Indeed, as we have said, the denial of the Holy Trinity—in one form or another, by the various heresies—is a tremendous error, mimicking the heresy of the Jews in their rejection of Christ and the Holy Trinity, the only True God.

For if one were carefully to investigate the falsehood of these heresies, he would find that they have great similarity to the error of Eunomius. For each of them affects the Jew in his doctrine, admitting neither the Only-begotten God nor the Holy Spirit to share the Deity of the God Whom they call “Great,” and “First.” For Whom Sabellius calls God of the three names, Him does Eunomius term unbegotten: but neither contemplates the Godhead in the Trinity of Persons. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892a, p. 223)

Clearly, there is no other God, but the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The heresies of Judaism and Islam, among a multitude of other heresies, deny this reality of the Triune God Whom the Orthodox saints have confessed with unequalled heroism and truth throughout history.
For how can he speak truth concerning the Father, who denies the Son, that reveals concerning Him? or how can he be orthodox concerning the Spirit, while he speaks profanely of the Word that supplies the Spirit? and who will trust him concerning the Resurrection, denying, as he does, Christ for us the first-begotten from the dead? and how shall he not err in respect to His incarnate presence, who is simply ignorant of the Son’s genuine and true generation from the Father? For thus, the former Jews also, denying the Word, and saying, ‘We have no king but Caesar,’ were forthwith stripped of all they had, and forfeited the light of the Lamp, the odour of ointment, knowledge of prophecy, and the Truth itself; till now they understand nothing, but are walking as in darkness. (St. Athanasius, 1891b, p. 310)

The powerful and truthful confession of Orthodoxy, just seen, from St. Athanasios the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa, clearly must be understood and not denied by Orthodox Christians—lest we forget our Orthodox Faith. At the same time, Orthodox Christians should not become arrogant or self-righteous pertaining to such matters—because there truly is no reason for that ever happening, given that all humanity was “created from one blood” (as all the Orthodox saints tell us). Therefore, whatever truths St. Athanasios the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa have said in their works—and in regard to whatever other words of truth and righteousness which countless other Orthodox saints have said—we Orthodox Christians nevertheless must never forget that all human beings are of equal dignity with one another, and we all fall into sin. And the correct verbal, academic confession of, and nominal affiliation with, the only true Faith, Orthodox Christianity, does not necessarily prevent anyone from acting as godlessly as anyone
else does in the world—in fact we Orthodox oftentimes act worse than any other people, despite our possession of the only True Faith.

*St. Sergius of Radonezh and St. Dmitri Donskoi.* We also look, for inspiration, to other great Orthodox saints and heroes (both known and unknown) whose great love for Christ and Orthodox Christianity, and whose unmatched courage in the face of unbelievable evil and persecution, stand as a lesson of perseverance and hope for all humanity. With this in mind, let us consider the example of faith and courage set for us by two great Orthodox heroes and saints of Russia, about whom we spoke earlier in our discussion: St. Sergius of Radonezh and St. Dmitri Donskoi. Here is some more of their story:

St. Sergius of Radonezh, the guiding light of the Russian church during the fourteenth century and founder of the wilderness monastery in the dense forests of northeastern Rus, also did not shun political affairs. Princes and boiars came to the abbot of Trinity Monastery for advice, blessings, and prayers. Sometimes they also asked him for help in purely political matters. Dmitrii Donskoi, the celebrated hero of the Kulikovo battle, turned to St. Sergius for advice and assistance many times. For example, he visited St. Sergius Trinity Monastery before a critical and terrifying moment in Russian history, the 1380 campaign against the Tatars. There, St. Sergius blessed the prince to go into battle against Mamai, promised that God would help the Russian army, and sent Peresvet and Osliabia, two monks and former valiant warriors from Trinity monastery, to accompany him into battle against the Tatars. The two monks died heroes, and the Kulikovo battle ended in victory and glory. (Pushkarev, et al., 1989, p. 11)
Let us look, in some more detail, at this remarkable story in Russian history. Indeed, St. Dmitri Donskoi and his brave soldiers, by the grace of God, defended Orthodox Russia against the Islamic Mongols. As we shall see the Christian West was, once again, against Orthodox Christianity and Russia, having sided with the Mongols. The Mongols were among the most feared warriors in history, and at that time were one of the most powerful empires that the world had ever seen. This is what St. Dmitri Donskoi and his brave Orthodox warriors faced:

The Russians had by now so recovered their sense of independence that Dmitri decided to erect round his capital the stone walls which were forbidden by the Tartars. This act provoked the suspicion of the Mongols, and their Khan, Mamai, decided to inflict an exemplary punishment upon the disobedient Russians. An army 400,000 strong was gathered against Moscow. As in the thirteenth century, the attack on Russia from the East was supported by the Christian West. Yagailo, Prince of Lithuania, promised to assist the Tartars; the Republic of Genoa provided the Mongols with military experts and modern armaments. Russia stood alone against her formidable enemy. (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40)

There was, understandably, great confusion regarding how to face the persecution and oppression, long posed by the Mongols, and which appeared about to take on even more staggering proportions. As Nicholas Zernov tells us: “Prince Dmitri [St. Dmitri Donskoi] was afraid to take the last step on his own responsibility; there was still a possibility of laying down arms, of imploring mercy in the hope of appeasing the wrath of the Tartars. It was a moment of extreme tension; every one knew the price which would have to be paid for a wrong

\[35\] I have made this bracketed entry.
decision” (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40). For indeed, the Mongols, having accepted Islam, had become hostile to Orthodox Christianity, and if Russia were defeated in its resistance, or if it simply surrendered, it would mean great devastation (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40). There was great danger associated with all possible decisions in this matter. Regarding this horrifying threat, which the Mongols clearly presented to Orthodoxy and to Russia, St. Dmitri Donskoi visited St. Sergius of Radonezh for advice and guidance. The venerable saint unequivocally encouraged St. Dmitri to fearlessly defend Orthodox Russia:

St. Sergius, usually so reticent, was this time firm and explicit. Confronted with supreme danger, he did not evade its challenge. He gave his blessing to Dmitri and, promising him victory, urged the Prince to meet the attack of the enemy in the open steppes of the south. His last words were, “Go forward and fear not. God will help thee.” (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40)

The holiness of life and great courage of the Orthodox saints—which, only by the unfathomable mercy of the Triune God, they all possess—is truly what makes their words and their teaching so believable and inspirational to others. This is certainly why the Orthodox saints are, by the grace of God, the great educators that they are. Because to believe a person and be inspired by him or her, one must first believe in the integrity of that person, seen in that person’s words and actions.

This reminds one of the ancient Greeks’ analysis of effective communication, and the different ways in which to appeal to people’s understanding and consciousness. It was Aristotle who said, that there were three different ways in which to appeal to one’s audience in order for communication to be effective. In ancient Greek thought, communication was most effective
through consideration of the following: *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. *Ethos* pertains to ethical appeal, *logos* pertains to logical appeal, and *pathos* pertains to emotional appeal. The most important of these considerations is *ethos*, which is associated with ethical appeal. This is so, because, no matter how logical a person’s argument is or how passionately that argument is made, if a person’s *ethos*, ethic, integrity, are questionable then the argument itself oftentimes gets called into question. For Orthodox Christians, no one has had more integrity, by the grace of God, throughout history, than the Orthodox saints. Therefore, what the Orthodox saints teach us, in both their words of great wisdom and heroic deeds, is truly believable and inspirational, for their integrity is unquestionable. Nicholas Zernov relates to us how one Orthodox saint inspired another, when he tells of St. Sergius’ encouragement of St. Dmitri Donskoi, shortly before the battle of Kulikovo:

The determination displayed by Prince Dmitri was due to St. Sergius’ influence. The old monk stood behind the military leader of the Russian nation. On this fateful day of final decision, a special envoy, sent from Radonezh, reached the camp. He brought from St. Sergius a message addressed to Dmitri and through him to the rest of the Russian men. Its content was as follows: “Be in no doubt, my lord; go forward with faith and confront the enemy’s ferocity; and fear not, for God will be on your side.” (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40)

At the battle of Kulikovo, neither St. Sergius of Radonezh nor St. Dmitri Donskoi was to compromise, in any way, with any of the philosophy and power of this world, which sought to
overwhelm their nation and their Faith. This frightful worldly philosophy and power, in this instance, was, primarily (though not exclusively), to be seen in those, who followed the false religion of Islam and who in their delusion attacked the True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. Neither St. Sergius of Radonezh nor St. Dmitri Donskoii demonstrated subservience or relativism, at this frightening moment in history, though it likely would have been much less dangerous for them had they done so. St. Sergius of Radonezh and St. Dmitri Donskoii refused to be subservient to the enemies of Orthodoxy. For they knew that such relativism and subservience would have likely been much more dangerous for their own people, than anything else. St. Sergius faithfully advised St. Dmitri Donskoii, and St. Dmitri Donskoii and his brave soldiers faithfully risked their lives, in confronting their oppressors, to save Orthodox Russia. Zernov describes the battle of Kulikovo, as follows:

On September 8th, 1380, the two armies met at last. No battle in Russian history can be compared with that of Kulikovo Pole. Here occurred the clash between two irreconcilable powers. Four hundred thousand nomads, with their camels and horses and inspired by the sight of the Crescent, faced a much smaller army of Russians, gathered under the eight-pointed Eastern Cross. Kulikovo Pole occupies a place in history similar to that of the battle of Poitiers (732), when France saved the West from Mahometan invasion; or to the fatal defeat of Kosovo in 1389, which marked the beginning of the five-centuries-long Moslem domination over the Christians of the Balkans. The struggle was fierce and the losses on both sides were enormous. At first the Tartars had the upper hand but, at the critical moment, when the main Russian force was precipitated into a disorderly retreat, the fortunes of war were suddenly reversed by an
unexpected attack of Russian reserves, and a crushing blow was inflicted upon the
Mongols. St. Sergius’ prophecy was fulfilled: the advance of the Mahometans was
arrested; Russia was to remain a Christian country. (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40)

Unlike what was seen among the aforementioned modern day Orthodox Patriarchs and
among some other Orthodox leaders and lay people (myself included, because I am a coward),
there is no cowardly subservience to be seen here among these Orthodox saints to very powerful
anti-Christian people and forces. The Orthodox martyrs, from ancient times and throughout
history, along with all the other countless Orthodox heroes, boldly, free of hypocrisy, with great
courage and with love for all humanity (including love for their enemies in spite of the fact that,
in the case of the countless Orthodox martyrs, they suffered torture and were killed by these
same enemies) have confessed Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. The Orthodox saints
and martyrs in their heroic struggles teach us faith, love, hope and courage and they teach us to
bow down to God, the Holy Trinity, our Creator, and to no one else. They follow the words found
in the Orthodox Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom:

We give thanks to You, invisible King. By Your infinite power You created all things and
by Your great mercy You brought everything from nothing into being. Master, look down
from heaven upon those who have bowed their heads before You; they have bowed not
before flesh and blood but before You the awesome God. (The Divine Liturgy of Saint
John Chrysostom, 1985, pp. 27-28)

The Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the unfathomable mercy of the Suprasubstantial
Trinity, confront all evil and unjust worldly power against all odds, which seem insurmountable,
and because of their martyric witness emerge victorious for all Orthodox Christians (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11). They know and confess, by their martyrdom, that overwhelming, oppressive worldly power is but temporary and given by God, Who allows it to exist, but that same God will one day bring such power to nothing; they are fully aware of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ when they hear Him say: ‘Thou wouldest have no authority at all against Me, except it were given to thee from above.’ (John 19:11) (The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume 1), 1999, p. 459).

The Great Humility of the Orthodox Saints

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God Himself, tells us that no one has any power, whatsoever, except for what is given to them by God. So we are taught that what is given to us, (namely, everything including our very being, our very existence which was created by God, the Holy Trinity, with God having had absolutely no need of any kind whatsoever to create anything or anyone), is not intrinsically our own but a gift from God and therefore must be used with all humility. Let us see what some Orthodox saints say regarding humility: St. Nikolai Velimirovich quotes St. Paul: “If thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (I Cor. 4:7) (Velimirovich, cited in Popovic, 2000, p. 176).

And St. Maximos the Confessor (1990c) tells us: “For every humble person is invariably gentle and every gentle person is invariably humble. A person is humble when he knows that his very being is on loan to him. He is gentle when he realizes how to use the power given to him in a manner that accords with nature”... (p. 297).
And St. Andrew of Caesarea tells us:

... “the humility of wisdom of the saints who, saying from all their heart, I am but earth and ashes (Gen. 18:27), by this very confession rip apart all the nets of the devil. For, as was revealed by the angel to the divine Anthony, nothing so crushes and cuts off the power of the devil as humility” (Taushev, 1995, p. 184).

All the countless Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the grace and power of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, trample on the power of the devil through their complete submission to the will of God in all humility. They know and teach us, by their exemplary lives, to use whatever power has been given to us with all humility, because any power which we have has indeed been given to us and is in no way intrinsically our own. We quote from the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom once again to emphasize this reality: “For Yours is the dominion, the kingdom, the power, and the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages” (The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, 1985, p. 5).

And elsewhere we also see: “For every good and perfect gift is from above, coming from You, the Father of lights. To You we give glory, thanksgiving, and worship, to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen” (The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, 1985, p. 35).

The Great Courage of the Martyrs, a Great Educational Example for all Humanity

Let us see what St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain teaches us, concerning these Martyrs. We will see that St. Nicodemos is here speaking primarily of the New-Martyrs, but of course, what he is saying about the New-Martyrs is also applicable to all Orthodox Saints and
Martyrs of all times and places throughout history. With this in mind, St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain teaches us:

In addition, these New Martyrs renew in the hearts of present-day Christians the preaching of the holy Apostles. They confirm the divine Gospel and the divinity of Jesus Christ, that He is truly the Son of God, consubstantial with His Unoriginate Father, and they proclaim the great mystery of the Holy Trinity. And simply speaking, they put a seal on the entire Orthodox faith of the Christians—not only with words, but rather with the all-dreadful tortures that they received and with this very blood and their martyric deaths.

(St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain, cited in Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11)

We continue to learn from St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain as he teaches us to follow the example of the Orthodox Saints and Martyrs, who courageously confessed Christ, against all falsehood and evil:

Do not let the tortures frighten you, because they kill only your bodies, but are unable to kill your souls- rather, they give life to them. Hence, your Lord encourages you when He says: “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul” [St. Matthew 10:28].

Do you want us to show you what you ought to fear, brethren? Denying Christ and not bravely confessing Him. This alone is truly worthy of fear. Because if you deny Christ, alas! Christ will deny you on the Day of Judgment. For, as He Himself says: “Whosoever denies Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father Who is in Heaven” [St. Matthew 10:33]. (St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain, cited in Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 16)
By the grace of the Triune God, the Orthodox saints reached glorification (theosis); and, as such, they truly had great love for God their Creator and for their fellow man—and their great kindness, heroic actions and unmatched humility demonstrated this, in an incomparable manner. The sanctity which the Orthodox saints received, by the grace of God, made them true friends of their fellow human beings, as we see from St. Maximus the Confessor in his telling us what faithful friends are:

‘A faithful friend is beyond price’ (Ecclus. 6:15), since he regards his friend’s misfortunes as his own and suffers with him, sharing his trials until death. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990a, p. 112)

The Orthodox saints truly lived the beautiful, God-inspired, advice of St. Paul—spoken of, and quoted by, St. Maximus the Confessor:

As for your own envy, you will be able to check it if you rejoice with the man whom you envy whenever he rejoices, and grieve whenever he grieves, thus fulfilling St Paul’s words, ‘Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep’ (Rom. 12:15). (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990b, p. 98)

However, these same heroic saints knew, as most of us do, how the world works in regard to the fact that when things get dangerous: most people flee, including, oftentimes, friends. The Orthodox saints knew that God Who created us from nothing is our only salvation, not people:

Friends are many, but in times of prosperity (cf. Prov. 19:4). In times of adversity you will have difficulty in finding even one.
One should love every man from the soul, but one should place one’s hope only in God and serve Him with all one’s strength. For so long as He protects us from harm, all our friends treat us with respect and all our enemies are powerless to injure us. But once He abandons us, all our friends turn away from us while all our enemies prevail against us. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990a, p. 112)

St. Nikolai Velimirovich knew the same thing—as all the Orthodox saints throughout history have known—he knew that only Almighty God had power over all that He has created. So, those who abuse any power which has been given to them are truly delusional. None of us, without exception, have any power except for what Almighty God has given to us—for we were all created from absolutely nothing.

Neither be afraid that your enemies will overcome you, nor be assured that your friends will defend you. Concern yourself only that you have God for a friend, and do not be afraid of anything. Behold, He Who loves you unalterably is your only friend.

O Good Lord, Wise Provider, Who knows the number, measure and time of all, banish from us every fear—except the fear of Thee—that through fear of Thee, we may arrive at pure and holy love for Thee, our Creator and Benefactor. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen. (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, p. 81)

Now, what obviously follows from the fact of our having been created from absolute nothingness is the fact that we can hide nothing from our Creator. The truth never remains hidden forever and one day God will judge the world. Nothing can be hidden from God, and sooner or later the truth is always revealed. St. Nikolai Velimirovich speaks beautifully of these matters, as only an Orthodox saint can. In the following two quotations, St. Nikolai Velimirovich is clearly
—though certainly not exclusively—speaking of the Jews’ rejection of Christ. And certainly such admonishment and condemnation applies to a significant extent, in some way or another, to all people and peoples—for we have all sinned in word, thought, and deed; we must never forget this, in our self-righteousness. God will judge all of us.

All the secret works of man will be revealed one day. None of man’s works can be hidden. The Jews thought that they could conceal from God the slaying of so many prophets, and that their bloody, villainous deed against Christ could be hidden from God and man. However, that which they thought to hide has become a daily and nightly tale, told both in the heavens and on earth for thousands of years. [Homily “on the impossibility of secrets”] (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, p. 194)

*There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known* (Matthew 10:26). […]

Everything is revealed and open before the All-seeing God and His holy angels. The man who believes that all the works of man can be hidden becomes a criminal. Thus thought the Jewish elders, who arranged and planned in secrecy their evil plot against Christ the Lord. Secretly they persecuted Him, secretly they judged Him in the darkness of night, and secretly they bribed and paid false witnesses. And, like Judas, they secretly condemned Him. Where are their secrets today? All have been revealed and opened before the entire world. It is easier for man to hid from the air than from the sight of God. All the secrets of mankind, the good and the evil, are revealed before God. A countless number of those secrets God reveals to the entire world according to His providence. Those who can understand this truth, that God sees all and knows all,
carefully guard themselves in the depth of their hearts from evil thoughts and especially from evil deeds. [Homily “On revealed secrets”] (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, p. 246)

To God alone belongs all glory; so let us follow the advice of St. Nikolai Velimirovich in the above quotation and “guard” ourselves “in the depth of our hearts” from committing evil in word, thought, or deed. We must make every attempt to do this—following Christ and the teachings of His Holy Orthodox Church as the Orthodox saints did, to the best of our capabilities. And this only can be accomplished with God’s help—as St. Nikolai Velimirovich and all the Orthodox saints throughout history admonish us to pursue this sanctity with our entire created being.

The sanctity pursued by the Orthodox saints, and which was granted to them by Almighty God, made them fearless—for they had nothing to hide and their heart had become pure, by the grace of God. This of course is in sharp contrast to one who chooses to lead a life committing great evil and who has selfish love—in contrast to having the selfless love which we are all called by God to pursue (Romanides speaks of this). And we all have sinned, and as such have fear of many things in the world. But, by the unfathomable grace of God, the Orthodox saints are the great example to which we must all aspire—we are called to follow their example, in their great struggles and pursuit of holiness. By the unfathomable grace of the Triune God, the Orthodox saints are very powerful and fearless from the sanctity which God has granted to them. St. Nikolai Velimirovich speaks to us of these matters beautifully and full of inspiration:
The impious man flees although no one pursues him; but the just man, like a lion, feels sure of himself (Proverbs 28:1).

Impious men are even afraid of shadows; to them the shadows of trees seem like an army. Whenever something rustles, the impious man thinks: the avenger is coming! He hears the trembling of leaves as the sound of chains; he takes the voices of birds as the shouts of hunters who give chase after game; he sees the grass as spying on his evil deed, the water as a witness against him, the sun as a judge, and the stars as those who taunt him. Oh, my brethren, how many lies are born out of fear! For fear is of sin, sin is of the devil, and the devil is the father of all lies.

Fear is the first fruit of sin. When Adam sinned, he hid from the face of God. And when God cried out to him, Adam said: I heard Thy voice in the garden and I was afraid (Genesis 3:10). Adam did not know about fear before he sinned, nor did he hide from the face of God but, on the contrary, always hastened to encounter God. But as soon as he sinned he was afraid.

But the just man, like a lion, feels sure of himself. Without sin—without fear. Without sin—without weakness. The sinless ones are powerful, very powerful, and brave, very brave. The righteous ones are strong and fearless. Such are the righteous ones, only the righteous ones.

O sinless Lord, save us from empty fear, but before that, preserve us from sin, the parent of fear.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen. [Homily “On the fear of the impious man”] (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, pp. 627-628)
CHAPTER 5

ECUMENISM AND OTHER HERESIES EMBRACE FALSEHOOD

Ecumenism: A Violation of Orthodox Canons

Now we will turn our attention to more inexplicable ecumenical comments and activities of some prominent Orthodox hierarchs. And to further our education we will attempt to give an Orthodox response to such conduct utilizing much of the wisdom of some Orthodox saints and Orthodox scholars.

We now consider the ecumenical contacts that were pursued and continue to be pursued by some Orthodox and Roman Catholic leaders in their quest to glorify relativism and ignore profound theological differences which exist between the two traditions; all this, as these leaders attempt to establish “union of the Churches” apparently with indifference and disdain towards the truth, which is, in all its fullness, found in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. Much of this modern day dialogue with Roman Catholicism on the part of some Orthodox leaders had a substantial part of its beginning with the ill-conceived visit to the Vatican of the late Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in 1967 and the mutual lifting of the anathemas (These anathemas in 1054 had for all intents and purposes finalized the “Great Schism”). Clearly, this action of the lifting of the anathemas was done without theological justification, as Roman Catholicism has not renounced any of its many innovations and heresies. But Patriarch Athenagoras, serving God only knows whose interests (certainly not those of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ), proceeded to lift the anathema anyway. But before we look further at other ecumenical
occurrences and their impact let us quote Father Daniel Degyansky (1997) regarding some of the direct consequences of Patriarch Athenagoras’ 1967 ecumenical adventure:

The act of the lifting of the anathemas and the visit of Patriarch Athenagoras to the Vatican on October 26, 1967, was to have a direct effect on relations between the Latin and Orthodox Churches. Shortly after these events, the Roman Catholic Church unilaterally declared that its members could fulfill their “Sunday obligation” at an Orthodox Church. More importantly, it was declared that Roman Catholics could now partake of the Eucharist in an Orthodox Church. This unilateral decision by the Roman Catholic Church was made without consultation with the Orthodox, who forbid Roman Catholics to receive Communion in Orthodox Churches. In fact, by the strict interpretation of Her Canons, Roman Catholics are still considered heretics by the Orthodox Church and their sacraments without Grace. Here again, Roman Catholic-Orthodox ecumenism led to a violation of the Orthodox Church’s ecclesiastical integrity. By trying to force the issue of inter communion, the Latin Church encouraged Orthodox ecumenists to abandon their doctrines and participate in an absolutely illicit act. (p. 50)

Let us proceed and look further into ecumenical “agreements” and “understandings” between Orthodox and Non-Orthodox leaders, for example we will continue our look at the interactions between Orthodox and Roman Catholic leaders, as they religiously embrace the humanistic principles of ecumenism. And, in general, we will look at the relationships being constructed between some Orthodox and Non-Orthodox leaders in their seeming attempt to build an all encompassing “Super-church” founded on the man-made, humanistic, relativistic, “spiritual”
principles of ecumenism with indifference to the absolute Truth that is Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church.

Once again, to avoid confusion we note that the term “Ecumenical” in “Ecumenical Patriarch” pertains to a primacy of honor afforded to the Patriarch of Constantinople within Orthodoxy throughout the world and has nothing to do with the “Ecumenical Movement” and “Ecumenism”, though unfortunately numerous Orthodox Patriarchs, among them Ecumenical Patriarchs, have in recent times been grossly involved in the ecumenical movement and ecumenism. The title “Ecumenical Patriarch” is given to the Patriarch of Constantinople because historically the Patriarchate of Constantinople has been given primacy of honor among both the ancient and more recent Patriarchates of Orthodoxy and the Patriarch of Constantinople is regarded as the “first among equals” among Orthodox bishops but he does not dictate nor determine dogma. Theology and dogma are by the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, revealed to the whole body of the Orthodox Church through the Holy Scriptures interpreted within the Holy Orthodox Tradition, through the Saints, Martyrs, Ascetics, Confessors, the Holy Synods and generally through the unchanging and unconquerable reality that is Orthodox Christianity lived by both clergy and laity throughout history in the Body of Christ, The Holy Orthodox Church.

Let us continue to consider what the current Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, has reportedly said and done in some other instances. Quoting some of the research of the Greek Orthodox Old Calenderist Bishop, Angelos of Avlona, we see Patriarch Bartholomew following closely in many of the footsteps of some of his recent predecessors, unfortunately. We observe the following which is alleged to have happened, again this is according to Bishop Angelos of Avlona (Greek Orthodox, Old Calenderist):
Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople on June 27, 1995 gave a homily in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Transtevere before countless young Papists, after praying together with them. Among other things he said the following: “Children of the Church, blessed and beloved in the Lord”; “We, the East and the West, are concelebrating [the Patronal Feast of Rome]--it is a gift of God”; “We are celebrating, because we are the communion of saints journeying on earth”; “The Feast of the Church is fulfilled when the youth are present and celebrating together”; “You received the gifts of the Holy Spirit through Holy Baptism and Chrismation: you bear in your souls and on your foreheads the signs of the Kingdom of God.” (1998, p. 23)

The Ecumenical Patriarch’s alleged actions regarding the young Roman Catholics with whom he had (according to the Greek Orthodox Old calendrist Bishop, Angelos of Avlona) prayed and called “Children of the Church” (Bishop Angelos of Avlona, 1998, p. 23), if true, are confusing and astonishing. For as was mentioned earlier by Father Daniel Degyansky, strictly applying Orthodox canons: Roman Catholicism is considered a heresy with its numerous innovations and heresies to which it continues to adhere in its centuries of separation from Orthodox Christianity. So for an Orthodox Patriarch to pray with heretics and call them the “Church” and acknowledge their heretical baptism and chrismation as having grace, as we saw in the above alleged actions and comments, is clearly wrong from an Orthodox Christian perspective. Again, the question needs to be asked, whose interests are being served, when an Orthodox leader of prestigious stature effectively attempts to make relative that which is impossible to be made relative: the unique, absolute truth of Orthodox Christianity? Such “ecumenical” actions and comments serve to only confuse and discourage many Orthodox
Christians and others, as the absolute truth that is Orthodoxy is not confessed as such by some Orthodox leaders themselves. In my opinion, if certain Orthodox hierarchs choose to publicly deny through their remarks and conduct, what for Orthodox Christianity is the truth, that the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is uniquely the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, then those same hierarchs should repent of their actions or if they refuse to do so, they should at least explicitly leave the Orthodox faith which they are unwilling to confess and teach. All this would do much to not further confuse and discourage Orthodox Christians and it would leave the tremendous responsibility of courageously confessing and teaching the incomparable Holy Orthodox Christian Faith to the entire world to those Orthodox hierarchs who are actually willing to do so.

Those Orthodox hierarchs who in complete violation of their episcopal calling attempt to trivialize and relativize the absolute Truth of Jesus Christ the Son of God and His Holy Orthodox Church which is His Body, need to listen to St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije as he makes reference to the Holy Apostles and Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church in his admonition to Orthodox ecumenists regarding their relations with the heterodox. St. Justin of Chelije educates us pertaining to the aforementioned as follows: “The supreme Apostle decrees, with total theanthropic authority: ‘A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition reject’ (Tit. 3:10)” (Popovich, 2000, p. 158).

Canon 45 of the Canons of the Apostles thunderingly decrees: “Any bishop, presbyter or deacon who prays with heretics, should be barred; moreover, if he allows them to serve as clerics, he should be deposed.” ...
Canon 65 of the Canons of the Apostles decrees: “Any cleric or lay person who attends a synagogue or a heretical place of worship in order to pray, should be deposed and barred.” ...

Canon 46 of the Canons of the Apostles: “We decree that a bishop or presbyter who acknowledges heretical baptism or sacrifice be deposed. What concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (II Cor. 6:15)”...

It is obvious even to those who have no eyes that this decree specifically orders us not to recognize any of the heretics’ holy mysteries, to consider them invalid and devoid of grace. (Popovic, 2000, p. 158)

The Orthodox confession, free of syncretism and pandering, of St. Justin of Chelije and of countless other Orthodox saints, ancient and modern, apparently does not affect or inspire many Orthodox ecumenists, who in their rationalistic, humanistic “theology of love” disregard and disrespect the undefiled Holy Orthodox Faith which these same saints by the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, have handed down for all of humanity throughout history. It would appear by their actions and comments that many of these Orthodox ecumenists regard themselves as wiser, more loving, and more knowledgeable than the Orthodox saints who suffered to bring to the entire world the Holy Orthodox Faith, undefiled and without change. Many Orthodox ecumenists’ disregard and disrespect for the Holy Orthodox Tradition is seen in their trivializing or ignoring of some of the dogmatic decisions of the Holy Ecumenical Synods. This is particularly obvious regarding their actions and comments in the World Council of Churches (WCC) and within other ecumenical contexts. Let us come back to the inexplicable statement of
Patriarch Bartholomew, which was quoted earlier: Patriarch Bartholomew again, in the ‘Joint
Communiqué’ of 1995 at the Vatican, made this typical pronouncement: ... ‘the Joint
Commission was able to proclaim that our Churches are recognized mutually as Sister Churches,
responsible together for the preservation of the one Church of God’ (As cited in Bishop Angelos

As was mentioned earlier, the Holy Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism have
profound Theological differences separating them, due to Roman Catholicism continuing to
adhere to its numerous innovations and heresies. Quoting the Orthodox priest and monk,
Heiromonk Patapios, we observe the following:

Roman Catholics not only reject the Essence-Energies distinction, but have, over the
course of their centuries of apostasy from the Orthodox Church, introduced a host of
innovations into Christianity, chief among which are the dogmas of Papal Supremacy and
Infallibility, the Filioque, Created Grace, the Immaculate Conception, and Purgatory.
(Patapios, 2000, p. 25)

So, for an Ecumenical Patriarch (or anybody else for that matter) to call Orthodox
Christianity and Roman Catholicism “Sister Churches” is something which has absolutely no
Theological or Dogmatic justification whatsoever and is therefore something which is, from an
Orthodox perspective, categorically absurd.

*Ecumenism and Evangelicalism Both Erroneously Claim to Possess “True Christianity”*
Earlier in the discussion, when Patriarch Bartholomew allegedly called the young Roman Catholics, “Children of the Church” (Bishop Angelos of Avlona, 1998, p. 23), about what “Church” was he speaking? The Orthodox Church? The Roman Catholic Church? The imaginary, confused, ever-changing, multi-variant and ever-splitting non-denominational and inter-denominational Evangelical “Christian” Church? Or is he referring to the branch of Evangelicalism which features the media business known as Televangelism and its imaginary “Church” with its propaganda for, and political subservience to, powerful people and forces, many of them non-Christian and anti-Christian? Given the ambiguity with which many ecumenists speak, including some Orthodox ecumenists, its really hard to know where they regard their imaginary Church to have its boundaries and not have its boundaries, since with ecumenism relativism reigns supreme, independent of the unique truth of Orthodox Christianity. Ecumenists arrogantly look to rediscover or construct the “True” Church of Christ or Christianity as it “truly” is or should be, ignoring the fact that the True Church already exists, and it is uniquely the Orthodox Church—and it was not nor could it ever be established by man, but instead was established by God Incarnate, Christ the Theanthropos. One cannot help but see here, once again, ecumenism’s similarity, in its delusion, to evangelicalism. Let us observe some of what Archimandrite George of the Holy Monastery of St. Gregory on Holy Mount Athos has to say regarding the man-made religion of evangelicalism and other heresies:

People have false experiences of God when they believe that by themselves, with their own powers, in heresies, in groups, in religious gatherings, outside the Church, they can receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. They gather and some new “prophet” acts the leader
and they believe they are receiving the grace of God. (Archimandrite George of the Holy Mountain, 1989)

A previous Pentecostal man for example confessed that at the Pentecostal gatherings, when some “prophetess” would prophesy, he felt a demonic disturbance and that when he tried to say the prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me the sinner”, the speaking in tongues would start and drown him, impeding him from saying the prayer.

Because the devil transforms to an angel of light, we must be careful with experiences. The Apostle John advises us: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1). Those who have the Apostle Paul’s gift of the discernment of spirits (1 Cor. 12:10) can discern the spirits if they are from God or if from the devil. The Confessors of the Church have this gift. That is why when we have such problems we should seek our Confessor and he will determine the source of every experience. (Archimandrite George of the Holy Mountain, 1989)

Certainly, though it is very difficult to keep track of and name all of the heresies (if not impossible), evangelicalism and Pentecostalism are essentially the same heresy; and they are definitely not the Church—their division into manifold groups and embrace of all manner of falsehood proves this.

The experiences of the Pentecostals are not from God. For this, not only are they not helped to come to Church but instead they are driven away from the Church. For only the devil is interested in driving people out of the Church.
Also their divisions in many heresies and groups is proof they do not comprise the true Church of God. Protestantism consists of thousands of heresies. One of the protestant heresies is Pentecostalism. […] If the Spirit of God existed in these groups, there would have been a union, there would have been one Church and not so many different and opposing groups. (Archimandrite George of the Holy Mountain, 1989)

As such and with these, and other, heresies clearly being seen, we look at the unparalleled continuity and history of Orthodox Christianity and from there we see that Christ the Theanthropos established the Holy Orthodox Church on Himself and it alone is uniquely His Body and He is its Head.

Once again, very similar to the arrogance of many ecumenists, many Evangelicals and Tele-Evangelicals also look to bring people to what they feel is True Christianity, namely, their own individual interpretation of Christianity based on each Evangelical’s “infallible” understanding of Holy Scripture—which accounts for theoretically as many different “Apostolic Churches” as there are people implying that their understanding of Holy Scripture is infallible (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 21)—in that sense, they are really no different from the “infallible man” in Rome, seen in the heresy of Papism (as St. Nektarios and St. Justin Popovich tell us). Many of the adherents of the made-up religion of Pentecostalism (and of evangelicalism, the multitude of non-denominational “Christian” groups, and of a myriad of other heresies) make the outrageously prideful and delusional claim that their recent heresy is True, “Apostolic Christianity”:
They also cultivate a spirit of pride believing that the whole Church of two thousand years is deceived, while they discovered the truth in 1900. The first one who created the group of Pentecostals is an American. The first Pentecostal in Greece, Michael Gounas, preached, “After so many centuries in the land of Greece the outset of the visitation of God happened like the day of the Pentecost”. According to him, the visit of Christ started in Greece by him like in the day of the Pentecost! All these years there was nothing. Do you see the satanic egoism and pride?

What now with the sought after gift by them of “speaking in tongues”? In truth, in the New Testament there is reference to “speaking in tongues”. The Holy Apostles on the day of Pentecost spoke the tongues of the people who had come for pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to teach them the Good News. The gift of speaking in tongues is a grace given by God to the Apostles for a specific purpose: To convert the non-Christians to the Christian faith. The Holy Apostles, when speaking in tongues, did not speak meaningless sounds like demoniacs. They spoke tongues, not any tongues, but the tongues of those who were in Jerusalem and could not speak the Jewish language, so that they could hear of the greatness of God and believe. So the meaningless cries have no relation to the gift of “speaking in tongues” which the Pentecostals maintain. (Archimandrite George of the Holy Mountain, 1989)

Furthermore, only the Holy Water of the Orthodox remains unspoiled. Those who have Holy Water at your home, you know that no matter how old it is, it never spoils. This is our faith, the true and Orthodox one.
To depart from this faith and follow some American recent “saviors” who believe that the Church starts with them, just imagine what demonic conceit they have! The Church exists for two thousand years and they say that from them, the Pentecostals and other heretics, begins the true faith. (Archimandrite George of the Holy Mountain, 1989)

And apparently none of these “Apostolic Churches” need to agree on all matters of faith. For how could they do so given the fact that each Evangelical’s “infallible” interpretation of Holy Scripture is his or her own, and likely different from some other “infallible” person’s interpretation, hence the fact that these churches constantly split into more and more denominations. For the Evangelicals, in their delusion, it would seem that such confusion and anarchy is far superior to the unconquerable witness of countless Orthodox saints and martyrs who throughout history have confessed Christ the Theanthropos, by the unfathomable mercy of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, in an unchanging and unbroken succession.

Evangelical Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism

The Orthodox saints defy worldly power for Christ the Theanthropos. In contrast, evangelicalism and ecumenism are subservient to worldly power. Let us talk about some of the previous questions related to which “Church” ecumenists are possibly referring. For example, it is a well known fact that very many Evangelical and Televangelical leaders and their followers—adhering to their own conception of what the “Church” is, centered on personal infallibility (Popovic, 2000, p. 153) in their interpretation of the Bible and other religious matters—strongly support the government and leadership of the modern state of Israel, no matter what policies are followed by the Israeli government and its leaders, even if those policies are oftentimes inhumane, racist and against peace. At that point the Evangelicals’ confused, multi-variant, ever-
changing heretical system which they call “the Church” becomes little more than a political system subservient to powerful people, such as government leaders and radical Zionists, many of whom do not even believe in Christ, with some even hating Christ and Christianity. Make no mistake, such disbelief and hatred of Christ is also manifested in word, thought or deed by many who claim to believe and follow Him, including many nominally Orthodox Christians through their oftentimes godless conduct (myself among them).

Ecumenism is also subservient to powerful political forces and hence the heresy of ecumenism is similar to the heresy of Evangelicalism. By the unfathomable grace of God, the Orthodox saints and martyrs—in so many ways, the only true revolutionaries and radicals—would never allow themselves to be manipulated or dominated by powerful people and forces, which exploit other human beings and through their actions hate Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. The Orthodox saints and martyrs educated the world about Christ the Theanthropos, not just through their words, but through their great courage and perseverance in the face of tremendous danger, suffering, and the most frightful kinds of death imaginable (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11). In this regard, because of their great courage, the Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the grace of God, are (for Orthodox Christians) the world’s greatest educators—showing the world that the power of this world is nothing, and that it will one day be brought to nothing by Christ Himself.

37 The late Archbishop Christodoulos, Primate of the Orthodox Church of Greece, one time quoted something to the effect, from the great Russian Orthodox writer Dostoevsky, that “the only true revolutionary is a Christian”.

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37 The late Archbishop Christodoulos, Primate of the Orthodox Church of Greece, one time quoted something to the effect, from the great Russian Orthodox writer Dostoevsky, that “the only true revolutionary is a Christian”.
The martyrlic life and death struggles of the Orthodox saints—done in all wisdom and humility, with great courage and love for Christ—is truly the great educational legacy of the Orthodox saints and martyrs for the world to plainly see. This is obviously contrasted with the subservience, hypocrisy, and great cowardice of most other people, including very many Ecumenists, Evangelicals, Muslims, Jews, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians and countless others from every other group of people. In this condemnation of subservience, hypocrisy and great cowardice, I must obviously include myself as worthy of condemnation, because of my great sinfulness and because I am the worst coward of all.

*Evangelical Christian Zionism seemingly subservient to Jewish Zionism.* It seems that very powerful and influential Evangelical Christian Zionists are, in many ways, often subservient to very powerful Jewish Zionists. Both sides seem to need one another in this syncretistic alliance, in order for many of the supporters of Israel, both Evangelical Christian and Jewish, to accomplish their goals. The problem is, as we have explained, that Evangelicalism is a made up religion, more of a business and subservient political organization than anything else—some people have said that in many ways it is the closest thing to an official religion for America than just about any other religion in our country. This is certainly manifested in many Evangelical leaders’ unconditional support for the modern state of Israel and all the wars which Israeli and American politicians have wanted to start in the Middle East and elsewhere. As a reporter for Fox News, Kelley Beaucar Vlahos, told us, during one of the Bush presidencies:

“An increasingly close alliance between the powerful pro-Israel Jewish lobby and fundamentalist Christians has been warning President Bush against withdrawing support from Israel and ceding too much to the Palestinians in his peace-building efforts” (Vlahos, 2003).
This sort of peculiar and very powerful alliance can be see in many instances. For example, we see some Jewish and fundamentalist Christian Zionists working closely together in organizations such as Christian Friends for Israeli Communities which “funds programs in one-third of the 150 or so Jewish settlements in Gaza and on the West Bank” (Broadway, 2004). The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews is also an organization for Jewish and Christian Zionists to support Israel and aid Jewish people with their religious and political goals. Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein [head of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews] “said most people who contribute to the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews do so for religious reasons but also want to show their solidarity with Israel. They oppose any withdrawal of Jewish settlers and ‘are very distrustful of Palestinians’... ‘They would make good Likudniks,’ he said.” (Broadway, 2004). In addition, Rabbi Eckstein “recently launched the Stand for Israel advocacy group with Christian conservative Ralph Reed [former head of the Christian Coalition, a group founded by Televangelist Pat Robertson]” (Vlahos, 2003).

An Orthodox Archbishop, Theodosios (Attalah) Hanna, speaks about such injustice which is embraced by the made up religion of Evangelicalism and by others, when he beautifully points out to us that we cannot use contemporary politics to implicate God in people’s oppression of other people, and consequently justify such oppression.

“Those who use the Bible to support Israel need to differentiate between God’s promise and the Balfour promise, because the occupation is the result of a promise given to the Israelis by Lord Balfour and not by God.” (Hanna, 2010)

38 This bracketed entry was made by me.
“The Orthodox Church as all churches in the Holy Land refuses to give excuses from the Bible for the unjust treatment of the Palestinian people.” (Hanna, 2010)

But many Evangelicals do just that:

“I am very sorry to hear about some religious groups in the United States that support the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Such support cannot be justified from a Christian point of view because Christianity is against any sort of occupation and the injustice in all its forms and rationalizations.

These groups need to re-read their Bible, because the Bible calls us to stand with the marginalized and the oppressed and not with the oppressors.

God is innocent from the unjust actions of the Israeli occupation of our land since ’48 and until now.” (Hanna, 2010)

Now it should be noted, Archbishop Theodosios, in his above rightful condemnation of Israeli political policy and blatant human rights violations, nowhere condemns the oppression which Muslims have committed throughout history—as all other peoples have also committed atrocities, to one extent or another, throughout history. Now in all fairness, I fully understand any person’s apprehension in speaking of such matters—for I am the same way, and would likely not write such things if I was not living in a democratic country; but I am fortunate enough to be writing these things in a country were there still is significant freedom of speech and I am not a well known person to have drawn huge attention to myself. Nevertheless, such matters need to be mentioned.
John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt in their book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* say many of the same things regarding these matters as Archbishop Theodosios says above, namely that you should not side with the oppressors but with the oppressed:

[...]”Christianity contains a complex set of moral and religious teachings, and many of its important precepts neither justify nor encourage unconditional support for Israel. Christian Zionists may believe that biblical prophecy justifies Jewish control of all of Palestine, but other Christian principles—such as Christ’s command to “love thy neighbor as thyself”—are sharply at odds with Israel’s treatment of its Palestinian subjects.” [...] (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 139)

Mearsheimer and Walt also bring up an important point on the individual level—regardless of the falsehood of the religions involved, for Orthodoxy is alone the true Faith (though a great many Orthodox, including myself, do not live it).

“Just as many American Jews do not support everything that Israel is doing, neither do many Christians, including evangelicals.” (P.139)

Nevertheless, we should always side with the oppressed and not the oppressors. And certainly, the roles of oppressed and oppressor can easily reverse, if circumstances change—and historically this has from time to time happened in the world. In fact, that is human history to a significant extent. But one must never be deluded by all the heresies of the world—a person’s own heresy and that of others, whether it be Evangelicalism, Islam, Judaism or any of the countless other heresies—all of which are foreign to the only true Faith, Orthodox Christianity.

Jews in Israel and America may also realize that Christian Zionism is a dubious ally—especially when they consider the unappealing role they are expected to play in the end-
time—and begin to distance themselves from the evangelicals’ embrace. For their part, Christian evangelicals should be encouraged to reflect on the human tragedy that Israel continues to inflict on the Palestinians and to consider whether their own commitment to a “greater Israel” is truly consistent with Christ’s message of love and brotherhood.

(Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, pp. 353-354)

Regarding the Separation Wall, that has been built stealing more land from the Palestinians and further separating them from one and another; and regarding, arguably, the largest open air prison camp in the world, the Gaza strip (though honestly, communist North Korea and other places likely outdo the tragedy that is Gaza), Archbishop Theodosios continues to teach us:

First of all, I want to stress on the fact that the wall is illegal, even the highest court system in the world has declared that it is illegal, thus our duty as humans is that we have an obligation towards our brethren to dismantle this racist wall.

[…] It is just an excuse to take more land illegally and separate Palestinians from each other.

Not to mention the biggest prison in the world is the Gaza strip. There are a million and a half living in Gaza. We pray and ask every free person in the world to work for the release of the people in Gaza.

I say to all the Palestinian refugees they should still not give up their right to return. It is a right that could not be cancelled by time. It is a human right because every Palestinian refugee should return to his/her home.
Do not lose hope because our cause is a just one and the person who was wronged in a way or another should not be desperate, but we should still claim our rights where we hope that one day it will be soon “Enshaala” (God Willing) that every Palestinian could return to his/her home. (Hanna, 2010)

With these things in mind, we observe the following:

Critics of the alliance between American Jews and Christian conservatives say they are worried that the partnership is generating too much influence on Capitol Hill and could drown out the Palestinian perspective. “The political agenda, combined with the religious agenda--you have this killer, killer combination against world peace,” charged Faiz Rehmanen, a spokesman for the American Muslim Council.... “We won’t be able to match those resources and efforts.” (Vlahos, 2003)

That is probably very true, the power that Jewish Zionists and Evangelical Christian Zionists wield independent of one another, and together in their syncretistic alliance—in what one could say is their Jewish / Evangelical Christian ecumenism—is, by practically all accounts, tremendous. However, according to Mearsheimer and Walt, the most major portion of the pro-Israel lobby is comprised of Jews—which is certainly understandable. As such, and as a part of the larger pro-Israel lobby, the neoconservative movement has a similar representation of people. The extremely powerful neoconservative movement, which has played a huge role in, at least, the last few devastating wars in the Middle East—wars which have caused tremendous suffering to untold numbers of people in the region and have contributed to making the world a much more dangerous place—has Jews very prominently represented in its ranks. In turn, this increased danger throughout the world, from these preemptive wars, provides more of an excuse
for the militarism and oppression inflicted by powerful people and nations on weaker people—it is the same “law of the jungle” that has predominated throughout human history. Mearsheimer and Walt say the following pertaining to neoconservatism:

Virtually all neoconservatives are strongly committed to Israel, a point they emphasize openly and unapologetically. According to Max Boot, a leading neoconservative pundit, supporting Israel is “a key tenet of neoconservatism,” a position he attributes to “shared liberal democratic values.” (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 130) Jews nonetheless comprise the core of the neoconservative movement. In this sense, neoconservatism is a microcosm of the larger pro-Israel movement. Jewish Americans are central to the neoconservative movement, just as they form the bulk of the lobby, but non-Jews are active in both. (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 132)

The neoconservative movement itself is also heavily influenced by various manifestations of the ancient heresy of chiliasm, as can be found in the falsehood of dispensationalism and millenarianism. As such, the world being made much more dangerous by people wanting to start wars under the pretense of promoting “freedom and democracy” helps the cause, in a perverted sense, of the most radical elements of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—with potentially devastating consequences for the everyone else in the world. Orthodox Christianity, the only true Faith, and all that we learn from the incomparable Orthodox Faith, has nothing to do with this aforementioned tragic stupidity. Let us look at some of the commentary of Mearsheimer and Walt pertaining to some of the dangers of Evangelical and Jewish Zionism:
The origins of Christian Zionism lie in the theology of dispensationalism, an approach to biblical interpretation that emerged in nineteenth-century England, largely through the efforts of Anglican ministers Louis Way and John Nelson Darby. Dispensationalism is a form of premillennialism, which asserts that the world will experience a period of worsening tribulations until Christ returns. (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, pp. 132-133)

The best-selling millenarian author Hal Lindsey wrote in January 2007 that a preemptive nuclear strike on Iran was “the only logical choice available to Israel,” (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 136)

Jo-Ann Mort of Americans for Peace Now terms the collaboration between American Jews and the Christian Right an “unholy alliance,” and the Israeli moderate Yossi Alpher warns that Christian support for continued settlement expansion is “leading us into a scenario of out-and-out disaster.” As he told CBS News, “God save us from these people.” Similarly, the Israeli-American scholar Gershom Gorenberg notes that dispensationalist theology does not foresee a happy fate for Jews: in the end-times “the Jews die or convert.” In particular, he warns, the Christian Zionists “don’t love real Jewish people. They love us as characters in their story, in their play…[and] it’s a five act play in which the Jews disappear in the fourth act.” (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 137)

This last quotation pertaining to the Jewish people being regarded as little more than mere characters in the awaited “end time” drama of the heretical religion that is Evangelicalism, is
spoken of by others as well, as we shall see a little later in the discussion. This is a rather alarming view that many Evangelicals have—and many Jews are rightfully concerned by it, as we saw in this last quotation. Additionally, people need to be careful to not be anti-Semitic or bigoted in any other way toward any group of people—but people should speak their mind if they believe something, with respect and love for all of their fellow human beings. We observe the following quotation:

Condemning neo-Nazis or Holocaust deniers is a worthy enterprise, but smearing respected individuals such a Jimmy Carter, Richard Cohen, Tony Kushner, or Tony Judt, or attacking progressive groups like the Union of Concerned Zionists, is something very different and disturbing. The more the lobby’s hard-liners attack any and all critics, the more they reveal themselves to be out of step with the broad American commitment to free speech and open discussion. And once virtually any criticism of Israel becomes equated with anti-Semitism, the charge itself threatens to become meaningless.

Convincing hard-line Christian Zionists to abandon their commitment to a greater Israel is less likely, given the role that prophecies about the end time play in dispensationalist theology, and given their apparent willingness to see the Middle East engulfed in a highly destructive “apocalyptic” war. Hope may be found in the tendency for evangelicals’ agendas to shift in the perennial quest for new members and in the general tendency for these movements to fluctuate in strength over time. (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 353)
Within these last few quotations from Mearsheimer and Walt, a few things really stand out and are understandably quite frightening. In fact, as we already see from much of contemporary world events, many radical Zionists are unabashedly pro-war, as are many other people—usually these people are enthusiastic about war, as long as they are not the ones suffering the consequences of their actions. We again observe:

Convincing hard-line Christian Zionists to abandon their commitment to a greater Israel is less likely, given the role that prophecies about the end time play in dispensationalist theology, and given their apparent willingness to see the Middle East engulfed in a highly destructive “apocalyptic” war. (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 353)

So what we just saw explains a lot of the oppression and wars in the Middle East. As does the absolutely terrifying remark made by a prominent Evangelical writer, Hal Lindsey ‘that a preemptive nuclear strike on Iran was “the only logical choice available to Israel,”’ (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 136)

Advocation of a preemptive nuclear strike against any nation is a great evil, it is genocidal, truly a monstrous thing to encourage. The fact that no one in the mainstream media in the U.S., to my knowledge, condemned this evil remark by this heretic is even more frightening. When Muslim radicals advocate similar monstrous acts against Israel and others, it immediately is rightfully condemned and broadcast throughout the mainstream media of the world—though perhaps not condemned as strongly in the Muslim world, if at all. There is absolutely no reason for this remark from Hal Lindsey, and for similar hateful remarks from others within the media business of tele-evangelism, to have not gotten huge press coverage in the American media—
especially given millions of Americans’ embrace of the made up religion of Evangelicalism and its teachings, and the close political ties that Evangelical leaders have to the Israeli government. This is very frightening and perhaps very telling.

The Jewish and Evangelical Christian Zionists are looking to serve what they feel is their best interests, and they do it very well; in so many ways they are no more worthy of condemnation than anyone else, they simply do what it is that they do, much more effectively than many others. We must always be very honest with ourselves and others in such matters, and know that no group of human beings is intrinsically better or worse than any other group of human beings; and this thinking in no way justifies ecumenism, nor does it change the fact that Orthodoxy is alone the true Faith, as proven by the Orthodox Saints, by the grace of God, throughout history. Having said these things, we note that there are people of conscience within the heresy of Evangelicalism that are not blinded by the political agenda and propaganda which permeates so much of the mass media presentation of their fabricated religion.

Apparently, one such person is Babu G. Ranganathan, an Evangelical Christian, who is critical of the modern state of Israel, both in regard to how it was actually founded and how it continues to violate Palestinian human rights to the detriment of world peace. Here are some insightful comments of his, regarding some of the aforementioned matters:

U.N. resolutions demand Israel to withdraw completely from the West Bank. The United States made a big noise under President Bush about applying U.N. resolutions on Saddam Hussein when he was in power. Why doesn’t the United States make a big noise about applying U.N. resolutions to Israel? […] (Ranganathan, 2009)
The reason, of course, why U.N. resolutions did not, and do not, apply to Israel is that the
supporters of Israel have much more power than any other lobby in the United States of America.
As such, it is certainly not a matter of justice, but one of power—power to oppress, or not having
the power to oppress, describes so much of human relations in our fallen world; with that in
mind, the word “justice” frequently gets used by very powerful people in an attempt to excuse
their exploitation and oppression of other people. Additionally, and this must never be forgotten
—lest we exclusively vilify any particular people or peoples, but exclude ourselves, thereby self
righteously exonerating ourselves—the role of oppressed and oppressors can certainly change
from circumstance to circumstance and often times has indeed changed throughout history. We
all share the same fallen human nature making us prone to oppress one another when we get
opportunity to do so.

As one writer points out: “Israel was created (in the beginning) not by force of arms or
military invasion, but terrorist activity advocated by Jewish immigrants, in an effort to
get rid of the British Administration (the lawful government of the day, as sanctioned by
the predecessor to the U.N). Britain abandoned its mandate and Israel was created by the
U.N.”

Any solution to the present crisis must also involve monetary or financial compensation
being made by Israel to Palestinian families who have had their homes and lands seized
and taken away during the formation of the modern state of Israel in the 1940’s.

(According to the U.N. resolution 194, Palestinian refugees have the right for
compensation and repatriation). (Ranganathan, 2009)
During that time Palestinian families suffered huge atrocities at the hands of Jewish immigrants, including many pregnant Palestinian Arab woman having their wombs ripped open and their babies slaughtered before their very eyes. This was one of the many horrible crimes committed against Palestinians, even by such notable political figures as former Prime Minister of Israel Menachem Begin, and the Palestinians should be compensated by the modern state of Israel for these crimes. That is only right.

The terrorism committed by Jewish immigrants against Palestinian Arabs in the late 1940’s is a major reason for why many Palestinian Arabs fled their homes and land and became refugees. (Ranganathan, 2009)

These sort of atrocities committed by Jewish immigrants, in the founding of the modern state of Israel, is also spoken of by Mearsheimer and Walt:

Consider what Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary on January 1, 1948, at a time when he was involved in a series of important meetings with other Zionist leaders about how to deal with the Palestinians in their midst: “There is a need now for strong and brutal reaction. We need to be accurate about timing, place and those we hit. If we accuse a family—we need to harm them without mercy, women and children included. Otherwise, this is not an effective reaction… There is no need to distinguish between guilty and not guilty.” It is hardly surprising that this sort of guidance from the Zionist leadership—Ben-Gurion was summarizing the emerging policy—led Jewish soldiers to commit atrocities. After all, we have seen this pattern of behavior in many wars, fought by many different peoples. Regardless, the occurrence of atrocities in this period undercuts Israel’s claim to a special moral status. (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007, p. 99)
Again, we go back to Ranganathan’s commentary:

However, as long as most evangelical Christians in America believe modern Zionism is biblical they will continue to exert one-sided pressure in Washington DC in support of Israel’s status quo in the region and prevent any pressure on Israel to pull back to its pre-1967 borders and discontinue building settlements on Arab land.

That is why it is very important to understand that there is no Biblical basis for modern Zionism. If America insists Israel must be fair to Palestinians it will not only help achieve peace in the Middle East but also will reduce Muslim extremism, and even terrorism, against the United States. (Ranganathan, 2009)

Regarding the Jewish Zionists and Evangelical Christian Zionists, many of their good and evil intentions are no better or worse than anyone else’s, they simply have much more power with which to enact them than many others do, in many instances that is really the only difference. This having been said by no means relativizes evil or in any way justifies it; the evil and stupidity embraced and enacted by very many Jewish Zionists and Evangelical Christian Zionists is just that: evil and stupid. In the same way that the evil and stupidity often embraced and enacted by very many Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Roman Catholics and countless others is just that: evil and stupid.

*People, from among all groups of people, have, throughout history, committed atrocities.*

Dostoevsky wrote in *The Brothers Karamazov*, without a doubt having drawn from the Holy Orthodox tradition, that “truly each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone” (p. 298). And this certainly must be kept in mind throughout our discussion, so that we do not fall into the stupidity of making one group of human beings as better or more worthy of compassion
or more honorable and important than any other group of human beings. All human beings are of
equal dignity, having been created by the eminently free will of God from absolutely nothing—
so in and of ourselves, each and every one of us without exception, intrinsically and innately, has
absolutely nothing except for what the Triune God has given to us. As said elsewhere in this
work, this holds even for the greatest of the Saints, for God created us all from absolutely
nothing and He was under no compulsion to do so, and our having been created by God added
nothing to God—God was under no necessity whatsoever to create any of us.

So earlier when speaking of the great power of Jewish and Evangelical Christian Zionists,
the Muslim spokesman, Faiz Rehmanen, made what very many people (myself included) would
regard as a realistic and factual statement by saying: “The political agenda, combined with the
religious agenda—you have this killer, killer combination against world peace. We won’t be able
to match those resources and efforts” (Vlahos, 2003). The power of Jewish Zionism and
Evangelical Christian Zionism in world politics is enormous, something to which Faiz
Rehmanen rightfully alludes in his statement, but one must note that he ignores the oppression
and tremendous cultural and physical genocide committed by many of the followers of Islam
throughout the ages against countless people. Rehmanen ignores the very violent legacy of Islam
throughout its history, when he speaks about world peace. And generally, each and every person
from every religion needs to acknowledge their own wrongdoing and the wrongdoing of their
ancestors. Orthodox Christians—most unworthy to possess what they indeed uniquely truly
possess: the fulness of all truth in the one and only Body of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church—
must come to terms with their own extreme failures and evildoing, both individually and
collectively, throughout history. Regarding Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, Roman
Catholics, and all other peoples and religious groups—which have had, at some point or other, some measure of power in history—each and everyone of these groups of people has at times shown great compassion, humility and fairness towards others who do not share their beliefs; and each and everyone of these same groups, has also at times committed great evil against those who do not share their beliefs. Orthodox Christians must acknowledge the fact that countless Orthodox Christians throughout history have been guilty of atrocities against other human beings, for this accusation of violence and inhumanity which is rightfully leveled at Muslims, is also rightfully leveled at all other religious groups, including Orthodox Christians.

Though Orthodox Christianity is the one and only Body of Christ, with Christ the Theanthropos Himself as its Head, and as such uniquely possesses the fulness of all truth, unchanged and unconquerable throughout history; nonetheless, countless Orthodox Christians have committed great evil throughout history just as countless other people from all the other faiths of the world—which do not possess the fulness of all truth that Orthodox Christianity uniquely does—have also committed great evil throughout history. Having said all of these things, we must also say that the fulness of all truth uniquely possessed by the unconquerable Holy Orthodox Church of Christ has nothing to do with the great evil that countless Orthodox Christians have chosen to commit throughout history. For Orthodox Christianity has never justified nor glorified non-defensive violence and other wrongdoing, as Judaism and Islam frequently have. For example, we see that countless Muslims have also chosen to commit great evil throughout history, just as countless Orthodox Christians have, with the difference being that the Muslims were frequently sanctioned to commit their evil by the great falsehood and deception that is Islam, which they were following; whereas Orthodox Christians obviously
never received such sanction from the True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. With this in mind, Muslims need to acknowledge and lament the tremendous number of people whom very many Muslims have murdered throughout the world and throughout history, and not insanely justify the violence as something which is righteous and justified by their faith. Similarly, the Jews--having rejected God Incarnate, Christ the Theanthropos, Who alone is the Truth (Popovic, 2000, p. 146)--have sought to find the truth elsewhere, such as in their interpretation of the Mosaic Law; this they attempt to do independent of the Son of God, God Himself. From the perspective of Orthodox Christianity, this obviously is a great error, for it is the Son of God Himself Who created the Jews and all the other peoples and it is the Son of God Who Himself gave the Law to Moses and became Incarnate for all the peoples of the earth, whom He created by an act of free will--and this divine will, which is “eminently free” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 9), the Son of God eternally shares in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Suprasubstantial Trinity, by an act of free will, common to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, created all things (and that obviously includes the entire human race) and so to deny the Son of God, Who voluntarily became man, is to deny God Himself. To deny the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, Christ the Theanthropos, is to deny the one and only True God, the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Such a denial of the one and only True God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, can never lead to the truth. The Jews’ and other peoples’ rejection of the one and only Truth, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, Christ the Theanthropos, is consequently an embrace of falsehood and delusion, which often leads to the attempted justification and sanction of various evils--something which is to be found in these same theological systems (to be found in Judaism and Islam, for example) which reject Christ.
Likewise countless other people following all the other heresies and deceptions of the world and of history—all of which are foreign to the unique truth of Orthodox Christianity—have also committed evil, frequently sanctioned by the falsehood and deception of their religion.

