The purpose of this expanded and revised Third 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 (as such, the 2006 Masters thesis was the First Edition)—was to expand the discussion somewhat beyond what was said in the Second Edition (2015) of this work, with some additional (I believe) important subject matter.

Certainly, there were at least two practical goals in this Third Edition of the work, which were essentially as follows: firstly, there was the goal to retain all the corrections which were first made in regard to the original Masters thesis and which were then placed, and are to be found, in the Second Edition of this work—for these corrections that were put forward in the Second Edition were corrections of significant mistakes that were made in the original thesis; and, secondly, there was the goal to expand somewhat (in this Third Edition) the discussion of earlier topics and introduce a few new topics.

Among the new topics to be discussed—and some older topics to be expanded upon—in this Third Edition of the work, are topics such as the following: the great catastrophe associated with the Genocide of Abortion in predominately Orthodox nations and elsewhere; further mention of the topic of Genocide and some specific discussion of the first great Genocide of modern times (committed by Turkey, with significant help from other powerful nations); the “Council” of Crete—with many, very rightfully, questioning and finding unacceptable much of what came forth from this Council; further mention of the great modern day Russian Orthodox Saint, St. Hilarion (Troitsky), Archbishop of Verey, and some of his heroic fight against various deceptions and falsehoods that the Marxists and others had tried to bring forward in their failed attempt to undermine Orthodoxy; and further mention of the Great Orthodox Saint and hero, St. Dimitri Donskoi, and his courageous Orthodox soldiers—as they heroically fought against the heresies of Islam and Western Christianity and against all others who hated the Only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

Regarding many of the mistakes in my original thesis of 2006 (the first Edition of the work): these same mistakes that I made 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. And practically all of those corrections that were made to the original 2006 work were largely made by looking at Father Romanides' work; and all of the corrections were placed in the Second Edition of the work (2015); and those very same corrections have certainly remained in this Third Edition of the work. As I have stated the obvious many times: Generally, 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!

Obviously, it is the case with many works of research, on various topics, when people revise their work over a period of time (sometimes more than once and sometimes over a relatively substantial period of time) that the subject matter pertaining to recent history, especially, becomes somewhat dated. Certainly, “recent” history or “current” events depend upon where we are at some point in time. I started researching and writing my original thesis in the early 2000’s and completed that thesis in 2006; and at a later time I researched and then completed the expanded and revised Second Edition of this work in 2015, and now—rather simply, with a less substantial amount of work than was required for the first two editions and after not a great amount of time nor any great amount of modification—this expanded and revised Third Edition is completed in 2019. Now with all of this having been said, and despite the fact that some of the current events of the somewhat recent past are no longer current nor are many of the politicians in power, any longer, who, subserviently, helped start some of the more recent wars—with those leaders having been replaced by other like minded people—nevertheless the lesson to us all of the futility of great worldly power and of God one day bringing all such worldly power to nothing is forever relevant. Whatever is done in history, recently or in the distant past, or is to be done in the future, will all be judged one day by Almighty God and all history and all of us in it will be judged by God Who will bring all the power of this world to absolutely nothing. St Justin Popovich said things very similar to this and all the Orthodox Saints teach us, in one way or another, beautifully pertaining to these matters.

There are research and elements of my original thesis of 2006 that are very faithful to the Orthodox Theology of the Fathers—that is, 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 Third Edition of the work—as they were also emphasized in the Second Edition of the work of 2015—to the best of my ability; and all of this is done while the corrections found in the Second Edition are all retained in this now Third Edition of the work. As such, it is hoped that at least some of the striking mistakes that I made in the original Masters thesis of 2006 were largely corrected—in these Second and Third Editions of the work—in the light of the God inspired wisdom of the Orthodox Saints, seen directly in their life and works; and hopefully the content presented—in these last two works (Second and Third Editions)—is all adequately shown and discussed and hopefully can be of some use to anyone interested in Orthodox teaching.

We also learn about the God inspired wisdom of the Orthodox Saints in the brilliant commentary and discussion pertaining to these great Saints of our Church by those who were renowned for their great faithfulness to Orthodox Christian Theology. Having said these things, it
also must be emphasized that a very large portion of the Second Edition of the thesis (from 2015) remains completely untouched and is practically completely present, in its entirety, word for word, in this Third Edition of the thesis—with the content of the Second Edition forming the majority of the content of the Third Edition, and a few new topics are introduced and expanded upon in this Third Edition—so, with that said, it is understandable and a fact that practically all of the corrections to the original work which are found in the Second Edition of the thesis remain present, and completely untouched, in this Third Edition.

My good friend, Father Athanasios Papagiannis, motivated me to work some more on my original thesis of 2006 and reconsider some of the original work. As such, I need at this point to greatly thank Father Athanasios Papagiannis for his kind words and great encouragement pertaining to my effort here (for both the second and now third edition of this work)—I very much admire Father Athanasios’ hard work and great patience in his service to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church; Father Athanasios is among many great Orthodox Priests in America doing very significant work for Christ and the unconquerable Orthodox Church—may they all continue strong in this great work, by the grace of God!

Also, 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 in the original thesis—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 of 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, perhaps of some interest, Father Romanides was also very impressed, as I was, by the writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa and he recommended to his students to study those writings in order for them to get an example, and some genuine sense so to speak,
of the great and unparalleled beauty of Orthodox Theology—and one can be sure that Father Romanides was also greatly impressed by all the writings of all the great Orthodox Fathers. And, of course, one can be absolutely certain that Father Romanides knew, as did other great Orthodox theologians, that this great and incomparable beauty of Orthodox Theology is something certainly to be found throughout the entire Holy Orthodox Tradition—indeed, this is something most 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 great significance and is very edifying to Orthodox Christians and others. In fact “personalism”, in reference to Orthodox Trinitarian Theology, is clearly a heresy—this is so because in the great error of personalism an attempt is made to introduce elements of created reality and created personhood into the Uncreated and absolutely transcendent Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. Father Romanides’ brilliant exposition of the heresy 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 great 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 original 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 Nafpaktos, 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. Certainly, with multitudes of Orthodox Christians rightfully agreeing with him, Metropolitan Neophytos of Morfou spoke with great praise about the immensely significant work pertaining to teaching Orthodox Theology which was accomplished by Father Romanides and which is being beautifully continued by one (among many) of Father Romanides’ students, Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos.

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 aforementioned 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 now available to us in English—something that was not very common in the past. 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—obviously, with the great work that they have done, Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos very prominently come to mind in this regard, as was mentioned above.

With all of these things in mind, I feel that I did many things that were right in my original Masters thesis—or at least I feel that 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, for sure, that I made many mistakes in that original thesis, both in terms of approach and content, and I am hoping that I corrected at least a significant portion of those errors—with many of those corrections certainly to be found in the Second Edition of the thesis. Additionally, with all that having been said, and with the current revisions to be found in this Third Edition of the thesis, some more corrections are being presented in this current work, to the best of my ability. I hope that this Third Edition of the thesis, and, much more significantly, I hope that many of the very powerful and beautiful resources from which so much of the content in this work is drawn, will be of use to anyone with an interest in the unconquerable Holy Orthodox Faith.

At least some of these aforementioned 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—for indeed this “theology” of personalism is a very profound error, which many Orthodox embrace. As such and obviously, I will in this present work (this Third Edition) retain the correction of my mistake, and provide some further correction related to this topic—the original corrections made, and placed, in the Second Edition of this same work will be slightly elaborated upon in this current Third Edition of the work—following Father Romanides' brilliant work on the topic. There is not much more to say beyond that, pertaining to this earlier, extremely, significant error of embracing personalism—and any other errors 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 Third Edition of the thesis—the bibliography and references in this Third Edition are very similar to those of the Second Edition, but with some additions pertaining to some of the aforementioned expanded subject matter—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—for truly anything of any worth in my work is from such beautiful resources.
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 work, that this Third Edition of the thesis 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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f) Why God Condescended to Become Man—and Not Some Other Part of Creation (P. 514)

g) God The Word Condescends To Become Man And To Be Called Jesus Christ (P. 516)
h) There is No Philosophy or Power of This World Which Can Defeat Christ Our God

(P. 523)
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 remains consistent with many of the goals of this Third Edition of the thesis, and therefore is here once again presented.

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, Expanded and Revised, 3rd 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 Third Edition.
COURSE OUTLINE
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 the Orthodox theanthropic philosophy of education—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

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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 by 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.

3 This terminology of “theanthropic philosophy of education” is very accurate and powerful, and is borrowed from St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije.
ecumenism”—to some of its underlying assumptions, and to those who religiously embrace
ecumenism—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 ecumenism 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.

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.

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).
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 project. The presentation of the project and any associated activities should be expected to take

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.
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:

- 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

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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).
• 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— from the Reference and Bibliography sections—are by no means exhaustive (nor could they ever come close to being exhaustive, obviously); and further examples of excellent resources (once again, by no means ever being exhaustive), 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, 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

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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.
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 purged 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 :
(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 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

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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 pertaining to “cf.” is found in Palmer, G. E. H., Sherrard, P., Ware, K. (Eds. and Trans.) Philokalia II, (p. 12)
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 martyrlic 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 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 (\textit{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

\(^9\) 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).
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.
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 martyrlicly 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 1), 1999, pp. 92-93)

We can see a striking similarity between what an ancient Orthodox Father, St. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407)\textsuperscript{10}, 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

\textsuperscript{10} Dates obtained from the Preface, p. xii, of The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume 1)
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).
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 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

11 The “cf.”, in relation to all quotations from the Philokalia, as mentioned and outlined earlier, is the editors’ note.
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

Christ can never be made into a relative truth by anyone or anything. For the One called Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God Who is the incomprehensible God Who condescended to become what He was not, in any way, before: man. This the Son of God, God Himself, did for us—for our salvation and glorification—this while God was under no necessity for Himself to even do this for us, nor did God have any need whatsoever to even create us from absolutely nothing (but God did just that, in His unfathomable mercy and power, as all the Orthodox Saints confess to us).
God created us in His image, but this is only to be understood in the sense that He condescended to become what He was not before: one of us, human. As, Father Romanides, and others faithful to Orthodox teaching, will tell us: Man, who was created from nothing and is thus forever created, is in no way whatsoever a copy or image of the forever incomprehensible, indescribable, and absolutely transcendent Uncreated Triune God. The Son of God, God Himself, having condescended to have become man means that man is in the image of what God condescended to become. Man was created in the image of what God was to condescend to become in His love for mankind. But this certainly does not mean that God was obligated, or under any compulsion, to enter into our created existence as man nor is our forever created existence any image whatsoever of the absolutely transcendent, indescribable, incomprehensible and Uncreated Triune Divinity. Monk Damaskinos Agioreitis, consistent with Orthodox teaching, beautifully points to this reality of the self-emptying of the Pre-eternal Son of God in condescending to become what He was not before, man, as the reason for our understanding that God created us in His image:

“In other words, in the Incarnation, it was finally revealed that man had been created in the image of Christ, his chronologically subsequent prototype.”\(^{12}\) (Romanides, 2008, p. 142)

With this understood, let us look at what St. Nikolai Velimirovich has to say about Christ our Lord and about how, from ancient times, the Orthodox saints knew that He was the absolutely transcendent, and forever Unknowable God Who condescended to become man for us, thereby honoring our created existence by truly entering into it and becoming, for us, fully man—yet still remaining the Uncreated, absolutely transcendent God. Indeed, only God could accomplish this for us: Only the Uncreated God could condescend to create and assume our created human nature in the Incarnation—and the human nature which the Son of God assumed and made His own indeed forever remains created—and yet nevertheless the forever incomprehensible and forever Uncreated Divine Nature of the Son of God remains completely unchanged and un-effected by the Incarnation.

St. Nikolai Velimirovich teaches us beautifully about the absolutely transcendent Triune God, and Orthodoxy’s faithful confession of this God throughout centuries:

\[^{12}\text{We are informed that the “Text and Comments” of this particular work of Father John Romanides (some of his University lectures), having been put in book form, were prepared by Monk Damaskinos Agioreitis; and as such, the assumption is made that this concise, yet outstandingly brilliant passage—which we are here quoting—is to be attributed to Monk Damaskinos Agioreitis.}\]
The are many vindictive people who think that time has brought glorification to Christ, and that, in the early centuries of Christianity, the Lord was not as esteemed as He was in later times. Nothing is easier than to squelch this falsehood. This is how St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes about the Lord Christ: “This is He Who is and He Who was, consubstantial with the Father, the Only-Begotten, equally enthroned, equal in power, Almighty, without beginning, Uncreated, Unchangeable, Indescribable, Invisible, Inexpressible, Incomprehensible, Immeasurable, Unfathomable, Uncircumscribed. He is “the brightness of the Father’s glory” (cf. Hebrews 1:3). He is the Creator of the substance of all things created. He is the Light of Light, shining from the bosom of the Father. He is the God of gods (Psalm 48:15), and God of God, Who gives us knowledge of Himself. He is the Fountain of Life (Psalm 36:9), flowing from the Father’s Fountain of life. He is the River of God ((Psalm 46:4, 65:9), Who comes forth from the infinity of God but is not separated from Him. He is the Treasury of the Father’s good gifts and endless blessings. He is the Living Water (John 4:14) that gives life to the world. He is the Uncreated Light that is begotten but not separated from the First Sun. He is God the Word (John 1:1), Who with one word brought forth all things from non-existence into being… This is He Who created us in the image of God and has now made Himself man in our image; man, but at the same time God.” Even today, after sixteen centuries since this Confession of Faith was written, the Orthodox Church adheres to this same Faith, word for word and letter for letter. (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, p. 273)

The Pre-eternal Son of God, in His unfathomable mercy and power, united our created human nature to His Divine Hypostasis, but His Uncreated Divine Nature remains forever un-effected by this. Instead, that which God has wrought for our salvation and glorification, the Incarnation, forever has immeasurably blessed humanity, though we forever remain created. The Uncreated Divine Nature remains forever un-changed and un-effected by the Incarnation, but our created human nature (with the Incarnation which the Son of God willed accomplished for us) is forever blessed and given potential beyond comprehension—for, from the moment of the Incarnation being accomplished by the Son of God, the Divine Nature and human nature are united to the Pre-eternal Hypostasis of the Son of God inseparably and yet this union of natures (Divine and human) in the Divine Hypostasis remains forever without any mixture or confusion whatsoever; otherwise, we would be making claims affirming a theology full of pantheism and anthropomorphic tendencies—something inherent to all the heresies, to one extent or another, but never present in the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. (Romanides, 2008, p. 139), (Romanides, 2008, p. 69), (Romanides, 2008, pp. 141-142), (Hierotheos, 2013, p. 205),
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, cited in 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 Un-created God. This of course means that we cannot know the Un-created 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 whatsoever, 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 any way to any of us; to all creation, without any exception, the divine hypostases and the divine essence are forever completely beyond any understanding or comprehension whatsoever. 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, cited in 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—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, having done so He thereafter is called by the human names “Jesus” and “Christ”—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

13 Dr. George Gabriel writes pertaining to such matters beautifully, consistent with the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church.

14 St. Gregory of Nyssa and other Orthodox saints tell us this.
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 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, cited in 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, cited in 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—
conceding 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.” (Hierothos, 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. (Hierothos, 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 (as well as the decisions of all other Holy Synods that are universally accepted by the Holy Orthodox Church) are infallible—all of which were 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—15—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 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

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15 Romanides speaks of these matters often.
against heresies which had arisen and threatened the Orthodoxy of the Church. Nothing new was formulated or confessed at these Holy Ecumenical Synods—nor was there anything new at any of the other Great Holy Orthodox Synods whose decisions have received universal acceptance throughout the Holy Orthodox Church; 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 Russia, 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)

The “Council” of Crete

The Council of Crete of June 2016—the long planned for, and awaited, Holy and Great Synod which was anticipated, and prayed for, by many to faithfully address numerous issues of importance in the One and Only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and which was also anticipated to address how our Orthodox Church would relate to others outside of its embrace—had much controversy associated with it, with many Orthodox leaders (clergy and laity alike from throughout the Orthodox world) finding many of its presuppositions and conclusions to be grossly flawed and much more faithful to the tenets of syncretistic ecumenism
rather than to the absolutely unique Truth found in Holy Orthodoxy. As such, a few Orthodox Churches were notably absent, namely: the Russian Orthodox Church in addition to the Bulgarian and Georgian Orthodox Churches were not in attendance, additionally, the Orthodox Church of Antioch was also absent. It must also be noted that there were many Orthodox Christian leaders from Orthodox Churches which did indeed have representatives attending this council, who nevertheless had serious misgivings with the conduct, presuppositions and conclusions of this controversial council. As such, let us look at some of what a few of these faithful Orthodox leaders had to say.

Metropolitan Hierotheos of the Orthodox Church of Greece speaks with great concern—and very rightfully so—regarding this council of June 2016 being called the “first Council” to take place in the Orthodox Church since the first millennium of Christianity. People who espouse this sort of ignorance purposely ignore the unmatched continuity and witness, unbroken throughout the ages, of the One and Only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. Instead, such Orthodox leaders who should know better, attempt to minimize and make relative the Only True Faith, Holy Orthodoxy—this is certainly done by Orthodox leaders who view ecumenism as a fuller representation of truth, than the Only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church.

Let us consider some of what Metropolitan Hierotheos has to say here:

With regret I hear and read some of the views expressed that, namely, the Holy and Great Council is the first Council to take place in the second millennium of Christianity. Others claim that it is the first Great Council since the ‘Schism’ which occurred in 1054, whereas the excommunication of the Church of Old Rome took place in 1009 with the introduction of the filioque. Still others say that the Holy and Great Council will convene after an interval of 1200 or 1300 years, that is to say, after 787, when the Seventh Ecumenical Council convened, and others dare to say officially too that it will be the Eighth Ecumenical Council!

The basis of this mindset is that the Orthodox Church has supposedly remained in a state of spiritual hypnosis and spiritual dementia since 787, and that all this time it has been a ‘dead’, ‘sleeping’, ‘museum’ Church.

Such a conception is not only an insult to the Holy Fathers of the Church who appeared and taught during the second millennium, but it also undermines the Orthodox Church itself, which is a continuous Synod and is the true and living body of Christ.

(Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, 2016, paragraphs 8-10)
Metropolitan Hierotheos continues with his brilliant research and discussion pertaining to the truly unmatched and unbroken continuity of Holy Orthodoxy throughout the ages. With that in mind, we clearly see—in contradiction to the relativism and pan-heresy promoted by the ecumenists in their attempt to minimize the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ—that there have been numerous Great and Holy Orthodox Synods throughout the ages, all of which inspiring defended the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church (and contrary to the goals of ecumenism, obviously, none of those Holy Synods needed any validation whatsoever from any of the heretical religions). With this kept in mind, I am not here mentioning all of the Councils that Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos mentions, just some of them. His Eminence’s entire article is very informative and worth reading in its entirety. Metropolitan Hierotheos tells us the following:

I would like to mention some important Councils after the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which are unfortunately ignored.

**The Council of 879-80 under Photios the Great** is a great Ecumenical Council, which was convened by the Emperor. The representatives of the then Orthodox Pope were present and everyone accepted its decisions. The Council discussed the two types of ecclesiology, Eastern and Western, and the Eastern ecclesiology prevailed. It also pronounced on the primacy of the Pope and the heresy of the filioque.

There were Councils between 1341 and 1368, particularly the Council of 1351, which was convened by the Emperor in the presence of St Gregory Palamas and ruled that the energy of God is uncreated and that the light of Christ which shown on Mount Thabor was uncreated. It condemned the heresy of Barlaam and Akindynos that the uncreated essence is identified with uncreated energy, which is known as the actus purus, and that God supposedly communicates with creation and man through created energies. So in reality the Council of 1351 condemned scholastic theology, which to a large extent is valid to this day in ‘Roman-Catholicism’.

**The Council of 1484**, with the participation of Patriarchs Simeon of Constantinople, Gregory of Alexandria, Dorotheos of Antioch and Joachim of Jerusalem called itself Ecumenical. It annulled the unifying Council of Ferrara-Florence and issued a Service, composed by Patriarch Simeon of Constantinople, for those returning to the Orthodox Church from the ‘the Latin heresies’. Although this Synod established that the Latins should return to the Orthodox Church by means of a written declaration and
Chrismation, because at that time the standard ‘form of Baptism’ still prevailed, the Service composed for the return of Latins to the Orthodox Church clearly refers to the heresy of the Latins, the ‘disgraceful and alien doctrines of the Latins’, and states that those returning to the Orthodox Church should “avoid completely the assemblies of the Latins in their churches,” and anathematized the Filioque which they dared to add.

In the Service there is reference to Latins and to alien dogmas, among which are the familiar filioque, i.e the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, and the heresy of the actus purus, namely, that uncreated energy is identified with the uncreated essence in God and therefore God communicates with the world through created energies. (Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, 2016, paragraphs 14-18)

Below, we see Metropolitan Hierotheos affirm the great and universal significance, for Orthodox Christians, of the Holy Synods of St. Gregory Palamas’ time—the decisions of these Great and Holy Synods are certainly of Ecumenical significance (universally accepted within Holy Orthodoxy).

I have mentioned a few of the ‘Ecumenical’, ‘Holy and Great’ Councils—there are others too—that were convened after the Seventh Ecumenical Council and until the nineteenth century, and have been accepted by the consciousness of the Church. Indeed, the decisions of the Great Council of 1351 in the time of St Gregory Palamas have been included in the ‘Synodikon of Orthodoxy’, which is read on the First Sunday of Lent, and have been introduced into hymns used in worship. This represents the strongest proof that the Council of 1351 has been accepted by the consciousness and judgment of the Church itself as Ecumenical. (Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, 2016, paragraph 25)

And, in the following two quotations, we see some of how the leaders of Western Christendom excommunicated themselves and their people from the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, the Holy Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Hierotheos also makes it very clear that this condemnation of falsehood, heresy, is indeed a condemnation of heretical teaching and it is not a necessary condemnation of people—nor is it an affirmation of people who are nominally Orthodox but perhaps atheistic in conduct and belief.

It is known to those who follow Church matters and read Church history that in 1009 Pope Sergius IV officially used the Creed with the addition that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son (filioque). For that reason Patriarch Sergius II deleted the Pope from the diptychs of the Eastern Orthodox Church, so there has been excommunication since
then. Thus a large part of Christianity was cut off from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. (Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, 2016, paragraph 33)

What is called Western Christianity is a sick, heretical system, having seceded from the Orthodox tradition of the first millennium. Of course, when we speak of Western Christianity, we do not mean the ordinary Christians who believe in Christ, pray and study the Bible. We mean the doctrinal teaching of Christian communities and Confessions. Similarly, when we speak of the Orthodox Church, we do not mean all Orthodox Christians, who, although baptized, may be atheists or indifferent, but the teaching as recorded in the decisions of Local and Ecumenical Councils.

(Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, 2016, paragraph 35)

As we have said many times, the Holy Orthodox Church is alone without heresy and has never fallen into heresy; and, as an Orthodox Hierarch, Metropolitan Hierotheos faithfully confesses this:

Orthodox teaching never succumbed to such distortions. It preserved the teaching of the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Fathers, not only of the first millennium, but of the second millennium as well, such as St Simeon the New Theologian, St Gregory Palamas, St Mark of Ephesus and all the philokalic neptic Fathers of the Church. Our more recent saints, like St Paisios Velichkovsky, who brought a renaissance in Romania and Russia, St Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, St Kosmas Aitolos, St Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia, St Paisios the Athonite and many others matured within this theology.

(Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, 2016, paragraph 45)

Additionally, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Jeremiah of Gortys, along with many others, rightfully condemns any so-called “Orthodox” Council’s affirmation of ecclesiastical validity being associated with any of the manifold Christian heresies of the world and of history.

“How could it happen that the Holy and Great Council on Crete called heterodox heretical communities ‘Churches?’” His Grace asked. “They said, wrote, and signed the term ‘heterodox Christian Churches.’ So now heretics have become a ‘Church?’ Then what one Church do we talk about in the Symbol of Faith?”

Met. Jeremiah noted that the Greek Church’s delegation at the Council breached its obligation to advocate the unanimously adopted position of the Holy Synod and its proposed amendment, “Christian confessions and communities.”
“The worst part,” according to the metropolitan, “is that in calling the heterodox ‘Churches,’ they gave it weight, presenting the matter in such a way as if this position has historical justification:

“The Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other heterodox Christian Churches and Confessions…” What does ‘historical name’ mean? When and where did the Holy Fathers call heresies and schisms ‘Churches?’ Nowhere and never!”

“The saddest part” according to Vladyka is the signing of “propositions that are erroneous from a dogmatic and ecclesiological point of view” by the primates of the Local Churches and so many members of the Council’s delegations.

Met. Jeremiah thanked Met. Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and the other hierarchs who refused to sign the text “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World.” He compared their position with the conduct of St. Mark of Ephesus, the only one who refused to sign the union with the Papists at the Council of Ferrara-Florence.

Met. Jeremiah stated that as a bishop he is united with those who refused to sign the document which is “erroneous from a dogmatic point of view:”

“We, Gortys and Megalopolis, support them, because we do not recognize heresies and schisms as ‘Churches.’” (Pravoslavie.ru, 2016e, paragraphs 1-8)

With all of the aforementioned being kept in mind, we continue to see the truth of what St. Justin Popovich tells us—and that which all the other Orthodox saints teach us, as well—namely, that heresies are not the Church and that they never have been the Church, nor will heresies ever be the Church. In the following we see a report pertaining to the Greek organization the “Union of Orthodox Clergy and Monks” in which this organization rightfully condemns the actions of some Orthodox leaders at the Crete Council.

The authoritative Greek public organization “Union of Orthodox Clergy and Monks,” has commented on the results of the Crete Council. Agionoros.ru has published the main provisions of an open letter signed by the well-known Greek pastors, monastics, and theologians.

In the letter is noted in particular that the Holy and Great Council which took place on Crete in reality was “neither a council, nor great, nor holy.” It “is not a continuation of the Orthodox Councils, but presents itself as a deviation from the longstanding conciliar practices and as an unprecedented canonical innovation.”
“The Council was not holy, because some of the documents approved by it contradict the decisions of the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers made in the Holy Spirit, especially in relation to heretics. The Holy Spirit cannot contradict Himself: they condemned heresies and anathematized heretics at the truly holy Councils, but at the Crete “Council” they confessed them as churches… The Crete Council does not fight against heresies, but accords them the status of ecclesiality.”

According to the members of the Union of Orthodox Clergy and Monks, the Council was small and not great, as not all Orthodox bishops took part in it, which means “the fullness of the Church was not represented.” The Crete Council practically turned into a “small meeting of primates.”

The refusal of four Local Churches to participate diminishes the scale of the Council. Thus, the Council forfeited “its pan-Orthodox character,” and moreover “the authority of its decisions was diminished.”

The Union of Orthodox Clergy and Monks have criticized the primate of the Greek Church, Archbishop Ieronymos, who broke their obligations, not defending until the end the amendments proposed by the Holy Synod of the Greek Church (in particular, the proposal to replace “Christian Churches” with “Christian Communities” in the text “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World”).

“The Union of Orthodox Clergy and Monks” applauds the bishops who refused to place their signature on some of the Council documents: “They are the disciples of the confessors and Holy Fathers and are the hope for revising the decisions of the Crete Council in the future.”

Amongst those who signed the open letter are Elder Evstratios of the Great Lavra on Mt. Athos, the igumens of several Greek monasteries, and the well-known theologians Fr. George Metallinos, Fr. Theodore Zisis, and Dr. Demetrios Tselengides. (Pravoslavie.ru, 2016f, paragraphs 1-8)

Archimandrite Athanasios Anastasiou writes very powerfully and inspiringly pertaining to the Pan-heresy of ecumenism and about its fervent proponents—proponents who are to be found both nominally within Orthodoxy and outside of Orthodoxy—who have long and relentlessly sought, and continue to seek, to undermine the Only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. But in the end, we Orthodox know that we must labor with all our might—and this can happen only with God’s unfathomable grace, for to God alone belongs all
glory—to be vigilant against such assaults; and we must fear not, for the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, as we have rightfully been told many times, will never be defeated—for the Orthodox Church alone is the True Church of Christ, and as the Lord has promised us “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Mt 16:18)

Archimandrite Athanasios writes brilliantly pertaining to these matters and points out that many of the proponents of the Council of Crete did much in an attempt to validate the Pan-heresy of ecumenism, within an ostensibly Orthodox Council, at the expense of a strong witness to the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. Here is some of what Archimandrite Athanasios Anastasiou said:

Those who inspired and organized this Council undertook, in a violent and authoritarian way, to overthrow the patristic tradition of the Church and to elevate, without conditions, the institution of the Council alone to absolute authority. Their chief aim is the creation of a consolidated bishop-centered establishment—along papal lines and of papal provenance—so that unobstructed and unchecked, they can institutionalize their innovative and heterodox teachings—the attribution of ecclesial reality to heretical groups with the further aim of the “union of the churches” which will eventually lead to the uniting of religions foreseen within the New Age movement. (Archimandrite Athanasios Anastasiou, 2016, paragraph 6)

Archimandrite Athanasios continues his greatly insightful discussion of the “Council” of Crete, and he discusses the proponents of this Council and their blatant embrace of ecumenism and apostasy—pursued through syncretistic comprises and innovations—with the Orthodox ecumenists’ ultimate goal of “union” with the heretics (Archimandrite Athanasios Anastasiou, 2016, paragraphs 25-27).