With all of these things in mind, Orthodox Christians must acknowledge and lament the violence and injustices committed by very many Orthodox Christians against huge numbers of Jewish people, and against huge numbers of Muslims, as well. For example, many times the violence and injustice against Jews manifested itself in pogroms where very many innocent Jewish people were murdered by Orthodox Christians, and apparently not enough Orthodox Christians cared enough or had enough courage to stop it. The mass murder of up to 6,000,000 Jews in W.W.II by Nazi Germany must never be forgotten—as one of the most horrible chapters in human history—nor ever allowed to be repeated against any people. And yet, during their reign of terror, the followers of Marx tortured and killed more people, by far, than the Nazis ever did—what a dubious distinction. An incredibly huge proportion of the people murdered by Marxism were Orthodox Christians or the descendants of Orthodox Christians. Great numbers of these people, who were killed, were killed by other Orthodox Christians (or descendants of Orthodox Christians). These people—Orthodox Christians or descendants of Orthodox Christians, who participated in this enormous and unparalleled genocide against other Orthodox Christians—in their willful stupidity, ignorance and blindness, insanely followed the great lie of Marxism to self-destruction, murdering their own people and others. In the former Soviet Union alone—not even counting the incredible loss of human life that occurred from the two world wars—an estimated 66,000,000 people died because of Marxism and its followers (Pushkarev, S., Rusak, V., Yakunin, G., 1989, p.78). In Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union, the
overwhelming majority of the countless people murdered by Marxism were Orthodox Christians or the descendants of Orthodox Christians (see Chapter 6). And very many of the most powerful people in Marxism—who presided over this nearly successful, yet ultimately failed, attempt to wipe out Orthodox Christianity, through unequaled mass murder and cultural genocide—were Jewish.\(^{39}\) This is no way, obviously, justifies the great stupidity of countless nominally Orthodox Christians (myself in regard to my thoughts and actions more stupid than all of them) who willingly followed such ideologies hostile to their Orthodox faith to the destruction of other Orthodox Christians and themselves.

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\(^{39}\) Geoffrey Hosking makes the observation that many Jews figured prominently in Soviet Government, and benefited from the Communist coup which destroyed the Tsarist order. He writes: “Discriminated against by the tsarist government, the Jews were natural recruits to the revolutionary movement, and in many respects beneficiaries of the events of 1917-21. They were numerous in the Communist Party, and included some of its best-known figures” (Hosking,1993, p.255). Karl Marx (whose infamous political and philosophical system bears his name), along with other prominent leaders of Communism such as Leon Trotsky, Yakov Sverdlov, Lazar Kaganovich, Grigory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, Karl Radek, Alexander Parvus (Israel Lazarevich Helphand), Genrikh Yagoda, and Matvei Berman (in addition to lesser known people, such as Aron Solts, Naftaly Frenkel, Yakov Rapopport, Lazar Kogan—who were in charge of various communist slave labor camps, in the Gulag system), were all of Jewish heritage, as were countless others, great and small, who were instrumental in Marxism’s great reign of terror in Eastern Europe and Russia. A biography of Karl Marx, which also mentions that this philosopher’s heritage was Jewish, is found in (Landauer, 1969, pp. 987-988). A biography of Leon Trotsky, which mentions that he was Jewish, is found in (Schapiro, 1969d, pp. 261-262). An interesting biography of Yakov Sverdlov is found in (Schapiro, 1969c, p. 473), and mention of the fact that Sverdlov’s heritage was Jewish is to be found in (Hosking,1993, p.255). David Floyd mentions the fact that Kaganovich was Jewish, in his biography of this prominent Marxist leader (p.186). That Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Radek were of Jewish heritage is mentioned by Hosking (p.255). Robert V. Daniels(1967) likewise mentions that Trotsky (p.23), Zinoviev (p.25), and Kamenev (p.25) were all Jewish. In a more detailed biography than that provided by Daniels, L.B. Schapiro(1969a) mentions the fact that Kamenev was of Jewish heritage (pp.199-200). Likewise, Schapiro(1969b), within a short but informative biography, mentions the fact that Karl Radek was Jewish (p.1023). Solzhenitsyn (1976) provides an insightful discussion about Alexander Parvus (pp. 285-287); and Michael Scammell (1985) mentions the fact that Alexander Parvus was Jewish (p.942). In the *Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn (1975) speaks at length about some of the crimes against humanity committed by Genrikh Yagoda, Matvei Berman, Naftaly Frenkel, Aron Solts, Yakov Rapoport, and Lazar Kogan (pp.75-87); and Scammell (1985) makes mention of the fact that all six of these people were Jewish (p.959). These historic facts are in no way a condemnation of the entire Jewish people, nor justification for any kind of anti-Semitism, any more than the willful stupidity and brutality of countless Orthodox Christians towards their own people and others is a condemnation of all Orthodox Christians.
I read somewhere long ago that for many women in the former Soviet Union abortion (the murder of unborn children) was the primary means of birth control—certainly something made very easy to do under the atheistic Marxist regimes, as it is in other countries and ideologies (including here in the United States of course). The numbers mentioned regarding abortion in just the former Soviet Union were staggering, with on average each Russian woman having had several abortions by the time she was out of her childbearing years—there were on average six abortions per woman, if I recall correctly. The numbers were certainly staggering, that much I recall for sure. One can be certain that overwhelmingly, for the most part, no Jew or Muslim or anyone else explicitly commanded countless nominally Orthodox Christian men and women to murder their unborn children through abortion—though Marxism certainly made such murder socially acceptable. St. Maximos the Confessor, I believe, tells us, drawing from Holy Scripture and his own experience, that no one can harm a man unless he harms himself.

In regard to such matters just mentioned, I would like to relate that I personally worked for a company, where fundraising for some worthwhile causes was certainly done, including fundraising for Public broadcasting (radio and television) and fundraising for various worthwhile charitable organizations; but, unfortunately, also fundraising for homosexual and abortion “rights” organizations was also done there, as was other fundraising that undermined Palestinian rights and Orthodox Christians who were coming out from under the yoke of Marxism—and I because of the convenience of the work, for I was too lazy to work elsewhere, continued to work for this organization and participated in many disgusting things to make money, willingly undermining the well being of other people. No one forced me to do this, it was my own willful stupidity—no forces anyone to be stupid, it is a conscious choice, and we Orthodox Christians
need to unequivocally acknowledge this and not scapegoat on others for our own sins. Other
groups to some degree can claim ignorance in some very limited regard, but we Orthodox
Christians, who through no merit of our own possess the only true Faith, have no excuse on these
matters. Truly, each and every group of people, without exception, has something to
acknowledge and lament, regarding the great evil committed by many of their own people—all
people are guilty of this dreadful moral equivalence, Dostoevsky and all the Orthodox Saints
were right.

St. John of Damascus comments regarding the apostasy of the Jews. Regarding the Jews’
rejection of Christ the Theanthropos and their consequent embrace of all manner of falsehood
and delusion which continues to this day, St. John of Damascus comments:

It should be known that the Antichrist is bound to come. Every one, therefore, who
confesses not that the Son of God came in the flesh and is perfect God and became
perfect man, after being God, is Antichrist. But in a peculiar and special sense he who
comes at the consummation of the age is called Antichrist. First, then, it is requisite that
the Gospel should be preached among all nations, as the Lord said [Matt. 24: 14], and
then he will come to refute the impious Jews. For the Lord said to them: *I am come in My
Father’s name and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will
receive* [John 5: 43]. And the apostle says, *Because they received not the love of the truth
that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion that they

\[40\] Some of the quotations and references from the Holy Scriptures used by St. John of Damascus are
noted by the translator, S.D.F Salmond, in the form of footnotes to the translation. I have used these
footnotes where I have deemed appropriate and made note of the Scriptural references in the form of
bracketed entries, to be seen in the next few quotations from St. John of Damascus.
should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness [2 Thess. 2: 10-12]. The Jews accordingly did not receive the Lord Jesus Christ who was the Son of God and God, but receive the impostor who calls himself God. For that he will assume the name of God, the angel teaches Daniel, saying these words, *Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers* [Dan. 11: 37]. And the apostle says: *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God* [2 Thess. 2: 3,4], *shewing himself that he is God;* in the temple of God he said; not our temple, but the old Jewish temple. For he will come not to us but to the Jews: not for Christ or the things of Christ: wherefore he is called Antichrist. First, therefore, it is necessary that the Gospel should be preached among all nations [Matt. 25: 14]: *And then shall that wicked one be revealed, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, whom the Lord shall consume with the word of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming* [2 Thess. 2: 8-10] (St. John of Damascus, 1898, pp. 98-99).

St. John of Damascus tells us that the Antichrist will be of this fallen world and will attain to great worldly power, and having done so will persecute the Church of God, showing truly how evil he is:
He is, therefore, as we said, the offspring of fornication and is nurtured in secret, and on a sudden he rises up and rebels and assumes rule. And in the beginning of his rule, or rather tyranny, he assumes the role of sanctity. But when he becomes master he persecutes the Church of God and displays all his wickedness. But he will come with signs and lying wonders [2 Thess. 2: 9], fictitious and not real, and he will deceive and lead away from the living God those whose mind rests on an unsound and unstable foundation, so that even the elect shall, if it be possible, be made to stumble [Matt. 24: 24].(St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 99)

St. John of Damascus, faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, goes on to confess the great mercy of the Triune God. For when we see God’s compassion and longsuffering towards the Jewish people, and towards all of humanity in general, truly it is nothing other than an example of the unfathomable grace and mercy of God which is clearly seen, for indeed none of us are worthy of it. Rather than completely rejecting the Jews for their long and stubborn rejection of the Only-Begotten Son of God, Christ the Theanthropos, God once again shows His great mercy by calling the Jews to salvation and sanctification in Christ, the only Truth. The mercy of the Triune God is offered to all of us, Jew and non-Jew alike, though, in our sinfulness, none of us is worthy of it. Indeed, all that people have they have by the grace of God, intrinsically possessing nothing themselves. Mindful of these things, the Orthodox confession of St. John of Damascus, pertaining to the mercy of the Triune God and the Second Coming of Christ, continues to inspire us:
But Enoch and Elias the Thesbite shall be sent and shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children [Mal. 4: 6, Apoc. 11: 3], that is, the synagogue to our Lord Jesus Christ and the preaching of the apostles: and they will be destroyed by him. And the Lord shall come out of heaven, just as the holy apostles beheld Him going into heaven, perfect God and perfect man, with glory and power, and will destroy the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, with the breath of His mouth [Acts 1: 11]. Let no one, therefore, look for the Lord to come from earth, but out of Heaven, as He himself has made sure [2 Thess. 2: 8]. (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 99)

Indeed, Christ transcends all worldly power and when He comes again from Heaven, He will bring all the power of this world to nothing.

_Evangelicalism’s attempt to justify radical zionism._ “We won’t be able to match those resources and efforts” (Vlahos, 2003), is what Faiz Rehmanen said, regarding the great power of Jewish and Evangelical Christian Zionists. But what if the Muslims were able “to match those resources and efforts”? Would there then be peace in the Middle East, and in much of the rest of the world for that matter? Or would the Jews be robbed of a homeland to call their own and suffer yet another Holocaust? One never knows. The violence with which Islam was first spread, and its relationship to many non-Muslims to this day, would seem to indicate that the Middle East and the world would not be a safer, more peaceful place if the Muslims had the upper hand over the Jewish Zionists and their fundamentalist Christian Zionist allies. Regardless, the current situation is that Jewish and Evangelical Christian Zionism reigns supreme in the Middle East, and it has many people worried:
“These lobbying organizations--both Christian and Jewish and others--set back the cause and prolong it, and it is going to fuel more international terrorism without question,” said Don Wagner, director of the Middle Eastern Studies Program at North Park University in Chicago. Wagner said if Bush comes out too strongly in favor of Israel, the United States will not be perceived as an honest mediator in the peace process. (Vlahos, 2003)

We also observe the following:

The [Evangelical] Christians refute characterizations that their support is based on an apocalyptic prophecy that says the second coming of Christ will see a conversion of Jews to Christianity and usher in the end of the world. Critics have pointed to this “end times” scenario as a “creepy” basis of support for Israel by evangelical Christians. “It’s pretty terrifying,” said Jean Abinader, managing director of the Arab American Institute.... He said Christian[sic. Christians] and Jews are using each other to forward both theological and political missions, and worries about the influence of the more radical elements of the pro-Israel lobby. “We are concerned about the present position of American interests in the region because people are literally interpreting scripture as a basis of foreign policy rather than what’s best for the country,” he added. “Anytime you apply theology to politics it’s very counter-productive.” (Vlahos, 2003)

The deception and extreme danger of “Christian Zionism” is seen even by many of the mainline Protestant denominations--even though according to Orthodox Christianity all of the Protestant

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41 This bracketed entry was made by me, in order that Evangelicals be rightfully associated with their political conduct and confused beliefs--and this is done so that they not be confused as somehow being the only Christians on earth.
denominations themselves have fallen into heresy, to one extent or another. With that in mind we observe the following:

“Not all Christians want to be considered supporters of Israeli policy. Corrine Whitlatch, executive director for the Churches for Middle East Peace, said plenty of mainline Protestant churches decry their conservative brethren’s unbridled support for Israel” (Vlahos, 2003).

The unquestioning support of Israeli and US policy in the Middle East by Evangelical Christian Zionists, independent of any compassion for all of the people in the Middle East--and without any regard to the violence and hatred that this hypocritical support engenders, and without any regard to the untold suffering that it brings to the people of the region--has prompted the concern of many mainline Christians:

“It is their application [of the Bible] to public policy that we feel creates a situation where one needs to take responsibility and say, ‘This is just wrong,’” Whitlatch said, adding that both sides in the Middle East fight must be urged to end the violence. “We’re reclaiming the name of Christianity and asserting the commitment toward peacemaking.” (Vlahos, 2003)

As we saw, there are mainline Protestant denominations (such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for example)--all of which, as was mentioned, Orthodoxy regards as having fallen into heresy to one degree or another and from which the other heresies of Evangelicalism and Televangelism were themselves born--that are appalled by what even they rightfully call the heresy of “Christian Zionism”. For example, Dr. Munib A. Younan, bishop of the Evangelical

42 Bracketed entry was in the website article.
Lutheran Church in Jerusalem has this to say about Christian Zionism, from his January 2003 Newsletter:

### 3. Bishop Younan Declares Christian Zionism to be a Heresy

Recently Bishop Younan was interviewed by a Danish newspaper. He was asked for his opinion of Christian Zionism and the bishop said, “I hereby declare that Christian Zionism is not only a sick theology but it is a heresy, right along with Arianism and Nestorianism and others. I believe it is time we named this misinterpretation of Christ and the gospel for what it is.”

First of all, the bishop states, Christian Zionism promotes Christ not as the Savior but as a military general, readying his forces for a huge battle, Armageddon. “The true Christ is the Christ of the cross and the open tomb, bringing hope, peace, reconciliation and new life. This is the Christ in whom I believe.”

Secondly, Christian Zionists pretend to be philosemitic, to love the Jewish people, but in the long run they are actually anti-Semitic in their teachings. The Jewish people are simply characters in the Christian Zionist heresy and in the so-called final battle; two-thirds of the Jewish people will be destroyed because they do not believe in Christ, while

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43 I first came across this part of the January 2003 Newsletter, by Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan, in the endnotes of Ann E. Hafften’s article *Challenge the Implications of “Christian Zionism”.*

44 The January 2003 Newsletter was in three parts, discussing some of the many difficulties that Palestinians face living under Israeli occupation. The third part of the Newsletter is where the Lutheran bishop explicitly condemns Christian Zionism. This third part is what is being reprinted for our discussion.
the other one-third will be converted to Christ. As Palestinian Christians we cannot accept such a heresy that loses sight of the core Gospel of Christ which is love for everyone, not only the Christians, without discrimination.

Thirdly, Christian Zionism is anti-justice, anti-peace, anti-reconciliation. Bishop Younan states that the teachings are racist, calling for the transfer of Palestinians out of this land. “Christian Zionism is the enemy of peace in the Middle East.” Christian Zionism is imported into the Middle East and is not limited to one or more church bodies, but its adherents can be found in every church body. Declaring Christian Zionism to be a heresy, Bishop Younan states, is intended to alert all Christians everywhere to its dangers and false teachings. (Younan, 2003)

Ann E. Hafften had the above discussion by Bishop Younan from the January 2003 Newsletter, reprinted in her article, *Challenge the Implications of “Christian Zionism”*; we now continue to look at her insightful research and commentary pertaining to the great dangers and injustice inherent to following the falsehood and deception that is “Christian Zionism”. Here are some more significant points made by Ann E. Hafften, which are to be found in her article *Challenge the Implications of “Christian Zionism”*, as she speaks to her fellow Lutherans (Hafften, 2003) and to others:

[1]45 The ubiquitous “rapture” story, elaborate end-times constructs, and fervent, unquestioning support for the state of Israel are now firmly embedded in U.S. Christian

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45 All the bracketed numbers in this article are from the article itself, from the actual website.
culture. Among these touchstones of pre-millennialism, a new “Christian Zionism” has found its way into the congregations of the ELCA. It is doubtful that many ELCA pastors teach or preach the tenets of pre-millennialism. The question is whether or not these leaders are willing to challenge the implications of a popular belief that has no place in Lutheran doctrine, because there is too much at stake to take it lightly anymore.

[2] The Rev. Munib Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jerusalem, has gone so far as to urge western Lutherans to consider the new Christian Zionism to be “heresy” in an effort “to alert all Christians everywhere to its dangers and false teachings.”

[3] Support among Christians for Israel as a safe homeland for the Jews is one thing, a form of Zionism that involves participation in a Jewish political movement leading to the establishment of the nation state of Israel.

[4] “Christian Zionism” as manifested in the programming of the Christian Broadcasting Network (www.cbn.org) and the Trinity Broadcasting Network (www.tbn.org) is another thing altogether. It is a movement with serious political and economic leverage that advocates Israel as a nation that reaches from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River or even the Euphrates; the transfer of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza to other Arab states; the destruction of the mosques in the Old City of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of a Jewish temple there. When the Christian Coalition of America met in October 2002 the conference began with a videotaped benediction direct from the Oval office. Some of the most influential Republicans in Congress at that time addressed the
group, including—not once, but twice—Tom DeLay, arguably one of the most powerful people on Capitol Hill. The website of the International Christian Zionist Center (www.israelmybeloved.com) puts forth the most recent theme to emerge, and one that participants have raised in every ELCA setting where I have been the speaker lately: “There never was a Palestine.”

[5] Lutheran scholars and pastors may once have grimaced at fundamentalist biblical interpretations or scoffed at the more inventive readings of Revelation, but it just isn’t funny anymore.

[6] In Bishop Younan’s experience, Christian Zionism is anti-justice, anti-peace, and anti-reconciliation. It calls for the transfer of Palestinians out of the land of their homes. “Christian Zionism is the enemy of peace in the Middle East.” Younan wrote. It is imported into the Middle East and is not limited to one or more church bodies, but its adherents can be found in every church body, he said. The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek called pre-millenialism a “heresy” and Christian Zionism a “menace” when he spoke at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas on Nov. 7, 2002. Ateek is director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Jerusalem. He said the implications of Christian Zionism are “life or death to people in Palestine on a day-to-day basis.”

[7] Apocalyptic lore has been present in U.S. religious communities since the Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth* was published in 1970. In recent years the *Left Behind* fiction series has captured the imaginations and bookshelves of countless US Christians—Lutherans among them. A show of hands in any group of ELCA pastors will indicate the
startling presence of the *Left Behind* phenomenon in their congregations, a tribute to the success of this $8 million franchise. [8] Dr. Barbara Rossing of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago describes the situation this way: “Many Americans interpret God’s action in the world through pre-millennialism, as evidenced in the popular *Left Behind* series (nine novels, a web site, two movies, a board game). Sales of so-called “prophecy” books have surged since September 11, 2001. Their understanding of Revelation is consumed with the ‘rapture’--the belief that God will snatch true Christians up into heaven before the disastrous events of Revelation’s seven-year tribulations are visited on the earth. This belief unfortunately is connected to unquestioning political support and military aid for Israel, arguing that the Jewish Temple must be rebuilt in order for Christ to return and usher in the end-times.” This belief results in a peculiar understanding of the very nature of the state of Israel and its relation to the fulfillment of a covenant with God and the second coming of Jesus. Rossing writes, “No Lutheran or mainline Christian doctrine endorses such an escapist theology of the rapture or such Middle East policies, yet this view of the end-times has virtually taken over American Christian views of the book of Revelation.”

[9] So where are our people getting this stuff? In addition to the “Left Behind” products, there’s television, especially cable TV. The enormously popular televangelists Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Benny Hinn broadcast this biblical interpretation over

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46 The reader is referred to Appendix A, for a brief discussion on the Orthodox understanding of the Second Coming of Christ.
religious cable channels every day. The ideas of Jack Van Impe and Kenneth Copeland, receive generous play on Christian TV. (Hafften, 2003)

Ann E. Hafften’s concise and brilliant research helps reveal to us the injustice, confusion and heresy associated with the falsehood and deception that is “Christian Zionism”.

Indeed, as we just saw, this is something of which even many people who are associated with the heresy of Protestantism are aware, for Ann E. Hafften and Bishop Younan are Protestant (Lutheran). Additionally, criticism of the policies of governments and their actions in alliance with powerful business and religious leaders, such as occurs with Jewish and Evangelical Christian Zionism, must never be misunderstood as anti-Semitism. With these things in mind, we conclude our look at Ann E. Hafften’s brilliant research and discussion:

...we should not fear to speak honestly about Israel. At an event for journalists in April 2002, Benny Avni of Kol Israel Radio said that criticism of Israel or U.S./Israeli policy should not ever be misunderstood as anti-Semitism.

... My hope is that ELCA pastors and leaders will make good use of our strong Lutheran theology to help our members understand these issues, to guide them beyond the cartoon stories provided by pre-millennial Christian Zionism. In a letter to President Bush in October 2001, former presiding bishop George Anderson vouched for the ELCA’s affirmation of Israel’s “right to exist peacefully within recognized and secure borders and its call upon the international community to recognize the same right for the Palestinian people.” Bishop Anderson also described the violence which torments the region, “The cycle of violence includes the violence inherent in decades of occupation: imprisonment
without trial, demolition of homes, torture, intimidation, destruction of thousands upon thousands of olive trees and other crops, confiscation of land and the building of settlements in disputed areas, economic strangulation, and so on. Addressing the root causes of the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians is in the best interest of both parties.” (Hafften, 2003)

*Orthodoxy must be confessed without subservience to worldly power.* Many Evangelicals are allied, and it seems subservient, to some of the more radical elements of Zionism--propagated by many Evangelical and Jewish leaders. Ecumenists are likewise frequently subservient to others more powerful than themselves, as we all are. This sort of cowardly, hypocritical pandering to people who have more worldly power than oneself, without regard for the truth, is something of which we are all guilty from time to time. I, of course, must include myself in this condemnation, because of my hatred, lack of faith, hypocrisy and great cowardice. Such pandering and subservience on the part of Orthodox hierarchs and leaders to powerful people and forces who are not Orthodox, with many of these same non-Orthodox people and forces oftentimes being ignorant of, and hostile to, the unique truth of Orthodoxy, does absolutely nothing to serve the truth of confessing and teaching the Holy Orthodox Faith to the entire world. Powerful people and forces, who are not Orthodox Christian, could be Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Roman Catholic, Protestant, atheist, “New Age” proponents, “New World Order” political power elite or whoever else that could possibly have great power in a particular situation. The innumerable Orthodox saints and martyrs courageously taught and confessed the Orthodox Christian Faith to their flock and to the whole world; Orthodox hierarchs and leaders, who choose to not follow
their example need to pay close attention to the following (as we, Orthodox Christians, all need to do so):

The Orthodox attitude to the episcopal office is well expressed in the prayer used at a consecration: “Grant, O Christ, that this man, who has been appointed a steward of the episcopal grace, may become an imitator of You, the True Shepherd, by laying down his life for Your sheep. Make him a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, a teacher to the unreasonable, an instructor to the foolish, a flaming torch in the world; so that having brought to perfection the souls entrusted to him in this present life, he may stand without confusion before Your judgment seat, and receive the great reward which You have prepared for those who have suffered for the preaching of Your Gospel.” (Ware, 1997, p. 250)
CHAPTER 6:
ECUMENISM: SUBSERVIENT TO THE PHILOSOPHY AND
POWER OF THIS WORLD

Ecumenism is closely related to all the other humanisms (for, indeed, it is not only one of
them, but also seems to have the feature of trying to unite all of them)—it is closely related to all
the other man-made, man-glorifying philosophical systems—many of which, ironically, have
been catastrophic to countless human beings. Marxism of course is one such horrifying example
of a man-destroying, anti-human, “humanistic” philosophy or system. All these lifeless
humanistic systems, both religious and otherwise, both past and present, have no part in the
unique truth that is Orthodoxy (which, by the mercy of God, is taught to us by the Orthodox
saints, courageously and without compromise). So to fully understand what the Orthodox saints,
by the mercy of God, teach to all of humanity, without compromise and in all truth, in sharp
contrast to the relativism and confusion taught by ecumenism, we must first understand the tragic
consequences of the Fall of Adam and Eve, we must look at the great tragedy of human history,
of which we are all a part. We must consider our alienation from one another and from God,
through sin, seen throughout the world and throughout history, which continues unabated to this
day. This must be considered first, in order to put ecumenism within its proper context, in order
to identify ecumenism for what it truly is: a man-made system that serves to compromise with,
and validate, the alienation and injustice of this world. Ecumenism does not call mankind to

47 St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije makes this truthful assertion throughout his book *The Orthodox Church
and Ecumenism*.

48 Solzhenitsyn has called Communism “anti-human”, and rightfully so.
salvation in Christ, for it does not serve Christ, but instead serves the philosophy and power of this fallen world. We see that this is so, for ecumenism tries to replace Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body, through construction of its own humanistic religion where relativism is paramount and the empty philosophical systems and power of this world are validated, or at least ignored, but never confronted.

Sartre said that “Hell is—other people!” (Sartre, 1947/1977, p. 61). He was right, in the sense that humanity, in its great self-love and self-worship, tortures humanity. All of us, individually and collectively, contribute and are responsible for much of the hardship that besets our fellow human beings and ourselves. Humanity tortures humanity; mankind is in need of salvation from itself. But humanity—contrary to the teachings of rationalistic, humanistic social philosophies—cannot save itself. Only God can save mankind, and that is why God, of His own free will, without Himself being under any compulsion or necessity to do so, chose to become fully Man while remaining fully God to save fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, God Himself, assumed human nature, of which He is the Creator, so as to save fallen humanity.

How does man oppress man? Let us look for example at the following reality: Certainly, there is an agenda with any power elite, whether we are talking about the world’s power elite, the power elite in a particular situation or the power that any particular individual (myself included) tries to wield with respect to another person. This is an unfortunate attribute of our fallen condition, that most people, most of the time (myself included of course), place their own interests above those of others. Before I go any further, I need to make it very clear that in my
criticism and condemnation of various ideologies and people, I must acknowledge my love of
self, my self righteousness, my hypocrisy, and my cowardice, in these regards, I am not much
different than most other people, in fact I am worse than most others. It is important for me to
remember what Dostoevsky (1991) says in *The Brothers Karamazov* through the Orthodox Elder
Zosima, (this character based on a real life Russian Orthodox saint) “truly each of us is guilty
before everyone and for everyone” (p. 298). What Dostoevsky says here is essentially that we are
all responsible for one another, and we all in some sense share the guilt for what is wrong in the
world. Indeed, a very beautiful and true conception brought forth by various characters in this
wonderful yet tragically prophetic work. In conformity with these things, we also need to keep in
mind the following Greek proverb: “One who has had enough to eat cannot understand someone
who is starving.” Aleksander Solzhenitsyn tells us essentially the same thing, echoing what
countless others must have felt in the communist concentration camps, “When you’re cold, don’t
expect sympathy from someone who’s warm” (Solzhenitsyn, 1963, p. 26); indeed, a true
testament to the alienation that each one of us has in regard to the rest of humanity, in this fallen
world in which we all live and struggle. In the truest sense, only the Orthodox saints transcend
this alienation and catastrophic selfishness, about which we speak and of which we are all guilty
—and only by the infinite grace of the Triune God is this something that the Orthodox saints are
able to accomplish and teach humanity.

*Dostoevsky Saw the Hypocrisy, Futility, and Danger of Humanism*

Regarding the tragic fall of man and our alienation from one another, let us continue to
call upon the genius of Dostoevsky. In Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, indisputably one
of the greatest novels ever written, one sees the unparalleled mysticism that is a feature of the Orthodox Faith. Dostoevsky valiantly argues against rationalistic philosophical systems and the lie of being able to “engineer human happiness” (Wasiolek, 1994, p. 245). Sound familiar? That occurs in seemingly countless manifestations to this very day. Ecumenism for example, just like Marxism and other systems, is a humanistic system, which glorifies the philosophy of this fallen world and denies the uniqueness of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body. Dostoevsky was, it seems, primarily, arguing against the philosophy of Marx and his followers, and against the impending disaster, which he was certain would occur—if enough people believed in the lie of Marxism. Dostoevsky’s truthful argument against Marxism could just as easily be applied to the deception that is ecumenism—and against anything else trying to undermine Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. Tragically, Dostoevsky was largely ignored and the rationalistic lie of Communism prevailed.

Communism—though it certainly looked good to many who ignored its leadership’s profound hatred for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, or maybe because of this hatred it looked appealing to many powerful people—as with all other godless ideologies that have ever existed, currently exist or will ever exist, found evildoing to be an acceptable and useful means to accomplish its atheistic goals. Father Romanides, when he looked at communism as a political system promoting social and economic equality—and no doubt, for the sake of discussion, was he, in that particular instance, ignoring contemporary communism’s overt atheism—accurately attests to the fact that it is an attractive system “on paper”, no doubt if we are assuming that people would really have freedom of religion. But once again, fallen humanity is fallen humanity
—and no political, man-made system can heal us, not communism, nor capitalism, nor any of the man-made religions—and only Christ can heal us.

Of course, as an idea and as a community of equality, communism is attractive. In practice, however, equality cannot be realized in this way. For real equality to exist, the human personality must first be healed. If it is not healed, any ideological system whatsoever, no matter how perfect it may be, cannot be implemented, because instead of genuine representatives of the ideology working for the system, those looking out for their best interests will always find their way in and corrupt it. (Romanides, 2008, p. 122)

We have definitely seen this in Marxism and in every other political system that has ever existed anywhere at any time.

By denying God, the Holy Trinity, and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, all manner of godless conduct became permissible in predominantly Orthodox nations; it is truly ironic that the nations with the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity, became more atheistic than the nations of the heretics (St. Justin Popovich and St. Nikolai Velimirovich tell us this)—these once overwhelmingly Orthodox nations allowed themselves to be led by atheists who hated Christ, and participated in leading themselves and others, to self-destruction. St. Nikolai Velimirovich and St. Justin Popovich were tragically correct in their analysis of Europe’s abandonment, at various times and places, of Orthodox Christianity.

This condemnation of such deplorable and ignorant conduct applies to the nominally Orthodox who embraced the apostasy associated with humanistic systems, such as Marxism; and
it also applies to those with whom these nominally Orthodox shamelessly worked in attempting to destroy the Holy Orthodox Church—indeed, all who participated in this atrocity did not realize, in their willful stupidity, that this was something truly impossible to accomplish for “in vain they fought against Thee O Lord” (from the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition); for Orthodox Christianity is alone the True Church and will endure forever by the grace of God—“I shall build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). There was great stupidity and destruction on the part of many of us Orthodox Christians; but, also great heroism on the part of many other Orthodox and in the end “the gates of hell” did not prevail against the Holy Orthodox Church—this miraculous survival occurred through no merit on our part, but by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God Who empowered countless great Orthodox saints (both known and unknown) to inspire the rest of us with their great love, wisdom, and fearless heroism. By the grace of God, Orthodoxy survived once again—truly no surprise and through no merit of our own, for as Christ told us, “for without Me you can do nothing”:

The words of Archpriest Avvakum, spoken in the seventeenth century, were certainly fulfilled under Communism three hundred years later: ‘Satan has obtained our radiant Russia from God, that she may become red with the blood of martyrs.’

What effect did Communist propaganda and persecution have upon the Church? In many places there was an amazing quickening of the spiritual life. Cleansed of worldly elements, freed from the burden of insincere members who had merely conformed outwardly for social reasons, purified as by fire, the true Orthodox believers gathered themselves together and resisted with heroism and humility. [...] (Ware, 1997, p. 148)
As Dostoevsky and others will tell us, if mankind loses its belief in its immortality—an immortality, regarding the next life, which we have only by the grace of God—then all things and all manner of conduct, no matter what they are, becomes permissible and justifiable and consequently human existence decays to the absolute worse form of barbarism; this has absolutely shown itself throughout history, and to this very day—in each individual’s personal history and humanity’s history, in general. Dostoevsky speaks brilliantly of this—through one of the characters, Ivan Fyodorovich Karamazov, in *The Brothers Karamazov*—in what follows:

[…]there is decidedly nothing in the whole world that would make men love their fellow men; that there exists no law of nature that man should love mankind, and that if there is and has been any love on earth up to now, it has come not from natural law but solely from people’s belief in their immortality. (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 69)

This is true, our belief in God and His bestowing, by grace, upon us of immortality makes love possible—as Orthodox Christians we know that our salvation is only in Christ and in His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body. Once again, the barbarism that follows from denying God and the dignity, only by grace, that He has bestowed upon us—to the point where we are even consuming one another, anthropophagy—cannot be denied as a lamentable historical and present reality, from which only Christ can save us. Again, Dostoevsky on some of these matters:

Ivan Fyodorovich added parenthetically that that is what all natural law consists of, so that were mankind’s belief in its own immortality to be destroyed, not only love but also any living power to continue the life of the world would at once dry up in it. Not only
that, but then nothing would be immoral any longer, everything would be permitted, even anthropophagy. And even that is not all: he ended with the assertion that for every separate person, like ourselves for instance, who believes neither in God nor in his own immortality, the moral law of nature ought to change immediately into the exact opposite of the former religious law, and that egoism, even to the point of evildoing, should not only be permitted to man but should be acknowledged as the necessary, the most reasonable, and all but the noblest result of his situation. (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 69)

Certainly—and to put it very simply, for it is quite simple—when we lose our sense of God’s unfathomable power and grace and love on our behalf, forgetting that in an eternal fashion we will one day “reap what we sow”, then, tragically, nothing becomes non-permissible and profound hatred and disrespect rule, and consequently there is no love. Pertaining to this matter, let us once again look at Dostoevsky and his faithfulness to the Orthodox saints—seen in the character Elder Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*, based on a real life Orthodox saint with whom Dostoevsky would converse (additionally, the translators tell us that this statement to follow is drawn from St. Isaac the Syrian [they note this on p.788]):

“What is hell?” And I answer thus: “The suffering of being no longer able to love.” (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 322)

This is hell on earth—which can lead to eternal hell—and we all live it on earth, to varying extents, and suffer the consequences of it. One only has to look at our own, and other people’s, oftentimes godless conduct towards the people around us, to see this plainly.
In what follows within the next few paragraphs, Father Romanides, Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, Father George Papavarnavas, St. Nikolai Velimirovich and others, consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition, explain beautifully that this selfish, self-centered love is certainly not the way to heaven; but, the selfless love acquired from the unfathomable grace of Christ our God within His Holy Orthodox Church—something clearly epitomized by the Orthodox saints—is our only path to salvation and sanctification. We observe the following beautiful quotations, in regard to these matters:

Christ was victorious over the devil, death and sin through His Cross and Resurrection. As death entered man’s body at the instigation of the devil, victory over the devil and death cannot come about through speculations and rational thoughts, only through the Cross, Tomb and Resurrection of Christ. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 129)

Truly, the Son of God—because of what He condescended to accomplish for us in becoming man and dwelling and conversing with us His creatures, and certainly all else that He did for us: the Cross, the Tomb, and His glorious Resurrection—is our only salvation and sanctification. God indeed has granted to us immortality, by grace, though His Only Begotten Son becoming Incarnate, suffering death in the flesh, and through His glorious Resurrection. As the Orthodox hymn for Easter tells us: “Christ is Risen from the dead, by death trampling down death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life.”

“Death is the devil’s greatest power and is destroyed within the Body of Christ, where the faithful continuously fight against Satan and struggle to acquire unselfish love. The battle against the devil and this struggle for unselfish love are centered on the
Indeed, the Orthodox saints defeat the devil, only by the grace of the Triune God; and, with what these Orthodox saints are granted, as they strive with their entire created being to do the commandments of God, we are all greatly encouraged and inspired by their unmatched fearlessness and holiness of life—in this sense they greatly inspire the rest us and teach us the great power and mercy of God:

It follows that “every saint of the Church represents the triumph of faith over the powers of the devil.” (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 131)

Consequently with noetic prayer in the heart “we have certain phenomena, apart from love: no fear exists in this human being. He remains unaffected to such a degree that his body can go through the worst tortures and yet he does not deny Christ.” (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 138)

This last quotation is of course true and proven by the Orthodox saints throughout history. We know what truly unparalleled things the Orthodox saints have accomplished by the grace of the Triune God, when they had reached glorification (had achieved theosis)—and this happens, in the strictest sense, only by the grace of God. For, without God and His unfathomable grace, we can accomplish nothing and are enslaved to fear and selfishness and motives solely pertaining to our perceived self interest:
“The worst illnesses are those affecting the human personality, which ultimately compel man to wage wars and kill people and steal and tell lies.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 138)

Sick and fallen man has selfish love and cares only for himself. He does not love God and other people. He has to be cured, to attain to unselfish love. This is achieved through Christ, Who alone is healthy and sinless. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 293)

When the noetic faculty is not functioning properly, man is enslaved to fear and anxiety and his relations to others are essentially utilitarian. Thus, the root cause of all abnormal relations between God and man and among men is that fallen man, i.e., man with a malfunctioning noetic faculty, uses God, his fellow man, and nature for his own understanding of security and happiness. Man outside of glorification imagines the existence of god or gods which are psychological projections of his need for security and happiness. (Romanides, n.d.)

St. Nikolai Velimirovich tells us first hand, as only an Orthodox saint can, of the great power of God and of those who know God. Certainly he is speaking of the Orthodox saints and their God given knowledge—through their having had experience with the uncreated energies of the Triune God. All the Orthodox saints, throughout history, have shown unmatched fearlessness in the face of a terrifying world, for no one has defied the power of this world as the Orthodox saints have
by the grace of God. Saint Nikolai Velimirovich quotes Holy Scripture and gives a beautiful Homily “on victory over the world”:

_In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world_ (16:33).

The Conqueror of the world, the One and Only, with these words teaches His followers not to fear the world.

Indeed, the world appears very strong; however, is not the One Who created the world stronger than the world?

The world is very frightening for him who does not know that God rules the world, and that He has the authority to hold it in existence as long as He wills and to return it into nonexistence whenever He wills. But to him who knows this, the world is not frightening. (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, p. 71)

Furthermore—as Fr. George Papavarnavas very inspiringly tells us—the Orthodox saints and martyrs were (and are) the greatest resistors to all of the power of this fallen world. As such, their educational example is unmatched in human history:

The Martyrs of Christ are the greatest resisters in the history of mankind. They resisted violence, authoritarianism and delusion with the power of their sacrificial love that gives life, and not by the power, or should we rather say weakness, of hatred which kills. The Holy Martyrs, free of the tyranny of the passions and demonic falsehood (“the idols of the nations are demons”), experienced the truth as reality in the person of the Word of God (“I am the Truth”) and freedom as the subjugation of the flesh, or carnal mind, to the spirit. Because they experienced God’s presence sensibly in the regeneration of their
existence by the Holy Spirit, this is why they endured to the end without bending even to
the most inhumane tortures. They sacrificed themselves, like Christ, that others may live,
and did not sacrifice others that they may live. The various ideologies, as constructs of
passionate people, are unable to offer life. Rather, they can even cause death, pain and
suffering. In the name of a pharisaical or rather demonic justice they reduce human lives
to better, as they claim, human societies, removing them from the elements which, in
their opinion, prevent their progress. That is, they try with violence and killing to
regenerate humanity and kill others that they may live. [“The Holy 42 Martyrs of
Amorium as Models for our Lives”] (Papavarnavas, 2003)

The Orthodox saints—in regard to their tremendous courage and sanctity—defy the insane and
frightful logic of this world, in a manner which is unparalleled. By the grace of God, they were
able to overcome the evil and power of this world. The Orthodox saints endured the most horrific
tortures and did not break, ever; they knew and lived the words of Christ, and as such the power
of this world, and all things regarded as significant in it, meant nothing to them:

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and
they derided Him.

15 And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God
knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the
1993, p. 181)

And in ancient Greek the above verse Luke 16:15 reads:
καὶ εἰπεν αὐτοῖς, Ἄνεις ἐστε οἱ δικαιούντες εαυτοὺς ἐνὸπτον τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ο̣̱ δὲ Ἐσκος γινομεῖ τὰς καρδίας υἱῶν. οτι τὸ εν ἀνθρώποις υψηλόν, βητέλυμα ενὸπτον τοῦ Ἐσκος εστίν.’ (The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: According to the received Greek text, together with the English authorized version, 1961, p. 197)

No matter how seemingly significant and unconquerable the power of the world, and no matter how terrifying that power is, the Orthodox saints could never (and will never) be conquered by any power of this world, and this is so by the grace of the Triune God—we Orthodox and others have only to look at the unmatched history of Orthodox Christianity throughout the ages to clearly see this.

With these matters in mind, regarding the great atheistic lie of Marxism and its failed attempt to destroy Orthodox Christianity—something that was pursued by all means of evildoing deemed necessary, by powerful and weak people alike, in their attempt to accomplish this evil goal—we again look at essentially what is part of one of the previous quotations, this time rephrased and spoken by another character (Dmitri Karamazov) in Dostoevsky’s masterpiece. From The Brothers Karamazov, Dmitri Karamazov asks the question: “Evildoing should not only be permitted but even should be acknowledged as the most necessary and most intelligent solution for the situation of every godless person! Is that it or not?” (Dostoevsky, 1991 p. 69).

And his brother Ivan Karamazov remarks: “There is no virtue if there is no immortality” (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 70).

Dostoevsky is consistent with Holy Orthodox tradition in the above remarks, as he is elsewhere; and we can see this consistency of Dostoevsky with Orthodox teaching by looking,
for example, at some of what St. John of Damascus has to say pertaining to matters very similar to the truthful statement above, “There is no virtue if there is no immortality” (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 70):

For if there is no resurrection, let us eat and drink: let us pursue a life of pleasure and enjoyment. If there is no resurrection, wherein do we differ from the irrational brutes? If there is no resurrection, let us hold the wild beasts of the field happy who have a life free from sorrow. If there is no resurrection, neither is there any God nor Providence, but all things are driven and borne along of themselves. For observe how we see most righteous men suffering hunger and injustice and receiving no help in the present life, while sinners and unrighteous men abound in riches and every delight. And who in his senses would take this for the work of a righteous judgement or a wise providence? There must be, therefore, there must be a resurrection. For God is just and is the rewarder of those who submit patiently to Him. Wherefore if it is the soul alone that engages in the contests of virtue, it is also the soul alone that will receive the crown. And if it were the soul alone that revels in pleasures, it would also be the soul alone that would be justly punished. But since the soul does not pursue either virtue or vice separate from the body, both together will obtain that which is their just due. (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 99)

The above quotations from The Brothers Karamazov, tragically describe not just the beliefs and actions of many powerful people in their godless oppression of weaker people, but they also generally describe all of us, to one extent or another, in our fallen condition and willful alienation from one another. Additionally, we must pay attention to the God-inspired wisdom of St. John of Damascus—where, in the foregoing quotation that we just saw, he clearly informs us of the fact
that there is a God Who sees and knows all; and He will one day, on the dreadful Day of
Judgment, give to each of us, body and soul, for all eternity, according to what we have done and
chosen to be. Obviously, great caution is needed from each of us, given what could be our reward
or punishment for eternity. Because God grants us immortality in either heaven or hell, virtue
does truly exist and matters profoundly.

Oftentimes, humanity in its self-worship and self-glorification, attempting to save itself
and attain perfection independent of God, the Holy Trinity, ends by torturing itself in its fruitless
pursuits—matters simply oftentimes end in people living atheistically; at various times and to
various extents, we are all guilty of this happening in our lives, whether explicitly confessed or
not. The cruelty of human beings towards their fellow human beings is a tragic, absolute
historical reality, for which we all, to one extent or another, share responsibility. Again, we quote
Dostoevsky (1991), as he speaks through one of the Brothers Karamazov, Ivan:
“I never could understand how it’s possible to love one’s neighbors. In my opinion, it is precisely
one’s neighbors that one cannot possibly love. Perhaps if they weren’t so nigh...” (p. 236).

Elsewhere, Ivan Karamazov remarks, “Indeed, people speak sometimes about the ‘animal’
cruelty of man, but that is terribly unjust and offensive to animals, no animal could ever be so
cruel as a man, so artfully, so artistically cruel. A tiger simply gnaws and tears, that is all he can
do” (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 238).

Once again, we look at Dostoevsky’s character, Ivan Karamazov, as he continues to speak about
humanity’s alienation from itself: “I think that if the devil does not exist, and man has therefore
created him, he has created him in his own image and likeness” (Dostoevsky, 1991, p 239).
Dostoevsky was right; when man rejects God, he becomes just like the devil. Mankind’s embrace of humanistic philosophy, and consequent rejection of Christ God and His Holy Orthodox Church, leads ultimately to an ideology which can justify all manner of evil and leads people to self-destruction.

_St. Justin of Chelije Rightfully Condemns Humanism_

St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije helps us to identify and confront the sorrowful realities which have been mentioned in the above discussion, and which were brilliantly brought to our attention by Dostoevsky; doing this, St. Justin gives us the Orthodox perspective regarding these same issues. These issues, as we have seen and will continue to see, are related, generally, to the fact that people are alienated from one another and from God, through sin. These aforementioned issues brought to our attention and reflected upon by Dostoevsky are, for example, related to the fact that human beings, oftentimes, choose to commit great evil against other human beings, in this fallen world in which we all live and attempt to survive. So, mindful of these things, we will first look at some of the comments of St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, this great modern day Orthodox saint, as he speaks of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, in full conformity with ancient Holy Orthodox Tradition. In so doing, St. Justin confesses mankind’s great limitations and sinfulness and the complete powerlessness of mankind to save itself from itself, and from the devil. Were it not for God willing to condescend and become fully man, while remaining fully God, all humanity would be entirely lost.

Now we read what St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (1998) has to say, regarding some of the aforementioned issues:
Is it possible that anyone remembers that the earth was once Paradise? Today’s fall of man is incomparably greater than the first fall: then man fell away from God, but today he has crucified God, killed God. What should we call you, O man, if not Devil? That is slandering the Devil. The Devil was never as evil, never so artfully evil, as man. The Lord Christ descended into Hell, but that was not where He was crucified. We crucified Him! (Popovich, 1998, p. 5)

Even the Dread Judgment, brother, will not be more dreadful than Great Friday. No, it will be incomparably less dreadful, for then God will judge man, but today man judges God. Today God is under Dread Judgment, mankind judges Him. Today man appraises God, valuing Him at thirty pieces of silver. He puts a price on Christ of thirty pieces of silver. Could this be the final price? Could it be that Judas is our last word about Christ?

Today mankind condemned God to death. This is the greatest mutiny in the history of Heaven and earth. This is the greatest sin in the history of Heaven and earth. Such was not committed even by the fallen angels. Today is performed the Dread Judgment on God. Never has the world seen a more innocent victim condemned and a more mindless judgment. Never was God mocked more dreadfully. Today all the storm of Hell entered into man and derided God, and all that is Divine. (Popovich, 1998, pp. 5-6)

“No one, no one should be so ashamed of himself as much as man--none of the demons, none of the wild beasts, none of the animals... Men spit at God--is there anything more horrible than this? Men strike God--is there anything more devilish than that? Brother, if there had been no Hell, it would have to have been thought up for man, for man alone...”
“He, the Creator and God, was spat upon and struck, but He, meek and silent, bore it all.”

... (Popovich, 1998, pp. 8-9)

God is crucified. Are you satisfied, fighters against God; are you appeased, killers of God? How do you assess Christ on the Cross? A deceiver, a ninny, a seducer; if Thou art the Son of God, come down from the Cross? O Thou Who buildest the Temple in three days, save Thyself and come down from the Cross!

What does the Lord on the Cross think about the people beneath the Cross? That which only the God of love and meekness could think: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (St. Luke 23:34) (Popovich, 1998, pp. 9-10)

St. Justin Popovich speaks here about what is, to Orthodox Christianity, the indisputable, historical, truth of the Cross, which Christ the God-Man voluntarily endured, and His glorious Resurrection on the third day. These are not just historical realities confined to the past; for Orthodox Christians, they are also forever present. People’s love, hatred, or indifference towards Christ is as real and significant now as it would have been during the actual historical time of the Crucifixion and glorious Resurrection. It is in this spirit that St. Justin tells us the following:

Alas, we ceaselessly persecute the Risen Christ.... How, how can we persecute Christ, says someone, when He is not with us physically, when we do not see His Body? Ah, we persecute Christ, brother, when we persecute His Spirit, when we persecute His teaching, when we persecute His Saints, when we persecute His Church. We persecute Christ when we drive away a beggar, for He it is Who in the beggars begs; we persecute Christ when we do not clothe the naked, for in the naked Christ goes naked; we persecute Christ when
we do not feed the hungry, for in the hungry Christ hungers. In every sufferer, the Lord Christ suffers,... In His immeasurable mercy, He ceaselessly unites Himself with them: ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me.’ (St. Matthew 25:40, 45) (Popovich, 1998, pp. 12-13)

“The Theanthropos vanquished sin and death by His Resurrection, in order to awaken man to immortality and eternal life, to rejuvenate the stunted and paralyzed sense of immortality in man, so that he can sense that God and eternal life are the purpose of his life on earth and in heaven” (Popovic, 2000, p. 97).

If Christ is not risen, then why believe in Him? To be honest, I would never have believed in Him had He not risen and had not thereby vanquished death. Our greatest enemy was killed and we were given immortality. Without this, our world is a noisy display of revolting stupidity. Only by His Glorious Resurrection did our wonderful Lord free us from stupidity and despair, for neither in Heaven nor under Heaven is there a greater stupidity than this world without the Resurrection; and there is not a greater despair than this life without immortality. There is no being in a single world more miserable than man who does not believe in the resurrection of the dead. It would have been better for such a man never to have been born. (Popovich, 1998, p. 18)

As we just saw, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, beautifully, gives an Orthodox perspective to many of Dostoevsky’s concerns and insightful descriptions of fallen humanity (which the Orthodox Christian, Dostoevsky, brought forth in his masterpiece The Brothers
Marxism and Other Humanistic Systems are Profoundly Similar to One Another, in Their Alienation From God and the People Whom They Oppress

The Marxists and other humanist groups rejected the God-Man, Christ, and His Glorious Resurrection and the immortality for humanity which came through the Resurrection. This willful and voluntary rejection of Christ on the part of the Marxists and other humanist groups, which continues to this day, left these same “self-sufficient” groups of people with the task of having to “build” the means for their own survival and salvation, by themselves. This striving to construct systems and plans for mankind’s “salvation”, independent of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church (which is what the followers of ecumenism, and their powerful political allies, seek to accomplish) is something which these humanists, deluded by their temporary great worldly power, have attempted and continue to attempt, with devastating consequences for much of humanity. The followers of the humanistic philosophical systems in their rejection of Christ fail to learn from or heed the advice of His saints when they teach us the following:

The essence of a fall into sin is always the same: the wish to become good, to become perfect, by one’s own efforts, the wish to become a god by oneself. But, by this, man has made himself equal with the devil, who also wanted to become a god by himself and so supplant God. In his arrogance, he suddenly became the devil, completely alienated from God and completely opposed to Him. In this arrogant self-deception lies the essence of sin, the ultimate sin. In this lies the essence of the devil himself, the ultimate devil: Satan. (Popovic, 2000, pp. 144- 145)
The Marxists and their allies were able to commit their crimes and atrocities against innumerable people because for them there was no God to Whom they had to answer, and consequently no morals to restrain them from committing their abominations. This, they must have felt, gave them the right “to build a better world” by first tormenting and murdering countless people. The latest “New World Order”—which, among its numerous violations of human rights and international law, features “humane”, preemptive war in order to make the world a “better place” by first destroying people—seems to have fanatical advocates who have learned much from the terror tactics of Marxism and other similar humanistic philosophies. The world’s power elite feels, and always has felt historically, that “Might makes right”. Tragically, we all, to one extent or another, have been guilty of this kind of barbarism, as we feel justified in the injustices which we commit against other people, as we hypocritically strive to exercise some sort of dominion over others (provided that we have the power to do so). All such people (and that includes all of us to one extent or another, as was just mentioned), have justified themselves before men by claiming that their goals (their ends) will justify their means.

Obviously, we all do not have the same great power and influence that the world’s most powerful people have, which enables them to commit their evil, whenever they have the intention to do so, on a much larger scale than the rest are able to do. All people who have power in a particular circumstance (and that includes all of us, where to one extent or another, at various times and in various situations in life, we have some power over others) in their self-love, arrogance and hypocrisy, deluded by the temporary power that has been given to them—for all such worldly power is temporary and, in the end, will be brought to nothing when God comes again to judge the living and the dead—feel justified in the injustices that they commit against
others. It must be noted, that the evil intentions (whenever present) of the world’s most powerful people—which are often manifested in their devastating actions towards others—are no less evil than the evil intentions frequently found in the rest of us. The world’s power elite simply have substantially more worldly power with which to accomplish their evil intentions than the rest of us do, that is all.

There is, oftentimes, as we see, a sort of disturbing and frightening moral equivalence to be found, between, on the one hand, the world’s great leaders and other very powerful people of the world and, on the other hand, the rest of us. The very same powerful people whom we condemn for their works of evil, and rightfully so, are sometimes much more similar to the rest of us than we would like to admit either to ourselves or to others. In so many ways, the only difference between powerful people and weaker people is that of circumstance. Powerful people are powerful only because they have been given more power, by no means possessing this power intrinsically in themselves, and weaker people—who just like the more powerful people (and in fact just like all people, in general), possess absolutely nothing in and of themselves—are weak only because they have been given less power than others in a particular circumstance, that is all. Evil intentions which are to be found among all people (among the weak and the strong), make all people, the weak and the powerful alike, practically indistinguishable from one another. Solzhenitsyn confesses this reality inspiringly when he tells us:

If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us
and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

During the life of any heart this line keeps changing place; sometimes it is squeezed one way by exuberant evil and sometimes it shifts to allow enough space for good to flourish. One and the same human being is, at various ages, under various circumstances, a totally different human being. At times he is close to being a devil, at times to sainthood. But his name doesn’t change, and to that name we ascribe the whole lot, good and evil.

Socrates taught us: *Know thyself!*

Confronted by the pit into which we are about to toss those who have done us harm, we halt, stricken dumb: it is after all only because of the way things worked out that they were the executioners and we weren’t. . . . From good to evil is one quaver, says the proverb. And correspondingly, from evil to good. (Solzhenitsyn, 1973, p. 168)

The people with the greatest worldly power, whoever they may be in a particular circumstance, have most frequently attempted to justify their actions by their goals. People, in general, whenever they choose, and have the power, to engage in wrongdoing, oftentimes attempt to justify their wrongdoing by their supposedly just goals. Regarding evil actions and the supposedly just goals pursued through such actions by many (by all of us sometimes), most frequently, the means and the goals, whether explicitly revealed or not, are equally misguided and deplorable. Again, one only needs to take a close look at some history to confirm this. People with great worldly power pursuing a godless agenda—with others stupid enough to follow them
and do their bidding, or who are at least too fearful to confront them—more often than not, have essentially, through their conduct, responded “Yes” to questions similar to this one posed by Dostoevsky (1991) in *The Brothers Karamazov*, through the character Ivan Karamazov, who asks:

Tell me straight out, I call on you--answer me: imagine that you yourself are building the edifice of human destiny with the object of making people happy in the finale, of giving them peace and rest at last, but for that you must inevitably and unavoidably torture just one tiny creature, that same child who was beating her chest with her little fist, and raise your edifice on the foundation of her unrequited tears--would you agree to be the architect on such conditions? Tell me the truth. (p. 245)

When very powerful, hypocritical people advocate and start “humane”, preemptive wars in which of course they themselves are not willing to die or suffer, but who are more than willing to impose that same death and suffering on countless other human beings, then we clearly can see that these same very powerful people are responding with a resounding “Yes” to the above question of Dostoevsky’s.

When the world’s most powerful people decide to start wars for the “good” of humanity and inevitably innocent people die of famine, thirst, disease or wounds as a result of the “humane war” in question then the utmost sympathy is usually expressed by members of the world’s power elite without themselves acknowledging any responsibility for the unfortunate collateral damage. Instead, usually the blame is placed on someone weaker who was formerly allied in some sense to that same power elite. These weaker people, with whom the world’s power elite
did great business and with whom they played world politics, serve a purpose. After many years of doing business with, and selling arms to, these weaker nations and leaders—and after playing Geopolitics at the expense of countless human beings—inevitably and suddenly, the very powerful people of the world discover that these weaker people are very evil and oppressive, and always have been, and therefore must be stopped immediately. And anyone and any nation that has ever done business with these newly proclaimed evil nations is also evil, with the exception of course that the most powerful people and nations (who uniquely have the best intentions for humanity and are the ultimate judges for what is good and evil in the world) are excluded from this categorization, and therefore need not answer for what they have done. Regarding this hypocrisy, let us look at one general example from very many possible examples: Much of the weapons that are used by all sides in the multitude of conflicts throughout the world tend to be manufactured by the same people and corporations, which is great business. Because, once a nation is destroyed it will need to be rebuilt and it will need to be sold arms once again, so that there will once again be a pretext to destroy that same nation and make the world a safer, more humane place. The tragedy and irony of all the countless examples of people’s hypocrisy and evil, found throughout the world and throughout history (myself as guilty as anyone else), is this: If the situation were reversed and the weak were now the strong and the strong were now the weak, then the newly strong would attempt to dominate the newly weak. The same law of the jungle would hold as the violence, hypocrisy, lies, exploitation, evil and devastation would in all likelihood be essentially the same, only with the circumstances being completely reversed, and that would be just as wrong then as it is now, and as it always has been wrong.
There is no man-made organization, system, network or philosophy that can answer all of humanity’s most pressing questions and consequently save humanity. Humanistic philosophies and systems from Marxism to secular humanism, and from Tele-evangelism to religious ecumenism, and everything else in between all have “withered humanistic roots” (Popovic, 2000, p. 155), powerless to save mankind. In fact, historically and currently such organizations and systems pander to and serve very powerful people and political forces which would account for their unhampered existence in many spheres of society, while they do little to substantially help common people in their everyday struggles to survive.

Let us look at a specific example of just how humane a humanistic philosophy or system can be when given the chance to liberate and better the lives of people. We will look at the historical example of Marxism in predominately Orthodox Russia and in the surrounding areas. The following statistics pertain to what was the Soviet Union which had an enormous Orthodox Christian population. This profound, ever enduring Orthodox presence was something that the Marxist leadership, and their blind, willfully stupid henchmen, could not stand to have in their midst and so they did their best to decimate and destroy the Orthodox Christian population and heritage throughout Eastern Europe and Russia through intimidation, imprisonment, torture, and through vast cultural and physical genocide. We note that the statistics about to be seen, which predominately (though by no means exclusively) reflect the catastrophe suffered by Orthodox Christians, pertain only to the former Soviet Union and they do not even include the staggering losses of many millions of other Orthodox Christians and descendants of Orthodox Christians, in both Russia and throughout the rest of Europe, as a result of the two world wars. We note, if we look far enough back into the history of Orthodox Christianity, that the mention of “descendants
of Orthodox Christians” would include huge numbers of people from the populations of Europe, Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine and other parts of the world--many of whom have remained, miraculously, at least nominally, Orthodox throughout history and many others, tragically, have not remained Orthodox having broken away at various times, having succumb to various apostasies and heresies of the world and of history. So with this in mind we observe:

Not counting the two world wars, according to the calculations of Ivan Kurganov, who was once a professor of statistics in Leningrad, we lost sixty-six million (!!) people from civil discord and disorder alone, and from domestic, “class”, political and economic destruction. A significant percentage of this unbelievable number were clergy and believers. (Pushkarev, S., Rusak, V., Yakunin, G., 1989, p.78)

The great Russian Orthodox writer, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in his monumental work *The Gulag Archipelago*, also quotes these same figures from the work of Professor Ivan Kurganov, and he also informs us as to the specific time period about which Kurganov’s research pertains, namely 1917-1959: “According to the estimates of émigré Professor of Statistics Kurganov, this ‘comparatively easy’ internal repression cost us, from the beginning of the October Revolution up to 1959, a total of . . . sixty-six million-- 66,000,000--lives” (Solzhenitsyn, 1975a, p. 10).

One can find other estimates dealing with roughly this same time period. Additionally, there are other estimates to be found which deal with the time period covering the entire reign of Marxism in Russia. Mindful of all these different estimates, we see that there are calculations which put the number of people lost to Marxism in the Soviet Union at about that same number which Kurganov calculates or at a somewhat lower number than that figure. And in some other
cases the estimates are very much lower than Kurganov’s calculations. However, there are still other estimates putting the total number of people killed by Marxism in the Soviet Union at a somewhat higher figure than that of 66,000,000 killed. And according to some calculations, the number of people who were murdered in the Soviet Union by the godless inhumanity of Marxism alone is estimated to be very much higher than even the figure of 66,000,000 people killed. (Rummel, 1990, pp 16-20, 24).

By simply considering the demographics prior to, and shortly after, the 1917 Communist Coup: it is completely logical to conclude that the overwhelming majority of these people who were killed in the catastrophe of Marxism were baptized Orthodox Christians and their sons and daughters, who themselves may or may not have been baptized Orthodox due to their potential apostasy for various reasons, including, but not limited to, those associated with the ignorance and fear engendered by Marxist restrictions, oppression and persecution.

We also note that the exploitation and evil associated with powerful people oppressing weaker people was a frequent occurrence in Tsarist Russia, and this provided the Marxist leadership with the opportunity, for which they had long awaited, to assume power and (among other things) do everything possible to destroy Orthodox Christianity. Of course, great injustice which was certainly to be found abundantly in Imperial Russia—before the incomparably greater devastation which was to follow because of Marxism—was not something that was unique to Tsarist Russia, because generally, such exploitation and evil has always occurred and has been seen in all places and times, throughout the world and throughout history. The sinfulness of Orthodox Christians and others contributed greatly to the horrific, all-encompassing, yet
ultimately failed attempt, on the part of the communist power elite, to destroy Orthodox
Christianity and other faiths. This cultural and human genocide enacted by the Marxists was
done so as to “liberate” the people from the “oppression of religion”. With Marxism’s proven
hatred of both Orthodox Trinitarian Theology and Orthodox Christians, seen in communism’s
catastrophic oppression of the Orthodox Church, one thing becomes clear: Communism
attempted to destroy Orthodoxy in Russia, and elsewhere, so that the atheistic Marxists could
exclusively, and “humanely”, oppress and devastate the same people about whom they claimed
to care so much.

The atheistic power elite of Marxism, and all their allies, “loved” the people so much that
they subjected those same people to things to which they would never have subjected themselves
or other people for whom they really cared. It is really just a matter of common sense for one to
see the following: When people, who do not have any concern for you, tell you that they want to
help you, their “help” is more likely to cause you much more harm than good—but even in the
worst oppression, Christ will never forsake His Holy Orthodox Church; and in fact He will
glorify it all the more to show that great worldly power and evil can never destroy the Holy
Orthodox Church. It is likewise self-evident that when people who hate you tell you that they are
concerned for you and want to help you, they are likely to be lying, motivated purely by their
own selfish goals and self interest, and consequently their “help” is something which is meant to
lead to your destruction. This kind of evil and stupidity describes the actions and deceptions of
the Marxist power elite and their allies towards Orthodox Christians and others, and in a sense it
describes the willful stupidity of all Orthodox Christians who were willing to follow such people
to self-destruction. Many Orthodox Christians, seeking what they perceived to be liberation from
the real injustices which they were suffering, embraced a great lie which was told to them by people who hated them more profoundly than anyone else. And these same willfully deceived Orthodox Christians gladly slaughtered other Orthodox Christians in an attempt to reach the false liberation offered to them by Marxism. Solzhenitsyn was right in his explanation of a Russian proverb, and all Orthodox Christians are well advised to pay attention to such reasoning, so as not to make the same mistakes made by many of our ancestors in embracing ideologies and systems which seek to undermine and destroy Orthodox Christianity: “We have a Russian proverb: ‘Do not call a wolf to help you against the dogs.’ If dogs are attacking and tearing at you, fight against the dogs, but do not call a wolf for help. Because when the wolves come, they will destroy the dogs, but they will also tear you apart” (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b).

The same sort of phenomenon is to be observed, throughout history and to this day, in countless other circumstances where we find very powerful people who are themselves the greatest proponents of their own man-made theological, philosophical and political systems and who within the delusion of these same man-made, humanistic systems promise other people that they will lead them to “the building of a better world” (much as the Marxists promised). But first those same people, who are to be led to this “better world”, must help in the destruction of any and all people who are deemed to be enemies of this future “New World Order”—whichever New World Order it may happen to be, depending upon where we are in human history and depending upon who has great power at a particular moment in history—a New World Order which the world’s power elite is “benevolently” trying to construct, through violence. With what we have just said being kept in mind, we look among the innumerable great evils that exist in the world and we draw our attention to the current New World Order, which is nothing other than a
blatant, lawless, hypocritical attempt to justify and implement that which is unjustifiable: namely aggression, brutality and war for the fulfillment of the goals of the world’s most powerful people without concern for the cost to the rest of humanity. What else is new? All these things described, born of lifeless humanism, apply to any and all “New World Orders” which have ever existed or ever will exist. And just like what happened with the enormous devastation of humanity caused by Marxism and by many of its blinded followers (and which occurred because of the sinfulness, stupidity and cowardice of humanity in general), there remain plenty of people who are ignorant or willfully stupid enough, or at least too fearful to courageously confront this latest evil which is being introduced into the world, so that the implementation of this latest global catastrophe is, tragically, almost assured.

I must note, regarding ignorance, stupidity and lack of courage, that we all—to one degree or another—possess these sorrowful attributes; and the extent to which we possess them can of course vary with time and circumstance. Speaking for myself, the ignorance and stupidity with which I have lived and with which I have chosen to conduct myself in countless circumstances—and with which I continue to conduct myself in many instances—is a sad reality in my life, in need of correction. Regarding my lack of courage, I have, throughout my life, been a coward. And I remain, a pitiful coward, in need of the courage which only Christ can give me.

So how does humanity escape the dilemma of its own selfishness, hypocrisy, cowardice and evil-doing and that of its leaders? For Orthodox Christians, the countless Orthodox saints and martyrs—who by the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, possess indomitable courage and love for God and all humanity—are truly the great teachers and leaders of the Orthodox Faithful. This
is so, because these same Orthodox martyrs and saints zealously sought to place the will of God, the Holy Trinity, above their own will and self-interest, thereby in themselves, by the grace of God, transcending the selfishness, stupidity and evil of this world, they help lead humanity to the one salvation and Truth, Jesus Christ.

The communist power elite—which had no belief in God, the Holy Trinity, and consequently had no fear of God, the Holy Trinity—magnanimously decided, in its great atheistic love for mankind, to build the world’s first genuinely “humane” and “just” society, where man would no longer oppress man. To accomplish all of this, these same atheists—who hated God and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ—found it necessary and unavoidable to first oppress, torture and murder countless people in order to lay the foundation for their humane and democratic society. What Dostoevsky feared, and predicted, would happen did indeed happen through Marxism and its followers.

As we said, for the communists to build their perfect society they had to first destroy countless people, much like the doctrine of preemptive war which the world’s power elite of today advocate as they work to build the New World Order at any and all costs to humanity. The systematic torture and mass murder of countless people, on an unprecedented scale, in order to lay the foundation for a “better world” was something that the Marxist power elite zealously advocated and worked to attain, and they accomplished what they had set out to do: Tens of millions were persecuted, tortured and countless people were systematically worked to death in communist concentration camps in the most horrifying conditions imaginable. Tragically, very many Orthodox Christians, in Russia and throughout the world, were willingly stupid enough to be deceived by the great atheistic lie of Marxism. And to a large extent as a result of this willful
stupidity on the part of very many Orthodox Christians, both weak and strong, Orthodox
Christianity, once again, found itself having to survive almost insurmountable persecution, which
by the grace of the Triune God it miraculously did survive—in spite of devastating, almost
unimaginable losses. The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, the only True Church, having
survived such evil is truly a testament to God’s unconquerable power and a testament to how the
Triune God empowered the Orthodox Saints (both known and unknown) to be truly unbreakable
in their confession of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. Only by the mercy of the Triune
God, and through no intrinsic merit on the part of Orthodox Christians themselves, Orthodox
Christianity in its unparalleled history has never been conquered, nor will it ever be.

Keeping in mind that no ideology nor person has a monopoly on evil, I would like to
quote the Russian Orthodox priest, Father Vladimir Stepanov (Rusak) when he spoke of
Marxism’s great crimes against the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian people:

After the war people did not forget the vile things that the Nazis did on Russian soil. The
scale of what they did, it is true, is enormous. But as far as their acts against the Church
are concerned, they were not as terrible as the communists would like everyone to
believe. True, several dozen cathedrals were destroyed; several hundred brutal acts of
violence were committed against priests; but this is nothing compared to the cruelty of
the Soviet government toward the Church in the entire period of peacetime after the
Revolution of 1917.

The crimes of the Nazis against humanity have not been forgotten; they were judged at
the Nuremberg trials. The crimes of the Soviet government against the Church, and
against the Russian people were completely forgotten, blasphemously and most sadly, by the Church itself. Will there be a new Nuremberg trial at which the evils the Bolsheviks inflicted on the Church will be judged? Such a trial must be held! And we are prepared to act as witnesses for the prosecution! (Pushkarev, et al., 1989, p. 40)

There are so many injustices of human history that have been ignored, or not adequately addressed. This apparently is so because very powerful people choose to ignore such matters, and address them at some level, usually superficially, and only when they feel that it is to their advantage, with the matter of justice being the last of their considerations.

*Political Correctness: An Attempt to Control and Suppress Freedom of Expression*

We mention all these things about Marxism (and rightfully so, because of its unprecedented destruction of humanity), but, as was mentioned, the same sort of condemnation can be directed towards any other secular or non-secular rationalistic, humanistic philosophy or system. A relatively new humanistic ideology in name, but not in practice, is “Political correctness”, which is itself a blatant, oppressive and thus far amazingly successful attempt on the part of very powerful people to dictate to other people what it is that they are allowed to say, and not allowed to say. It seems that the goal of the world’s power elite using the tool of oppression known as Political correctness is to define, and confine, freedom of speech to their own exact specifications and desired restrictions (which of course ironically means that a person’s speech is no longer free). Does this sound like anything that the Nazis and Marxists did? Or does it sound like what any other oppressive regime or ideology has done? Now once people are told what is that they are allowed to say and think and not allowed to say and think there are,
understandably, punishments for transgressing the pre-approved and mandated limits to “free speech”—which can range from losing one’s job to being imprisoned or killed, for having the wrong opinion or associating with the wrong organization. The so called “War on Terror”, unquestioningly embraced and propagandized by the world’s major media networks, is a perfect excuse for many of the world’s most powerful people to terrorize anyone who gets in the way of geopolitical agenda, their New World Order. Much like the Marxists used the oppression inflicted upon humanity by some of the Orthodox Tsars, by some Orthodox ecclesiastical leaders, and by some others who were also powerful in Imperial Russia, as an excuse for their oppression of others—an oppression which the Marxist leadership liberally inflicted upon their own subjects, within their communist empire—so also this latest New World Order power elite uses the real and horrifying threat from Islamic terrorists, and others, to justify their destroying anyone who gets in their way. It must be made clear, in case that there is any doubt: All of what is said here is in no way to justify the evil and stupidity of Islamic terrorists, nor for that matter are these things said to justify the evil and stupidity of Jewish terrorists, Orthodox Christian terrorists, Roman Catholic terrorists or any other terrorists, all of whom are evil and stupid irrespective of who they are or from where they come.

One can say in a sense that Political correctness, in its numerous varieties, works to condition people to behave themselves within the all-powerful confines of New World Order politics. But of course, in the strictest sense, there is a Political correctness, that is to say coercive and threatening limitations on free speech and free expression, which people are forced to encounter, that are to be found in countless other human situations and not just in the “grand” scheme of New World Order politics. Some such examples of these threatening and oppressive
situations, which are to be found, range from circumstances in a Middle school locker room to situations found in an abusive household, and from office politics in a big corporation to practically any place where a person is, in some sense, a minority—and generally speaking such circumstances exist in countless other situations where a person has less power than someone else. In short, mankind’s fallen condition is invariably associated with human beings threatening and oppressing other human beings.

I must note, at this point, that I am fortunate to be writing this thesis in a great country which has fed me and helped me, the United States of America, where to a large degree I have the freedom to express myself—there are many other countries in which I would not have the courage to write these things. Additionally, regardless of what happens, I felt that these things needed to be said. As we proceed in our discussion, I believe that it is also necessary to say that with political correctness and the supposed “War on Terror”— motivated by the world’s most powerful people pursuing their geopolitical, economic, social, and religious agendas—we continue to see our freedoms in the United States, and elsewhere, deteriorating. With Political correctness only speech which is approved is free and any non-approved speech has potentially serious consequences for the person daring to speak too freely in all matters. Such potentially devastating consequences for anyone attempting to speak freely are manifested to try to make sure that no one exceeds any particular strict limits on “Free” speech (which are imposed by some of the powerful guardians of controlled “Free” speech). Daring to speak too freely can get a person into catastrophic problems, especially if the person’s speech is offensive to very powerful people, this is an obvious reality—which has existed throughout the world and throughout history, and continues unabated to this day, everywhere.
The world’s power elite has always, throughout history, tried to control what people say and think. Of course, it is no different now when, tragically to a significant degree, we have freedom of speech only in name, but not always in practice because of, among other things, the “War on Terror” and the associated policies of very powerful governments which in “Orwellian” fashion violate human rights throughout the world in order to combat a terrorist problem which these same governments helped to create in the first place. Given the terror tactics of the world’s most powerful people and governments, as they fight against much weaker terrorists, we see political correctness and other constraints on free speech serving the latest New World Order, in which preemptive war is lauded as “humane” and the consequent exploitation and devastation of humanity is trivialized or completely ignored. We must note that the weaker terrorists, who were just mentioned, are no less evil than the more powerful terrorists—they simply have less power with which to influence and terrorize people—and each side uses the other side’s existence and conduct to justify its own existence and conduct. Once again, to which we have alluded earlier, this by no means justifies Islamic militants and their terrorism against unarmed civilians. Instead, generally speaking, we must condemn any and all terrorism against any civilian population regardless of who commits it, and regardless of whether or not powerful governments and media networks choose to acknowledge such terrorism for what it is—terrorism. The Orthodox saints were not intimidated by powerful people, attempting to control free expression and thought, but most of the rest of us, myself included, are.
The Orthodox Saints Fight Against the Evil and Hypocrisy Inherent to All Humanistic Systems

Just as the Marxist power elite used much of the injustice and exploitation of this world as an opportunity to deceive anyone willfully stupid enough to follow them and serve their godless agenda, so also the New World Order power elite of today uses a terrorist problem, which they themselves have helped to create, as an excuse for attempting to dominate the world with their own godless agenda. The Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the infinite mercy and power of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, have always heroically fought against such evil and hypocrisy. The Orthodox saints’ and martyrs’ heroic fight against such evil, is a great educational example for all Orthodox Christians, and for the entire world. The Orthodox saints were never Politically correct. In contrast, ecumenism, in all its varieties—explicitly, or implicitly, presented—is simply a very powerful manifestation of Political correctness, constructed for the world’s religions to follow. In striking contrast to what many of the followers of ecumenism do, the Orthodox saints teach the world to follow the absolute Truth, Christ the Theanthropos, Who is found in His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body. The Orthodox saints teach us through their great courage, wisdom and holiness of life. The ecumenists, including Orthodox ecumenists, for the most part, do not do these things. For, the ecumenists, including Orthodox ecumenists, have embraced a humanistic philosophy and system, ecumenism, that denies the unique, absolute Truth that is Christ the Theanthropos (the God-Man) and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body. Ecumenism does not lead people beyond the injustice and hypocrisy of this fallen world, but instead, through its relativism and subservience, cooperates with it.
Regarding the supposed “War on Terror”— which the world’s most powerful people use as an excuse to terrorize people, in order to dominate the world—we must say, that what people feel is in their vested interest greatly influences their opinion on particular issues, sometimes more than the truth does. With that in mind, and acknowledging that we are all guilty of this sort of selective cognizance, which of course is a form of hypocrisy, we should assert that terrorism is terrorism regardless of who commits it and regardless of the hypocritical, selective labeling that exists pertaining to it. Terrorism, whether it be committed by Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Jews, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs or by any other people from any other group, religious or otherwise, needs to be condemned for the evil that it is, independent of who commits it. All peoples have had and continue to have violent, misguided, hypocritical and cowardly people who view terrorism as somehow justified provided that they can get away with it, either by brute force, intimidation or by any other means. People choosing to employ terror, or any other evil, to achieve their goals justify the means by the ends, when in actuality the means and the ends are, most oftentimes, equally deplorable. We look at the horror of what goes on in the world, and we are compelled to hold responsible ourselves. Each and every one of us is in some sense responsible, collectively and individually, for the problems and sufferings of humanity (as was mentioned earlier). The Orthodox Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia helps us to see this as he quotes the great Russian Orthodox writer, Solzhenitsyn:

For most Orthodox Christians in the twentieth century, Communism has been the enemy. But it is wise to remember that our enemy lies not only outside us but within. As Solzhenitsyn discovered in the prison camp, we should not simply project evil upon others, but we need to search our own hearts: “Gradually it was disclosed to me that the
line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either- but right through every human heart--and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains... an unuprooted small corner of evil.” [The Gulag Archipelago, vol. 2 (London 1975), part iv, p.597] (Ware, 1997, p. 171)

In resistance to the evil that exists in this fallen world, in resistance to the devastating oppression and evil, which humanity inflicts upon itself, the Orthodox saints educate mankind that God, the Holy Trinity, as confessed in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, is humanity’s only salvation. Regarding these saints and martyrs, when it was their time to make this Orthodox Trinitarian confession--in the face of overwhelming, oppressive and hypocritical power--no intimidation or threat could force them to confess otherwise. Fearlessly confessing the truth of Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, the Orthodox saints and martyrs forever teach humanity that the fallen condition of the world, and all of us in it, is not the way that things were meant to be, nor the way that they will always be. The Orthodox saints prove this to themselves and to the rest of humanity, by the unfathomable grace and power of God, through their confronting the delusion and hypocrisy of great worldly power, without any regard for their own survival. The Orthodox saints and martyrs teach us--though most of us (myself included) greatly lack their courage--that the goal of our lives is to courageously serve our Creator, God, the Holy Trinity, and to bow down to no one else.

There was no Political correctness, nor any other intimidation and worldly power, which could dominate the lives of the Orthodox saints and martyrs who had completely surrendered
themselves to God and proved that they had done so, not just by their words of great wisdom, but by their courageous acceptance of all horrifying danger, suffering and death—this, the Orthodox saints and martyrs accomplished by the grace of God. It is in this regard that the Orthodox venerate their saints and look to them for enlightenment and education, because only by the unfathomable grace of God do the saints have their great sanctity with which they can teach us so much (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132).
CHAPTER 7

ORTHODOX THEOLOGY CONTRADICTS THE HERESY OF THE 

FILIOQUE INNOVATION

Before we proceed further, to illustrate some of the absurdity and irresponsibility of some of the previously quoted remarks made by ecumenists—which are irreconcilable with the truthful and heroic witness of the Orthodox saints—let us look at the Roman Catholic theological innovation known as the Filioque, the addition into the original Symbol of Faith\(^49\) of the words “and from the Son”, regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit. This Filioque claim violates the ancient defense and proclamation of Orthodox Dogma as confessed by Holy Ecumenical Synods. People who advocate and propagate such innovations, arguably, in effect, attempt to trivialize and relativize the Holy Ecumenical Synods themselves, which since ancient times and throughout the subsequent history of the Church have proclaimed and defended Orthodox Trinitarian Theology and Dogma without change. Additionally, as St. Nectarios and other saints will tell us, this apparent trivialization and relativization of Holy Ecumenical Synods has the obvious effect for many people of calling into question the validity, significance and authority of these same Holy Synods, which in turn causes confusion and harm to many of the faithful (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 21). This is all closely connected—as St. Nectarios and St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije and others will teach us—to issues and claims of individual “infallibility”.

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\(^49\) The original Symbol of Faith, also known as the Nicene Creed, was and is a profession of Orthodox Faith composed during the course of the first Two Ecumenical Councils (finalized at the Second Ecumenical Council, 381 A.D.). According to Orthodox theologians (and according to Orthodox Tradition) the Symbol of Faith summarizes the basic beliefs of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church has kept the Symbol of Faith of the ancient, undivided Church (the Orthodox Church) unaltered to this very day.
regardless of whether those claims are being made on the part of the Papacy or by people within Protestantism or by anyone else.

In addition to looking at the original Greek text of the Symbol of Faith (also known as the *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed* or oftentimes simply referred to as the *Nicene Creed*), we will consider an official translation into English of that same Creed by the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Chicago honoring the 1600th anniversary of the Second Ecumenical Council, 381 - 1981 A.D.. This Second Holy Ecumenical Synod finalized and (one could better say) formalized the Symbol of Faith which had, in essence, always been confessed by Orthodox Christianity since Apostolic times in the life and worship of the Church, the Orthodox Church. In actuality, regarding all Seven Holy Ecumenical Synods: We must state the sad fact that many Christians, including Orthodox Christians, and countless non-Christian groups, are completely ignorant of many of the eternal Dogmatic truths and definitions which were confessed and proclaimed in these Holy Ecumenical Synods in order to defend the Apostolic Faith, Orthodox Christianity, from the error of false teaching. Nothing new was proclaimed at these Holy Ecumenical Councils, simply the ancient and eternal Apostolic Faith, Orthodox Christianity, was defended against any and all heresy. This, by the grace of God, was done both for the Orthodox faithful and for the entire world, for all of humanity in general.

An obvious question needs to be asked given the fact that numerous, prominent Orthodox leaders are willfully entrenched in the syncretistic contradiction and confusion that is contemporary ecumenism. How will these same leaders teach to the Orthodox flock entrusted to
them, and to the whole world, the incomparable truth of Holy Orthodoxy, when they oftentimes are publicly embracing the glorified relativism of the ecumenical movement?

So, let us look at the Symbol of Faith in both the original Greek\textsuperscript{50} and in English translation and then look at some Orthodox arguments against the Roman Catholic Filioque innovation.

**THE SYMBOL OF FAITH**

(The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed)

1. I believe in one God, the Father almighty,

   Maker of heaven and earth,

   and of all things visible and invisible;

2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ,

   the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made,

   of one essence with the Father

   by Whom all things were made;

\textsuperscript{50} The original Greek of the ancient Symbol of Faith has various accent marks--intonation marks, breathing signs, etc.--that are to be seen in Liturgical texts of the Orthodox Church, where the Greek language is used; and these same accent marks thus are also to be seen in the publication of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Chicago honoring the 1600th anniversary of the Nicene Creed. Unfortunately, the computer software which was readily available to me, in the writing of this thesis, did not have the appropriate features to allow for these accent marks to be shown, and thus they are not shown, in this thesis, pertaining to the Symbol of Faith. Additionally, for the same reason just outlined, such accent marks are not to be found in any other Greek text in this thesis.
3. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens
   and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary and became man;

4. Crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,
   He suffered and was buried,

5. Rising on the third day
   according to the Scriptures;

6. And ascending into the Heavens,
   He is seated at the right hand of the Father;

7. And coming again with glory
   to judge the living and the dead,
   His kingdom shall have no end;

8. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
   the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father,

   Who together with the Father and the Son
   is worshipped and glorified,
   Who spoke by the prophets;

9. In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church;
10. I accept one baptism for the remission of sins;

11. I look for the resurrection of the dead;

12. And the life of the age to come. Amen.

ΤΟ ΣΥΜΒΟΛΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ

1. Πιστεύω εἰς ἕνα θεόν, Πατέρα Παντοκράτορα, Ποιήτην οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς, ὃς τε παντὸν καὶ αὐτοῦν.

2. Καὶ εἰς ἕνα Κυρίον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ παντὸς τῶν αἰωνῶν. Φως ἐκ Φωτος, Θεον ἀληθίνου, ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθίνου, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιήθησαν, ομοούσια τῷ Πατρὶ, δι’ Οὐ τὰ πάντα εγενετο.

3. Τὸν δὲ ημᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ημετέραν σωτηρίαν, κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν Οὐρανῶν καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Αγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς Παρθένου καὶ ενανθρωπήσαντα.

4. Σταυρώθησαν τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, καὶ παθοῦσαν, καὶ ταφεῖσαν.

5. Καὶ αναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, κατὰ τὰς Γραφὰς.

6. Καὶ ανέλθοντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, καὶ καθεξήμονιν εἰς δειξήμων τοῦ Πατρὸς.

7. Καὶ πάλιν ερχόμενον μετὰ δοξῆς κρίνωντας ζωντας καὶ νεκροὺς, Οὐ τῆς Βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος.
8. Καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἁγιόν, τὸ Κυρίον, τὸ Ζωοποιὸν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευομένον, τὸ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ συμπροσκυνομένον καὶ συνδοξαζομένον, τὸ λαλήσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν.

9. Εἰς Μιᾶν, Ἁγιαν, Καθολικὴν καὶ Ἀποστολικὴν Ἐκκλησιαν.

10. Ὀμολογῶ ἐν Βαπτίσμα εἰς αφεσιν αμαρτίων.

11. Προδοκῶ Αναστασιν νεκρον.

12. Καὶ ἡμᾶς τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰώνος. ἀμήν.

(The Greek Orthodox Diocese of Chicago, n.d.)

*The Filioque Innovation Contradicted by Orthodox Tradition*

Having just seen the original Symbol of Faith, both in Greek and English, it is obvious that the clause, “and from the Son”, regarding the supposed double procession of the Holy Spirit, is nowhere to be found. That is because it was never in the original text of the Creed, which was universally accepted in both East and West of the ancient undivided Church. And it is Orthodox Christianity which is, uniquely, that ancient Undivided Church, preserving the Holy Tradition given to it on the day of Pentecost without change. Let us call upon the research of Dr. Constantine Cavarnos, rooted in the Orthodox saints and Holy Orthodox Tradition, so that we can further clearly see that the *Filioque* innovation is wrong from an Orthodox perspective:
Another important dogmatic innovation of the Papal Church is the so-called *filioque*, the addition to the Symbol of Faith (the Creed) of the phrase: “and from the Son.” According to this innovation, the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the first person of the Holy Trinity, the Father, but also from the second, the Son, Christ. This addition, as St. Nectarios writes, “came about in the Symbol of Faith in the West for the first time in the third local Synod, which was convened in Toledo, Spain, in the year 589. Other local Synods that were later convened subsequently ratified this addition, and especially the one convened in Aquistrano, which proclaimed this addition to be a dogma of the faith. But after all this, the addition was not generally spread through all the Churches of the West.... The addition of “and from the Son” to the Symbol of Faith... received acceptance in Rome only in 1014 under Pope Benedict VIII [*Historical Study Concerning the Causes of the Schism*, vol. 2, p.14]. (Cavarnos, 1992b, p23)

With regard to this innovation, we must note that it is illicit, because in its seventh Canon the Third Ecumenical Synod anathematizes those who compose another Symbol of Faith apart from that which the Holy Fathers of the Ecumenical Synod of Nicea formulated. Commenting on this canon, St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite says that St. Cyril, who was exarch of the Third Ecumenical Synod and fully understood the meaning of the canons of this Synod, wrote to Patriarch John of Antioch that no one is permitted to alter even a single syllable of the Symbol of Faith. And St. Nicodemos observes: “If nobody is

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51 On an earlier page, Cavarnos cites volume 1 of this same work by St. Nectarios. I have here, in brackets, explicitly mentioned that work by St. Nectarios, because otherwise in this particular quotation Cavarnos, only cites the work by writing, “(*ibid.*, vol.2, p.14)”. 

permitted to alter even one syllable, much more is it not permitted to add anything to or take anything away from it” (*Pedalion* [Athens, 1957], p. 174). The Papal Church, disregarding this canon, and defying the anathema of the Third Ecumenical Synod, added the phrase “and from the Son” to the Symbol of Faith. This illicit addition, says St. Nicodemos, “was enough to divide the Westerners from the Easterners” [*Pedalion* (Athens, 1957), p. 174]52. (Cavarnos, 1992b, pp. 23-24)

It is, I believe, insightful to our discussion to use some of the research of Fr. John Meyendorff as he draws from the wisdom of the Orthodox saints, in this particular instance from St. Gregory Palamas and St. Gregory Nazianzen. We observe the following discussion of Meyendorff (1998) as he draws heavily from the insight of St. Gregory Palamas pertaining to the error of the *Filioque* innovation:

The Latins “have no answer to those who blame them for introducing two origins for the Spirit,” because the Father and the Son, as hypostases, are *two* and not one, and because the procession is a hypostatic act of the Father. ...They are one by nature, but the Spirit equally possesses that unique nature and should proceed from itself if procession was conceived as an act of nature. (p. 230)

As one sees from this last quotation, there are parts of Fr. John Meyendorff’s research which expose some of the theological pitfalls of the rationalistic, Roman Catholic innovation that is the “double Procession” of the Holy Spirit, known as the *Filioque*; we note this rightful

52 In the text cited, Cavarnos had written, “(ibid.)” to indicate “[*Pedalion* (Athens, 1957), p. 174]”. So, I have added the entry “[*Pedalion* (Athens, 1957), p. 174]” at the end of the above quotation, for clarity.
confession in Father Meyendorff’s research, while of course not ignoring his and other people’s
great error of embracing the philosophy of personalism, itself a rationalistic innovation—a
profound error which its adherents regard as somehow being applicable to Orthodox Trinitarian
Theology. Orthodox theologians regard the innovation of the Filioque—which is completely
foreign to Orthodox Trinitarian Theology and therefore forever unacceptable to Orthodox
Christianity—as a threat to the right confession of the Persons (Hypostases) of the Holy Trinity.
This concern frequently centers around the confusing of the Persons (Hypostases) of the Holy
Trinity by the pre-eternal Procession of the Holy Spirit being ascribed to both the Father and the
Son. This rationalistic conclusion, foreign to divine revelation, arguably results in
marginalization and trivialization of the Persons (Hypostases) of the Holy Trinity as unbalanced
emphasis on the divine Essence common to the Holy Trinity is asserted (in the Filioque
innovation) in order to describe the “double Procession” of the Holy Spirit, at the expense of
fully confessing the truth of divine revelation which is uniquely found in Orthodox Trinitarian
Theology.

Orthodoxy Rightfully Condemns the Filioque Heresy, And Never Claims—Unlike the West—To
Comprehend or Describe the Absolutely Incomprehensible Triune God

Father Romanides brilliantly speaks of such matters, regarding the attempted
undermining of the right (Orthodox) confession of the Holy Trinity by Papism (Roman
Catholicism)—through its propagation of the heresy of the Filioque. With this in mind, we
observe the following from Romanides' outstanding work which rightfully describes the Filioque
heresy as being as bad as the ancient heresies defeated by the Orthodox Church:
As a heresy, the Filioque is as bad as Arianism, and this is borne out by the fact that the holders of this heresy reduce the Pentecostal tongues of fire to the status of creature as Arius had done with the Angel of Glory. Had Arius and the Scholastics been gifted with the Pentecostal glorification of the Fathers, they would have known by their experience that the Logos who appeared to the prophets and the apostles in glory, and the tongues of fire are uncreated; the one an uncreated hypostasis, and the other the common and identical energies of the Holy Trinity emanating from the the new presence of the humanity of Christ by the Holy Spirit. (Romanides, 1975)

By “the the new presence of the humanity of Christ” we, of course, understand that God the Word did not pre-eternally have a human nature associated with His divine hypostasis—unlike claims made or implied by pantheistic heresies and tendencies, some within Western Christianity—but instead God the Word condescended to our created human existence. Through no compulsion whatsoever, but just as the creation of all things “visible and invisible” was done by God by a completely “free act of will”—Lossky and others say this, consistent with Orthodox doctrine—so also was the Incarnation done in the same complete freedom of will (for it was in no way necessary to God).

What is true of the Bible is true of the Synods, which, like the Bible, express in symbols that which transcends symbols and is known by means of those who have reached theoria. It is for this reason that the Synods appeal to the authority, not only of the Fathers in the Bible, but also to the Fathers of all ages, since the Fathers of all ages participate in the same truth which is God’s glory in Christ.
For this reason, Pope Leo III told the Franks in no uncertain terms that the Fathers left the Filioque out of the Creed neither because of ignorance nor by omission, but by divine inspiration. (Romanides, 1975)

The *Filioque* claim made by Papism is a rationalistic heresy foreign to the experience of the glorified Orthodox saints—as are the multitude of other heresies found throughout Western Christianity and in all the non-Christian faiths. This, as we said earlier, does not make Orthodox Christians any better than anyone else; instead, it is simply a matter of God’s unfathomable grace unquestionably found in the Orthodox saints and consequently in the dogma which these same saints confess to the world.

Father Romanides rightfully confesses, consistent with Orthodox doctrine, that the *Filioque* is a heresy foreign to divine revelation and as such is something that is born of speculation; likewise, what certain Orthodox theologians have claimed in regard to God being supposedly a “personal” God—which implies that we humans are somehow a copy of God or of what is in Him (as the Papal Church and others claim)—is itself heretical, being a rationalistic conclusion (just as the *Filioque* is) born of speculation and having nothing to do with the glorification common to the Orthodox saints. The following concise, yet powerful and informative, comment tells us some more about personalism:

> It is worth noting that personalism, which claims that the real is the personal, is itself a school of philosophy, usually idealist, sometimes theistic. Important representatives include the American philosopher of religion Borden Brown, the Roman Catholic
theologian Rev. Karl Rahner, the Orthodox theologian Rev. John Meyendorff, and many
Methodist thinkers. (Romanides, 2008, p. 139)

We mentioned Father Meyendorff earlier, and his embrace of the error of a philosophy of
personalism—I also made this same grave mistake, in embracing personalism, in the first edition
of this current work, some years ago, before being corrected by Father Romanides' brilliant
work. According to what Father Meyendorff, and other people, espoused, personalism is
something authentically Orthodox and supposedly pertains to the reality of the incomprehensible
Triune God; such an approach to Orthodox theology is absolutely not valid, as personalism
embraces the Western Christian heretical thinking that God can somehow be described or
rationalized—nothing could be further from the truth. Father Romanides said this, among other
things, about the error of attempting to apply personalism to the forever unknowable and
absolutely transcendent God.

Now there are certain Orthodox theologians of Russian descent who claim that God is a
personal God. They claim that God is not the God of philosophy, a construction of
human philosophical thought, but that He is a personal God. Western tradition makes
similar statements. But in the Patristic tradition, God is not a personal God. In fact, God
is not even God. God does not correspond to anything that we can conceive or would be
able to conceive. (Romanides, 2008, p. 139)

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53 This quotation is itself from a footnote of this brilliant translation of Father Romanides’ Lectures. The
footnote, in the translation, was likely written by the translator, Hieromonk Alexios (Trader), because at
the end of the footnote is written “TRANS.”, so that is the assumption that I am making; and it should be
noted that we are informed that the Text and Comments were prepared by Monk Damaskinos Agioreitis.
Regardless of who authored the footnote which we quote above, it is brilliantly done and very significant.
Father Romanides’ response above to a philosophy of personalism is impeccably Orthodox—as we will see, his other remarks pertaining to the error of personalism are likewise brilliantly faithful to Orthodox teaching. As the name implies, personalism attempts to describe the utterly unapproachable, incomprehensible, and absolutely transcendent Triune God and to associate this same ineffable and unknowable Triune God with human existence, human personhood, and human philosophical categories and language—such an undertaking is beyond absurd and is a heresy, plain and simple.

The following from Father Romanides and others testifies against the falsehood of heretical confessions—such as attempts to associate the philosophy of personalism with the absolutely transcendent Triune God.

Being uncreated, God is accordingly not a human being. That is, in His uncreatedness God neither is a human being nor resembles a human being. So when God became man, He did not become something that He already resembled. Incarnation does not mean that God assumed a nature that was somehow similar to His own. There is absolutely no similarity whatsoever between human nature and divine nature.

This is the reason why the Fathers stress that man is not the image of God. Only the Word or Son is the exact image of God. The Word is the image of the Father. And since the Word is the image of the Father, Christ as the Word is also the image of the Father. But since there is an interchange of properties between the two natures in Christ the incarnate Word Who is also human, the very humanity of Christ is also the image of the Father. So the human nature of Christ is the image of the Father on account of the Incarnation.
Man is not the image of God. Although some people certainly refer to man as the image of God, it is improper to do so. Literally, man is fashioned in the image of God, but he is not the image of God. Although the Bible relates that “in the image of God created He him,” precisely what is meant by this verse was fully revealed only in the Incarnation, because from the very beginning human destiny was to become like Christ, to become god by grace, and to attain the state of being “in the likeness.” (Romanides, 2008, pp. 141-142)

What Father Romanides tells us here is certainly a very profound and beautiful expression of Orthodox theology pertaining to the forever, and absolutely, transcendent Triune God and how there is no similarity whatsoever between the created and the uncreated. The Prophets of the Old Testament “saw” God the Word before He condescended to become Incarnate—before He condescended to become human—as such, we are an image of God only after God’s condescension to humanity, not before. Metropolitan Hierotheos and Father Romanides say the following:

The Prophets of the Old Testament saw the unincarnate Word, whereas the Prophets of the New Testament saw the incarnate Word. This is the basic difference between the Old and New Testaments. [Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 202)

“What is the difference between the Old and New Testaments? First of all we said that it was the incarnation. Every Prophet received a revelation of Christ Himself, the unincarnate Christ, before He became Christ, when He was only the Angel of the Lord,
the Word, as He became Christ by the incarnation.” [Father Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 202)

The Angel of the Lord (the Angel of Great Counsel, God the Word) in His condescending to become Man (something that He was not before) becomes—though His voluntarily assumed humanity is subsequent to the first man created—the Image in which the human race was created. Monk Damaskinos Agioreitis says this beautifully:

In other words, in the Incarnation, it was finally revealed that man had been created in the image of Christ, his chronologically subsequent prototype.⁵⁴ (Romanides, 2008, p. 142)

As such, after the Incarnation, we can have a personal relationship with God, but only through the God-Man, Christ. It is only because of the Incarnation that such a personal relationship can exist with God the Word—on account of His voluntarily assumed humanity; this same relationship of a personal nature does not exist with the other divine hypostases, because They did not condescend to become Incarnate and “in His uncreatedness God neither is a human being nor resembles a human being”.

However, after the Incarnation of God the Word, we can have a personal relationship with God by means of and on account of the Incarnation. But this relationship is with God as the God-man (as the Son of God and the Son of man).

Since God became man, the Incarnation brought about a special relationship between God and man or Christ and man, a relationship that is nevertheless non-existent.

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⁵⁴ We are informed that the “Text and Comments” of this particular work of Father John Romanides (some of his University lectures), having been put in book form, were prepared by Monk Damaskinos Agioreitis; and as such, the assumption is made that the following concise, yet outstandingly brilliant passage—which we are here quoting—is to be attributed to Monk Damaskinos Agioreitis.
when we consider the Holy Trinity as a whole. We do not have a relationship with the Holy Trinity or with the uncreated Divinity that is like our relationship with Christ. In other words, our relationship with the Father or with the Holy Spirit is not like our relationship with Christ. Only with Christ do we have a personal relationship. The Holy Trinity came into personal contact with man only through the Incarnation, only through Christ. This relationship did not exist before the Incarnation, because we did not have a relationship with God as we do with other people before the Incarnation. (Romanides, 2008, p. 140)

Clearly, these aforementioned quotations from Orthodox theologians—who are very faithful to Holy Orthodox tradition—should warn us against falling into the error of embracing any theology of “personalism”. The embrace of a theology of personalism is essentially a theology that makes the uncreated Triune God anthropomorphic—in a sense, in this heresy of personalism, man is made into a copy of the uncreated God. What is this other than an embrace of a form of the heresy of pantheism—which is common to Western Christianity, in one form or another, and is also common in the other heresies? To counter any attempt of introducing the great error of the philosophy of personalism into Orthodox Trinitarian theology let us look at what great Orthodox saints teach us, and what Orthodox theologians teach us (who are very faithful to Orthodox tradition). St. Gregory of Nyssa—and Father Romanides, following St. Gregory of Nyssa and the entire Holy Orthodox tradition—tell us that the nature common to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one and that the names “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit” point to the divine persons or hypostases but do not communicate what They are in Their divine essence or nature, which They share in common; nor do these names tell us what the divine
hypostases are; but instead these names, through the use of our human language and concepts from our created environment and existence, point to the distinctive features of each hypostasis as a means of differentiating Them for us and at least pointing to Them for us—for these names “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit” are for our benefit not for God’s benefit (obviously), as St. Gregory of Nyssa told us earlier; indeed for Itself the Triune God needs no name or names whatsoever.

For which reason we say that to the holy disciples the mystery of godliness was committed in a form expressing at once union and distinction, —that we should believe on the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For the differentiation of the subsistences makes the distinction of Persons clear and free from confusion, while the one Name standing in the forefront of the declarations of the Faith clearly expounds to us the unity of essence of the Persons Whom the faith declares, — I mean, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. For by these appellations we are taught not a difference of nature, but only the special attributes that mark the subsistences, so that we know that neither is the Father the Son, nor the Son the Father, nor the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son, and recognize each by the distinctive mark of His Personal Subsistence, in illimitable perfection, at once contemplated by Himself and not divided from that with which He is connected. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892a, p. 103)

As St. Gregory of Nyssa just told us, in the above quotation, regarding the names “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit”: “For by these appellations we are taught not a difference of nature, but only the special attributes that mark the subsistences [Divine Hypostases, Divine Persons]\(^{55}\), so

\(^{55}\) Here the terminology “subsistences” means the same thing as Divine Hypostases or Divine Persons.
that we know that neither is the Father the Son, nor the Son the Father, nor the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son, and recognize each by the distinctive mark of His Personal Subsistence, in illimitable perfection, at once contemplated by Himself and not divided from that with which He is connected.” Indeed, we “recognize each by the distinctive mark of His Personal Subsistence” and as such are able to differentiate that indeed the Three Divine Persons are distinct from One Another, but we will never know Who They are; we will never know Who the Triune God is—for the mystery of the Holy Trinity is forever a mystery to all that is created, as the Orthodox saints teach us.

Again, in the next quotations from St. Gregory of Nyssa, we see that the divine essence or nature is unknowable and unnameable and that the names, from our human language, of “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit” do not communicate what the divine essence is, but instead they are words from our human language that point to the relations of the Divine Persons with One Another—which, in the final analysis, no language can ever describe or comprehend.

What then means the unnameable name concerning which the Lord said, “Baptizing them into the name,” and did not add the actual significant term which “the name” indicates? We have concerning it this notion, that all things that exist in the creation are defined by means of their several names. Thus whenever a man speaks of “heaven” he directs the notion of the hearer to the created object indicated by this name, and he who mentions “man” or some animal, at once by the mention of the name impresses upon the hearer the form of the creature, and in the same way all other things, by means of the names imposed upon them, are depicted in the heart of him who by hearing receives the appellation imposed upon the thing. The uncreated Nature alone, which we
acknowledge in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, surpasses all significance of names. For this cause the Word, when He spoke of “the name” in delivering the Faith, did not add what it is,—for how could a name be found for that which is above every name?—but gave authority that whatever name our intelligence by pious effort be enabled to discover to indicate the transcendent Nature, the name should be applied alike to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whether it be “the Good” or “the Incorruptible,” whatever name each may think proper to be employed to indicate the undefiled Nature of Godhead. And by this deliverance the Word seems to me to lay down for us this law, that we are to be persuaded that the Divine Essence is ineffable and incomprehensible: for it is plain that the title of Father does not present to us the Essence, but only indicates the relation to the Son. It follows, then, that if it were possible for human nature to be taught the essence of God, He “Who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” would not have suppressed the knowledge upon this matter. But as it is, by saying nothing concerning the Divine Essence, He showed that the knowledge thereof is beyond our power, while when we have learnt that of which we are capable, we stand in no need of the knowledge beyond our capacity, as we have in the profession of faith in the doctrine delivered to us what suffices for our salvation. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892a, p. 103)

Again, when it expounds that unspeakable and transcendent existence which the Only-begotten has from the Father, because human poverty is incapable of the truths that are too high for speech or thought, it uses our language here also, and calls Him by the name of “Son,”—a name which our ordinary use applies to those who are produced by matter
and nature. But just as the word, which tells us in reference to God of the “generation” of
the creation, did not add the statement that it was generated by the aid of any material,
declaring that its material substance, its place, its time, and all the like, had their
existence in the power of His will, so here too, in speaking of the “Son,” it leaves out of
sight both all other things which human nature sees in earthly generation (passions, I
mean, and dispositions, and the co-operation of time and the need of place, and
especially matter), without all which earthly generation as a result of nature does not
occur. Now every such conception of matter and interval being excluded from the sense
of the word “Son,” nature alone remains, and hereby in the word “Son” is declared
concerning the Only-begotten the close and true character of His manifestation from the
Father.
And since this particular species of generation did not suffice to produce in us an
adequate idea of the unspeakable existence of the Only-begotten, it employs also another
species of generation, that which is the result of efflux, to express the Divine Nature of
the Son, and calls Him “the brightness of glory,” the “savour of ointment,” the “breath of
God,” […] (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892a, p. 205)

St. Gregory of Nyssa once again, in the above quotations, as he does so often in his God inspired
work, speaks of the great inadequacy and limitations of our human language, and of the great
limitations of our other capabilities, in reference to what is said of God (in both Holy Scripture
and elsewhere). For, indeed, the Triune God is, and forever will be, a mystery to us. We see our
great limitations in our language—these same limitations found even in the language used in
Holy Scripture, and in our capabilities of thought—confessed beautifully by St. Gregory of Nyssa in his having said above:

Again, when it expounds that unspeakable and transcendent existence which the Only-begotten has from the Father, because human poverty is incapable of the truths that are too high for speech or thought, it uses our language here also, and calls Him by the name of “Son,”

Father Romanides' discussion pertaining to the great limitations of all human language and thought in regard to the absolutely transcendent Triune God is brilliant, and faithful to the Orthodox saints’ confession pertaining to such matters. And with that having been said, we also know that in the experience of theosis (glorification) the Orthodox saints experience the Triune God—through the uncreated energies of this same God—but nevertheless they, and all the rest of creation for that matter, will never comprehend the absolutely transcendent Triune God.

So without the POIEIN and ENERGEIN there would be no ad extra manifestation of God, and without the internal PROS TI or SCHESEIS there would be no Holy Trinity. Thus in the Patristic tradition and Palamas the incommunicable hypostatic properties of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or of unbegotten cause and source of divinity (Father), of the effect receiving its existence by the mode of begetting (Son), and of the effect receiving its existence by the mode of procession (the Holy Spirit), are neither names of the divine essence nor definitions of the three hypostases, but names of their relations which are known by revelation and at the same time inexplicable because beyond the categories of human reason. (Romanides, 1963-64)
We certainly continue to see this same sort of confession of the absolute incomprehensibility and transcendance of the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity, the only True God, when we continue to look at the God inspired wisdom of St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John of Damascus. St. Gregory of Nyssa tells us:

Therefore, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are to be known only in a perfect Trinity, in closest consequence and union with each other, before all creation, before all the ages, before anything whatever of which we can form an idea. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892c, p. 319)

And St. John of Damascus (c. 680-780 A.D.) tells us beautifully the following, which we can see in English translation and subsequently in the original Greek:

The Holy Trinity transcends by far every similitude and figure. So, when you hear of an offspring of the Father, do not think of a corporeal offspring. And when you hear that there is a Word, do not suppose Him to be a corporeal word. And when you hear of the Spirit of God, do not think of wind and breath. Rather, hold your persuasion with a simple faith alone. For the concept of the Creator is arrived at by analogy from His creatures. (St. John of Damascus, 1958, pp. 162-163)

Πολὺ υπὲρ πᾶσαν εἰκόνα καὶ τυπὸν ἡ ἁγία Τριάς. μη τοκον ακουων εκ Πατρος, σωματικὸν τοκον νοησης. μηδ οτι Λογον ακουων, λογον σωματικὸν ὑπολαβης. μηδε Πνευμα Θεου ακουων, ανεμον και αναπνοην νοησης. αλλα πιστει μονη απειριγων δοξαζε. Εκ γαρ των κτισματων αυτου αναλογως ο δημιουργος νοεται. (St. John of Damascus, n.d.)
Again, one cannot help but see, in this last quotation from St. John of Damascus, much of what we have discussed earlier pertaining to human language and concepts—which are all from our created environment and created existence—being used to point to God and discuss pertaining to Him; but those same similitudes, figures, names, words, and concepts, whatever they may be, are forever incapable of describing or comprehending the incomprehensible Triune God.

Once again, let us come back to the beautiful research and confession of Orthodoxy of Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and of Father John Romanides—who were fully consistent with our Holy Orthodox tradition, in their analysis of the heretical presuppositions inherent to the heresy of Western Christianity (i.e. inherent to the heresies of Papism, Protestantism, Evangelicalism, etc.). As we saw much earlier in this thesis, Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos spoke of Father John Romanides’ brilliant analysis pertaining to two major errors which are often found, to one extent or another, in the heresy of Western Christendom: *analogia entis* (analogy of being) and *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith).

The *analogia entis* refers to the existence of an analogy between what is uncreated and what is created, that God created the world from archetypal forms, and man’s salvation consists in the return of his soul to the uncreated world of ideas. …. The *analogia fidei* refers to man’s relationship with God through faith, as it is revealed in Holy Scripture. This tradition says that the revelation of God was given in words. It is not known through philosophy, but through Holy Scripture, which is the word of God. By studying Holy Scripture, one comes to know God and comes into contact with Him, because the revelation of God has been deposited in Holy Scripture, which is the word of God. (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 24)
Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos tells us that these presuppositions—*analogia entis* (analogy of being) and *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith)—in regard to any theology, are certainly completely foreign to Orthodox theology, they are certainly completely foreign to the unique truth of the Holy Orthodox Church.

Not even *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith) is acceptable in Orthodox theology, at all—this supposed analogy of faith is the assertion that the revelation of God *is* the words and concepts of Holy Scripture; in the analogy of faith it is claimed that the very words and very concepts of Holy Scripture are themselves, very literally, the divine revelation. All of the branches of Western Christianity have this heresy within their theology, to one significant extent or another. Father Romanides speaks inspiringly to Orthodox Christians (and to others) of these matters, when he tells us:

Now the Orthodox tradition does not even accept an analogy of faith, because you cannot make an analogy by faith between teachings in the Bible and the truth about God. Why not? Because there is absolutely no similarity between God and creation. This is the reason why Biblical concepts about God are concepts that can be set aside and are set aside during the experience of *theosis*. Before *theosis*, these concepts are clearly helpful, necessary, correct, and right, but only as guideposts towards God.

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

So you cannot hope to theologize correctly simply because you have read the Bible and base your theology on the Bible. If you do this, you cannot avoid becoming a heretic, because Holy Scripture can be correctly interpreted only when the experience of illumination or theosis accompanies the study or reading of the Bible. Without illumination or theosis, Holy Scripture cannot be interpreted correctly. (Romanides, 2008, pp. 128-129)

Aside from the experience of illumination or theosis—which, by the unfathomable grace of God, the Orthodox saints live incomparably—one cannot possibly correctly interpret Holy Scripture and the entire Holy Orthodox tradition. And when people are ignorant of this, or choose to ignore it, then we arrive at all of the man-made religions such as Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism, Papism and countless other heresies.

Unfortunately, some Orthodox theologians—in parts of their academic work—apparently, inadvertently, embrace some of the faulty presuppositions of the heretical West. For example, Father Meyendorff—along with some other Orthodox theologians—embraces the philosophy of personalism as supposedly being a philosophy applicable to understanding the indescribable, incomprehensible Triune God. Additionally, Father Meyendorff, to at least some level, looks at some the revelations spoken of in the Holy Scriptures as being symbolic, and not as the uncreated reality of the Triune God being experienced by grace—an uncreated reality that then is later spoken of by the Orthodox saints in our created human language; when, of course, in reality none of our language, concepts, or any other symbolism, in general, can ever describe or
comprehend God. Indeed, when St. Gregory Palamas was fighting the heretics of his time (Akindynos, Barlaam, and others)—who essentially were following the ideologies of the ancient heresies (among them the false presuppositions inherent in Augustine’s Platonism)—he remained faithful to the Orthodox teaching pertaining the absolute incomprehensibility and transcendence of God. Father Romanides speaks of such matters, and beautifully defends Orthodoxy—consistent with the Patristic witness, in so doing.

It may be profitable to point out at this time that for those of the Barlaamite-Augustinian tradition, symbols and concepts and rational knowledge become the only means by which man can come to know God. Both those who are immediate recipients of revelation, such as prophets and apostles, and those whose contact with revelation is mediated by the Bible, come to know God by symbols and the concepts contained therein. It is obvious that within such a tradition there can be no supra-conceptual and supra-rational knowledge of God, since the very purpose of a revealed symbol is to convey concepts. (Romanides, 1963-64)

The heresy of Western Christianity, to this very day, exhibits these features. During his time, St. Gregory Palamas brilliantly combated such heresies. Here, in what follows, in Father Romanides’ research and discussion, we see St. Gregory Palamas responding to Akindynos’ heretical thinking and accusations—which Akindynos directed against the hesychastic tradition of Orthodoxy:

In order to substantiate this claim that the hesychasts may be having demonic visions, Akindynos appeals to the Fathers, who warn against visions which appear in
shapes and forms and advise that the mind must be kept immaterial and formless.

Palamas is quick to take advantage of this blunder to remind Akindynos that this would make his revelations to the prophets and apostles by means of real or imaginary symbols demonic. Nevertheless, Akindynos claims that at the baptism of Christ, St. John saw a dove which symbolized the Holy Spirit, but he did not see God. Palamas ridicules the idea that a dove could ever take the place of the Holy Spirit in St. John’s vision and insists that there was no bird in the revelation. What St. John saw transcends human reason and is expressed by the dove symbol. [Fr. Romanides] (Romanides, 1963-64)

In what follows, Father Romanides tells us that apparently Meyendorff is, in at least some sense, following the line of the heretics regarding their belief that revelation is indeed revealed through created symbols. Romanides points out, yet again, some of Meyendorff’s errors, which in places are consistent with the errors of those whom Palamas was fighting in the first place.

Meyendorff reports Palamas’ ideas on all this as follows: ‘The theophanies could be symbolic, but not the incarnation: Thus the Holy Spirit appears, but is not incarnated; the dove which manifested it (the Spirit) was a symbol, but “the body of Christ is truly body of God and not a symbol.”’ But the whole point of the debate is that Palamas rejects the idea that the theophanies are symbolic and strongly refutes Akindynos’ claim that a dove manifested the Spirit to St. John at the baptism of Christ. Because Palamas believed that the reported Biblical apparitions of fire, light, cloud, and dove were not created symbols, but the linguistic symbols by which supra-rational revelations were reported, Akindynos accused Palamas of worshipping creatures. Here again Palamas is being very faithful to St. Dionysius. (Romanides, 1963-64)
Father Romanides fights against the heresy of personalism, faithful to the witness of the Orthodox Saints. Keeping in mind the brilliant and beautiful comments of St. Gregory the Theologian, among which is the following (which we have already seen)—which Father Romanides quotes, with his own inspiring comment (faithful to Orthodox doctrine) associated with it:

“‘It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.’ We can neither describe God in words nor understand Him.” (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 228)

These powerful words kept in mind, we see, in the following quotations from Father Romanides, the Orthodox confession of the absolute transcendence of God being defended against the rationalistic, philosophical system of personalism (espoused by Father Meyendorff and others):

We have already noted that not only the nameless supraessential essence of God is beyond the participation of both deified angels and men, but even participation in the divine darkness or light in which God dwells is for Palamas a knowing which is beyond knowing, God remaining a mystery even when man is united to Him and unknowingly knows Him. Yet Meyendorff insists that Palamas’ understanding of God is personalistic in contrast to essentialistic, and this is supposed to put Palamas in the camp of existentialism. It seems to me, however, that since for Palamas man transcends himself in his union with God, Who transcends all categories of human and creaturely existence, being non-being because transcending being itself, and non-existent because transcending existence itself, it is very doubtful that such categories as personalism/impersonalism, essentialism/existentialism can be applied to Him. This is why one can
apply personal names to God, such as Father and Son, but also impersonal names such as Holy Spirit, Cloud, Light, Darkness, Rock, Fire, etc. (Romanides, 1963-64)

In support of this theory concerning Palamite personalism, Father Meyendorff quotes St. Gregory who insists against Barlaam that God did not say to Moses, "I am the essence," but "I am He Who is." For He Who is is not from the essence, but the essence is from Him Who is. For Father John this is supposed to demonstrate the priority of hypostasis or person over essence, and therefore Palamite personalism. However, Meyendorff quotes this passage out of context. Palamas is here using the term ‘essence’ in the Dionysian sense of ‘essence-making power (OYSIOPOIOS DINAMIS),’ and not in the Dionysian sense of ‘super-essential hiddenness (HYPEROYYSIOS KRIFOTIS),’ which would be equivalent to Meyendorff’s use of the word essence or nature in developing his theory concerning personalism. This is very clear from the prior paragraph in which Palamas quotes Dionysius’ use of the term essence in order to prove wrong Barlaam’s contention that the essence of God is alone without beginning. ‘For Dionysius the essence of God is alone without beginning.["] ‘For Dionysius the Areopagite says’ writes Palamas, ‘If we call the super-essential hiddenness God, or life, or essence (OYSIAN), or light, or reason, we mean nothing else than those divinizing, or essence-making (OYSIOPOIOYS), or vivifying, or wisdom-giving powers which come to us from it {the super-essential hiddenness}.’” So the name essence is here one of the eternal powers of God grounded in but not identical with the super-essential essence which has no name. Together with this one should also keep in mind that for Palamas and the whole Eastern Patristic tradition it was the Logos Who said to
Moses ‘I am He Who is.’ Thus Palamas is saying that the essence as essence-making power is from the super-essential essence and from the Logos. He is not saying, as Father John thinks, that the super-essential essence is from an hypostasis or person.\(^5\)

(Romanides, 1963-64)

*The absolute transcendence of God forever defies all language, concepts, and all knowledge whatsoever.* Father Romanides is very faithful to Orthodox tradition in these matters—and what immediately follows are just two quotations from many in Romanides' outstanding work:

All the names for God in Holy Scripture are taken from human experience. All these names are descriptions. But when you have an experience of *theosis*, you discover that God is *anonymous*, because you cannot find a single human or angelic name that can be properly attributed to God. You cannot even find a single human or angelic concept that can be attributed to His existence or being, because God does not resemble anything that we know. This is why all names and concepts are set aside in the presence of the vision of God.

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\(^5\)I have copied this quotation word for word, and with all of the punctuation present as it was written on the website “romanity.org”, which contains some outstanding work of Father John Romanides. In the place of the bracketed entry where I have inserted [’], there perhaps needs to be a quotation mark, hence my bracketed entry—perhaps this pertains to what Barlaam said and is about to be refuted by Palamas, or perhaps this is a typographical error.

Regardless of any potential minor punctuation or typographical errors, Father Romanides’ research and work are nothing short of remarkable; and his refutation of the error of a theology of “personalism” espoused by Father Meyendorff and others (myself included when, at an earlier time, I embraced this great error as truth), is beautifully done. Father Romanides’ confession of the absolute transcendence of God, where God absolutely transcends any manner of personalism, essentialism and everything else, is something which is faithfully done by Father Romanides in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church.
St. Dionysius the Areopagite has written a very beautiful passage that is cited by the Fathers. It tells us that in the final analysis God is neither Unity nor Trinity, because God does not correspond to anything the human mind conceives or could possibly conceive. For example, we say that there is one God. Of course, when we say the word ‘one,’ we visualize a number or a unit. We imagine that there is one God just like any isolated individual is one person. The same thing happens when we say that God is three Persons. But God is not three anything. He is not three subjects. He is not three objects. He is not one subject and He is not one object. (Romanides, 2008, pp. 137-139) God is literally unique and can in no way be described by comparison with anything that any creature may be, know or imagine. No aspect about God can be expressed in a concept or collection of concepts.