II. A Premeditated and Methodical Decision

A basic condition for any evaluation of the “Council” of Crete is that we trace its peculiarities noting where it differed completely from every Orthodox Synod. This particular “Council” was convened not to condemn some heresy, but to attribute ecclesiality to heresies, not in order to resolve canonical questions but in order to consciously violate the canons and to approve uncanonical decisions, not in order to strengthen and show forth the unity of Orthodox Christians but to impose a fabricated “unity” with heretics!!
As his excellence Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus observes: “A Council which does not distinguish ‘between the profane and the holy’ (the ‘Oros’ of the 7th Ecumenical Council), between Orthodoxy from heresy, between the truth of Christ and delusion from the demons, legitimizing heresy at an ecclesiastical level, cannot truly be Orthodox, but becomes a pseudo-council.”

This “Council” was from the outset a part of a larger undertaking to deconstruct the Church’s unity in the Holy Spirit. This undertaking which began, with the cooperation of the Evil One, in the beginning of the twentieth century, at the behest of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, is many-leveled and is comprised of two fronts. It moves along two central axes:

1. The Theological Dialogue with the Heterodox

2. The Pan-Orthodox Meetings and Conferences (which were systematized in 1961) on the road to the “Holy and Great Synod.”

The common factor in both of these axes is ecumenism. (Archimandrite Athanasios Anastasiou, 2016, paragraphs 25-27)

As we continue our discussion, we see that Archimandrite Athanasios quotes Metropolitan Hierotheos regarding the fact that the Council was looking to embrace the heresy of personalism. We must note that the great error of personalism essentially confuses the created with the uncreated—and as such is certainly a heresy (Romanides, 2008, p. 69), (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2012, p. 256)—and Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos (and others) have fought brilliantly against such falsehood.

According to the Metropolitan of Nafpaktos [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos], “the whole strain of thought concerning the person, without risking saying too much, is a heresy, a continuation of Arianism, of Monotheletism, and came about through the influence of existential philosophy.” “The Church, according to the teaching of the Apostle Paul, is the Body of Christ; the basis of the Church is Christocentric and not Triadocentric, since Christ, ‘one of the Trinity,’ became man, took on human nature and divinized it. When the Church is characterized as an ‘icon’ or ‘according to the image of the Holy Trinity’ then from a strictly theological point of view a confusion of theology and economy occurs and a confusion of created and uncreated.” (Archimandrite Athanasios Anastasiou, 2016, paragraph 55)
Additionally, we see Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York and other Hierarchs, from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR), giving a brilliant confession of Orthodox theology and a thoughtful and strong condemnation of the heresy of personalism:

The problems contained in the document “The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World” are more subtle and theological in character than those in the text on the relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world, but for precisely this reason deserve special attention. His Eminence the Metropolitan of Nafpaktos and St. Vlasios has already carefully laid out the basics of the anthropological flaws that undergird the whole of this text, which render its otherwise noble focus on the work of Orthodoxy to foster peace, the aversion of war, the fight against discrimination, etc., deeply problematic until they are corrected.

The heart of the problem lies in the document’s persistent use of the term “human person” where it ought to use “man”, and grounding its humanitarian discussion in elaborations on this phrase. Usage of the term “person” for man emerges within Orthodox discussion in a notable way only from the time of V. Lossky, who himself acknowledged the novelty of his employment of it; and while it has become almost normative in contemporary discussions, the Holy Fathers are consistent in employing the Scriptural and liturgical language of “man”. The term “person” (Rus. лицо, Gr. πρόσωπον) is chiefly used in Orthodox language in reference to the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, in confessing the unique hypostatic being of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as well as the singular hypostatic reality of the One Son in Whom both the divine and human natures co-exist “unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably” (Definition of the Fourth Ecumenical Council). Almost never is the term applied to the human creature (in whom such distinctions do not exist), precisely as a way of noting the absolute distinction between that which is created and that which is Uncreated—for while man is “in the image and likeness of God”, he is in no way comparable, in his createdness, to Him Who has no beginning.

This clarification, which may at first strike as overly nuanced or even pedantic, is of fundamental importance to Orthodox theology and anthropology, and demonstrates the need for the most exacting attention when considering documents for widespread circulation (even in a case such as this, where the text does not purport to be about Trinitarian doctrine at all, yet inadvertently puts forward doctrinally problematic themes). The rise in misapplication of the term “person” to man over the past seventy-
five years has resulted in numerous perversions of theological language in the realm of doctrinal reflection, one of the most notable of which, the concept that there is a “communion of Divine Persons in the Holy Trinity”, is directly stated in the document (art. 2.i). The precise theological discussions of the fourth and fifth centuries clarified that the Father, Son and Spirit are united in an eternal communion of essence (in the begottenness of the Son, the procession of the Spirit and the monarchia of the Father), but not a communion of Persons. Misapplication of the term “person” to man has led, however, to considerations of the human race being applied to the nature of the Holy Trinity in a manner that contradicts the clear teaching of the Fathers and Ecumenical Councils. Furthermore, such improper language of Trinity creates new anthropological problems that arise from seeing “the human person” as “a community of persons in the unity of the human race reflecting the life and communion of the Divine Persons in the Holy Trinity” (art. 2.i—one of the most problematic phrases of the document). While it is true that man’s freedom (the subject of Article 2) is a gift arising from his being created “in the image” of God, neither his life in the broad community of the race of men, nor the freedom he exercises within it, are comparable to the freedom of the Divine Persons expressed in their eternal, mutual indwelling.

In numerous places throughout the document signs of this flawed anthropology are present, summed up in its desire to advance “the general recognition of the lofty value of the human person” (art. 1.iii) as the source for its language of mission. Yet when man is identified improperly as a human person reflecting an improper conception of a “communion of Divine Persons” in the Trinity, his “lofty value” is elaborated in necessarily inaccurate terms. Man’s value is indeed lofty, but the right foundation of his value lies precisely in his created distinction from the Persons of the Trinity, into Whose life he is nonetheless called and Whose image he yet mystically bears, rendering him unique among all creation in that he can attain the likeness of God through the deification of his nature.

(Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, et al., 2016 paragraphs 11-15)

Regarding the last paragraph of this beautiful and powerful quotation that we just saw, we always keep in mind that all who attain to the deification of their human nature do so, obviously, in the strictest sense, only by the unfathomable grace of God; and after this deification about which we speak, if by the grace of God we attain it, all of us (with no exception whatsoever) remain forever human and created and God forever remains the Uncreated, absolutely transcendent, incomprehensible, Triune God.
Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos rightfully criticizes the documents of the Crete Council as being “diplomatic” and associated with “compromise” (orthochristian.com, 2017, paragraphs 2-6)—and certainly such diplomacy and compromise have nothing to do with the incomparable confession of the Orthodox saints. Instead of Orthodoxy being uncompromisingly confessed at the Crete Council, Metropolitan Hierotheos tells us that the Council was full of old ecumenical innovations—such as “the branch theory” and “baptismal theology.” Such betrayals of Orthodoxy—by some supposed Orthodox Hierarchs, no less—can, oftentimes, do nothing but confuse the faithful and encourage many to leave their unconquerable Orthodox Faith; this is obviously so, because some presumably Orthodox leaders are in effect telling the Orthodox faithful that their Holy Orthodox Church is but one branch of many “branches” associated with some kind of “true” ambiguous Christianity or perhaps (in the ecumenists thinking and politics) Holy Orthodoxy is merely a branch associated some sort of other “true” religion—which, of course, the ecumenists (Orthodox and otherwise) seek to “rediscover” and “confess” to the whole world, “in their theology of love”. In such truly frightening and pathetic circumstances, paradoxically, we should hope that such betrayal and advocation of false teaching on the part of some powerful Orthodox leaders can actually serve—in an odd way—as motivation to the Orthodox faithful (and to their Faithful leaders) to never forsake Orthodoxy; and indeed we hope that such dire circumstances can motivate all of us Orthodox Christians to draw much closer to Christ and to His Holy Orthodox Church with greater repentance than ever before—and, as such, and only with God’s help, may we Orthodox all do our best to raise our children in the Only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

Here is some of what Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos had to say about these matters:

Vladyka underlined that the Church needs first not diplomats but theologians, whose views are the fruit of the experiences of their spiritual lives.

Metropolitan Hierotheos characterized the documents of the Crete Council as “diplomatic compromise texts, from which each can draw the conclusion he wants.”

Vladyka stressed that Orthodox Christians should not go into schism or cease commemorating their hierarchs. The way out of the situation, in Metropolitan Hierotheos’ opinion, is perhaps to hold a “Great Council,” which would give a theological interpretation and refinement to the documents accepted at Crete.

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, being a member of the Greek Orthodox Church’s delegation at the Crete Council, refused to sign the final document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world.” At a November session of the Greek Orthodox Holy Synod, Vladyka expressed the opinion that the Crete Council was
not properly prepared for and did not represent a council of bishops, but a council of
primates and their entourages.

Metropolitan Hierotheos also emphasized that the final text of “Relations of the
Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world” contains (in his opinion) a number
of questionable assertions and was not ready for signing. According to Vladyka, once the
minutes of the sessions of the Crete Council will be published it will be obvious that it
was dominated by “the branch theory” and “baptismal theology.” (orthochristian.com,
2017, paragraphs 2-6)

Father Peter Alban Heers speaks very beautifully and powerfully pertaining to these same
matters when he tells us that this Crete Council was a false council—and thus it must be rejected
by Orthodox Christians. Father Peter also, very rightfully, praises the Holy Synod of the
Georgian Orthodox Church and its faithful leader, Patriarch Ilia II, for their rejection of the Crete
Council and the syncretistic ecumenism that it advocated. Indeed, the stance of the Georgian
Orthodox Church—in relation to the Crete Council and its advocation of falsehood—as Father
Peter tell us, is a great inspiration to all Orthodox Christians.

—Sadly, the council in Crete is a false council which produced unorthodox texts which
now must be rejected by the Orthodox pleroma.

[…] the final texts were heavily tainted by the non-Orthodox ecumenist mentality—the
“Cretan Council” departed from the way and truth of the holy fathers and Ocumenical
Councils. A foreign spirit, alien to the holy fathers but at home in this world, animated
the proceedings, proclaiming foreign teachings and not those “strange words, strange
doctrines, strange teachings of the Holy Trinity” which have been spoken in the past at
every true Ocumenical Council.

In spite of the excessive claims to the contrary, both the preparatory process and the
organization and governing rules did not reflect the Orthodox way of conciliarity
(συνοδικότητα). Major decisions regarding the council, including the final decision to
hold the council, were consistently made without the knowledge, let alone the
participation, of the synods of the Local Churches. In practice, then, a new form of
Papalism was practiced and promoted, wherein the primates of the Local Churches
operated not as “first among equals” but as “first without equals” and as “popes” over
their bishops. This was most evident in the unprecedented and unorthodox practice of
limiting voting to the primates of the Local Churches. As one bishop noted, without the
possibility of voting, the only difference between the Orthodox bishops in attendance
and the observers of the various heterodox confessions was that the former [the Orthodox bishops] could speak publicly, even if only for a limited time.

[...] The well-known criteria of all Orthodox councils is that they were called to confront doctrinal and, by extension, pastoral challenges to the Church’s unity and thus chiefly addressed matters of faith (and thus heresy) and only secondarily related matters of canonical order. In Crete, this relation of faith and order, dogma and ethos, was set aside, with any reference to schism and heresy, let alone living heretics, completely absent. In this most heretical of all ages, in which syncretism and the New Age reigns and the devil “walks naked through history,” the Cretan Council referred even to those well-known heresies condemned by past Oecumenical Councils and the consensus of Church Fathers, as “churches.”

Unfortunately, it is also clear that the council was neither “great” nor “holy.” It was a minor gathering which will be remembered at best as an episcopal conference without pan-Orthodox authority both on account of the small number of bishops invited and the rather secondary issues it addressed. Moreover, however, it was also not “holy” on account of a glaring departure from Holy Tradition and the promotion of syncretistic ecumenism with, among other things, the nonchalant endorsement of unorthodox texts issued in the dialogue with the Papacy (ex. Balamand) and in the so-called “World Council of Churches” (ex. Pussan and Porte Alegre). This tragic departure from Holy Tradition is also apparent in the text approved by the council, “The Sacrament of Marriage and its Impediments,” which directly overturns the 72nd canon of the Penthekte Oecumenical Council (“in Trullo”). In allowing for inter-marriages with the heterodox this document subtly but clearly expresses the so-called “baptismal theology” and the new ecumenist ecclesiology of “partial churches” outside of the One Church. Both it and the document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World,” which recognizes the existence of “heterodox churches,” are unorthodox texts which must be rejected by the Orthodox Church.

[...] —The Church of Georgia stands, at this moment in history, as a light unto the faithful everywhere and their hope for the unity of the Church and a future victory for Orthodoxy over the new heretical ecclesiology of syncretistic ecumenism. In particular, the pre-synodal stance of the Holy Synod and His Beatitude, Patriarch Ilia II, with regard to the unorthodox texts on marriage and on the heterodox, as well as the patriarch’s epistle sent
to the Patriarch of Constantinople during the Council itself, explaining the reasons for not attending, gave great joy to the faithful everywhere and especially in Greece. The faithful in Greece are now looking to the Georgian Church to stay the course and remain strong, standing fearlessly on the firm rock of the confession of faith in the one and only Body of Christ, which is the Orthodox Church, the salvation of the world. We ourselves are engaged in a terrible struggle against anti-Christian forces in our country, which are openly working for the uprooting of the Christian faith from Greece. Syncretistic ecumenism is a part of this ant-Christian agenda. Thus, the witness of the Georgian Church is immensely important. (Heers, Fr. Peter Alban, 2016, paragraphs 1-5, 7)

The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ will never be defeated by the power and falsehood of this world, ever.

We conclude our discussion pertaining to the Council of Crete, by once again looking at the brilliant work of Archimandrite Athanasios Anastasiou. Archimandrite Athanasios looks at some more history leading up to the Council of Crete; and this history is definitely very disturbing—with some very powerful Orthodox leaders and others looking to unify all the faiths of the world independent of the unique truth that is Orthodoxy. In one of the great ironies, Archimandrite Athanasios points out that essentially we have some of the highest ranking Orthodox hierarchs ignoring the fact that the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is alone the True Church—and in doing so some of these hierarchs are looking to betray and completely undermine the unconquerable Holy Orthodox Church which they are supposed to be serving.

In the Roman Catholic world, we have the announcement, preparation, and realization of the Second Vatican Council; on the Orthodox side, we have the process by which the Pan-Orthodox meetings were followed as stages in preparation for the “Holy and Great Council.”

In private meetings with the representatives of Patriarch Athenagoras, Pope John XXIII revealed the intentions of the Vatican in sight of the Second Vatican Council that was about to begin its proceedings. “One of the goals of the new Council is the reunion of the Churches,” he declared. On the 25th of January, 1959, the convocation of the Second Vatican Council is announced. The proceedings of the Council were carried out in 178 meetings that lasted four years (1962-1965).
In 1961, the Ecumenical Patriarchate calls the first Pan-Orthodox Meeting in Rhodes. Many others follow (1961, 1963, 1964, 1968), as well as Pre-Synodal meetings (1976, 1982, 2009, 2015) following the same methodology as Vatican II. At one point, the Ecumenical Patriarch himself, Bartholomew, during his time as Metropolitan of Philadelphia, from 1977 onward, revealed the character of the then Council then being designed in an interview with the Roman Catholic periodical, *The National Catholic Reporter*, where he stated that: “Our aims are the same as John’s (Pope John XXIII): to update the Church and promote Christian unity… The Council will also signify the opening of the Orthodox Church to non-Christian religions, to humanity as a whole. This means a new attitude toward Islam, toward Buddhism, toward contemporary culture, toward aspirations for brotherhood free from racial discrimination… in other words, it will mark the end of twelve centuries of isolation of the Orthodox Church.”

From the very beginning these were their goals; this was their philosophy. It was this aim which the “Council” of Crete served and was meant to yield. It is ecclesiologically unacceptable and exceeds all ecclesiastical logic for such un-Orthodox positions to be formulated by an Orthodox bishop, never mind the man who holds the highest honor in the hierarchy of the entire Orthodox Church, that of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. It is truly painful and incomprehensible, but that which Bartholomew envisioned as “the end of twelve centuries of isolation of the Orthodox Church” is not nothing more than the end of fidelity to the Holy Fathers of our Church—an end to the tradition and experience of the Holy Spirit. This is true “isolation” from the living truth of the Church of Christ!!!

Such words [as Patriarch Bartholomew’s] confirm the revelation given to Elder Ephraim of Katounakia, of blessed memory, concerning ecumenism, namely the introducer of all wickedness is at work therein. (Archimandrite Athanasios Anastasiou, 2016, paragraphs 72-76)

Archimandrite Athanasios Anastasiou has done outstanding research and writes very powerfully and in a manner that is outstandingly inspiring and faithful to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ—as such, his work deserves great attention and consideration on the part of Orthodox Christians.
“Better, Indeed, a Laudable War Than a Peace Which Severs One From God”

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 6). 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 Donskoi 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 Donskoi to stand and lead his people against almost insurmountable power and oppression. If St. Dmitri Donskoi 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 (Karamzin, 2016), (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] (p. 247)

As we note the truth of the above quotation, nevertheless, the Holy Orthodox Church is forever the only True Church—despite the great sinfulness of countless nominally Orthodox Christians (myself included). And, despite this aforementioned reality, we nevertheless can see people such as Archbishop Paul of Finland speaking very truthfully and 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.

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16 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, cited in 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, cited in 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, cited in 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)

*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, cited in 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, cited in 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”] (κατα φυσιν). (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)\(^\text{17}\)

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 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).

\(^\text{17}\) In Appendix E, there is further discussion of God’s condescension--seen in His voluntarily becoming Incarnate for humanity.
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,
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 had to say (as Father Romanides was following the holy Fathers) in his aforementioned faithful 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 Vladimir Lossky and other great Orthodox theologians will tell us, faithful to Orthodox teaching—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, incomunicable, 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 (Lossky, 1976, pp. 92-94)—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

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 Suprasubstantial 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, with St. Philaret of Moscow: “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 divine hypostases and the very essence or nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity are forever unknowable and absolutely transcendent; whereas the energies common to the Holy Trinity can, by the infinite grace of God, be approached by God’s creatures—but only in a very limited way. For even the divine energies remain forever indescribable and incomprehensible—even to the greatest of Orthodox saints (without any exception) who experience these uncreated energies in theosis or glorification (but who nonetheless can never comprehend these energies). “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) Indeed, as we said, these divine, uncreated energies can be approached, only by the unfathomable grace of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, and nevertheless these divine energies forever remain uncreated, indescribable and incomprehensible to all; and as such, these divine energies bear no similarity whatsoever to anything or anyone created—with everything and everyone having been created from absolutely nothing by Almighty God. The Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity is absolutely transcendent and incomprehensible and bears no similarity whatsoever to anything or anyone that is created. Despite the fact that it is only through the divine energies that we can know God—albeit that even then, through those same divine energies, we can only know God “unknowingly” (Romanides, 1963-64)—the Almighty Suprasubstantial Trinity, in reference to the divine hypostases, the divine essence and the divine energies, is forever
absolutely transcendent in regard to all creation and is forever incomprehensible to all creation, with no similarity whatsoever existing between the created and the uncreated; Holy Orthodoxy has always confessed this truth, in sharp contrast to the teachings of all the heresies of the world and of history which, to one extent or another, confuse the created with the uncreated. (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 75), (Romanides, 2008, pp. 165-167), (Romanides, 2008, pp. 137-139), (Romanides, n.d.), (Romanides, 1963-64), (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 111), (Romanides, 1975)

With all of the aforementioned being kept in mind, we see St. Philaret of Moscow telling us the following: “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; as we have said, God created all of creation from absolutely nothing, by an absolutely free act of will (Lossky, 1976, pp. 92-94); and, as such, creation was and is in no way necessary to God nor was it something eternally present in the absolutely transcendent Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity.

Creation is not coeternal with God, in any way whatsoever. Creation was brought into being by God from absolutely nothing, according to His eternal free will to do so, at the point when God actually created. As we said, 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—nor, as we said, do any of the uncreated divine energies resemble anything that is created, in any way whatsoever. 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 (προορισμός) 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 transcendance 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 perfect incomprehensibility attained by means of negation, or apophasis, since this nature is transcendentally 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.
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)]\(^{18}\). 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 hypischnoumetha 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)]\(^{19}\). (Florovsky, 1987, p. 7-8)

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

*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)

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

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\(^{18}\) Bracketed entry from the cited text.

\(^{19}\) Bracketed entry from the cited text.
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

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20 See Appendix C
in no sense is necessitated to do what He does. Thus *genēsis* [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 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 research, 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

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21 Regarding the quotations from Florovsky, all the bracketed entries are from the text that is cited.
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, cited in 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 there 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, cited in 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, cited in 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, cited in Hierotheos, 2012, p. 256)

What is uncreated can never be identified with the concept, because that would be idolatry. [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Naupaktos] (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, cited in 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, cited in 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. The created words and created concepts which exclusively comprise all of Holy Scripture help to guide us as we seek to experience the absolutely incomprehensible Triune 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, cited in 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

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22 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 inspiringlly.
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 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, cited in 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, cited in 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, cited in 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 rewarder 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.”23 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

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23 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.
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 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” (φῶς), and others “articulate speaker” (μικροπνημόνευσις)—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, cited in 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:

Εἶπες σὺ τὴν αγεννησίαν τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ τὴν γεννησίαν τοῦ Υἱοῦ φυσιολογήσω, καὶ τὴν εκπορευσίαν τοῦ Πνεύματος, καὶ παραπληκτίσωμεν αμφοὶ εἰς Θεοῦ μυστηρία παρακατεύτης. (St. Gregory the Theologian, n.d., Oration 31)

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, cited in Hierotheos, 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’. (Hierotheos, 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, cited in 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, cited in 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 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 encyclical24, 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.

[...]

24 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

The Orthodox Patriarch of blessed memory, Diodoros I, Patriarch of Jerusalem, rightly, 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) 25

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 “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.

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25 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.”
The Great Miracle of the Holy Fire

The Great Miracle of the Holy Fire, during the Orthodox celebration of the Resurrection of Christ, is given only to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, every year in Jerusalem, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

From ancient times until the present, in unbroken continuity throughout the ages, this Great Miracle of the Holy Fire, is given only to the Holy Orthodox Church—we who are Orthodox Christians, despite our profound unworthiness, are alone the ones who receive this great miracle where God demonstrates to all His great power and mercy; and, as such, Almighty God testifies to the entire world that the Holy Orthodox Faith is alone the True Faith and that the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is alone the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

With all of this in mind, we observe the following:

The first written account of the Holy Fire (Holy Light) dates from the fourth century, but authors write about events that occurred in the first century. So Ss. John Damascene and Gregory of Nissa narrate how the Apostle Peter saw the Holy Light in the Holy Sepulchre after Christ’s resurrection. “One can trace the miracle throughout the centuries in the many itineraries of the Holy Land.” The Russian abbot Daniel, in his itinerary written in the years 1106-07, presents the “Miracle of the Holy Light” and the ceremonies that frame it in a very detailed manner. He recalls how the Patriarch goes into the Sepulchre-chapel (the Anastasis) with two candles. The Patriarch kneels in front of the stone on which Christ was laid after his death and says certain prayers, at which point the miracle occurs. Light proceeds from the core of the stone - a blue, indefinable light which after some time kindles unlit oil lamps as well as the Patriarch’s two candles. This light is “The Holy Fire”, and it spreads to all people present in the Church. The ceremony surrounding “The Miracle of the Holy Fire” may be the oldest unbroken Christian ceremony in the world. From the fourth century A.D. all the way up to our own time, sources recall this awe-inspiring event. From these sources it becomes clear that the miracle has been celebrated on the same spot, on the same feast day, and in the same liturgical frame throughout all these centuries.

(holyfire.org, n.d.)

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26 The reference to “Gregory of Nissa” is almost certainly a reference to the ancient Orthodox Saint, St. Gregory of Nyssa.
Also, of profound significance is the fact that this great miracle, which occurs only by the mercy of the absolutely transcendent Triune God, “appears only by the invocation of an Orthodox Archbishop” (holyfire.org, n.d.).

Indeed, we see the following:

Every time heterodox have tried to obtain the Holy Fire they have failed. Three such attempts are known. Two occurred in the twelfth century when priests of the Roman church tried to force out the Orthodox church but by their own confession these ended with God’s punishment. But the most miraculous event occurred in the year 1579, the year when God clearly testified to whom alone may be given His miracle.

(holyfire.org, n.d.)

In the year 1579, we have the great miracle of the “lightning-struck column” and the martyrdom of a Turkish soldier who confessed Christ and became an Orthodox Christian right after seeing this miracle. This saint about which we speak is Saint Tounom the Omir (Feast Day - April 18)²⁷. Regarding the martyrdom of St. Tounom the Emir (Omir) at the hands of the Turks, we see the following:

Turkish warriors stood on the wall of a building close to the gate and the lightning-struck column. When he [Saint Tounom the Emir (Omir)] saw this striking miracle he cried that Christ is truly God and leaped down from a height of about ten meters. But he was not killed—the stones under him became as soft as wax and his footprint was left upon them. The Turks tried to scrape away these prints but they could not destroy them; so they remain as witnesses.

He was burned by the Turks near the Church. His remains, gathered by the Greeks, lay in the monastery of Panagia until the 19th century shedding chrism.

(holyfire.org, n.d.)

²⁷This saint martyred for confessing Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church is called Saint Tounom the Emir, or Saint Tounom the Omir. This information can be found in John Sanidopoulos’ brilliant Orthodox Christian resource center: MYSTAGOGY RESOURCE CENTER.
Additionally, it should be noted that the date of this Great Miracle of the “lightning-struck column” is reasonably ascertained (or confirmed, one could say) to indeed be Holy Saturday of 1579. We can see that this is so from the research of Haris Skarlakidis:

The column that was split by the Holy Fire (1579)

On Holy Saturday 1579, according to the Church chronicles of the city of Jerusalem, the Turkish governors forbad the Greek patriarch and the Orthodox faithful to enter the Church of the Resurrection for the customary rite of the Holy Fire.

The works that make reference to this event do not specify the exact date, but they mention that at the time the patriarch of Jerusalem [sic. Jerusalem] was Sophronius IV, the patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch [sic. Antioch] were, respectively, Jeremiah, Sylvester and Joachim, and the sultan of the Ottoman Empire was Murad III.

If we look at the official lists of these four patriarchates we shall find that the four Greek Orthodox patriarchs were indeed in office in the second half of the sixteenth century, and if we examine the exact period of each patriarch’s reign and that of Sultan Murad III, we discover that the only common year in which the leadership of all five men coincided was the year 1579.

(Skarlakidis, H., n.d.)

Let us look at a more detailed account of the great miracle of the column in Jerusalem that was split by the Holy Fire during Orthodox Pascha, discussed by the Monk Parthenius.

There is an outstanding website from which we see some of Monk Parthenius’ brilliant work —telling us that “The following account of Holy Week and Paschal services in Jerusalem and of the miracle of the Holy Fire in 1846 is taken from the second volume of his Wanderings.” Monk Parthenius lived and wrote during the time that we just mentioned; we will also mention some occurrences and facts not mentioned on this outstanding website (or, at least, that were not found there by me) which occurred prior to, and subsequent to, this beautiful
account which is to follow; these facts are to be found in other sources, and often talk about
the same miraculous events of 1579, but in different or more detail in some places. As we
see, the presentation is set forth so that we look also at these other sources before, during and
after we look at Monk Parthenius’ brilliant work. Here is some of what Monk Parthenius said
regarding the miracle of the Holy Fire during Pascha 1579:

Let me tell you about this: At the great gates themselves, on the left side, stands a column
made out of marble with a fissure from which the grace, that is the Holy Fire, came forth.
This column is honored by Orthodox as well as non-Orthodox, and even the Armenians. I
would like to write a little about this incident, how the Orthodox Eastern Christians
unanimously speak of it and the Turks themselves confirm it. In the wall there is an
inscribed marble slab, and they say that this very incident is written on it; but we could
not read it because it is written in Syrian letters, in the Arab tongue; and I only heard
about it, but did not read it. But the incident happened something like this: At one time
when the Greeks were completely oppressed by the Turkish yoke, some rich Armenians
took it into their heads to force the Greeks out of the Holy Sepulchre and out of the
Church of the Resurrection. They gathered a large sum of money and bribed the Ottoman
Porte and all the Jerusalem authorities, assuring the unbelievers that the Holy Fire comes
forth not simply for the sake of the Greeks, but for all Christians, and “if we Armenians
are there, we also will receive it!” And the Turks, who are greedy for money, accepted the
bribe and therefore did as the Armenians wished, and they affirmed that only the
Armenians would be allowed to receive the Holy Fire. The Armenians rejoiced greatly
and wrote to all their lands and to their faithful, that more of them should go on a
pilgrimage. And a great multitude of them did come. Holy Saturday approached: the
Armenians all gathered in the church, and the Turkish army drove the poor Greeks out.
Oh, what unspeakable grief and sorrow filled the Greeks! There was only one comfort for
them—the Grave of the Saviour, and they were being kept away from it, and the Holy
Gates were locked to them! The Armenians were inside the church and the Orthodox
were on the streets. The Armenians were rejoicing and the Greeks were weeping. The
Armenians were celebrating and the Greeks were bitterly lamenting! The Orthodox stood
opposite the Holy Gates on the court and around them stood the Turkish army, watching
so that there would not be a fight. The Patriarch himself with all the rest stood there with
candles, hoping that they would at least receive the Fire from the Armenians through the
window. But the Lord wished to dispose things in a different way, and to manifest His
true Faith with a fiery finger and comfort His true servants, the humble Greeks. The time
had already come when the Holy Fire issues forth, but nothing happened. The Armenians
were frightened and began to weep, and ask God that He send them the Fire; but the Lord did not hear them. Already a half hour had passed and more, and still no Holy Fire. The day was clear and beautiful; the Patriarch sat to the right side. All of a sudden there was a clap of thunder, and on the left side the middle marble column cracked and out of the fissure a flame of fire came forth. The Patriarch arose and lit his candles and all the Orthodox Christians lit theirs from his. Then all rejoiced, and the Orthodox Arabs from Jordan began to skip and cry out, “Thou art our one God, Jesus Christ; one is our True Faith, that of the Orthodox Christians!” And they began to run about all of Jerusalem and raise a din, and to shout all over the city. And to this day they still do this in memory of the incident and they jump and shout, running around the Holy Sepulchre, and they praise the one true God, Jesus Christ, and bless the Orthodox Faith. Beholding this wonder, the Turkish army, which was standing around on guard, was greatly amazed and terrified. From amongst them one named Omir, who was standing at the St. Abraham’s Monastery on guard, immediately believed in Christ and shouted, “One is the true God, Jesus Christ; one is the true faith, that of the Orthodox Christians!” And he jumped down to the Christians from a height of more than 35 feet. His feet landed on the solid marble as if though on soft wax. And to this day one can see his footprints imprinted as though in wax, although the non-Orthodox tried to erase them. I saw them with my own eyes and felt them with my own hands. And the column with the fissure still bears the scorch marks. As for Omir the soldier, having jumped down, he took his weapon and thrust it into the stone as though into soft wax, and began to glorify Christ unceasingly. For this, the Turks beheaded him and burned his body; the Greeks gathered up his bones, put them into a case and took them to the Convent of the Great Panagia, where they gush forth fragrance to this day. The Armenians in the Holy Sepulchre received nothing and were left only with their shame. The Pasha of Jerusalem and other Turkish authorities were greatly displeased with them and wanted to slaughter them all, but they feared the Sultan. They only punished them heavily: they say that they made each one to eat dung as he left the church. (Monk Parthenius, n.d.)

(http://www.orthodox.net/pascha/holyweekandpaschajer.html)

Proceeding further, the following quotations continue to teach us of the great miracle of the Holy Fire and are from the research of N.C. Hvidt, who generally appears to have done some good work in his research and discussion, in numerous places. This having been said, it also needs to be mentioned that N.C. Hvidt seems to display a favoritism toward the ecumenical movement, in at least some of his writing; and he even misidentifies who is actually Orthodox Christian—erroneously claiming that the Armenians and Copts, who
belong to the Monophysite heresy, are Orthodox. Nevertheless, Hvidt has numerous things to say pertaining to the great miracle of the Holy Fire—which I am sure are faithful to history—and as such (whether Hvidt understands it or even acknowledges it) his research demonstrates the profound uniqueness of the only True Church, The Holy Orthodox Church.

In 1187, the Saracens under the direction of Sultan Salah ad-Din took Jerusalem. In that year, the Sultan desired to be present at the celebration, even though he was not a Christian. Gautier Vinisauf tells us what happened: “On his arrival, the celestial fire descended suddenly, and the assistants were deeply moved.

The Christians demonstrated their joy by chanting the greatness of God, the Saracens on the contrary said that the fire which they had seen to come down was produced by fraudulent means. Salah ad-Din, wishing to expose the imposture, caused the lamp, which the fire from heaven had lighted, to be extinguished, but the lamp relit immediately.

He caused it to be extinguished a second time and a third time, but it relit as of itself. Thereupon, the Sultan confounded cried out in prophetic transport: ‘Yes, soon shall I die, or I shall lose Jerusalem.’ This prophecy was accomplished, for Salah ad-Din died the following Lent.” (p. 2)

(Hvidt, N.C., 2007)

One of the great ironies, in unbroken continuity throughout many centuries—just like it was in ancient times, so it is in modern times—is that whoever the people were who had power in Jerusalem and the surrounding region at that particular time, they, whether they liked it or not, would validate this great miracle given uniquely to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, by the unfathomable grace of the Suprasubstantial Triune God. And indeed no one has any power over God. For how could anything or anyone have any power over God? We must never forget the fact that we all were created from absolutely nothing by the Supra-substantial Trinity, Who did

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28 We note that the particular year that is being referenced here is 1192 at which time the Sultan Salah ad-Din attended the Orthodox celebration of the Resurrection of Christ—where he witnessed firsthand the miracle of the Holy Fire given uniquely to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ; and one year later, in 1193, he died.

29 N.C. Hvidt tells us that “the report written by the English chronicler, Gautier Vinisauf, deserves special attention as it relates a very interesting anecdote about the ceremony as it occurred in the year 1192.”
not have any need whatsoever to create anything or anyone. **To God Belongs All Glory!** As such, let us pay close attention to the present and how it is, so often, strikingly similar to the past.

> “Every year Israeli authority check the tomb so it does not conceal any lights, whereafter it is sealed until the arrival of the patriarch.” (p. 3)

> “At 1:00 PM a delegation of the local authorities elbows through the crowds. Even though these officials are not Christian, they are part of the ceremonies. In the times of the Turkish occupation of Palestine they were Moslem Turks; today they are Israelis. For centuries the presence of these officials has been an integral part of the ceremony, as their function is to represent the Romans in the time of Jesus.

The Gospels speak of Romans that went to seal the tomb of Jesus, so his disciples would not steal his body and claim he had risen. In the same way the Israeli authorities on this Easter Saturday come and seal the tomb with wax. Before they seal the door it is customary that they enter the tomb to check for any hidden source of fire, which could produce the miracle through fraud.

Just as the Romans were to guarantee that there was no deceit after the death of Jesus, likewise the Israeli Local Authorities are to guarantee that there will be no trickery in the year 2000. (pp. 3-4)

(Hvidt, N.C., 2007)

In the following quotation, His Beatitude Patriarch Diodorus I, is interviewed regarding his experience with the Miracle of the Holy Fire.

His Beatitude Patriarch Diodorus I\(^\text{30}\) was born in 1923. He first came to Jerusalem in 1938 and assisted the Miracle of the Holy Fire ever since. In 1981 he was elected Patriarch and was thus the key witness to the Holy Fire 19 times until his death in December 2000, as the Greek-Orthodox patriarchs always enter the little tomb chapel where the flame first occurs. I spoke with him at the Orthodox Easter, 2000.

> “Your Beatitude, what actually occurs when you enter the tomb on Holy Saturday during the ceremony of the Holy Fire?”

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\(\text{30}\) The name “Diodorus I” is also spelled “Diodoros I”, this is the same Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, of Blessed memory, who we referenced earlier and who spoke beautifully in defense of the Only True Church, The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ.
“After all the lights are extinguished, I bow down and enter the first chamber of the tomb. From here I find my way through the darkness to the inner room of the tomb where Christ was buried. Here, I kneel in holy fear in front of the place where our Lord lay after his death and where he rose again from the dead.

Praying in the Holy Sepulchre in itself for me is always a very holy moment in a very holy place. It is from here that he rose again in glory and spread his light to the world. John the Evangelist writes in the first chapter of his gospel that Jesus is the light of the World.

Kneeling in front of the place where he rose from the dead, we are brought within the immediate closeness of his glorious resurrection. Catholics and Protestants call this church “The Church of the Holy Sepulchre.” We call it “The Church of the Resurrection.” The resurrection of Christ for us Orthodox is the centre of our faith, as Christ has gained the final victory over death, not just his own death but the death of all those who will stay close to him.

“I believe it to be no coincidence that the Holy Fire comes in exactly this spot. In Matthew 28:3, the Gospel says that when Christ rose from the dead, an angel came, dressed all in a fearful light. I believe that the intense light that enveloped the angel at the Lord’s resurrection is the same light that appears miraculously every Easter Saturday.

Christ wants to remind us that his resurrection is a reality and not just a myth; he really came to the world in order to offer the necessary sacrifice through his death and resurrection so that man could be re-united with his creator.

“In the tomb, I say particular prayers that have been handed down to us through the centuries and, having said them, I wait. Sometimes I may wait a few minutes, but normally the miracle happens immediately after I have said the prayers. From the core of the very stone on which Jesus lay an indefinable light pours forth.

It usually has a blue tint, but the colour may change and take on many different hues. It cannot be described in human terms. The light rises out of the stone as mist may rise out of a lake - it almost looks as if the stone is covered by a moist cloud, but it is light.

This light behaves differently each year. Sometimes it covers just the stone, while other times it gives light to the whole sepulchre, so that people who are standing outside
the tomb and look into it see the tomb filled with light. The light does not burn - I have never had my beard burnt in all the sixteen years I have been Patriarch in Jerusalem and have received the Holy Fire. The light is of a different consistency than the normal fire that burns in an oil-lamp.

“At a certain point the light rises and forms a column in which the fire is of a different nature, so that I am able to light my candles from it. When I thus have received the flame on my candles, I go out and give the fire first to the Armenian Patriarch and then to the Coptic. Thereafter I give the flame to all people present in the Church.” (pp. 4-5)

(Hvidt, N.C., 2007)

The fact that the Armenian Patriarch and Coptic Patriarch receive the Holy Fire only from the Orthodox Patriarch is of course of great significance, for it is not any of the heretics—whether they be Armenian, Coptic, Papist, Protestant, or anyone else affiliated with any of the other heresies of the world—who can receive the Holy Fire except “by the invocation of an Orthodox Archbishop”. This is yet one more demonstration of the fact that the Holy Orthodox Church is alone the True Church—despite the profound unworthiness of all of us nominally Orthodox Christians, myself most unworthy of all. The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ alone receives the Holy Fire, as we have clearly seen; this great miracle, uninterrupted through the many centuries, by itself shatters any syncretistic theories associated with the Pan-heresy of ecumenism and clearly demonstrates that the only True Church is the Holy Orthodox Church. To God Belongs All Glory!

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—seemingly 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 and for different reasons; additionally, there certainly have been, historically, and there remain to this very day, people with tremendous worldly power—both known and unknown to the general public—who can start practically any war which they wish to start and blame whomever they wish for the war itself. Rarely, does a criminal blame himself entirely for his crime; and when a group of criminals are all guilty, to one extent or another, then the criminals with less worldly power often are saddled with all of the blame (or most of it)—but these same lower, subservient criminals are often (though not always) pardoned, in one way or another, by the higher power elites for their subservience. There is a saying in Greek, which translates something like this: “Who steals and then confesses to it?” The power elite—no matter who they are, in any given situation—fool themselves and others in their delusion, believing that their abuse of a power, which is not even theirs, is somehow justified. With that in mind, we must never forget the very obvious, though profound truth, that we know as Orthodox Christians, namely, that all the power of this world, without any exception, is given by God Who allows it to exist—it is indeed a power which is often abused whenever people choose to sin (this obviously applies to all of us, at various times and to various degrees)—but all worldly power, no matter how immense and frightful, will one day be brought to nothing by Almighty God. God having brought all creation into being from absolutely nothing—by an act of free will, not having been necessitated to do so in any way whatsoever—created all of us,
without any exception, from absolutely nothing, and gave us all the great freedom of will, and the great potential to approach God, through the divine energies, and the power to think, and the power to love and the power to act in any way righteously.

All that we have—including our very existence, all of us having been brought into being from absolute nothingness—is given to us by the unfathomable grace of the absolutely transcendent Triune God; as such, we have absolutely nothing which we possess, intrinsically, in and of ourselves—not our power, no matter how great, nor our very existence having been created from nothing by Almighty God Who has given us great power and boundless potential and blessings. And, as such, we must never be delusional, inhumane, and generally stupid in our use of power that has been given to us—and which, as we said, is not even ours.

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—with unmatched heroism, by the grace of God—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 Person31, 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 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

31 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.
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 another, 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*

*The Lord is All Powerful, Yet Long-suffering in His Mercy.* Almighty God can prevent any injustice from happening and He can also allow an injustice to occur temporarily; but, in the end, God will destroy all injustice—for Almighty God will one day utterly destroy all the power of this world forever. Any person or ruling elite choosing to be oppressive and inhumane, in any situation, will one day see their power completely destroyed—for there was, and is, absolutely no power that is ours to begin with. God is the source of all our power (and of our very being)
which humanity—created from absolutely nothing—must use in all humility for justice, never for injustice. Certainly all power belongs to God alone and any misuse of such power—under the influence of the stupidity and delusion of arrogance—will one day be brought to nothing, by the One to Whom alone belongs all power and to Whom belongs All Glory.

As such, no one should ever view the mercy and long-suffering of God as any justification for the abuse of the power that God alone has given to us—a power which alone ultimately belongs to the same Almighty God Who created us from absolutely nothing—a power that we certainly do not have intrinsically as our own, but as a gift from our Creator.

With this in mind, let us look at a homily from St. Nikolai Velimirovich:

**HOMILY**

**on the King Who does not wish to defend Himself with His army**

*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?* (Matthew 26:53).

Thus spoke the Lord to the disciple who drew a sword to defend his Teacher in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is obvious from these words that the Lord could have defended Himself if He had wanted to, not only from Judas and his company of guards but also from Pilate and the leaders of the Jews. The might of one angel is greater than the greatest army of men; how much more so is the might of twelve legions of angels!

The Lord did not want to seek this help from the Father. In His prayer in Gethsemane, He said to His Father: *Thy will be done* (Matthew 26:42). And He immediately knew the will of the Father: that it was necessary that He be given over to suffering. He was in agreement with the will of His Father and set out on the path of suffering. It was necessary to depict the background darkly, that the image of the Resurrection would appear clearer. It was necessary to allow evil to compete as much as it could, so that afterward it would explode and disintegrate into nothing. It was necessary to allow evil to cry aloud, so that soon afterward it would become speechless before the miraculous Resurrection. It was necessary that all the wicked deeds of men against God should be manifested, so that all would be able to see the love and mercy of God toward mankind. The angels of God were not sent to defend Christ from the Jews; rather, the angels of God were sent, after three days, to announce the Holy Resurrection of Christ.
O Lord, All-powerful and All-merciful, have mercy on us and save us!

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

(St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, p. 274)

Despite our great sinfulness and our misuse of the power given to us by God, the great power and mercy of Almighty God are truly unfathomable.

St. Nikolai Velimirovich comments on something said by St. Isaac the Syrian pertaining to the immeasurable power and mercy of God Who created all of us from absolutely nothing:

“The mercy (of God) that raises us up after we have sinned is even greater than the mercy by which He gave us being, when we did not yet exist. Glory, O Lord, to Thine immeasurable mercy!” Thus speaks St. Isaac the Syrian. He means that greater is the mercy that God showed toward us when, through Christ, He saved us from the corruption of sin and death, than when He created us from nothing. Truly, it is so.

(St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, p. 276)

The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is alone the True Church, and we who call ourselves Orthodox—despite our profound unworthiness to call ourselves Orthodox—must never leave Holy Orthodoxy. For if we leave or put aside our Holy Orthodox Faith then we certainly and inevitably embrace any of the multitude of the false teachings and systems of this world. We need to remain Orthodox forever and never disrespect the immeasurable mercy of God given to us within His Holy Orthodox Church.

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, radical Zionism, 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”. Its the same “Law of the jungle” that has always ruled the world and humanity’s relationship to itself. Its 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).
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] 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)

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,

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32 This bracketed entry has been made by me.
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 un conquer able 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.
CHAPTER 4
THE HEROIC CONFESSION OF ORTHODOXY

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)

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33 This has been suggested. Or perhaps this saintly character of Father Zosima is based on numerous Orthodox saints. In the end, it does not matter—for Dostoevsky, with his Orthodox Christian background and experience, is so often speaking very consistently with what countless Orthodox saints have taught the world, by the grace of God.
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 Degyansky’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]’, then, are “not found in agreement with God” (quoted in Degyansky, 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 Degyansky, 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 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

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34 This bracketed entry is found in Degyansky’s work, from where the above quotation was obtained. The bracketed entry helps explain the quotation, and is not found in the original source.

35 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 Degyansky’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 Degyansky’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.*
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. Haralambos, 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 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

36 The text from which we will quote spells “St. Haralambos”, as “St. Charalambos”. 
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, cited in 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, cited in 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, cited in 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]? 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 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

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37 The bracketed entry is my addition.
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 Bapto, 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

38 The Feast Day of St. Haralambos and these other two saints is February 10th.
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 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-Streamer, 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 myron 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\(^{39}\), for their not accepting the false religion of Islam; ultimately these fearless saints suffered martyrdom for Christ and for their Holy Orthodox Faith\(^{40}\), 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 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

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\(^{39}\) Both words “Moslem” and “Muslim” mean the same thing, and refer to people who follow the faith of Islam.

\(^{40}\) Something that cowards, such as myself, would be very unlikely to do.
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, cited in 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] 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)

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:

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41 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.
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.” (Hierotheos, 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, by the unfathomable grace of God, 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 Donskoï. 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 Donskoï, 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)

Indeed, those two monks, Venerable Alexander Peresvet and Venerable Andrei Oslyabya42, who died heroes at the battle of Kulikovo are regarded as Orthodox saints by the Russian Orthodox Church—may their prayers strengthen all Orthodox Christians (Pravoslavie.ru, 2016d, paragraphs 1-2).

We also note, in a number of places to follow, St. Dmitri Donskoï’s great regard for one of the great ancient Martyrs of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, St. Demetrius of Thessalonika (St. Dmitri Donskoï’s patron saint). St. Dmitri Donskoï’s faithfulness to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church were impeccable—truly, as only an Orthodox saint would heroically and unwaveringly pursue—being inspired and following the example of great Orthodox saints, who fearlessly served Christ, before him.

In the spiritual experience of the Russian Church, veneration of the Holy Great Martyr Demetrius of Thessalonica is closely linked with the memory of the defense of the nation and Church by the Great Prince of Moscow, Demetrius of the Don (May 19).

St Demetrius of the Don smashed the military might of the Golden Horde at the Battle of Kulikovo Field on September 8, 1380 (the Feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos), set between the Rivers Don and Nepryadva. The Battle of Kulikovo, for

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42 Venerable Andrei (Andrew) Oslyabya’s last name is spelled in various ways, when translated into English writing. Here are two ways in which this is seen: Osliabia, Oslyab.
which the nation calls him Demetrius of the Don, became the first Russian national deed, rallying the spiritual power of the Russian nation around Moscow. The “Zadonschina,” an inspiring historic poem written by the priest Sophronius of Ryazem (1381), is devoted to this event.

Prince Demetrius of the Don was greatly devoted to the holy Great Martyr Demetrius. In 1380, on the eve of the Battle of Kulikovo, he solemnly transferred from Vladimir to Moscow the most holy object in the Dimitriev cathedral of Vladimir: the icon of the Great Martyr Demetrius of Thessalonica, painted on a piece of wood from the saint’s grave. A chapel in honor of the Great Martyr Demetrius was built at Moscow’s Dormition Cathedral.

The St Demetrius Memorial Saturday was establish for the churchwide remembrance of the solidiers who fell in the battle of Kulikovo. This memorial service was held for the first time at the Trinity-St Sergius monastery on October 20, 1380 by St Sergius of Radonezh, in the presence of Great Prince Demetrius of the Don. It is an annual remembrance of the heroes of Kulikovo, among whom are the schemamonks Alexander (Peresvet) and Andrew (Oslyab).

(The Orthodox Church in America, 2016, paragraphs 1-4)

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 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

43 I have made this bracketed entry. Also, it should be noted—though perhaps it is rather obvious—that the names Dmitri, Dimitri, Demetrios, and Demetrios all refer to the same name; and as such, it is clear, and as was already mentioned, St. Dimitri Donskoi gets called St. Demetrius of the Don and his patron saint was the ancient Orthodox Saint, St. Demetrius of Thessalonika.
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.\textsuperscript{44} 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. However, let us not forget, as we saw earlier: A very powerful leader, of the heretical Christian West, the Lithuanian King Yagailo and his forces allied themselves to the heresy of Islam in order to attack the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. Neither St. Sergius of Radonezh nor St. Dmitri Donskoi demonstrated subservience or relativism, at this frightening moment in history—though it likely would have seemed to many others to have been a much less dangerous prospect had they done so. St. Sergius of Radonezh and St. Dmitri Donskoi 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 Donskoi—and St. Dmitri and his brave soldiers faithfully risked their lives, in confronting their oppressors, to save Orthodox Russia. Zernov describes the battle of Kulikovo, as follows:

\textsuperscript{44} These matters related to ethos, logos, and pathos, I first learned in High School. Mr. Streff was the teacher.
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)

Zernov’s account of the battle at Kulikovo is powerful and inspirational; but, I believe that more specificity on Zernov’s part, in at least the very last part of the above quotation, would have been appreciated by many Orthodox and would have been even more inspirational—let alone the fact that such specificity, most importantly, would have been much closer to the truth. We say this because we Orthodox Christians must never forget that St. Dmitri Donskoi and his courageous soldiers fought for the only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and for absolutely for no other faith whatsoever—for all faiths (Christian or otherwise) which are separated from Orthodox Christianity are heresies. For certainly, Russia was not just to remain a “Christian” country—remember the heretical Christian West allied itself to the Moslem heretics in order to destroy an Orthodox Christian nation (as countless heretics, throughout history, have wanted to destroy Orthodox Christianity)—but of immeasurably more significance is that Russia was to remain united to the one and only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. Russia was to remain an Orthodox Christian nation—despite the evil designs of all the heretics, Christian and otherwise, who hated the One and Only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

That having been said, here to follow—and from a much stronger Orthodox perspective, from the historian Karamzin—is a somewhat more detailed and much more inspirational account of the God inspired heroism of St. Dmitri Donskoi and of his Orthodox warriors in their fight to defend their Russian homeland and Holy Orthodox. We will comment some on Karamzin’s brilliant work, as we look at it:
Medieval Russia went through very hard times in the 11th-13th centuries. Because of the internecine strife among the Russian princes who had divided the land into petty principalities, Russia was so weakened that when it was attacked by the Tatars it could not resist and was conquered by the infidels.

(Karamzin, 2016, paragraph 2)

In regard to what was just mentioned, certainly and quite obviously, these types of profound failures are seen in all peoples, throughout history—whether we are speaking of the conquerers or the conquered (and certainly roles can change when God wills it or allows it to happen). Whether we are speaking about the problems that the Russians created for themselves in the 11th to 13th centuries, or whether we are speaking about what their infidel oppressors did to them, in any case, all such failures are, tragically, a common feature of all humanity (without any exception) and are clearly associated with our fallen human nature—and are obviously associated with our oftentimes willful embrace of evil.

Additionally, one cannot help but see, in the aforementioned quotation—and we can also see this in countless other instances—that we Orthodox Christians are oftentimes our own worst enemies; this fact is clearly seen in our great violence toward one another through civil war (in one form or another) and in our truly massive and widespread murder of our own unborn children through abortion—we note that these are, in vast numbers, nominally Orthodox Christian people (or descendants of Orthodox Christians) who are committing these great atrocities, who are committing these great crimes against humanity, against their very own people. And this tremendous violence that we nominally Orthodox peoples often commit against ourselves and others is much to the delight of our enemies—and also, oftentimes, these atrocities are tragically much to the delight of many of our fellow nominally Orthodox Christian brethren, something clearly to be seen in our jealousy of one another (myself clearly as guilty as anyone else in these matters).

As such, we Orthodox should never scapegoat regarding our own embrace of stupidity, whenever we choose such a path—we need to acknowledge our own willful embrace of evil and stupidity, and take full responsibility for it—of this we must always be mindful while, of course, at the same time acknowledging, in all sobriety, the fact that those who hate Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church will always strongly encourage us to move forward in the destruction of ourselves and others; indeed, in regard to many such matters, we should acknowledge that such staggering calamities that befall us Orthodox Christians are the kind that we very oftentimes are only too glad to invite upon ourselves—and at the same time our enemies are only too glad to
help us destroy ourselves. God respects our freedom; but our turning away from God can never
end right—that is obvious. We Orthodox have historically invited many catastrophes upon
ourselves whenever we have denied our Orthodox heritage and roots—that is to say, whenever
we have denied Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church which alone is His Body—this denial
certainly begins to happen when we lose sight of the fact that Orthodox Christianity is alone the
True Faith and that there is no other. The ecumenical movement and all other New World Order
manifestations—and all the other powers, philosophies, and heresies of the world—are examples
of forces trying to deny the fact that truly Christ is the Son of God Who condescended to become
Incarnate; and, through the voluntary Incarnation of the Son of God, it is the Holy Orthodox
Church which Christ, the Son of God, uniquely established and made His Body in which all of
humanity was given the opportunity to seek salvation and glorification. And indeed, the mercy of
God is great, otherwise we would all—without any exception—be lost.

As many Orthodox priests will certainly tell us, it is only by God’s unfathomable mercy
that we have not been completely destroyed. This great mercy that the absolutely transcendent
Triune God clearly shows to us Orthodox Christians—throughout history and in every Orthodox
nation, despite our often willful embrace of evil and stupidity—is seen, in so many ways. Despite
what has at times been our great disregard for the only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church
of Christ, God has shown us His immeasurable mercy innumerable times. Let us continue to
speak of the great God inspired courage and sanctity of St. Sergius of Radonezh, St Dmitri
Donskoi and the brave Orthodox warriors who fought the great delusion that is the power of this
world.

For more than 200 years the Russian people were ruled by the Tatars and paid tribute to
their khans. But the time came when the Russians decided to rid themselves of the harsh
Tatar yoke. When the Tatar khan Mamai found out about this, he gathered all his Tatar
forces and also invited the Lithuanian King Yagailo to join him. He decided to erase the
Russian people from the face of the earth and to convert Orthodox churches into Moslem
mosques. But the Lord did not allow the evil intentions of the infidels to materialize.