One can readily see why Plato’s theory of ideas, even in Augustinian form (whereby creatures are literally copies of archetypal prototypes in the divine mind), are consistently rejected by the Fathers of the Church.

Thus, the experience of glorification has no room either for Augustine’s speculation about God by use of psychological analogies, nor for the claim of some Russian theologians that the Fathers of the Church allegedly theologize about God on the basis of some kind of ‘personalism.’ Neither the term, nor the concept, is ever applied to God by the Fathers. The reason is clear. All the Fathers emphasize, and mean what they say, that there is absolutely no similarity between God and any of His creatures. […]

It is for this reason that positive statements about God are balanced by negative statements, not in order to purify the positive ones of their imperfections, but in order to
make clear that God is in no way similar to the concepts conveyed by words, since God
is above every name and concept ascribed to Him. (Romanides, n.d.)

God the Father is Uniquely the Source of God the Son and of God the Holy Spirit

Let us continue to look at Father Romandes’ and Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos’
brilliant research and discussion pertaining to the Holy Trinity, contradicting the errors of the
West. The Orthodox Fathers knew about the Holy Trinity from their experience of the uncreated
energies of the Triune God—though they never comprehended, nor will anyone ever
comprehend, the mystery of the Triune God. As Father Romanides brilliantly tells us, the
Orthodox saints knew what they knew; and they also were well aware about all which they, and
all the rest of us, would be forever ignorant in regard to the Triune God—they knew what they
definitely knew, and they knew that there were other matters about which they would be forever
completely ignorant. Father Romanides and others tell us these things pertaining to the great
God-inspired knowledge, humility and wisdom of the Orthodox Saints who knew of such matters
pertaining to God by their experience of God through the divine energies—not from the delusion
of philosophical speculation which dominated, and which continues to dominate, the theology of
Western Christendom.

The holy Fathers teach that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father and is
sent from the Father through the Son. The Fathers of the Church knew this difference
from their experience. As they were aware of what they knew and what they did not
know, they did not philosophise or speculate, as we see happening in the West,
particularly after the 8th century. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 89)

The Father, not the divine essence, is uniquely the Source of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

“To beget and to cause to proceed do not appertain to the essence of God, as it is not the essence that begets and causes to proceed, but the hypostasis of the Father.”

“The Cappadocian Fathers taught that the Father as hypostasis, and not as essence, begets the Son and causes the Holy Spirit to proceed. The Father’s hypostasis and not the divine essence generates the Son and causes the Holy Spirit to proceed.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 78)

“In the first period the Fathers speak of the Father Who begets the Word and causes the Holy Spirit to proceed. The Cappadocians introduced the idea of ‘cause’ for the first time. Generation signifies ‘cause of existence’. That is why we have the Father as the cause of existence of the Word through generation and of the Holy Spirit through procession. When the essence was also added, they then said that the essence was not begotten of the Father nor did the essence proceed from the Father, but the Father communicates His essence to the Son by generation and to the Holy Spirit by procession.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 79)

“So what is the cause of their existence? The Father is without cause. The Word is caused and begotten, and the Holy Spirit is caused and proceeding. The essence does not have a cause of existence. As the Father is without a cause, so the essence too is without a cause.”
“The manner of existence of the three hypostases is not the essence; it is the Father. The essence does not exist in three ways. The essence is not the Persons.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 82)

The Orthodox Fathers used the philosophical categories and terminology of their time to defend Orthodoxy against the heretics, such as by their use of the words “essence” and “hypostases”; and they also obviously used Biblical terminology such as the words “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit”—and of course all of these words and names, without exception, are taken from our created human language, from our created existence and experience; and, as such, though our language can point to God in some sense, no language whatsoever can ever describe or comprehend God. As he does throughout so much of his brilliant work, Father Romanides faithfully speaks about these matters. In what follows, Father Romanides comments pertaining to Western Christianity’s delusional confidence in its rationalistic speculation in theological matters; and in fact Father Romanides rightfully condemns the erroneous belief found in Western Christianity “that every level of knowledge concerning God is rational”. For indeed this way of thinking common in Western Christianity, and found elsewhere in the various other heresies, essentially has pantheistic roots—strongly related to the errors of Platonic philosophy which strongly influenced Western Christianity; the errors of *analogia entis* and *analogia fidei* (which we mentioned earlier, drawing from Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos’ and Father Romanides' brilliant research) (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 24) definitely come to mind here. Regarding these matters, we see from Father Romanides the following:

This belief that every level of knowledge concerning God is rational is the very basis of all *credo ut intelligam* theologies of the Latin West and makes possible either the naive
confidence that one can understand the Bible by just reading it with the aid of the Holy Spirit or the foolish notion that the Church can deepen its understanding of revelation and dogmatic truths with the passage of time, even with the aid of philosophical categories. (Romanides, 1963-64)

They believe that, as time goes by, the Church reflects more deeply on its doctrine and improves its understanding of dogmas. But they have not paid due attention to what Gregory the Theologian says: ‘It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.’ As far as Westerners are concerned, we have a better conception and better expression. So with the passage of time, the Church understands its dogmas more profoundly and expresses them with extreme clarity.

If you take the proposals of the Second Vatican Council you will see that they follow this line. On every page you will find this view, that in the course of time the Church has a better understanding. Whereas St Gregory the Theologian tells us that, however perfect someone may be, ‘It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.’ Although they talk about ‘deeper understanding’, we can neither understand nor express God.” (Hierotheos, 2012, p.115)

Again, as Father Romanides told us in other places—having drawn from St. Gregory the Theologian, whose teaching on the Holy Trinity is certainly consistent with the teaching of Holy Orthodox tradition—we know that we can only point, somewhat, through our use of language, to the reality that is the incomprehensible Triune God but we will absolutely never comprehend or understand this same God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity.
for the Fathers, no name or concept gives any understanding of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Saint Gregory the Theologian, e.g., is clear on this as we saw. He ridicules his opponents with a characteristic taunt: “Do tell me what is the unbegotteness of the Father, and I will explain to you the physiology of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, and we shall both of us be frenzy-stricken for prying into the mystery of God”[.] (Romanides, 1975)

As this above quotation, which is very profound and beautiful, was mentioned earlier, we also mentioned the following earlier—which (just as the above quotation) also confesses our ignorance, now and forever, concerning the “mystery of the Holy Trinity”:

“Human beings can never understand the mysteries of God. For that reason the Fathers of the Church speak about the generation of the Word from the Father, but they emphasise that they do not know what this generation is. They know that it is the manner of existence of the Word from the Father, but what this manner of existence is cannot be described. It is something we say and nothing more.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 78)

Philosophical speculation pertaining to theological matters is doomed to failure, culminating in heresy—all of the heresies are proof of this. The heresy of the *Filioque* and the great error that is the philosophy of personalism are speculative in nature—as are all other heresies, in contrast to the Orthodox Fathers’ experience of the divine energies in their holy lives. All the heretics ignore what the Orthodox Fathers always knew, as St Gregory the Theologian tells us: ‘It is impossible
to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.’ Although they talk about ‘deeper understanding’, we can neither understand nor express God.” (Hierotheos, 2012, p.115)

With this in mind, we continue by now looking at some of the research of Vladimir Lossky, pertaining to what some of the ancient Orthodox Fathers had to say regarding the Holy Trinity, completely contradicting the error of the *Filioque* innovation: “‘A single God because a single Father’, according to the saying of the Greek Fathers.”... “For the Greek Fathers, to confess the unity of the nature is to recognize the Father as unique Source of the persons who receive from Him this same nature” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 58-59).

St. Athanasius of Alexandria says: ‘There is a single principle of the Godhead, whence there is strictly a monarchy’ (Lossky, p. 58).

“The Greek Fathers always maintained that the principle of unity in the Trinity is the person of the Father” (Lossky, p. 58).

St. Gregory the Theologian says: ... ‘one safeguards one only God in referring the Son and the Spirit to a single Principle, neither compounding nor confounding them; and in affirming the identity of substance and what I will call the unique and like motion and will of the Godhead’ (Lossky, p. 59).

St. Basil the Great tells us: ... “we do not count by addition, passing from the one to the many by increase; we do not say: one, two, three, or first, second and third. ‘For I am God, the first, and I am the last’ (Is 44:6). Now we have never, even to the present time, heard of a second
God; but adoring God of God, confessing the individuality of the hypostases, we dwell in the monarchy without dividing the theology into fragments.” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 47-48)

As St. John of Damascus teaches us:

The Father derives from Himself His being, nor does He derive a single quality from another. Rather He is Himself the beginning and cause of the existence of all things both as to their nature and mode of being. All then that the Son and the Spirit have is from the Father, even their very being: and unless the Father is, neither the Son nor the Spirit is. And unless the Father possesses a certain attribute, neither the Son nor the Spirit possesses it: and through the Father, that is, because of the Father’s existence, the Son and the Spirit exist. ...When, then, we turn our eyes to the Godhead, and the first cause, and the sovereignty... what is seen by us is unity. But when we look to those things in which the Godhead is, or, to put it more accurately, which are the Godhead, and those things which are in it through the first cause... that is to say, the hypostases of the Son and the Spirit, it seems to us a Trinity that we adore. (Lossky, 1976, pp. 59-60)

This last passage from St. John of Damascus, especially, and some of the other passages which immediately precede it as well, could easily be misunderstood to be false statements of the kind which profess the Father to have superiority over the Son and the Holy Spirit. And consequently, in that kind of false conception, the Son and the Holy Spirit would have to be regarded as inferior to the Father. Vladimir Lossky asks some very important questions related to such possible misunderstandings and misconceptions, namely: “...does not this monarchy of the Father savour of subordination? Does not this conception confer upon the Father, the one unique
source, a certain pre-eminence as *the* divine person?” (Lossky, 1976, p. 63). The answer to both of these questions is a resounding “No”, as St. Gregory the Theologian answers any and all such questions, beautifully, in these following quotations from him which are a profound confession of Orthodox Trinitarian Theology:

I should like... to call the Father the greater, because from Him flow both the equality and the being of the equals... but I am afraid to use the word Origin, lest I should make Him the Origin of inferiors, and thus insult Him by precedencies of honour. For the lowering of those who are from Him is no glory to the Source.

Godhead... neither increased nor diminished by superiorities or inferiorities; in every respect equal, in every respect the same; just as the beauty and the greatness of the heavens is one; the infinite connaturality of Three Infinite Ones, each God when considered in Himself; as the Father so the Son, as the Son so the Holy Ghost; the Three, one God when contemplated together; each God because consubstantial; the Three, one God because of the monarchy. (Lossky, 1976, p. 63)

Remaining within this same eternal Holy Orthodox Tradition, let us continue and look further at what the saints have to teach to the world regarding God, the Holy Trinity. St. Thalassios the Libyan faithfully teaches Orthodox theology when he confesses that the Father is eternally and uniquely the Source of the Son and the Holy Spirit, saying:

We regard the Father as unoriginate and as the source: as unoriginate because He is unbegotten, and as the source because He is the begetter of the Son and the sender forth
of the Holy Spirit, both of whom are by essence from Him and in Him from all eternity.

(St. Thalassios the Libyan, 1990, p. 331)

Although the Father is uniquely and eternally the Source of the Son and the Holy Spirit, there is no superiority or inferiority between the Three Divine Persons, as St. Gregory the Theologian explained earlier (Lossky, 1976, p. 63). For the Son and the Holy Spirit, both come forth eternally and impassibly from the Father, the unique Source of Divinity within the Holy Trinity, and are indeed both “by essence from Him and in Him from all eternity” (St. Thalassios the Libyan, 1990, p. 331).

Consistent with this, St. Maximos the Confessor has the following to say:

“The Father is unoriginate Intellect, the unique essential Begetter of the unique Logos, also unoriginate, and the fount of the unique everlasting life, the Holy Spirit” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 165).

“There is one God, because the Father is the begetter of the unique Son and the fount of the Holy Spirit: one without confusion and three without division” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 165).

God the Father, as the unique Source from Whom pre-eternally God the Son is Begotten and from Whom pre-eternally God the Holy Spirit Proceeds, is the principle of unity in the Holy Trinity. But this monarchy of the Father as the unique Source of Divinity within the Holy Trinity does not mean in any way that there is any superiority or inferiority within the Holy Trinity. On the contrary, because of this monarchy of the Father as uniquely the Source of Divinity within
the Holy Trinity, the Three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are, regarding Their Divinity, “in every respect equal”, They are “in every respect the same” [as was quoted from the God-inspired wisdom of St. Gregory the Theologian] (Lossky, 1976, p. 63). For indeed the Son and the Holy Spirit eternally come forth from the Father, and They are in no way inferior to Him, for regarding Their very essence or nature, They are from the Father and in the Father from all eternity (St. Thalassios the Libyan, 1990, p. 331). St. Thalassios beautifully confesses this reality when he says:

The individual characteristics of the Father are described as unoriginateness and unbegotteness; of the Son, as co-presence in the source and as being begotten by it; and of the Holy Spirit, as co-presence in the source and as proceeding from it.

The origin of the Son and Holy Spirit is not to be regarded as temporal: how could it be? On the contrary, the term ‘origin’ indicates the source from which Their existence is eternally derived, as light from the sun. For They originate from that source according to Their essence, although They are in no sense inferior or subsequent to it. (St. Thalassios the Libyan, 1990, p. 331-332)

The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are the one and only true God. ‘Godhead... neither increased nor diminished by superiorities or inferiorities; in every respect equal, in every respect the same; just as the beauty and the greatness of the heavens is one; the infinite connaturality of Three Infinite Ones, each God when considered in Himself”.... ‘the Three, one God when contemplated together’....[St. Gregory the Theologian] (Lossky, p. 63).
Confirming that about which we speak, regarding Orthodox Trinitarian Theology, we again refer to the God-inspired wisdom of St. Maximos the Confessor where the following quotations from this great saint continue to beautifully give an Orthodox presentation about God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, and summarize much of what we have said, and will say, in our discussion:

Mystical theology teaches us, who through faith have been adopted by grace and brought to the knowledge of truth, to recognize one nature and power of the Divinity, that is to say, one God contemplated in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It teaches us to know God as a single unoriginate Intellect, self-existent, the begetter of a single, self-existent, unoriginate Logos, and the source of a single everlasting life, self-existent as the Holy Spirit: a Trinity in Unity and a Unity in Trinity. ... the Unity and the Trinity are both affirmed and conceived as truly one and the same, the first denoting the principle of essence, the second the mode of existence. The whole is the single Unity, not divided by the Persons; and the whole is also the single Trinity, the Persons of which are not confused by the Unity. Thus polytheism is not introduced by division of the Unity or disbelief in the true God by confusion of the Persons. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990c, pp. 295-296)

Again, elsewhere, St. Maximos the Confessor continues to teach the Orthodox Faith pertaining to the Three Divine Persons Who are the One True God:

God is one because there is one Divinity: unoriginate, simple, beyond being, without parts, indivisible. The Divinity is both unity and trinity--wholly one and wholly three. It
is wholly one in respect of the essence, wholly three in respect of the hypostases or persons. For the Divinity is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and is in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The whole Divinity is in the whole Father and the whole Father is in the whole Divinity. The whole Divinity is in the whole Son and the whole Son is in the whole Divinity. The whole Divinity is in the whole Holy Spirit and the whole Holy Spirit is in the whole Divinity. The whole Divinity is both Father and in the whole Father; the whole Father is in the whole Divinity and the whole Divinity is in the whole Father. The whole Son is in the whole Divinity and the whole Divinity is in the whole Son; the whole Son is both the whole Divinity and in the whole Divinity. The whole Divinity is both the Holy Spirit and in the whole Holy Spirit; and the whole Holy Spirit is both the whole Divinity and in the whole Divinity. For the Divinity is not partially in the Father, nor is the Father part of God. The Divinity is not partially in the Son, nor is the Son part of God. The Divinity is not partially in the Holy Spirit, nor is the Holy Spirit part of God. For the Divinity is not divisible; nor is the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit incomplete God. On the contrary, the whole and complete Divinity is completely in the complete Father; the whole and complete Divinity is completely in the complete Son; and the whole and complete Divinity is completely in the complete Holy Spirit. For the whole Father is completely in the whole Son and Spirit; and the whole Son is completely in the whole Father and Spirit; and the whole Holy Spirit is completely in the whole Father and Son. Therefore the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God. The essence, power and energy of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one, for none of the hypostases or
persons either exists or is intelligible without the others. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990e, pp. 137-138)

Orthodox Christianity, by the mercy of God, has always taught the following: The Hypostasis (Person) of God the Father is uniquely and pre-eternally the Source of the Hypostases (Persons) of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, and God the Father is also uniquely the Source of the Divine Essence or Nature that is common to the Holy Trinity. The Father is uniquely the Source of the Divine Essence in that the Divine Essence is His very Essence or Nature which He Himself possesses as God, and which is equally and fully possessed by the Only-Begotten Son of God, and which is also equally and fully possessed by the Holy Spirit. For the Son of God is “begotten of the Father before all ages;” He is “Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father” and the Holy Spirit is also God of one Essence with the Father for He pre-eternally Proceeds from the Father, it is in this sense that the Holy Spirit is called “the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified”. It is not the Divine Essence or Nature which is the Source of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rather, it is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Who possess one and the same undivided Nature or Essence. For as St. John Chrysostom confesses in the Divine Liturgy: “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Trinity one in essence and inseparable” (The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, 1985, p. 18). The Divine Essence or Nature is not the Source of Divinity, it is not the Source of itself nor of the Holy Trinity, rather, as we have already mentioned, it is the Person of the Father Who is the unique Source of Divinity in that the Father pre- eternally begets the Son and pre- eternally sends forth the Holy Spirit and the Three Divine Persons have the same Divine Nature or Essence, for the Son Who is
pre-eternally Begotten of the Father and the Holy Spirit Who pre-eternally Proceeds from the Father are of one Essence with the Father. The Divine Essence or Nature of the Father is equally and fully possessed by the Son and the Holy Spirit. ‘The Three have one Nature—God. And the union (ενωσις) is the Father, from whom and to whom the order of Persons runs its course, not so as to be confounded, but so as to be possessed, without distinction of time, of will, or of power’ (St. Gregory the Theologian, cited in Lossky, 1976, p. 59). The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church teach that “God the Father begets the Son and sends forth the Holy Spirit by nature and not by will” (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 13, 1).

The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are “undivided in nature, will, glory, power, energy, and all the characteristics of divinity” (Palamas, 1995b, p. 323). As Fr. Florovsky told us earlier, “There is a certain ‘necessity’ in the Divine Being, indeed not a necessity of compulsion, and no fatum, but a necessity of being itself. God simply is what He is” (Florovsky, 1987 p. 8). God is the Three Divine Persons (Hypostases), the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is the Holy Trinity and this fact that God is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is not caused by anything nor anyone, for God is not caused by anything nor anyone. Faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. Maximos the Confessor beautifully teaches this when he says that the Father is eternally the Father, and that “the Son and the Holy Spirit coexist with Him eternally in substantial form, having their being from Him and by nature inhering in Him beyond any cause or principle” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990c, p. 291). Following Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. Maximos the Confessor teaches these things brilliantly, when he is commenting on the Lord’s prayer, saying:
For the Father’s name is not something which He has acquired, nor is the kingdom a
dignity ascribed to Him: He does not have a beginning, so that at a certain moment He
begins to be Father or King, but He is eternal and so is eternally Father and King. In no
sense at all, therefore, has He either begun to exist or begun to exist as Father or King.
And if He exists eternally, not only is He eternally Father and King but also the Son and
the Holy Spirit coexist with Him eternally in substantial form, having their being from
Him and by nature inhereing in Him beyond any cause or principle: they are not sequent to
Him, nor have they come into existence after Him in a contingent manner. The
relationship of coinherence between the Persons embraces all three of them
simultaneously, not permitting any of the three to be regarded as prior or sequent to the
others. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990c, p. 291)

God simply is Who He is, God is the Holy Trinity, and “there are neither principles nor causes
anterior to the Trinity” (Lossky, 1976, p. 47). All these things which are mentioned confess the
truth, plainly and simply, as has been revealed to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ by the
mercy of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. Orthodox Christianity confesses that the one true
God is the Three Divine Persons (Hypostases), the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. None
of the Three Divine Persons or Hypostases “either exists or is intelligible without the others” (St.
Maximos the Confessor, 1990e, pp. 137-138), for there is no other God, but God, the Holy
Trinity. Indeed, Orthodox Christianity has always taught the following, beautifully confessed by
St. Gregory Palamas:
'The Lord your God is one Lord’ (cf. Deut. 6:4), revealed in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit: in the unbegotten Father; in the Son, who is begotten eternally, timelessly and impassibly as the Logos, and who through Himself anointed that which He assumed from us and so is called Christ; and in the Holy Spirit, who also comes forth from the Father, not begotten, but proceeding. This alone is God and alone is true God, the one Lord in a Trinity of Hypostases, undivided in nature, will, glory, power, energy, and all the characteristics of divinity. (Palamas, 1995b, p. 323)

_The Filioque Innovation Contributes to the “Relativization” of the Suprasubstantial Trinity_

The _Filioque_ innovation denies the monarchy of the Father as the unique Source of the Son and the Holy Spirit and instead seems to give pre-eminence to the divine Nature or Essence of the Holy Trinity over the Hypostases (Persons) of the Holy Trinity. Vladimir Lossky discusses brilliantly this kind of error into which the _Filioque_ inevitably leads:

The Greeks\(^57\) saw in the formula of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son a tendency to stress the unity of nature at the expense of the real distinction between the persons. The relationships of origin which do not bring the Son and the Spirit back directly to the unique source, to the Father—the one as begotten, the other as proceeding—become a system of relationships within the one essence: something logically posterior to the essence. Indeed, according to the western conception the Father

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\(^{57}\) The “Greeks” here likely means the Fathers of the Orthodox Church, many of whom spoke and wrote Greek, without themselves necessarily all being ethnically Greek. “Greeks” could also mean Orthodox Christians who are obviously not necessarily ethnically Greek. Oftentimes in history Eastern Europe was referred to as “Greek” and Western Europe as “Latin”, regarding cultural influence; certainly this was not to describe the ethnicity of vast regions of Europe, which were ethnically very diverse.
and the Son cause the Holy Spirit to proceed, inasmuch as they represent the one nature; while the Holy Spirit, who, for western theologians, becomes ‘the bond between the Father and the Son’, stands for a natural unity between the first two persons. The hypostatic characteristics (paternity, generation, procession), find themselves more or less swallowed up in the nature or essence which, differentiated by relationships—to the Son as Father, to the Holy Spirit as Father and Son—becomes the principle of unity within the Trinity. The relationships, instead of being characteristics of the hypostases, are identified with them. As St. Thomas\(^{58}\) was later to write: ‘Persona est relatio’, inner relationship of the essence which it diversifies. It can scarcely be denied that there is a difference between this trinitarian conception and that of Gregory Nazianzen with his ‘Thrice-repeated Holy, meeting in one ascription of the title Lord and God.’ (Lossky, 1976, p. 57)

The Orthodox Fathers taught something profoundly different, regarding the Supra-substantial Trinity, than what St. Thomas Aquinas taught—as was alluded to by reference to St. Gregory the Theologian (Gregory Nazianzen) in the above quotation. This can be seen in what Father Romanides had to say in his rightful criticism of Western Christianity (in this case Papism) and its rationalistic views foreign to divine revelation:

St. Gregory of Nyssa writes, “It is apparent indeed that the name of the Father is not descriptive of His essence but rather designates His relation to the Son.” *Against Eunomius*, 2nd Homily, P.G. 45, 473. Therefore, not even the name *Father* indicates

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\(^{58}\) “St. Thomas” here refers to St. Thomas Aquinas, a saint of Roman Catholicism—but he is definitely not a saint of the Orthodox Church. His teachings regarding the Holy Trinity are substantially different from those of the Orthodox Fathers—such as what St. Gregory Nazianzen (St. Gregory the Theologian) taught, as we have just seen, briefly.
what the divine essence is. Cf. also Gregory the Theologian’s *Third Theological Oration*, 16. The Greek Fathers speak of the name of the Father as indicative of the relation of the Father to the Son and of the Son to the Father, but this must not be confused with the West’s teaching regarding relations within the divine essence itself. The Greek Fathers speak of relations between three real hypostases, while the West speaks of relations of the divine essence with itself. According to Roman Catholicism, the opposition of the relations of the divine essence toward itself reveals the persons within the divine essence. (Romanides, 2002, p. 111)

Clearly, looking at what Father Romanides just said, the West, in its ignorance pertaining to Orthodox teaching, attempts to undermine the doctrine of the Holy Trinity by in effect moving toward an almost marginalization or trivialization of the Three divine hypostases—somewhat reminiscent of the heresy of Sabellianism, though not as extreme. This of course is to be expected from a theology born of philosophical speculation, such as what is found in Western Christianity—contrary to the empirical theology of the Orthodox saints.

As we just saw, yet again, what Western Christianity teaches is profoundly different from what the Holy Orthodox Church teaches. It is with these sort of sorrowful realities pertaining to Western Christianity and its confession of the Holy Trinity being kept in mind that we are well advised to learn from and heed the insightful comments of the famous Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Lossky as he expresses his thoughts on the inappropriate *Filioque* innovation of Roman Catholicism:

...by the dogma of the *Filioque* the God of the philosophers and savants is introduced into the place of the Living God. ...The Unknowable Essence of the Father, the Son, and the
Holy Spirit receives positive qualifications. It becomes the subject of a Natural Theology, concerned with “God in general,” who may be the God of Descartes, or the God of Leibniz, or even perhaps, to some extent, the God of Voltaire and the dechristianized Deists of the eighteenth century. (Vladimir Lossky, cited in Meyendorff, 1974, p. 189)

According to the brilliant remarks of Vladimir Lossky seen in this last quotation, we see that the Filioque innovation assails the Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity and in effect goes a long way towards promoting the attempts—which have been made throughout history and are continuing to be made to this day—which strive to qualify and to relativize God, the Holy Trinity. The rationalism of the Filioque innovation, in complete contradiction to the eternal revealed truth found in Orthodox Trinitarian Theology confessed by the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, works in the favor of all those who hold that God, the Holy Trinity, is merely a “concept” or “a particular way of looking at God”, though to many such people it is not the only way to “view” God nor is it necessarily the correct view of God at all. All this as many such people take, what for them is, the “concept” of the Holy Trinity and make it into a “relative concept” subservient to and by no means necessarily associated with their own vague, generalized and ambiguously formulated God. Rationalistic conclusions, such as the Filioque, promote concepts of God reminiscent of Greek philosophy to be found in Plato and other Greek and Hellenistic philosophers. The Roman Catholic, rationalistic, philosophical “deduction” of Filioque works to take the dogma of the Holy Trinity away from Orthodox Trinitarian Theology and put it into the philosophical realm, doing so the God of the philosophers and philosophical speculation is given primacy over the divine revelation of Orthodox theology found in the Holy Orthodox Church.
Associated with the heresy of the *Filioque* and its assault on the Orthodox Dogmatic teaching pertaining to God, the Holy Trinity, we see that such heresies and innovations encourage the relativization of God, the Holy Trinity, and this having been done we can see how such relativistic theology in turn justifies the glorified relativism of ecumenism. When God, the Holy Trinity, is made into a “relative conception” made to conform to a more generalized, “more inclusive”, “not necessarily Trinitarian” God which is what ecumenism essentially attempts to accomplish in its various manifestations, then we can see how various theologies which have nothing to do Orthodox Trinitarian Theology become promoted as all being somehow equally valid since they all seek to describe the same, generalized, purposely ambiguous, “not necessarily Trinitarian” God. With this in mind, we can see how numerous ecumenists, some of them, tragically, Orthodox (as we saw from some of the remarks made by some Orthodox Patriarchs themselves), attempt to essentially validate and equate various religions (many of them non-Christian) in their faithful subservience to the principles of ecumenism. When we look at some of the remarks which have been made by some Orthodox Hierarchs, and indeed by some Orthodox Patriarchs, we see how these people seem to be striving to give equal validity to the various religions of the world, both to Christian and non-Christian faiths alike, ignoring the fact that Orthodox Christianity is *uniquely* the Church.

*The One and Only True God is the Suprasubstantial Trinity*

In this climate of confusion and ambiguity promoted by rationalistic innovations and heresies such as the *Filioque*, all of which can find their home within the Pan-heresy of ecumenism, it is not surprising that some people would try to put the theological traditions found
outside of Orthodox Christianity onto some sort of equal plain with Orthodox Christianity itself. For example, Islam and Judaism, though undoubtedly monotheistic faiths, clearly and avowedly do not believe in God, the Holy Trinity, and therefore do not worship the same God as Orthodox Christianity does. Orthodox Christianity confesses belief in the one and only true God: the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Islam and Judaism clearly do not believe in the one and only true God, for they do not believe in the Suprasubstantial Trinity. With all these things in mind, and in contrast to the willful syncretism which we have seen manifested by some Orthodox leaders who embrace ecumenism, the following Orthodox confession of God, the Holy Trinity, made by St. Maximos the Confessor is insightful, profound and free of all syncretism and relativism:

Moreover, in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew (cf. Gal. 3:28). By this is meant differing or, rather, contrary views about God. The Greek affirms a host of ruling principles and divides the one fundamental principle into opposing operations and powers, devising a polytheistic worship full of contradictions because of the multitude of objects to be venerated, and ridiculous because of its many modes of veneration. The Jew affirms a fundamental principle which, although one, is narrow, imperfect and almost non-existent, since it is devoid of immanent consciousness and life; and so he falls into an evil which is just as bad as that into which the Greek falls for the opposite reason, namely disbelief in the true God. For he limits the fundamental principle to a single Person, one that exists without Logos and Spirit, or that merely possesses Logos and Spirit as qualities; for he fails to realize what kind of God this would be if deprived of these two other Persons, or how He could be God if assigned them as accidents by participation, as is the case with created intelligent beings. Neither Greek nor Jew, then, has any place at
all in Christ. In Him there is only the principle of true religion and the steadfast law of
mystical theology, that rejects both the dilatation of the Divinity, as in Greek polytheism,
and the contraction of the Divinity, as in Jewish monotheism. In this way the Divine is
not full of internal contradictions, as it is with the Greeks, because of a natural plurality,
nor is it regarded as possible, as it is by the Jews, because of being a single Person,
deprived of Logos and Spirit, or only possessing Logos and Spirit as qualities, without
itself being Intellect and Logos and Spirit. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990c, p. 295)

It is clear that when St. Maximos the Confessor is speaking of Intellect and Logos and Spirit he
is speaking of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, respectively. And St. Maximos the
Confessor is affirming in his discussion the Orthodox teaching that the Suprasubstantial Trinity
is the one and only true God, and therefore cannot be made relative.

The Nicene Creed, by Itself, is Not the Sole Determination of Orthodoxy

The innovation of the Filioque and all other innovations born of empty rationalism come
from, and encourage, a theology of philosophical deduction and speculation, independent of
divine revelation; as such these innovations and philosophical schemes resemble, and easily fit
into, the various humanisms which exist in the world. Within the ecumenical movement, that
syncretistic forum and glorified collection of heresies, such innovations and speculations--
foreign to divine revelation--find fertile ground in which to be justified and promoted.

Having said all this, we again need to mention that the Filioque innovation is but one of
the numerous innovations and heresies of Roman Catholicism which have separated it from
Orthodox Christianity. For even if Roman Catholicism were to renounce its Filioque innovation
and once again confess the original Nicene Creed (The Symbol of Faith), there would still be profound theological differences and matters to be resolved before Roman Catholicism could once again be in communion with the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. To illustrate this fact, we can look at the example of the Non-Chalcedonians (i.e., the Armenian Church, the Ethiopian Church and the Coptic Church of Egypt) who over more than fifteen centuries have persisted and continue to persist in their ancient heresy of Monophysitism and who, consequently, are not Orthodox and obviously are not in communion with the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and yet they still accept the original Nicene Creed. Additionally, the Uniates, a religious group of Roman Catholic origin and affiliation, who have historically, and aggressively, attempted to undermine and replace Orthodox Christianity, also accept the original Nicene Creed and yet they are not, nor have they ever been, in communion with the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. The point clearly being made here, through the aforementioned examples, is that even the acceptance of the original Nicene Creed does not, in and of itself, make any group Orthodox nor put any group in communion with the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. The acceptance of the original Nicene Creed, by itself, never has been, nor will it ever be, the sole determination of Orthodoxy.

Father Daniel Degyansky brilliantly argues against minimalistic formulas for the union of divided Christians because such formulas and schemes are, invariably, associated with the compromise, negotiation, contradiction and glorified relativism of the Ecumenical Movement, but in the end can have nothing to do with the unchanging reality that is Holy Orthodoxy. Father Daniel Degyansky’s (1997) insight regarding this issue is inspiring:
There are, admittedly, some Orthodox ecumenists who have suggested that unity can be achieved by such things as the universal acceptance of the Nicene Creed as a “sign of membership” in the True Church. However, this concept, like other similar ones, is also minimalistic; for even Uniates and Monophysites accept the original Nicene Creed. In fact, even the Unitarians, a group holding largely humanistic religious views, recite the Nicene Creed once a year “for historical reasons”—yet they reject the doctrine of the Holy Trinity! The Orthodox Church does not imagine Christian unity to come from a common creedal confession among people separated by different traditions or from simplistic formulae for union, but from the acceptance of a creedal statement that reflects a commitment to common traditions and which rejects the idea of ecclesiastical relativism. (p. 66)

The Attempted Undermining of Orthodoxy, Done in Ignorance, Under the Influence of the Delusion of Worldly Power

We close this chapter with more on how we Orthodox ourselves sometimes greatly undermine our witness to the world when it comes to our confessing what is incomparably the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. With this in mind, we see that Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos speaks of some of what the great Russian Orthodox theologian, Fr. Georges Florovsky, had to say regarding foreign, non-Orthodox, influences undermining traditionally Orthodox nations—in this case Father Florovsky is speaking of Russia (though this certainly also happened in Greece, and in other Orthodox nations as well). We have to note that this attempted undermining of Orthodox tradition very frequently took place in these nations with the full
cooperation, and even instigation, of many powerful people who were nominally Orthodox.

Some of what Metropolitan Hierotheos had to say—drawing from Father Georges Florovsky—proceeds as follows:

In an article with the title *Western Influences in Russian Theology* he [Father Florovsky] examines how Russian theology was influenced by the Western Enlightenment and German Idealism, and thus found itself at odds with the Orthodox tradition and the piety of the people. He discusses German philosophy, which infiltrated Russian theological consciousness, and the “new theological scholarship” which entered Russia from the West.

Speaking of academic theology in Russia in the past, which was influenced by German Idealism, he writes that it used “a special language, foreign to the people, a language which was neither that of common life nor of prayer. It remained an alien body in the structure of the Church, developing into artificial and totally estranged forms.” (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 29)

One cannot help but think that perhaps the great error of “personalism”—put forward by Father Meyendorff and some other Russian theologians, arising from an attempted academic confession of Orthodoxy, heavily influenced by Western, non-Orthodox, non-Patristic sources, and foolishly put forward in an attempt to essentially describe the indescribable, incomprehensible Holy Trinity—has at least some of its origins somewhere here (in the aforementioned historical reality, upon which Father Florovsky is brilliantly commenting).

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59 Bracketed entry is mine.
Additionally, many others have embraced the error of personalism. Bishop Kallistos Ware has at least, apparently, implicitly endorsed the error of personalism as a valid expression of Orthodox theology—by his having enthusiastically endorsed a book authored by Father John Meyendorff, where this same error is expounded as truth. Though Bishop Kallistos Ware has very often times, throughout many years, done a very significant service to our Holy Orthodox Church in his academic confession of Orthodox theology to the general public, he unfortunately, in his book, *The Orthodox Church* (on page 330), endorses Father John Meyendorff’s work *A study of Gregory Palamas*—apparently with no reservations, for none are mentioned—telling us that this book “still remains fundamental”. His eminence tells us this despite the fact that Father Meyendorff expounds—in this very same book—the very serious error of personalism. Father Meyendorff and others expounding a philosophy of personalism, and regarding it as being somehow a truthful and authentic expression of Orthodox Trinitarian theology, is very far from the truth and a very serious theological error. Apparently, Bishop Kallistos is not too familiar with Father Romanides’ brilliant and very faithful presentation of Orthodox theology; or perhaps Bishop Kallistos Ware simply chooses to underestimate or ignore Father Romanides’ very rightful condemnation of the great error of personalism—an error which I also, very regretfully, due to my ignorance, wholeheartedly embraced in the very first edition of this current work, some time ago, before I was corrected by Father Romanides’ brilliant work.

In relation to these very same topics, pertaining to non-Orthodox influences attempting to undermine Orthodoxy, Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos tell us how Western philosophy and other non-Orthodox forces found their way into Russia, and influenced Russia greatly—with oftentimes very adverse consequences to simple people of Orthodox Faith.
The Russian Church had dealt a blow to Orthodox spirituality and theology by condemning Maximos of Mount Athos and Trans-Volga elders in the sixteenth century. In other words, the Russian Church became like a keeper of books about astronomy, biology, and medicine, but had gotten rid of the telescopes, microscopes, and the scientist who used them. This made the Church ripe for Westernization under Peter the Great. (Romanides, n.d.)

Powerful leaders in Russia, in having done away, for a time, with Athonite Monasticism adopted Western style Monasticism which greatly exploited, and basically enslaved, their own people; indeed, the godless, Christ hating leadership of the great lie of Communism was finding a perfect excuse to make war on Orthodox Christians and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, because many powerful nominally Orthodox Christian leaders were giving them that excuse—many powerful, nominally Orthodox Christian leaders were themselves ignorantly and arrogantly attempting to undermine their own Orthodox Church, and gladly exploited their own people in doing so (this happened long before Marxism took power in Russia). Human arrogance and our willful embrace of falsehood and evil, whether perpetrated by Orthodox Christians or by anyone else, gives room for more evil—the leaders of Marxism were waiting. Father Romanides speaks brilliantly of these matters:

“In the Russian tradition, monks of the Holy Mountain are called ‘Non-Possessors’, whereas the others are called ‘Possessors’. One side said that poverty was essential for the monk, as they used to say in earlier times; no one can be an ascetic without being free from possessions. The other side said that property was indispensable for monasticism and it was essential for them to have property. Then the curious tradition
was introduced into Russia whereby the Russian monasteries not only had lands but also servants, like the monasteries of the Franks.

The Frankish Monasteries always had a Frank as an Abbot and most of the monks were not Franks. This monasticism with serfs was introduced into Russia. When the class of muzhiks developed in Russia, particularly with the reforms of Peter the Great, European feudalism came into Russia and these people were made subservient. The Monasteries were feudal institutions.

When scholastic theology appeared, monasticism in Russia faded away.

Afterwards heschasm returned in 1817 with the spiritual children of Paissy Velichkovsky. Thus the revival of hesychastic monasticism began, which had such a great influence on Dostoevsky. It is obvious.” (Hieroteos, 2012, p. 239)

One only has to read Dostoevsky’s masterpiece of literature, *The Brothers Karamazov*, to see the great influence of traditional Orthodox theology and spirituality—epitomized by the hesychastic tradition of Orthodox Monasticism, such as that found on Mount Athos—on Dostoevsky’s extremely significant and powerful work. When the Russians embraced Western style, feudalistic monasticism which essentially created a class of people who were made subservient to these same non-traditional Monasteries—which had deviated from traditional Orthodox theology and spirituality—the Christ-hating leaders of Marxism were being armed with enough propaganda to attack the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ; this despite the fact that it was essentially a case of mistaken identity—these feudalistic monasteries, the heavily Western influenced theology which they confessed, and their exploitation of people were a deviation from Orthodox Patristic
theology. Let us see some of the outstanding commentary of Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos pertaining some of these matters:

The Marxists encountered this scholastic and feudalistic theology of Tsarist Russia and made war on Christianity. This sort of theology of Western origin is not Orthodox patristic theology, but a deviation from it. [Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2012, pp. 240-241)

“The Marxists do not know the God of Orthodoxy. Russian Marxists know the God of Tsarist Russia, but He is the God of the Franks, the God of metaphysics and philosophy, not the God of the patristic tradition and hesychasm, of experience, glorification and illumination. This is not the God of Tsarist Russia. Because Tsarist Russia in the 16th century officially condemned hesychasm, when it imprisoned Maximos of the Holy Mountain, and he died in prison. This means that the Russian tradition took shape far away from the patristic tradition. The Russians have their own tradition.

For that reason the Greeks have been deluded for so many years with the propaganda of Korais, thinking that they will imitate the Russians. In which era will they imitate the Russians? If you reckon that, when Korais wrote that the Orthodox Church of Greece should imitate Tsarist Russia, that country had feudalism and the Church was supporting feudalism in those years, the servitude of Russians, of the muzhiks…” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 241)
Among the leadership and power elite of Tsarist Russia, in ecclesiastical and political centers of power, a sort of arrogance apparently presented itself in relation to Orthodox Patristic theology—no doubt under the influence of western ideas and the politics of some of Russia’s powerful, nominally Orthodox, but western thinking leaders—which promoted the ridiculous claim that Patristic theology had come to an end, and somehow was replaced by some sort of Russian theology which supposedly presented Orthodox theology more perfectly than the Patristic Fathers ever did. Father Romanides speaks of this:

“The Russians had the idea that patristic theology had finished. They were unable to accept the idea that, after the fall of Constantinople, the Romans could be the hesychasts of the patristic tradition. Because now, with the development of holy Russia, the Russians had become the heirs not only of the political rights of Romanity but also of the theological rights. So they ought to become the supreme heirs of the Orthodox Church. Thus they became susceptible to the Franks’ theory about the patristic tradition coming to an end.” (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 239)

Apparently, many from Russia’s power elite regarded Patristic theology as coming to an end with the fall of the glorious Byzantine Empire—this in regard to some of these powerful Russians’ belief that Patristic theology’s significance was no longer what it was because some sort of Russian theology had now surpassed it as a more authentic expression of Orthodoxy. Within such truly sorrowful and ridiculous claims—which could only undermine Orthodoxy and the well being of the Russian Orthodox people, who suffered tremendously—we see the arrogance of worldly power and self-righteousness leading people astray, leading people to delusion.
Tragically, it is as though, for a long time in their history, the Russian religious, cultural, and political power elite were mimicking the arrogance of those who formulated the false belief systems found throughout the multitude of the heresies in Western Christianity—though remaining nominally Orthodox, this same power elite and its followers, believed their Russian theology to be an improvement in Orthodox theology (a more perfect expression of it, if one wills to say), when compared to the Orthodox Patristic theology upon which they foolishly believed they had improved. Some of the following quotations from Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos speak of these matters brilliantly:

“What is of interest to us is that, when the Russians and the Franks say that patristic theology comes to an end, they mean by this expression that it is succeeded by something better than what was there before. In the Frankish tradition, Frankish theology is better than patristic theology. It is not simply a continuation of the patristic tradition, but is superior to it. For that reason, the propaganda is that patristic theology ends and afterwards scholastic theology begins. Scholastic theology is superior to patristic theology. Here in Greece such a thing is unimaginable. The Russians, too, took a curious line. For them Byzantium forfeited patristic theology with the fall of the Empire…” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierohos, 2012, p. 240)

“The perception developed among the Franks, who had conquered the Western provinces, that patristic theology used to exist and their own theology had taken its place, exactly as we see among the Russians. There is no Russian father of the Church or, at least, if they exist they do not call them Fathers of the Church.
So there is the perception among the Russians that patristic theology ended with John of Damascus or Photius the Great. Or there are some Russians who can ‘hold on’ until Gregory Palamas in patristic theology. Then patristic theology stops, essentially, and Russian theology takes over from patristic theology. This is the line the Russians take. It is a fact.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 238)

Tsarist Russia was much influenced by Frankish theology, particularly by scholastic theology and theological feudalism. This is why hesychasm—as represented by St Maximos of Vatopedi, called ‘the Greek’—was condemned in Russia as anti-patristic.

The view of the Franks and the Russians that the patristic tradition came to an end in the eighth century led to the assertions that Frankish scholasticism and Russian theology surpassed the patristic tradition. [Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 238)

Such errors—born of the ignorance and arrogance engendered by some measure of worldly power and to which no group of people is immune, whether they be Orthodox or non-Orthodox—which, in regard to these aforementioned circumstances, at various periods of time, consisted of many Russians (particularly from the power elite) significantly emulating the Western heretics’ institutions and theological “scholarship”, in order to supposedly “improve” the “understanding” of theology and confession of Orthodoxy. This sorrowful, truly delusional approach of supposedly confessing Orthodoxy “better” was something that was embraced by some Orthodox leaders and others—not only by many Russian Orthodox, but by many other
Orthodox Christians also—and was obviously something that was foreign to the unconquerable witness of the Orthodox Saints throughout history. With all of this having been said, we Orthodox, from all the Orthodox nations, should never forget (without any exception from among us) that which St. Gregory the Theologian warns and teaches to all the Orthodox peoples and to the entire world—with his God inspired wisdom, in agreement with all the Orthodox Saints throughout the ages—namely: that we can neither describe, nor conceive Who God is, ever. This Orthodox confession of St. Gregory the Theologian holds true, no matter how much supposedly “better” or “improved” any theology might be (according to the claims of its proponents), when compared to the Orthodox theology of the Fathers. With no exception whatsoever, all the words, names, concepts, and all dogmas, in any way pertaining to, or naming, God, point in some sense to Who God is but can never communicate or comprehend Who the absolutely incommunicable, incomprehensible, absolutely transcendent Triune God is; and none of the countless Orthodox saints from throughout the world and history were ever foolish enough to believe otherwise. Indeed, as we said, what St. Gregory the Theologian says is very true: ‘It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.’

Father Romanides continues his discussion pertaining to these aforementioned matters of history and how the Orthodox Church was challenged from within. We note that this is not the first time in history (nor will it be the last, one can be sure) that people from a particular power elite have attempted, either knowingly or unknowingly, to undermine Orthodoxy—an endeavor forever doomed to failure in regard to the Orthodox Church as a whole, for Orthodox Christianity is alone the True Faith. Let us look at Father Romanides’ discussion pertaining to some of this:
“The important thing for us to bear in mind is that the Russians were greatly influenced by the West from very early on. Because from the time when they officially condemned Maximos of Vatopedi, called ‘the Greek’, to imprisonment in the 16th century, they also condemned Nil Sorsky, who was leader of the Russian hesychasts.

The Russians had hesychastic monasticism. It seems that a movement started then for them to abandon this monasticism in exchange for a contemporary Western type. A non-Athonite kind of monasticism was introduced into Russia. This, obviously, was after Maximos of Vatopedi and Nil Sorsky had been condemned. Monasticism was condemned along with them. (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 238)

One cannot help but see in such claims made by some Orthodox Christians—regarding a “particular” Orthodox theology coming to an end and being replaced by something higher—the same sort of arrogance which is found in the heresy of Western Christianity, the arrogance of supposed infallibility in the interpretation of theological matters (the infallibility of the individual’s interpretation, according to Protestant thinking; and that of the Pope, according to Papism). Incidentally, the heresy of ecumenism is essentially very akin to what we just mentioned—with all its supposed new “understandings” and “improvements” in our confession of theology. Proceeding, we see that Metropolitan Hierotheos, somewhere in his writing beautifully and powerfully tells us, that in Orthodoxy their is one Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and our Orthodox theology is one— and this Orthodox theology is certainly not associated with a particular ethnic group or nation having a more perfect theology than another within Orthodoxy, provided that our confession follows the Patristic witness. With this in mind,

60 St. Nektarios and St. Justin Popovich teach us this, pertaining to the heresies which comprise Western Christianity.
Metropolitan Hierotheos informs us in an article (found in John Sanidopoulos’ outstanding research), from which we are taking the excerpt which is to follow, that the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) had invited Fr. John Romanides, Fr. George Metallinos and Metropolitan Hierotheos to be the only speakers at a seminar organized by the OCA in 1997 in Atlanta. It should be noted that the defense of Orthodox Patristic theology offered by these invited speakers (Fr. Romanides, Fr. Metallinos, and Metropolitan Hierotheos) was very surprising, enlightening, educational, and humbling to at least one of their listeners from the OCA—and likely to many more of their listeners, given the theological stature of these speakers.

The O.C.A. is a Church in which Fr. Alexander Schmemann, known to all, taught and played a significant role. The organizers of the Seminar wanted to know our views of these issues. We learned that the members of this Church, until then, considered the theologians of Greece influenced by the scholastic and Protestant theology of the West and that the Russian theologians of the diaspora expressed the true Orthodox theology of the so-called neo-patrists and neo-palamites, which of course is superior and outweighs the theology of the Fathers. Well-known are the views of Alexis Khomiakov that the scholastic theology of the West is higher than the theology of the Fathers, and that Russian theology surpassed both scholastic and even Greek patristic theology. But when they heard us repeatedly over two days at this Seminar analyze issues of Orthodox tradition, then one of those in attendance said: “This theology is higher than ours and the Russian diaspora. We were mistaken to have underestimated it.” (Hierotheos, 2010)
Certainly, the ancient Orthodox Fathers, and all the Orthodox saints, teach us that we Orthodox—unlike the heretics—do not make up or discover a better theology than that which we have inherited and confessed, unadulterated, from ancient times; nor do we pretend to ever give a better description of the Triune God—as the proponents of the falsehood of personalism claim. For, as we said, the Triune God is forever indescribable and incomprehensible—as such, we Orthodox do not improve upon the Patristic theology of our Holy Orthodox tradition with some sort of Russian theology or some theology of personalism or any other kind of theology. Orthodox Christianity is the only True Faith, and the Triune God is forever beyond all communication, all words, any and all names, all concepts and all comprehension—the Triune God is forever beyond all these things. As such we Orthodox say the following:

“As this is so, it is nonsensical for us [to] sit there asserting, like the Protestants and the Franks, that as time passes we have a deeper understanding of the dogmas of the Church. What does a deeper understanding mean, when, in the experience of glorification, of Pentecost, dogma has been abolished and the concepts and words that constitute dogmas have been done away with? The experience of glorification is not dogma. It is higher than dogma. Dogma is the expression of the mystery, but expressing the mystery is not the same as comprehending the mystery, because ‘It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.’ That is the end of the matter.” (Hierotheos, 2012, p.101)

Additionally of interest, Father Romanides tells us that after hesychastic Orthodox spirituality was being reintroduced into Russia, ironically at around that same time, the Greeks
where about to mimic the earlier mistakes of the Russians—by now taking their own turn at
attacking hesychastic Orthodox theology.

One of the amazing quirks in history is that while the Greek state was getting rid
of theology and spirituality based on noetic prayer, this same tradition was being
reintroduced into Russia by means of the spiritual children of Paisios Velitchkovsky of
Moldavia who passed away in 1817. (Romanides, n.d.)

With this in mind, Father Romanides tells us that the situation in Greece was pathetic,
theologically, for a while—as we Greeks of Orthodox heritage were not in touch with our
Patristic Orthodox theology and hesychastic tradition as much as we should have been.
Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos tells us that with the passage of time the Greek people
have, thankfully, awoken to see much of what they were previously forsaking.

“In the modern Greek state, Orthodoxy had been completely uprooted, destroying
its traditional inner continuity with the past. They had not the slightest clue about the
patristic theological method. Not that they did not understand it; not a trace of
comprehension had remained. Nothing, absolutely nothing, had remained. They did not
even know any more what God was, nor did they know what illumination was, nor did
they know what purification was, nor did they know how the Fathers interpreted Holy
Scripture…All they knew, in a superficial way, were a few things from the Fathers.” [Fr.
Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 241-242)

Fortunately in our own days we have understood this loss and are returning to the
genuine hesychastic patristic tradition. To summarise, the Fathers are the successors of
the Apostles and the Prophets, and the patristic tradition is inseparable linked with ecclesiastical life. [Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 241-242)

As such, and only with God’s help, let us keep learning from our mistakes and attempt never to repeat them. With this in mind, as we saw a little earlier, the Westernization of the Russian Orthodox Church by Peter the Great and others provided fertile ground for the Marxists to attack Russia and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. This is so because Orthodoxy was falsely identified with the errors of Western Christianity and with Western Christianity’s enslavement of people through the feudalism which the Western church had long endorsed; this misidentification is unfortunately very understandable because the Russian Orthodox Church basically copied, for a while in its history, this same feudalistic system of the West with certain elements of the West’s theological approach also thrown in—this was done after hesychastic Patristic theology was condemned in Russia, for a time. Father Romanides discussed pertaining to these matters earlier. Because there was a time when the Russian Orthodox Church was greatly under the influence of Western ideas pertaining to philosophy and religion and had adopted Western monastic practices—including the servitude of people through feudalism—as such, the Russian Church was seen by many as alienating and enslaving people. When people were ignorant of, and deceived by, Marxism, then Marxism presented itself as a viable alternative and solution to what was being done in Russia to vast numbers of simple, pious Orthodox Christian people (in addition to what was also being done to other simple hardworking people) by many in a ruling elite who—in both ecclesiastical and political circles—were in power and were greatly exploiting people. We note that certainly this exploitation of people in
Russia was not done by all in this aforementioned ruling elite—for there were, without a doubt, very many pious and saintly Orthodox Christians among this ruling elite, as there were certainly vast numbers of pious and saintly Orthodox Christians among the simple hardworking people in Russia and elsewhere—and certainly good and evil is done by all, from time to time, independent of how powerful or weak they may be. Additionally, the leaders of Marxism and their lackeys were about to surpass everyone, by far, in their cruelty and exploitation of other human beings—this was horrifically evident in their genocide perpetrated against truly staggering numbers of Orthodox Christians who were tormented and murdered in Russia and Eastern Europe. Indeed, to fight against some of the oppression in Tsarist Russia many embraced Marxism. In order to destroy the dogs, many called in the wolves—a huge mistake. What does Solzhenitsyn tell us: “If dogs are attacking and tearing at you, fight against the dogs, but do not call a wolf for help. Because when the wolves come, they will destroy the dogs, but they will also tear you apart” (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b). This is a lesson to all Orthodox Christians and their leaders; let us not invite a catastrophe through our own embrace of non-Orthodox influences, either in our politics or ecclesiastical life—the danger of the heresy of ecumenism certainly comes to mind, among many other dangers.

Regarding pious, simple Orthodox Christians—about whom we just spoke in the above paragraph—who so often have had to pay for the mistakes of their leaders and who throughout the predominately Orthodox nations have had to stand and defend and suffer for their unconquerable Holy Orthodox Faith against the heresies of the world and other hostile forces, St. Justin Popovich and St. Nikolai Velimirovich tell us of the heroic Orthodox Faith of the Russian muzhik and the Serbian peasant (and they could just as easily have been speaking of the simple,
pious Orthodox Christians who were Greek, Romanian, Georgian, or from any other ethnic
group or background where we find Orthodox Christians).

The victor is the Russian *muzhik* and the Serbian peasant, according to Christ’s words:

*He that is least among you all, the same shall be great* (Luke 9:48).

[...] Who, if not the Russian *muzhik*, the pauper ‘in the holy places’ and the Serbian peasant,
the warrior against the crescent and the liberator of the Balkans?

[...] [St. Justin Popovich quotes St. Nikolai Velimirovich] (Popovic, 2000, p. 168)

Orthodox Christians of simple Faith, profound humility, and great courage—and those who possessed these virtues did so only by the unfathomable grace of God—fought against false beliefs and the great worldly power that attempted to propagate such falsehood; and, only by God’s grace, they emerged victorious for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, becoming a tremendous inspiration to all Orthodox Christians. As such, in what follows, we will see but one example, of countless such examples throughout the unmatched history of Orthodox Christianity, where pious Orthodox Christians stood in the face of heresy and great worldly power—and by the grace of God could not be broken and emerged victorious for Holy Orthodoxy. Here is one such example, as St. Justin Popovich and St. Nikolai Velimirovich tell us of the heroic stand of the Serbian peasant who courageously defended Orthodox Christianity against heresy and against the overwhelming worldly power which supported such falsehood.

The Serbian peasant represented everything in opposition to all that: firstly: a cross-bearing heroism, secondly: a martyr priesthood, and thirdly: the fisherman’s apostolic wisdom. To him also apply those prayerful words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus: *I thank*
Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes (Matt. 11:25). What has God revealed to simple peasants? He has revealed manly courage, heavenly sanctity and divine wisdom to them. He has revealed to them all that is utterly other than the western Emperor, Pope and Philosopher, entirely opposite, as day is to night. [St. Justin Popovich quotes St. Nikolai Velimirovich] (Popovic, 2000, pp. 168-169)

Christ promised us that His Church will remain forever and that hell will never prevail against it; the Orthodox Church is alone the True Church, and indeed it has never been defeated, nor will it ever be—To God belongs all glory! As such, may the Greeks, the Russians, the Serbs, and all the Orthodox Christian peoples repent of their mistakes and never forget their unconquerable Orthodox Faith. May all of us Orthodox repent of our mistakes, laziness, cruelty, arrogance and stupidity and never forget Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church—for the Holy Orthodox Church is alone the True Church of Christ.
CHAPTER 8

ORTHODOX ECUMENISTS’ RELATIVISM

Orthodox ecumenists’ relativism, which can be seen in their conduct towards other faiths (both Christian and Non-Christian), essentially teaches Orthodox Christians, and the rest of the world, that theological relativism is the truth, rather than Orthodox Christianity. That is a dreadful educational example for some Orthodox leaders to set. Consistent with this and as was mentioned earlier, many Orthodox ecumenists are not simply content at attempting to minimize and relativize the Orthodox faith when dealing with representatives of the various Christian denominations, but they feel the right and apparently the need to do so when witnessing to non-Christians as well. Let us consider some more amazing comments on the part of prominent Orthodox leaders who appear to be more concerned with providing an articulate witness to the ambiguously “Deistic” views of the confused, humanistic religious conglomerate, known as the ecumenical movement, rather than witnessing to the Pre-eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ and His Holy Church, the Orthodox Church. We observe—as we quote from some of the research of the Old Calendrist Greek Orthodox Bishop, Angelos of Avlona (1998)—the following syncretistic remark of the Patriarchal Metropolitan of Switzerland, Damaskinos: ‘We should be prepared to seek and to recognize the presence of the Spirit—which means: the Church—outside our own canonical boundaries’ ...(p. 38).

In response to such relativism and syncretism, which profoundly contradicts what the Orthodox saints have taught humanity throughout history, it should be said that it is outrageous for an
Orthodox hierarch to deny, what for Orthodox Christianity is the truth, namely, that the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is uniquely the Church and that there is no other.

Once again, in close conformity to what has been mentioned earlier in the discussion: If an Orthodox hierarch chooses to not defend and confess the unconquerable Holy Orthodox Christian Faith then he should explicitly leave that same Orthodox Faith and confess whatever he chooses within some other context without defiling Orthodoxy and the sufferings of countless Martyrs. It is with this in mind that the following words of Dr. Constantine Cavarnos (1996), regarding the Holy Ecumenical Synods and the pathetic disrespect afforded to the Theology confessed in those same Holy Synods by numerous Orthodox ecumenists, need to be considered:

Now the Divine dogmas of the Faith and the Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church were elaborated by these Synods, and are traditionally regarded as God-inspired. They constitute the law of the Church. Accordingly, those who do not take these doctrines seriously and violate these Canons cannot be regarded as Orthodox, and their Ecumenism should not be called Orthodox Ecumenism but Anarchical Ecumenism. (p. 14)

In addition, quoting Hieromonk Klemes Agiokyprianites (2000), we see the following which is related to what we have just mentioned:

In November of 1994, at the World Conference on Religion and Peace (Riva del Garda, Italy, November 4, 1994), Patriarch Bartholomew said the following: “Roman Catholics and Orthodox, Protestants and Jews, Muslims and Hindus, Buddhists and Confucians: the time has come not only for rapprochement, but also for an alliance and joint effort” to
“contribute--all of us--to the promotion of the spiritual principles of ecumenism, brotherhood, and peace,” since “we are united in the spirit of the one God.” (p. 73)

We also quote from the research of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili (1997), where we continue to see the relativism and syncretism so common to ecumenists:

In 1990 (January 9-15), the WCC organized a Meeting in Baar, Switzerland, in which twenty-one Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic theologians took part, as well as other specialists, from fifteen countries, and they hammered out a text entitled “Religious Pluralism-Theological Perspectives and Affirmations.”