(Karamzin, 2016, paragraph 2)

The intentions of the heretics of that time, Christian and otherwise, were truly evil with
the goal of a great genocide against Orthodox Christians—a great physical and cultural genocide
was being planned at that time against the Holy Orthodox Church and its people—certainly
rivaling what the leaders of communism wished to accomplish, centuries later. But, one must
never forget that in any and all circumstances—no matter how incredibly horrific those
circumstances may be—God always strengthens the Orthodox saints and makes them truly unconquerable with a courage that is forever unmatched in human history, making them unassailable in their Orthodox confession of Christ and in His Holy Orthodox Church and in its teachings; God always unmistakably strengthens His Orthodox saints, and makes them forever unconquerable—regardless of any temporary outcomes, and mere moments in history, in this world. God makes it very obvious to those who hate His Holy Orthodox Church that, through His indescribable power, His saints will forever remain truly unbreakable and unconquerable; and thus the Orthodox saints will always remain an inspiration to the whole world, always confessing the incomprehensible power and mercy of the Triune God—to Orthodox Christians and to the rest of the world.

Let us continue our look at St. Dmitri Donskoi:

At that time the great Prince of Moscow was Dmitri Ioannovich. Not relying only upon his own forces, he asked for help from the divine saint, Sergius of Radonezh. St. Sergius blessed the prince and foretold his victory.

Placing his faith totally in the help of God, Prince Dmitri Ioannovich moved with his forces against the Tatars. A decisive battle took place in the Kulikovo field near the Don River. The Tatars were roundly defeated. Mamai himself fled with a few surviving warriors. This took place in 1380. Prince Dimitri vanquished his enemy at the expense of losing more than half of his army,

Prince Dmitri Ioannovich commemorated his dead warriors in the Holy Trinity Monastery of St. Sergius, and decreed that a similar commemoration be held annually on the Saturday before October 26th (the feast day of St. Demetrius). Later the Church began to commemorate on this day not only all those who had fallen on the battlefield, but all Orthodox Christians.

(Karamzin, 2016, paragraphs 2-4)

We observe more pertaining to the saintly heroism, humility, and faithfulness of St. Dmitri Donskoi:

A description of the battle was retained in ancient monastic chronicles.

On September 6th the Russian host approached the Don River, and the princes and the boyars began to discuss whether they should wait there for the Tatars or go on further. Opinions were divided, but Prince Dimitri was for advancing. “I did not come here to
watch over the Don River, but to deliver the Russian land from captivity. It would be better for us not to go out against the Tatars, than to come, accomplish nothing, and go back. Today we will cross the Don, and we will either be victorious, or we will give up our lives for the holy Church and for our brothers.” That same day Prince Dimitri received a message from St. Sergius of Radonezh, blessing him for the battle and advising him not lose time.

On September 7th Prince Dimitri ordered his troops to find a good place for the cavalry to ford the river and to throw over bridges for the infantry to cross. On the following morning there was dense fog, but it soon cleared up, and the troops crossed the Don. The Russian regiments stood in a long line seven miles across, so that its ends abutted against places that were inaccessible to the enemy—gullies and swamps. In the middle of the line stood the main regiment with Prince Dimitri’s company, guarding his red banner with a golden image of the Saviour. On the left flank a reserve regiment under the command of Prince Vladimir was hidden within the woods.

Standing upon a tall hill, seeing the orderly rows of troops, the banners streaming in the wind, the glitter of weapons in the sun, and knowing that many thousands of these warriors would be killed, Dimitri began to fervently pray before the icon of the Saviour. Afterwards he rode through all the regiments and spoke with the warriors, calling them his loyal comrades and beloved brothers, and promising them honorable memory in the world and martyric crowns in heaven.

(Karamzin, 2016, paragraphs 5-8)

The great God inspired humility, love, and courage of St. Dmitri Donskoi was unmistakable—and everyone who dealt with him must have clearly seen it. Indeed, what a profound contrast such great humility, love, and courage is—which is clearly seen in all the Orthodox saints, by the grace of God—when compared to so many of today’s leaders who are subservient to very powerful anti-Christian people and forces; and we see in so many of these same subservient and dishonorable leaders such great theatrics—in their feigned indignation and genuine willingness to send other people’s children to die in unjust wars. Nothing of this sort of hypocrisy is to be found in St. Dmitri Donskoi or in any other Orthodox saint—the courage and humility of the Orthodox saints was impeccable; and when God would give the Orthodox saints their strength to endure all, then there was nothing whatsoever horrific enough to make them renounce Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. With this in mind, we now finish our look at St. Dmitri Donskoi and his great heroism, and that of his brave Orthodox soldiers:
On September 8th, on the day of the feast of the Nativity of the Holy Theotokos, the Russian host met with the hordes of Khan Mamai on a large field called Kulikovo. Commanders on both sides watched each other and slowly advanced. There were many more Tatars than Russians. The boyars pleaded with Dimitri to stay behind the main army, but Dimitri replied: “Where you will be, so shall I. If I hide in the back, how can I exhort you: brothers let us die for the homeland”? He took off his gold-threaded cape, kissed the cross, ate the holy bread sent to him by St. Sergius, and went into battle.

The battle began with single combat. St. Sergius had sent off with Prince Dimitri two of his monastics, former warriors, Peresvet and Oslyabya. When a huge warrior by the name of Chelibeizi rode out from the Tatar side and began to call the Russians out to combat, Peresvet galloped out of the ranks and rode hard at him. They struck each other with such force that both fell down. Then Prince Dimitri went at the Tatars, loudly reciting the psalm “God is our refuge and strength.”

The fierce battle spread over seven miles. The ranks became mixed up. First the Russians drove back the Tatars, then the Tatars drove back the Russians. Almost the entire Russian front regiment was destroyed. The Tatars began to advance upon the center and managed to undercut the wooden staff holding the Russian banner, but the Russians were able to recapture it. Then the Tatars decided to break through the Russian lines and struck with all their forces at the right flank. The main regiment in the middle of the Russian line was in danger of being outflanked. It was at this point that Prince Vladimir ordered his reserve regiment to come out of the woods and attack the Tatars. This unexpected blow decided the fate of the battle. The Tatars were unable to withstand the new and fresh host, and Mamai saw his troops fleeing. Tradition holds it that he himself joined his fleeing warriors with the words: “Great is the Christian God!” Prince Vladimir then stood on the battlefield under the princely banner and ordered the trumpets to sound the battle cry of victory. Princes and commanders began to join him from all sides, but Dimitri was nowhere to be seen. Vladimir asked everyone about the whereabouts of his brother, but no one could answer him. They began to look for Dimitri, dead or alive, all over the battlefield and for a long time were unable to find him, but finally two warriors saw him lying under a tree. Having been stunned by a powerful blow, he fell from his horse and lost consciousness. Coming to his senses and seeing joyous faces all around him, Prince Dimitri gave fervent thanks to God and then, getting up on his horse, slowly rode over the entire battlefield, on which lay up to 200,000 Russian and Tatar warriors. Among the dead were many princes and both the monks sent by St. Sergius. In accordance with Prince Dimitri’s wishes, the Russian
Church established a commemoration of all warriors killed at the Kulikovo battlefield to be held on St. Demetrius Saturday—the last Saturday before the feast day of the holy martyr-warrior St. Demetrius of Thessalonika on October 26th.

The Tatar yoke did not end with the Russian victory on the Kulikovo battlefield and continued for another 100 years, but the power of the Tatar hordes was broken, and the Russian people came to realize that with God’s help they could vanquish the Tatars. Such was the ancient miracle of September 8, 1380.

(Karamzin, 2016, paragraphs 9-12)

How can any Orthodox Christian not be inspired by such unbreakable Orthodox saints who, by the mercy of Almighty God, could truly stand up to any horrific power of this world? 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. Their conduct is certainly consistent with 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 martyrlic 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

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

**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 Deyansky (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 of Avlona, 1998, p. 38).
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\textsuperscript{45} 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.

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.

\textit{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

\textsuperscript{45} 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”.
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]46 ” (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)

“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.

46 This bracketed entry was made by me.
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 evangicals’ 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:

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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 nominally Orthodox Christians throughout history have been guilty of atrocities against other human beings—we certainly all have our sins. Additionally, one can clearly see that it seems, very much, especially the case among Orthodox Christians—who seem to surpass practically all others in their wish to devastate themselves—that countless nominally Orthodox people have been truly obsessed with destroying their own people, in unbelievably immense numbers (especially since Marxism)—and this great self inflicted genocide is much to the delight of those who hate us. So 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 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, whereas Judaism and Islam frequently have done so. 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 Only 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 of the world from absolutely nothing by an act of complete free will (meaning that God was in no way necessitated to create anything or anyone whatsoever); 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 from absolutely nothing (and that obviously includes the entire human race, as we said) 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—who is called Christ the Theanthropos because of His condescending to become what He was not before, man (while remaining fully God), for our salvation and glorification—is consequently an embrace of falsehood and delusion, which often leads to the attempted justification and sanction of various evils.

Certainly, justification of falsehood and delusion is something, tragically, which is to be found in all the heresies of the world (something clearly to be found in the Christian and non-Christian heresies alike) to one extent or another, all of which reject Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. Again, this sort of embrace of delusion and falsehood, inherent to every false religion (inherent to every heresy)—oftentimes, inevitably, leading to the heretical religion’s sanction and justification of various evils—is something which is certainly to be found in the heresies of Judaism and Islam. 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. All the heresies inevitably fall into the justification of evil, in one way or another; whereas, Orthodox Christianity is alone the True Faith and is alone the True Church and as such the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is infallible; nevertheless, we Orthodox Christians ourselves often choose to reject Christ and His unconquerable Holy Orthodox Church, doing so we choose to embrace evil which causes great harm to ourselves and others.

With all of these things in mind, Orthodox Christians must acknowledge and lament the violence and injustices committed by very many Orthodox Christians against large numbers of Jewish people, and against large numbers of Muslims, as well. For example, many times the violence and injustice against Jews manifested itself in pogroms where very many 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, very great numbers of people of Muslim background and of Christian background are being subjected to starvation and disease and are being killed in wars started by many of the world’s power elite, from the Western countries and elsewhere, who claim to have the goal to rid these nations of tyrants and inhumane political systems—tyrants and inhumane political systems, which, ironically, this same power elite helped to install and keep in power, for many years, in the first place. Certainly, none of us—not those with great worldly power nor those with very little worldly power—will escape the Day of Judgement when the Christ will return to judge the whole world, as He promised us that He would; with the Day of Judgement always in mind, may God have mercy upon us!

With these things in mind, certainly it cannot be ignored that 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.47

“Was the Russian Revolution Jewish?” In an article in the Jerusalem Post, Seth J. Frantzman asks a question and makes a statement—or perhaps one of the editors of the paper makes the statement associated with the article authored by Frantzman, pertaining to the Marxist Revolution—namely: “Was the Russian Revolution Jewish? A hundred years after the Bolsheviks swept to power, historians and contemporaries still struggle to understand the prominent role played by Jews.” (Frantzman, 2017)

47 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 atheistic 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 Yakogda, and Matvei Berman (in addition to lesser known people, such as Aron Solts, Naftaly Frenkel, Yakov Rappoport, Lazar Kogan—who were high ranking officials in charge of various communist slave labor camps in the Gulag system, where they had great influence in the perpetration of the crimes against humanity that took place in those concentration camps), 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); also, “Kamenev had married a Jew—interestingly, Trotsky’s sister, Olga.” (Lindemann, 1997, p. 430) 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 Rappoport, 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. Historically and absolutely in general, human beings have committed great evil against other human beings; and to this very day, all of fallen humanity often commits great evil against others—all people and peoples of the world are sick and fallen, without exception, and only Christ our God can save us. (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 293), (The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, 1985, p. 167)
If we choose to be fair and acknowledge our great sinfulness—all of us acknowledging our great sinfulness—and not fall into the ignorance of self-righteousness, “for there is no one who lives and is sinless” (*The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, 1985, p. 167), then we answer the above question, “Was the Russian Revolution Jewish?” with the very truthful answer of “NO”. This is so because we must never forget that “truly each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone”—Dostoevsky is very faithful to the tradition and teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church in this statement, of this we can be sure; and as such, there is plenty of guilt to be ascribed to ALL people and peoples of the world for so much of the great evil that occurs in the world.

It was certainly not just Jews who played a great role in this great catastrophe of atheistic Marxism being implemented in Russia and Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world. There were also great numbers of people from many other groups of people who were of profound importance in the implementation of the terror of atheistic Marxism, including countless nominally Orthodox Christians or their descendants—who obviously played a huge role in the catastrophe. In fact, this horrible catastrophe could not have happened without the assent and cooperation of huge numbers of Orthodox Christians (or their descendants); and when Orthodox Christians throughout the world continue to murder their unborn children, in truly massive numbers, then we continue to see that countless of us nominally Orthodox Christians wholeheartedly continue to embrace the atheistic philosophy and power of this fallen world which is clearly immensely hostile to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. As such, given many of these historical facts, obviously, in no way is there a justification for the great stupidity of countless nominally Orthodox Christians who willingly followed such ideologies, hostile to their Orthodox Faith, as they proceeded to devastate other Orthodox Christians and themselves. I, myself, in regard to my thoughts and actions, am so often more stupid than all of the aforementioned people, whether these people were nominally Orthodox or not—as we are all guilty of such willful ignorance and hatred of others, in our thoughts and actions, so oftentimes throughout our lives.

Once again, with all of the aforementioned kept in mind that “truly each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone” and “that there is no one who lives and is sinless” we also do not deny that there were unmistakably great numbers of Jews who played a huge role in the immense catastrophe associated Marxism; and we must also never deny that ALL peoples and people share the guilt for the evil that people commit against other people. There were countless people of Orthodox Christian heritage, countless Jews, and countless others who chose to have no compassion and to be incredibly cruel to other human beings and who chose to be stupid enough in their embrace of atheistic ideologies, such as Marxism, which lead to the destruction
of countless people. As such, no one should scapegoat; and Frantzman is right in communicating that Jews are often targeted unjustly with exclusive blame for the crimes of Marxism:

The role of Jews in the Russian Revolution, and by extension Communism writ large, has always been a sensitive subject because antisemitic voices often painted Soviet Communism as a Jewish plot, or “Jewish Bolshevism.” (Frantzman, 2017, paragraph 8)

We see this essentially mentioned elsewhere, as well:

The outsized prevalence of Jews in the ranks of the revolution that broke out a century ago on Nov. 7 has remained a mainstay of anti-Semitic vitriol in the area. (Haaretz, 2018, paragraph 2)

However, Solzhenitsyn is also right when he accuses some people of unjustly attempting to throw all of the blame for the atrocities of Marxism exclusively onto the Russian people—though, to be sure, huge numbers of people of Orthodox Christian heritage and ancestry did undoubtedly embrace the ancient and enduring lie of atheism. Indeed, atheism and idolatry, in all their forms, are great lies which have been manifested in so many ways throughout human history. Atheism and idolatry have certainly manifested themselves in the form of countless heresies and in numerous godless ideologies and philosophies—and the leaders of all of these false belief systems have motivated countless of their delusional followers to attack Orthodox Christianity vehemently (for the Orthodox Church is alone the True Church and, as such, poses the greatest threat to all the deception and power of this world)48. This time the great lie of atheism was being very powerfully propagated by the new Marxist leadership—who clearly lied to the people with their claims that they were seeking human rights for all, by first oppressing and murdering countless people. Clearly, history and the confession of Orthodox martyrs has shown that this very same power elite truly looked to destroy Orthodox Christianity and Russia, through unprecedented mass murder and cultural genocide—but this very same power elite and their allies failed, as all others have failed before them. And all others trying the same evil against the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ will always fail. To God Belongs All Glory!

Here is some of what Solzhenitsyn had to say, regarding Russians being entirely blamed for the atrocities associated with atheistic Marxism in Russia:

48 Father Romanides and Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos speak, consistent with Orthodox teaching, of all the heresies arising from a form of idolatry seen in the denial, in one form or another, of the absolute transcendence of the Supra-substantial Triune God.
Solzhenitsyn argues that some Jewish satire of the revolutionary period “consciously or unconsciously descends on the Russians” as being behind the genocide. But he states that all the nation’s ethnic groups must share the blame, and that people shy away from speaking the truth about the Jewish experience. (Walsh, 2003, paragraph 3)

In one remark which infuriated Russian Jews, he [Solzhenitsyn] wrote: “If I would care to generalise, and to say that the life of the Jews in the camps was especially hard, I could, and would not face reproach for an unjust national generalisation. But in the camps where I was kept, it was different. The Jews whose experience I saw - their life was softer than that of others.” (Walsh, 2003, paragraph 4)

At the same time and at other times, Solzhenitsyn comments on history and people who oppressed others. People who have oppressed others, to at least some degree, is a tremendously large group—it is essentially the entire human race, as we have said. And yet Solzhenitsyn cannot blame any one group of people for the atrocities that they committed as being somehow something that only they uniquely could have committed—this is certainly obvious when any other group of people could have committed the same crimes, were they in the same circumstances as the oppressors (and any group of people could have chosen to not commit the atrocities as well) (Solzhenitsyn, 1973, p. 168). Certainly, humanity throughout its history has been known to be incredibly inhumane towards other people. The explanation as to why this happens is sometimes as baffling as our own fallen human nature.

Pertaining to some of these matters, Solzhenitsyn comments on some specific circumstances which of course can be generally applied to many circumstances in human history:

“But it is impossible to find the answer to the eternal question: who is to be blamed, who led us to our death? To explain the actions of the Kiev cheka [secret police] only by the fact that two thirds were Jews, is certainly incorrect.” (Walsh, 2003, paragraph 5)

Nevertheless, as we have already said, it is an historic fact that there were a great many people of Jewish heritage who had tremendous power during the great atrocity of Marxism in the former Russian Empire—an Empire which was destroyed and which became the atheistic Soviet Union and whose early power elite attempted to destroy the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ in its hatred of Russia and the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. But there were countless others who also had great power and also committed great atrocities— this is also obvious and an historic fact. The fact that people of Orthodox Christian heritage have murdered, and continue to murder, their own unborn children through abortion in Russia and Greece and throughout the whole Orthodox world in truly tremendous numbers is a testament of some of the staggering
atrocities which we nominally Orthodox Christians have chosen to commit, unabated—and in the final analysis, this is all our fault and is no one else’s.

Regarding the Communist revolution, and its early enthusiastic reception by huge portions of the Jewish community of Russia, and the “central” role played by Jews in establishing Marxism in Russia, we see people who know some history and acknowledge certain facts. People at Russia’s main Jewish museum acknowledge the truth of some assertions—unveiling “an exhibition that underlines unapologetically how and why Jews became central to the revolution.” (Haaretz, 2018, paragraph 7)

Yet ahead of the centenary, Russia’s main Jewish museum—which since its opening in 2012 has tackled head-on the subject of revolutionary Jews in its permanent display—unveiled an exhibition that underlines unapologetically how and why Jews became central to the revolution. (Haaretz, 2018, paragraph 7)

In regard to what the person who runs that same Jewish museum has to say, we see the following:

Regardless of the exact makeup of the first Soviet government, “there was great and undeniable enthusiasm among basically all the elements that made up Russian Jewry during the revolution,” said Gorin, who runs the $50 million state-of-the-art museum that last year won an award from UNESCO for its promotion of tolerance. (Haaretz, 2018, paragraph 14)

This “great and undeniable enthusiasm among basically all the elements that made up Russian Jewry during the revolution” is certainly understandable—given the fallen human nature that all of humanity shares—for it was not their Orthodox Christian nation that was about to be destroyed through civil war and atheistic Marxism, nor was it their Churches being destroyed and desecrated en masse, nor was it their people in the tens of millions about to be murdered in Communist concentration camps. One can almost be certain that the overwhelming majority of people who were not Orthodox Christian did not care, in fact were likely glad, that Marxism was about to ravage a great Orthodox Christian nation—and was about to come close to completely destroying it. Likewise, countless nominally Orthodox Christians often do not care when others suffer—this is also certainly understandable, but also never justified when any person or group of people does this.

Once again, what we mention here, is something that is clearly symptomatic of our fallen human nature, and tragically often afflicts ALL of us throughout the entire human race without
exception—as humanity worships itself in all manner of false religions, in all the heresies and in its atheism—as countless people (with multitudes of nominally Orthodox Christians included) show great hatred for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, the Only True Church. And this great affliction associated with our fallen human nature and often willful embrace of selfishness and all other manner of evil is arguably the strongest indication of the truth of our being able to do absolutely nothing good without the unfathomable grace of the Triune God Who, in complete freedom of will, created us all from absolutely nothing and gave us tremendous blessedness and opportunity to grow in the unspeakable grace of the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity, the only True God.

With all of this in mind, for that matter, tragically and in all truth, countless people of Orthodox Christian heritage themselves did not care about the impending catastrophe associated with their embrace of atheism and instead blindly helped in the great devastation being wrought against their own people. But there were also countless Orthodox heroes (both known and unknown) who by the grace of God were unbreakable, both in Russia and throughout the Orthodox Christian world. Countless people, from ALL backgrounds, demonstrated their hatred for one another—and that was certainly proved and manifested in such unbelievably inhumane conditions, created by people who wanted to create such terrible circumstances for great numbers of other human beings. But, by the grace of the absolutely transcendent Triune God, the Orthodox Saints, both known and unknown, emerged unconquerable despite their horrific sufferings which would have almost certainly broken most of the rest of us completely (myself obviously included).

And, obviously, regardless of how enthusiastic we are of other people’s destruction—for “Schadenfreude” has been and remains a sorrowful reality in our fallen human nature and remains something clearly and tragically to be seen throughout the entire human race, in regard to the thoughts and actions of ALL people in their relation to other people—nevertheless, an old Greek saying reminds us succinctly that “An injustice is never blessed.” Therefore, consistent with this old saying, it is not surprising that we hear:

[…]the hopes for Jewish emancipation through communism were ultimately dashed, making some Jews prominent perpetrators of repression and turning many other Jews into victims. (Haaretz, 2018, paragraph 27)

Also, let us note, in reiteration of what was already said:

Not many Jews, even traditional ones, mourned the fall of the tsar. And for a while at least, many Jews were ready to conclude, if hesitantly, that the Bolsheviks were
the lesser of two evils. On the other hand, large numbers of Jews were alert to the grave dangers of a social revolution, and before too long many of them came to the conclusion that as far as Jews were concerned, the Bolsheviks were even worse than the tsars. It is a conclusion that in retrospect is difficult to avoid in relation to practically any group that one wants to consider, industrial workers included, the presumed beneficiaries of the Bolshevik takeover. (Lindemann, 1997, p. 425)

This statement is certainly true, but miserably fails to mention the fact that no one group of people suffered more because of atheistic Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe than people of Orthodox Christian background. This is certainly true, as the power elite of Marxism, in their profound atheism, obviously did not have humanitarian goals in mind—rather, in their hatred of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, domination and destruction of vast numbers of people was their goal. This is something that has already been mentioned and will continue to be mentioned throughout this work.

From start to finish the Gulag had claimed 66 million lives, according to Solzhenitsyn’s calculations (25,000 perished in the construction of the White Sea-Baltic Canal alone), and in its heyday there were never fewer than 10 to 15 million men, women, and children behind barbed wire. While these figures were high, they did not provoke much dissent among commentators, and most of Solzhenitsyn’s documentation was confirmed as generally accurate. (Scammell, 1985, p. 932)

Various writers and scholars speak of the profound influence and great power that many people of Jewish heritage had within the Russian revolution and afterwards. Lindemann discusses the following remarkable history:

Any effort to compose a list of the most important Bolsheviks must be unavoidably subjective, but it seems beyond serious debate that in the first twenty years of the Bolshevik Party the top ten to twenty leaders included close to a majority of Jews. Of the seven “major figures” listed in The Makers of the Russian Revolution, four are of Jewish origin, and of the fifty-odd others included in the list, Jews constitute approximately a third, Jews and non-Russians close to a majority. (Lindemann, 1997, pp. 429-430)

In at least the second part of the above quotation, Lindemann is here citing these facts in a footnote—and we are informed by Lindemann that this information is from the work of the following authors and publication: Georges Haupt and Jean-Jacques Marie, Makers of the Russian Revolution (Ithaca, N.Y., 1971).
Lindemann continues his discussion of the communist revolution, speaking of non-Jews and Jews who were prominent in Marxist leadership—and discusses some of the relationships that existed.

A list of prominent non-Jews in the party would begin with Lenin, whose name outweighs the others, although in the first year or so of the revolution, Trotsky’s fame rivaled his. Yet his status as a non-Jew and a “real Russian” is not as clear as subsequent Soviet propaganda tried to make it. His grandfather on his mother’s side was Jewish, though a convert to Christianity and married to a woman of German origin. On Lenin’s father’s side were Kalmyk and Swedish forebears. Lenin the non-Jew, in other words, was Jewish enough to have fallen under the shadow of doubt in Nazi Germany or to have been accepted in the state of Israel. He was of course widely believed to be a Jew, although he was Great Russian in a cultural sense and of mixed origin in other regards. (Lindemann, 1997, p. 432)

In what follows, Lindemann speaks of Stalin and his close relationships to prominent Soviet Jewish leaders who were devoted to him (and who were every bit as ruthless as Stalin was); and we also see mentioned Stalin’s familial relationship, through marriage, to some people of Jewish heritage.

Determining Stalin’s real attitude to Jews is difficult. Not only did he repeatedly speak out against anti-Semitism but both his son and daughter married Jews, and several of his closest and most devoted lieutenants from the late 1920s through the 1930s were of Jewish origin, for example, Lazar Moiseyevich Kaganovich, Maxim Litvinov, and the notorious head of the secret police, Genrikh Yagoda. (Lindemann, 1997, p. 453)

It certainly may have been the case that Stalin spoke out against anti-Semitism (and whether it was sincere or not, is likely something that one cannot know for certain); but one thing is for sure, Stalin and his associates had absolutely no problem with the mass murder of innumerable Orthodox Christians—truly the irony of ironies, to say the least. The preaching of tolerance by atheist leaders while they commit mass murder in breathtaking magnitude is diabolical hypocrisy; and all who were very powerful and supported, and were instrumental, in such massive devastation of humanity are each every bit as guilty as Stalin was—for Stalin could never have done this by himself, regardless of how evil he truly chose to be. No one leader can do everything by himself, whether it be good or evil, without like-minded people supporting, encouraging, pressuring, and greatly empowering them to do so. One can be sure that for such a far reaching and tremendous genocide Stalin had great empowerment from very powerful people
and from weak people alike, known and unknown, from all backgrounds—as they blindly proceeded to commit great evil against themselves and others.

Solzhenitsyn is correct when he tells us that the founders and leaders of Marxism had the intention to fulfill their goals of an atheist totalitarian state (and an atheist totalitarian world, for that matter) from the very beginning, with any manner of evil doing being regarded as permissible in order to accomplish their goals—here, one cannot help but think of what Dostoevsky saw and warned would happen to people, and to society, when any embrace of atheism was substantially present among people. Certainly, just as all the Orthodox Saints, by the grace of God, always saw through the evil designs and deceptions of powerful people and their hate-filled atheistic goals, in the very end, the most powerful people who choose to unite with various forms of atheism—in their promotion of violence, deception, and all other wickedness—finish with nothing. Stalin certainly did not plan or accomplish the evil of atheistic Marxism by himself; instead, he served a larger goal and plan, which predated his rise to power:

“A close study of our modern history shows that there never was any such thing as Stalinism, either as a doctrine, or as a path of national life, or as a state system. … Stalin was a very consistent and faithful—if also very untalented—heir to the spirit of Lenin’s teaching.” (Scammell, 1985, p. 668)

This is very believable, given the abundance of people who, like Stalin, were also great mass murderers and were always in Stalin’s inner circle. Additionally, Lenin had no problem promoting the mass murder of countless Russians, if the revolution called for it: “Let 90% of the Russian people die” [Lenin]. (Neviarovich, 2004, paragraph 19) We also must mention that without the apostasy of huge numbers of people of Orthodox Christian heritage, which indeed occurred, then a great many of the atrocities of Marxism would not have occurred. Had the apostasy and atheism embraced by great numbers of people of Orthodox Christian heritage not been chosen by those great numbers of people then very much of the catastrophe would have been averted, by the mercy of God—one can almost be certain of this, despite the fact that so many people outside of the Holy Orthodox Church hated us and wanted to see Orthodox Christians destroyed. It appears all but inescapable that the root of the Marxist catastrophe was the great apostasy whole heartedly embraced by tremendous numbers of people of Orthodox Christian heritage. Great numbers of people of Orthodox Christian heritage (where very many of these people had great worldly power and very many others clearly did not) were instrumental in Marxism’s horrific atrocities—these people of Orthodox Christian heritage were instrumental in their own self destruction and in the destruction of countless others—by their having wholeheartedly embraced atheism and having apostatized from the Holy Orthodox Church of
Christ. Certainly, when we Orthodox, of our own free will, choose any form of atheism then how on earth could such apostasy and atheism end right for us nominally Orthodox Christians and for people around us? Additionally, and obviously, it was not just people of Orthodox Christian heritage and roots who chose to embrace various apostasies and atheism during the time of the communist revolution—there were countless other people who did the same, from all backgrounds, in this truly catastrophic and wholehearted embrace of apostasy and atheism.