In this text, aside from other surprises, we read that: “We recognize the need to move beyond a theology which restricts salvation to a particular explicit commitment to Jesus Christ” and “We explicitly affirm that the Holy Spirit works in the life and the traditions of peoples of living faiths”! (pp. 26-27)

Well, needless to say, from the perspective of Orthodox Christianity and its Theology, the previously quoted remarks and affirmations, which were either made, or accepted, by some prominent Orthodox leaders, who are Ecumenists, are obviously false and border on the insane, bearing no witness to the absolute truth of divine revelation. Any Orthodox Christian who chooses to embrace such foolishness and essentially deny Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church should listen to St. Nikolai Velimirovich who tells us:

[O]f all forms of folly, it is difficult to find one greater than this: that someone who calls himself a Christian should go and glean miserable proofs of God and of eternal life from
other faiths and philosophies. He who does not get gold from a rich man is not likely to have it from a poor one. (St. Nikolai Velimirovich, cited in Patapios, 2000, p. 71)

Jesus Christ, the Son of God is the world’s only salvation. It is with this in mind that Orthodox Christianity teaches and proclaims in the Divine Liturgy the following:

Only begotten Son and Word of God, although immortal You humbled Yourself for our salvation, taking flesh from the holy Theotokos and ever virgin Mary and, without change, becoming man. Christ, our God, You were crucified but conquered death by death. You are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit--save us. (*The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, 1985, p. 6)

*Ecumenism, Ambiguity, and the Relativization of God*

As we saw earlier, Patriarch Bartholomew--in what obviously appears to be purposely vague, generalized and politically correct theological language--effectively says (by making the expression ‘we are united in the spirit of the one God’) that people who do not confess Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, God Himself, are united spiritually to those who do confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. About what God then is the Patriarch speaking in his seemingly purposeful and uninspiring ambiguity? It is certainly not God, the Holy Trinity, because many of the people to whom he is speaking clearly do not believe in God, the Holy Trinity. Apparently ‘the promotion of the spiritual principles of ecumenism, brotherhood, and peace,’ are enough to unite all present to the one God who is not the Holy Trinity or at least not necessarily the Holy Trinity or maybe for some it can be that God is the Holy Trinity but for others it is not
necessarily so and does not need to be so. Or maybe these are all “culture-specific” details that are biased and not worth mentioning or the “concept” of the Holy Trinity is simply a historical and cultural peculiarity that is but one of many “diverse” views that are all equally “acceptable” to describe the the one, generalized, politically correct, “not necessarily Trinitarian” God.

According to this line of reasoning, common to much of what is seen and accepted in various ecumenical encounters, there is clearly an attempt on the part of many ecumenists to deny (either explicitly or implicitly) the eternal Theological truth--always confessed throughout the ages by Orthodox Christianity--that the one God is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity. Explicitly or implicitly, this denial of Orthodox doctrine has become something frequently seen and accepted in the Ecumenical Movement. Sadly, as we have seen, many Orthodox ecumenists participate in and frequently lead the charge into the appalling, cowardly theological syncretism and relativism that is a dominant feature of the ecumenical movement.

How will these same Orthodox hierarchs and leaders answer to God, the Holy Trinity, on the Day of Judgment when they refuse to courageously and without any compromise teach to their Orthodox flock and witness to the entire world the incomparable and unique truth that is the Holy Orthodox Christian Faith established by the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ?

*The Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition Proclaim Christ the Son of God; the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition Proclaim the Suprasubstantial Trinity*

To those who, in any way, deny the uniqueness of Christ, the Son of God, and by so doing are essentially supporting those who deny that God is the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit--the Holy Scriptures are very clear:
1 John 2:18-26: Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us--eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, pp. 572-573)

1 John 4:2-3: By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which

61 Of interest is the commentary of the The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms regarding 1 John 2:18: “The last hour is the era of the New Covenant, the ‘eleventh hour’ (Matt. 20:6). The deceptions at hand are in view, rather than a specific prediction of the end of the world. Many antichrists are the heretics, through whom the Antichrist of the end of time (see 2 Thess. 2) is doing his spade work.”(The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, pp. 572-573). Here we see some of the sobriety and balance, which is characteristic of Orthodox teaching, this is in strong contrast to the sensationalism and subservience, which is characteristic of Evangelicalism and so many of the other heresies.
you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 575) 2 John 7-9: For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 579)

John 15:4-5: Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 253)

Orthodoxy confesses that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity; He is God the Word (the Logos), He is the Son of God, He is God Himself. The Son of God, without any need or necessity to His Person and without ceasing to be God, voluntarily condescended to become that which He was not before, man, for the salvation of all humanity. The Only-Begotten Son of God, God the Word, voluntarily became what He was not before, He became a human being, He became fully man, while remaining fully God. As such, the entirety of Holy Scripture, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, when interpreted within the Holy Orthodox Tradition, confesses the Son of God as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Scriptures, having been brought forth and defended by the Holy Orthodox Church of
Christ, were inspired by the Suprasubstantial Trinity, and they clearly confess the truth that the Suprasubstantial Trinity is the one true God.

The Only-Begotten Son of God, God the Word, revealed Himself to the prophets, to the apostles, and to countless other saints, who throughout history confessed Him. Orthodox theologians, following the Holy Tradition passed on to humanity throughout the ages by the Orthodox saints themselves, confess that before the Incarnation the Old Testament prophets and saints of ancient Israel, by the unfathomable grace of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, knew and confessed the Son of God. The research of Dr. George S. Gabriel (2000) is greatly insightful, regarding this matter:

In the uncreated glory of God, the holy Prophets and saints of Israel were able to converse with and see the Son of God. This takes place in another reality, one that men do not ordinarily know: the uncreated reality of God. They were taken into the uncreated energies of the divine will, rule or reign, and prescience. And because they were in God, “within the light,” He gave them to know things that are in His foreknowledge, and they learned what His will had foreordained before the ages.

“After this invisible manner, therefore, did they see the Son of God as a man conversing with men, while the prophesied what was to happen, saying that He Who was not come as yet was present....They saw the dispensations and the mysteries through which man should afterwards see God.” [St. Irenaeus] “It is evident that God appeared to them as a man...the image and type of what was yet to come. For the invisible Son and Word of God was to become truly man that He might be united to our nature and be seen
on earth." [St. John of Damascus] "You see, therefore, that the Prophets also in those
times beheld Christ but as much as each was able....The forefather David knew
Him....Moses also saw Him, Isaiah also saw Him, Jeremiah also saw Him, and not a
single one of the Prophets did not know Him." [St. Cyril of Jerusalem] (p. 117). "All who
have known God from the beginning and have foretold the coming of Christ have
received the revelation from the Son Himself." [St. Irenaeus] (p. 119)\(^62\)

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cannot be made into a relative truth, no matter how
powerful certain people and forces may happen to be who advocate this kind of apostasy and to
whom many ecumenists and others zealously pander and ally themselves. Christ clearly tells us
that He is the Lord, and nothing and no one can change that fact, for all that exists is because of
Him. With this mind, we observe the words of Christ, the Son of God: John 10:30: “I and the
Father are one” (The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume 1), 1999, p. 436).
Christ the Theanthropos having made this particular statement of fact, among others, affirming
that He is the Only-Begotten Son of God, God Himself, caused very many Jews to want to kill
Him. We clearly see this, among other places, in John 10:31-39:

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “Many good
works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?”
The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for
blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.” Jesus answered them,

\(^62\) The bracketed entries in this entire block quotation pertaining to p. 117 and p.119, from Gabriel (2000),
were inserted by me--and are consistent with Dr. Gabriel’s footnotes for these pages.
“Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods”’? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.” Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 241)

Certainly, of great significance is the Orthodox understanding of these passages from the Holy Scriptures. Regarding John 10:30-33, we see that Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, “reveals Himself as fully God: one means one in nature. He was God before the Incarnation, and He remains fully God after that union of God and man in His one Person. The verb are indicates the Father and the Son are two Persons. They are always distinct, but united in essence, will and action. Jesus’ bold claim causes a violent reaction: they attempt to stone Him, accusing Him of blasphemy” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 241). Christ quotes from the Holy Scriptures, which He Himself (as God) inspired, in response to their charge of blasphemy. We see this in John 10:34-36: Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods”’? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 241). The Orthodox understand this passage as an affirmation of the following fact: Whatever people have, they have by the infinite grace of God, by no means possessing anything in and of themselves, for all creation was created from nothing
by God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, with God having had absolutely no need to create anything or anyone. Therefore, seen from this Orthodox perspective, by the unfathomable grace of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, humanity is given the opportunity to pursue “theosis”. In other words, in Christ the Theanthropos, God gives every person the path to become “godlike” by grace, while forever remaining human by nature (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). In theosis, we forever remain what God created us to be, human (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). In theosis, we forever remain created and human, and the Triune God forever remains Uncreated and God (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). In humanity’s pursuit of theosis we do not, nor can we ever, become what the Triune God is, for God is God and we obviously are not God, nor can we ever be God (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). Therefore, in the Orthodox doctrine of theosis, as in all aspects of Orthodox theology, the false teaching of pantheism, in all its forms, is rejected. Indeed, Orthodox Christianity confesses that this opportunity for each and every person to cooperate with the infinite grace of God and pursue theosis, to become that for which God has created us, is contrasted, of course, with the fact that Christ the Theanthropos is God Incarnate— the Pre-eternal Son of God Himself, Who chose to become Man. Christ the Theanthropos is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, He is God Himself Who, without any necessity to His Divine Person, voluntarily became that which He was not before, Man, in order to save humanity and offer it the path to sanctification, theosis. As such, and in conformity with the Holy Orthodox Church’s rejection of any form of pantheism, the opportunity for theosis (and theosis itself) is not necessitated by anything in God, the Holy Trinity, it is not necessitated by the divine nature
of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, rather it is simply a gift of grace offered to humanity by that same absolutely transcendent God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Therefore, within this context of Holy Orthodox Tradition, the wisdom of St. John Chrysostom is very enlightening to us, regarding Christ’s response to His enemies in John 10:34-38: “If those who have received this honor by grace are not found at fault for calling themselves gods, how can He who has this by nature deserve to be rebuked?” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 241).

For as Christ Himself tells us: Revelation 22:13: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” [Translated from the Greek] (Η ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ, 1980, p. 1061). Indeed, this passage of Holy Scripture is fully consistent with countless other passages from Holy Scripture, such as the following: Ex. 3:14, Rev.1:8, Rev. 4:8, and Rev.11:17. In fact, the entirety of Holy Scripture, when seen within the light of the eternal Holy Orthodox Tradition, gives us affirmation that Christ the Theanthropos is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, God Himself. Let us look at two of these other passages from the Holy Scriptures and let us look at some corresponding commentary from Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, all of which confess the Divinity of Christ the Only-Begotten Son of God, and affirm, along with the entire Holy Orthodox Tradition, the truth that God is the Suprasubstantial Trinity: Rev. 1:8 : “I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, He Who is and He Who was and He Who is coming, the Almighty” [Translated from the Greek] (Η ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ, 1980, p. 997). This beautiful passage of Holy Scripture applies to Christ the Only-Begotten Son of God and confesses His Divinity as One of the Holy Trinity, for as St. Gregory the Theologian tells us: “This is clearly spoken of the Son” (The Orthodox New
Additionally, and certainly consistent with Orthodox Trinitarian Theology, St. Andrew of Caesarea tells us that the words in Rev. 1:8 also apply to each of the Three Divine Persons of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity separately, and they also apply to All Three Divine Persons together: “The divinely splendid words are fitting equally for each of the Persons separately and for All together” (Taushev, 1995, p. 65). We see this in other passages of Holy Scripture, and confirmed by Holy Orthodox Tradition, for example, we observe this in Rev. 4:8: “And the four living creatures, each one having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God the Almighty, He Who was and He Who is and He Who is coming’” [Translated from the Greek] (Η ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ, 1980, p. 1007). Indeed, it is not just the creatures which are six-winged and many-eyed that praise their Creator, the Triune God, but the entire Holy Orthodox Church does the same, in every aspect of its life, a life which has been given to it and is sustained by that same God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. For example, we can see this when we consider the following concise and illustrative reference to the Triune God, from countless such references which are to be found throughout the Liturgical Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church: “O Trinity, one in Essence and undivided, Unity in three coeternal Persons, to Thee as God we sing the angels’ hymn: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, our God” (The Lenten Triodion, 1978, p. 664). Some more commentary, from Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, beautifully confesses that God is the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Regarding Rev. 4:8, we listen to St. Gregory of Nyssa: “The mystery of the Trinity was luminously proclaimed when they uttered that marvelous cry, ‘Holy’, being awestruck with the beauty in each hypostasis of the Trinity” (The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2), 1999, p.
And regarding that same passage of Holy Scripture (Rev. 4:8), St. Ambrose tells us: “They repeat thrice and say the same word, that even in a hymn you may understand the distinction of Persons in the Trinity, and the oneness of the Godhead, and while they say this they proclaim God” (The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2), 1999, p. 560).

Orthodox Christianity is uniquely the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church with unparalleled, unbroken continuity and it forever teaches that the one true God is the Holy Trinity as is uniquely and correctly confessed in Orthodox Trinitarian Theology within the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. Orthodoxy teaches that there is no other God but God, the Holy Trinity. Orthodox ecumenists and all other Orthodox Christians, myself included, need (to the best of their ability) to work towards, courageously and uncompromisingly, confessing this fact, following the example set throughout history for all humanity by the unconquerable Orthodox saints.
CHAPTER 9

ORTHODOXY CONTRADICTS THE ERROR OF
PERSONAL INFALLIBILITY

The error of personal infallibility, which is seen in Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and
Ecumenism (and among other places where such arrogance is exulted above humility, an
arrogance of which we are all guilty, from time to time), is contradicted by Orthodox
Christianity. Many Orthodox ecumenists, regarding themselves as empowered to violate and
ignore much of Orthodox theology and Tradition, including decisions of the Holy Ecumenical
Synods, seem to consider themselves by their actions and comments as some how “infallible”
when they are engaged in their relativistic, syncretistic “theology of love”. This disregard for
much of Holy Orthodox Tradition on the part of numerous Orthodox ecumenists and their
reaching “understandings” with the heterodox outside of that same Holy Tradition, resembles the
arrogance of “Papal infallibility” and for that matter their actions also resemble the arrogance of
Protestant “infallibility”. For as some modern day Orthodox saints teach us: we see that just as
each Pope claims to be infallible in matters of dogma and faith so also theoretically each
Protestant can do the same, interpreting the Holy Scriptures to his or her liking and convenience,
independent of a Holy Tradition (which they lack), creating the ecclesiastical anarchy that is
Protestantism in its manifold varieties. Included within Protestantism we can number its
“Evangelical” offspring: the endlessly various, ever-changing, ever-splitting Pentecostal, Neo-
Pentecostal, interdenominational, and non-denominational “Apostolic” and “Christian” groups and whatever other group or sect exists or will exist (after subsequent splits or consolidations).

Let us look more closely at what these Orthodox saints teach us regarding individual claims of infallibility to be found in Roman Catholicism and in the innumerable sects of Protestantism.

Individual claims of infallibility (either directly made or implied) make the Holy Tradition, which countless Orthodox saints throughout history have suffered to bring to all of humanity without alteration or innovation, of insignificant value to “infallible” people and their allies.

St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000) explains regarding individual claims of infallibility as follows:

By the appropriating, through the dogma of infallibility, of all the power and rights belonging solely to Christ the God-Man, the Pope, a man, has, in fact, by this act, proclaimed himself a Church within the papist Church and has become all-powerful in it. He has become his own version of the “upholder of all things.” (pp. 144-145)

Papism has determinedly and persistently worked at replacing the God-Man by a man, until it has replaced Him forever with the ephemeral ‘infallible’ man, with the dogma of papal infallibility. By this dogma, the Pope was clearly and decisively pronounced to be not only somewhat higher than a man, but also higher than the holy apostles, the holy fathers and the holy Ecumenical Councils. (pp. 119-120)
Make no mistake: Papism is the most radical Protestantism, for it has transferred the foundations of Christianity from the eternal God-Man to ephemeral man. It has proclaimed this as its central dogma, as the highest truth, the highest value, the highest norm for all beings and things in all worlds. The Protestants only accepted the essence of this dogma and worked it out to a fearsome extent and in fearsome detail. In fact, Protestantism is nothing other than generally-applied Papism, for in Protestantism every man individually lives-out the main principle of Papism. Following the example of the infallible man in Rome, every Protestant is an infallible man, for he pretends to personal infallibility in matters of faith. (p. 120)

“Ecumenism” is a collective name for pseudo-Christianities, for the pseudo-Churches of Western Europe. All European humanisms, headed by papism, have given it their wholehearted support. And all these pseudo-Christianities, all these pseudo-Churches, are nothing other than a collection of heresies. ...There is, in fact, no substantial difference between papism, protestantism, ecumenism and the other sects whose name is legion. (p. 153)

Protestantism, the dearest and most loyal child of papism, blunders from heresy to heresy through its rationalist scholasticism, constantly drowning in divers poisons of its heretical fallacies. In all this, papist arrogance and “infallible” insanity hold absolute sway and ravage the souls of their adherents. In principle, every Protestant is an independent pope, an infallible pope, in all matters of faith. (p. 153)
The modern day Greek Orthodox saint, St. Nectarios (Kephalas) of Pentapolis teaches us essentially the same thing as the modern day Serbian Orthodox saint, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, regarding individual claims of infallibility. St. Nectarios makes the following observations:

His Beatitude the Pope sinned greatly when he proclaimed himself infallible and sinless.... Infallibility abrogates Synods, takes away from them significance, importance, and authority, and proclaims them incompetent, disturbing the confidence of the faithful in them. The proclamation of the infallibility of the Pope disturbed the foundations of the Western Church; because it provided ground for suspicion about the authority of the Synods, and secondly it made her depend on the intellectual and spiritual development of a single person, the Pope.... Since every Pope judges concerning what is right as it seems to him, and interprets Scripture as he wills, and lays down the law as he considers right, in what respect is he different from the multifarious dogmatists of the Protestant Church?... Perhaps in that in the case of the Protestants each individual constitutes a Church, while in the Western Church one individual constitutes the entire Church, not always the same individual but ever a different one. [The Seven Ecumenical Synods, [Athens, 1892], pp. 22-23, 27] (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 21)

Orthodox Christianity Has Uniquely Preserved the Holy Scriptures Throughout History

As we look at Protestantism with its minimalization and subsequent denial (to varying degrees, depending upon the sect) of the Church in favor of the “infallibility” of individual interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and Theology, we are drawn to the research of the Old
Calendrist Greek Orthodox Hierodeacon Gregory (1995), who in full conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition informs us of the following:

By the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, Orthodox Christianity has throughout its incomparable and unbroken history preserved the Holy Scriptures without alteration and has given them to all of humanity and will forever preserve these same Holy Scriptures within its Holy Orthodox Tradition until the end of the world (p. 16-17).

With this in mind we quote Hierodeacon Gregory: ... “This Trinitarian cornerstone of Holy Tradition is confirmed by the existence of the Textus Receptus, which the Orthodox Church bequeathed to Western Christianity”... (p. 16).

Regarding this gift of the Holy Scriptures and their being preserved throughout the ages without change for the whole world, which was accomplished only by the grace of God and through no personal merit on the part of the Orthodox and which the Holy Orthodox Church was able to give to Western Christianity, we continue to see the relevance of Hierodeacon Gregory’s (2000) discussion and research, as he tells us:

Historical fact compels Evangelicals to admit this: “It was only those in the Greek-speaking [i.e., Orthodox] churches in Greece and Byzantium that continued to make copies of the Greek text [of the New Testament]. For century after century—from the sixth to the fourteenth—the great majority of the New Testament manuscripts were produced in Byzantium, all bearing the same kind of text.” [Philip W. Comfort, “Texts

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63 This bracketed entry is in the text cited.

64 This bracketed entry is in the text cited.
In view of these facts just mentioned, it is truly baffling that many Evangelical “Christian”
groups, in their self-appointed authority and self-righteousness, accuse Orthodox Christianity of
not following the Holy Scriptures, when these same elitist “Christian” people and their ever
changing, ever splitting communities owe their possession of these Holy Scriptures to the very
same Holy Orthodox Church which they love to attack.

*The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, Uniquely the Church*

The heresy of Evangelicalism was itself born from earlier heresies within Protestantism.

The heresy of Evangelicalism was born from the heresy of Protestantism. In a sense,

Evangelicalism is merely a branch of Protestantism. With that in mind, we must further consider
the issue of Protestantism, which is one of the heresies to be found within Ecumenism, and we
are educated by the words of St. Hilarion (Troitsky) the New Hieromartyr, who like countless
other Orthodox saints suffered greatly and lost his life heroically defending Orthodox
Christianity: “It is Protestantism that openly proclaimed the greatest lie of all: that one can be a
Christian while denying the Church” [Holy New- Martyr Archbishop Ilarion (Troitsky),
*Christianity or the Church?*, (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1985), p.29] (Gregory,
1995, p. 3).

“...[I]t must be considered as the most vital necessity of the present time to confess
openly that indisputable truth that Christ created precisely the Church and that it is absurd to
separate Christianity from the Church and to speak of some sort of Christianity apart from the
Holy Orthodox Church of Christ” [Holy New-Martyr Archbishop Ilarion (Troitsky), Christianity

“All the points of discord between... sectarians and the Orthodox Church come from the
denial of the Church in the name of an imaginary ‘Evangelical Christianity” [Holy New-Martyr
Archbishop Ilarion (Troitsky), Christianity or the Church?, (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity

And along the same lines, the denial of Holy Tradition by the multi-variant branches of
Protestantism is exposed as contradictory and lacking justification by St. Nikolai Velimirovich,
when he explains:

The Orthodox Church surpasses all other Christian groups in the richness of her
Tradition. Protestants look only to the Holy Scriptures, but the Scriptures can only be
interpreted within the Tradition. ...The tradition concerning Prince Avgar is doubtless an
apostolic tradition, although it is not referred to by any of them in their epistles. The
Apostle Thaddaeus wrote nothing, and therefore, according to Protestant thinking, he said
nothing, gave nothing to the faithful. Why was he then an apostle of Christ? (St. Nikolai
Orthodox Ecumenism: For Some, An Encouragement and Opportunity to Attack Orthodox Christianity

Once again, to avoid any misunderstanding, Orthodox Christianity—through absolutely no intrinsic merit belonging to Orthodox Christians themselves, only by the unfathomable mercy of God, the Holy Trinity—has preserved and defended the Holy Scriptures, without change and in an unparalleled manner, throughout history for all of humanity, and it will continue to do so until the end of time. So its very sad when Protestant and other Christian groups which are not Orthodox attempt to undermine and replace Orthodox Christianity, sometimes under the cover of ecumenism and the ecumenical movement. With this in mind, some of the unfortunate examples of these occurrences cited in Fr. Daniel Deyansky’s (1997) research is of interest and should be noted by Orthodox ecumenists. We observe the following:

... immediately after the overthrow of the communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, 10,000 copies of the Bible in the Romanian language were sent to the Romanian Orthodox parishes by a Protestant source in the United States. It was subsequently discovered that the word *idol* had been consistently translated *icon*, in a blatant attempt to undermine Orthodox dogmatic teaching. Such are the fruits of ecumenism: an Orthodox country requests aid and this request becomes the occasion for an attack against Orthodoxy. Similar ecumenical fruits are evident in Ukraine. While the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch exchange greetings in the true spirit of a “theology of love,” Ukrainian Uniates are proselytizing among the Orthodox, misrepresenting their minority church--the
product of forced conversions and Jesuit chicanery--as an ancient Ukrainian institution to the world press, and taking over Orthodox Church buildings by force. (pp. 88-89)

(Regarding the Orthodox veneration of the saints and their icons, see Appendix D)

As we see, perhaps such groups, which are attempting to undermine and replace Orthodoxy, are, in some sense, being encouraged to do so and are taking their lead, if you will, from Orthodox ecumenists themselves. Prominent Orthodox leaders, by their very participation in ecumenism, oftentimes and not surprisingly, tragically send the erroneous message to many, including to Orthodox Christians, that the Holy Orthodox Church is not uniquely the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. The message being sent to the world, by many Orthodox leaders’ irresponsible participation in ecumenism, is that Orthodox Christianity is merely a part of some larger “True” Christianity. And this “more inclusive”, “Universal”, “True” Christianity is something that the followers of contemporary ecumenism--no matter who they may happen to be, whether they be Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant or whatever else--must seek to rediscover and teach to the whole world. And to do this, these ecumenists--ignoring and denying the truth that the fullness of divine revelation is to be found uniquely in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and nowhere else--insist that there must be some kind of Universal agreement in matters of faith, or at least in matters of faith that they deem to be significant. Or, maybe it is that many or all of the vast theological differences--inevitably encountered in these ecumenical consultations and negotiations--are insignificant for these people, and need not be considered at all in this framework of glorified relativism and syncretism, where the “theology of love” will build a “Super-Church” in which relativism will reign supreme in place of Christ, the God-Man, and His Holy Orthodox Church.
But why are some Orthodox leaders willfully entrenched in this denial of Orthodoxy? The message sent to the world and to their Orthodox flock is devastatingly wrong, whenever Orthodox leaders, through their actions and comments, refuse to confess the truth that Orthodoxy is uniquely the Church. Regarding these aforementioned matters, we see the dangers of Orthodox leaders’ participation in ecumenism and its consequent harmful effects to Orthodox Christian witness and education, as is clearly exposed by Dr. Constantine Cavarnos (1992a):

Contemporary “Ecumenism,” like all the other innovations or modernizations about which I have spoken, is an invention of the heterodox. ...The Ecumenical Movement aims at the union of the various “Churches,” with indifference about Tradition and the truth.

The “Orthodox” Ecumenists regard the Dogmas, the sacred Canons, and the totality of Tradition as insignificant matters, things that are not worth discussing, because it appears that deep down they do not believe that there is absolute truth, that there is Divine revelation. ...They disregard the fact that there is only one Church, as the Symbol of Faith (the Creed) says: “I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church;” and that this one Church is the Orthodox, because only she has remained a faithful keeper of Tradition.

... With the disdain that the “Orthodox” Ecumenists show for Tradition and the very provocative manner in which they trample on the sacred Canons, they scandalize the Orthodox people and cast many down into the abyss of unbelief and perdition. (p. 34)

The Orthodox saints and martyrs always taught the uniqueness of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and would have never thought of being involved in the glorified ambiguity and relativism that is ecumenism. The pan-heresy of ecumenism can have no place in the Body of
Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church, for no heresy has ever had any place in the Holy Orthodox Church. Orthodox Christianity has never embraced heresy nor will it ever be replaced by any heresy, including ecumenism. Christ established His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church, and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against her” (Matt. 16:16-19). The “gates of hell” have never prevailed, nor will they ever prevail against Orthodox Christianity. One sees this, through the ages, in the unparalleled and incomparable experience of the Orthodox Church, where Orthodox Christianity has remained unchanged and unconquered throughout history since its establishment by Christ Himself. Those who seek the Truth, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will find Him in His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church which is His Body. And there always have been Orthodox saints who have heroically lived and died confessing the one and only Truth, Christ Who is found in His Holy Orthodox Church which He Himself has established and which is, uniquely, His Body. Unlike many Orthodox ecumenists, the Orthodox saints and martyrs never sought to essentially make relative the Orthodox Faith, for they knew that the Holy Orthodox Church was the only True Church and was established by Christ, our God. Unlike many Orthodox ecumenists and others (myself included), the Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the grace of God, were willing to suffer and die, in the most horrific manner imaginable—and countless Orthodox saints and martyrs did just that, confessing and teaching, without any compromise, that same Holy Orthodox Faith established by God Himself.
CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

The Orthodox saints knew that all man-made systems, such as Ecumenism, were powerless to save humanity. They knew that humanity has absolutely nothing except for what God in His immeasurable grace has given to us. And as such all their hope was in God and not in humanity, for, as Orthodoxy teaches, humanity has nothing in and of itself. St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000) tells us what all the Orthodox saints have realized throughout history:

“From the depth of the ages, there echo the bitter words of the melancholic Prophet of God, Jeremiah: ‘Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.’ (17:5)” (p. 121).

Knowing this, the Orthodox saints, cleaving to God alone and trying with all their might, rejected all the power of sin which was manifested in themselves and others—and which inevitably is manifested in all of us, for the power of sin dominates this fallen world. The Orthodox saints knew that by themselves they could do absolutely nothing, for without God no one can do anything. The Orthodox saints, in sharp contrast to those who embrace worldly philosophical systems, such as ecumenism, rejected the “wisdom” and “logic” of this fallen world and in doing so accepted to stand in the face of great danger and suffering. This is the great educational example given to the world by the Orthodox saints, in sharp contrast to the safety of relativism and cowardice pursued by many within the ecumenical movement. The Orthodox saints teach us that if a person is united to Christ and given the strength by Him, then
that person can do all things. St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000), in conformity with the Holy Scriptures and the entire Holy Orthodox Tradition, teaches us this beautifully, defying the power and “wisdom” of this fallen world, when he tells us:

As the Holy Apostle Paul says: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Phil. 4:13). A man of Orthodox faith, by living in the theanthropic organism of the Church, always lives in union with all the saints. (Eph. 3:18), which helps him in a mysterious way to fulfill all the evangelical commandments. For this reason, a member of the Orthodox Church has a vivid sense of being of the same faith as the apostles, martyrs and saints of all ages, that they are ever alive, and that they also are permeated by the same theanthropic power, the same theanthropic life, the same theanthropic truth. In the Church, the past is always contemporary, for Christ the Theanthropos, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, lives unceasingly in His theanthropic Body by the same truth, the same holiness, the same goodness, the same life, ever making all the past present. Hence, a man of Orthodox faith is never alone, but is in the company of all the holy members of the Church. When he thinks, he thinks with fear and prayerful trembling, for he knows that all the saints are also participating in a mysterious fashion. The Orthodox are Orthodox through having this sense of unbroken theanthropic conciliarity, nurturing and preserving it by prayer and humility. They never preach themselves, never boast by man, never stop at sheer humanity, never idolize humanism. Wherever they go, they confess and profess the God-Man, not man. Their guiding principle is that theanthropic goals can be achieved only by theanthropic means; evangelical goals can be reached only by evangelical paths. A theanthropic ideology of Christianity can be preserved only by a theanthropic methodology of Christianity. The Lord Jesus is both the Truth and the Way; not only the Truth but also the Way,
the only Way that leads to the Truth. The abandoning of theanthropic methodology inevitably leads to the abandoning of theanthropic ideology, of Christ the Theanthropos. (pp. 118-119)

The Orthodox saints through their martyrlic struggles and God inspired wisdom teach us that knowledge of God is not something derived or deduced, instead it is revealed to humanity by God Himself, Who chose to become man. Knowledge of God, the Holy Trinity, is given to us by God, the Holy Trinity, for the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, chose to become man “for us men and for our salvation” (The Symbol of Faith). The philosophy of education found in Orthodox Christianity can be nothing other than the Truth, Christ the God-Man (the Theanthropos). Christ the Theanthropos is the Source of our very existence, for He is God our Creator, and He is the Source of all our knowledge, as well. Having said this, the Orthodox saints teach us that knowledge of God is not deduced, but lived and experienced united to Christ in His Holy Orthodox Church. So it becomes clear, that the Orthodox Christian saints live and confess Orthodox Christianity’s philosophy of education which is entirely centered on Christ the God-Man, for no one has anything without Christ. As such, Orthodox Christianity has a ‘theanthropic philosophy of education’... ‘In it, God is always in first place, man in second; man lives, thinks, feels and acts by God; i.e. man is educated and enlightened by God. Not by some kind of abstract, transcendent, super-heavenly, Platono-Kantian God, but the God of direct earthly and human reality, the God who became man and, in the human context, has given us all that is divine, immortal and eternal’ (Popovic, 2000, pp. 129-130).

Ecumenism and its followers deny the fact that the Holy Orthodox Church is uniquely the Church, the Body of Christ, with Christ the Theanthropos, Himself, as its Head. Doing so, the
ecumenists seek to derive their knowledge of things pertaining to God through humanistic philosophical deduction; and similarly, through the same sort of humanistic philosophical process, they seek to construct a ecclesiastical and theological unity in place of the true unity that already exists in the one and only Church of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church. Ecumenism and all the other similar humanistic philosophies, seeking to unite all the heresies and call them the truth, have relentlessly denied Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. Regarding ecumenical activities and consultations: When Orthodox Christian leaders are merely present at such gatherings and even minimally participate in various aspects of this denial of the uniqueness of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, a certain false validity is given to these kinds of proceedings, which further adds to the confusion already present in the world, and among Orthodox Christians.

Again, we come back to the wisdom of St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije who rightfully condemns the “dialogue of love”—of which the ecumenists are so fond of speaking and using as the pretext for their ecumenical activities—as the hypocrisy and deception that it truly is. Faithful to the eternal and unconquerable Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000) confesses the great uniqueness of Orthodox Christianity as the one and only Church of Christ, when he tells us the following:

The contemporary “dialogue of love”, that is conducted in the form of empty sentimentalism, is, in fact, a faithless negation of the saving sanctification of the Holy Spirit and belief of the truth (II Thess. 2:13). ...The essence of love is truth, and love lives by speaking the truth. Truth is the heart of every theanthropic virtue, including love.
Every one of them reveals and proclaims the Theanthropos, the Lord Christ, who is the one incarnation and personification of divine truth, the supreme Truth. If Truth were anything but Christ the Theanthropos, it would be small, insufficient, ephemeral and mortal. It would be such if it were a concept or an idea, a theory, a scheme, reason or science, a philosophy, a culture, man or mankind, the world or all worlds, anybody or anything or all these put together. But the Truth is a Person, the Person of Christ the Theanthropos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, and this is why it is perfect, enduring and eternal. In the Lord Christ, the Truth and the Life are of the same essence: eternal Truth and eternal Life (cf. Jn. 14:6, 1:4,17). Whoever believes in the Lord Christ constantly grows by His Truth into its divine infinities; he grows with all his being, his mind, his heart and all his soul. (pp. 154-155)

This entire quotation from the God-inspired wisdom of St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, and the following statement in particular: “Whoever believes in the Lord Christ constantly grows by His Truth into its divine infinities; he grows with all his being, his mind, his heart and all his soul” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 154-155), is a profound confession of the potential that each person has to grow with his entire created being--and thus be truly educated, in his pursuit of sanctification--in the one and only Truth, Christ the Theanthropos. The very truthful and insightful statement, made by St. Justin of Chelije, “The essence of love is truth, and love lives by speaking the truth. Truth is the heart of every theanthropic virtue, including love” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 154-155), clearly points to the reality that if what we pursue and do in our endeavors is not motivated by love for the one and only Truth, Christ the Theanthropos and all that He commands of us, but instead is motivated by subservience to worldly power and personal gain,
and pursued through hypocrisy and falsehood, then our conduct is not love, for it does not serve or abide in the unique Truth, Christ the Theanthropos, and in all that He commands of us. The end never justifies the means, if the means are evil then what is being done is, indeed, evil. All people, the strong and the weak alike, must realize this. Those with tremendous power in world politics, and those subservient to them, must realize this. Those with power over someone in a particular situation, and in general all people who have the power to commit evil, and that includes all of us, must all realize this. St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije further speaks about these realities when he faithfully confesses the one and only Truth, Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body, against those in ecumenism, and elsewhere, who (in one way or another) attempt to deny Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. This is seen in the following quotations from St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije:

Make no mistake: a “dialogue of lies” also exists when negotiators, consciously or unconsciously, lie to each other. Such a dialogue is characteristic of the father of lies, the devil, for he is a liar and the father of it (Jn. 8:44). It is also characteristic of all his willing and unwilling collaborators, when they want to achieve their good by means of evil, to find their “truths” by means of lies. There can be no “dialogue of love” without a dialogue of truth. Such a dialogue is otherwise unnatural and false. Hence the commandment of the Christ-bearing Apostle: Let love be without dissimulation (Rom. 12:9). ...

The heretical, humanistic division and separation of Love and Truth is simply the sign of a lack of theanthropic faith and a loss of theanthropic balance and common sense.
In any case, it is never the way of the holy fathers. The Orthodox, rooted and founded with all the saints in truth and love, have and profess, from the time of the Apostles to this day, this theanthropic saving love for the world and all of God’s creatures. The barren moralistic minimalism and hoministic pacifism of modern ecumenism do only one thing: they reveal their withered humanistic roots, their sick philosophy and their helpless ethics after the tradition of men (Col. 2:8). Furthermore, they reveal the crisis of their hoministic faith in the truth, and their docetic insensitivity towards the history of the Church and its apostolic and conciliar theanthropic continuity in truth and grace.

(Popovic, 2000, p. 155)

Very many ecumenists and others deny the uniqueness of the Orthodox Church as the one and only Body of Christ, established by Christ Himself Who is its Head. Thus, having essentially rejected where the fullness of all truth is uniquely to be found, Orthodox Christianity, such people in “their docetic insensitivity”65 compromise and collaborate with the hypocrisy and all other evil that exists in the world (Popovic, 2000, p. 155), looking to find and establish the truth in places where it clearly is not, in falsehood and heresy. St. Justin of Chelije continues to confess these realities, and courageously defend Orthodoxy, in the following:

“The teaching of the Orthodox theanthropic Church of Christ through the holy apostles, the holy fathers and the holy Councils concerning heretics is this: heresies are not the Church and can never be it” (Popovic, 2000, p. 156).

65 See glossary for a definition and discussion of “docetism”.
Hence, only in the Church—that unique universal mystery of Christ’s—can there be any mysteries. For the Orthodox Church, as the Body of Christ, is both the source and the criterion of the mysteries, never the other way round. The mysteries cannot be elevated above the Church and examined outside the Body of the Church....

Therefore, according to Orthodox ecclesiology and in accordance with the whole of Orthodox Tradition, the Orthodox Church does not recognize any mysteries outside itself, nor does it consider them as mysteries until someone from a heretical “Church”, i.e. a pseudo- Church, approaches the Orthodox Church of Christ with repentance.

(Popovic, 2000, p. 157)

Beautifully summarizing his defense of Orthodox Christianity, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000) quotes from the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Synodicon of Orthodoxy, where we see the following uncompromising confession of Orthodoxy:

And we believe that we have been saved, not by an agent or an angel but by the Lord Himself (cf. Is. 63:9).

Following Him and making His voice our own, we cry aloud: Neither a council, nor imperial power, nor a plot of the damned has saved the Church from idols, as such nonsense was invented by the Jewish Sanhedrin, but the Lord of glory alone—God incarnate—has saved and freed the Church from idolatrous folly. To Him, therefore, by glory, to Him be grace, gratitude, thanks and majesty, for His redemption is ours, His
salvation is ours, for He alone has the power to save completely, and no miserable man
on earth.

So, as the prophets foretold, as the apostles taught, as the Church has received, as
the teachers put into dogma, as the universe agreed, as grace has illuminated, as the truth
has proved, as the lie has been banished, as Wisdom has boldly proclaimed and as Christ
has confirmed: thus we think, thus we speak, thus we preach Christ our true God. This is
the apostolic faith, this is the patristic faith, this is the Orthodox faith! This faith sustains
the universe’ (Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, session 4, and the Synodicon of
Orthodoxy). (pp. 178-179)

The Orthodox saints have throughout history courageously confronted and rejected all
falsehood and evil; they certainly were not subservient to such things nor did they attempt to
validate and compromise with falsehood and evil as many Orthodox ecumenists and others
attempt to do. It is therefore the Orthodox saints to whom we look for encouragement,
inspiration and education. This because they are the most believable of educators having by the
grace of God transcended the tragedy of what is--to this fallen world--inevitable and necessary,
for by the grace of God they have transcended the supremacy of selfishness and self interest
which dominates this world. The Orthodox saints, in an unbroken and unparalleled continuity
throughout history, have by the grace of God conquered their own selfishness and sinfulness, and
have overcome the hypocrisy, hostility and evil of this world. The Orthodox saints, utilizing the
power and free will given to them by God, have with all their being pursued the courage and
holiness which only God can give to people--and which God in His unfathomable grace did
indeed give to the Orthodox saints, showing forth His unfathomable power and mercy for all mankind to see. For God by His unfathomable grace gave the Orthodox saints that for which they aspired with all their created being, they attained to the holiness for which God had created them, and for which God has created all of us. The Orthodox saints, by the infinite grace of God, demonstrate incomparable love, humility, wisdom, courage and holiness of life which defies, and indeed shatters, all the logic and power of this fallen world. By the grace of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, this is the great educational example given to all Orthodox Christians, and to the whole world, by the Orthodox saints.
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APPENDIX A:

THE LAST JUDGMENT

Orthodox Christianity is Christianity as it began; it is the original and unadulterated form of Christianity, born on the day of Pentecost and filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ uniquely confesses and teaches the True Faith, the Orthodox Faith. The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ has uniquely confessed Christianity in its unadulterated form throughout the ages and to this day. And this same Holy Orthodox Church will continue forever to confess the Truth that is Christ, for it is uniquely the Church, the Body of Christ, with Christ our God as its Head. By the mercy of God, the Holy Trinity, the Holy Orthodox Church has overcome all heresies which have, throughout history, risen up against it. And having emerged victorious, Orthodox Christianity certainly does not embrace nor repeat these same heresies which have attacked it, for these heresies have threatened to overcome and deceive the whole world. But in contrast to the Orthodox Church, all other Christian groups have, to one extent or another, embraced heresy and thus have separated themselves from the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. All the various Christian groups which are not Orthodox have, to one degree or another, fallen into heresy.

And this fact pertaining to the embrace of heresy—this embrace of falsehood and deception, which can only lead to great delusion and catastrophe for people—obviously applies not just to Christian groups which are not Orthodox, but it also applies to all the non-Christian religions as well, when viewed from an Orthodox Christian perspective. With that in mind, let us look again to what St. John of Damascus teaches us: “It should be known that the Antichrist is
bound to come. Every one, therefore, who confesses not that the Son of God came in the flesh and is perfect God and became perfect man, after being God, is Antichrist. But in a peculiar and special sense he who comes at the consummation of the age is called Antichrist.” (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 98)

Let us also look at St. Justin Popovitch of Chelije and his beautiful Orthodox confession pertaining to such matters:

Antichrist’s forerunners, confessors and believers have, through the ages, been innumerable in the human world. Every spirit: a spirit can be a person or a teaching, an idea, a thought, a man or an angel or devil. So every teaching, every person, idea or thought, every man who does not acknowledge that Jesus is God and Saviour, God incarnate and God-Man, derives from and belongs to Antichrist. There have been such persons, teachings and ideas from the very time of the Lord Christ’s coming into the world. Hence the holy seer of divine mysteries says that Antichrist is even now already in the world. Every man, every idea in the world that denies Christ the Theanthropos and His Church is of Antichrist. Directly or indirectly, Antichrist is the creator of every anti-Christian ideology. In fact, there are only two kinds of ideology: for Christ and for Antichrist. In the end, man is in this world to resolve only one thing: whether he is for Christ or against Him. This is all that every man does, willingly or unwillingly: he solves this problem, his ultimate problem. Each one of us is therefore either a Christ-lover or a Christ-hater; either a Christ-worshipper or a devil-worshipper. There is no third option. (Popovic, 2000, pp.30-31)
Well, these very powerful statements speak for themselves; and, quite obviously, the denial of the
divinity of Christ is found in many religions and political systems, including Judaism, Islam, and
Marxism—not to mention the fact that it is also found in countless other places.

Now let us look at a particular false teaching pertaining to the Second Coming of Christ
to be found in some of the heretical Christian groups which are separated from Orthodoxy. It is
with this in mind that we look at the ancient heresy of *chiliasm*, which has once again emerged,
powerfully, and has gained widespread acceptance among many people, especially among
evangelical and non-denominational Christian groups. In the same way that many other heresies
are offered to people in these times, this heresy is promoted by the teaching and publications—
brought forth by various people—which have become popular in evangelical and non-
denominational circles, and which have received substantial attention within the general public
as well. Additionally, as many other heresies are, the heresy of *chiliasm* is made popular, and is
reinforced, by the well funded and powerful media business and political organization known as
Televangelism, which makes sure not to offend certain very powerful people and interests here in
the United States as it seeks to spread its political and religious propaganda both here and
internationally. Televangelism does these things as it shamelessly looks to undermine
mainstream churches throughout the world while faithful to, and slavishly serving, the
construction of any particular “New World Order” dictated by the power elite whom they serve
—this being done in clear opposition to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church.

The heresy of *chiliasm* teaches that before the Final Judgment Christ will return to earth,
defeat the Antichrist, and then reign with His “elect” for literally one thousand years in an earthly
kingdom. And only after this earthly kingdom concludes its one thousand years of existence, Christ will then do the Last Judgment. This sort of heresy arises from an overly literal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, born of a rationalistic religious tradition epitomized by Evangelicalism and its allies. This kind of religious tradition—or better put, this kind of ecclesiastical anarchy in which confusion reigns supreme—ignorantly and arrogantly places individual interpretation of theological matters above the conciliar and divinely revealed understanding to be found in the ancient undivided Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. Those embracing the traditions of rationalistic religions such as Evangelicalism and televangelism are far removed from, and are almost completely ignorant of, the ancient Holy Orthodox Tradition that has brought forth and defended the Holy Scriptures throughout the ages.

Evangelicalism and televangelism, ignorantly and arrogantly, promote heresy, and this contributes greatly to the confusion and deception that rules our fallen world. For confusion and deception are what the Antichrist and his allies will need to establish their earthly kingdom in an attempt to rule the world in complete opposition to God. These Evangelical and televangelical groups, or at least their leaders, seem intent to serve the most powerful people and forces of this world, independent of what is right, independent of truth. For to do so is much safer than what the Orthodox saints did: Confront those with great power who choose to commit great evil, and lose one’s life for Christ in doing so. Neither the heretics, nor I, nor most other people are willing to follow the example of the Orthodox saints in their sacrifice for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church.
The Evangelicals’ and Televangelicals’ promotion of chiliasm—a future, earthly thousand year kingdom—is an embrace of things worldly over things heavenly. And their promotion and embrace of this heresy, which glorifies and looks forward to worldly power, is fully consistent with their support for the most powerful people of this world, who brutally misuse that same great power which has been given to them. For to confess the one Truth, Christ, in the face of people and forces who hate Him is dangerous to a person; to do so would be in sharp contrast to the subservience shown by many to powerful people and forces of this world. For, to courageously confess the one and only Truth that is Christ our God, something which is epitomized by the heroic life and death struggles of countless Orthodox saints and martyrs who by the grace of the Suprasubstantial Trinity have emerged victorious in Christ, is something that is in the sharpest contrast to the cowardly subservience which is hypocritically promoted as somehow being righteous by many Evangelical and Televangelical leaders.

This sort of hypocritical subservience and cowardice—exhibited by many evangelists and televangelists—under the pretense of love and faithfulness to the commandments of Christ, is to be seen among many ecumenists, including Orthodox ecumenists, and is to be seen among many others, myself included. In sharp contrast and for the world to clearly see, the Orthodox saints fought against the abuse of great worldly power. The Orthodox saints fought against the lie of “Might makes right”; they truly loved God and their neighbor with all their heart, mind and soul and by the strength that they sought to have, and which by the grace of God they eventually acquired, they were able to do the will of God, even when called to suffer all manner of horrific hardship and death. By the grace of God, there is not anyone or anything that could break the Orthodox saints.
The Orthodox saints, through their unmatched courage, wisdom and love, teach all humanity that no earthly kingdom or power can bring salvation to this world, for Christ’s Kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36). And when Christ returns at His glorious Second Coming, His Judgment will be Final and there will be no time limit to His Kingdom, for as the ancient Symbol of Faith of the Holy Orthodox Church teaches us, “His Kingdom shall have no end”. With these things in mind, we see how the Orthodox saints and the Holy Orthodox Tradition which they defended contradict all falsehood and deception, we see how Orthodoxy contradicts every heresy, including the heresy of chiliasm. Regarding the “thousand year reign of Christ”, which is certainly mentioned in the Book of Revelation, let us look at some commentary grounded in the Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church which explains this biblical reference and which completely contradicts the heresy of chiliasm. To do this we will first look at some passages from the Book of Revelation and then we will look at some Orthodox commentary explaining these passages. We begin by looking at the first six verses of the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 20:1-6):

1. “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

3. and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.
4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.

Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, pp. 627-628).

Now let us look at some Orthodox commentary corresponding to these same verses of Holy Scripture. In the same Orthodox Study Bible from which we quoted these verses, The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, (1993) we see the following insightful commentary for Revelation 20:1-6, fully consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition:

Regarding Revelation 20:1, we observe this commentary: “The bottomless pit (abyss) is the great nether region (Ps. 88:6) where the disobedient are confined awaiting final judgment. The demons fear it (see Luke 8:31; Jude 6). It is reached through a chasm, the key to which is in the hand of the angel. The great chain binds Satan” (p. 627).
And regarding Revelation 20:2, we observe this commentary:

Though most did not, a few early Fathers and writers believed in a literal **thousand years** binding of Satan and reign of Christ and the saints on earth (vv. 2-7). The Church, however, authoritatively rejected this teaching (called *chiliasm*) at the Second Ecumenical Council. In apocalyptic literature, numbers have symbolic significance. “Thousand” is often used in the Scriptures to denote a long period of time, a great quantity, completion, perfection, thoroughness (Ps. 50:10; 2 Pet. 3:8). Here, a *thousand years* (vv. 2-7) is interpreted as the Church age, when Jesus reigns on earth in those who believe. It is that era between the First and Second Comings of Christ, also called the “last times”, when Satan’s effectiveness at deceit is restricted through the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, and the saints share in Christ’s earthly reign through the Church. For these persecuted Christians threatened by martyrdom, this is a consoling hope. (pp. 627-628)

Regarding Revelation 20:3, the following commentary provides some more insight pertaining to the **thousand year** reign of Christ on earth, as understood by the Orthodox Church--completely refuting the chilastic heresy:

The devil is thrown, **shut** and sealed into the pit for one **thousand years** (i.e., a long period of time) to allow the Church to be planted, to grow and to overcome, even in time of persecution and trial. The word “millennium” is synonymous with *thousand years*, and carries with it no connotations of peace and prosperity. The Bible teaches that Satan was bound at the completion of Christ’s saving work (Matt. 12:28, 29; Luke 10:17, 18; John
12:31, 32; Col. 2:15). He is not totally inactive (Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 6:11), but he cannot deceive the nations by keeping the gospel from them. At the close of the millennium or Church age, Satan will be released for a while (vv. 7, 8). (p. 628)

Regarding Revelation 20:4-6, we observe this commentary:

Those who have died for their witness to Jesus are in heaven living and reigning with Him (Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12) as royal priests (1:6; 5:9, 10; Is. 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10) while the Church serves Him here on earth. The first resurrection (v. 6) is the heavenly life of souls who have died in Christ before His Second Coming. Those not in Christ who die are in Hades awaiting the resurrection of the body at His coming. For the righteous saints with Christ, the second death has no power (v. 6). These righteous spirits (Heb. 12:23) await only the reuniting of soul and body after the final judgment, when all things are made new (21:1). Hell or Hades (Sheol), where sinners’ souls are separated from their bodies, will give up its dead to Gehenna (vv. 13, 14), the lake of fire which burns with sulphur (21:8), eternal damnation (Matt. 25:41), and these will be excluded from the age of the blessedness to come. Hell cannot harm the victorious in Christ (2:11). (p. 628)

Just as in the aforementioned explanation of Holy Scripture, we continue to see commentary elsewhere which remains consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition. The Orthodox hierarch and theologian, Archbishop Averky Taushev draws from St. Andrew of Caesarea, and from other ancient Orthodox Fathers, to explain the Orthodox teaching regarding the “thousand years”—in doing so he completely contradicts the deception of the chiliastic heresy. Archbishop Averky Taushev (1995) tells us the following:
This angel “laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent...and bound him a thousand years....”

St. Andrew of Caesarea interprets this passage in this way: by this “thousand years” one must understand the whole time “from the incarnation of Christ to the coming of Antichrist” (St. Andrew, ch. 60). With the coming of the Incarnate Son of God on earth--and in particular from the moment of His redemption of mankind through His death on the Cross--Satan was bound, paganism was cast down, and there came upon earth the thousand-year reign of Christ. The thousand-year Kingdom of Christ on earth is to be understood as the victory of Christianity over paganism and the establishment on earth of the Church of Christ. The definite number one thousand is used here in place of an indefinite number, signifying the long period of time until the Second Coming of Christ.

(pp. 253-254)

And Archbishop Averky Taushev (1995) continues to teach us from the Orthodox Tradition as he writes:

These first six verses of the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse have served as a pretext for the development of a false teaching concerning the “thousand-year reign of Christ on earth” which has received the name of Chiliasm. In essence it teaches that not long before the end of the world, Christ the Saviour will come again to earth, defeat Antichrist, resurrect the righteous, and make a new kingdom on earth. As a reward for their struggles and sufferings, the righteous will reign together with Christ for the course of a thousand years, and will enjoy all the good things of temporal life. Only then will there follow the second, universal resurrection of the dead, the universal judgment, and the general giving
of eternal rewards. This teaching is known in two forms. Some say that Christ will restore
Jerusalem in all its beauty and reinitiate the fulfillment of Moses’ ritual law with all its
sacrifices; and that the blessedness of the righteous will consist in all manner of sensual
enjoyments. In the first century this teaching was held by the heretic Cerinthus and other
judaizing heretics: the Ebionites, the Montanists, and in the fourth century by the
Apollinarians. Others, on the contrary, have affirmed that this blessedness will consist in
purely spiritual delights. In this latter form, chiliastic ideas were expressed first by Papias
of Hieropolis; later they are to be found in the holy Martyr Justin, in St. Irenaeus, in
Hippolytus, Methodius and Lactantius. In recent times it has been revived with certain
peculiarities by the Anabaptists, the followers of Swedenborg, the Illuminati and
Adventists. (Taushev, 1995, pp. 256-258)

Consistent with what was just mentioned, one must note that Archbishop Averky was writing this
discussion sometime before the meteoric emergence of Evangelicalism, which, in its countless
varieties, also propagates the heresy of Chiliasm throughout the world.

Faithful to Orthodox Tradition, Archbishop Averky shows that, in both of its
aforementioned forms, Chiliasm remains a heresy, as he writes:

One must be aware, however, that neither in its first nor in its second form can the
teaching of Chiliasm be accepted by an Orthodox Christian for the following reasons:

1. According to the chiliast teaching, the resurrection of the dead will take place twice: the
first, a thousand years before the end of the world--when only the righteous will be
resurrected; and the second, at the very end of the world, when sinners also will be
resurrected. However, Christ the Saviour clearly taught only one universal resurrection of
the dead, when both the righteous and the sinners will be resurrected and all will receive

2. The Word of God [Holy Scripture] speaks of only two comings of Christ in the world:
the first in lowliness, when He came to redeem us; and the second in glory, when He will
appear to judge the living and the dead. Chiliasm introduces one more—a third coming of
Christ a thousand years before the end of the world. The Word of God [Holy Scripture] knows no such thing. (Taushev, 1995, pp. 256-258)

One must note that in this quotation which we just saw, and in some other quotations,
within this particular context (Archbishop Averky’s work on the Apocalypse), the words “The Word of God” apparently refer to Holy Scripture, and do not here, apparently, refer to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Word. In other contexts, however, the terminology, “The Word of God”, does refer obviously to God the Word, the Son of God—in fact, according to Father John Romanides’ brilliant commentary, the words “The Word of God” should only refer to God the Word and not to Holy Scripture (for the words of Holy Scripture cannot ever adequately describe God, for no words can). For Holy Scripture, according to Father Romanides, is “not the Word but only a word about the Word”; Christ the Son of God is alone “The Word of

66 I have inserted this bracketed entry to clarify what, in this context, I believe, the usage of the terminology, “The Word of God”, is most likely intended to mean—though above we refer to Father Romanides’ correction of such errors regarding misapplication of terminology.

67 I have inserted this bracketed entry.
God”—and certainly, make no mistake, Holy Scripture is words about the Word of God written by holy men inspired by God. Mindful of this, we continue to look at Archbishop Averky’s discussion, as he refers to the Holy Scriptures and to other aspects of Holy Tradition, clearly showing that Chiliasm is a heresy:

3. The Word of God [Holy Scripture][68] teaches only of two kingdoms of Christ: the Kingdom of Grace which will continue until the end of the world (I Cor. 15:23-26), and the Kingdom of Glory which will begin after the Last Judgment and will have no end (Luke 1:33; II Peter 1:11). Chiliasm, however, allows yet a third, as it were, a middle kingdom of Christ, which will last only a thousand years.

4. The teaching of a sensual kingdom of Christ clearly contradicts the Word of God [Holy Scripture][69], according to which the Kingdom of God is not “food and drink” (Rom. 14:17); in the resurrection of the dead they do not marry nor are given in marriage (Matt. 22:30); the rites of the law of Moses had only prefiguring significance and were forever done away with by the more perfect New Testament laws (Acts 15:23-30; Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:6; Heb. 10:1). (Taushev, 1995, pp. 256-258)

Within some of the aforementioned we saw Archbishop Averky point out: “Some say that Christ will restore Jerusalem in all its beauty and reinitiate the fulfillment of Moses’ ritual law with all its sacrifices; and that the blessedness of the righteous will consist in all manner

[68] I have inserted this bracketed entry.

[69] I have inserted this bracketed entry.
of sensual enjoyments.” This certainly sounds like the heresy of chiliasm. This also sounds like Judaism, but it definitely is not the Orthodox confession that only Christ the Son of God saves the human race. This also definitely sounds like something that certain religious/political organizations and businesses such as televangelism and evangelicalism advocate.

But as Archbishop Averky, points out later in this discussion, the Law prefigured Christ Who alone is our salvation. Father John Romanides draws from great Orthodox saints and confesses Orthodox teaching beautifully in such matters:

> After death, both the righteous and the unrighteous descend to the same place, to Hades, […] and there they anticipate the general resurrection and judgment, the only means of salvation or damnation. […] Once human nature was stricken by the disease of death, all the living and the dead became the devil’s captives. For the righteous of the Old Testament, however, captivity to Satan was unjust. They were to be saved in the future; their justification was realized through Christ Who imparted life to them. This is the reason why Paul emphasizes that to Abraham was given the promise of salvation but not the salvation itself. “For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have come from the Law.” The Law is not capable of imparting life to the dead. “To change what is mortal to immortal belonged to no other but to Him Who is self-existence.” [St. Athanasius the Great] (Romanides, 2002, p. 86)

No people, ideology, or law, in and of themselves, can bring salvation to mankind. Only the One [Christ the Son of God] Who created all of us from absolutely nothing can do that, which is something that has always been confessed throughout the ages by our Holy Orthodox Church.
Our only salvation is the One Who condescended to become man—the Son of God, God Himself “Who is self-existence”.

Certain ancient teachers of the Church—Justin, Irenaeus and Methodius—held Chiliasm only as a personal opinion. At the same time there were those who decidedly rose up against it such as Caius the Presbyter of Rome, St. Dionysius of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Epiphanius, Blessed Jerome, and Blessed Augustine. To hold Chiliasm even as a private opinion was no longer permissible after the Church, at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, condemned the teaching of the heretic Apollinarius concerning the thousand-year reign of Christ. At the same time this was confirmed by the introduction into the Symbol of Faith of the words “of His Kingdom there will be no end.” (Taushev, 1995, pp. 256-258)

The heresy of chiliasm, as the false teaching and deception that it is, was condemned in ancient times by the undivided Church, and it remains condemned, by that same ancient, unchanging, undivided Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. With this in mind, the Holy Orthodox Church confesses with all sobriety and expectation the truth that Christ will indeed come again and “of His Kingdom there will be no end” (pp. 257-258). We see this, as was mentioned earlier, in the Symbol of Faith which was finalized at the Second Ecumenical Council of the ancient, undivided Church, the Orthodox Church:

Καὶ πάλιν ερχομένων μετὰ δόξης κρίναι ζωντας και νεκροὺς, Οὐ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος. (The Symbol of Faith, from the original Greek) which when translated into English means: “And coming again with glory to judge the living and the dead, His kingdom shall have no end”. (The
Symbol of Faith, in English translation)

When Christ will come again, no one knows. But indeed Christ will come again, as He promised that He would. And at His Second Coming, Christ’s Judgment will be Final and His Kingdom will be eternal. With this in mind, we will mention here just two examples of Patristic wisdom—from the myriads of possible examples which are to be found in the Holy Scriptures, Patristic writings, and Liturgical Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church—which give one some sense regarding the Orthodox expectation of the Second Coming of Christ. Looking at some of the writings of the Orthodox Father, St. Maximos the Confessor (580- 662 A.D.), we observe the following Orthodox confession regarding the Second Coming of Christ and the Final Judgment: “By a single infinitely powerful act of will God in His goodness will gather all together, angels and men, the good and the evil. But, although God pervades all things absolutely, not all will participate in Him equally: they will participate in Him according to what they are” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990g, p. 249).

As Father John Romanides tells us—consistent with what St. Maximos the Confessor just told us above and consistent with the general teaching of Orthodox Christianity—we will all see God. Now, how we will see and experience God, based on the life that we have chosen in relation to God and our fellow man, is itself another matter. Father Romanides speaks of such matters very powerfully as he draws from the Holy Orthodox tradition and teaches us Orthodox Christians to always be prepared to do what God has called us to do, pursue sanctification in Christ our God thereby acquiring unselfish love; and we are commanded in this pursuit to be watchful of our hearts and not allow ourselves to fall into hardness of heart:
“We know that if an Orthodox Christian who does not prepare himself correctly and reaches the point that his heart is hardened, he will see God as a consuming fire.”

“Contrary to Augustine’s ideas about Paradise and Hell, according to the other Fathers of the Church in both East and West, Hell and Paradise are the same thing. There is no difference at all. When someone sees God’s glory with unselfish love, he sees God as Paradise, and this is Paradise.

“When this same divine vision is seen by someone selfish, who has not learnt to love and has not attained to the love that ‘seeks not its own’, he too sees the glory of God, but he sees it as ‘eternal fire’ and ‘outer darkness’.

That is why Gregory Palamas mocked Barlaam, saying: ‘What do you mean by negative theology?’ The greatest negative theologian is the devil, because he sees the glory of God as darkness and as fire. Darkness and fire are opposites, because they refer to God, Who is indescribable. The Fathers use opposites when they speak about God. They call Him light, but He is also dark cloud. He is neither light nor dark cloud, because He transcends all the categories of human thought. For that reason there is no concept or word that can convey the reality of God to man.” [Fr. Romanides]

(Hierotheos, 2013, p. 434)

A common theme of much of this discussion, throughout this thesis, is humility, something which I and many others greatly lack. The Orthodox saints are the paragon of humility, by the unfathomable grace of God, for the entire world to plainly see and by which to be inspired. The Orthodox saints, by the grace of God, through their heroic example of great human effort, fearlessness, and right conduct, in their love and service to God and their fellow
man, educate the world that the Holy Orthodox Church is alone the true Church and that Christ our God is the world’s only salvation. This cannot be seen if we are blinded by arrogance and subservience and allegiance to great worldly power. Many of us Orthodox Christians, myself included, are very guilty of this stupidity of arrogance and subservience to one form or another of great worldly power—in my great cowardice and sinfulness, I am clearly more guilty than most. There is, as we mention elsewhere in this discussion, clearly an equality of all human beings with one another, for we were all created from absolutely nothing by God and all that we have that is good or potentially good has been given to us by God. Intrinsically, we have nothing, in and of ourselves. As great Orthodox theologians tell us, all human beings are equally in possession of great potential to approach God through experiencing His uncreated energies and attaining to glorification (sanctification). This equality of all humanity must be noted; and, once again, this great potential—given to all of us by God—must be lived and confessed by all Orthodox Christians and shown to others.

No group of people is better, intrinsically, than any other group of people. And when we Orthodox deny Christ in our actions, we, in a sense, become worse than anyone else, because we do not have as much of an excuse to plead ignorance as others do—because, Orthodox Christianity is alone the true Faith. The Jews had the true Faith but rejected Him Whom they awaited—after He condescended to become Incarnate through one of their people, the Virgin Mary. Instead of worshipping the Son of God—the One Who created all the Jews, and all the rest of the human race, from absolutely nothing—the Jews rejected Him in a terrible manner. The Jews regarded God’s voluntarily assumed humility and weakness as true weakness; they regarded Him in His condescension as being nothing of significance, they were ignorant of Who
He was—the Creator of everything and everyone. We are all guilty of this horrible rejection of Christ, as St. Justin Popovich has mentioned, every time we reject someone in great need, every time we do not help people who need us most—those who are helpless, sick, hungry, and persecuted for whatever reason. God can give any of us great strength and power and also take it away from any of us, at any time—indeed none of us have any power, or anything else, that is intrinsically our own, it is a gift which we have no right to abuse.

The Jews regarded Christ as nothing of significance because they had blinded themselves to the fact that God could truly condescend to our human weakness, while still being the pre-eternal God and “Creator of all things visible and invisible”. The Jews, as all the rest of us in our hypocrisy and cowardice, had and have tremendous regard (and fear) for great worldly power and disrespect for those perceived as weak—as such they thought the condescension and humility of Christ an easy target for mockery and abuse; truly. Are we not all guilty of this sort of cowardice and hypocrisy towards those perceived as weaker than we are (when we really have nothing in and of ourselves, and any us of could lose all of what we have in an instant)? Is not everyone guilty of such abusive conduct toward others—that is, in our cowardice, when we feel that we have the power to do so. We all must never forget what Christ has told us, that whatever we do to the least of these people (our good or bad actions) it is as though we are doing it to Christ Himself.

The truth is that the abuse and mockery of the Jews towards Christ could have ended very badly at that instant for them—as it equally could end very badly for any of us, whenever any of us are abusive to our fellow human beings (for we are all guilty of these kind of injustices toward
others). Christ could have smashed His tormentors to pieces at that instant, but God showed great mercy on those whom He created from nothing—exactly the same as He has shown to all of us the same great mercy, when we have rejected Him in our deplorable conduct. It is in this sense—regarding everyone of us being abusive and inhumane toward others and committing any sin, when we feel that we have the power to get away with it—that we must understand the great modern day Orthodox saint, St. Nikolai Velimirovich, when he tells us the following:

He who does not see God as the merciful Samaritan on earth will see Him as the dreadful Judge in heaven. So blinded were the leaders of the Jews that, in the Lord Christ, they were unable to see God, or the Messiah, or a prophet, or even simply a good man. They placed Him beneath ordinary good people. Not only that, they placed Him even lower than the thieves. They released Barabbas and they condemned Christ! In general, they did not even consider Christ a man. They spit on Him; they mocked Him; they made a masquerade of Him, as of some cheap and unneeded thing. Exactly at the moment when the Jews maliciously played with Christ as some cheap and unneeded thing, the Lord suddenly opened His mouth and spoke: *Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* What a distance there is between what Christ is in truth and what the Jews held Him to be! […]

O my brethren, do not be misled by deluding and illusionary tales of those men who say: “When we see Christ in the heavens as God, then we will believe in Him.” That faith will be too late, and that vision will be in vain. With our faith we must see Christ as God in that humiliated, spat upon, beaten, bloodied and ridiculed Man in the court of
Caiaphas; in that silent and condemned One Whom the Jews considered as something cheap and unneeded and Whom they turned into a masquerade. This is the Faith that is valued in heaven. This is the Faith that is rewarded by resurrection and immortality. This is the Faith that, until now, nurtured and transplanted to heaven numerous armies of the holiest souls, the strongest characters, the most forbearing heroes, and the most illustrious minds. O humiliated Lord, raise us up to this Faith.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen. [Homily “On Christ’s prophesy concerning His Glory”] (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, pp. 259-260)

And another modern day Orthodox saint, St. Justin Popovich of Chelije, is faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition when he tells us the following about the Second Coming of Christ:

If the Lord Christ is of the same essence with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, then the judgment of mankind is an act of the whole Holy Trinity. ... There is no being or created thing which the stream of time will not bring to that last day. Time will end its existence on that day and this is why it is, in the Revelation, called the Last Day, ... in which He will judge the world (Acts 17:31), ... the Day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God (Rom. 2:5), ... the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (II Pet. 3:7; 2:9). ...On this all-important day, the Theanthropos, the Lord Christ, will pronounce His last Judgment, the final judgment on the entire history of the world and men; all men together and each man in particular. And as, after He completed the creation, He surveyed every created being and thing and pronounced His judgment that it was very good (Gen. 1:31), so on the last day shall the Triune Lord survey all beings and
creation at the end of their journey through history, and pronounce His judgment on
everything and everyone. He shall then finally separate good from evil, and set an
impassible barrier between them. (Popovic, 2000, pp. 87-88)
APPENDIX B:

THE HOLY EVER-VIRGIN MARY

The Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God (the Theotokos), is a woman like any other woman, is a human being like any other human being, for she was created by God, the Holy Trinity. And, through the following words which she spoke in all humility and truth, indeed a wonderful example to the rest of humanity, the Holy Ever-Virgin Mary truthfully acknowledges her complete dependence upon her Creator: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46-47). The Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, by the unfathomable grace of God, gave birth to God in the flesh. From the Holy Orthodox Liturgical Tradition, we observe a poetic and truthful confession of this great mystery, which God willed to accomplish, as He freely condescended in His love for mankind to become that which he was not before, Man:

Why art thou filled with wonder, O Mary? Why art thou amazed at that which is come to pass in thee? ‘Because I have given birth in time to the timeless Son, yet understand not how I have conceived Him. I have not known man: how then shall I bear a child? Who has ever seen a birth without seed?’ But as it is written, ‘Where God so wills, the order of nature is overcome.’ Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem of Judah. (The Festal Menaion, 1977, p. 267)

70 I am using the translation of this particular passage of Holy Scripture (Luke 1:46-47), which I found on an unnumbered introductory page, just before page 1, in the book, The Life of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, which is to be found in the references for these appendices.
The Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God, gave birth, in the flesh, to her Creator, God and Saviour. The Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, a human being created by God—as each of us is created by God, by the infinite grace and mercy of God—gave birth, in the flesh, to the Creator, God and Saviour of all. God, in His dispensation, chose to accomplish the Incarnation for mankind’s salvation, providing the opportunity for theosis to all. For as we see confessed throughout Holy Orthodox Tradition: “The Creator, when He saw man perishing, whom He had made with His own hands, bowed the heavens and came down” (The Festal Menaion, 1977, p. 269). The Holy Orthodox Church offers all glory to God for condescending to become Incarnate through the Virgin. In conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition and consistent with what Orthodox saints and theologians tell us, the Virgin, a member of the human race and created by God, as we all are, is the human person who offers herself, and is offered by the rest of the human race, for the Incarnation of God to take place. We see this confessed in the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition:

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ, who for our sakes hast appeared on earth as man?

Every creature made by Thee offers Thee thanks. The angels offer Thee a hymn; the heavens a star; the Magi, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, its cave; the wilderness, the manger: and we offer Thee a Virgin Mother. O pre-eternal God, have mercy upon us. (The Festal Menaion, 1977, p. 254) [I first saw this teaching, from the Holy Tradition, confessed by Dr. Demetrios Constantelos, an Orthodox Priest, in one of his books, where he also, and of course before me, used this same hymn from the Vespers for the Nativity of Christ, to help explain Orthodox Tradition.]
Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos also beautifully confesses this aspect of our Holy Orthodox Tradition explaining to us everyone’s complete dependence upon God—that of course includes the Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, all the Saints, and all of us in general, without any exception—for God created everything and everyone from absolutely nothing and God was under no necessity whatsoever to create anything or anyone. With this in mind, we look at Metropolitan Hierotheos’ Orthodox confession:

The All-Holy Virgin was the greatest gift of the creation and humanity to Christ. The successive purifications of her forebears, her own struggle and, most of all, the grace of God, made her worthy to become the Mother of the Son and Word of God. She experienced glorification in the Holy of Holies. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 206)

We of course note that this capacity for any of us to do anything is also by the unfathomable grace of God, Who created all of us from nothing and gave all of us all of the capacity for good that we have. Indeed, “All Glory belongs to God.”

*God in His Dispensation Prepared the Human Race for His Incarnation*

“The name of the Mother of God (Θεοτόκος) contains the whole history of the divine economy in the world” (St. John of Damascus). This last quotation from St. John of Damascus is from Vladimir Lossky’s work *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (P.140). This same exact quotation from the original Greek is translated somewhat differently into English elsewhere, but certainly means the same thing: “Hence it is with justice and truth that we call the holy Mary the Mother of God. For this name embraces the whole mystery of the dispensation.” (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 56)
In fact, this Orthodox confession that this particular human being, the Virgin Mary, created by God to be truly the Mother of God in regard to, and only in regard to, God truly condescending to become that which He was not before, Man, is of obviously immense significance and combats a multitude of heresies.

For the Pre-eternal God Who was in need of nothing from us, for He was not necessitated by anything in the divine nature to create any of us, truly condescended for us to become what He in no way, whatsoever, was before, a human being—God condescended to unite our human nature to His divine hypostasis. The Son of God, God Himself, united within His Pre-eternal divine hypostasis His divine nature, which He Pre-eternally possesses as God, to our created human nature, which in these last days He condescended to assume for our salvation and sanctification. The two natures, divine and human, are in no way united with one another as a union of natures—as the Monophysite heretics continue to assert, which certainly embraces a form of the heresy of Pantheism—but instead the two natures are united without any confusion or mixture whatsoever within the one divine hypostasis of the Son of God. This truly is forever beyond any human comprehension and only God could accomplish this for His creation, mankind. As such, pertaining to these matters we observe once again that the holy Ever-Virgin Mary, who is a human being created by the Triune God from absolutely nothing (as we all are), is Mother of God in the sense, and only in the sense, that God condescended to become man through her for our salvation and sanctification. With that in mind we are able to understand the following from St. John of Damascus:
“For if she who bore Him is the Mother of God, assuredly He Who was born of her is God and likewise also man. For how could God, Who was before the ages, have been born of a woman unless He had become man? For the son of man must clearly be man himself. … The name in truth signifies the one subsistence and the two natures and the two generations of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 56)

For, as St. Cyril of Alexandria tells us—regarding the condescension of the Son of God to our human poverty—we see that there was no mixture or blending of the divine nature of God the Word with the human nature that He voluntarily assumed for us. And, consistent with what we said in the past regarding Orthodox teaching, from this same great Orthodox saint (St. Cyril of Alexandria), we see that the appellation of “Mother of God” is to be understood only within the context of God condescending to become man. For, as St. John of Damascus told us above: “For how could God, Who was before the ages, have been born of a woman unless He had become man?”, for it certainly was not His pre-eternal existence, as God, that could have had any beginning from a woman (whom God created from nothing). As such, it most certainly was not God’s pre-eternal existence that came forth from the Virgin—in other words it is understood only in regard to the manhood voluntarily assumed by the absolutely transcendent Son of God, God Himself, that the title “Mother of God” can possess any meaning. St. Cyril of Alexandria speaks beautifully of these matters:

And indeed, the Only-Begotten Word, even though [H]e was God and born from God by nature, the “radiance of the glory, and the exact image of the being” of the one who begot [H]im (Heb 1:3), [H]e it was who became man. He did not change [H]imself into flesh; [H]e did not endure any mixture or blending, or anything else of this kind. But
He submitted himself to being emptied and “for the sake of the honor that was set before Him He counted the shame as nothing” (Heb 12:2) and did not disdain the poverty of human nature. As God He wished to make that flesh which was held in the grip of sin and death evidently superior to sin and death. He made it his very own, and not soulless as some have said, but rather animated with a rational soul, and thus He restored flesh to what it was in the beginning. He did not consider it beneath Him to follow a path congruous to this plan, and so He is said to have undergone a birth like ours, while all the while remaining what He was. He was born of a woman according to the flesh in a wondrous manner, for He is God by nature, as such invisible and incorporeal, and only in this way, in a form like our own, could He be made manifest to earthly creatures. He thought it good to be made man and in His own person to reveal our nature honored in the dignities of the divinity. The same one was at once God and man, and He was “in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:7) since even though He was God He was “in the fashion of a man” (Phil 2:8). He was God in an appearance like ours, and the Lord in the form of a slave. This is what we mean when we say that He became flesh, and for the same reasons we affirm that the holy virgin is the Mother of God. (St. Cyril of Alexandria, 1995, pp. 54-55)

Additionally, two unconfused natures, divine and human, mean two unconfused natural energies or operations, divine and human—otherwise we embrace the heresy of Pantheism, which the Monophysites and other heretics embrace.

We glorify two natural operations indivisibly, immutably, inconfusedly, inseparably in the same our Lord Jesus Christ our true God, that is to say a divine operation and a
human operation, according to the divine preacher Leo, who most distinctly asserts as follows: “For each form (μορφη) does in communion with the other what pertains properly to it, the Word, namely, doing that which pertains to the Word, and the flesh that which pertains to the flesh.”

For we will not admit one natural operation in God and in the creature, as we will not exalt into the divine essence what is created, nor will we bring down the glory of the divine nature to the place suited to the creature. [The Definition of Faith. The Sixth Ecumenical Council.] (Percival, 1899e, p. 345)

Clearly, from these last quotations and others to follow, we see that the Pre-eternal Son of God, Who is God Himself, obviously did not receive His Pre-eternal existence from the Virgin, but rather received His human nature from the Ever-Virgin when He condescended to be born from her—for she is a created woman who shares our human nature—in the flesh. God the Word created us all from absolutely nothing and all that we have is from Him; and nothing whatsoever is possible for us without God the Word, and nothing is impossible for God the Word. Hence this truth directs our attention to the following reality: that which is impossible for humanity was indeed possible for God—namely, the Incarnation of God the Word which took place from the human being, the Virgin Mary, and God the Word thereby uniting the divine and human natures unconfusedly in His divine hypostasis. St. Nikolai Velimirovich speaks of this beautifully when he tells us:

The entire created world is a miracle, and all the visible and comprehensible order and manner is a miracle, and altogether these miracles came about by the Word of God. Therefore, much in the same way, the Lord was conceived in the Virgin’s womb. All
were brought about by the power and Word of God. That is why the wonderful Gabriel replied to the question of the All-pure one (a question asked by all generations: *How shall this be?* [Luke 1:34]): *For with God nothing shall be impossible* (Luke 1:37).


Let us continue to look at some more beautiful quotations from Holy Orthodox tradition pertaining to the absolute transcendence of God and how He condescended to truly become Man

So then [H]e who had an existence before all ages and was born of the Father, is said to have been born according to the flesh of a woman, not as though [H]is divine nature received its beginning of existence in the Holy Virgin, for it needed not any second generation after that of the Father (for it would be absurd and foolish to say that [H]e who existed before all ages, coeternal with the Father, needed any second beginning of existence), but since, for us and for our salvation, [H]e personally united to [H]imself an human body, and came forth of a woman, [H]e is in this way said to be born after the flesh … (St. Cyril of Alexandria, 1899a, p. 198)

This was the sentiment of the holy Fathers; therefore they ventured to call the holy Virgin, the Mother of God, not as if the nature of the Word or [H]is divinity had its beginning from the holy Virgin, but because of her was born that holy body with a rational soul, to which the Word being personally united is said to be born according to the flesh. (St. Cyril of Alexandria, 1899a, p. 198)
Likewise, as we have said, God did not need to create anything or anyone, whatsoever or whomsoever; nor did He, in any way, need to become man for Himself to be somehow perfected or completed:

The question of why God created the world can be answered in many ways. One answer, which we discover in patristic teaching, is that the world was created for the incarnation of the Word. This does not mean that the incarnation was essential as a ‘theological’ act to make God perfect […] [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos]

(Hierotheos, 2013, p. 109)

For how does the Almighty God need anything? He needs nothing whatsoever from us or from anything else that He has created; and by His Almighty power He created us all from absolute nothingness. God condescending to become man shows forth the great love of God for His creation, mankind, and He greatly blesses that same creation by dwelling among mankind as man, saving and sanctifying His creatures as only their Creator could. The insight of Metropolitan Hierotheos and Father Romanides are, once again, very useful at this point. Here we are told that the Orthodox Faith teaches us that the Incarnation of God the Word had the purpose of providing humankind with the opportunity for being glorified (reaching sanctification, theosis), and that fall impeded matters but never changed the divine plan:

“The incarnation did not come about for salvation. The incarnation was decided upon and for that reason the world was created, and the Fall and salvation intervened. Salvation is not the essence of the incarnation and creation. Many Fathers say this.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 109)
“The purpose of the creation is the incarnation, according to the Fathers. Man was made for glorification.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 109)

And if God had not condescended to become man, then nothing would have been possible for any of us, regarding our pursuit of glorification:

Glorification, however, would not have been within man’s reach if that Person had not existed in Whom the divine and human natures were united and Who would become the prototype for the glorification of man. We are referring to the God-man Christ. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 109)

Humanity having been created from absolutely nothing is capable of absolutely nothing good by itself; and as such, humanity can certainly never save nor glorify itself, by itself—regardless of what any of the heresies may teach in their delusion. St. Gregory Palamas speaks brilliantly and inspiringy on such matters:

For if deification is accomplished according to a capacity inherent in human nature and if it is encompassed within the bounds of nature, then of necessity the person deified is by nature God. Whoever thinks like this should not attempt, therefore, to foist his own delusion upon those who stand on secure ground and to impose a defiled creed upon those whose faith is undefiled; rather he should lay aside his presumption and learn from persons of experience or from their disciples that the grace of deification is entirely unconditional, and there is no faculty whatever in nature capable of achieving it since, if there were, this grace would no longer be grace but merely the manifestation of the operation of a natural capacity. Nor, if deification were in accord with a natural capacity, would there be anything miraculous in it; for deification would truly be the work of
nature, not the gift of God, and a man would be able to be and to be called a God by nature in the full sense of the words. For the natural capacity of every being is nothing other than the undeviating and natural disposition for active accomplishment. It is, indeed, incomprehensible how deification can raise the person deified outside or beyond himself if it is encompassed within the bounds of nature.

The grace of deification is, therefore, above nature, virtue and knowledge and, according to St Maximos, all such things infinitely fall short of it. For all the virtue we can attain and such imitation of God as lies in our power does no more than fit us for union with the Deity, but it is through grace that this ineffable union is accomplished. (Palamas, 1995a, pp. 420-421)

Again, God freely becomes fully human, while remaining fully God, to bring to us the opportunity for salvation and glorification—which would otherwise be impossible for the human race. We continue, once again, with the God-inspired wisdom of St. Cyril of Alexandria:

And since the holy Virgin brought forth corporally God made one with flesh according to nature, for this reason we also call her Mother of God, not as if the nature of the Word had the beginning of its existence from the flesh.

For “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God,” and [H]e is the Maker of the ages, coeternal with the Father, and Creator of all; but, as we have already said, since [H]e united to [H]imself hypostatically human nature from her womb, also [H]e subjected [H]imself to birth as man, not as needing necessarily in [H]is own nature birth in time and in these last times of the world, but in
order that He might bless the beginning of our existence, and that that which sent the earthly bodies of our whole race to death, might lose its power for the future by being born of a woman in the flesh. (St. Cyril of Alexandria, 1899b, p. 205)

Certainly, nothing was added to God, in His divine nature, by His condescending to become man; nor did He lose anything in His divine nature by becoming man. The Son being Pre- eternally Begotten of the Father and possessing the same divine essence (divine nature) as the Father and the Holy Spirit, has nothing to do with our created human nature which the Son of God condescended to assume for our salvation and sanctification. The two natures, divine and human, are unconfused and unmixed in the one divine hypostasis of God the Word—this is a great mystery accomplished by God, as He Himself willed to accomplish it, known only to God.

As we will see more later, the Incarnation which is a “stooping down in compassion” by God empowered mankind tremendously—the Orthodox Saints, by the grace of God, in their holiness of life and fearlessness in the face of all manner of torture and death epitomize this empowerment. No one, and no power whatsoever, could break the Orthodox Saints with the power that Christ had given to them. The God-inspired wisdom of St. Leo teaches us pertaining to these matters:

This birth in time in no way detracted from, in no way added to, that divine and everlasting birth; but expended itself wholly in the work of restoring man, who had been deceived; so that it might both overcome death, and by its power “destroy the devil who had the power of death.” For we could not have overcome the author of sin and of death, unless He who could not be contaminated by sin, nor detained by death, had taken upon Himself our nature, and made it His own. (St. Leo, 1899c, p. 254)
Certainly, no created person, nation or any other group of people have the power to save and offer sanctification to mankind, for their and everyone else’s foundation is nothing (as St. Philaret of Moscow and others tells us, consistent with Holy Orthodox tradition); for we were all, without exception, created from nothing—this power to save and sanctify humanity belongs alone to God Who chose to become man through the people whom He created for this purpose (though He did not need to create any of us). Our only salvation and sanctification is found in the Incarnate Son of God, the One Who is called Christ. St. Leo speaks beautifully of this:

   God’s promise said to Abraham, “in thy seed shall all nations be blessed,” in order to avoid all doubt as to the proper meaning of this “seed”, he should have attended to the Apostle’s words, “To Abraham and to his seed were the promises made. He saith not, ‘and to seeds,’ as in the case of many, but as in the case of one, ‘and to thy seed,’ which is Christ.” (St. Leo, 1899c, p. 255)

   He assumed “the form of a servant” without the defilement of sin, enriching what was human, not impairing what was divine: because that “emptying of [H]imself,” whereby the invisible made [H]imself visible, and the Creator and Lord of all things willed to be one among mortals, was a stooping down in compassion, not a failure of power. (St. Leo, 1899c, p. 255)

   God is absolutely transcendent and forever incomprehensible to us. Following Father Romanides’ brilliant work and great faithfulness to the holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church and their teaching to us, we know that God in His voluntary assumption of humanity became what He was not before and that God is not a human being, is not a person, and does not resemble a
human being or person or anything else that He created. The Uncreated God has absolutely no similarity whatsoever to anyone or anything that He created. (Romanides, Patristic Theology Pp. 141-142)

Indeed, the whole history of ancient Israel, and of all humanity in general, is a preparation for the Incarnation of God through a particular member of the human race, created by God: the Virgin Mary. The Virgin, a member of the human race and created by God, as each of us is, speaks for the entire human race when she gives her consent, in obedience to the will of God, for God to become Incarnate through her, for her own salvation and for the salvation of the rest of humanity. Some of the brilliant commentary of Vladimir Lossky, which is faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, is very insightful to us in these matters and helps us to understand certain aspects of the Incarnation. We observe the following:

In the person of the Virgin, humanity has given its consent to the Word becoming flesh and coming to dwell amongst men, for, according to the patristic phrase “if the Divine will alone was the creator of man, it could not save him without the concord of the human will.” (Lossky, 1976, p. 141)

Elsewhere, in conformity with what we are discussing, we see more of Lossky’s faithful confession of Orthodox Tradition, when he writes:

According to St. John of Damascus, “The name of the Mother of God (Θεοτοκος) contains the whole history of the divine economy in the world.” “One could ask”—said St. Dimitri of Rostov (seventeenth century)—“why the Word of God delayed His descent
to the earth and His incarnation to save fallen humanity. But before the middle of the 6th Millennium since the fall of Adam, it was not possible to find a virgin pure in body as well as in spirit. There was only one such, unique by her spiritual and bodily purity who was worthy to become the Church and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.”

The whole development of the Old Testament with its successive elections--the election of Noah, the election of the stock of Abraham, the election of the people of Israel, the election of the tribe of Judah, the election of the House of David, the law which preserved the purity of the people of God, the blessing on the chosen descendants, the whole of this sacred history appears as a providential and Messianic process, as a preparation of the Body of Christ, of the Church--the very focal point of union with God, and above all as a preparation of Her who was to lend her human nature so that the mystery of the incarnation could be realized. (1976, p. 140)

Just like Vladimir Lossky’s work, George S. Gabriel’s commentary and research, pertaining to these matters, is excellent and consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition. Here Dr. Gabriel quotes St. John of Damascus, regarding the Virgin Mary and her having been created by God, in order for God to accomplish His eternal will for the Incarnation, with humanity’s consent:

“‘She lived a life that was above nature, not her ‘own’ life, because she was not born ‘for herself.’ Indeed, she lived for God. She came into life for Him, to serve in the salvation of the world so that ‘the ancient will of God’ for the Incarnation of the Word and our own theosis may be fulfilled through her. Her hunger was rather for nourishment by divine words, and by their nectar she increased. And in the temple of God, she became like a
fruitful olive tree, a tree planted by the banks of the streams of the Spirit, a tree of life which, at the time appointed by God, brought forth its fruit: God in the flesh, the Life Eternal for all His creatures” [St. John of Damascus]. (Gabriel, 2000, pp. 23-25)

For, as Orthodox theologians tell us, God did not will to accomplish the Incarnation without humanity’s consent. The Virgin speaks for all of humanity, with her entire created being, as she voluntarily cooperates with the will of God, for her own salvation and sanctification, and for that of rest of the human race.

God, in His unfathomable wisdom, under no necessity of nature to accomplish the Incarnation, prepared humanity for the Incarnation to take place from a Virgin. By sustaining the human race, and through “successive elections” (Lossky, 1976, p. 140) of certain members of the human race, who heroically cooperated with the will of God, God created the human being from whom He would voluntarily become Incarnate, the Ever-Virgin Mary (Palamas, 1995c, p. 371).

According to Orthodox Tradition, God created the Jewish people (and miraculously sustained them) to be the people from whom He would one day create the human being, the Virgin Mary, through whom He would voluntarily become Incarnate, for the salvation of the entire human race. In that sense—never understood apart from the economic dispensation of God, Who voluntarily became Man—by the grace of God, this created person, the Virgin Mary, is the fulfillment of all the promises and prophesies of the Old Covenant. No human hands could ever build the “living temple of God” (Gabriel, 2000, pp. 23-25) that she is. For, by the

71 This bracketed entry was made by me, and is consistent with Dr. Gabriel’s footnotes.
unfathomable grace of God, she contained the Uncontainable God in her womb when He voluntarily became Incarnate through her. George S. Gabriel’s research and commentary, related to these matters, is outstanding, as he explains that all the history of ancient Israel was to find its meaning, and its purpose fulfilled, in the Ever-Virgin Mary—the person created by God, through whom God voluntarily became Incarnate for the entire human race:

Through her, the Mosaic Law arrived at the threshold of its fulfillment, and God’s promise to the world and covenant with Abraham was fulfilled: “God promised Abraham the forefather that in his seed shall the nations be blessed, O Pure One. And through you the promise comes to pass this day.” [Sixth Ode, Matins of the Annunciation]. The coming of Mary had been prefigured by the overwhelming presence of glory in the ark or vessel of the covenant, both in the time of Moses and in the temple. For over a millennium, the tabernacle, the temple, the veil, the ark of the covenant, the golden censer, the sacred table and the shewbread, the golden urn of manna, the lamps and all the vessels were all prefigurings of her. When Mary, the living temple of God, enters into the holy of holies, the old temple’s passing is foreshown: “Receiving the Untrodden Portal today, the house of God terminates the worship and shadow under the Law, and it cries aloud, Verily, the truth has appeared to those on earth.” [Fourth Ode, Matins of the Feast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple (Nov. 21).] The temple receives the East Portal prophesied by Ezekiel and it is at last completed, not in its architecture but in its divine purpose. Mary, the Ever-Virgin is the East Portal which “shall be shut...and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord God of Israel shall enter by it...and he shall depart from the same way.” [Ez. 44:1-3]. “With her entry, she introduces the grace of the Holy Spirit into
the house of God,” [Kontakion of the Entry] and thereby “the temple receives her as its
diadem.” [Sixth Ode, Matins of the Entry] Being divinely prepared in the temple to
become the “chamber” of the Incarnate Lord of Glory, she fulfills the temple’s purpose
and destiny and all that it had prefigured. She is the living promise and connection of the
temple’s participation in the mystery of the Incarnation: “The fulfillment of the prophecy
that the fallen temple of David would be raised up again is prefigured by her, through
whom the dust of the earth that all men are made of is refashioned in a body for
God.” [Ninth Ode, Canon 2, Matins of the Birth of the Theotokos (Sept. 8)] Therefore,
she is the living proof of its fulfillment and, in turn, she prefigures the temple’s passing
and its rebirth in the Body of Christ. God has declared “a new covenant; He hath made
the first obsolete. That which is obsolete and aged is ready to vanish.” [Heb. 8:13] The
Old Testament Church, “the church that was formerly barren,” [Eirmos, Third Ode,
Matins of the Universal Elevation of the Cross (Sept. 14)] now passes away. (Gabriel,
2000, pp. 23-25)

We also see one of the great defenders of Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas, speak of the Virgin
Mary and her unique role in the divine economy:

That we should not be entirely ignorant of the superabundance of His compassion for us
and the abyss of His wisdom, God deferred man’s death, allowing him to live for a
considerably longer time. From the first God shows that His discipline is merciful or,
rather, that He delays a just chastisement so that we do not utterly despair. He also

72 The bracketed entries in this entire block quotation were made by me, and are consistent with Dr.
Gabriel’s footnotes.
granted time for repentance and for a new life pleasing to Him, while through the succession of generations He eased the sorrow produced by death. He increased the human race with descendants so that initially the number of those being born would greatly exceed the number of those who died. In the place of one man, Adam, who became pitiable and impoverished through the sensible beauty of a tree, God brought forth many men who by means of things perceptible to the senses became blessedly enriched with divine wisdom, with virtue, with knowledge and divine favour: for example, Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Melchisedec, Abraham, and those who were their contemporaries or who lived before them and after them, and who proved to be their equals, or nearly so. But there was no one among these great men who passed his life utterly free of sin, so that he might retrieve the defeat which our forefathers had suffered, heal the wound at the root of our race and be sufficient warranty for the sanctification, blessing and return to life of all who followed. God foreknew this; and during the course of time He chose out people from among the races and tribes who would produce that celebrated staff from which would blossom the Flower [Christ] that was to accomplish the saving economy of our whole race (cf. Num. 17:8; Isa. 11:1). (Palamas, 1995c, p. 371)

The great mercy of God to the people of Israel and to the entire human race. We come back to what we saw earlier from St. John of Damascus: “The name of the Mother of God (Θεοτόκος) contains the whole history of the divine economy in the world” (Lossky, 1976, p. 140). This “divine economy”, about which we speak, namely, all that God does for creation, and for that matter, all creation itself, is accomplished by the unfathomable grace and power of the Triune
God, without there being any necessity of nature\textsuperscript{73} for God to accomplish what He indeed freely accomplishes. We also look at the brilliant work of Father Romanides and his drawing from the God-inspired wisdom of St. Theophilus of Antioch and St. Athanasius the Great to see the following:

If divine providence is truly an uncreated energy of God that sustains and gives life not indirectly through the created laws of nature but directly, it is sufficiently clear that not only the soul but the body also comes about through the direct, creative energy of God co-working with the parents. “God made you from nothing and brought you into existence. For if there was a time when neither your father nor your mother existed, much more so were you not in existence either. And He made you from the least drop of a moist and small substance that also did not exist at one time. And God brought you forth into this life.” In a more general sense Theophilus says, “And He is called God (\textit{Θεος}) because He placed (τεθεικεναι) all things in the certainty afforded by Himself, and because \textit{theein} means hastening, moving, operating, nourishing, providing, governing, and giving life to all things.” It is God “Who gave the Spirit that nourishes the earth and Whose breath vivifies all things; if He should withdraw His breath, everything would utterly vanish.” [These last three beautiful quotations are from St. Theophilus of Antioch] (Romanides, 2002, p. 160)

\textsuperscript{73} In other words, what the Triune God accomplishes, is indeed freely accomplished, for it is done without any necessity to the Divine Nature of the absolutely transcendent Triune God.
Similarly, Athanasius the Great writes about the first man: “He was made from the earth, as all were. And the hand that formed Adam then, now, and always, forms and constructs those who came after him also.” [St. Athanasius the Great, *Defense of the Nicene Definition*, Ch.9] (Romanides, 2002, p. 160)

By His unfathomable grace, God gave each of us our very existence, not necessitated by anything in the Divine Nature. Simply by a free act of will, under no compulsion or necessity, the Triune God created all things from absolute nothingness. According to His eternal divine will for the Incarnation to take place through the Virgin, whom He was to create for this purpose, God by His infinite power, grace and wisdom created all things with the purpose of His one day condescending to becoming Man. Without any compulsion or necessity of nature for Him to have done so and while remaining fully God, God personally entered the human race by condescending to become Man through the woman whom He created for this purpose; and He dwelt among His creation, giving meaning to all the struggles and experiences lived by humanity throughout history, fulfilling the promise and all the prophesies of the Old Testament. The Triune God created the people of Israel from nothing and chose them to be the people who would bring forth the Virgin, whom God would create from nothing (as we all are created from nothing) and this Virgin would be His Mother according to the flesh, when God had condescended to become Incarnate from her. God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, created the people of Israel and chose them, from among all the other peoples, to be the people through whom God would voluntarily become Incarnate and enter His creation, humanity. The Triune God created the Jewish people, for the Triune God has created the entire human race of which the Jewish people are a part, and
God miraculously sustained the Jewish people showing them, and the rest of humanity, His incomparable mercy, love, compassion and power. For, without Almighty God Who is the Creator and Upholder of everything and everyone, the Jewish people, and all the rest of us, would not even exist. For, without Almighty God, we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing.

*Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Virgin Mary.* Keeping in mind the great power and mercy of God, we see God’s unfathomable grace working throughout history, clearly seen in the Holy Scriptures and throughout Holy Tradition. The righteous parents of the Virgin Mary, Joachim and Anna, miraculously, when it was beyond hope, were rewarded by God for their perseverance, faith, hope and love\(^{74}\) with a child born to them in their old age, after so many years of barrenness. For as we see confessed in the Holy Orthodox Tradition: “Today the bonds of barrenness are loosed; for God hearkened to Joachim and Anna. And though it was beyond hope, He clearly promised them that they would bear a divine child, from whom would be born the uncircumscribable Himself, Who became mortal” [Dismissal Hymn of Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, Tone Four] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, p. 9). To translate from the original Greek is very difficult; by the words “divine child” in this hymn, we understand these words to be referring to the Blessed Ever-Virgin Mary, who is exceedingly blessed by God to be full of grace. But these words, “divine child”, in no way equate the creature, the Blessed Ever-Virgin Mary, with her Creator, God. For God, without any necessity of nature, by an act of free will, created Mary and asked her to consent to be the Birth-Giver of God, when God chose to

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\(^{74}\) In the Holy Scriptures, the Apostle Paul speaks of the great significance of “faith, hope and love”.
become Man. With this in mind, we continue to look at more of the Holy Orthodox Tradition, where we see confessed the unfathomable grace and power of God, which God freely manifests towards creation—something which is clearly seen in God’s immeasurable grace and great mercy towards Joachim and Anna, and towards the Virgin Mary, and towards the rest of humanity. For God freely created the human race and then, by His unfathomable grace, He chose to become Incarnate through His own creation, humanity. God voluntarily created humanity and then chose various people from the human race, and prepared them, to participate in bringing forth the Virgin, a member of the human race whom God would create to be His Mother, according to the flesh (that is, according to His voluntarily assumed humanity). Mindful of these things, we observe some more passages from the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition, confessing these same realities that we are discussing:

O Lord, Thou hast opened the womb of Sarah, giving her Isaac as fruit in her old age (Gen. 21:1-3). Today, O Saviour, Thou hast likewise given to godly Anna a fruit born from her womb, even Thine own Mother without spot. [Matins Canon, Ode Four, Tone Plagal Four] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, p. 16)

Although by the will of God other women who were barren have brought forth famous offspring, yet among all such children Mary has shone most brightly with divine glory. [Vespers Sticheron, Ideomelon, Tone Plagal Second] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, p. 16)

The barren woman gives suck to her child Mary, and Joachim rejoices at this birth, saying, “A rod is born unto me, and from it the flower that is Christ shall blossom from
the root of David (Is. 11:1). Marvelous in truth is this wonder!” [Matins Sessional Hymn, Tone Plagal Fourth] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, p. 18)

These realities, about which we speak, are so, only by the unfathomable grace of God. God freely accomplishes all that he accomplishes in the divine economy, freely condescending for mankind’s salvation. With that in mind, we observe the following:

Today God Who rests upon the spiritual thrones has made ready for Himself a holy throne upon earth. He Who made firm the heavens in His wisdom has prepared a living heaven in His love for man. For from a barren root He has made a life-giving branch spring up for us, even His Mother, God of wonders and hope of the hopeless, glory be to Thee, O Lord. [Great Vespers, 8 Sept., Tone Plagal Second by Sergios] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, pp. 9-10)

For indeed, the absolutely transcendent God does not need anything, but instead condescends, out of love for mankind, to accomplish all things. This is confessed throughout Orthodox Tradition, for example, during worship services in the Orthodox Church for the Nativity of Christ, we observe:

Thou hast come to dwell in a cave, O Christ our God, and the manger received Thee; shepherds and Magi worshipped Thee. Then was the preaching of the prophets fulfilled, and the angelic powers marvelled, crying aloud and saying: ‘Glory to Thy condescension, O Thou who alone loveth mankind.’ (The Festal Menaion, 1977, p. 266)
Indeed, the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God condescended to become what He was not before, Man, through the Virgin whom He created to be His Birth-Giver according to His voluntarily assumed humanity. We again see this confessed in the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition, for example in the Vesper services for “The Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (*The Festal Menaion*, 1977, p. 252), the following can be observed:

Come, let us greatly rejoice in the Lord as we tell of this present mystery. The middle wall of partition has been destroyed; the flaming sword turns back, the cherubim withdraw from the tree of life, and I partake of the delight of Paradise from which I was cast out through disobedience. For the express Image of the Father, the Imprint of His eternity, takes the form of a servant, and without undergoing change He comes forth from a Mother who knew not wedlock. For what He was, He has remained, true God: and what He was not, He has taken upon Himself, becoming man through love for mankind. Unto Him let us cry aloud: God born of a Virgin, have mercy upon us. (p. 253)

God, Who is absolutely transcendent, does not need anything. The Incarnation itself is not necessary to God, in any way; nonetheless, truly and voluntarily, God became Incarnate to save humanity and offer it the path to sanctification.

The Virgin Mary is the child of Joachim and Anna. She (the Virgin Mary) is the child--whom God created through the natural process associated with physical union between man and woman--who was chosen by God to be the Birth-Giver of God in the flesh. This child (the Virgin Mary) was chosen by God to be the woman who would give birth to God in His voluntarily assumed humanity. For as we see in the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition: “Today the Virgin gives
birth to Him Who is the Creator of all” [December 25th], to be found in the chapter “The Birth according to the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ”, translated from the Greek] (ΜΕΝΑΙΟΝ ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ, 1993, p. 503). And elsewhere we see: “The Virgin today gives birth to Him Who is above Essence and the earth offers a cave to Him Who is Unapproachable. Angels with shepherds offer up glory. Magi are guided by a star. Because, He, Who is The Pre-eternal God, for us becomes a new-born Child” [Kontakion for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, December 25th, translated from the Greek] (ΩΡΟΛΟΓΙΩΝ ΤΟ ΜΕΓΑ, 1998, p. 281). The Holy Orthodox Tradition confesses the truth that the absolutely transcendent God and Creator of all chose to personally enter human existence by becoming Man, through the woman whom He created for this purpose. By the unfathomable grace of God, the Virgin Mary is that woman whom God created to be His Mother according to the flesh. The Virgin Mary is that woman, who was created by God and who was chosen by God, to be His Mother according to His voluntarily assumed humanity. By the infinite grace of God, the Virgin Mary is the woman, who was to be the fulfillment of the prophesy: “a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son” [Isaiah 7:14] (Brenton, 1851, p. 842). As we saw earlier, the Ever-Virgin Mary is that “rod”, prophesised by Isaiah [Isaiah 11:1], from which “the flower that is Christ” blossomed. For indeed the Son of God entered humanity “from the root of David”, through the Virgin, as He promised that He would [Matins Sessional Hymn, Tone Plagal Fourth] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, p. 18). The Virgin indeed is “that celebrated staff from which would blossom the Flower [Christ] that was to accomplish the saving economy of our whole race” (cf. Num. 17:8; Isa. 11:1) (Palamas, 1995c, p. 371).
Lossky is fully consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition when he tells us:

According to St. John the Damascene [St. John of Damascus], who sums up the Christological doctrines of the Fathers, the Incarnation was accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit who caused the Virgin to be fit to receive in her the Deity of the Word, as well as through the Word Himself who formed in the Virginal flesh the first-fruits of His humanity [St. John of Damascus, *The Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, III, 2]. Thus, in the one and the same act the Word assumed human nature, gave it its existence, and deified it. The humanity, assumed and appropriated by the Person of the Son, received its being in the Divine hypostasis: it did not exist before as a distinct nature, and has not entered into union with God, but from the beginning it has appeared as the human nature of the Word. (Lossky, 1976, pp. 141-142)

Once again, we must make reference to the fact that the Incarnation was voluntary and in no way defines or determines God. Without any necessity to His Divine Person, the Incarnation was voluntarily and truly accomplished by God the Word, when “in the one and the same act the Word assumed human nature, gave it its existence, and deified it” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 141-142).

To help us further understand this, we again draw from the Liturgical Tradition of the Orthodox Church:

He Who cannot be contained by all that is in existence, how is it possible that He was contained in a womb? He Who is in the bosom of the Father, how is it possible that He
was held in the arms of His Mother? All of this, He accomplished, as He Himself knew, as He Himself willed, and as He Himself was well pleased to do so. For He Who is bodiless, voluntarily became Incarnate. And, He Who is, became that which He was not before, for us. And without putting aside His divine nature, He took part in what is our own substance. His will being to fill the heavenly world, Christ is born in two natures.

[December 25th, to be found in the chapter “The Birth according to the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ”, translated from the Greek] (MENAION ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ, 1993, p. 505)

Continuing regarding these matters, we look at the Orthodox commentary of St. John of Damascus as he strongly contradicts the heresy of Monophysitism—a heresy which inherently has pantheistic tendencies:

   Wherefore we speak not of man as having become God, but of God as having become Man. For being by nature perfect God, He naturally became likewise perfect Man: and did not change His nature nor make the dispensation an empty show, but became, without confusion or change or division, one in subsistence with the flesh, which was conceived of the holy Virgin, and animated with reason and thought, and had found existence in Him, while He did not change the nature of His divinity into the essence of flesh, nor the essence of flesh into the nature of His divinity, and did not make one compound nature out of His divine nature and the human nature He had assumed. (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 46)
Certainly, in Orthodoxy—contrary to the heresy of Monophysitism and other heresies—there is no pantheism associated with God Who is absolutely transcendent in regard to creation, which He freely brought into being from nothing.

Regarding the comparison between God and His creatures, he emphasizes that “not a single creature or dependent thing can ever be compared to the Logos of God.” [Irenaeus] (Romanides, 2002, p. 110)

As such, we Orthodox also know, that the Virgin Mary is a human being created by God from absolutely nothing, as all of us are; and this presupposes, as the Orthodox Fathers tell us, that the One Who condescended to be born from her in the flesh is God Who chose to take on created human nature, with His divine nature un-effected by this union of these two natures in His divine hypostasis. So in regard to the two natures, divine and human, unconfusedly united within the one divine hypostasis of God the Word, any pantheistic tendencies are clearly, and rightfully, rejected within the Orthodox confession pertaining to the Incarnation. We observe the following quotations pointing to this fact:

Moreover we proclaim the holy Virgin to be in strict truth the Mother of God. For inasmuch as He who was born of her was true God, she who bare the true God incarnate is the true mother of God. For we hold that God was born of her, not implying that the divinity of the Word received from her the beginning of its being, but meaning that God the Word Himself, Who was begotten of the Father timelessly before the ages, and was with the Father and the Spirit without beginning and through eternity, took up His abode in these last days for the sake of our salvation in the Virgin’s womb, and was without
change made flesh and born of her. For the holy Virgin did not bare mere man but true
God: and not mere God but God incarnate, Who did not bring down His body from
Heaven, nor simply passed through the Virgin as channel, but received from her flesh of
like essence to our own and subsisting in Himself. (St. John of Damascus, 1898, pp.
55-56)

Indeed, the Son of God truly condescending to become what He was not before—through
birth in the flesh from the human being, the Virgin Mary—while remaining what He eternally is,
is something which could not be rightfully confessed within Monophysitism nor within any other
pantheistic heresy. Again, we observe some more of the God-inspired wisdom of the Fathers,
pertaining to these matters:

This is why Mary is truly presupposed, in order that He may take it from her, and offer it
for us as His own. And this Isaiah pointed to in his prophecy, in the words: ‘Behold the
Virgin,’ while Gabriel is sent to her—not simply to a virgin, but, ‘to a virgin betrothed to
a man,’ in order that by means of the betrothed man he might shew that Mary was really
a human being. (St. Athanasius, 1891c, p. 572)

Nor did the Word proceed from Mary that He might be bettered, but that He might
ransom the human race. How then can they think that the Body, ransomed and quickened
by the Word, made an addition in respect of Godhead to the Word that had quickened it?
For on the contrary, a great addition was accrued to the human Body itself from the
fellowship and union of the Word with it. For instead of mortal it is become immortal;
and, though an animal body, it is become spiritual, and though made from earth it
entered the heavenly gates. The Triad, then, although the Word took a body from Mary,
is a Triad, being inaccessible to addition or diminution; but it is always perfect, and in the Triad one Godhead is recognised, and so in the Church one God is preached, the Father of the Word. (St. Athanasius, 1891c, pp. 573-574)

For, as we said, the Orthodox Fathers rightly confess that there is no pantheism whatsoever in regard to the Incarnation nor anywhere else in regard to God and His relationship with creation—the two natures, the divine nature and human nature, united in the one divine hypostasis of God the Word are not united to one another to form one essence or nature, in any way. Nor did God the Word derive the human nature (human essence)—which He condescended to make His own by uniting it to His divine hypostasis—from His divine nature (divine essence), in any way whatsoever. The created human nature voluntarily assumed by the Son of God, God Himself, is in no way derived from the Uncreated divine nature of God. For, between what is created and uncreated there is, as the Fathers tell us, no similarity whatsoever. That is why God, in His condescension, and in order to glorify our created existence (as the Fathers tell us), assumed our human nature from one of His creatures, the Virgin Mary, whom He created from nothing—as all creation was created from nothing. God is forever absolutely transcendent in regard to what He has created. As such, according to Orthodox teaching, there is no essential union of the two natures—no essential union of the divine nature (divine essence) and human nature (human essence)—instead this union of the two natures (essences) is hypostatic, in the one divine hypostasis of God the Word, in a way in which only God could accomplish such a union and in a way known only to the same Almighty God Himself. We observe the following from St. Athanasius the Great, regarding some of these matters:
What lower region has vomited the statement that the Body born of Mary is coessential with the Godhead of the Word? or that the Word has been changed into flesh, bones, hair, and the whole body, and altered from its own nature? […] or who ever went so far in impiety as to say and hold, that this Godhead, which is coessential with the Father, was circumcised and became imperfect instead of perfect; and that what hung upon the tree was not the body, but the very creative Essence and Wisdom? Or who that hears that the Word transformed for Himself a passible body, not of Mary, but of His own Essence, could call him who said this a Christian? Or who devised this abominable impiety, for it to enter even his imagination, and for him to say that to pronounce the Lord’s body to be of Mary is to hold a Tetrad instead of a Triad in the Godhead? Those who think thus, saying that the Body of the Saviour which He put on from Mary, is of the Essence of the Triad. Or whence again have certain vomited an impiety as great as those already mentioned; saying namely, that the body is not newer than the Godhead of the Word, but was coeternal with it always, since it was compounded of the Essence of Wisdom. (St. Athanasius, 1891c, pp. 570-571)

But we worship the Lord of Creation, Incarnate, the Word of God. For if the flesh also is in itself a part of the created world, yet it has become God’s body. And we neither divide the body, being such, from the Word, and worship it by itself, nor when we wish to worship the Word do we set Him far apart from the Flesh, but knowing, as we said above, that ‘the Word was made flesh,’ we recognise Him as God also, after having come in the flesh. Who, accordingly, is so senseless as to say to the Lord: ‘Leave the Body that I may worship Thee,’ or so impious as to join the senseless Jews in saying, on account of
the Body, ‘Why dost Thou, being a man, make Thyself God?’ But the leper was not one of this sort, for he worshipped God in the Body, and recognised that He was God, saying, ‘Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean.’ Neither by reason of the Flesh did he think the Word of God a creature: nor because the Word was the maker of all creation did he despise the Flesh which He had put on. But he worshipped the Creator of the universe as dwelling in a created temple, and was cleansed. (St. Athanasius, 1891d, pp. 575-576)

And let them know that in worshipping the Lord in the flesh we do not worship a creature, but, as we said above, the Creator Who has put on the created body. (St. Athanasius, 1891d, p. 577)

The Son of God, God the Word, united human nature to His Divine Person (Hypostasis), where in His Divine Person (Hypostasis) human nature truly became the human nature of God the Word. For this human nature received its being in the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word (Lossky, 1976, pp. 141-142), when the Son of God condescended to become Incarnate. This human nature was united to the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word, while leaving the Divine Nature, which is also hypostatically united to God the Word, unaffected. God the Word became fully Man while remaining fully God; God the Word united human nature to His Divine Hypostasis, He did this without setting aside His Divine Nature which as the Son of God, God Himself, He eternally and entirely possesses in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And the Son of God voluntarily accomplished all of this, suffering no change to His Divine Nature. For the union of human nature with the Divine Person of the Son of God was accomplished by the Son of God Himself through a free act of will, it was not in any way an act necessitated by the Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, but rather it was a mode of economic
condescension belonging to the eternal will of the Suprasubstantial Trinity which was accomplished by the Son of God in His Divine Hypostasis (Lossky, 1976, p. 138). “The humanity, assumed and appropriated by the Person of the Son, received its being in the Divine hypostasis” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 141-142), this assumed human nature is truly the humanity voluntarily assumed by God the Word, without any necessity to His absolutely transcendent Divine Nature, which He shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The union of the two natures, the Divine Nature and the human nature, in the One Divine Person of the Son of God is accomplished voluntarily by the Son of God Himself, in His Divine Hypostasis. This is not accomplished in the Divine Nature nor is it in any way necessitated by the Divine Nature. The union of the two natures in the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word leaves the two natures completely unchanged, unmixed, and not affecting one another. For the union of the two natures is hypostatic, not essential, this means that the natures in themselves are not united, nor is either one of them to be found in the other, in any way whatsoever. So, the Divine Nature, which God the Word shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit, remains the Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, unchanged and absolutely transcendent. The Incarnation, which was voluntarily and truly accomplished by God the Word in His Divine Hypostasis, was not accomplished in the Divine Essence or Nature of God the Word, a Nature which the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit. For the Divine Essence or Nature, which is common to all Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, is the very Essence, the very Nature, shared by the Three Divine Persons or Hypostases of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, and this very Nature of the Triune God is absolutely transcendent. Nothing created, including human nature, can ever participate in, nor is it in any way a part of,
the absolutely transcendent Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity. With the Incarnation of
the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, the human nature which God the Word voluntarily
assumed was not introduced into the very Being or Divine Nature of the Triune God, nor was this
human nature eternally in the Divine Nature; this human nature was never in the Divine Nature,
nor can it ever be (Gabriel, 2000, p. 100). Therefore, based on what we have discussed here and
elsewhere, consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition, the Incarnation in no way introduces
pantheism into the Triune God, Who is absolutely transcendent.

*In Orthodox Christianity, the Veneration of the Mother of God is Balanced, Never Heretical*

God—by a free act of will, without any necessity to Himself—created Mary and willed
that she should offer her human nature for God to become Man. Mary used the free will with
which God had created her, and submitted to the will of her Creator, and offered back to God all
that God had given to her. What God had chosen Mary to do was not asked of any other woman
ever before or since, and Mary freely accepted what God asked her to do. Offering herself
completely to God, “Mary received the angelic good tidings humbly and submissively. ‘Then the
Word, in a way known to Himself, descended and, as He Himself willed, came and entered into
Mary and abode in Her’” [St. Ephraim the Syrian, “Praise of the Mother of God”] (Maximovich,
1987, p. 51).

St. John Maximovich (1987) draws from St. Irenaeus of Lyons when he says:

The rod of Aaron that budded, the rock torn away from the mountain without hands, seen
by Nebuchadnezzar in a dream and interpreted by the Prophet Daniel, the closed gate
seen by the Prophet Ezekiel, and much else in the Old Testament, prefigured the birth-
giving of the Virgin. Just as Adam had been created by the Word of God from the unworked and virgin earth, so also the Word of God created flesh for Himself from a virgin womb when the Son of God became the new Adam so as to correct the fall into sin of the first Adam [St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Book III]. (pp. 22-23)

With Christ, the Son of God, all things are possible:

As lightning illuminates what is hidden, so also Christ purifies what is hidden in the nature of things. He purified the Virgin also and then was born, so as to show that where Christ is, there is manifest purity in all its power. He purified the Virgin, having prepared Her by the Holy Spirit, and then the womb, having become pure, conceived Him. He purified the Virgin while She was inviolate; wherefore having been born, He left Her virgin. I do not say that Mary became immortal, but that being illuminated by grace, She was not disturbed by sinful desires [St. Ephraim the Syrian, Homily Against Heretics, 41]. (Maximovich, 1987, pp. 51-52)

We again note that everything that the Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, has, she has by the unfathomable grace of God with God not being determined by anything that He has accomplished in His infinite goodness and love for mankind. And, in the most absolute and strictest sense, only God is perfect and sinless, and it is with this in mind that we see that St. John Maximovich is fully within the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church when he teaches us that the complete sinlessness of the Mother of God is not taught in Orthodox Christianity, neither in the Holy Scriptures, nor in Holy Tradition when he says:
The teaching of the complete sinlessness of the Mother of God (1) does not correspond to Sacred Scripture, where there is repeatedly mentioned the sinlessness of the “One Mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ” (I Tim. 2:5); “and in Him is no sin” (I John 3:5); “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” (I Peter 2:22); “One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15); “Him Who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf” (II Cor. 5:21). But concerning the rest of men it is said, “Who is pure of defilement? No one who has lived a single day of his life on earth” (Job 14:4). “God commendeth his own love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us... If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:8-10).

(2) This teaching contradicts also Sacred Tradition, which is contained in numerous Patristic writings, where there is mentioned the exalted sanctity of the Virgin Mary from Her very birth, as well as Her cleansing by the Holy Spirit at Her conception of Christ, but not at Her own conception by Anna. “There is none without stain before Thee, even though his life be but a day, save Thou alone, Jesus Christ our God, Who didst appear on earth without sin, and through Whom we all trust to obtain mercy and the remission of sins.” (St. Basil the Great, Third Prayer of Vespers of Pentecost.) (Maximovich, 1987, p. 44)

Also in full conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. John Maximovich (1987) quotes St. Epiphanius of Cyprus to tell us:
“There is an equal harm in both these heresies, both when men demean the Virgin and when, on the contrary, they glorify Her beyond what is proper” (Panarion, “Against the Collyridians”). This Holy Father accuses those who give Her an almost divine worship: “Let Mary be in honor, but let *worship* be given to the Lord” (Panarion, “Against the Collyridians”). “Although Mary is a chosen vessel, still She was a woman by nature, not to be distinguished at all from others. Although the history of Mary and Tradition relate that it was said to Her father Joachim in the desert, ‘Thy wife hath conceived’, still this was done not without marital union and not without [sic. without] the seed of man” (Panarion, “Against the Collyridians”). “One should not revere the saints above what is proper, but should revere their Master. Mary is not God, and did not receive a body from heaven, but from the joining of man and woman; and according to the promise, like Isaac, She was prepared to take part in the Divine Economy. But, on the other hand, let none dare foolishly to offend the Holy Virgin” [St. Epiphanius, “Against the Antidikomarionites”]. (pp. 40-41)

Faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. Epiphanius of Cyprus comments: “Certain senseless ones in their opinion about the Holy Ever-Virgin have striven and are striving to put Her in place of God” [St. Epiphanius, “Against the Antidikomarionites”] (Maximovich, 1987, pp 46-47). These words from St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, as well as other things which have been said by this saint and by others in our discussion, are a well said warning to Orthodox Christians to make sure that their veneration of the Mother of God, the Theotokos, is consistent with, and does not exceed, the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church.
APPENDIX C:
CAPITA 96 AND 97 FROM ST. GREGORY PALAMAS, ANOTHER TRANSLATION

Fr. George Florovsky’s use of this particular translation, of chapters 96 and 97 from St. Gregory Palamas’ work *Topics of Natural and Theological Science*, found in *The Philokalia*, is relatively strong. And, most significantly, this translation is fully consistent with, and faithful to, the great defense of Orthodox theology conducted by St. Gregory Palamas. This having been said, one should note that when consideration is given to the original Greek text it would seem that a more accurate word-for-word translation of these chapters from the original Greek is to be found in the translation of *The Philokalia* by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware and others. So with that in mind, their translation is provided here for future reference:

If, according to the absurdities of Akindynos and those who share his views, the divine energy does not in any respect differ from the divine essence, then the act of creating, which is something that pertains to the energy, will not in any respect differ from the act of begetting and the act of procession, which are things that pertain to the essence. But if the act of creating is not distinct from that of begetting and of procession, then created things in no way differ from Him who is begotten and Him who is sent forth. But if this is the case--as according to these men it is--then both the Son of God and the Holy Spirit will in no way differ from creatures: all created things will be begotten and sent forth by God the Father, creation will be deified, and God will share His rank with creatures. For this reason St. Cyril, affirming the distinction between God’s essence and energy, says,
“The act of generation pertains to the divine nature, whereas the act of creating pertains to His divine energy.” Then he clearly underscores what he has affirmed by saying, “Nature and energy are not identical.” (Palamas, 1995c, pp. 391-392, ch. 96)

If the divine essence does not in any respect differ from the divine energy, then the act of generation and of procession will in no respect differ from the act of creating. But God the Father creates through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Thus, in the view of Akindynos and his adherents, He also begets and sends forth through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

(Palamas, 1995c, p. 392, ch. 97)
APPENDIX D:

THE ORTHODOX VENERATION OF THE SAINTS AND THEIR ICONS

There is tremendous confusion and misunderstanding among Protestant religious groups, and others, regarding the Orthodox veneration of the saints and the Orthodox veneration of the holy cross and the icons. Orthodox Christians venerate the saints in order to honor them and to remind themselves of the great miracle which God, the Holy Trinity, has worked in the lives of these people (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 800). For through the saints—who heroically struggled to do the will of God—God has educated and enlightened the whole world throughout history. Throughout history, the Orthodox saints have remained faithful to the one true Faith, the Orthodox Faith, devising nothing outside of what Christ has revealed to His Holy Orthodox Church through the Holy Apostles and all the other saints. God, in His unfathomable mercy, has granted this incomparable and eternal consistency that is Orthodox Christianity seen throughout the ages and which is forever confessed without alteration by the Orthodox saints. The Orthodox saints are thus rightly honored and venerated by the Orthodox faithful. The Orthodox saints are venerated and honored but they are not in any way worshipped, for worship is due to God, the Holy Trinity, and to no one else (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 800). Likewise, the holy cross and the icons of the Lord and of His saints are meant to educate the faithful and inspire them; they are used by the faithful to draw their attention from things earthly to things heavenly. The holy cross and the
holy icons are “windows” into things heavenly; they are thus rightly venerated with reference to what or whom they depict; they are not in any way worshipped, for that would be idolatry.