In regard to Stalin, we should note that he was a Georgian of Orthodox Christian heritage. In fact, we are told that Stalin was an Orthodox seminarian and ‘In 1899, when he was about to graduate, he was expelled from the seminary because of his “disloyal” views.’ (Deutscher, 1969, p.105) Stalin, the former Orthodox Christian seminarian denounced Anti-Semitism repeatedly (Lindemann, 1997, p. 453)—which is a very good thing to do, for all such hatred should be denounced unequivocally; and such denunciation of hatred and bigotry should be independent of perceived self interest and without any double standards or subservience to anyone. But Stalin—along with his closest allies—tortured and killed countless people (great multitudes of them of Orthodox Christian heritage) and attempted to destroy the Holy Orthodox Church and other faiths in Russia. Such great hypocrisy and evil on the part of a former Orthodox Christian seminarian—and on the part of others who were not Orthodox—should not surprise anyone given our fallen human nature and the potential for any of us to fall and then proceed to commit all manner of evil—this certainly can happen to anyone of us, when we choose to not seek God and to not guard our hearts (St. Philaret of Chernigov, 2015, p. 255).

Regarding Jewish militants associated with the revolution in Russia when compared to the “defender’s of the old regime” (who without a doubt were people that were predominately Orthodox Christian), Lindemann has the following to say:

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49 The overwhelming majority of the people who were murdered in this catastrophe were of Orthodox Christian heritage—they were somehow either at least nominally Orthodox Christian or born of parents who were Orthodox Christian and/or they were from families whose lineage was substantially of Orthodox Christian background. To see this, one only needs to look at the massive number of people murdered during atheistic Marxism in Russia and then look at the demographics of the Russian Empire shortly before that time—one should look at who the atheistic communist regime targeted in their failed attempt to destroy the Holy Orthodox Church. The Holy Orthodox Church had, overwhelming, the most people (in at least nominal membership), it was the most powerful faith community, and the most feared by the atheists of that time. The atheists were right to fear the Holy Orthodox Church, for the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ—only by the mercy of the absolutely transcendent Triune God—was, yet again, about to be seen as something ultimately indestructible, as it always has been and will be forever.
Some of those revolutionaries, especially when driven into the moral anarchy of civil war, proved themselves capable of breath-taking ruthlessness. The defender’s of the old regime, or those who in other ways opposed the revolutionary left, were no less ruthless. As the revolution developed, it was often a question of kill or be killed. (Lindemann, 1997, p. 427)

Lindemann continues and speaks of the “dreaded Cheka”, consistent with what we saw mentioned earlier from Solzhenitsyn:

[…] for there were still many Jewish Bolsheviks, especially at the very top of the party. And there were even more in the dreaded Cheka, or secret police, where the Jewish revolutionary became visible in a terrifying form. (Lindemann, 1997, p. 429)

This is all certainly believable, and one must not forget that those “defender’s of the old regime” were not the ones who started the revolution which culminated with a great catastrophe for countless people. The defender’s of the old regime were fighting against people who looked to start a civil war and plunge a great nation into murderous chaos—which they largely succeeded in doing for many years. Nevertheless, it also must not be forgotten that there were great numbers of people from all cultures and from numerous belief systems who chose atheism and committed great atrocities before, during and after the revolution—very often, throughout history, humanity commits atrocities against humanity.

We once again look at the research and writing of Frantzman, in regard to the very substantial role played by some people of Jewish background in the Russian revolution:

When Theodor Herzl visited the Russian Empire in 1903, he met Count Witte, the minister of finance. According to Leonard Schapiro, who authored The Role of the Jews in the Russian Revolutionary Movement in 1961, Herzl found that “50% of the membership of the revolutionary parties was Jewish.” Herzl asked Witte why. (Frantzman, 2017, paragraph 32)

“I think it’s the fault of our government. The Jews are too oppressed.” Schapiro argues that Jews moved into revolutionary circles as they gained access to intellectual circles. Ironically then, the more Jews gained wealth and freedom in the empire, the more they

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50 Theodor Herzl was the “founder of the political form of Zionism, a movement to establish a Jewish homeland.” And Herzl was the the first President of the World Zionist Organization. (found, in an article written by David Ben-Gurion, in britannica.com)

51 This was Witte’s response to Herzl’s question.
also awakened to their predicament and joined the slow gurgling rebellion against the ancient regime. (Frantzman, 2017, paragraph 33)

But as we saw, as it was mentioned earlier: for very many groups of people things were actually worse under atheistic Marxism than it was under the Tsars and the Russian empire—including for Jews (Lindemann, 1997, p. 425). Additionally, regarding what is quoted above, these are obviously very substantial numbers of Jewish people in revolutionary parties, at that time; and then Frantzman goes on to essentially praise many of the leaders of these revolutionary parties; and by extension Frantzman essentially commends atheistic Marxist ideology and practice—whose leadership, from all backgrounds, looked to devastate the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and nearly destroyed Russia.

The situation Jews were born into in the 19th-century Pale of Settlement has no parallel with today’s Jewish experience. But despite economic hardship there was a spark in this community amidst unique circumstances of radical change that impelled it forward to leadership in numerous sectors in Russia and abroad. (Frantzman, 2017, paragraph 59)

As one can see, what was just quoted from Frantzman is clearly a disturbing, insensitive, and thus baffling commendation being given to many of the leaders of Communism; and unfortunately similar remarks—reflecting the same dismissive attitude in regard to human suffering caused by the atrocities being committed by a power elite—are made by many others. Once again, such praise is senseless and shows a great disregard for the suffering of others—given the incredible atrocities, given the great crimes against humanity, associated with the followers and leadership of atheistic Marxism.

Let us continue to look at some of the atheistic leaders of Marxism who played a substantial part in the establishment, and the ruling, of the Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn spoke of many powerful figures in Marxism who committed great crimes against humanity; Genrikh Yagoda and Naftaly Frenkel were among them, and Solzhenitsyn mentioned them in *The Gulag Archipelago*; and Yagoda and Frenkel were among many others who were infamous for their atrocities and crimes against humanity in the communist concentration camps.

Khlevniuk, in what is to follow, informs us of some of what Frenkel had done, though this is not exhaustive by any means:

He was head of construction on the Baikal-Amur railway (BAM) and head of the NKVD Chief Administration of Camps for Railway Construction. Frenkel received a rank of
general and became (in no small degree, thanks to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s book) one of the best-known leaders of the Gulag. (Khlevniuk, 2004, p. 35)

Once again, regarding Frenkel, Solzhenitsyn tells us that:

A stubborn legend persists in the Archipelago to the effect that “The camps were thought up by Frenkel.” (Solzhenitsyn, 1975a, p. 75)

However, Solzhenitsyn is quick to dismiss this rumor—that the communist concentration camps were thought up by Frenkel—by saying that the slave labor camps were brought into existence earlier, in 1918 (Solzhenitsyn, 1975a, p. 75).

Long before Frenkel they already used to say: “correction through labor” [which according to Solzhenitsyn was understood to mean] “destruction through labor”(Solzhenitsyn, 1975a, pp. 75-76)

Nevertheless, Solzhenitsyn takes nothing away from Frenkel in such matters, telling us that it was Frenkel who “expressed his famous thesis about using up the prisoner in the first three months.” (Solzhenitsyn, 1975a, p. 77) Now those are the sentiments of a true atheist, Marxist humanitarian! But one can be sure that this gentleman’s sentiments would have been much different had he—and others for whom he cared—been suffering the same atrocities that he was powerfully advocating, and implementing, for other people to suffer.

Additionally, in no way refusing to give Frenkel his proper “credit”, Solzhenitsyn informs us that Frenkel essentially went a very long way toward “perfecting” the communist concentration camps. For Frenkel’s goal, according to Solzhenitsyn, was the construction of socialism through slave labor in concentration camps, “constructing socialism through the use of prisoner labor”52 (Solzhenitsyn, 1975a, p. 78). In bold and exacting detail, Frenkel first proposed these changes to Stalin—after he had been flown to have a three hour meeting with Stalin regarding these matters, in 1929. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975a, p. 78).

52 Is this what the atheist power elite told people that socialism was going to be, before they assumed control of the nation and its people? What lies were told to bring people here, and what great evil was willfully embraced by countless nominally Orthodox Christians to make this catastrophe possible? All humanity needs to understand our fallen human nature, as much as possible. And we Orthodox Christians all need to repent, as do all others, in order to understand that which consequently brought countless people here—and in order for us to understand that which brought (and continues to bring) countless people to other circumstances, throughout history, where great evil likewise has flourished and continues to flourish. The tremendous irony of these circumstances cannot be lost on anyone nor should this catastrophe ever be forgotten or allowed to ever be repeated against any people ever again. This should be one of humanity’s major goals—which the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ teaches us can only be accomplished by the grace of the absolutely transcendent Supra-substantial Trinity.
Proceeding to Genrikh Yagoda. Reuters had the following to say of Yagoda, that he was “the head of the Soviet-era NKVD secret police who oversaw Stalinist purges in the 1930s and set up the GULAG forced labor camps.” (Reuters staff, 2015, paragraph 1)

The GULAG, the communist concentration camps, tormented and killed tens of millions of people over a relatively substantial period of time—Yagoda and his allies clearly had a huge task in front of them; and certainly nothing this massive can be brought to existence and sustained without help from very many people (powerful and weak alike).

We are also told that “Yagoda ran the NKVD between 1934 and 1936, was dismissed in 1937 and executed in 1938 for treason and conspiracy, becoming one of millions of victims of the Soviet system that he himself helped establish under Joseph Stalin.” (Reuters staff, 2015, paragraph 2)

These forced labor camps, and associated persecutions, murdered tens of millions of people—Yagoda, Frenkel and countless others, both Jews and non-Jews alike, both known and unknown, people of all backgrounds, were instrumental in these great atrocities against humanity. Indeed St. Justin Popovich and St. Nikolai Velimirovich were right regarding the leadership of Marxism, and regarding all who embraced its atheism and atrocities: “The twentieth century was the century of a Sanhedrin comprising baptised and unbaptised Judases” (Popovic, 2000, p. 168). It is sickening when we contemplate what evil any of us are capable of committing if we cease to fear God (St. Philaret of Chernigov, 2015, p. 255), in any embrace of atheism. If any of us, without any exception, allow ourselves to forget the great love and mercy of God toward all of us and when we cease to fear God—something that can be seen in any disregard for any compassion toward others, seen in any movement toward any self centered atheism, of which we are all guilty sometimes (to various extents and in various circumstances)—then we move toward hell.

St. Tikhon warned the communist leaders, regarding their atheistic inhumanity toward the people, that it would not end right for them. For how can anyone get away with crimes against humanity forever and not answer for it? St. Tikhon warned the Marxist leadership that if they did not truly seek justice for the people rather than attempting to destroy them, then the consequences for their crimes would end in catastrophe for these leaders. How could it not end that way eventually? Truly, and very obviously, it is the height of great arrogance and extreme stupidity to think that an injustice will be allowed to exist forever and that we will never have to answer for any evil that we choose to embrace. Indeed, it is obvious that “An injustice is never blessed.” And, for whatever we do in this world there are consequences in this world, in one way
or another; and most certainly there are consequences at the Last Judgement, where we all must stand before Christ, when Christ our God alone will judge all of us. May God the Supra-substantial Trinity have mercy upon us, for without God we are nothing and we are lost. St. Tikhon spoke very inspiringly and truthfully to the Marxist leadership, and to all others choosing to commit crimes against humanity, when he fearlessly warned them, faithful to Christ: “and you who took sword in hand will yourselves die of the sword (cf. Matt. 26:52).” (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 20)

Continuing, we look more at some prominent Marxist leaders such as Grigory Yakovlevich Sokolnikov, and at Grigory Yevseyevich Zinoviev (Apfelbaum); in addition to looking further at Alexander Helphand (Parvus) and others. Lindemann speaks of Sokolnikov:

To the list of leading and highly visible Jewish Bolsheviks could be added such names as Grigory Sokolnikov (one-time editor of Pravda and leader of the delegation that finally signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with Germany after Yoffe adamantly refused to have his name associated with such a “disgraceful” treaty) […] (Lindemann, 1997, pp. 431-432)

According to St. Tikhon and others, this Brest-Litovsk treaty actually worked out great for the Marxists and for Germany and its allies, because Russia would have likely defeated Germany had the war continued and had Russian nationalism been allowed to surge in the defense of Russia; and, certainly, the last thing that the atheist Marxist power elite wanted was for Russians to have great love for their Orthodox Christian nation and defeat their enemies, both internal and external (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918).

Solzhenitsyn speaks of Sokolnikov, as well:

_Sokolnikov (Brilliant), Grigory Yakovlevich_ (1888-1939) […] Returned to Russia with Lenin’s group. From July 1917, in the Bolshevik Central Committee, editor of Pravda, member of the Politburo when the October Revolution took place. Organized the seizure of the banks, became their commissar general. Signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty as head of the Soviet delegation, took part in the supplementary discussions in Berlin. In charge on the political side of operations to put down the workers’ risings at Izhevsk and Votkinsk and the peasant risings in Vyatka province. Then in charge of punitive operations on the Don which provoked the Don rising. (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, p. 294)

Notice how Sokolnikov and others put down workers’ revolts. Truly ironic since the leaders of Marxism claimed to wish to liberate working people, not oppress them.
Solzhenitsyn writes about the one time incredibly powerful Marxist leader Zinoviev as well:

_Zinoviev (Apfelbaum), Grigory Yevseyevich_ (1883-1936) (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, p. 295)

During the 1905 Revolution, complained of heart trouble (at the age of twenty-two), was forbidden by a specialist to “take any part in politics,” and went abroad again. Once the major revolutionary events were past, he recovered and returned to Russia. In 1908 he was arrested for the first time, was released after a few months as a result of intervention on his behalf, and this time went abroad to stay. From 1907, he was a permanent member of the Bolshevik Central Committee. When Lenin changed his entourage in 1908, Zinoviev became his closest assistant, and co-editor of all his publications. He followed Lenin to Galicia, and back to Switzerland, was taken by him to the Zimmerwald and Kienthal conferences. Throughout the war years the “Central Committee” meant Lenin, Zinoviev, and anyone they cared to coopt. He returned to Russia via Germany in Lenin’s group, was fully informed on the connections with Parvus and the question of German aid. After the press revelations in July 1917 he went into hiding with Lenin (on the Finnish Gulf) to escape possible trial. Remained in hiding until the October Revolution. After the Revolution, chairman of the Petrograd Soviet of Worker’s Deputies, chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Union of Communes of the Northern Region—i.e., after the flight of the Soviet government to Moscow in March 1918, he was virtual dictator of Petrograd and northwestern Russia. The terrorist operations of 1918-1919 were carried out under his direction. From 1919, head of Comintern. In 1923-1924 he helped Stalin to defeat Trotsky and entrench himself as Secretary General. [...] After 1926, lost all his main posts, and all importance. Tried twice—in 1935 and 1936—before he was shot. Is said to have kissed the boots of the Chekists who led him out to be shot, pleading for mercy. (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, pp. 295-296)

Zinoviev apparently lived and died a coward, as many others did—I can certainly relate to this, for I have been a coward my entire life and, as such, would likely die a coward as well (as countless other people likely would do the same). But it must in all certainty be noted that—by the grace of the absolutely incomprehensible Triune God—the Orthodox Saints were unbreakable and exhibited a wisdom, compassion, and great courage unmatched in human history. With that understood, no Orthodox Saint would have been broken like this, nor could any godless people break any Orthodox Saint, ever. And this is why the Marxist power elite—and others throughout history, regardless of their tremendous worldly power and atheistic oppression of people—were never able to destroy the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ; and, by the
unfathomable grace of Supra-substantial Triune God, the Orthodox Church will indeed endure forever, as Christ promised.

We now look some into the life and works of Alexander Helphand (Parvus) who conspired with powerful people in Germany in order to help Germany in World War I and to help Lenin and the rest of the Marxist power elite against Imperial Russia. Parvus, Lenin, Trotsky, and many others looked to destroy Tsarist Russia and the Holy Orthodox Church and replace Imperial Russia with a murderous atheistic regime—which ostensibly was to be for working people, but instead was godlessly oppressive to practically everyone within its influence.

Looking at the work and research of Zeman and Scharlau we see confirmation of much of what Solzhenitsyn had accused Parvus of doing against Russia during that time period.

The revelations from the captured archives of the German Foreign Ministry, soon after the Second World War, made possible at least a partial decoding of the enigma of Helphand’s life. The secret Great War series among these papers contain a large number of documents concerning Alexander Helphand. He emerged as the central figure in the conspiratorial connexions between the Imperial Government and the Russian Social Democratic party, and in particular Lenin’s Bolshevik faction of it. The contention that the Imperial German Government had taken a great deal of interest in the spread of rebellion in wartime Russia could now be supported by documentary evidence. (Zeman & Scharlau, 1965, p. 3)

Certainly, rebellion in wartime Russia was to the advantage of Imperial Germany, and to the Marxist leadership, for neither group of people could defeat Orthodox Russia until it was substantially destroyed from within.

As we continue our look into Imperial Germany and the Marxist leadership, and their connections, in the research of Zeman and Scharlau it is mentioned that a German Government official—and, from the context, from where the quotation is found, this is presumably Brockdorff-Rantzau about whom the authors are speaking—essentially took the same views of the leading Marxists of the time, regarding how to defeat and destroy Imperial Russia.

53 Clearly from the context, “Imperial Government” must, in every likelihood, mean “Imperial German Government”—and not “Imperial Russia”, which the German government and the Marxist leadership was trying to destroy.
First of all, the Minister drafted a long telegram to the Foreign Ministry, summing up the views Helphand had expressed, and making them his own. (Zeman & Scharlau, 1965, p. 211)

This which follows is the quotation from the Minister—as mentioned earlier, presumably from Brockdorff-Rantzau.

Either we are both militarily and economically in a position to continue the war effectively until the autumn. In that case it is essential that we try now to create the greatest possible degree of chaos in Russia. To this end, any patently apparent interference in the course of the Russian revolution should be avoided. In my opinion, we should, on the other hand, make every effort surreptitiously to deepen the differences between the moderate and extremist parties, for it is greatly in our interests that the latter should gain the upper hand, since a drastic change would then be inevitable and would take forms which would necessarily shake the very existence of the Russian Empire…In all probability, we should, in about three months’ time, be able to count on the disintegration having reached the stage where we could break the power of the Russians by military action. If we were now to launch a premature offensive, we should only give all the various centrifugal forces a motive for uniting and even, perhaps, lead the army to rally in its fight against Germany. (Zeman & Scharlau, 1965, p. 211)

A united Orthodox Russia was unconquerable, and Russia’s enemies knew it. For this reason, nothing overtly malicious was to be manifested, as much as that was possible—until circumstances were right; apparently timing was everything, and Russia’s enemies knew it. And there were enough people who had tragically apostatized within Russia, which made a radical revolution in Russia all the more possible—at the very least, Russia subjected to the right propaganda, agitation, and foreign money financing the communists would fall into a tragic civil war—and to the great joy of the Marxist power elite and that of the leadership of Imperial Germany, that indeed is what happened. The enemies of a nation can most easily destroy it when people of that nation embrace evil and start to destroy themselves.

Volkogonov writes about Lenin and Parvus meeting, and Parvus making it clear to Lenin that as long as Germany was in a war then there would be no revolution in Germany. But, according to Parvus, in Russia there would be a catastrophe if Russia lost the war to Germany (Volkogonov, 1994, p. 114)—certainly Russia losing the war never happened, despite the apparent hopes of Parvus and others. But the Marxist leadership did make sure to prevent Russia from winning the war against Germany, which proved just as effective. Indeed, according to St.
Tikhon, Russia was on the verge of winning that war and the Marxist power elite viewed such an imminent victory for Russia as a threat to their power and militantly atheistic agenda—so they prevented the Russians from winning the war, in which they were indeed about to be victorious, by a “shameful truce” (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraphs 6-7). This the Marxist power elite did under the pretense of seeking peace—all the while as these treacherous leaders were creating a murderous civil war for the Russian people and for others, in order to see countless people decimated. (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraphs 5-7, 10-11)

Parvus wrote of this meeting: ‘I told Lenin my views on the social-revolutionary consequences of the war and also drew his attention to the fact that, as long as the war was going on, there would be no revolution in Germany: revolution was possible only in Russia which would blow up as a result of a German victory.’ The meeting was confirmed by the Bolshevik, Arthur Zifeldt, who saw Lenin and Parvus leaving the restaurant together. (Volkogonov, 1994, p. 114)

Volkogonov goes on to explain, in his research, that vast amounts of money from Imperial Germany flowed to Marxist leaders who looked to undermine the Russian war effort and looked to completely undermine Russia itself. The Greeks have a saying which goes something like this: “Money crucified Christ. Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver.” With enough money there is very much that is possible, either good or bad. The communist revolution was for countless Orthodox a great catastrophe, and large sums of money given to atheist leaders who looked to humiliate a nation with a “shameful truce” imposed upon it—a truce that it did not even need to pursue in the first place, given the great bravery of its soldiers (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraphs 6-7, 11)—was a disgrace for Russia. And those same atheistic traitors who orchestrated this “shameful truce” looked to completely destroy Russia on top of all this.

After the revolution, one of the first to try to unravel the secret of the German money was the German Social Democrat Eduard Bernstein. In 1921, he published an article in the Party newspaper, Vorwärts, in which he stated that it was known, and had been confirmed by General Hoffmann, that the Kaiser’s government had allowed Lenin and his comrades to pass through Germany so that they could carry on their agitation in Russia. ‘Lenin and his comrades received vast sums of money from the Kaiser’s government for their destructive agitation.’ Bernstein wrote that he had known about this in December 1917, and that it had been confirmed by someone who knew about it because of his job. Bernstein did not know the amount of money Lenin had received, nor who the contacts between Lenin and the government had been. He went on: ‘From absolutely reliable sources I have now ascertained that the sum was very large, an almost
unbelievable amount, certainly more than fifty million gold marks, a sum about the
source of which Lenin and his comrades could be in no doubt. One result of all this was
the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. General Hoffmann, who negotiated with Trotsky and other
members of the Bolshevik delegation at Brest, held the Bolsheviks in his hand in two
senses, and he made sure they felt it.’ (Volkogonov, 1994, pp. 122-123)

While the documents show many varied figures from both the German and
Russian sides participating in this affair, Lenin stood in the wings and watched while the
play, created with his involvement and agreement, was performed. He was very cautious,
made very few slips, such as claiming that he’d had no financial dealings with Ganetsky,
and left few traces on the affair. Having approved this enormously important anti-Russian
operation, he made the maximum use of the opportunities presented by the Germans.
They both sought the defeat of tsarism, and they were both satisfied. (Volkogonov, 1994,
p. 124)

Among the many things to be said and researched regarding these events, one thing is for
sure: It took very much to make Orthodox Russia fall and certainly the atheist leaders of
Marxism could not do it by themselves, nor could Germany and the other Central powers in
WWI do it (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, pp. 136-137), nor likely were there other forces that could do it
by themselves or in union with any other forces. The only way Russia, or any other Orthodox
nation could fall, during any duration of its history, is when great multitudes of their people
choose to fall away from the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ—that is what happened in Russia,
and has also happened, at various times and circumstances, in other Orthodox nations. (Davydov,
P. & Chavchavadze, Z. M., 2015, paragraphs 11-12), (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918,
paragraph 1), (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, p. 245)

Solzhenitsyn writes regarding Parvus and his actions prior, during and after the revolution
—consistent with what we saw earlier, but with some different details and some more specificity:

Parvus isolated from the main events, stranded in bronze and blue Constantinople, in
possession of the riches he had so desired, and with them every imaginable carnal delight
—the East knows how to sate the male soul and slake male desire—remote from the great
battle (“in the socialist army of reserve,” as Trotsky had advised), and in no danger of
experiencing its consequences [...] (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, p. 133)

Generally, we all have an easier time with other people’s suffering compared to our own
suffering; as we have said, all of us, all of humanity is fallen and sick, and only Christ our God
can save us (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 293). Solzhenitsyn’s analysis here is very much to the point:
Many of the leading Marxists were materially rich, in one way or another\textsuperscript{54}, and did not bother to risk their lives in war and revolution—for they had countless other people suffering the devastation of the atrocities which this same power elite so strongly, almost religiously, advocated. Many leaders (regardless of background) throughout the world historically, and presently, are of course guilty of the same conduct—advocating wars and devastation through which they themselves do not have to suffer.

Solzhenitsyn continues regarding Parvus and his great advocacy for war, with Parvus regarding war as something beneficial to a particular cause and geopolitical agenda—once again, this is something very common in the mentality of much of the world’s power elite:

[Solzhenitsyn on Parvus]: The millions which so mysteriously flooded in to him and carried him along on their tide had not dazed him or made him forgetful. And he did not forget while he was founding banks and trading with mother Odessa or stepmother Germany. The shot at Sarajevo had stung him like the stroke of a whip. Parvus had a seismographic sense of movement in the depths, he knew at once that the rock bed was slipping. That the stupid old bear would be trapped. At last it had come, the Great War, the World War. He had long foretold it, described it, invoked it—the most powerful locomotive of history. The first chariot of socialism! (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, p. 134)

[Solzhenitsyn on Parvus]: He wasted no time, there was not a minute to lose, but scurried about his secret passages, trying to persuade Turkey’s rulers that only by siding with Germany could their country break loose from the endless chain of capitulations. He speeded up the delivery of equipment and spare parts for Turkish railways and flour mills, to supply the towns with grain and put Turkey in a position not only to declare war in the autumn but to begin serious military operations in the Caucasus as soon as possible. (He was working just as busily in Bulgaria, which he also succeeded in preparing for war.) Only after these essential tasks could Parvus allow himself to settle back comfortably into his favorite and long neglected occupation—propaganda: this time in the Balkan press, with the slogan “FOR DEMOCRACY! AGAINST TSARISM!” (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, pp. 134-135)

Once again, it is easy for anyone to advocate for wars and great destruction through which they themselves, and the people for whom they care, do not need to suffer.

\textsuperscript{54} Again, the irony here just cannot be lost.
Solzhenitsyn comments on Parvus’ plans to help destroy Tsarist Russia with Germany’s help. Again, very much of this discussion of Solzhenitsyn’s is consistent with other documentation previously cited here.

In March 1915, on presentation of a definitive and detailed memorandum, he received his first advance of a million marks.

The Plan was to concentrate all their potential, all their forces, all their resources under a single command, to control from a single headquarters the activities of the Central Powers, the Russian revolutionaries, and the border peoples. (He knew the strength of this bull, and had chosen his ax to match it.) No uncoordinated, private improvisations. The Plan asserted that German victory could never be final without a revolution in Russia: until it was carved up, Russia would remain an unabated menace. The Russian fortress, however, could not be destroyed by any one of these forces in isolation, but only by a single-minded union of all three. There must be simultaneous explosions of social revolution and national revolution, with German financial and material support. Experience of the 1905 Revolution (and the author should know! What induced the Imperial government to treat their advisor seriously was that he was no mere footloose businessman but the Father of the First Revolution) enables us to see that all the symptoms are recurring, that all the conditions for revolution are still in existence, and that it will indeed proceed more quickly in conditions of world war but only if it is given a skillful push, only if the catastrophe is speeded up by action from outside. (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, pp. 136-137)

Solzhenitsyn comments on Parvus’ and other Marxists’ plans to weaken Russia through anti-patriotic propaganda—to weaken the will of the people to resist an atheist agenda, something that the Marxist power elite had mastered.

Any publication which saps the Russian will to resist, and points to social revolution as the way out of the war, will be useful. The main target for propaganda will be the army in the field. (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, p. 138)

We also note that St. Tikhon—and one can be sure that other Orthodox Saints—saw through this evil design very clearly; and St. Tikhon mentioned this deplorable conduct of the communist power elite when he admonished them, fearlessly, to stop their great atrocities against humanity (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918).
These people were never able to fool, or intimidate or break the will, of even one Orthodox Saint, ever. And these people are now long gone. But the Orthodox Saints, by the mercy of God, are forever venerated as great defenders of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

Solzhenitsyn once again comments on Parvus’ life and his central role in the Communist coup. Solzhenitsyn informs us that Parvus—as mentioned earlier, also known as Alexander (Israel) Lazarevich Parvus (Helphand)—had far reaching influence and power in the struggle to topple Imperial Russia and in establishing an atheist state through Marxism. (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, p. 285):

[Regarding Parvus]: Real leader of the Petersburg Soviet in 1905 [...] From 1910 to 1915, was in Turkey and Balkans, where he became extremely rich. Acted as financial advisor to the Turkish and Bulgarian governments when they came into the world war. From February 1915, entered into negotiations with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Undertook to bring Russia out of the war by starting a revolution there. Under cover of trading operations, sent German money to Russian revolutionaries—after the February Revolution, exclusively to the Bolsheviks, enabling them quickly to reinforce their press and their membership, which were ineffectual and low in February 1917. After the revelations of July 1917, which were not followed up, he fiercely attacked Kerensky in the German press. In 1917 he obstructed concerted socialist efforts to end the war and influenced the German government to await the collapse of Russia into anarchy and then neutralize it. (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, p. 286)

Additionally, Solzhenitsyn comments some more on how Parvus chose to conduct his life, and his not having to live through much of the devastation that he and others helped to create for countless people. Of course, this does not absolve huge numbers of people who chose to follow a lie, leading to their destruction and to the destruction of others.

[Regarding Parvus]: Left for Switzerland after the German revolution of November 1918, settled in a villa by the lake at Zurich. His orgies there, together with the scandals involving Sklarz in Berlin (he had bribed members of the Social Democratic government), led to Parvus’ expulsion from Switzerland. He built himself an opulent residence on the island of Schwanenwerder in Germany and lived there for the rest of his life. (Solzhenitsyn, 1976, pp. 286-287)

Again, we Orthodox must never forget that Parvus, and many others like him from that time, are long gone and their attempt to destroy the Holy Orthodox Church ultimately failed. And every such attempt to destroy the Orthodox Church is forever doomed to fail regardless of any and all
power of this world that attempts such evil. This is so because the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is alone the True Church and to God belongs all glory! And the Orthodox Saints (both known and unknown) who fearlessly fought these atheists—by the grace of the Incomprehensible Holy Trinity—forever remain unconquered, always praying for all Orthodox Christians and for the peace of the whole world.

Once again, let us go back to some of the history surrounding the revolution: Countless nominally Orthodox Christians—to the delight of those who profoundly hated them—embraced great deception and evil, turning their back on the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, during that time period. And into the present, for that matter, in numerous Orthodox nations, we continue to see great apostasy among people of Orthodox Christian heritage.

But we also must note that there were very many Orthodox who did not apostatize during the time of the revolution; and there are many now who have not apostatized (while of course many others have). With this in mind, Neviarovich discusses the tragic truth of countless people of Orthodox Christian heritage who indeed did choose to fall, during the time of the revolution—and, as we have said, only because of this mass apostasy was this atheistic revolution possible in the first place. With this in mind, we observe what Neviarovich rightfully said regarding great numbers of the Russian people during the time of the communist revolution:

[…] But the majority of Russian people were insane and possessed… (Neviarovich, 2004, paragraph 18)

Once again, what Neviarovich said is tragically very true, and speaks volumes. And to this day, in a world full of apostasy, even in predominately Orthodox nations—or perhaps, tragically, especially in predominately Orthodox nations—there are great numbers of people who turn their back on the only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church. Tragically, as we have said, this happened during the atheistic reign of Marxism in Russia and in other places—when tremendous numbers of people of Orthodox heritage chose atheistic ideologies and practices over Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church—such was the irony and our stupidity, we who had the only True Faith, Orthodoxy, were willing to forsake it for atheism; and such was the injustice that we committed against ourselves and countless others.

55 And many who hated the Holy Orthodox Church and Orthodox Christians were themselves often of Orthodox heritage as well; while many others with this same hatred of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, and of Orthodox Christians, clearly were not of Orthodox heritage. And God—who created all of us from absolutely nothing—knows the hearts of all people, regarding everyone’s motives for their actions, and all else that is in our hearts.
The result of the final stage of Russian people’s madness was consistent extermination of the best layer of our country, including many hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church, clergy, monkhood, as well as of own nobility, army officers, merchantry and hard-working substantial peasants; demolition of Orthodox churches, historical monuments of architecture, proclamation of godlessness in the country and deification of the communist leaders, first of all V.I. Ulyanov (Lenin), who once said: “Let 90% of the Russian people die, most important is that 10% are left for the time of the world revolution”. This is the real scale of global claims of this revolutionary, a fanatic, about whom Bunin once said: “A bantling, a moral degenerate from his birth, Lenin at the peak of his activities made something villainous and monstrous: he devastated the greatest land in the world and killed several millions of people, and still the world has gone so mad that in broad daylight they argue whether he is a benefactor of the mankind or not?” (From his speeches in Paris, February 16, 1924). (Neviarovich, 2004, paragraph 19)

With the great catastrophe against countless human beings that Lenin and his very powerful allies and large number of followers unleashed, we see great numbers of people, in their embrace of ignorance, actually unsure as to how to categorized Lenin: “and still the world has gone so mad that in broad daylight they argue whether he is a benefactor of the mankind or not?” (Neviarovich, 2004, paragraph 19). This last quotation comes from Bunin in 1924, and yet to this very day there are still a great many people who are apologists for the reign of atheistic communism in Russia and elsewhere—and who are even praising atheistic Marxism in Russia and elsewhere—despite its great atrocities against tremendous numbers of people throughout the world.

Remember, and it is quite obvious, that no one person can conduct such massive and horrific crimes against humanity without great help from many other very powerful atheistic people (who are either generally known, or are unknown to others). As we just saw, Lenin had no regard for the people of Orthodox Christian heritage whom he and his many powerful allies were about to murder in a tremendous genocide. Remember, and it was tragically not a lie, but instead conveyed a real sense of the hatred that Lenin and countless other powerful atheists had for a great Orthodox Christian nation and for its people, when he said: “Let 90% of the Russian people die”… (Lenin). The Marxist power elite told many great lies and committed truly staggering atrocities against countless people—but here, at least, Lenin was very truthful in that he advocated a tremendous genocide against the Russians, who were of course predominately

56 We are told by Neviarovich, in his work which we have cited, that Bunin said this (From his speeches in Paris, February 16, 1924) (Neviarovich, 2004, paragraph 19).
Orthodox Christian. Such was the great “love” and respect for the entire human race—including for all kinds of hard working people, and for the human rights of all people in the world—that Lenin and his very powerful atheist allies advocated and actually conducted the torture and mass murder of countless men, women, and children.

Neviarovich—in drawing from others, and in his own very powerful research—continues to discuss Lenin:

An agent of Prussian and German intelligence services (it was positively established by Russian secret police in 1917), most possibly a mason of high rank, Lenin in Russia was called “most human of humans” and for the deceived possessed people he became a symbol of sanctity (“more holy than all saints”). Is it not a definite proof of the gravest spiritual illness of the Russian people, which is unfortunately not completely cured till today. Mental eclipse and spiritual blindness cover our souls with a thick veil, and Russia's enemies did not loose [sic. lose] this chance: “Using epidemic mental eclipse and religious and moral poverty haters of Russia try to destroy in the first line those unique and ancient ideas and values that always ensured phenomenal steadfastness and vitality to the Russian community, - Metropolitan of St. Petersburg and Ladoga John (Snychev) wrote in his book “Symphony of Russia” (P. 419). (Neviarovich, 2004, paragraph 19)

Perhaps some of the above work of Neviarovich might be a little unclear in places—or simply perhaps, there appears to be a somewhat awkward usage of the English language in places; nevertheless, the substance of what is being said in the research and work of Neviarovich is certainly very powerful and absolutely very clear—and applies as a strong warning to all Orthodox Christians, at all times and in all places. This is so as we can interpret what Metropolitan John (Snychev) had to say—and what others have truthfully said—as applying to the time period of the communist revolution and to all time periods throughout history, and into the present, when Orthodox Christians are truthfully warned to not forsake Orthodoxy, the only true Faith (Neviarovich, 2004, paragraph 19), (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 1).

Solzhenitsyn comments on the hypocrisy of various communist and capitalist leaders—and their history of support for one another.

When liberal thinkers and wise men of the West, who had forgotten the meaning of the word “liberty,” were swearing that in the Soviet Union there were no concentration camps at all, the American Federation of Labor, published in 1947, a map of our
concentration camps, and on behalf of all the prisoners of those times, I want to thank the American worker’s movement for this. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 14)

What Solzhenitsyn relates to us, in the above quotation, is certainly one of the finest moments of the American Federation of Labor, and for the American Labor movement, in general—this great truth that they spoke is to be commended. What the American Federation of Labor did, in its truthful confession here, is very admirable and should be taught in schools.

Tragically, I have spoken to some American Labor leaders (and many others) who are Marxist-Leninist in their philosophy of history and politics who grossly underestimate the catastrophe of what the atheist leaders and their blinded followers did in the former Soviet Union to countless human beings. There are those who laud communism and deny that the tremendous Holocaust of Orthodox Christians and others—as the result of atheistic Marxism—ever even occurred. There was a Labor leader, who happened to be of Jewish heritage (whom I knew and who had genuinely helped many working people), who laughed—literally laughed, sarcastically—at the idea that the atheistic leaders of Marxism perpetrated a tremendous genocide against countless people of Orthodox Christian heritage and against great numbers of others throughout the world. This man certainly did not deny the Holocaust that his own people had experienced, but denied the Holocaust experienced by countless others who suffered great atrocities due to the atheism of Marxism’s leaders and its many followers. This labor leader was clearly not effected, in the least, by the great Holocaust committed against Orthodox Christians and others; in fact this person (as many others have done so) denied that this Holocaust ever even happened. And most likely this person had this attitude because he did not care in the least for those who suffered this great catastrophe—but, for people with whom he identified, this labor leader did care very much for what they had suffered. This is not an uncommon type of phenomenon to be seen throughout the world and human history, among all of us oftentimes—it is tragic reality, clearly symptomatic of our fallen human nature and our true lack of concern for others; and this sorrowful reality is an indication that only Almighty God can save us. In our fallen existence, from which only the Supra-substantial Trinity can save us, we see the tragedy—of which we all share some measure of guilt—that “the one who has had enough to eat does not understand the starving man.”

All people are alienated from other people—to various extents and in often the most tragic ways—and only the absolutely incomprehensible Triune God, Who created all of us from absolutely nothing, can save us and glorify us.

57 *A rough translation of a Greek proverb.*
A friend of mine of Orthodox Christian heritage whose family had close ties to the
Communist Party of Greece once remarked\(^5^8\) that it was “good” that the Marxists killed so many
people in Russia, because the Orthodox Christians who were killed “were Tsarists”\(^5^9\). So, clearly
beyond all logic and any measure of common sense, for this man, his Communist Party
affiliation had priority over the lives of countless Orthodox Christians; and this person—with
Orthodox Christian roots—saw in the atheism and lies of the Marxist power elite somehow a
justification for the annihilation of countless people of Orthodox Christian heritage (people who
were of his own heritage!). And this same Communist affiliation, for this person, also justified
the destruction of countless other human beings throughout the world—in order to build a
“better” world—in the name of Marxism and its inherent atheism. This sort of mentality—this

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\(^5^8\) The remark occurred after I reminded my friend of the great genocide committed against
Orthodox Christians and against many others due to Marxism’s leadership and followers.

\(^5^9\) According to this faithful Marxist (who was and remains my friend), this multitude of
victims in the genocide were people who were for the Emperor—for the Tsar—and this person
blindly followed the propaganda of those who hated the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. And, in
this person’s thinking, whatever happened to these great numbers of people “served them
right”. These victims were supposedly Monarchists which, in this person’s thinking (and in the
thinking of countless other people), justified the mass murder of countless people—who were
accused of being “Imperialists” and for the Tsar.

But, let us choose to look beyond the mindless propaganda that many people elect to
foolishly embrace. As such, perhaps, a much more realistic analysis would be to say that many
of these people of Orthodox roots who were about to be murdered were viewed as a threat—by
the Marxist power elite—to the “successful” implementation of an atheistic agenda.

And, perhaps, if these people of Orthodox heritage were gone then there could be even
more atrocities against countless more people. This could certainly happen after the remaining
people were frightened enough and further “educated” on the “right” to murder their unborn
children through abortion—and “taught” (and intimidated) to not raise their children within the
Holy Orthodox Church.

Truly, the atheistic power elite of Marxism did not care that people of Orthodox Christian
heritage were helping to slaughter themselves and others. In fact, these are atrocities which the
Marxist power elite long planned and ardently hoped to see committed.

As we have already implied, atrocities can also be used as a deterrent—used as an
example for all to see what can happened when the great power of this world is defied by any
people daring to do so. One thing is absolutely for sure: These atrocities, obviously, had nothing
do to with justice for working people—because hard working people were suffering the greatest
catastrophe on account of this unprecedented genocide committed by avowed atheists.

These atrocities did however have everything to do with the Marxist power elite’s great
hatred for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. Additionally, and it must never be forgotten by
anyone: The people who were among that Marxist power elite (of that time) are indeed gone—
they are long gone and can no longer harm anyone (Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America
and New York, et al., 2017, paragraphs 9-10). This is so, just as all other atheistic power of this
world is doomed to fail—and those who oppress others with that power will also wither away, as
countless others have before them—but the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ has remained and
will forever remain unconquerable, as Christ promised.
sort of willful embrace of deception and profound stupidity—among countless people of Orthodox Christian heritage, is what made the horrific catastrophe of Marxism and numerous other forms of atheism a reality in Russia and elsewhere.

I knew another person, in Greece, who was also an avowed Marxist—whose roots were also Orthodox Christian, but he had claimed that he was atheistic in terms of his beliefs—and this same person, for whom I once worked briefly, had made me work extra on a particular day and did not pay me for it. This he had done on purpose—after a long day of work in the hot sun by all of us workers—and after others were sent home, I was made to stay to do some extra unpaid work. And what I had to do for this hypocrite is absolutely nothing compared to what others have had to do in life; and what I had to do is absolutely nothing compared to what many others currently are forced to do in life—and they have to do much more than I did and for great durations of time, as well. However, this prior circumstance of mine—and countless other circumstances faced by countless others (who are in much more severe circumstances than I ever was), in both communist and capitalist countries—is nevertheless very interesting to note, because Marxism was supposed to be a system entirely for the respect of all workers’ rights. Marxism was supposedly brought to bear in order to end the exploitation of people, not further it—certainly any adherent to this “humane” philosophy of communism should know better. I remember telling an uncle of mine about this same supposed communist—who had fashioned himself as an outspoken champion of workers’ rights, though his actions often spoke otherwise—and my uncle responded with the wisdom of a simple, hard working person, telling me, regarding this communist and his conduct elsewhere: “Sure, he is a communist, that must be why he has gypsies cleaning the yard for his wife.” Basically, my uncle was saying that this gentleman was quite well off enough to have other people do his work and that he likely exploited people—something which I had experienced first hand, at least once—quite a capitalistic way to conduct business. One can guess that every communist has his capitalistic side—even an exploitative capitalistic side. This is so, of course, despite, historically, the leading Marxists’ supposed great regard for all humanity—and then the world truly saw, in horrifying fashion, that tremendous “regard” for humanity from that atheistic Marxist power elite and from their willfully blinded followers.

60 This uncle of mine, who lived in Greece, was a blacksmith, from a relatively long line of blacksmiths in our family, and he was a Monarchist—and he worked very hard throughout his entire life. And if he had lived in Russia, during the revolution, one can be sure that he would have been a Monarchist there, as well—he would have, most certainly, been for the Tsar and against atheistic Marxism—for this man was always against Marxism. This uncle was a decent man who made a number of very significant mistakes in his life—mistakes which greatly hurt himself and others; but he did much good as well, and I learned very much from him and am forever indebted to him. May his memory be eternal!
Remember, in one way or another, the communist power elite was usually materially very well off and could exploit people and commit tremendous atrocities of unprecedented scale as “well”, or even “better”, than the “best” of the exploitative capitalists. It is like there is often not much of difference between the two camps, and they are often working very well for each other. Solzhenitsyn commented on this, when he was speaking to an American audience and explaining the significant cooperation between communist leaders and capitalist leaders, in prior times—with huge numbers of human beings suffering the consequences of this synergy:

But just as we feel ourselves your allies here, there also exists another alliance - at first glance a strange one, a surprising one - but if you think about it, in fact, one which is well-grounded and easy to understand this is the alliance between our Communist leaders and your capitalists. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 15)

This alliance is not new. The very famous Armand Hammer, who is flourishing here today, laid the basis for this when he made the first exploratory trip into Russia, still in Lenin’s time, in the very first years of the Revolution. He was very successful in his intelligence mission and since that time for all these 50 years, we observe continuous and steady support by the businessmen of the West of the Soviet Communist leaders. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 16)

This “strange” and “surprising” “alliance” between capitalism and communism about which Solzhenitsyn comments above is an amazing and rather frightening historical fact. But this historic reality is really not surprising (as Solzhenitsyn rightfully implies). For we must remember that many of the early leaders of communism, in the 19th and 20th centuries, were often (in some sense or another) remarkably well off and well funded and in some cases even worked with other powerful governments against their own country. These people committed this treasonous betrayal of their nation even at times when their country was at war with some of these very same nations who were helping to finance these atheist communist leaders—Lenin and many others allied themselves with foreign powers to undermine and destroy Russia. And of course these “humble” leaders “working on behalf of all working people” did all of this with very substantial resources at their disposal and only as “true” capitalists or perhaps “true” communists would be capable doing. We find that these same powerful people worked in whatever way was necessary to accomplish their atheistic goals—depending upon circumstances and the audience in front of them—but, in all truth, certainly they were not fettered by any ideology. The atheistic goal of many powerful people was to make an attempt to destroy the great Orthodox nation of Russia—and using any ideology to deceive people would do. Ideology was more important to the people who were being deceived and about to suffer devastating
oppression, than it was to those who promoted that very same atheistic ideology. The ideology was to be used by powerful leaders as an excuse to devastate an Orthodox nation. So one can guess that, after the near destruction of Russia, powerful capitalists who did not want to see Russia free of atheistic Marxist control—again, the irony here is remarkable—tended to help sustain the atheist power elite of the Soviet Union. Again, one has to remember that a sort of capitalist-communist cooperation clearly helped to establish the atheistic Marxist regime in the first place. So it would not be surprising that a similar such alliance would have helped to sustain this very same catastrophe—for it to be able to continue to ravage a nation—once it was already established. It certainly appears, so often, that those within various power elites everywhere—to various extents—give substantial support for one another. Powerful people, often, regardless of political labels, support each other—where political labels, are often little more than theatrical ploys, so often given for public consumption, with which any given power elite pacifies and exploits their own partisans. Anyway, we cannot say that this is always the case—for the world can be a very complicated place—but oftentimes it is indeed the case and the near destruction of Russia exemplifies this (as do many other circumstances in history). Solzhenitsyn rightfully comments and calls everyone’s attention to such matters—and in essence warns us that evil can reside in any of us, regardless of people’s professed ideologies.

This brings us to some very powerful capitalists—or perhaps to some very powerful communists, who behaved like capitalists—who enriched themselves and others from doing business with the Soviet power elite, while countless people were being destroyed in the Soviet Union. Armand Hammer, whom Solzhenitsyn mentions, was just one of these people who were enriching themselves and others—and he was among great numbers of people, both known and unknown, with great power who did great business with the Soviet Union. Armand Hammer and others did great business with the Soviet Union from the very beginning of the murderous, atheistic regime. And let us not concern ourselves too much with the ideology or beliefs which Hammer may or may not have had—this is something that he knew for certain, and is almost irrelevant given his conduct and alliances. Regarding Armand Hammer, who was of Jewish heritage (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 4), and whose father Julius Hammer was “one of the founders of the American Communist Labor Party” (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 3), (Sutton, 1974, p. 117), we also learn that Armand Hammer “became a multimillionaire capitalist, thanks in large measure to his relations with leaders of the Soviet Union.” (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 3) Certainly—in today’s money and in regard to today’s influence—the reality of a “multimillionaire capitalist” back then would be equivalent to a person now with much more money and power than today’s “multimillionaire capitalist” would obviously have. Additionally, back in the 1970’s when he wrote pertaining to some of these matters, Sutton commented
regarding the power and influence—and very long term, and truly remarkable, connections—of Armand Hammer and his family stemming from their association with the Soviet power elite:

The Hammer family has had close ties with Russia and the Soviet regime from 1917 to the present. Armand Hammer is today able to acquire the most lucrative of Soviet contracts. [...]  

Julius Hammer [Armand Hammer’s father] was a prominent member and financier of the left wing of the Socialist Party. At its 1919 convention Hammer served with Bertram D. Wolfe and Benjamin Gitlow on the steering committee that gave birth to the Communist Party of the U.S.

In 1920 Julius Hammer was given a sentence of three-and-one-half to fifteen years in Sing Sing for criminal abortion. Lenin suggested—with justification—that Julius was “imprisoned on the charge of practicing illegal abortions but in fact because of communism.” (Sutton, 1974, p. 117)

Lenin was clearly one of history’s great mass murderers (Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, et al., 2017, paragraph 7)—and Lenin helped make the Soviet Union the first country in the world to legalize abortion (Pravoslavie.ru, 2016a, paragraphs 9-10) which further greatly aided in the mass murder of countless people of Orthodox Christian heritage. And Lenin and others who hated Orthodox Christians and Orthodox Christianity greatly aided people of Orthodox Christian heritage to destroy themselves—whenever people of Orthodox Christian heritage chose to embrace such evil as “acceptable”. And, as such, countless people of Orthodox Christian roots helped others who hated them to greatly decimate countless people. What great irony that we of Orthodox Christian roots, in our hatred of others, often commit atrocities against ourselves and others to the great joy of those who hate us. Armand Hammer, the great

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61 Again, Sutton is writing this in the 1970’s and Armand Hammer died in 1990, after decades of working closing with the Soviet power elite.

62 Actually, abortion “rights” and communism have a very close connection, which makes Lenin’s indignation (as mentioned above) truly ironic—or perhaps very understandable. What greater “help” can those who hate us have, in their genocidal plans, than for us of Orthodox Christian heritage to demonstrate great hatred for one another—and then for us to murder our own people and others, in great numbers? One must never forget that Marxism’s atheistic leaders looked to destroy Orthodox Christianity by all means—and, as such, the atheist power elite greatly encouraged and empowered great numbers of people of Orthodox Christian roots to murder their unborn children, in order to aid in the massive and horrific genocide that was taking place. Great numbers of people of Orthodox Christian heritage only needed to assent to this great evil planned for them—which, in fact, countless people did in numerous Orthodox nations.
“philanthropist” and other great “philanthropists”—both known and unknown—who greatly empowered great crimes against humanity were allied to Lenin and to other mass murderers; so it is understandable that such people supported one another. Additionally, we continue to learn from Sutton of the Hammer family’s high level connections with the atheistic communist regime of the Soviet Union:

Other U.S. Communist Party members were sentenced to jail for sedition or deported to the Soviet Union. Soviet representatives in the United States made strenuous but unsuccessful efforts to have Julius\textsuperscript{63} and his fellow Party members released. (Sutton, 1974, p. 117)

Countless people of Orthodox Christian heritage and great numbers of other people were being murdered by the communist power elite and their followers (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 40), (Solzhenitsyn, 1975a, p. 10), (Rummel, 1990, pp. 16-20, 24) and Armand Hammer and his family and many others were getting rich from this very same atheistic regime that established and perpetuated this great human catastrophe. Many in the western power elite, including Armand Hammer, by having helped to provide great technological and economic aid to the atheistic leaders of Marxism had greatly strengthened the oppressive Soviet regime—something which clearly allowed for the establishment and continuation of the tremendous catastrophe involving truly staggering numbers of people being murdered (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 17).

With all of this in mind, it is truly unbelievable that Armand Hammer actually had an annual award named after him—which was well attended by powerful people, who, apparently also had no problem with powerful western capitalists’ economic and technical support to a atheistic regime that had murdered countless people.

In Los Angeles, on Aug. 31, 1981, more than a thousand leading businessmen and politicians gathered at the Century Plaza Hotel for the presentation of the annual Armand Hammer Businessman of the Year Award. Bob Hope introduced Armand Hammer, now 83, as the “epitome of success” of American capitalism. He lauded him as “an industrialist, an art collector, a diplomat and a philanthropist,” all titles to which Hammer can lay indisputable claim. (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 2)

Certainly, the great crimes against humanity of the atheistic Marxist leadership of the Soviet Union and of other Marxist nations could not have happened by the actions of just a few evil

\textsuperscript{63} Armand Hammer’s father.
people, in its entirety; rather, many powerful people and their blinded followers, in all kinds of alliances, were required for this sort of tremendous human catastrophe to have occurred—truly the scale of this catastrophe would dictate that very many powerful people needed to cooperate in a “great” alliance united in making this great evil a reality against countless human beings. How on earth, can Armand Hammer have laid “indisputable claim” to being a “philanthropist” (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 2)? He was certainly not a philanthropist to the tens of millions of Orthodox Christians and others murdered by the atheistic, terrorist, Marxist regime which Hammer and his father (and countless others) wholeheartedly supported from the very beginning of its establishment. What was Bob Hope talking about and what was Epstein (in his article) talking about? How was it that Hammer and a great many others were not tried for treason and then put in prison for aiding, at a very high level, a genocidal terrorist regime that committed countless atrocities? Why was the media not doing its job, again? How was it that those more than a thousand powerful people—who werelavishing praise on one another and on Armand Hammer—did not care, apparently, that they were ignoring the historic reality of a genocide of tens of millions of people. All seemed content to ignore the horrific genocide associated with a terrorist atheistic Marxist regime which very many people, like Armand Hammer and his family, greatly helped to strengthen; and from such an oppressive regime people like Hammer and his family greatly profited. As we have said, there were many very powerful people, from their alliance with a terrorist state, who enriched themselves—having allied themselves with the atheism and oppression abundantly found in the Soviet Union and other Marxist states. But, was it worth it? How on earth could it be worth it to leave such a legacy behind? Eventually a person dies, then what? The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ commands all of us to ask the question of ourselves—given that no power of this world, no matter how great, will endure the Second Coming of Christ: What will await us after our life in this world?

In the sharpest contrast to some of the people just mentioned, Orthodox Christian Hierarchs and others rightfully tell us that all the Orthodox Saints, known and unknown, were by the grace of God unconquerable in the face of all the terrifying power of this world; and these Saints are forever venerated by the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ—we Orthodox Christians will never forget the unmatched heroism of the Orthodox Saints; and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ will never be conquered. On the other hand, those who chose to attack Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, having done so under various diabolical guises and by various means—including through Marxism and through exploitative capitalism and other ways, past and present—truly, did so in vain. Indeed, those oppressors and murderers and their powerful allies (who made sure to provide aid to those committing atrocities) are clearly forgotten, not to be found (Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, et al., 2017, paragraphs 9-10)—this is
certainly so, when compared to the immeasurable glory given by Almighty God to the countless Orthodox Saints and Martyrs who heroically endured all trials which they were called to endure, to the very end.

‘I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found’ (Psalms 37:35-36). (Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, et al., 2017, paragraphs 9-10)

What the Lord Christ said and teaches us, through the unfathomable grace given to the Prophets, is indeed true. Christ Himself, the Uncreated Son of God—the absolutely transcendent, incomprehensible and Almighty God Himself, Who condescended to enter created reality by becoming man and coming to earth as one of us to save the world and offer humanity the path to glorification—taught us truthfully, regarding true power and true glory which alone belongs to the Uncreated, Almighty, and forever Incomprehensible Supra-substantial Triune God. This reality of God’s unfathomable power and glory is in the starkest contrast to the actions of any power elite anywhere that abuses the temporary power given to them and who consequently lead themselves and others to delusion and destruction. Christ makes it very clear that All Glory Belongs to God—and not to any people, all of whom God created from absolutely nothing; as such, human praise and the power of this world, in the end, are of no significance and only God Who knows our hearts can save us.