What follows is some of the inspiring Orthodox confession of a bishop (bishop Basil of Ancyra) who was formerly led astray by the Iconoclastic heresy, and here, and in other statements, is seen returning back to the only true Church, the Orthodox Catholic Church [Orthodox Christianity]:

Anathema to those who apply the words of Holy Scripture which were spoken against idols, to the venerable images.
Anathema to those who say that Christians have recourse to the images as to gods.
Anathema to those who call the sacred images idols.
Anathema to those who spurn the teachings of the holy Fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church, taking as a pretext and making their own the arguments of Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches, and Dioscorus, that unless we were evidently taught by the Old and New Testaments, we should not follow the teachings of the holy Fathers and of the holy Ecumenical Synods, and the tradition of the Catholic Church. [Extracts From the Acts. The Seventh Ecumenical Council.] (Percival, 1899f, p. 534)

In this last quotation, in some sense, one cannot help but see the condemnation of the beliefs of all the made up religions of the heretics—from Judaism and Islam to evangelicalism (in its countless varieties). Additionally, Bishop Basil of Ancyra means here, by the terminology “Catholic Church”, the ancient undivided Church, the Orthodox Catholic Church [the Holy Orthodox Church]—his statements obviously predate the heresy of Papism. As such, it must be
noted that Papism certainly attempts to undermine the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church and the teachings of the Fathers and Holy Ecumenical Synods through the “Infallible man” in Rome—through making the Pope of Rome infallible and essentially above all of the holy Fathers and the Ecumenical Synods and the entire Orthodox Tradition (St. Justin of Chelije and St Nektarios of Pentapolis speak of this very inspiringly). This of course is very similar to Protestantism, in its multi-variant forms, where every individual, in himself or herself, in their personal interpretation of faith, is infallible—Papism and Protestantism both claim personal infallibility in matters of faith, as such both of these heresies are very similar to one another in their ignorance, disrespect, and dismissal of very much (if not all, in some cases) of the teachings from the Holy Synods and Holy Orthodox Tradition (St. Justin of Chelije and St Nektarios of Pentapolis brilliantly tell us all of these things). We must note that all the atheistic systems and philosophies do this, as do all the made up religions, to one extent or another; in fact, according to the Orthodox Fathers all the heretics are atheists—every religion except for Orthodox Christianity, the only true Faith, is essentially atheistic because they worship an imaginary god (Father Romanides mentions that the Orthodox Fathers teach us this). Obviously, when we Orthodox deny the true Faith—such as, in twentieth century history, by helping people who hate us build communist concentration camps to murder tens of millions of people, and when we murder unborn children through abortion, and destroy Orthodox Churches to the delight of countless people who hate us—then we, by far, out do all the heretics and are much more atheistic than they are.

Because God condescended to become truly man, while remaining God, we Orthodox depict this reality of the Incarnation in our iconography, and it is only with strict reference to this
reality of God condescending to become clothed in created human existence that we are allowed
to ever depict God the Word—the One Who when He condescended to become human was
called Jesus Christ. For this truly is the only way in which we could depict God: in His
voluntarily assumed humanity. Certainly we cannot ever depict God in His divine nature nor ever
put forward a depiction of the Pre-eternal divine hypostasis of God the Word as anything other
than the forever incomprehensible, indescribable and absolutely transcendent God Who
condescended to be clothed in created human flesh for our salvation and glorification—only with
reference to His voluntarily assumed created human nature can a depiction be made of God the
Word, Who because of His condescending to become Incarnate is called Christ. Regarding the
Incarnation of the Son of God, His condescension to created reality is depicted in iconography,
but never is there allowed any attempted depiction in iconography of the Uncreated reality of the
Supra-substantial Trinity, for this is forever impossible in that God is absolutely transcendent.
For even any and all of the words from Holy Scripture—which beautifully point to the reality of
the Triune God, when interpreted in an Orthodox way—are themselves all from our created
human language, and as such they cannot in any way describe or comprehend the Uncreated God
Who is absolutely transcendent in regard to all of creation (Romanides, faithful to Orthodox
Teaching, tells us this beautifully throughout much of his work). All of the words from Holy
Scripture can point to Who God is, in a sense, but we must never forget that these (and all other
words and symbols from anywhere else) can never describe or comprehend the absolutely
transcendent Supra-substantial Trinity, nor can any of us (without any exception) in our own
mind or otherwise comprehend or describe God, ever (not in this life nor ever in the next life)—
we know these things from Holy Orthodox Tradition (as Father Romanides has told us, faithfully following the Fathers).

We only depict the created flesh which God assumed, and nothing more is possible in this regard; the Uncreated reality of the absolutely transcendent God is forever impossible for any of us to describe or comprehend, without exception, both in this life and the next. God truly assumed what He did not have before, humanity—the Angel of Great Counsel, the Pre-eternal Logos of God [God the Word] and His divine nature remained unchanged and unconfused with the human nature which He assumed for our salvation and sanctification. The following quotations point to these matters of discussion:

“Before the incarnation, in the Old Testament, not even the Angel was depicted, because He is uncreated. As there is no similarity between what is uncreated and what is created—which is a dogma of the Orthodox Church and of the Jewish tradition—what is uncreated cannot be represented. He begins to be represented as a man only at the incarnation.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 63)

“This is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. There was no need for them to speak about one essence and three hypostases, nor about being co-essential (homoousios). These issues did not concern them. What concerned them was that, because this Angel is the image of the invisible God, God cannot have a created image. That is why it is forbidden to depict God. Uncreated God cannot have an image. This is also the teaching of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. That is why the Father is not represented on icons. We depict Christ, Who is the image of the Father and took flesh.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 64)
God, the Holy Trinity, alone is worshipped in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, and no one else. All these things which are confessed by Orthodox Christianity are wonderfully taught to us by the Orthodox saints. In fact, to conclude this part of the discussion we see St. Gregory Palamas making reference to the Holy Scriptures as he beautifully and concisely teaches us the significance of the Orthodox veneration of the saints and the significance of the Orthodox veneration of the holy cross and icons, in the following passages:

“You shall not make an image of anything in the heavens above, or in the earth below, or in the sea” (cf. Exod. 20:4), in such a way that you worship these things and glorify them as gods. ... In like manner you should also make ikons of the saints and venerate them, not as gods—for this is forbidden—but because of the attachment, inner affection and sense of surpassing honour that you feel for the saints when by means of their ikons the intellect is raised up to them. It was in this spirit that Moses made ikons of the Cherubim within the Holy of Holies (cf. Exod. 25:18). The Holy of Holies itself was an image of things supracelestial (cf. Exod. 25:40; Heb. 8:5), while the Holy Place was an image of the entire world. Moses called these things holy, not glorifying what is created, but through it glorifying God the Creator of the world. You must not, then, deify the ikons of Christ and of the saints, but through them you should venerate Him who originally created us in His own image, and who subsequently consented in His ineffable compassion to assume the human image and to be circumscribed by it. (Palamas, 1995b, pp. 324-325)
For the cross is Christ’s great sign and trophy of victory over the devil and all his hostile hosts; for this reason they tremble and flee when they see the figuration of the cross. This figure, even prior to the crucifixion, was greatly glorified by the prophets and wrought great wonders; and when He who was hung upon it, our Lord Jesus Christ, comes again to judge the living and the dead, this His great and terrible sign will precede Him, full of power and glory (cf. Matt. 24:30). So glorify the cross now, so that you may boldly look upon it then and be glorified with it. And you should venerate ikons of the saints, for the saints have been crucified with the Lord; and you should make the sign of the cross upon your person before doing so, bringing to mind their communion in the sufferings of Christ. ...By doing this and by glorifying those who glorify God—for through their actions they showed themselves to be perfect in their love for God—you too will be glorified together with them by God and with David you will chant: “I have held Thy friends in high honour, O Lord” (Ps. 139:17. LXX). (Palamas, 1995b, p. 325)
APPENDIX E:

THE INCARNATION OF GOD THE WORD

Let us see some of what the Holy Orthodox Church teaches about the Incarnation of the Son of God, God the Word:

At the Third Ecumenical Synod, Saint Cyril and the Fathers of the Synod condemned Nestorios, who divided the Person of Christ into two hypostases: one of God the Word and the other of the man Jesus, and they gave Synodal expression to the confession of the Church, that the very Hypostasis of God the Word became incarnate and that this Hypostasis constitutes the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way, they safeguarded the Orthodox teaching concerning the unity of the Person of Christ, which is essential for the salvation of human nature by means of its actual union with the Divinity in the Hypostasis of God the Word. (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 9-10)

In the above quotation, it can be seen that the fathers—from the Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, on Mount Athos—concisely and beautifully present Orthodox doctrine concerning the Person of Christ. They continue, again with reference to the Third Ecumenical Synod, as they speak of Saint Cyril and his Orthodox teaching pertaining to the Person of Christ—which was consistent not only with the defense of Orthodoxy against Nestorianism, conducted in the Third Ecumenical Synod, but was also consistent with the Orthodox confession of the distinction of persons.

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75 This is the heresy that was taught by Nestorios (and which bears his name). In the first quotation of this Appendix, we see that “At the Third Ecumenical Synod, Saint Cyril and the Fathers of the Synod condemned Nestorios, who divided the Person of Christ into two hypostases: one of God the Word and the other of the man Jesus (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 9-10).
of the two Natures, Divine and Human, in the one pre-eternal Hypostasis (Person) of God the
Word, which was later to be formally proclaimed as Orthodox doctrine in the subsequent history
of the Church.

Regarding this, the following is observed from the same Athonite fathers:

Although the struggle of Saint Cyril, as an opponent of heresy, was directed against the
division of the one Person, nevertheless, an actual distinction between the Natures and an
Orthodox understanding of their hypostatic union in one and the same Hypostasis of God
the Word, and the actual exchange of attributes of the Natures [communicatio
idiomatum], by reason of the hypostatic union, are elements that appear clearly in the
document of this ecumenical teacher of the Church, when one reads him and interprets him
in an Orthodox way.

“Thusly, we affirm that He both suffered and rose again, not that God the Word suffered
in His Own Nature, ..but since that which became His Own Body suffered these things,
again the Same is said to have suffered on our behalf” (Epistle II, to Nestorios). (Holy
Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 9-10)

The Athonite fathers continue, drawing from the wisdom of the great Orthodox Father, St. John
of Damascus:

It is taken for granted that nature understood “in mere thought” is something abstract.

God the Word, according to Saint John of Damascus, assumed not the nature, understood
in this way, nor that which is observed in the species, that is, all men together, but that
which is observed in the individual, which is itself observed in the species, but which
does not have an hypostatic character, but is observed as a whole in every hypostasis of
the same species. The Saint, therefore, writes:

“For the flesh of God the Word did not subsist in its own right, nor did another
hypostasis come into being besides the Hypostasis of God the Word, but rather, the flesh
subsisted in It enhypostatically and did not become a self-existing hypostasis in
itself.” [Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, Chapter 9 [53]] (Holy Monastery of
Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 21)

St. Maximos the Confessor teaches us the same Orthodox confession of the Incarnation in
agreement with St. John of Damascus, and in agreement with all the Orthodox saints in general,
when he says:

With regard to Christ, we do not speak of a distinction of persons, because the Trinity
remained a Trinity after the incarnation of the Logos. A fourth person was not added to
the Holy Trinity as a result of the incarnation. We speak of a distinction of natures to
avoid asserting that the flesh is coessential in its nature with the Logos. (1990g, p. 250,
ch. 57)

The last part of the above quotation, from St. Maximos the Confessor, “We speak of a distinction
of natures to avoid asserting that the flesh is coessential in its nature with the Logos” (1990g, p.
250, ch. 57), is of great significance. The “distinction of natures” refers of course to the
distinction between the two Natures in God the Word, Divine Nature and Human Nature, united in His Divine Person after He condescended to accomplish the Incarnation. The two Natures, Divine and Human, are united by God the Word in His pre-eternal Hypostasis; this was not necessitated by anything in the very Nature (Divine Nature) of God, but instead was accomplished as an absolutely free act of will by God in His condescension—for the salvation and sanctification of humanity. Contrary to the error of Latin theology and other heretical belief systems, Human Nature was never eternally present in the Divine Nature of God, nor is it in any way present in the Divine Nature (Romanides and Gabriel speak brilliantly on this matter). This Orthodox teaching forever a part of Orthodox Christianity’s confession of Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, to the world is something of which the Monophysite and Monothelite heretics are ignorant, not realizing that denying this Orthodox teaching is essentially introducing necessity into the absolutely transcendent God—which in turn inescapably constitutes an embrace of strongly pantheistic tendencies. Father Romanides brilliantly points out that Papism (Roman Catholicism), with its embrace of Augustinian-Platonic presuppositions, which are very much present throughout Latin theology, itself amounts to little more than a higher or more sophisticated form of these more ancient heresies (Romanides, 2002, p. 66).

For God the Word (the Logos) did not need to create Human Nature or anything else, nor did He need to become Incarnate, voluntarily uniting Human Nature to His pre-eternal Hypostasis (Person)—with His Divine Nature, shared in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, remaining unaffected. With what was just said being kept in mind—this Orthodox Teaching found in Holy Tradition pertaining to the Incarnation—the following from St. Maximos the Confessor is more easily understood:
He who does not distinguish the two natures in Christ has no basis for affirming that the Logos became flesh without change. He does not acknowledge that after the union that which assumed and that which was assumed are preserved according to their nature in the single person of the one Christ, our God and Saviour. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990g, p. 250, ch. 58)

Furthermore, we can better understand St. John of Damascus when he teaches us of the two distinct, unconfused, unmixed natures which God the Word condescends to unite in His one pre-eternal divine Hypostasis (or Person). For human nature can in no way be united to God, unless Almighty God condescends to become what He was not before, human, while remaining the pre-eternal God—with His divine nature unchanged and unaffected.

For through the union in subsistence the flesh is said to be deified and to become God and to be equally God with the Word; and God the Word is said to be made flesh, and to become man, and is called creature and last: not in the sense that the two natures are converted into one compound nature (for it is not possible for the opposite natural qualities to exist at the same time in one nature), but in the sense that the two natures are united in subsistence and permeate one another without confusion or transmutation[.] The permeation moreover did not come of the flesh but of the divinity: for it is impossible that the flesh should permeate through the divinity: but the divine nature once permeating through the flesh gave also to the flesh the same ineffable power of permeation; and this indeed is what we call union. (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 91)
Additionally, as we shall see in the quotation which follows, in the union of the divine nature and human nature accomplished by God the Word, the divine nature remains uncreated and the human nature remains created—otherwise it would not be a true union of the two natures without confusion and without mixture.

For we look upon the union as essential, that is, as true and not imaginary. We say that it is essential, moreover, not in the sense of two natures resulting in one compound nature, but in the sense of a true union of them in one compound subsistence of the Son of God, and we hold that their essential difference is preserved. For the created remaineth created, and the uncreated, uncreated: the mortal remaineth mortal; the immortal, immortal: the circumscribed, circumscribed: the uncircumscribed, uncircumscribed: the visible, visible: the invisible, invisible. “The one part is all glorious with wonders: while the other is the victim of insults.” (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 48)

*The Incarnation of God “As He Himself Saw Fit”*

God the Word, Who created everything and everyone, without any exception, from absolutely nothing, is alone capable of saving all whom He has created from nothing; and the way in which He condescends to accomplish the Incarnation is something forever known only to Himself, for He alone is Almighty God—along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. St. John of Damascus speaks pertaining to this, calling the divine Hypostasis or Person of God the Word the “divine subsistence” (at least in this particular translation of St. John of Damascus being quoted):
We hold then that the divine subsistence of God the Word existed before all else and is without time and eternal, simple and uncompound, uncreated, incorporeal, invisible, intangible, uncircumscribed, possessing all the Father possesses, since He is of the same essence with Him, differing from the Father’s subsistence in the manner of His generation and the relation of the Father’s subsistence, being perfect also and at no time separated from the Father’s subsistence: and in these last days, without leaving the Father’s bosom, took up His abode in an uncircumscribed manner in the womb of the holy Virgin, without the instrumentality of seed, and in an incomprehensible manner known only to Himself, and causing the flesh derived from the holy Virgin to subsist in the very subsistence that was before all ages. (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 51)

Consistent with Orthodox Tradition pertaining to the Incarnation, we draw from St. John of Damascus again where we see the following: “We affirm that the whole and perfect Nature of the Godhead was united in one of His Hypostases to the whole of human nature and a part to a part” [Saint John of Damascus, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, Book III, chapter 6 [50]] (Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 40). In His Hypostasis (Person), God the Word united His Divine Nature, which He shares in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to Human Nature for the salvation of humanity. This union of the Divine Nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with that of Human Nature in the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word, was accomplished by God the Word “as He Himself saw fit” [St. John of Damaskos, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, op. cit., pp. 310-312.] (Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 24). The Son of God, God the Word, eternally willed to accomplish the Incarnation for
the salvation of humanity; the eternal will of God the Word is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for God, the Holy Trinity, is “undivided in nature, will, glory, power, energy, and all the characteristics of divinity” (Palamas, 1995b, p. 323, ch. 1). This union of the Divine Nature and Human Nature in the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word brought about no change in the Holy Trinity, as we have stated. The Suprasubstantial Trinity is absolutely transcendent in regard to creation, which the Holy Trinity has brought into being out of absolutely nothing, for the Holy Orthodox Tradition teaches us that “The Holy Trinity creates the creatures by will out of naught and relates to them by will” (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 13, 1). The Divine will for the Incarnation is accomplished for humanity by God. God had no need, for Himself, to accomplish the Incarnation, He was under no necessity of Nature of any kind whatsoever in order that the Incarnation would have been necessary to Him in any way. Rather, God freely and eternally willed to accomplish the Incarnation and this Divine will of the Holy Trinity for the Incarnation is not to be identified in any way with the absolutely unknowable, transcendent, and unapproachable Divine Nature or Essence of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. God, the Holy Trinity, eternally willed for the Incarnation to be accomplished by God the Word, but was not necessitated to will this nor to accomplish this by anything in the Divine Nature or Essence of the Holy Trinity. For the Divine will of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is “eminently free” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 9), and is among the eternal Divine Energies of the Holy Trinity but, as with all the Divine Energies, it is in no way to be identified with, nor introduced into, the absolutely unknowable, unapproachable, and infinitely transcendent Divine Nature or Essence of the Holy Trinity.
The significance of the Essence-Energies distinction as it points to, and safeguards, the absolute transcendence of the very Nature of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity can be seen, once again, this time in relation to the eternal Divine will for the Incarnation and its accomplishment in time. The Incarnation, which was eternally willed by the Holy Trinity to one day be accomplished (after the creation of the universe) for humanity in the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word, introduces no change into the very Essence or Nature of the Holy Trinity; this is so because the eternal Divine will for the Incarnation is not found in, nor does it in any way belong to, the Divine Essence or Nature of the Holy Trinity (Lossky, 1976, pp. 137-138). The Divine will, and that of course includes God’s eternal will for the Incarnation, belongs to the Divine Energies of the Holy Trinity (Palamas, 1995c, p. 392-393, ch. 100) which, though proceeding from the very Essence or Nature of the Triune God, are nevertheless exterior to, and do not in any way determine, that very Essence or Nature of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity.

Orthodox Christianity confesses that God the Word united Human Nature to His Divine Hypostasis: “The term ‘hypostatic union’ was used by Saint Cyril in the sense of a real union of the two Natures in the one Hypostasis of God the Word” (Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 22). St. John of Damascus confesses this truth of Orthodox theology beautifully when he teaches us:

We affirm that the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word pre-existed timelessly and eternally, simple and incomposite, uncreated, incorporeal, invisible, impalpable, uncircumscribable,... and in the last days, without departing from the bosom of the Father, the Word uncircumscribably dwelt in the womb of the Holy Virgin seedlessly and
incomprehensibly, as He Himself saw fit, and subjected the flesh from the Holy Virgin to Himself in this pre-eternal Hypostasis of His...He became flesh from her, therefore, assuming the firstfruits of our compound make- up, flesh animated by a rational and spiritual soul, so that the Hypostasis of God the Word became an Hypostasis for the flesh, and that what had previously been the simple Hypostasis of the Word became composite—a composite of two perfect Natures, Divinity and Humanity. [St. John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, op. cit.*, pp. 310-312.] (Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 24)

The Orthodox Defense Against Monophysitism, A Defense Against Pantheism

Consistent with what St. John of Damascus just told us, he also tells us: “Since, therefore, there are two Natures of Christ, we affirm that His natural wills and His natural energies are two. Since there is one Hypostasis of His Natures, we affirm that One and the Same both wills and acts naturally in both the Natures” [Saint John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, op. cit.*, p. 340.] (Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 26). For when the Monophysite heretics (Non-Chalcedonian heretics), and others, make erroneous affirmations, such as the following—which blur the distinction between God and creation, and which essentially introduce creation into the Divine Nature, in effect making creation and the Incarnation itself necessary to God: “‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ In the same way, we can say that the flesh also became Divine. Thus, the properties of the flesh can be ascribed to God the Word [in the Divine Nature] and *vice versa*” [Habte Mariam Worquineh, “The Mystery of the Incarnation”, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2]
(1964-1965), p.158)(Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 31), the Orthodox response to such heresy is clear as the Fathers on the Holy Mountain of Athos tell us:

This is unacceptable from an Orthodox point of view. Saint John of Damascus says: ‘In speaking of the Divinity [of Christ]76, we do not predicate of It the attributes of the Humanity [of Christ]77; for we do not say that the Divinity is passable or created. Nor do we predicate of the flesh, that is, of the Humanity, the properties of the Divinity; for we do not say that the flesh or the Humanity is uncreated.’ [Saint John of Damascus, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, op. cit., p. 300.](Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 31)

The affirmation of the two natures united without mixture or confusion to the One divine hypostasis of God the Word is an Orthodox affirmation of the absolute transcendence of God allowing for no pantheistic tendencies in our Orthodox Faith—contrary to the heresy of Monophysitism. We also say with St. John of Damascus:

Christ, therefore, is one, perfect God and perfect man: and Him we worship along with the Father and the Spirit, with one obeisance, adoring even His immaculate flesh and not holding that the flesh is not meet for worship: for in fact it is worshipped in the one subsistence of the Word, which indeed became subsistence for it. But in this we do not

76 Bracketed entry made by the Athonite monks who obtained the quotation, which they used in their work.

77 Once again, the bracketed entry apparently was made by the Athonite monks who obtained the quotation, which they used in their work.
do homage to that which is created. For we worship Him, not as mere flesh, but as flesh united with divinity, and because His two natures are brought under the one person and one subsistence of God the Word. (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 52)

Truly, it is because of God’s condescension on our behalf that the flesh created by God the Word—from the flesh of the Virgin Mary whom God created from nothing, as we all have been created from nothing—is worshipped as belonging to God the Word because of His condescension on our behalf. As something created by God, the flesh is certainly not, in its own right, worshipped by itself:

Along with the Father and the Holy Spirit we worship the Son of God, Who was incorporeal before He took on humanity, and now in His own person is incarnate and has become man though still being also God. His flesh, then, in its own nature, if one were to make subtle mental distinctions between what is seen and what is thought, is not deserving of worship since it is created. But as it is united with God the Word, it is worshipped on an account of Him and in Him. For just as the king deserves homage alike when unrobed and when robed, and just as the purple robe, considered simply as a purple robe, is trampled upon and tossed about, but after becoming the royal dress receives all honour and glory, and whoever dishonours it is generally condemned to death: and again, just as wood in itself is not of such a nature that it cannot be touched, but becomes so when fire is applied to it, and it becomes charcoal, and yet this is not because of its own nature, but because of the fire united to it, and the nature of the wood is not such as it cannot be touched, but rather the charcoal or burning wood: so also the
flesh, in its own nature, is not to be worshipped, but is worshipped in the incarnate God Word, not because of itself, but because of its union in subsistence with God the Word. (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 74)

“Well just as the three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity are both unconfusedly united and indivisibly divided and enumerated, and the number does not create division, or separation, or alienation and disseverance, in the same way the Natures of Christ, although they are united, are yet unconfusedly united. Hence, they are enumerated, and the number does not introduce division” [Saint John of Damascus, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, op. cit., p. 304.](Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 42)

The two Natures, Divine and Human, are united by God the Word in His Divine Hypostasis without the Divine and Human Natures mixing in any way whatsoever—without the Divine Nature becoming Human Nature in any way, and without the Human Nature becoming Divine Nature in any way. God the Word unites Divine Nature and Human Nature in His Divine Hypostasis as He Himself willed to do so, and the Divine and Human Natures co-exist in the one Divine Person or Hypostasis of God the Word “without being mingled, without change, indivisibly, inseparably, in such a way that the union does not destroy the difference of the two natures, but on the contrary the properties of each nature only remain the more firm since they are found united in one person or hypostasis which is neither separated nor divided into two persons, being the one and the same person of the Son, only-Begotten, God and Word, Lord Jesus Christ” (Lossky, 1976, p. 143).
The absolutely incommunicable and transcendent Divine Nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit never changes nor does It become anything other than what It eternally is—the absolutely transcendent Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. And Human Nature, which God the Word willed to unite to His Divine Person or Hypostasis, forever remains what God created it to be—Human Nature. The two Natures, the Divine Nature and Human Nature, are united by God the Word in His Divine Hypostasis, but they are not united to one another so that they would be one Nature formed from the union of the two Natures (Percival, 1899, p. 314). According to the heresy of Monophysitism, after the Incarnation, the two Natures, the Divine Nature and the Human Nature, are united in one Nature, the Divine Nature of God the Word (Azkoul, 1986, p. 180-181). What follows from the heresy of Monophysitism, is that the Incarnation accomplished by God as He Himself willed to accomplish it is not real, or else the Incarnation of God is something necessitated by the Divine Nature or Essence, making Human Nature something necessary to the Divine Nature—making Human Nature something to be found within the Divine Nature or Essence of the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Such thinking would lead to the introduction of necessity into God and the consequent embrace of pantheism (Gabriel, 2000, p. 100). According to the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church, that would be heresy, plain and simple. To further discuss this matter we refer to some of the brilliant work, which is faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, of Fr. Michael Azkoul, in which the inherent pantheistic tendencies of Monophysitism are clearly exposed:

The Monophysites conceded that Christ had two natures and two “natural wills” (i.e., one for each nature) before the Incarnation, but not after. The Fathers recognized at once the falsehood of this distinction. The Monophysites could not escape the conclusion that the
humanity was absorbed by the Divinity in Christ. If, as St. Maximos the Confessor said, that Christ is a model and analogy not only for the Church but the universe (i.e., the union of the visible and invisible, time and eternity), then, to insist that Christ has only one nature is to strip the Church of Her humanity and also to propound a theory of pantheism (see glossary). Unthinkable, too, is the notion that, since Christ has only one nature, God suffered on the Cross (theopaschism). (Azkoul, 1986, p. 180-181)

Certainly, the Only-Begotten Son of God suffered in His voluntarily assumed humanity, and this must be properly understood. The Only-Begotten Son of God voluntarily assumed what He did not have before, Human Nature—by His voluntarily uniting Human Nature to His Divine Hypostasis—and He voluntarily accepted all that came with His condescending to become Man, even bodily suffering and death. But His Divine Nature, which He eternally possesses in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, never in any way possessed a Human Nature, nor was it, in any way, united to Human Nature in the Incarnation—the two Natures are united in the Pre-eternal Hypostasis of God the Word, but they are not united to one another such as to form or constitute one Nature either entirely divine or entirely human or a mixture of the two.

The Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity never possessed a Human Nature, nor will it ever. Therefore, the Divine Nature of the Only-Begotten Son of God never possessed a Human Nature, nor will it ever—though the Son of God nonetheless truly condescended to become fully Man in His choosing to unite Human Nature to His Divine Hypostasis. The Divine

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78 Fr. Azkoul is referring to the glossary of his book, this same book which we are using for this quotation. In the definitions in the glossary of this particular thesis, Fr. Azkoul’s brief definition of “Pantheism”, to which he refers us in the above discussion, is indeed utilized and provided for future reference.
Nature of the Only-Begotten Son of God remained impassible and absolutely transcendent during the Passion, for the Divine Nature of the Only-Begotten Son of God is eternally impassible and absolutely transcendent, and the Human Nature voluntarily assumed by the Son of God is in no way whatsoever present in this Divine Nature which is fully possessed by each of Three Divine Persons of Suprasubstantial Trinity. So with this in mind, we say that according to His voluntarily assumed humanity—according to His Human Nature—Christ suffered; but in His divinity, in His Divine Nature which is absolutely and eternally foreign to the Human Nature voluntarily assumed by Him, Christ is absolutely impassible and does not suffer change. For the eternal Divine Nature of the Son of God, which the Son of God fully possesses and shares in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is in no way associated with the Human Nature that the Son of God voluntarily, in His condescension, united to His pre-eternal Divine Hypostasis to save the human race. This distinction of the Divine and Human Natures voluntarily united by the Son of God in His Divine Person (Hypostasis) is how we Orthodox understand the condescension of the Son of God for our salvation and sanctification.

The Monophysite heretics deny this Orthodox distinction, and instead make the two Natures, the Divine Nature and the Human Nature, into one Nature after the Incarnation. Again, this implies some form of pantheism, as does what follows from it: one Nature implies one will, the divine Will (Azkoul, 1986, p. 180-181). Regarding such matters, Azkoul is once again brilliant in his analysis:

The heretics did not grasp another consequence of their folly: if Christ has only one will, the divine Will, then, the creature has no freedom. Where there is no freedom,
there is no choice between good and evil, blame and praise may not be ascribed to human actions. What, then, is morality? How is growth in the Spirit possible? Are not all things predetermined? Is not everyone and everything identified with God? How, then, do we understand the role of the Church and Her Mysteries? (Azkoul, 1986, p. 180-181)

The Divine Nature and Human Nature united by God the Word in His Hypostasis do not in any way whatsoever mix with one another, nor do they change at all; they remain distinct and absolutely unaffected by one another though united in the one Divine Hypostasis of God the Word. It is in this sense that we can better understand the Fathers on Mount Athos as they confess Orthodox theology when they tell us: ... “the Hypostasis of God the Word is also the Hypostasis of the assumed flesh, and that the exchange of the attributes of the Natures takes place in the Hypostasis of God the Word and not between the Natures” (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 35).

For indeed, God the Word voluntarily united Human Nature to His Divine Person or Hypostasis but He did not in any way unite His absolutely transcendent Divine Nature, which He shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to Human Nature, in such a way so that there would be a union of Natures in their Natures—instead the Divine Nature and Human Nature are, nonetheless, united indivisibly and inseparably but without being mingled and without change in the one Divine Person or Hypostasis of God the Word (Lossky, 1976, p. 143). Obviously, this about which we speak, which is utterly impossible to be accomplished by anyone and anything which is created by God, is indeed possible for the Almighty God Himself to accomplish.
It is with this in mind that we can better understand Saint Epiphanios of Cyprus as he confesses the completely voluntary nature of the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ, God the Word; and as he confesses the fact that Human Nature never becomes Divine Nature, and Divine Nature never becomes Human Nature, though the two Natures are both united in the Hypostasis of God the Word:

He Who in truth endured the Passion on our behalf in the flesh and in a perfect Incarnation truly suffered on the Cross; His Divinity was with Him, but was not changed to suffering, since It is impassible and unchangeable. ...[T]he two consequences are clearly grasped, that Christ suffered on our behalf in the flesh, while remaining impassible in His Divinity. The Humanity and the Divinity did not exist on their own, but the Divinity co-existed, only not suffering on account of the purity and incomparability of the Essence [Patrologia Graeca, Vol. XLII, Col. 813 C]. (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 39)

For as the Fathers on Mount Athos brilliantly explain to us:

If the Divinity of Christ is possible by reason of the union, then Christ is not co-essential with the Father, because impassibility is an essential definition of Divinity. If, again, the Humanity of Christ is uncreated by reason of the union, then Christ is not co-essential with His Mother and with us, because being created is an essential definition of human nature. (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 42)
The Eternal Divine Will for the Incarnation, Seen Within the Context of the Essence- Energies

Distinction

It is clear from much of what we just saw that the Incarnation of the Logos, God the Word, was in no way necessary to God the Word. The Incarnation and the Passion were in no way necessary to the divine Nature (divine essence) which is common to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In short, the Incarnation and the Passion were in no way necessary to God, the Holy Trinity. Certainly consistent with the fact that the Incarnation and the Passion were in no way necessary to God, is the fact that—as Fr. Azkoul explained earlier—Orthodox Christianity rejects any form of pantheism, and, following from that, rejects any notion of predestination which would rob humanity of its freedom, with which it was created by God, to choose between good and evil (Azkoul, 1986, p. 180-181). We also know this to be true by looking further at the eternal Holy Orthodox Tradition which the Holy Fathers of the Church have always confessed. Having said this, we consider that same Holy Tradition which teaches us that God did not foreordain nor did He predetermine the fall of Adam and Eve, but God, in His infinite power and wisdom, did have foreknowledge from all eternity that Adam and Eve after their creation would choose to disobey Him and of their own free choice they would fall and bring all their descendants (the entire human race) with them. God did not predestine the fall of Adam and Eve, God simply eternally foreknew that His creation, man, would fall through disregard for His commandment, voluntarily misusing the freedom, wisdom and power which was given to him by his Creator. Let us look at Orthodox Tradition regarding these things as researched by brilliant Orthodox scholars who quote and make use of the wisdom of the Holy Fathers:
God has foreseen the fall of Adam and the Son of God was “the Lamb slain before the ages” in the pre-existent will of the Trinity. That is why we cannot expect to understand anything whatsoever apart from the cross of Christ. “The mystery of the incarnation of the Word—said St. Maximus—contains in itself the meaning of all the symbols and all the enigmas of Scripture, as well as the hidden meaning of all sensible and intelligible creation. But he who knows the mystery of the Cross and the Tomb, knows also the essential principles of all things. Finally, he who penetrates yet further and finds himself initiated into the mystery of the Resurrection, apprehends the end for which God created all things from the beginning.” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 137-138)

Again, the complete freedom with which the absolutely transcendent Triune God accomplishes all things “for us men and for our salvation”79 seen in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Word, is discussed by Lossky as he draws from the God-inspired wisdom of St. Paul and St. John of Damascus:

The work of Christ is a “dispensation of the mystery, which from all ages has been hidden in God”, as St. Paul said, an “eternal purpose which was realized in Jesus Christ”. However, there is no necessity of nature in the incarnation and the passion. “It is not a work of nature, but a mode of economic condescension,” according to St. John the Damascene; it is the work of the will, the mystery of divine love. We have seen (Chapter V) that “purposes”, “ideas” do not for the Greek Fathers belong to the essence, but to the

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79 This quotation is from the Symbol of Faith of the Orthodox Church, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.
will common to the Trinity. That is why the incarnation of the Son, which is a manifestation of love, does not introduce any change or new reality into the internal being of the Trinity. (Lossky, 1976, p. 138)

Confirming much of what is said in these last two passages found in Vladimir Lossky’s work—work which itself is grounded in, and is fully consistent with, the Holy Tradition and Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church—we will clearly see in two more quotations from one of the Holy Fathers, St. Maximos the Confessor, that the Incarnation of the Logos, God the Word, was indeed an act of free will accomplished by God with no necessity whatsoever for Himself to have done so. Indeed there was no necessity of nature in the absolutely transcendent divine essence common to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit which would have necessitated the Incarnation and the Passion of the Son of God, God Himself. Looking at what Lossky says above is very significant: “God has foreseen the fall of Adam and the Son of God was ‘the Lamb slain before the ages’ in the pre-existent will of the Trinity” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 137-138). We see that God, the Holy Trinity, eternally willed for the Incarnation and the Passion to be accomplished in order to save fallen humanity and provide humankind with the opportunity for theosis (which means, while we forever remain creatures, we are given the opportunity through grace to have union with God in His energies, but not in His absolutely transcendent, unapproachable, and incomunicable essence), this was accomplished in the Person of the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity Whose will is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. To avoid any confusion (and this is similar to what was mentioned earlier), we note that God, the Holy Trinity, eternally foreknew that the Jews and others would reject God the Word after He had chosen to become Incarnate and dwell among men, and then would murder Him by crucifixion. God
certainly did not will this misuse of the freedom with which He had created and empowered humanity, but He did eternally foreknow that this great evil would be plotted against Him; and He allowed it to happen showing forth, all the more, His unfathomable love, compassion and mercy towards mankind. For through the Incarnation, the Passion, and the glorious Resurrection on the third day, Jesus Christ—the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God—gives humanity the opportunity and only true path for salvation and sanctification, as God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, has eternally willed. The Son of God, God the Word, accomplished the will common to the Holy Trinity regarding the Incarnation and the Passion, and this He did out of love for man, and so He accomplished what He eternally willed to accomplish, without having been compelled or necessitated to do so, in any way whatsoever. For as we saw mentioned earlier regarding these matters, St. John of Damascus teaches us: ‘It is not a work of nature, but a mode of economic condescension’. As Lossky (1976) correctly and beautifully interprets this: “it is the work of the will, the mystery of divine love” (p. 138).

At this point, here are the two quotations about which we spoke earlier from St. Maximos the Confessor that will give us further insight into our discussion and indeed they are consistent with the above statements:

The great mystery of the incarnation remains a mystery eternally... For God is beyond being and transcends all beyond-beingness: and so, when He wished to come down to the level of being, He became being in a manner which transcends being. Thus, too, although transcending man, yet out of love for man He truly became man by taking
on the substance of men; but the manner in which He became man always remains
unrevealed...(St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 167)

Continuing, we look at George S. Gabriel’s research as he draws from the God-inspired wisdom
of St. Maximos the Confessor:

The eternal mystery of the Incarnation, then, was not only present before the fall; it was
independent of the fall and events in time. In the words of St. Maximus the Confessor, the
Incarnation is the “ineffable and incomprehensible hypostatic union of the Divine and
humanity. This is the great and hidden mystery. This is the blessed destiny for which all
things have been constituted. This is the premeditated divine plan in which all things
have their beginning and which we speak of as the prescient purpose. It is the cause of all
things and caused by none of them. With this purpose in view, God brought into being the
substances of all things. This is the primary object of the prescience and forethoughts
according to which all things made by God are recapitulated in Him. This mystery
encloses all the ages, showing forth the infinite great counsel of God that surpasses
infinity and preexists the ages eternally. The great counsel’s Angel, the Word
consubstantial with the Father, became a man. And He made the innermost depths of the
Father’s goodness apparent and showed in Himself the purpose for which indeed all
creatures received their existence. Therefore, for Christ and in the mystery of Christ, all
the ages and all things in them received their being and purpose. The union of limitation
and limitlessness, of measure and measurelessness, of finiteness and infinity, of the
Creator and creation, of stillness and motion was deliberated prior to the ages. And in the
last days, this [union] was revealed in Christ, in itself giving fulfillment to the
foreknowledge of God.” (Gabriel, 2000, p. 99-100)

In this last passage from St. Maximos the Confessor\(^80\), found in George S. Gabriel’s research,
we see words such as: “the premeditated divine plan”, “the prescient purpose”, “prescience and
forethoughts”, “the infinite great counsel of God”, “the innermost depths of the Father’s
goodness” and “foreknowledge of God”. All these things mentioned are eternal, uncreated
energies of God, which are all common to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
These are energies of God, the Holy Trinity, but they are not, in any way, the absolutely
transcendent essence of God—which is absolutely beyond any kind of participation or
description. Now, once again we note, that even in regard to the uncreated divine energies, with
which we can have some participation—by the grace of God, if God so wills— these divine
energies are, in the strictest sense, “known unknowingly” (paraphrasing Romanides) and are
truly forever beyond any description and knowledge; for as Romanides and others tell us,
“between the created and uncreated, there is no similarity whatsoever.” So, once again, the words
used for any of the divine energies to discuss anything pertaining to them, can only be used to
point to the uncreated reality of the Triune God, but these same words cannot possibly describe
or give us knowledge pertaining to that same absolutely transcendent, uncreated, God—this is so
with all words, and everything else, that can possibly be used in any discussion whatsoever
pertaining to the Uncreated Triune God. Father Romanides is very faithful to Orthodox teaching
pertaining to these matters:

\(^80\) His name is oftentimes spelled: St. Maximus the Confessor.
The only reason why we know that there is no similarity whatsoever between God’s essence or hypostases and creation on the one hand, or between God’s energies and creation on the other, is that that’s how those in a state of theosis experience God’s presence or revelation. The experience of theosis transcends the human faculty for knowing. This is why, in apophatic theology, we encounter all sorts of expressions such as ‘to know unknowingly,’ ‘to know beyond knowing,’ and so forth. (Romanides, 2008, pp. 166-167)

Even our being united to the mystery of the Triune God through the divine energies does not, and will never, change the fact that the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity is, and forever will be, a mystery to all creation.

Union with the mystery, however, does not mean that the mystery is set aside. The mystery remains. When a believer is united with the mystery of the Holy Trinity, he is united with Someone Who eludes every human concept, because when a believer in a state of theosis has a vision or experience of the mystery, he is confronted with something indescribable. Not only are the divine hypostases indescribable, but even the divine energies are, quite literally, indescribable. Knowledge about God’s energies cannot be placed among subjects that a human being is able to know, because knowledge of the divine energies transcends human capabilities. (Romanides, 2008, pp. 165-166)

With these very important matters found in Orthodox theology, that were just mentioned, being keep always in mind—throughout our discussion of the Orthodox confession of the absolutely transcendent Triune God—we note that it is of interest, as Holy Fathers of the
Orthodox Church and Orthodox theologians will point out to us, that the very term “God” in the Greek language “comes from a verb meaning ‘run’, ‘see’ or ‘burn’” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). In the beautiful and immensely powerful Greek language—noting of course that the Greek language, as with all other languages of humanity, without exception, are a human invention, by the grace of God (as we said elsewhere, following Father Romanides’ faithful confession of Orthodox tradition)—we see that even the word for “God” (Theos) conveys the reality of the Essence-Energies distinction in the absolutely transcendent Triune God. To help us see this, we observe the following:

St. John of Damascus, writing in the eighth century, makes a remarkable observation. The word “God” in the Scriptures refers not to the divine nature or essence, for that is unknowable. “God” refers rather to the divine energies—the power and grace of God which we can perceive in this world. The Greek word for God, theos, comes from a verb meaning “run”, “see”, or “burn”. These are energy words, so to speak, not essence words. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561)

Indeed, the words “run”, “see”, or “burn”—associated in meaning with the Greek verb from which the word for “God” in the Greek language, Theos, comes—are, as we have seen, action words; they are energy words if you will; these words are verbs not nouns, these words describe activity, action, energy, but not essence (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561).

St. Gregory Palamas teaches us this as well, as he quotes from the ancient Orthodox Father, St. Gregory of Nyssa, who tells us:
Likewise the term God (*Theos*) we have taken from His providential and overseeing activity. In this manner, then, by the term God we have been taught about a certain partial activity of the divine nature, but we have not attained an understanding of God’s essence by means of this word. (Palamas, 1995c, pp. 385-386)

With this in mind, let us directly look at a quotation which is very similar to the one immediately above, also drawn from St. Gregory of Nyssa—in fact, perhaps St. Gregory Palamas, in his above statement, was drawing from this very same quotation:

[...] we transfer the thoughts that arise within us about the Divine Being into the mould of a corresponding name; so that there is no appellation given to the Divine Being apart from some distinct intuition about Him. Even the word God (*θεος*) we understand to have come into usage from the activity of His seeing; for our faith tells us that the Deity is everywhere, and sees (*θεασθαι*) all things, and penetrates all things, and then we stamp this thought with this name (*θεος*), guided to it by the Holy Voice. For he who says, “O God, attend unto me,” and, “Look, O God,” and “God knoweth the secrets of the heart plainly,” reveals the latent meaning of this word, viz. that *θεος* is so called *θεασθαι*. For there is no difference between saying “Attend unto,” “Look,” and “See.” Since, then, the seer must look towards some sight, God is rightly called the Seer of that which is to be seen. We are taught, then, by this word one sectional operation of the Divine Being, though we do not grasp in thought by means of it His substance itself, believing nevertheless that the Divine glory suffers no loss because of our being at a loss for a naturally appropriate name. For this inability to give expression to such unutterable
things, while it reflects upon the poverty of our own nature, affords an evidence of God’s
glory, teaching us as it does, in the words of the Apostle, that the only name naturally
appropriate to God is to believe Him to be “above every name.” That, he transcends
every effort of thought, and is far beyond any circumscribing by a name, constitutes a
proof to man of His ineffable majesty. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892b, p. 309)

We see, in this beautiful quotation which is fully consistent with what St. Gregory Palamas says,
that St. Gregory of Nyssa speaks of the “Holy Voice” guiding us to the word “God” for our use—
a word that we use, from our created human language, so often when we speak of the absolutely
unknowable God. Certainly this is so because there is no divine language (St. Gregory of Nyssa
and others tell us this beautifully)—instead, all of the writers of Holy Scripture and all the Saints,
use nothing but human language invented by human beings, by the grace of God, to speak about
the utterly indescribable, incomprehensible, ineffable, and absolutely transcendent God. All of
the words and concepts of Holy Scripture are, without exception, taken from our created
environment (Romanides beautifully says this, consistent with Orthodox doctrine); therefore, this
term “Holy Voice” mostly likely means what a particular writer of Holy Scripture has written, or
the writings of Holy Scripture in general. For all of what is written in Holy Scripture, without
exception, is drawn from our created environment—and the language used therein is an
invention, by the grace of God, of human beings; and as such, God certainly does not need, nor
use, human language as though it is an intrinsic part of His nature, for it is not—nor is God in
anyway confined to the use of our human language, which He Himself allowed us and
empowered us to create, after He created us from nothing. Instead, our language, having been
created by humanity, by the grace of God—for no language whatsoever came down from heaven, but instead all language is a human invention (St. Gregory of Nyssa and Fr. Romanides beautifully tell us this)—is something that God condescended to use in communicating with us, His creation, when He condescended to become man.

In a number of these last quotations and statements, just seen, we again encounter some of the profound uniqueness of Orthodox Trinitarian Theology where in some of these instances, as in countless others, the Essence-Energies distinction is once again affirmed—among other very important things confessed in Orthodox teaching pertaining to the absolute transcendence of God. Proceeding, we see that as Orthodoxy confesses: “purposes”, “ideas” belong to the energies common to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but they do not belong to the absolutely unapproachable essence of God, the Holy Trinity. Regarding these matters, we continue to learn from some of the brilliant exposition of Orthodox theology by Vladimir Lossky (1976), as it is insightful to our discussion:

And if the divine ideas are not the essence of God itself, if they are thus as it were separated from the essence by the will, then it follows that not only the act of creation but also the very thoughts of God Himself can no longer be considered as a necessary determination of His nature and part of the intelligible content of the divine Being. (p. 95)

Father Romanides speaks beautifully of these matters confessed in Orthodoxy—contradicting some of the heresies which are to be found in Western Christianity, Greek Philosophy and elsewhere—when he tells us that the divine ideas, the divine will, and the divine energies in general, are not the essence of God; nor are they found in the essence of God nor do they
disclose the essence of God; nor is creation in any way a copy of, or in any way similar to, these
divine energies, divine willings:

“There is a difference between the Fathers and Augustine on the following point:
because Augustine identified the glory of God with Plato’s archetypes and Plato’s forms,
illumination for Augustine was not the unceasing remembrance of God in the heart, but
the vision of the archetypes in the essence of God, when someone conceives the
archetypes or forms with his brain.

We need to be careful here because sometimes the archetypes are used by the
Fathers, but for the Fathers the archetypes are formless: they are not the Platonic forms,
whereas for Augustine they are the forms that are identical to the archetypes. Here we
have the forms. We have the *rationes*—that is to say, the *rationes* that are the inner
principles (*logoi*). The inner principles (*logoi*) are called *rationes* in Latin. Augustine
occasionally refers to the *rationes*.

This would be fine if he went no further. This is the teaching of the faith, because
we ought to know the inner principles (*logoi*) of things. However, for us these inner
principles are not archetypal forms. They are not forms but divine purposes, destinies
and so on; they are what God wills. For Plato they are not divine purposes. For Plato
they are the originals of which the world is a copy. That is to say, there is a form of man
and we are a copy of the idea of man. Yes, but man is not a copy of the inner principles
(*logoi*) of beings, because the principles of beings are free from form and have no shape.
The principles of beings have no similarity at all with created things in patristic
literature.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 111)
Faithful to Orthodox theology, George S. Gabriel beautifully confesses the same truth found in the above discussion, as he contradicts the error of Latin theology (Roman Catholic theology) and the error of all other theological traditions, which are foreign to Orthodox Christianity. With this in mind, we observe the following brilliant presentation of Orthodox theology pertaining to the distinction that exists in God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, between the divine essence and the divine will—and that in a more general sense is, of course, a confession of the Essence-Energies distinction in God, the Holy Trinity:

There is an infinite difference between God’s eternal will for the Incarnation and the Neo-Platonic notion of the Incarnation as an eternal idea or archetype in the essence of God. The Church condemned the notion of eternal archetypes in God because it leads to pantheism, introduces necessity into God, and He becomes a man because it is dictated by an eternal archetype in His essence. This means that, in the eternal and immutable divine essence, an immortal, beginningless, and uncreated human nature always had some kind of existence, and that God was always a latent man, and man in His eternal idea was always God. Latin theology holds that the eternal archetypes of things in the divine essence had some kind of real existence in God from eternity. (Gabriel, 2000, p. 100)

Orthodox Christianity, in its worship of God, the Holy Trinity, has always confessed what the Seventh Ecumenical Council proclaims in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*:

“To those who teach that the ideas are co-beginningless with the Creator and God, and that creatures are eternal and beginningless: anathema, anathema, anathema!” (Triodion,
The Synodikon condemns the notion of the uncreated eternal ideas in the essence of God and of comparing God with anything. (Gabriel, 2000, p. 85)

Let us look at what is meant by many of the things that have just been mentioned. The ideas belong to the energies of God, not to the essence of God. As such the ideas, as energies of God, are uncreated and eternal. The divine ideas, and in fact all the divine energies, are eternal, uncreated, and without beginning. At first glance, this seems to contradict the Orthodox confession, which was just mentioned above, found in the Synodikon of Orthodoxy; but, in actuality, that is certainly not the case. Here is the significance of the above quotation from the Synodikon of Orthodoxy: The divine energies (whether we speak of any one of them or all of them together) in no way whatsoever determine or define God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. Vladimir Lossky (1976) gives us some background knowledge to help us understand this when he says:

One may say, to use a common expression, that the energies are attributes of God; provided that is, that one remembers that these dynamic and concrete attributes have nothing in common with the concept-attributes with which God is credited in the abstract and sterile theology of the manuals. The energies manifest the innumerable names of God, according to the teaching of the Areopagite: Wisdom, Life, Power, Justice, Love, Being, God--and an infinity of other names which are unknown to us, for the world can no more contain the fullness of the divine manifestation which is revealed in the energies, than, as St. John says, it can contain the books which would be needed to describe all
Jesus did. Like the energies, the divine names are innumerable, so likewise the nature which they reveal remains nameless and unknowable--darkness hidden by the abundance of light. (p. 80)

This statement is certainly consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition, and it bears striking similarity to the following, which was written by, one of the great defenders of Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas:

... none of God’s attributes constitutes the essence. ...If to the divine attributes described apophatically are added those that the theologians ascribe to God cataphatically, it is evident that none of them can be shown to disclose God’s essence, even though when necessary we apply all the names of these attributes to the supra-essential Being that is absolutely nameless. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 401)

The previous two quotations give us some background that helps us to understand what Vladimir Lossky (1976) is saying, when he tells us, powerfully and clearly, the following, which is also in full conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition:

For Orthodox thought, the energies signify an exterior manifestation of the Trinity which cannot be interiorized, introduced, as it were, within the divine being, as its natural determination. This was the basis of the theological development of Fr. Bulgakov, and also his fundamental error; for he sought to see in the energy of Wisdom (Sophia), which he identified with the essence, the very principle of the Godhead. In fact, God is not determined by any of His attributes; all determinations are inferior to Him, logically
posterior to His being in itself, in its essence. When we say that God is Wisdom, Life, Truth, Love—we understand the energies, which are subsequent to the essence and are its natural manifestations, but are external to the very being of the Trinity. That is why, in contrast to western theology, the tradition of the Eastern Church never designates the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity by the name of attributes. We never say, for example, that the Son proceeds by the mode of the intelligence and the Holy Spirit by the mode of the will. The Spirit can never be assimilated to the mutual love of the Father and the Son. ...St. Maximus refused to admit in the Trinity qualifications of a psychological order in connection with the notion of the will; he saw in such qualifications that which is posterior to the nature of God, in other words, His exterior determinations, His manifestations. To say: “God is love”, “the divine Persons are united by mutual love”, is to think of a common manifestation, the “love energy” possessed by the three hypostases, for the union of the Three is higher even than love. (p. 80-81)

In this last quotation, which is immensely useful and important, Lossky’s exposition of Orthodox theology, pertaining to the Essence-Energies distinction, is outstandingly brilliant and, as was said, is entirely consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition. The Triune God is absolutely transcendent over all that is—including any possible names for His divine uncreated energies, where His uncreated divine energies are nevertheless His exterior manifestations; and God is obviously transcendent over all creation as well.

In regard to the divine energies and any naming of them, as Father Romanides tells us:
Not only are the divine hypostases indescribable, but even the divine energies are, quite literally, indescribable. Knowledge about God’s energies cannot be placed among subjects that a human being is able to know, because knowledge of the divine energies transcends human capabilities. (Romanides, 2008, pp. 165-166)

Truly, in the strictest sense, nothing whatsoever pertaining to the absolutely transcendent Triune God is describable—not the divine hypostases, not the divine essence, not the divine energies. It is with that in mind that we can understand the following words from St. Gregory Palamas, quoted earlier:

Every created nature is far removed from and completely foreign to the divine nature. For if God is nature, other things are not nature; but if every other thing is nature, He is not a nature, just as He is not a being if all other things are beings. And if He is a being, then all other things are not beings. And if you accept this as true also for wisdom, goodness, and in general all things that pertain to God or are ascribed to Him, then your theology will be correct and in accordance with the saints. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 382)

Indeed, in the above quotation, wisdom, goodness and other attributes pertain to the divine energies—which in the strictest sense are indescribable. As such, God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, Who is infinitely beyond being and beyond essence, Who in His unapproachable essence is infinitely transcendent over any human conception or naming of His divine, eternal, timeless, and uncreated energies—which proceed from His very essence and of which He is the “unique author” of their being, without being defined or in any way determined by these divine energies
(which themselves are literally indescribable)—is also infinitely transcendent over all that He has created (Palamas, 1995a, p. 422-423).

*The Great Holy Synods of St. Gregory Palamas’ Time*

This Holy Orthodox Tradition about which we were just speaking in the above discussion is once again expressed beautifully by the great saint and defender of the Holy Orthodox Faith, St. Gregory Palamas, whose great defense and confession of the Essence-Energies distinction in God was formally accepted by Holy Synods which were held in Constantinople in 1341, 1347 and 1351. These Holy Synods, which we have just mentioned, though not formally called “Ecumenical”, as the ancient Holy Seven Ecumenical Councils are called “Ecumenical”, nonetheless, professed the eternal Orthodox doctrine of the Essence-Energies distinction and the absolute transcendence of the Triune God which is universally accepted in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. There are prominent Orthodox theologians who regard for example the Holy Synod of Constantinople in 1351 as having all the characteristics which would constitute it as a Holy Ecumenical Council, and so they feel that it should be formally regarded as such. (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d.). Regardless of anyone’s opinion pertaining to any formal naming of these Holy Synods of this time period, their doctrinal decisions and proclamations culminating with the Holy Synod of 1351 are nonetheless universally accepted in Orthodoxy as confessing the truth of the real, and not just conceptual, Essence-Energies distinction in the absolutely transcendent Supra-substantial Holy Trinity.

Consistent with what Orthodox Christianity has always confessed and taught throughout the ages, these Holy Synods of this time period are of profound and universal significance to
Orthodox Christianity and vital to the truthful expression of its unchanging and eternal Theology.

The great Orthodox theologian, Fr. George Florovsky, tells us this when speaking about the real, and not just conceptual, Essence-Energies distinction which was confessed by these Holy Synods:

This basic distinction was formally accepted and elaborated at the Great Councils in Constantinople, 1341 and 1351. Those who would deny this distinction were anathematized and excommunicated. The anathematisms of the council of 651[sic., 651 is probably a misprint, the year which should have likely been printed is 1351] were included in the right for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, in the Triodion. Orthodox theologians are bound by this decision. (Florovsky, 1987, p. 8).

So, as we look at the Orthodox doctrine of the Essence-Energies distinction in God, we clarify certain terminology to facilitate our understanding. Drawing from the commentary of Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and others, which is in full conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition, we see the following: Orthodox Christianity confesses that goodness, immortality, life, simplicity, immutability, infinity, being itself, love, mercy and an infinity of other attributes of God are the uncreated energies of the Triune God. These uncreated divine energies do not define or determine God, the Supra-substantial Trinity, in any way whatsoever. This is what Vladimir Lossky (1976) was confessing, as we saw earlier, consistent with Orthodox doctrine, when he said:

For Orthodox thought, the energies signify an exterior manifestation of the Trinity which cannot be interiorized, introduced, as it were, within the divine being, as its natural
determination.... In fact, God is not determined by any of His attributes; all
determinations are inferior to Him, logically posterior to His being in itself, in its essence.
When we say that God is Wisdom, Life, Truth, Love—we understand the energies, which
are subsequent to the essence and are its natural manifestations, but are external to the
very being of the Trinity. (p. 80-81)

These uncreated divine energies are not the very essence of the Triune God, nor do they
in any way determine or define that very essence, nonetheless these uncreated divine energies
eternally proceed from that very same essence of the Triune God. St. Gregory Palamas (drawing
from St. Maximos the Confessor) refers to these uncreated divine energies as “beings” which are
“participable” and “without beginning” in which creation (which does have a beginning in time)
participates. Consistent with all that was mentioned earlier, we must not misunderstand the word
“beings” or “being” in this context, when it refers to the uncreated energies of the Triune God.
The uncreated energies—as eternal processions of God, the Holy Trinity—are not to be
identified with any, nor with all, of the Three Divine Hypostases of the Holy Trinity nor are they
to be identified with the essence of the Holy Trinity. Additionally, they are not essences nor
hypostases, nor are they beings which have any individual existence by themselves; they exist
only because they are eternal processions of God. The divine energies exist only because God,
the Supra-essential Trinity, communicates them; they have no hypostasis or essence themselves,
yet have no individual existence by themselves (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch.
10, 3a). In this context, we see on the one hand, the uncreated divine energies of God, which are
without beginning, being referred to as “participable beings” and, on the other hand, we see all of
creation and created beings—all of which have a beginning in time, for creation is not without
beginning—being referred to as “participant beings” having been created by God, the Holy
Trinity, with the capacity to participate in the uncreated divine energies of their Creator, the
Triune God. So in this context we see how St. Gregory Palamas, faithful to Holy Orthodox
Tradition, differentiates between the eternal, uncreated, divine energies and creation. St. Gregory
Palamas says (drawing from St. Maximos the Confessor):

... listen to St. Maximos, who says: “All immortal things and immortality itself, all living
things and life itself, all holy things and holiness itself, all good things and goodness
itself, all blessings and blessedness itself, all beings and being itself are manifestly works
of God. Some began to be in time, for they have not always existed. Others did not begin
to be in time, for goodness, blessedness, holiness and immortality have always
existed.” (Palamas, 1995a, p. 422)

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, in conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition, explains,
related to this last quotation, that “All immortal things”, “all living things”, “all holy things”, “all
good things”, “all blessings”, “all beings” mean things which are created, things which have a
beginning in time--this is what is meant by “participant beings”. “Participant beings” are things
which are created, in other words creation, “for they have not always existed”. Now, we look at
what is meant by the other terms which were mentioned alongside the previous terms (these
previous terms dealt with creation, as we said, i.e. “participant beings”). Now, these other terms
such as, “immortality itself”, “life itself”, “holiness itself”, “goodness itself”, “blessedness
itself”, “being itself” mean (in this context) the uncreated, timeless, eternal energies of God
which are to be contrasted from all that is created, in other words to be contrasted from
“participant beings”. The uncreated, eternal, divine energies are what St. Gregory Palamas refers to as “participable beings”, contrasting them from what is created, “participant beings” (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 10, 3a).

With all of this background knowledge we can more adequately approach the God-inspired wisdom of St. Maximos the Confessor and St. Gregory Palamas who, in full conformity with all the other Holy Fathers—and as faithful witnesses to the common experience of all the Orthodox saints throughout history—can inspire us and teach us so much. With this in mind, the following is from, the great defender of Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas (1995a):

If anyone maintains that only God’s essence is uncreated, while His eternal energies are not uncreated, and that as what energizes transcends all it activates, so God transcends all His energies, let him listen to St. Maximos, who says: “All immortal things and immortality itself, all living things and life itself, all holy things and holiness itself, all good things and goodness itself, all blessings and blessedness itself, all beings and being itself are manifestly works of God. Some began to be in time, for they have not always existed. Others did not begin to be in time, for goodness, blessedness, holiness and immortality have always existed.” And again he says: “Goodness, and all that is included in the principle of goodness, and—to be brief—all life, immortality, simplicity, immutability and infinity, and all the other qualities that contemplative vision perceives as substantively appertaining to God, are realities of God which did not begin to be in time. For non-existence is never prior to goodness, nor to any of the other things we have listed, even if those things which participate in them do in themselves have a beginning in
time. All goodness is without beginning because there is no time prior to it: God is eternally the unique author of its being, and God is infinitely above all beings, whether participant or participable.” It is clear, therefore, from what has been said that not everything which issues from God is subject to time. For there are some things issuing from God that are without beginning, without this in the least impairing the principle of the Triadic Unity, that alone is intrinsically without beginning, or God’s supraessential simplicity. (pp. 422-423)

In this last quotation, St. Gregory Palamas, who makes reference to St. Maximos the Confessor, teaches us some very important things in regard to the Essence-Energies distinction pertaining to God, the Holy Trinity (the Triadic Unity). In fact, the entire quotation is absolutely in full conformity with the entire Holy Orthodox Tradition confessed throughout the ages. Indeed we see that this reaffirmation of ancient Orthodox teaching seen in the above confession of the Essence-Energies distinction in the only True God, the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity, was confirmed as Orthodox doctrine by the Great Holy Synods of St. Gregory Palamas’ time.

*God Saves the Human Race After it Falls, and Does Not Allow It To Fall to Utter Destruction*

Of great interest and inspiration is what the Orthodox Saints teach us about the Fall of man, and God respecting man’s freedom of choice—even when it is the wrong one. Additionally, God does not let the devil emerge victorious, despite our stupid choices—for God offers us the path of salvation and sanctification through the Son of God condescending to become one of us, and indeed this is the world’s only salvation and sanctification. The following quotations from St. Athanasios the Great, St. John of Damascus, and St. Irenaeus are among the passages which
teach us pertaining to the fact that creation turned away from God and brought about its own corruption and death—but God would not and could be defeated by Satan, and as such did not allow His creation to fall to utter destruction:

For neglect reveals weakness, and not goodness on God’s part—if, that is, He allows His own work to be ruined when once He had made it—more so than if He had never made man at all. For if He had not made them, none could impute weakness; but once He had made them, and created them out of nothing, it were most monstrous for the work to be ruined, and that before the eyes of the Maker. It was, then, out of the question to leave men to the current of corruption; because this would be unseemly, and unworthy of God’s goodness. (St. Athanasius, 1891a, p. 39)

God in His goodness brought what exists into being out of nothing, and has foreknowledge of what will exist in the future. If, therefore, they were not to exist in the future, they would neither be evil in the future nor would they be foreknown. For knowledge is of what exists and foreknowledge is of what will surely exist in the future. For simple being comes first and then good or evil being. But if the very existence of those, who through the goodness of God are in the future to exist, were to be prevented by the fact that they were to become evil of their own choice, evil would have prevailed over the goodness of God. Wherefore God makes all His works good, but each becomes of its own choice good or evil. Although, then, the Lord said, Good were it for that man that he had never been born, He said it in condemnation not of His own creation but of the evil which His own creation had acquired by his own choice and through his own
heedlessness. For the heedlessness that marks man’s judgment made [h]is Creator’s beneficence of no profit to him. (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 94)

Irenaeus exuberantly states that “the whole economy of the salvation of man took place by God’s good will so that neither His power nor His wisdom should be shown to be deficient. For man was created by God that he might live, but he lost his life through the injury and corruptibility he suffered because of the serpent. But if he were not to return to life any longer, being abandoned to death forever, God would have been conquered, and the wickedness of the serpent would have prevailed over the will of God.” (Romanides, 2002, pp. 86-87)

By the unfathomable grace of the Triune God, we were created from absolutely nothing—all of us were—but, God did not let us revert to nothingness, despite our heedlessness. To the contrary, by the same unutterable grace, we are all given the potential for salvation and sanctification (glorification, theosis) through Christ.

Why God Condescended to Become Man—and Not Some Other Part of Creation

Let us look at what a few Orthodox saints have to say about God condescending to become man, for His creation, mankind, which had fallen—rather than having chosen to have manifested Himself in some other form of creation. As we saw earlier, from St. Cyril of Alexandria, we know the following:

He was born of a woman according to the flesh in a wondrous manner, for [H]e is God by nature, as such invisible and incorporeal, and only in this way, in a form like our own,
could [H]e be made manifest to earthly creatures. (St. Cyril of Alexandria, 1995, pp. 54-55)

And we can see—from the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church—that all of the Orthodox saints agree with one another, regarding their confession of God’s Almighty power and mercy towards His creation, humankind. And though God’s power is unbounded, for He is Almighty, He looks not to terrify us nor to dazzle us, but to save and sanctify us whom He has created from absolute nothingness. By condescending to become as we are, He does that; for He becomes as we are, fully human, and thereby greatly honors us—in putting on our own created humanity—and He thereby sanctifies our existence, as all the saints tell us. The Orthodox saints, Agatho the Pope of Rome and Athanasios the Great, confess these matters beautifully:

[…] the Maker and Redeemer of all men, who had [H]e come in the majesty of his Godhead into the world, might have terrified mortals, preferred to descend through [H]is inestimable clemency and humility to the estate of us whom [H]e had created and thus to redeem us, who also expects from us a willing confession of the true faith. (St. Agatho the Pope of Rome, 1899d, p. 329)

Now, if they ask, Why then did He not appear by means of other and nobler parts of creation, and use some nobler instrument, as the sun, or moon, or stars, or fire, or air, instead of man merely? let them know that the Lord came not to make a display, but to heal and teach those who were suffering. For the way for one aiming at display would be, just to appear, and to dazzle the beholders; but for one seeking to heal and teach the
way is, not simply to sojourn here, but to give himself to the aid of those in want, and to appear as they who need him can bear it; that he may not, by exceeding the requirements of the suffers, trouble the very persons that need him, rendering God’s appearance useless to them. Now, nothing in creation had gone astray with regard to their notions of God, save man only. Why, neither sun, nor moon, nor heaven, nor the stars, nor water, nor air had swerved from their order; but knowing their Artificer and Sovereign, the Word, they remain as they were made. But men alone, having rejected what was good, then devised things of nought instead of the truth, and have ascribed the honor due to God, and their knowledge of Him, to demons and men in the shape of stones. With reason, then, since it were unworthy of the Divine Goodness to overlook so grave a matter, while yet men were not able to recognise Him as ordering and guiding the whole, He takes to Himself as an instrument a part of the whole, His human body, and unites Himself with that, in order that since men could not recognise Him in the whole, they should not fail to know Him in the part; and since they could not look up to His invisible power, might be able, at any rate, from what resembled themselves to reason to Him and to contemplate Him. For, men as they are, they will be able to know His Father more quickly and directly by a body of like nature and by the divine works wrought through it, judging by comparison that they are not human, but the works of God, which are done by Him. And if it were absurd, as they say, for the Word to be known through the works of the body, it would likewise be absurd for Him to be known through the works of the universe. For just as He is in creation, and yet does not partake of its nature in the least degree, but rather all things partake of His power; so while He used the body as His
instrument He partook of no corporeal property, but, on the contrary, Himself sanctified even the body. (St. Athanasius, 1891a, pp. 59-60)

From this beautiful foregoing passage from the works of St. Athanasios the Great, we see that God could have manifested Himself in many ways to humanity, but chose to honor us greatly—while not changing in the least Who He was as the Pre-eternal God—by becoming man for us. In doing so, God condescended to our human nature, with human nature remaining nothing but created—and the divine nature remaining uncreated, never becoming created, never becoming human. And the human nature remained what God created it to be, created and human; human nature remained fully created and did not become uncreated, in any way, nor did it become, in any way, any part of the uncreated divine nature. The uncreated forever remained uncreated—and forever unconfused with the created. And the created forever remained nothing but created—never mixed or confused with the uncreated. As we see here from St. Athanasios the Great—consistent with the confession of all the Orthodox saints, throughout the ages—God the Word condescended to human existence, without any form of pantheism being introduced into the divine nature of the Triune God.

*God The Word Condescends To Become Man And To Be Called Jesus Christ*

The Human Name “Jesus Christ”, in Orthodox Christianity, confesses the true Incarnation of the Pre-eternal Son of God, God the Word. And this Orthodox confession of the meaning of the human names “Jesus” and “Christ”—along with other profound teachings in the Holy Orthodox Church —dispel any heretical pantheistic tendencies which are to be found in Western Christianity, and anywhere else. St. Cyril of Alexandria beautifully confesses Orthodox
teaching regarding the Pre-eternal Son of God and His condescending to become human for our sakes—while the divine nature of the Son of God is forever foreign to human nature:

Nonetheless [H]e made the limits of the manhood [H]is own, and all the things that pertain to it, and for this reason [H]e is called Christ even though [H]e cannot be thought of as anointed when we consider [H]im specifically as God or when we speak about [H]is divine nature. How else could we consider that there is one Christ, One Son and Lord, if the Only Begotten had disdained the anointing and had never come under the limitations of the self-emptying? (St. Cyril of Alexandria, 1995, p. 67)

Father Romanides’ and Metropolitan Hierotheos’ research and confession of Orthodoxy in such matters is very significant and useful for our Orthodox education. Here to follow, Father Romanides confesses, in a somewhat indirect but no less powerful manner, the two unconfused, and unmixed, natures—the divine nature of God and our human nature, which was voluntarily assumed for our sakes—in the Son of God, after the Incarnation.

“This is what the Apostle Paul says: ‘the image of the invisible God’, Christ, that is. When he says ‘image’ he does not mean something created, because there cannot be a created image of God. It is different if we speak about an image of Christ; in that case we have an image of something created, because Christ is man and we have an icon of Christ the man, not of Christ’s divinity. But when we say that Christ is the image of God, as God is not incarnate, how can God have a created icon? He is the image of the invisible God as an uncreated reality, not as a created reality.” [Fr. Romanides] (Hieroteos, 2013, p. 205)
Additionally, we of course see in this beautiful statement that, as Romanides has so often said elsewhere, "there is no similarity whatsoever between the Uncreated and the created"—Romanides was faithful to this Orthodox teaching throughout his brilliant work.

St. John of Damascus draws from earlier Orthodox Fathers to make clear to everyone the absolute transcendence of God—that in even the name by which the Lord condescended to be called, "Jesus Christ", we see the absolutely transcendent God condescending to become what He was not before, one of us, while eternally remaining the unspeakable God.

The mind was not united with God the Word, as some falsely assert, before the Incarnation by the Virgin and from that time called Christ. That is the absurd nonsense of Origen, who lays down the doctrine of the priority of the existence of souls. But we hold that the Son and Word of God became Christ after He had dwelt in the womb of His holy ever virgin Mother, and became flesh without change, and that the flesh was anointed with divinity. For this is the anointing of humanity, as Gregory the Theologian says. And here are the words of the most holy Cyril of Alexandria which he spoke to the Emperor Theodosius: "For I indeed hold that one ought to give the name Jesus Christ neither to the Word that is of God if He is without humanity, nor yet to the temple born of woman if it is not united to the Word. For the Word that is of God is understood to be Christ when united with humanity in ineffable manner in the union of the oeconomy [economy]." And again, he writes to the Empresses thus: "Some hold that the name ‘Christ’ is rightly given to the Word that is begotten of God the Father, to Him alone, and regarded separately by Himself. But we have not been taught so to think and speak. For when the Word became flesh, then it was, we say, that He was called Christ Jesus. For
since He was anointed with the oil of gladness, that is the Spirit, by Him Who is God and Father, He is for this reason called Christ. But that the anointing was an act that concerned Him as man could be doubted by no one who is accustomed to think rightly.” Moreover, the celebrated Athanasius says this in his discourse “Concerning the Saving Manifestation:” “The God Who was before the sojourn in the flesh was not man, but God in God, being invisible and without passion, but when He became man, He received in addition the name of Christ because of the flesh, since, indeed, passion and death follow in the train of this name.” (St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 76)

Once again, looking at St. Athanasios the Great [St. Athanasius of Alexandria], we see that God condescended to be known by His creation by having voluntarily put on our created nature and being known and called by a human name, “Jesus”—this not changing the fact that the unspeakable God Himself condescended to become man for us, while remaining unchanged in His divine nature.

For upon this, God being good and Father of the Lord, in pity, and desiring to be known by all, makes His own Son put on Him a human body and become man, and be called Jesus, that in this body offering Himself for all, He might deliver all from false worship and corruption, and might Himself become of all Lord and King. His becoming therefore in this way Lord and King, this it is that Peter means by, ‘He hath made Him Lord,’ and ‘hath sent Christ;’ as much as to say, that the Father in making Him man (for to be made belongs to man), did not simply make Him man, but has made Him in order to His being Lord of all men, and to His hallowing all through the Anointing. For though the Word
existing in the form of God took a servant’s form, yet the assumption of the flesh did not make a servant of the Word, who was by nature Lord; but rather, not only was it that emancipation of all humanity which takes place by the Word, but that very Word who was by nature Lord, and was then made man, hath by means of a servant’s form been made Lord of all and Christ, that is, in order to hallow all by the Spirit. (St. Athanasius, 1891b, p. 355)

Therefore, as we have already said, not Wisdom, as Wisdom, advanced in respect of Itself; but the manhood advanced in Wisdom, transcending by degrees human nature, and being deified, and becoming and appearing to all as the organ of Wisdom for the operation and the shining forth of the Godhead. Wherefore neither said he, ‘The Word advanced,’ but Jesus, by which Name the Lord was called when He became man; so that the advance is of the human nature in such wise as we explained above. (St. Athanasius, 1891b, p. 422)

St. Athanasios the Great tells us that, in His condescending to become fully man for us, the Son of God, as man, advances humanity, us—not Himself, considered in His eternal divine nature. For how could God in His divinity advance, being that He is God? Humanity obviously had, and has, great need of the Incarnate Son of God—for God the Word, Who created all of us from nothing, and condescended to become for us what He was not before, man, is our only salvation and glorification. God did not need to do anything for Himself, for as God He has all, He is “full beyond all fulness”, as St. Maximos the Confessor and all the Orthodox saints teach us; we are the ones who were and are, and always will be, in need of His condescension in becoming man for us. St. Athanasios continues to tell us of the unfathomable grace and honor,
forever beyond any human comprehension, which God the Word freely offers to all of us, His creation—for we indeed were created from nothing and saved by our Creator—in His condescension through becoming Incarnate. Only God Himself could become fully what He was not at all before: Incarnate as man, and yet remain unchanged as the pre-eternal God; and He alone, Who is God and the Creator of all of us, can offer us the path of salvation and sanctification.

And so too the words ‘gave Him’ are not written because of the Word Himself; for even before He became man He was worshipped, as we have said, by the Angels and the whole creation in virtue of being proper to the Father; but because of us and for us this too is written of Him. For as Christ died and was exalted as man, so, as man, is He said to take what, as God, He ever had, that even such a grant of grace might reach to us. For the Word was not impaired by receiving a body, that He should seek to receive a grace, but rather He deified that which He put on, and more than that, ‘gave’ it graciously to the race of man. For as He was ever worshipped as being the Word and existing in the form of God, so being what He ever was, though become man and called Jesus, He nonetheless has the whole creation under foot, and bending their knees to Him in this Name, and confessing that the Word’s becoming flesh, and undergoing death in flesh, has not happened against the glory of His Godhead, but ‘to the glory of God the Father.’ For it is the Father’s glory that man, made and then lost, should be found again; and, when dead, that he should be made live, and should become God’s temple. For whereas the powers in heaven, both Angels and Archangels, were ever worshipping the Lord, as they are now worshipping Him in the Name of Jesus, this is our grace and high
exaltation, that even when He became man, the Son of God is worshipped, and the heavenly powers will not be astonished at seeing all of us, who are of one body with Him, introduced into their realms. And this had not been, unless He who existed in the form of God had taken on Him a servant’s form, and had humbled Himself, yielding His body to come unto death. (St. Athanasius, 1891b, pp. 330-331)

And the illusion of demons is come to nought, and He only who is really God is worshipped in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the fact that the Lord, even when come in human body and called Jesus, was worshipped and believed to be God’s Son, and that through Him the Father was known, shows, as has been said, that not the Word, considered as the Word, received this so great grace, but we. (St. Athanasius, 1891b, p. 331)

St. Gregory of Nyssa makes the same Orthodox confession pertaining to these matters as all the Orthodox saints do—in one way or another, confessing that God absolutely transcends all the names and any other use of language that can possibly be applied to Him. In saying this, in one place or another, the Orthodox saints teach us the absolute transcendence of the Triune God—to Whom we can only point, but never fathom the mystery of Who that God is. With this in mind, St. Gregory of Nyssa explains in what follows that the Incarnation allows us to call the Lord by the human name of “Jesus”, for He condescended to our human existence—in His voluntarily uniting human nature to His divine Hypostasis (Person)—thus providing us with the potential for salvation and sanctification. Likewise, however, as we said earlier: there is no divine language, only our human language which we were able to create—and that only by the grace of God, Who created us all from absolutely nothing. And it is with, and from, this, our
human-made language—which we have constructed and taken from our created environment and created existence—where we find all possible words and names that exist, in Holy Scripture and elsewhere, which are applied to God, Who nevertheless absolutely forever transcends all words and names that could ever be applied to Him.

Orthodox Christianity is alone the True Faith and the Holy Orthodox Church is alone the True Church of Christ—but as we said, this does stop many of us Orthodox Christians from denying Christ with our oftentimes deplorable conduct, myself most guilty. But nevertheless the unique truth of Orthodoxy is fearlessly confessed by the Orthodox saints for all Orthodox Christians and for the whole world. St. Gregory of Nyssa speaks, as countless Orthodox saints do, of the ineffable condescension of the Son of God Who greatly honored and promoted the human race through His Incarnation—something that He freely accomplished for the entire human race which He created from absolutely nothing. From this, as Orthodox Christians, we certainly know that God the Word had no need for the Incarnation—which nevertheless is something that only He, as God, could accomplish—nor obviously, as such, was God the Word in any way promoted through His condescending to become Incarnate. Certainly God, due to the fact that He is the pre-eternal and absolutely transcendent God Who created everything and everyone from absolutely nothing, is in no way promoted or somehow honored by His condescending to become man—this of course is true because He is God, as we just said; and how can God be promoted or somehow acquire greater honor than He already has as God, from those whom He has created from nothing?

The Orthodox saints teach us a theology pertaining to the true absolute transcension of God—free from the heretical Archetypes of Platonic thought which invaded and continue to
abide throughout all of Western Christianity, to one extent or another, and which introduce
necessity into the Triune God and essentially make the creation of man and the universe a
necessity to God (Romanides, faithful to Orthodox tradition, confesses this brilliantly). There are
obvious pantheistic tendencies throughout Western Christianity and reduction of the absolutely
transcendent God to Someone Who can fully be known, and fully described, by created means;
for the entire heretical and multi-variant belief system that is Western Christianity, God can be
confined or encompassed by human conception and language, creation can be used as a means to
understand the Uncreated God—a claim absolutely never to be found in the only True Faith,
Orthodox Christianity (Romanides speaks beautifully on these matters).

Additionally, pertaining to what we just said, there are many heretical religions which
deny that truly God the Word, God Himself, with absolute freedom, became Incarnate for the
salvation and sanctification of the human race. Instead, these heresies, to one degree or another,
look to confine the Creator of all, God the Word, to the status of creature and, as such, somehow
view Him as having been promoted by God—Islam and other heresies clearly do this. But as we
said earlier, the multitude of heresies found throughout Western Christianity, in their embrace of
Platonic thought (in one form or another), clearly all reduce to heretical belief systems that
embrace pantheistic tendencies which assail the absolute transcendence of the Triune God and
tend to mimic ancient heresies which were long ago condemned. Regarding the profound
theological errors found in Western Christianity, we can see some of these erroneous beliefs
when we look at the heresy of Papism—and, certainly, Protestantism in its countless varieties
also embraces many heresies. The Papists (Roman Catholics), with their claim of the Filioque
and created grace, among other heretical beliefs, basically draw from a number of ancient
heresies and essentially refine them and reinvigorate them, in their ignorance—the Protestants do much the same, for they work under the same Augustinian-Platonic presuppositions, an error common to all of Western Christianity—but clearly the poison of these heresies remains unchanged. Father Romanides discusses pertaining to these matters in the book *The Ancestral Sin* and elsewhere in his brilliant works.

It is perfectly clear that the entire basis of Orthodoxy’s dogmas regarding the Holy Trinity and Christology is the revealed fact that God alone, without any created means, creates, foreknows, gives life, and saves. If these were created divine energies, in other words, if God creates, foreknows, gives life, and saves through created means, then the Arians, Macedonians, and Nestorians would be justified. The fact that God does not create, foreknow, give life, and save by created means bears witness to the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, that is, to the one nature of the Holy Trinity, and proclaims the hypostatic union in Christ. It is a basic premise of biblical and patristic theology that where the energy is uncreated, there too the essence is uncreated; where the energy is created, there too the nature is created. From the uncreated and identical energies of the three hypostasis we know the sameness, identity, and simplicity of the essence of the trihypostatic Divinity. Likewise, from the created energies of Christ, we know His created nature, and from His uncreated energies we know His uncreated nature. Moreover, Monophysitism and Monothelitism are heresies against the basic dogma of creation *ex nihilo* and of human freedom. Therefore, they are a rejection of the salvation of the whole man and of the world because “that which is not assumed is not healed.” The above observations about the scholastic teaching that through created means God saves,
foreknows, and acts in the world show how Latin theology merely amounts to a higher form of rejection of the basic presuppositions of biblical and patristic theology. It is a newer form of old heresies that were justly condemned by the Synods of Constantinople in 1341 and 1351. (Romanides, 2002, p. 66)

No heresy has ever, nor will it ever, conquer the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and its teachings; and here a great Orthodox Father, St. Gregory of Nyssa, speaks of the absolutely transcendent God and His true condescension done obviously not to promote Himself but to promote us, His creation who truly needed it.

Let us then consider which is the more pious and the more rational view. Which can we allowably say is made partaker of superiority by way of advancement—God or man? Who has so childish a mind as to suppose that the Divinity passes on to perfection by way of addition? But as to the Human Nature, such a supposition is not unreasonable, seeing that the words of the Gospel clearly ascribe to our Lord increase in respect of His Humanity: for it says, ”Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and favour.” Which, then, is the more reasonable suggestion to derive from the Apostle’s words? — that He Who was God in the beginning became Lord by way of advancement, or that the lowliness of the Human Nature was raised to the height of majesty as a result of its communion with the Divine? For the prophet David also, speaking in the person of the Lord, says, “I am established as king by Him,” with a meaning very close to “I was made Christ:” and again, in the person of the Father to the Lord, he says, “Be Thou Lord in the midst of Thine enemies,” with the same meaning as Peter, “Be Thou made Lord of Thine
enemies.” As, then, the establishment of His kingdom does not signify the formation of
His essence, but the advance to his Dignity, and He Who bids Him “be Lord” does not
command that which is non-existent to come into being at that particular time, but gives
to Him Who is the rule over those who are disobedient,—so also the blessed Peter, when
he says that one has been made Christ (that is, king of all) adds the word “Him” to
distinguish the idea both from the essence and from the attributes contemplated in
connection with it. For He made Him what has been declared when He already was that
which He is. Now if it were allowable to assert of the transcendent Nature that it became
anything by way of advancement, as a king from being an ordinary man, or lofty from
being lowly, or Lord from being servant, it might be proper to apply Peter’s words to the
Only-begotten. But since the Divine Nature, whatever it is believed to be, always
remains the same, being above all augmentation and incapable of diminution, we are
absolutely compelled to refer his saying to the Humanity. For God the Word is now, and
always remains, that which He was in the beginning, always King, always Lord, always
God and Most High, not having become any of these things by way of advancement, but
being in virtue of His Nature all that He is declared to be, while on the other hand He
Who was, by being assumed, elevated from Man to Divinity, being one thing and
becoming another, is strictly and truly said to have become Christ and Lord. For He
made Him to be Lord from being a servant, to be King from being a subject, to be Christ
from being in subordination. He highly exalted that which was lowly, and gave to Him
that had the Human Name that Name which is above every name. And thus came to pass
that unspeakable mixture and conjunction of human littleness commingled with Divine
greatness, whereby even those names which are great and Divine are properly applied to the Humanity, while on the other hand the Godhead is spoken of by human names. For it is the same Person who both has the Name which is above every name, and is worshipped by all creation in the Human Name of Jesus. For he says, “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 1892a, p. 190)

There is No Philosophy or Power of This World Which Can Defeat Christ Our God

St. Cyril of Alexandria—commenting on what the Apostle Paul and other writers of Holy Scripture had to say pertaining to the voluntary suffering of our Lord Christ, in the flesh—tells us that Christ, as God, is alone our salvation. Only God could have become man while remaining fully God; and this same God condescending to our human weakness and allowing Himself to suffer in the flesh, on our behalf, is something that only the Almighty God could accomplish. Those who see only the power of this world as the ultimate criteria of what is right and appropriate to God, and to the worship of God, are ignorant of this. This pertains not just to the Jews who thought that they could destroy Christ and remove all memory of Him from this world, nor does this just pertain to the ancient Greeks and their love of the wisdom of this world—where Christ voluntarily suffering for the life of this world is foolishness. But instead what St. Cyril tells us can also easily be seen as something much more general than those specific, and certainly real, instances, just mentioned—and as such can be made applicable to all of us in our
cruelty, love of power, and sinfulness. Indeed, no philosophy or power of this world can defeat Christ, Who one day will bring all the power of this world to nothing.

Does he not say that the suffering on the cross became a stumbling block for the Jews and a foolishness for the Greeks? When they saw Him hanging on the wood the former shook their murderous heads against Him and said: “If you are the Son of God come down from the cross and we shall believe in you” (Mt 27:40). They thought that He was beaten by their power and so had been seized and crucified; but they were mistaken, for they did not think that He really was the Son of God. They were looking at the flesh. The Greeks, on the other hand, are wholly incapable of grasping the profundity of the mystery, for they think it is foolishness on our part to say that Christ died for the life of the world. Yet this very thing which seems to be foolishness is that which is “wiser than men.” This system concerning Christ the Savior of us all is very profound and full of heavenly wisdom. What the Jews think of as weakness is far stronger than men; for the Only Begotten Word of God has saved us by putting on our likeness. Suffering in the flesh, and rising from the dead, He revealed our nature as greater than death or corruption. What He achieved was beyond the ability of our condition, and what seemed to have been worked out in human weakness and by suffering was really stronger than men and a demonstration of the power that pertains to God. (St. Cyril of Alexandria, 1995, pp. 129-130)

As we have said many times, all people, past and present, have sinned and have insulted Christ with their evil doing toward their fellow human beings—St. Justin Popovich and other Orthodox
saints have said this. Dostoevsky and others were right, we are all responsible, we are all guilty, in a sense, for the sins of the world—we certainly all contribute to those sins. As such, there is no group of people that has a monopoly on good or evil—we have all sinned, and we Orthodox Christians should always ask God to have mercy upon all of us. For, as we have said, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is alone the True Church—which leaves us Orthodox Christians with the least excuse of any other group of people for our oftentimes deplorable conduct and devout embrace of the philosophy and power of this world (something that we Orthodox do, at least, as much as anyone else).
GLOSSARY

The following definitions should be useful in making much of the subject matter of this thesis more accessible. Many of the topics brought forward in these definitions are to be seen in the body of the thesis and appendices where they are often further elaborated upon.

**ANGELS** Bodiless powers created before the creation of the physical universe. The English word “angel” comes from the Greek word for “messenger”. Throughout the Scripture, angels are messengers who carry the Word of God to earth (e.g. Gabriel’s visit to Mary, Luke 1:26-38). The Orthodox Church teaches that there are nine “choirs” or groups of angels: Angels, Archangels, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Dominions, Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim (see Gen. 3:24; Is. 6:2; Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16; 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:22). (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, pp. 793-794)

**ANTICHRIST** Literally, “against Christ” or “instead of Christ”. Antichrist is used by John to refer to (a) the opponent of Christ who will arise at the end of this age, and (b) the “many antichrists” who stand against the Son of God (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3). (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 794)

CREATION (Gr. *ktisis*) Everything made by God. The term *creation* is applied to the cosmos in general and to mankind in particular. Our regeneration in Christ and the resurrection of the dead are both often called the “new creation”. Creation has no existence apart from God, but is nevertheless distinct from God. (That which is not created, such as divine grace, the divine energies, belongs to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.) (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 796)

The following paragraphs and quotations further discuss the Orthodox Teaching pertaining to creation and the Creator:

The countless Orthodox saints and martyrs throughout history have all confessed the fact that “*God is absolutely transcendent*” (Ware, 1997, p. 208). Orthodox Christianity confesses the absolute transcendence of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, in relation to all creation (which this same God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, has created from absolutely nothing, with God, the

81 The definition of the word “asceticism” offered in *The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms* is actually quite good, but for the sake of accuracy we must note that it is erroneous to define *askesis* to mean “athlete”. Actually the Greek word *askesis* means “exercise” or athletic task, whereas *asketis* is the person performing the exercise or task.
Suprasubstantial Trinity, having been under absolutely no necessity to create anything or anyone). Orthodox Christianity—the one True Faith, and as such, the only Faith free of all heresy—certainly rejects the heresy of pantheism, in all its forms. We see an example of Orthodox Christianity’s rejection of any form of, or tendency towards, pantheism, in the Orthodox Church’s condemnation of Origenism, which spoke of creation proceeding “eternally from God” (Meyendorff, 1974, p. 129), and therefore, according to this heresy, creation has always existed (Meyendorff, 1974, p. 129). According to Origenism, creation, has eternally existed, in one form or another, and is seen as “a necessary expression of God’s goodness identified with divine nature itself” (Meyendorff, 1974, p. 130). Regarding mankind, for example, according to Origenism, human souls eternally pre-existed, in some form, only later being condemned to abide in bodies (Percival, 1899, pp. 318-320). Contrary to such heresy, Orthodox Christianity teaches that all creation, including mankind, was created by the Suprasubstantial Trinity from absolute nothingness, by a completely free act of will, without any necessity to the Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity (Lossky, 1976, pp. 92-94). God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, created all things from “absolute nothingness” (Lossky, 1976, p. 92), not necessitated to have done so in any way. For creation is in no way found in, or necessitated

82 “The Anathemas Against Origen” and “The Anathematisms of the Emperor Justinian against Origen” of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (A.D. 553) are, like all the proclamations of the Ecumenical Councils, very profound and edifying.

83 In this thesis, consistent with the expression of Orthodox theologians to be found in various writings and translations, the expressions “Divine Nature”, “Divine Essence”, or when written in all lower case letters, “divine nature”, “divine essence”, all mean the same thing, regardless if the letters are upper case or lower case. The expressions “Divine Nature”, “Divine Essence”, “divine nature”, “divine essence”, “Essence of God”, “Nature of God”, “essence of God”, “nature of God”, etc. are all synonymous.
by, the very Essence or Nature of the absolutely transcendent Triune God, nor does creation in any way express that very Nature of the Triune God.

God, the Holy Trinity, created freely, with no necessity to the Holy Trinity Itself. Creation was, and is, in no way necessary to God, nor is it in any way coeternal with Him. So referring to humanity: Orthodox Christianity teaches that mankind is not coeternal with God (for all of creation, including mankind, is not coeternal with God), but was created by God when God chose to create. Every human being is created by God, the Holy Trinity, with the body and soul being created “at one and the same time” (Patapios, 2000, p. 68). For as St. John of Damascus tells us: “[The]⁸⁴ body and [the]⁸⁵ soul were formed at one and the same time, not first the one and then the other, as Origen so senselessly supposes” (St. John of Damascus, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith) (Patapios, 2000, p. 68). Certainly what St. John of Damascus (ca. 675-749)⁸⁶ tells us is consistent with the God-inspired wisdom of the Fifth Ecumenical Synod (A.D. 553), which proceeded him in history. The Fifth Ecumenical Synod in its First Anathema against the heretic Origen and those who agree with him says the following: ‘If anyone asserts the fabulous pre-existence of souls, and shall assert the monstrous restoration [αποκαταστασις]⁸⁷ which follows from it: let him be anathema’ (Patapios, 2000, p. 68). Nothing pertaining to the

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⁸⁴ Hieromonk Patapios apparently has inserted this bracketed entry.

⁸⁵ Hieromonk Patapios apparently has inserted this bracketed entry.

⁸⁶ These dates when St. John of Damascus lived are found in Hieromonk Patapios’ book *The Orthodox Church and The Orthodox way Reviewed* on p. 68.

⁸⁷ Hieromonk Patapios has apparently inserted this bracketed entry, into the quotation he obtained, it is simply the Greek word for “restoration”.
human being is coeternal with or necessary to God, not the soul nor the body, nor anything else. This of course is consistent with the fact that all of creation, including humanity, is in no way coeternal with God, and in no way is it found in the very Essence or Nature of God (Gabriel, 2000, pp. 85, 100).

Many of these matters that we have just discussed are found in Fr. John Meyendorff’s research and presentation of Orthodox theology, pertaining to creation and its relationship to the Triune God. We see Fr. Meyendorff concisely contrasting the Orthodox Teaching pertaining to God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, with that of the teachings of some of the ancient heretics. With that in mind we observe the following:

Patristic thought on creation developed within the framework of age-long polemics against Origenism. The issue in the debate was the Greek concept of an eternal cosmos and the Biblical linear view of history, which began with the creative fiat. The starting point of Origen’s view on the origin of the world was that the act of creation was an expression of God’s nature and that, since this nature is changeless, there could never be a “time” when God would not be creating. Consequently, the world has always existed, because God’s goodness has always needed an object [Origen, De principiis, I, 2, 10] 88.

In Origenism, eternity of creation was, in fact, ontologically indistinguishable from the eternity of the Logos. Both proceeded eternally from God. This identification led Arius, after he had rejected the eternity of creation, to the concept that the Logos had also been generated in time. The anti-Arian theology of Athanasius of Alexandria defined the

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88 I have inserted this bracketed entry from information provided in the footnotes of the cited text.
categories which became standard in later Byzantine authors: the distinction between
generation and creation. (Meyendorff, 1974, p. 129)

Fr. Meyendorff goes on to tell us the following:

For Athanasius [St. Athanasios of Alexandria]\textsuperscript{89}, creation is an act of the will of God, and
will is ontologically distinct from nature. By nature, the Father generates the Son--and
this generation is indeed beyond time--but creation occurs through the will of God, which
means that God remains absolutely free to create or not to create, and remains
transcendent to the world after creating it. The absence of a distinction between the nature
of God and the will of God was common to Origen and to Arius. To establish this
distinction constitutes the main argument of Athanasius.

It is totally impossible to consider the Father without the Son, because “the Son is
not a creature which came into being by an act of will; by nature He is the proper Son of
the essence [of the Father]\textsuperscript{90}.” The Son, therefore, is God by nature, while “the nature of
creatures which came in to being from nothing is fluid, impotent, mortal, and
composite.”\textsuperscript{91} Refuting the Arian idea that the Logos was created in view of the world,
Athanasius affirms that “it is not He who was created for us, but we were created for Him.” …

\textsuperscript{89} I have inserted this bracketed entry.

\textsuperscript{90} This particular bracketed entry was made by Fr. Meyendorff, to help clarify to the reader what St. Athanasius [St. Athanasios of Alexandria] is saying.

\textsuperscript{91} This quotation is from St. Athanasios of Alexandria.
Divine “nature” and created “nature” are, therefore, separate and totally dissimilar modes of existence. The first is totally free from the second. Yet creatures depend upon God; they exist “by His grace, His will, and His word...so that they can even cease to exist, if the Creator so wishes.” In Athanasius, therefore, we have advanced quite far from Origen’s cosmos, which was considered a necessary expression of God’s goodness identified with divine nature itself. At this point one discovers that the notion of creation, as expressed by Athanasius, leads to a distinction in God between His transcendent essence and His properties, such as “power” or “goodness,” which express His existence and action \textit{ad extra}, not His essence.

The difference \textit{in nature} between God and His creatures, as well as the distinction between the “natural” generation of the Son by the Father, and creation “by act of will,” is emphasized by both Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus. The difference also represents the ontological \textit{raison d’etre} of the Chalcedonian definition on the “two natures” of Christ. The two natures can be understood as being in “communion” with each other, as “hypostatically” united, but they can never be “confused”--i.e., considered as “one nature”. (Meyendorff, 1974, pp. 129-130)

In the very last paragraph of the above quotation, seen within the light of Meyendorff’s earlier exposition of Orthodox theology pertaining to creation, we can see the dangers of the heresy of Monophysitism. Monophysitism makes the false claim that the Divine and Human Natures united by God the Word in His Divine Person or Hypostasis are really just one Nature.

\footnote{92 What is quoted is from St. Athanasios of Alexandria.}
Indeed such erroneous affirmations, with their inherent pantheistic tendencies (Azkoul, 1986, pp. 180-181), deny the absolute transcendence of God in relation to all of what God has, without any necessity to Himself, freely created.

**DOCETISM** “From the Greek word *dokei* (it seems). One of the oldest heresies: the opinion that Christ’s body was unreal, a phantom” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 225). We will see, in the forth coming discussion (in the thesis), how St. Justin Popovich points out the “docetic insensitivity” (Popovic, 2000, p. 155) of those willfully mired in the syncretistic practices of ecumenism. For indeed ecumenists by their very conduct, within their own man-made, relativistic philosophical system (known as ecumenism), look to essentially equate all the world’s religions and thereby, in the process, deny that the Holy Orthodox Church is uniquely the Body of Christ, with Christ our God as its Head. Ecumenism’s denial of Christ, through its denial of the uniqueness of the Holy Orthodox Church, as the one and only Body of Christ, established by Christ Himself, Who is its Head, is, in a sense, a form of docetism. Ecumenism denies the one absolute Truth, Christ. Ecumenism denies that Christ Himself is the one and only Truth, for it essentially looks to validate and unify all the heresies of the world, which are to be found throughout the world’s religions, into some sort of “syncretistic convergence” (The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part B, paragraph 30). But all these heresies, about which we speak, are of course completely foreign to Orthodox Christianity, which is uniquely the Church, which is uniquely the Body of Christ, possessing the fulness of all truth by the unfathomable mercy of God. Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, condescended to become truly Incarnate, voluntarily suffered the passion, in His Humanity, and on the third day--for
though He voluntarily became what He was not before, man, He remained what He was, God—He rose again and established the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church (the Holy Orthodox Church) on Himself to be His Body, to be forever present here on earth for all humanity. Ecumenism and all other humanistic philosophies, with their docetic tendencies, attempt to deny the unconquerable reality that the Holy Orthodox Church is uniquely the Church, the Body of Christ, with Christ our God as its Head.

**ECUMENISM** Within the context of our discussion, this term refers to the philosophical system, in which people promote the unification of the various religions under presuppositions, either explicitly or implicitly stated, which ignore or invalidate profound theological differences.

**ENERGY** Used theologically, that which radiates from the hidden essence or nature of God. The energies of God, such as grace, are not created, and allow the believer to enter into a personal relationship with God while preserving the unique character of God, whose essence always remains hidden from humanity. Moses was permitted to see the glory of God, His energies, but was forbidden to gaze on the face of God, His hidden essence. See Ex. 33:18-23; 2 Pet. 1:2-4. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 797)

**ESSENCE** (Gr. ousia) Also translated as substance, nature or being. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are “of one essence”. Jesus Christ is “of one essence” with God the Father and the Holy Spirit in His divinity, and “of one essence” with all human beings in His humanity. God’s essence is beyond the understanding and comprehension of His
creatures. God can be known by humans through the divine energies and operations of
the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Ex. 33:18-23). (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New
Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 797)

**FATHER** (1) God the Father is one of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. God the Son
is eternally begotten of God the Father. God the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from God
the Father (see Matt. 28:19; John 14:10; 15:26). (2) “Father” is a title given to one’s
spiritual father based on the custom of the Jews, who spoke of their father Abraham or
their father David, and on the words of Paul, who called himself the father of his flock.
See Luke 1:73; Acts 4:25 with center-column note; 1 Cor. 4:15. (*The Orthodox Study

**HERESY** Following one’s own choice or opinion instead of divine truth preserved by the
Church [the Holy Orthodox Church], so as to cause division among Christians. Heresy is
a system of thought which contradicts true doctrine. It is false teaching, which all true
Christians must reject (Matt. 7:15; 2 Pet. 2:1). (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New
Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 800)

**HOLY** Literally, “set apart” or separated unto God; also, blessed, righteous, sinless. The
word, therefore, refers to God as the source of holiness, to the Church and its sacraments,
to worshipers of the true God, and to those of outstanding virtue. Those who are
transformed by the Holy Spirit become holy as God is holy (Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 1:14-16;
HYPOSTASIS A technical theological term for “person” or something which has an individual existence. The word is used to describe the three Persons of the Godhead: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *Hypostasis* is also used to describe the one Person of Christ, who is both truly divine and truly human. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 800)

ICON Image. Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). Because Christ is God who became Man, He can Himself be pictured or imaged. Thus, icons of Christ—together with those of His saints—express the reality of the Incarnation. Orthodox Christians honor or venerate icons, but never worship them, for worship is due to God alone. The honor given to icons passes on to the one represented on the icon, as a means of thanksgiving for what God has done in that person’s life. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 800)

INCARNATE From Latin, meaning “to become flesh”. Christ is God Incarnate: He became flesh—that is, human—thereby sanctifying human flesh and reuniting all humanity to God. According to Orthodox doctrine, Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect Man (Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1-14; Phil. 2:5-7). (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 801)

JEW Originally one of God’s chosen people who followed the covenant given to Moses by God. In the Old Testament, the Jews are (1) citizens of Judah; (2) the postexilic people of Israel; or (3) the worshipers of Yahweh. God chose the Jews to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God. Through Christ the
distinction between Jew and Gentile has been overcome, and all those who follow Him have become the true chosen people of God. See Acts 22:3; Rom. 1:16; 2:28, 29; Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 2:9. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 801)

Indeed, in the strictest sense, all relationship of creature with the Creator, God, is established by God Himself Who created all things from absolute nothingness, without in any way having been necessitated to create anything or anyone. God did not need a chosen people, any more than He needed any people. No people were necessary to God, for creation itself was not necessary to God. God did not, nor does He, need anything or anyone, for God did not even need to create. Only by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God do we even exist; all of creation exists only because it was created by God from absolute nothingness. The creation of everything and everyone was freely accomplished by God without any necessity to God whatsoever. God created all things, including humanity, and God calls all people to righteously exercise their free will, with which they have been created, in order to pursue sanctification through the Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who, without any necessity to Himself whatsoever, condescended to become what He was not before, man--while remaining what He eternally is, God--for the salvation of the human race. Thus only by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God do we even exist and are given the opportunity to pursue sanctification through the Only-Begotten Son of God, Christ. Christ is the Only-Begotten Son of God, He is God Himself, Who, voluntarily (for the Incarnation, just like creation, was in no way necessary to God), became Incarnate to save us and sanctify us. So, regarding Christ our God, consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition, it is true that “all those who follow Him have become the true chosen people of God” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 801).
KENOSIS Literally, “emptying”. The word is associated with humility or humiliation.

God the Word humbled Himself by becoming man (with no change in His divinity), suffering death on the Cross for the world and its salvation (Phil. 2:5-8). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 801)

LITURGY The work or public service of the people of God, which is the worship of the one true God. The Divine Liturgy is the Eucharistic service of the Orthodox Church. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 802)

MARTYR (Gr. martyria) Literally, “a witness”. Normally, the term is used to describe those who give their lives for Christ. Martyria has two meanings: (1) witness or testimony, especially that which God bears to Christians, and which Christians bear to the world; and (2) martyrdom, especially Christ’s Passion, and the martyrdom of Christians for the faith (see John 1:6-15; Acts 6:8-7:60). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, pp. 802-803)

MILLENNIUM A thousand years. The Orthodox Church has traditionally taught that the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth before the final defeat of Satan, as recorded in Rev. 20:1-3, is symbolic of the rule of Christ through the Church, which is a manifestation of the Kingdom of God (see 2 Pet. 3:8). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 803)

MODERNISM The attempt to change the teachings and/or practices of the Orthodox Church in order to conform Her to the moral and intellectual climate of opinion. It also
suggests that the special and exclusive claims of the Church be denied; Her worship altered. (Azkoul, 1986, p. 227)

**MONOPHYSITISM** “The christological heresy that in Christ there is only one nature (*physis*) and one will or energy (*Monotheletism*)” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 227).

**MYSTERY** The ways of God, especially God’s plan for salvation, which cannot be known with the rational, finite human mind, but can be experienced only by the revelation of God. The Orthodox Church also uses the term *mystery* for the sacraments of the Church. *See* Mark 4:11; 1 Cor. 2:7, 8; Eph. 5:32. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 803)

**MYSTICISM** In the post-Orthodox Western sense, mysticism means a direct and super-intellectual knowledge of ultimate reality. In this sense, the life of the Church is not required; it may even be an obstacle to the mystic. Orthodox mysticism presupposes membership in the Church and participation in Her Mysteries. The purpose of mysticism is union with God; hence all members of the Church are mystics to some degree. (Azkoul, 1986, p. 227)


**THE ORTHODOX CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST** Orthodox Christianity never forgets its saints, for they are forever alive in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, and this is so, only by
the infinite mercy of the Triune God. For, when these saints contested against the enemies of
Christ and against their own sinfulness, they were in the Church “Militant”, the Orthodox Church
here on earth, striving for the heavenly reward, salvation and sanctification, eternal life,
promised to them by Christ the Theanthropos. Having “fought the good fight”, these Orthodox
saints “finished the race”; and, throughout their great martyrlic struggles, they “kept the faith”,
teaching all of us to follow them and do the same (2 Tim 4:7).

Against tremendous oppression and hardship, the Orthodox saints, by the mercy of God,
emerged victorious for all Orthodox Christians, and for the whole world. And even after their
deaths, these Orthodox saints (and countless of them have lived throughout history) are alive, in
heaven, and, along with countless angels and archangels, they comprise the Church
“Triumphant”, the Orthodox Church in heaven. All those in the Church “Triumphant” intercede
before God for the salvation of all Orthodox Christians in the Church “Militant” (the Orthodox
Church here on earth), and for all the rest of humanity, as well. Orthodox theologians rightfully
confess that at every liturgical service of the Orthodox Church, it is always the Church
“Triumphant” and the Church “Militant”, which are both present--together comprising the entire
Holy Orthodox Church--worshipping the Triune God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The historical Person, Jesus Christ, is none other than the Pre-eternal Son of God, God
Himself, Who voluntarily became what He was not before, a human being, while remaining what
He eternally is, God. For this reason, in Orthodox Tradition, Christ is called the God-Man, the
Theanthropos, for as the eternal God He did not need to become Incarnate and be seen to dwell
among men, but for the salvation and sanctification of the world, which He created, He did just
that; He humbled Himself by becoming man, He voluntarily became Incarnate and as the
Theanthropos (the God-Man), He unites heaven and earth in His Body. Christ the Theanthropos
does this, not just with His own physical Body--which He chose to create from the flesh of the
Ever-Virgin Mary, when He voluntarily became Incarnate--but also with His Holy Orthodox
Church, which--after His glorious Resurrection on the third day and Ascension into heaven,
where He is seated at the right hand of the Father--He uniquely established to be His Body, here
on earth, and of which He is the Head. Christ established His Holy Orthodox Church on the day
of Pentecost, where as the Body of Christ, it is His unconquerable presence here on earth. Just
as the Incarnation of the Son of God was real, so the establishment, by the Theanthropos, of the
one and only Body of Christ, here on earth, which unites heaven and earth, is also real, and it is
the Holy Orthodox Church.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY The Holy Orthodox Christian Faith is, for Orthodox Christians,
the one and only True Faith. Orthodox Christianity is the living, unconquerable, and eternal Faith
received on the day of Pentecost by the Holy Apostles. Orthodox Christianity, as the one and
only True Faith, is uniquely found in, and is uniquely confessed by, the Holy Orthodox Church
of Christ, which is uniquely the Body of Christ, with Christ the Theanthropos (the God-Man) as
its Head. The Holy Orthodox Church, fully and uniquely possessing the Orthodox (True) Faith,
was established by Christ Himself, through the Holy Apostles, and it is uniquely the Church. In a
sense, depending upon the context of a particular discussion and the semantics employed,
Orthodox Christianity and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ are one and the same. In short,
depending upon the context, Orthodox Christianity can mean the Faith or the Church or both.
This is what Orthodox Christians believe about their Faith and their Church:
For two thousand years the Orthodox Church has, by God’s mercy, kept the faith delivered to the saints. Within her walls is the fullness of the salvation which was realized when “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). *(The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 792)*

**PANTHEISM** “The philosophical opinion that God (*theos*) is everything (*pan*): all space and time is God; all reality is divine by nature” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 227).


**RAPTURE** The gathering of the Church on earth in the presence of Christ when He comes again to judge the living and the dead (1 Thess. 4:15-17). Orthodox theologians

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93 The bracketed entry is mine. “OT” here is an abbreviation of Old Testament.

94 The bracketed entry is mine.
reject the recent minority view that the Church will be taken out the world before the time of trouble preceding the Second Coming. Christ specifically teaches the faithful will experience the trials of tribulation (Matt. 24:4-28). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 805)

**RATIONALISM** “From the Latin word for reason (*ratio*). The attitude that reality can be understood by the human intellect; and sometimes it means that nothing is true unless it passes rational inspection” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 228).

**RELATIVISM** “In modern terms, **PLURALISM**; the notion that everyone is right in his moral and religious beliefs; the denial of absolute truth; values change from time to time and place to place” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 228).

**REMEMBRANCE** (Gr. *anamnesis*) Making present by means of recollection. The Eucharist is not merely a calling to mind but a remembrance of and mystical participation in the very sacrifice of Christ, His Resurrection, His Ascension, and His coming again (1 Cor. 11:23-26). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 805)

**REPENTANCE** Literally, “a change of mind” or attitude, and thus of behavior. God is the author of *repentance*, which is an integral part of baptism, confession, and ongoing spiritual life. Repentance is not simply sorrow for sins but a firm determination to turn away from sin to a new life of righteousness in Jesus Christ. See Matt. 4:17; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 1:9. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 806)

**RESURRECTION** The reunion of the soul and body after death which will revitalize and transform the physical body into a spiritual body. Jesus Himself is the firstfruits of perfect
resurrection; He will never again be subject to death. Because He conquered death by His Resurrection, all will rise again: the righteous to life with Christ, the wicked to judgment. See John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:35-55. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 806)

**SACRAMENT** Literally, a “mystery”. A sacrament is a way in which God imparts grace to His people. Orthodox Christians frequently speak of seven sacraments, but God’s gift of grace is not limited only to these seven--the entire life of the Church is mystical and sacramental. The sacraments were instituted by Christ Himself (John 1:16, 17). The seven mysteries are baptism (Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27), chrismation (Acts 8:15-17; 1 John 2:27), the Holy Eucharist (Matt. 26:26-28; John 6:30-58; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-31), confession (John 20:22, 23; 1 John 1:8, 9), ordination (Mark 3:14; Acts 1:15-26; 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 4:14), marriage (Gen. 2:18-25; Eph. 5:22-23), and healing or unction (Luke 9:1-6; James 5:14, 15). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 806)

**SACRIFICE** To offer something up to God. In the Old Covenant, God commanded His people to sacrifice animals, grain, or oil as an act of thanksgiving, praise, forgiveness, and cleansing. However, these sacrifices were only a foreshadowing of the one perfect sacrifice--Christ, the Word of God, who left the heavenly glory to humble Himself by becoming Man, giving His life as a sacrifice on the Cross to liberate humanity from the curse of sin and death. In the Eucharist, the faithful participate in the all-embracing, final

**SAINT** Literally, “a holy person”. With God as the source of true holiness, all Christians are called to be saints (*see* Rom. 16:2; 1 Cor. 1:1, 2). But from the earliest times, the Church has designated certain outstanding men and women who have departed this life and reached deification as worthy of veneration and canonization as saints or holy persons. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 807)

In Orthodox Christianity, all the holy persons of the Old and New Testaments, and all the holy persons who lived afterwards, throughout the unmatched history of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, are called saints. In Orthodox Christianity, all who have become holy persons throughout the ages, and this they were able to accomplish only by the unfathomable mercy and grace of the Triune God, are called saints. Many saints are known to the Holy Orthodox Church, and they are rightfully venerated and honored, there are also countless Orthodox saints and martyrs who have lived and died for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church throughout history, whom we do not know, but God knows who they are, and they also are great heroes and saints of Orthodox Christianity.

**SALVATION** The fulfillment of humanity in Christ, through deliverance from the curse of sin and death, to union with God through Christ the Savior. Salvation includes a process of growth of the whole person whereby the sinner is changed into the image and likeness of God. One is saved by faith through grace. However, saving faith is more than mere belief. It must be a living faith manifested by works of righteousness, whereby we
cooperate with God to do His will. We receive the grace of God for salvation through participation in the sacramental life of the Church. See articles in *The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, “the New Birth”, at John 3; “Justification by Faith”, at Rom. 5; and “Deification”, at 2 Pet. 1; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16; 5:17; Eph. 2:8, 9; Phil. 2:12, 13; James 2:14-26; 1 Pet. 2:2. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 807)

**SCHOLASTICISM** A term commonly used to denote the most typical products of medieval philosophy and theology. Developed in the post-Orthodox Western universities and schools, the Scholastics hoped by uniting the Christian Faith with Greek philosophy and Roman law to prove that Christianity was wholly compatible with human reason. (Azkoul, 1986, p. 228)

**SECOND COMING** At the end of the ages, Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. Following the judgment, a new heaven and new earth will take the place of the old earth, which has been scarred by sin. Because Christ is already present through the Church [The Holy Orthodox Church], Christians enter into the Kingdom through their participation in the sacramental life of the Church as they await the coming of the Lord (...Matt. 25:31-46; Rom. 8:18-21; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 20:11-22:5). (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 807)

**SIN** (Gr. *hamartia*) Literally, “missing the mark”. This word in ancient Greek could describe the action of an archer who failed to hit the target. All humans are sinners who miss the mark of perfection that God has set for His people, resulting in alienation from God, sinful actions that violate the law of God, and ultimately in death. See Matt. 5:48;

THE SUPRASUBSTANTIAL TRINITY (In Greek, Hyperousia Trias) Refers to the Holy Trinity, which is absolutely above any “essence”, “nature”, or “substance”. For the very nature or essence of the Holy Trinity, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, of the One True God, is itself—strictly speaking and paradoxically, according to Orthodox Tradition—infinitely beyond nature or essence. This is the meaning of the terminology, Supra-substantial or Supra-essential, referring to the Holy Trinity, the One True God, and Its very essence or nature, which is absolutely transcendent—forever beyond any comprehension or any participation, whatsoever. The very nature or essence of God is infinitely beyond being itself, comprehensible only to God, Whose very nature or essence it is. God is the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; there is no other God—though these names “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit” and all other words and names cannot ever possibly communicate to us Who the absolutely transcendent Triune God is. Only the Holy Trinity knows Its very essence or nature, and this very essence or nature is never, in any way, communicated outside of the Holy Trinity Itself, to anyone or anything. We know that God exists and is none other than the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but what the very essence or nature of God is, is known only by God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Who alone possess this divine essence or nature.

Likewise, as we have already said, the Divine Hypostases are referred to by the words, from our created human language: “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit”, and by other words from our human language—for we have nothing other than our created human language, derived from
our created environment, with which to point to the Triune God Who nevertheless absolutely transcends all names and language. These words “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Spirit” and all other names and words in Holy Scripture or elsewhere, pertaining to the Triune God, can only point to this same absolutely unknowable and transcendent God—as such, these Divine Hypostases (Persons) remain forever incomprehensible to us. Indeed, the Holy Trinity is forever, radically, and completely dissimilar to anything that any creature could ever possibly have been or thought or have conceived or is or thinks or will be or will ever conceive or think. God is forever and completely and radically dissimilar to anything created or associated with creation; the Triune God is forever absolutely transcendent.

SYNCRETISM “a combination, reconciliation, or coalescence of varying, often mutually opposed beliefs, principles, or practices, esp. [especially] those of various religions, into a new conglomerate whole typically marked by internal inconsistencies” (Agnes, 1999, p. 1452).

SYNERGISM (from Gr. syn: same, together; ergos: energy, work) Working together, the act of cooperation. In referring to the New Testament, synergism is the idea of being “workers together with” God (2 Cor. 6:1), or of working “out your own salvation...for it is God who works in you” (Phil. 2:12, 13). This is not a cooperation between “equals”, but finite man working together with Almighty God. Nor does synergism suggest working for, or earning, salvation. God offers salvation by His grace, and man’s ability to cooperate also is a grace. Therefore, man responds to salvation through cooperation with God’s grace in living faith,

THEANTHROPOS This word is from the Greek language, it means literally, God-Man, it refers to Christ the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, Who voluntarily became what He was not before, man, while remaining what He eternally is, God.

THEOSIS The word is from the Greek language, and is understood in Orthodox theology as “deification”, or, sometimes referred to as, “sanctification”. The Suprasubstantial Trinity, under no necessity whatsoever, created humanity from absolute nothingness so that humanity could pursue union with God, in His energies, but not in His essence (for that would be impossible). God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, under no necessity whatsoever, by His infinite grace created humanity and calls on each person to pursue “theosis” ("deification" or "sanctification"), which means that by the grace of the Triune God we become “more like God” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). In theosis, we become “godlike”, while forever remaining created and human (both in this life and the next), and God forever remains what He eternally is, Uncreated and God (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). Thus there is no pantheism in this Orthodox affirmation, related to our God given existence and our calling from God to pursue that for which God created us. For God created all things and then offers to humanity the opportunity for theosis without, in any way, having been necessitated to do either (create or offer the opportunity for theosis). For indeed creation, the Incarnation, and

95 The Orthodox confession of the impossibility of union with God, in His essence, for any creature, is mentioned in The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, p. 561. We note, of course, that this particular confession is to be seen throughout Holy Orthodox Tradition.
the opportunity for theosis, offered to humanity by God and made possible for humanity by the voluntary Incarnation of God the Word, are all in no way necessary to God. With these things in mind, we consider the following:

When the Son of God assumed our humanity in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the process of our being renewed in God’s image and likeness was begun. Thus, those who are joined to Christ through faith in Holy Baptism begin a re-creation process, being renewed in God’s image and likeness. We become, as St. Peter writes, “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4).

Because of the Incarnation of the Son of God, because the fullness of God has inhabited human flesh, being joined to Christ means that it is again possible to experience deification, the fulfillment of our human destiny. That is, through union with Christ, we become by grace what God is by nature--we “become children of God” (John 1:12). His deity interpenetrates our humanity.

Historically, deification has often been illustrated by the “sword and fire” example. A steel sword is thrust into a hot fire until the sword takes on a red glow. The energy of the fire interpenetrates the sword. The sword never becomes fire, but it picks up the properties of fire.

By application, the divine energies interpenetrate the human nature of Christ. Being joined to Christ, our humanity is interpenetrated with the energies of God through Christ’s glorified flesh. Nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, we partake of the grace of God--His strength, His righteousness, His love--and are enabled to serve Him and glorify Him. Thus
we, being human, are being deified. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 561)

TRADITION That which is handed down, transmitted. Tradition is the life of the Church in the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit leads the Church “into all truth” (John 16:13) and enables her to preserve the truth taught by Christ to His Apostles. The Holy Scriptures are the core of Holy Tradition, as interpreted through the writings of the Fathers, the Ecumenical Councils, and the worship of the Church [The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ]. Together, these traditions manifest the faith of the ancient undivided Church [The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ], inspired by the Holy Spirit to preserve the fullness of the gospel. See John 21:25; Acts 15:1-29; 2 Thess. 2:15. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 809)
Appendix and Glossary References


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To God Belongs All Glory!