Indeed, let us all be watchful over our hearts and seek mercy from God, so that we do not fall into such great hypocrisy and evil—for all of us are prone to fall; and none of us is without sin and without weakness.

Armand Hammer was a very influential and powerful business leader who did very substantial capitalistic work on behalf of the Marxist leadership in Russia—and this he did for himself and for others—essentially throughout his entire adult life from the time of working closely with the great mass murderer Lenin (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 1), (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 16), and also when he worked with, apparently, every other Marxist Leader (Sutton, 1974, p. 117), (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 17); this Hammer did for decades, likely up
until around the time of his death in 1990. So Solzhenitsyn is speaking in the mid 1970’s and Hammer was still in business with the Marxist power elite even then and afterwards, likely, as we said, until about the time of his death in 1990.

We see a number of things pointing to the fact that Armand Hammer and others had been given very preferential treatment by the atheistic Marxist regime of the Soviet Union. Epstein tells us the following regarding Armand Hammer, and about some of his interaction with Lenin and others:

[…] on May 27, 1922, Vladimir Lenin, the ailing leader of the Russian Revolution, sent an urgent and secret message to Joseph Stalin, the newly appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party, instructing him and the Politburo to give their “particular support” to a young American and his trading venture. (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 1)

Again, keeping in mind that Epstein is writing the following in the early 1980’s we see mentioned the remarkable fact that Armand Hammer “maintained cordial relations with Soviet leaders for more than half a century, providing Moscow with a vital link to Western industry and technology.” (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 3)

Apparently, as a reward—or at least as some token of appreciation—for having helped to strengthen an atheistic Marxist regime that hated Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, and which eventually tormented and murdered countless human beings: “Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev gave Hammer a luxurious Moscow apartment” (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 3) and we also learn that at some point “Kremlin officials” had “proposed that he [Armand Hammer] be named United States ambassador to the Soviet Union.” (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 3)

We also learn that well before “Brezhnev gave Hammer a luxurious Moscow apartment”—with this apartment having apparently been given to Hammer sometime in the mid 1970’s (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 3)—“Hammer resided in the Soviet Union for the better part of a decade” (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 41). Again, apparently, this time period, just mentioned, would pertain to the very early years of the atheistic terrorist state of the Soviet Union. At that early time of the reign of terror in the Soviet Union, Hammer “moved into a palatial home called Brown House in the center of Moscow, and married a Russian singer named Olga Vadina, who was one of the leading entertainers in the capital. In 1928, she bore him a son, Julian. At about this time he was joined in Moscow by his father. And both his older brother, Harry, and his younger brother, Victor, also stayed with him from time to time” (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 41). Regarding this time period, Epstein tells us that “Many members” of Armand Hammer’s family
“continued to work for him ever since” (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 41)—ever since that early time of close collaboration with the Soviet power elite.

Such historic facts, in some ways, are clearly difficult to comprehend. But at the same time, even the blindest of people could clearly see the irony and great hypocrisy here of very powerful people wholeheartedly supporting the great terror of a regime—which they themselves and many others helped to greatly strengthen—whose great crimes against humanity these very powerful people themselves would never have to live through. The son of a devoted Marxist lives in a palatial home while tens of millions of people are being enslaved, tormented and murdered—all while this same person’s Marxist father and family live in luxury.

Lenin offered Hammer economic concessions “for mining asbestos in the Urals and another for organizing Soviet foreign trade - the first foreign concessions ever in the Soviet Union.”(Epstein, 1981, paragraph 28)

In fact Epstein tells us that:

Hammer’s “concessions” included not only the asbestos mine but also the extraordinary right to act as agent for Soviet trade with the United States. To develop this latter “concession,” Hammer traveled throughout the United States attempting to persuade American companies to invest capital and transfer technology to the Soviet Union. He was joined in this enterprise by his father, who was paroled from Sing Sing prison in 1923, and also by his brother Harry Hammer. By 1925, he succeeded in recruiting no fewer than 38 corporations that supplied Russia with everything from machinery to agricultural equipment. Hammer also became the agent for the Ford Motor Company’s Fordson tractors in the Soviet Union, and even arranged for Russian engineers to come to the United States to study Ford’s techniques of mass production. (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 40)

Hammer and his family obtained great wealth and influence—as did very many others in the United States and Soviet Union—from the exploitation and atrocities being committed against countless people in the Soviet Union. What facilitated this power and influence? There is evidence that Julius Hammer, an avowed Marxist helped make his son’s “great” capitalistic ventures with the atheistic Soviet state possible—given his previous connections with very powerful people. Julius Hammer was Armand Hammer’s father “and one of the founders of the American Communist Labor Party” (Epstein, 1981, paragraphs 3), as Epstein mentioned. Once again the irony and great hypocrisy just cannot be missed here.
Epstein tells us that Armand Hammer was likely not the originator of what was his family’s very influential connection to the atheistic Soviet power elite—but instead his father was the originator of that connection, from very early on. Regarding the concessions which Armand Hammer obtained from the atheistic power elite of the Soviet Union, Epstein looks to the intrigue in which Julius Hammer was involved in supporting the communist coup and which benefited him and his family considerably from the financial standpoint—remember most influential atheistic Marxists really had no problem acting like exploitative capitalists (and the reverse was likely true as well).

The story behind Hammer’s concessions, however, involves considerably more intrigue than that, according to recently declassified State Department and Army intelligence files at the National Archives. Those files suggest that the Soviet arrangement actually began with Hammer’s father, Julius Hammer, an immigrant from Russia, who was a dedicated supporter of Lenin and the Communist Party. (Epstein, 1981, paragraphs 29]

We are told that Julius Hammer was a doctor and had established “a prosperous business in New York selling shampoos, medicinal alcohols and pharmaceutical drugs” (Epstein, 1981, paragraphs 29). But Julius Hammer made the initial very substantial money for himself and his family when he started doing business with smuggled diamonds for the communist power elite of the Soviet Union here in the United States (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 31).

We continue to look at Epstein’s research and commentary on these matters; and we cannot help but see—even within the microcosm of just one family, the Hammer family, in this instance—the more general picture that many people in the world must have gained much power and influence through cooperating with atheistic Marxism and its atrocities while countless others were certainly destroyed. This power and influence from affiliation with Marxism came through the great exploitation, deception, and torment of countless people—directly or indirectly—and these are certainly features of both exploitative capitalism and atheistic Marxism. As such, let us look at the Hammer family who were certainly not alone in their support of atheistic Marxism in Russia and who were certainly not alone in being able to escape that horror which they helped to make a reality for others to have to endure.

Julius Hammer also became a financial supporter of radical causes, and it was in this capacity that he established his connections with the Soviet Union. (Epstein, 1981, paragraphs 29)
After Lenin seized power in 1917, Washington not only refused to recognize his Government (it did not relent until 1933) but it also effectively cut off Moscow’s access to all its gold and currency reserves in the United States. The net effect was that the Soviet Government could not buy the supplies it desperately needed to retain power. To remedy the situation, Lenin appointed a German-Russian engineer named Ludwig C.A.K. Martens as his “ambassador” to the United States with the mission of organizing shipments of supplies to the Soviet Union. Since Martens could not get control of the Russian funds immediately, he turned to Julius Hammer for interim financing. (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 30)

Hammer paid the rent and other expenses of Marten’s unofficial “Soviet Bureau” in New York. Hammer was officially appointed “commercial attache” of the Soviet Bureau, and also was given an exclusive license for Russian trade with the United States. By 1918, the Soviet Union was financing the “Soviet Bureau” by smuggling diamonds into New York. Julius Hammer was responsible for converting these diamonds into cash to finance the purchase of Soviet supplies, according the autobiography of one of Julius Hammer’s fellow party members. Armand Hammer denies this. In any case, the Hammer family soon moved from their modest home in the Bronx to luxurious quarters in the Hotel Ansonia in Manhattan, and Julius Hammer noticeably improved his style of living. (Epstein, 1981, paragraph 31)

Given some of the things that have happened in world history—both in the establishment of the terror of atheistic Marxism in numerous countries in the past and given what we have seen in countless other circumstances—none of this is very surprising.

Solzhenitsyn continues to tell us of Marxism’s great crimes against humanity in the Soviet Union—with many of Marxism’s atrocities accomplished and, in a sense, enabled with significant help from the Western power elite.

Their clumsy and awkward economy, which could never overcome its own difficulties by itself, is continually getting material and technological assistance. The major construction projects in the initial five-year plan were built exclusively with American technology and materials. Even Stalin recognized that two-thirds of what was needed was obtained from the West. And if today the Soviet Union has powerful military and police forces - in a country which is by contemporary standards poor - they are used to crush our movement for freedom in the Soviet Union - and we have western capital to thank for this also. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 17)
I repeat, it was a system that introduced concentration camps for the first time in the history of the world. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 34)

It is a system which was the first - long before Hitler - to employ false registration, that is, to say: “Such and such people have to come in and register.” People would comply and then they were taken away to be annihilated. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 37)

We didn’t have gas chambers in those days. We used barges. A hundred or a thousand persons were put into a barge and then it was sunk. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 38)

It was a system which deceived the workers in all of its decrees - the decree on land, the decree on peace, the decree on factories, the decree on freedom of the press. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 39)

It was a system which exterminated all additional parties, and let me make it clear to you that it not only disbanded the party itself, but destroyed its members. All members of every other party were exterminated. It was a system which carried out genocide of the peasantry; 15 million peasants were sent off to extermination. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b, paragraph 40)

When is the last time that we have heard of this being taught in our educational system (in the United States) in such explicit and unambiguous detail as Solzhenitsyn teaches—regarding the Communist power elite founding the first concentration camps in history and these other related crimes against humanity? We Orthodox must never forget any such atrocities against humanity, ever—regardless of whether they are the great atrocities that we have experienced or whether they are the great atrocities having been experienced by other people in the human race. When any member of the human race suffers, we all suffer—we are told this and it is true—whether we realize it or not. We Orthodox must never forget such catastrophes and work to educate ourselves, our children and the whole world to never forget these tragedies and learn from them and pray to God that they are never repeated against any people, by any people—for any people,

64 And I am certainly not saying here or elsewhere that Solzhenitsyn is infallible in all that he has ever said or done in his life, for he had his faults—as all of us do. But he also did greatly significant work, at least academically, to educate humanity on what horrible atrocities humanity is capable of committing against itself. As we know, and as Solzhenitsyn and other great writers have discussed, these horrible crimes against others occur whenever people choose to harden their hearts in regard to the plight of other people. Solzhenitsyn had his faults, as we all have our faults—but his historical work was, and remains, very profound and extremely important. May his memory be eternal!
without exception, can fall and commit great evil against themselves and others. May God have mercy upon us.

_St. Tikhon the Patriarch of Moscow._

Here is some of what the editor (or editors) of the article, _Epistle To The Soviet of People’s Commissars_, had to say pertaining to the very powerful letter written by St. Tikhon to the godless, newly established power elite of Russia shortly after the Revolution. Many were deceived by the leadership of atheistic Marxism and many were not—certainly St. Tikhon saw through all the evil designs of the Marxist leadership; the godless leadership of that era is long gone and St. Tikhon and countless others forever remain, by the grace of God, unconquered Orthodox Saints.

…we present this bold letter written by Patriarch Tikhon to the new rulers of Russia a year after the revolution. It is invaluable as a spiritual lesson for us also, and a primary source of history, describing the results of the revolution as the Russian people experienced them firsthand, telling things as they were for them, and as they will always be for nations that turn against God and His Church and turn to lawlessness (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 1)

Indeed, this concise, yet very powerful introduction that we just saw—given to us by the current editor (or editors) of St. Tikhon’s _Epistle To The Soviet of People’s Commissars_—is itself worthy of every Orthodox Christian’s attention, and that of their leaders.

St. Tikhon addresses the godless Communist power elite which had just taken control over Russia—and once again we must make sure to note that not one Orthodox Saint was ever conquered or fooled by the power elite of that time, nor by any other power elite of any time in history:

Having seized power and called the people to entrust themselves to you, what promises have you given them, and how have you kept these promises? (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 4)

Truly you have given them a stone instead of bread, and a serpent instead of a fish (cf. Matt. 7:9-10). To a people worn out by a bloody war you promised to give peace “without annexation or contribution”. (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 5)

What victory could you have turned down, you who have lead Russia to a shameful truce, with humiliating conditions that even you did not resolve to make fully public? Instead of
“annexations and contributions” the great Motherland is conquered, diminished, dismembered; and as pay for the tribute placed on it you secretly transport to Germany gold that you yourself did not amass. (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 6)

You have taken away from the soldiers everything for which they have valorously fought. You have taught them, only recently brave and invincible, to leave off protecting the Motherland and to run from the field of battle. You have extinguished in their hearts the inspiring consciousness that there is no greater love than should one lay down his life for his friends (Jn. 15:13). You have traded the Fatherland for soulless internationalism, although you yourselves know perfectly well that when it comes to defending the Fatherland, the proletarians of all countries are those countries’ faithful sons, and not their betrayers. (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 7)

You have divided the entire nation into warring camps and cast it into a fratricide unprecedented for its cruelty. You have openly exchanged love of Christ for hatred, and instead of peace you have artificially fomented enmity between the classes. And there is no end in sight to war you’ve generated […] (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 10)

It was not Russia who needed the disgraceful peace with its external enemy but you yourselves, who have plotted to irreparably destroy Russia’s internal peace. No one feels safe; everyone lives in constant fear of searches, robbery, eviction, arrest, and execution. (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 11)

The Marxist power elite established their rule, by among other things, arranging for the humiliation of Imperial Russia in time of war—when Russia had no need to suffer such humiliation in the first place given its historically great power and courageous Orthodox soldiers; for certainly up to that time, the Russian people always demonstrated united and great faithfulness to Holy Orthodoxy and to their Orthodox nation, with great heroism. And, this was always the case in Russia, only by the grace of the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity—this was always the case, whenever the Russian nation remained faithful to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

Such great heroism has also been found in all the other predominately Orthodox nations; but once again this was (and is) so, only by the grace of the Incomprehensible Triune God, and generally held only when people did not revolt against Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church—for when any Orthodox nation remained faithful to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, by God’s grace that Orthodox nation remained unconquerable. And, even after an Orthodox nation
was temporarily conquered—in regard to the standards of worldly power—with only a portion of the people remaining faithful to Holy Orthodoxy, there were still enough of the people faithful to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ that, by the mercy of Almighty God, the nation survived. The Marxist power elite wanted to destroy the Orthodox Russian nation by fomenting a bloody civil war, which they did, and then they sought to further encourage many people to largely abandon Orthodoxy—as many people freely chose to abandon Orthodoxy, in their deliberate and willful embrace of ignorance and atheism. And, certainly, the embrace of atheism and all other manner of falsehood and heresy is common—currently and throughout human history—to all of humanity in our propensity to often embrace all manner of sin and deception.

With all this in mind, we come back to the atheistic catastrophe of Marxism being implemented in Russia: once any diabolical power elite can “win hearts and minds” like this, then all manner of evil is possible when countless people, formerly faithful to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, choose to destroy themselves and their once great Orthodox nation while embracing the “soulless internationalism” (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 7) found in the atheistic philosophies and power of this world. This, of course, is clearly a choice that people make; in the strictest sense, no one can force any of us to embrace evil and stupidity. Instead, embrace of such falsehood and evil is something for which all of us are guilty—in various ways, in various circumstances, and at different times in our lives—and our choosing to fall certainly becomes a reality for each and every one of us, every time we exercise our free will to embrace evil in our thoughts and actions, every time we choose to sin. This of course having happened in Russia during atheistic Marxism and beyond, has also definitely happened in other Orthodox nations, in one way or another. Indeed, such catastrophes associated with the embrace of apostasy by both the oppressors and the oppressed—and, certainly, the roles of oppressed and oppressors often change throughout human history—have also been attempted and encouraged in other predominately Orthodox nations; and to some significant degree this encouragement and promotion of various forms of atheism and other apostasies has been—historically and currently, among many people of Orthodox heritage—tragically and devastatingly successful, in its destruction of people. Once again, we must emphasize that these kinds of apostasy, to one extent or another, are of course also to be found at various times in history among all Orthodox peoples and all Orthodox nations—may we all, who call ourselves Orthodox, repent of our great failures and sins, and may God have mercy upon us all!

One cannot help but see the great insight and courage of St. Tikhon and how what he saw, while it was happening, is now confirmed history—indeed it is history that is often ignored and not taught, but it remains truthful history from which we Orthodox (and the whole world) need to learn very much.
Especially painful and cruel is the violation of freedom in matters of faith. Not a day goes by when the most monstrous slanders against Christ’s Church and her servants are not published in the agencies of your press, along with malicious blasphemy and mockery. You deride the servants of the alter, force bishops to dig trenches, and send priests to do dirty work. You have raised your hand against the Church’s inheritance gathered through many generations of the faithful, and have given no thought to violating their posthumous will. You have closed a large number of monasteries and churches without any excuse or reason. You have blocked access to the Moscow Kremlin—that sacred inheritance of the faithful people. You are destroying the ancient form of church community—the parish; you destroy brotherhoods and other charitable and educational Church institutions, close and rout diocesan meetings, and interfere with the Orthodox Church’s internal government. By banishing sacred images from schools and forbidding the teaching of faith to children there, you deprive them of the spiritual food necessary for an Orthodox upbringing. (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 17)

It is not our business to judge earthly authorities; all authority, allowed by God, would attract our blessing if it were truly “God’s servant” for the good of its subjects, and not a terror to good works, but to the evil (Rom. 13:3). Now to you, who are using your authority to persecute your neighbors and decimate the innocent, we extend our word of instruction: celebrate the anniversary of your coming to power by freeing the prisoners, putting a stop to the bloodshed, violence, destruction, and persecution of faith; turn not to destruction but to the establishment of law and order, give the people their desired and deserved rest from civil war. Otherwise all the righteous blood you have spilled will be required of you (cf. Lk. 11:50), and you who took sword in hand will yourselves die of the sword (cf. Matt. 26:52). (Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin), 1918, paragraph 20)

As we have said, the Orthodox Saints, by the grace of the absolutely transcendent Triune God, are forever unmatched in human history regarding their great courage, wisdom, and love for the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and all humanity. The Orthodox Saints, by the unfathomable grace of the Supra-substantial Holy Trinity, remain forever unconquerable—for by God’s immeasurable grace, none of the people and forces who hated Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church could ever deceive or defeat the Orthodox Saints—and those Saints intercede on behalf of all Orthodox Christians and pray for the whole world.

The Moral Equivalence often shared by all humanity. People from all groups of peoples have committed atrocities, in one way or another, and to one extent or another—there are no exceptions here. So any embrace of a delusional moral superiority, as part of a misplaced
nationalism, for example—something greatly encouraged by a power elite, not willing to die in the wars that it is willing to start (something which has happened quite a bit in the United States) and which can be directed toward a public devoid of historical, cultural, and religious stability and roots—only encourages a worse than childish mentality among many people that discourages any thoughtful questioning, introspection and repentance and instead greatly encourages more violence and war.

The Orthodox saints were always very consistent in the condemnation of all evil—and as the Orthodox saints were faithful to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, they knew that all people, without any exception, could fall into evil and that their only salvation and sanctification was Christ and His Holy Church (the Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body). Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos tells us, fully consistent with Orthodox teaching, that ALL of mankind is sick and that Christ our God “Who alone is healthy and sinless” is the only One Who can cure us (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 293). With that understood: It is clear, that we are all, without any exception, in great need of God’s help, for any of us can fall into the worst of sins—if we do not constantly guard our hearts and constantly seek the mercy of Almighty God. When the leadership of the Jewish people, the Sanhedrin, decided to murder Christ, those people obviously fell into a great sin, and committed great evil—and those who chose to follow them did the same—and the Orthodox saints make it very clear to us that any of us can rather easily fall into such great evil as the Jewish Sanhedrin did. One only has to look at the tragedy of human history to clearly see the great evil that people, any people, can and often do commit toward their fellow human beings and what blasphemy they commit against God. St. Philaret of Chernigov, faithful to the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church, warns all of us of such dangers.

What a dismal story! Oh, my soul—fear the passions of the Sanhedrin! No matter how terribly criminal they are, they are not far from the weak human heart. If you are not attentive to yourself, if you do not begin to watch over your feelings and desires, if you do not set the fear of God as a watch over your heart—you will not notice how the light of truth grows dim in you, how the oil of sacred love for God and neighbor begins to grow scant in the vessel of your heart, and how the waves of the passions drag the boat of your life into the sea of vanity, into the abyss of sins and hell. (St. Philaret of Chernigov, 2015, p. 255)

I read somewhere long ago that for many women in the former Soviet Union, the murder of unborn children, abortion, was the primary means of birth control; certainly, this is something

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65 Commented upon by numerous Orthodox Christians
that was made very easy to do under the atheistic Marxist regimes, as it is now equally easy to pursue for those wishing to exercise their “freedom of choice” within other countries and ideologies (including here in the United States of course, with its own form of atheism under different political circumstances). 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 also 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. However, at the same time, one can also be certain that, overwhelmingly, most people outside of our Orthodox Faith did not care that we, people of Orthodox Christian heritage, were indeed murdering our own children through abortion, in massive numbers—indeed, we ourselves, the nominally Orthodox, in our blind stupidity, often did not care about the mass murder that we were committing against our own children and our own people.

How is the stranger going to care—much less our enemies care, who hate us—when we who are nominally Orthodox in our jealousy, indifference, and hatred for one another do not even care about this great self-inflicted genocide that our own people have committed and continue to commit against themselves? As such, we who call ourselves Orthodox must never scapegoat on such matters, rather we must repent (myself greatly in need of this repentance) of our willful ignorance and profound stupidity. Indisputably, the humanistic philosophy of Marxism, and its atheist leaders, certainly and very purposefully, made such murder of unborn children socially acceptable—they gladly (joyfully, one could even say), “gave us enough rope to hang ourselves”; we of Orthodox Christian heritage only had to assent to the mass murder—for the “empowerment” and “freedom of choice” was already painstakingly provided to us by the power elite who hated us. As we said, with preparations having been meticulously made to have nominally Orthodox Christians destroy themselves and their Church, our assent was the only thing that was required in order for the attempted destruction of Orthodoxy to move forward and the mass murder of Orthodox Christians to proceed. One can be certain—and there definitely have been Orthodox Christians, in the past, who have already mentioned this in their work, in one way or another—that regardless of very powerful people’s professed ideology, whether it be communist or capitalist or anything else, these same people with great worldly power have very oftentimes derived great joy in seeing Orthodox Christians destroying one another; and, to the joy of those who hate Christ and the only True Church, The Holy Orthodox Church, we Orthodox Christians have too often been our own worst enemies.
The Greeks have a saying that goes something like this: “The Devil says, ‘Stretch forth your hand and I will do the killing.’” If we exercise our free will perversely, the Devil will certainly help us destroy ourselves and others. Nevertheless, we remain responsible for what we did, God empowered us with great freedom—so, by our choice to cooperate with people who hate us, we remain responsible for our embrace of stupidity. The destruction of Orthodox Christianity and Orthodox Christians was, during the reign of atheistic Marxism clearly a major goal of the world’s most powerful leaders (those with great power, both known and unknown)—and this hoped for destruction of Orthodox Christianity and that of Orthodox Christians remains a major goal, to this very day, in other established “world orders” created by the world’s most powerful people. But why is this so? The answer to that is very simple: Because Orthodox Christianity is the only True Faith; and as such—because Christ promised us that His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Holy Orthodox Church, will never be destroyed—all who hate Christ will attack the only True Church of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church, which alone cannot be conquered by the forces of evil. Indeed, those who hate Christ and his Holy Orthodox Church are doomed to fail miserably—as they always have failed, despite the horrific mass murder that they encourage and commit in the pursuit of their goals.

Obviously, historically, such atrocities were clearly seen when those who were nominally within Marxist ideology tried to undermine Orthodoxy in their miserably failed attempts to introduce heretical “churches” into Russia (right after the October Revolution); this was done in order to try to supplant the unconquerable Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, by the power elite introducing a made up religion—something which failed and is forever doomed to fail. The attempt to undermine Orthodoxy was also seen in the godless power elite propagandizing against the family, against the Holy Orthodox Church and encouraging abortion as something that “empowers” women; and this was all used in conjunction with the Marxist concentration camps, where tens of millions of people were tortured and murdered.

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. This is certainly true, but there is also an abundance of people who would love to destroy you or help you to destroy yourself and others, or at the very least they are completely indifferent to your well being and would have great joy in your demise—this is a tragic, indisputable, historic fact common to all of fallen humanity, to one extent or another. “Schadenfreude”, the joy in other people’s misfortune and devastation, is something common to all of us (myself especially guilty of it). And, once again, to overcome such cowardice, hatred, jealousy and selfishness—all of which give rise to our pathetic joy in seeing other people suffer great devastation—we have to follow the example of the great labor, humility and self-sacrifice of the great Orthodox saints who following Christ
are themselves saved only by Christ, our true God, within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, the Orthodox Church. By our own power we are all powerless to be saved from anything, and that fact pertains to each and every human being who was ever created by God, without any exception whatsoever—for even the Most-Blessed Virgin Mary, the most blessed of all creatures ever created by God, confesses this in all humility, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46-47). Clearly, we Orthodox understand that only Christ our God saves us—and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, which is uniquely His Body, has never confessed otherwise.

Our great God Who condescended to become man for us, Who created us all from absolutely nothing, is alone our salvation and sanctification—and our Holy Orthodox Church has confessed this truth, only by the grace of God, uniquely with the fulness of all truth, in an unmatched manner, throughout history. We have to look to the example of the Orthodox Saints (who intercede to God for our salvation and sanctification) who, certainly, only by the grace of God, were themselves able to overcome such hatred, cowardice, jealousy, and selfishness—or, at the very least, these Saints were certainly forced to seek God’s mercy to overcome such temptations toward such evil, which are ever present and impossible to combat without God’s mercy. And the forces of evil use, and have always used, such temptations in their attempts to move every human being toward evil; but—by being united to Christ through the only true Church, The Holy Orthodox Church which is alone the Body of Christ—the Orthodox saints emerge victorious against all such evil, and that, of course, only by God’s unfathomable grace and power.

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, in that same company, fundraising for homosexual and abortion “rights” organizations was also done—as was other fundraising that undermined Palestinian rights and the rights of 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 one 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—this of course does not justify the sins of others, any more than our own sins are justified. 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, to various degrees, at various times—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 comments⁶⁶:

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 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

⁶⁶ 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.
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 long-suffering 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 and unfathomable grace 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

67 This bracketed entry was made by me, in order that the Evangelical heretics 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.
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
denominations themselves have fallen into heresy, to one extent or another. As we have
mentioned and will continue to mention throughout this work: ALL faiths, without exception,
(Christian or otherwise) that are separated from the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ are
heresies, are devoid of the fulness of all Truth which alone resides in Holy Orthodoxy; and
this unique and unconquerable reality of Orthodox Christianity alone possessing the true
Faith and alone possessing the fulness of all Truth is so only by the grace of God—and one
can be absolutely certain that this fulness of all Truth uniquely possessed by Holy
Orthodoxy is so through absolutely no merit, whatsoever, on the part of those who identify
themselves as Orthodox. With that in mind, we also observe that there are conscientious people
from all faiths; as such, we observe that even within the heresy of Protestantism there are those
appalled by “Christian Zionism”:

“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]68 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) that are appalled by what even they rightfully call the heresy of
“Christian Zionism”. All faiths separated from Orthodoxy, as was mentioned, Orthodoxy
rightfully regards as having fallen away into heresy, to one degree or another—and it is from the

68 Bracketed entry was in the website article.
heresy of Protestantism that the other heresies of Evangelicalism and Televangelism were themselves born. Even though from all of the heresies in the world are born other heresies, there are people affiliated with heresies who can obviously speak significant truth on some matters at times. What follows is one such example, where a heretical bishop, associated with the heresy of Protestantism, Dr. Munib A. Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jerusalem, has the following to say about Christian Zionism, from his January 2003 Newsletter.69

[Everything that follows, including the bolded text, is from the cited source] :

370. 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 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.

69 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”:

70 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.
“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] 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 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

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71 All the bracketed numbers in this article are from the article itself, from the actual website.
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 web site 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
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

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72 The reader is referred to Appendix A, for a brief discussion on the Orthodox understanding of the
Second Coming of Christ.
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\textsuperscript{73}—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\textsuperscript{74}, “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 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

\textsuperscript{73} St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije makes this truthful assertion throughout his book \textit{The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism}.

\textsuperscript{74} Solzhenitsyn has called Communism “anti-human”, and rightfully so.
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. The One called Jesus Christ, is the Only-Begotten Son of God, God Himself, Who 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 jealousy, 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, and for all of us, to remember what Dostoevsky (1991) says in *The Brothers Karamazov* through the Orthodox Elder Zosima, (this character is likely based on a real life Russian Orthodox saint, or is at least based on various Orthodox saints within our unconquerable Holy Tradition) “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.
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? This attempt to engineer human happiness and bring “justice” through oppression and warfare 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 vehemently 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 atheistic 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 atheistic Communism prevailed.

Communism—though it certainly looked good to many who ignored the Marxist 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 (and which currently exist or will ever exist), found evil doing 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 communism is an attractive system “on paper”. Certainly, in such discussions pertaining to communism, Father Romanides and other Orthodox clerics, without any doubt, would be assuming, at least hypothetically, that people would really have freedom of religion within such an ostensibly egalitarian system. However, regardless of what might look good in theory, 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, as such, 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, in all truth, 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 vast numbers of nominally Orthodox Christians who embraced, and continue to embrace, the apostasy associated with humanistic systems, such as Marxism; and, as we said, this condemnation continues to apply to all who embrace other humanistic systems as well, such as exploitative capitalism and ecumenism—something which is clearly often done in an attempt to undermine the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ; and this condemnation obviously and rightfully also applies to those with whom these nominally Orthodox Christians shamelessly worked in attempting to destroy the Holy Orthodox Church. St. Nikolai Velimirovich and St. Justin Popovich speak pertaining to some of these matters when they tells us: “The twentieth century was the century of a Sanhedrin comprising baptised and unbaptised Judases. This Sanhedrin pronounced that Christ is dead forever and that He never rose from the dead. Why are you, then, surprised, my brethren, when scourges fall upon European humanity, scourges to the blood and bones, even to the bone marrow, from rebellions and revolutions and wars?” (Popovic, 2000, p. 168). Indeed, all who participated in this atrocity did not realize, in their willful stupidity, that the destruction of Orthodoxy 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, undeniably, in our embrace of great stupidity and deception, tremendous destruction wrought against our Holy Orthodox Church and against countless people of Orthodox Christian heritage—indeed, this is something that was committed by truly vast
numbers of us nominally Orthodox Christians; something that was done with great encouragement and help from others who hated us; but, also we see tremendous unmatched heroism, by the grace of God, on the part of a great many other Orthodox Christians—and in the end “the gates of hell” did not prevail against the Holy Orthodox Church, nor will they ever. Obviously, and strictly speaking, this truly miraculous survival of Holy Orthodoxy occurred through no merit on the part of those who identify themselves as Orthodox Christians, but instead occurred by the unfathomable grace of the incomprehensible Triune God Who empowered countless great Orthodox saints (both known and unknown) to remain unconquerable and 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, become 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 in all of humanity’s history, in general. Dostoevsky speaks brilliantly of this—

75 For our immortality is only by the unfathomable grace of God and is certainly not something that is inherent to our existence—as with everything that we have, our immortality is not intrinsically our own. For our very existence—and that of all creation, without any exception—was created from absolutely nothing by the Triune God Who was under no compulsion or necessity whatsoever to have created anything or anyone in the first place. As such, certainly everything and everyone, without any exception whatsoever, was created from absolutely nothing by the same absolutely free will of Almighty God.
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, for it is our belief in the Triune God, our Creator, and His bestowing, by grace, upon us of immortality that 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 inevitably 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; indeed, this is a tragic reality in which all of humanity shares in the guilt for such evil and apostasy being present in the world—and it is a tragedy from which only Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church 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\textsuperscript{76} (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.

\textsuperscript{76} This has been suggested by at least one person, who has written about Dostoevsky and his work, \textit{The Brothers Karamazov}. 
The battle against the devil and this struggle for unselfish love are centered on the collective Eucharistic life of the local parish.” (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 129)

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 of 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, cited in 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 me[n] 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* (John 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)

One cannot help but see here, among other things in the above beautiful commentary of Fr. George Papavarnavas, a rightfully strong condemnation of all the man-made ideologies and religions, past and present—this obviously includes, to one extent or another, a condemnation of all the heresies of the world and of history; in other words, such commentary obviously and very truthfully points to the falsehood of all of the religions of the world, with the exception of Orthodox Christianity which, by the grace of God, uniquely, transcends all ideology and religion and is thus forever unconquerable and is forever and alone the True Faith—regardless of the godlessness with which we nominally Orthodox Christians have often conducted ourselves. Additionally, Fr. Papavarnavas’ rightful condemnation of all the man-made ideologies and religions would almost inescapably have to include a condemnation of colonialism, slavery, atheistic Marxism, exploitative capitalism, and those who fight for “freedom and justice” and “the rule of international law”—while selectively ignoring all manner of injustice for which they share responsibility—by starting wars where people are mutilated, starved to death, and murdered.

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, the Orthodox saints were able to overcome all the evil and power of this world. Tremendous numbers of Orthodox saints and martyrs, both known and unknown, endured the most horrific tortures imaginable and did not break, ever—and all the other Orthodox saints that were not brought to such martyrdom, by the enemies of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, could also have endured such horrific tortures for Christ and His Holy Church, by the grace of God (of this we can be certain). All the Orthodox saints 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—this, of course, is in sharp contrast to so many of the rest of us (myself included) who choose, to one
degree or another, to be subservient to the power and logic of this world. The words of Christ forever teach us:

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.

And in ancient Greek the above verse Luke 16:15 reads:

καὶ εἰπεν αὐτοῖς, Ἱµεῖς ἔστε οἱ δικαιούντες εαυτοὺς ενοπίων τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ο δὲ Θεὸς γινώσκει τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν. οτι τὸ εν ἀνθρώπῳ υψηλὸν, βγέλυγμα ενοπιον του Θεου εστιν.’ (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—an attempt to undermine and destroy Orthodoxy 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, but 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 God and 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—certainly, 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 our 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
slander ing 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

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 Karamazov*).
St. Philaret of Chernigov Speaks on How Anyone Can Fall

From the Orthodox Memorial Service, we see a confession of the fact—which Holy Orthodoxy has always confessed—that none of humanity is sinless.

O God of spirits and of all flesh, You have trampled down death and have abolished the power of the devil, giving life to Your world. [...] As a good and loving God, forgive every sin he (she) has committed in thought, word or deed, for there is no one who lives and is sinless. You alone are without sin. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your word is truth.

(The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, 1985, p. 167)

And as we remain forever aware of our own sins and shortcomings—and that of our ancestors—we must strive to repent of our sins and pray for our ancestors and strive never to repeat their mistakes or our own previous mistakes. The following quotation pertains to the catastrophe of countless nominally Orthodox Christians in Russia turning against their saintly emperor, the Tsar, and against his saintly family—and it also pertains to countless nominally Orthodox Christians viciously attacking the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, Uniquely the Body of Christ, the Only True Church, in a willful ignorance and hatred much reminiscent of ancient times where countless Jews demonstrated their great hatred for Christ and subsequently murdered Him. With this kept in mind, we look at what Orthodox Christians in Russia, and throughout the world have to consider regarding their apostasy and that of their ancestors.

—We, who came to this world after the atrocities had been committed, must clearly determine what to repent of. The spiritual life has strict laws. We all have something of which we need to repent. Our repentance in this regard should begin with a fundamental and objective appraisal of this atrocity by everyone. We should also repent of our failure to do our best to free ourselves from the lies and slander against the emperor and his family, which have been spread for many decades by the regicides and their immediate followers. It is also our fault that the nation, through its mass unbelief, lives in sin and indifference towards evil and continues to live by the values of the regicides.

Our ancestors’ grave sins (regicide, apostasy, abandonment of the Church, the acceptance of the militant atheist ideology, the destruction of the centuries-old traditions, and so on) are not our personal sins. However, we bear the burden of the consequences of these wrongdoings. On Memorial Saturdays, when we pray for the repose of our deceased relatives, we ask God to forgive their sins instead of repenting of their
transgressions. Our prayers for their salvation will be effective, provided that we strive to mend our ways and fulfill the commandments.

Each person should labor not only for his own salvation, but also for the spiritual healing and revival of our much-suffering nation. This can be done by anybody—not through repentance of sins that were committed by someone else before your birth, but repentance of your own sins, coupled with unceasing striving for a righteous life.

(Archimandrite Job (Gumerov) & Vasyunov, Maxim, 2017, paragraphs 20-22)

Now, we look at Christ and the power of this world which could not tolerate Him. We look at the One Who created “all things visible and invisible” from absolutely nothing—by an absolutely “free act of will”—being confronted and judged by people Whom He created, from absolutely nothing. We see that Christ—the One Who is All-Powerful and will one day judge the whole world—is trying to bring people to their senses and have them rethink any stupid abuse of power (a power which is forever not intrinsically theirs in any way, but is given to them by Almighty God). We, of course, could be talking about the Jews who are about to murder Christ or we could be talking about nominally Orthodox Christians about to murder multitudes of people and attempt to destroy the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ—there is really no difference, we can all fall easily into great evil if we choose to do so. With this understood, we look at Christ standing before the Chief Priest Caiaphas and we clearly realize some very common trends in human history—namely, that the abuse of temporary worldly power committed by people is something to which all humanity is susceptible. Remember, that there is no one who lives and is without sin; God alone is without sin.

Jesus Christ was calm, as if He were the Judge rather than Caiaphas. This is what was so hard, so unbearably hard, for Caiaphas! It was absolutely necessary for Caiaphas that Jesus speak: in His words they might at least find something by which to slander Him. With Jesus silent, things were far from over. Where were the witnesses? There were many, but they were all to no avail. This was what was driving Caiaphas out of his wits!

And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 26:63).

This meant that Caiaphas was appearing before Jesus as the first servant of the God of Israel, and in the name of the True God was demanding an answer. Such an action in and of itself would be holy, but not coming from Caiaphas. What was he seeking? One thing: to put Him to death. If Jesus were to say yes to the question, it would be “death to Him,” because the Sanhedrin did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. If He were to say no
it would mean death as well, since He had spoken otherwise about Himself in the presence of the people.

*Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven* (Matt. 26:64).

He Who had been so reverential toward His Heavenly Father could not help but answer a question put to Him in the name of the God of Israel. Jesus replied to Caiaphas, *Thou hast said*, or, as it is expressed in the Gospel of St. Mark, *I am*. But this was not enough for the Savior of sinners—even now He was seeking the salvation of the souls of those who had gone astray. With the words of the Prophet Daniel, He not only justified His response concerning Himself, but also forced the Sanhedrin to halt in its bloody plan and prompted its members to rethink what they were doing, to think about themselves and the future. This is what the prophet saw: *Behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed* (Daniel 7:13-14). The Savior pointed out these words of God’s prophet to the members of the Sanhedrin and said that henceforth they would see in Him the One of Whom the prophet had spoken—that events would soon show Him in a form too formidable for them. In the language of the Scriptures, to sit on the right hand of the power of God means to possess the full might of the Godhead, to take part in the governance of the world. In the words *coming in the clouds of heaven* is shown, as it is by the prophet Daniel, the gradual disclosure of the Messiah’s divine glory. And did not the world see the beginning of the the divine glory of Jesus even at the Cross? (St. Philaret of Chernigov, 2015, pp. 252-253)

Regarding Caiaphas and his intention to have Christ murdered, we see that Caiaphas had no desire to seek the truth, but a desire to pursue his own self centered goals—and if it meant murdering Christ to pursue these goals, then so be it. Obviously, people around Caiaphas did not care much about justice either, otherwise they would have pursued it.

Without any investigation he declared Jesus’ indication of divine properties and works in Himself to be blasphemy. Ah! He who had bought the office of high priest for money; he who valued that rank only because it afforded him power, honor, and income; he who had
become the sworn enemy of Jesus solely because he saw in the glory of the Nazarene Teacher an obscuring of his own glory, and in His teachings the exposure of the dreams of his passions—could such a one listen and hear the voice of his conscience? Caiaphas not only did not want to ascertain the truth himself, but kept his colleagues from doing so as well. He uttered a decision on the case, and with his voice stopped any sympathetic thought the others might have had in regard to Jesus Christ.

_They answered and said, He is guilty of death_ (Matt. 26:66). (St. Philaret of Chernigov, 2015, pp. 253-255)

Much of the following quotation from St. Philaret of Chernigov was already mentioned earlier, and it nevertheless continues to bring to our attention, very powerfully, the frightful moral equivalence into which all people can fall—when we choose to have profound disregard for God. St. Philaret tells us, consistent with Orthodox teaching, that without extreme caution and reliance on God, we all—without any exception—can fall to the most pathetic depths of sinfulness and hatred.

And so, in vain had the Savior tried to bring the members of the Sanhedrin to their senses with the words of the prophet; in vain had He addressed them, pointing out the truth through heavenly revelation. Caiaphas’ colleagues were worthy friends of his. The Sanhedrin sentenced to death the One Whom Israel had been awaiting for so many centuries!

What a dismal story! Oh, my soul—fear the passions of the Sanhedrin! No matter how terribly criminal they are, they are not far from the weak human heart. If you are not attentive to yourself, if you do not begin to watch over your feelings and desires, if you do not set the fear of God as a watch over your heart—you will not notice how the light of truth grows dim in you, how the oil of sacred love for God and neighbor begins to grow scant in the vessel of your heart, and how the waves of the passions drag the boat of your life into the sea of vanity, into the abyss of sins and hell. (St. Philaret of Chernigov, 2015, p. 255)

St. Philaret continues to discuss the cruelty which people are capable of committing and he explains that they are only more emboldened to do so if their leaders’ permission and support is offered for such cruelty and stupidity to take place. The Jewish servants of the Sanhedrin who enthusiastically tormented Christ—and worked religiously to fulfill the murderous plans of the Sanhedrin—are certainly an example of the cowardly and dishonorable actions which people feel emboldened to commit when more powerful people give sanction to such atrocities.
The servants, worthy of the Sanhedrin, fulfilled the thoughts and wishes of the Sanhedrin to perfection. They spat in His face. According to the law, this served as the greatest dishonor, an expression of the most extreme disdain (cf. Num. 12:14; Deut. 25:9). Others cruelly beat Him on the face. Other wanted to appear even more clever: When they had blindfolded Him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote Thee? (Luke 22:64). This would not have been done by the Roman soldiers, who had no understanding of prophets and seers. This was the work of the crude servants of the Sanhedrin, who wanted to ridicule Jesus as a false prophet. These people said many other things blasphemously against Him (Luke 22:65). Oh, what an unfortunate people, whose leaders had such servants! Did the Patriarchs have such servants? Did Abraham have such slaves? Abraham walked in the fear of God, but taught all his servants the same. Servants who, from the example and words of their masters, have learned impertinence, fearlessness before God, depravity, and dishonesty, bring the vengeance of God’s justice not only upon themselves, but on their impious masters as well. (St. Philaret of Chernigov, 2015, pp. 255-256)

There is of course—as the communications experts will tell us—the precarious reality of “Group think” and this obviously seems to occur very much throughout history; and it can be, potentially, yet another manifestation of temptation to commit injustice. Certainly, even if this is the case (or not), nevertheless, in no way is any injustice excused or exonerated. In the most profound contrast to the truly despicable crimes of the Jewish Sanhedrin and those of their dishonorable servants, the Orthodox saints, throughout history, had great fear and love of God, and with their God inspired courage, wisdom and love the Orthodox saints fearlessly stood against all the unjust power of this world—demonstrating, by God’s unfathomable grace, their great love of God and of their neighbor.

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, within the Neo-Conservative movement and elsewhere, 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 to 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, 1975c).

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.

*The First Great Genocide of the 20th Century: The Holocaust Committed by Turkey—With Support from the West—Against Greeks, Armenians, and Others*

There have been tremendous atrocities that people have committed against other people, from the earliest times of human civilization to this very day—and one can almost certainly be sure that there will be many more such atrocities in the future. All of these atrocities, from the dawn of human history, and continuing unabated throughout history, are a testament to fallen humanity’s complete powerlessness to live righteously and save and sanctify itself based on its own power alone. Now, very obviously, this very simple statement that was just made is one of the great understatements that any person could make (when viewed from an Orthodox
perspective). And of course when we speak of humanity and “its own power” there is, in an
obvious sense, a misnomer here—for, of course, in the strictest sense, there is the fact that any
power, whatsoever, that anyone has is indeed given by God alone and, as such, is not possessed
intrinsically by anyone.

Given what we have said thus far, and regardless of any formal definitions, humanity
(without any exception whatsoever) is utterly powerless to do anything good without the
unfathomable grace and power of God, which alone can bring a person to salvation and
sanctification. And on the other hand, of course, when we deny God in thought, word, or deed,
and harden our hearts, then we head down the path of our own self destruction—and at that point
we do not care if we commit atrocities against others. In such a literally damned situation, where
all sorts of atrocities find fertile ground to come to fruition, one cannot help but see that
Dostoevsky was consistent with Orthodox teaching when he warns that the embrace of atheism
makes all evil possible and permissible—for those choosing to embrace such delusion (which we
all do sometimes, to one extent or another). But in the end, we know, as Christ our Lord has
taught us, that Almighty God will bring an absolute end to all the injustice of this fallen world—
when Christ our God comes again to “judge the living and the dead” and “His Kingdom shall
have no end”.

As we proceed, regarding the vast numbers of atrocities and holocausts of history (both
known and unknown), we know that native Africans and native Americans were persecuted
horrifically, in truly massive numbers, by great numbers of people from among the European
peoples—vast cultural genocide, torture, and mass murder, in truly staggering numbers, was
definitely experienced by these peoples. R.J. Rummel, whose brilliant research was sited earlier,
has written much on the vast human tragedy of genocide. Here we are about to see estimates of
genocide (“democide”, as Rummel calls it here) in pre-twentieth century history; and Rummel
tells us that these estimated numbers are definitely “but a fraction” of the actual number of
people devastated and murdered due to genocide—this having been said, once again, we note
that these particular statistics, which are immediately to follow, do not even include the twentieth
century and afterwards.

The mass murder of their own citizens or those under their protection or control by
emperors, kings, sultans, khans, presidents, governors, generals, and other such rulers is
very much part of our history. In ancient times captured cities or towns would be
pillaged and their inhabitants massacred; whole lands would be turned into regions of
ruins and skeletons.
Such genocide, massacre, and human slaughter; pillage, rape, and torture have been more common than war and revolution.

Even close to our time people have been murdered in the millions, as in the Teiping Rebellion in China in the mid-18th century. Of all pre-twentieth century killing—massacres, infanticide, executions, genocides, sacrifices, burnings, deaths by mistreatment, and the like—that for which corpses have been counted or estimated, surely but a fraction, add up to a range of near 89,000,000 to slightly over 260,000,000 million men, women, and children dead. An appropriate mid-democide estimate might be around 133,000,000 killed. (Rummel, R.J., 1997a, paragraphs 1-3)

Now, we proceed to consider a genocide that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century in Asia Minor, where the Turks tried to exterminate the ancient Christian populations from that region—and they were largely successful in their efforts, with help from some European powers—and, a very large part of that massacred population was Orthodox Christian, whereas other very large parts of that persecuted and massacred population was largely a Monophysite Christian community.

In parallel to that genocide which was occurring in Asia Minor, we can see what Solzhenitsyn and others have mentioned, regarding very numerous incidents of mass murder that were being committed by the power elite of the newly formed Soviet Union—such mass murders were earnestly being committed from the very earliest times of the militantly atheist regime, which had seized power in Russia (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b). In fact, well before the purposeful mass murder, through starvation, of people in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933, the Marxist power elite showed no regard for the rights of working people—and, generally, this same elite group in power showed no regard for human life, from the very beginning of the coup (to say the least, this is very much an understatement).

The power elite of the newly formed atheistic regime—clearly unwilling to emulate the courage of countless simple people of Orthodox Faith and also clearly unwilling to work, even remotely, as hard as the simple people of the Russian nation—persecuted Russia’s hardest working people (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b). In the greatest of ironies, ostensibly, this godless power elite intended to come to power, in the first place, with the goal of ending the oppression of working people. But, very early on, the Marxist power elite showed no regard for working people.

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77The text should read “89,000,000 to 260,000,000 men, women, and children dead.” To put the word “million” after 260,000,000 when the numbers already indicate millions is clearly and obviously a typographical error.
people—their true diabolical intentions and brutality became very evident, very shortly after they seized power (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b). But by then it was too late for everyone who was to be ruled by these atheistic elites; it was too late for the people who had not been fooled by the great lie of the atheists—for there were indeed very many who knew that these same godless elites looked to destroy Orthodox Christianity—as it was also too late for those who had been deceived, and for those who had deceived themselves.

In one of the great ironies, where much of the world did not seem to care about these horrific catastrophes—including, tragically, a lack of concern on the part of vast numbers of nominally Orthodox Christians who were embracing delusions offered to them by those who profoundly hated them—we see that Orthodox Christians and other Christians were being slaughtered in Asia Minor, and vast numbers of Orthodox Christians and, descendants of Orthodox Christians, were being starved to death in Ukraine. Solzhenitsyn comments on just some of the premeditated evil of the atheistic communist regime, in regard to the famine in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933: “It was a system which, in time of peace, artificially created a famine, causing 6 million persons to die in the Ukraine in 1932 and 1933. They died on the very edge of Europe. And Europe didn’t even notice it. The world didn’t even notice it—6 million persons!” (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b) And, as we said, so much more genocide was yet to happen in the former Russian (now Soviet) Empire—which was headed by militant atheists who profoundly hated Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church.

Also, it must be mentioned that while the godless power elite of the Soviet Union was encouraging, and attempting to enable as much as possible, their subject population to renounce Orthodoxy and murder their own people en masse—thereby bringing substantially to fruition the atheist power elite’s goal of exterminating vast numbers of Orthodox Christians—we see, during all of this catastrophe, American capitalists who did great business with the Soviet Union in order to help themselves and the Soviet Union’s economy (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b). We also see this same godless leadership (in the Soviet Union and later elsewhere) encouraging Orthodox Christians and others to decimate themselves further by killing their unborn children, through abortion. And Solzhenitsyn points out, that while all of this vast destruction of humanity was happening, the Western power elite did all that it could to validate and recognize the Soviet Union: “I could keep on numerating these endlessly, but I have to stop because I have come to the year 1933 when, with all I have enumerated behind us, your President Roosevelt and your Congress recognized this system as one worthy of diplomatic recognition, of friendship and of assistance.” (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b)
The power elite, whoever they may be (known or unknown) in any particular circumstances, seem to often support one another very well—and this they often do regardless of the great devastation to vast numbers of people which their conduct often brings. But we must never forget, all of us must never forget—for we all share some of the guilt, collectively and individually, for what is wrong in this world—that all of the power of this world will one day be brought to nothing by Almighty God. People can be fooled and we can all fool ourselves, but God cannot be fooled; and, when Christ our God comes again with glory, His Judgement will bring all the power of this fallen world to absolutely nothing.

With all that was just mentioned being kept in mind, let us look at the following quotation regarding the holocaust committed by Turkey against Christians—against great numbers of Orthodox Christians and against great numbers of heterodox Christians.

Democide had preceded the Young Turk’s rule and with their collapse at the end of World War I, the successor Nationalist government carried out its own democide against the Greeks and remaining or returning Armenians. From 1900 to 1923, various Turkish regimes killed from 3,500,000 to over 4,300,000 Armenians, Greeks, Nestorians, and other Christians. (Rummel, R.J., 1997b, paragraph 2)

And the following quotation mentions the same holocaust in early twentieth century Asia Minor (now Turkey); and it gives one specific estimate of the number of Greeks murdered in that particular genocide of Christians.

Pontian and Anatolian Greeks were victims of a broader Turkish genocidal project aimed at all Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire. A total of more than 3.5 million Greeks, Armenians, and Assyrians were killed under the successive regimes of the Young Turks and of Mustafa Kemal from roughly 1914 to 1923. Of this, as many as 1.5 million Greeks may have died. The end of the genocide marked a profound rupture in the long Greek historical presence on the Asia Minor.

Greek communities began inhabiting Anatolia (Greek for “east”), otherwise referred to as the Asia Minor, since the 12th century BCE. They centered mostly along the Aegean littoral, although some Greeks, known as Pontians, went further east and colonized the southern shores of the Black Sea. (Benvenuto, J. & Lim, J., n.d., paragraphs 1-2)

Now, we conclude this part of the discussion, regarding the Turkish genocide against Christians who lived in Asia Minor, in the early part of the twentieth century. The following quotation from the very inspirational work of Roberto Lopes, a Brazilian by birth, who has
shown tremendous love and respect for the Greek people and who thirsts for justice for everyone, is of great importance. I do not know if Roberto Lopes is an Orthodox Christian or not, but his great respect for the Greeks and their culture is as great or greater than that of most Orthodox Christians with whom I have had conversations; and Roberto Lopes’ thirst for justice for the Orthodox Christian Greeks who suffered at the hands of the Turks, based on his amazing research and writing, is as strong as that of any Orthodox Christian that I have ever met.

This very powerful quotation to follow from Roberto Lopes’ inspirational research and writing—pertaining to the Holocaust of Greeks, Armenians and others at the hands of the Turks—is no longer something easily to be found on the internet (this inaccessibility is so, at least, in reference to the time frame of my writing this 3rd Edition of the thesis). And, furthermore, unfortunately, Roberto Lopes’ citations and links which he provides within the actual Letter that he wrote to the Governor of Alabama are no longer active. Sometime ago, all of these remarkable resources were easy to access on the internet. But, in the recent past, I have tried to access much of this inspirational and amazing research of Roberto Lopes and have arrived at meaningless websites, or somehow otherwise could not find these resources. Thankfully Lopes’ letter to the Governor of Alabama—urging him not to issue any proclamations endorsing the Turkish government’s propaganda, in its denial of genocide—is, at least, accessible. But as we said, the citations and links within the Letter are, at this time, for whatever reason, inaccessible. I hope that nothing malicious was done to these sites on the internet—at times it sure seemed that something grossly inappropriate had been done to suppress Roberto Lopes’ very powerful research—in the end however I do not know for sure what happened; and we can only hope that these powerful resources once again become easily accessible to all who wish to learn history and seek justice for people.

To: Governor and First Lady of Alabama

From: Roberto Lopes, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Date: 30.Aug.2001

URGENT: Please, don’t let the Turkish government MISLEAD your people.

Dear Governor and First Lady of the State of Alabama, USA, My name is Roberto Lopes. I am not a US citizen. I am Brazilian. I am not Greek nor Turk and not even

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\[78\] This, in fact, is the quotation at which we will be looking, shortly.
descendant of either nation. I am just a person who values justice and realizes that everything depends on it.

I would like to ask you to, please, consider some essential facts that have been certainly hidden from you by the Turks that are trying to mislead you and the entire people of Alabama to support and cover up a GENOCIDE.

Before anything else, please, consider what a member of the government of your country had to say about the Greek Genocide and Mustafa Kemal:

“Enough has been said, however, to convince the reader that the extermination of the Christians of Turkey was an organized butchery, carried out on a great scale, and well under way before the Greeks were sent to Smyrna. We have seen it in operation in the days of Abdul Hamid, “the butcher,” we have seen it more fully developed and better organized under Talaat and Enver, those statesmen of the “Constitution.” We shall behold it carried out to its dire finish by Mustapha Khemel, the “George Washington” of Turkey.”


Some essential historical facts (easily proven in an irrefutable manner) that the people of Alabama needs to know and will eventually know:

- Greece didn’t invade anything.

- Greece tried to save its own population of an ongoing GENOCIDE.

- Greece was not defeated by Turkey but by France and Italy, which supported the massacre of a people to protect commercial interests.

- The defeat of Greece allowed the Turkish government to continue the Genocide not only of the Greeks but also of the Armenians and Assyrians.

- The Turkish government provides RIGHT NOW more proofs to the whole world of their previous crimes against humanity.

In 1919, Greece liberated a part of its own territory and a LARGE part of its own population that had not been liberated in the fight for freedom of 1821. For instance, the MAJORITY of the population of Smyrna (West of the present Turkish territory) and also Pontos (North) was Greek.

After liberating Smyrna and its surrounding area peacefully, Greece had to attack Turkey because those Greeks still under the misrule of the Turks were being systematically TORTURED and MASSACRED. Also were victims of the same extermination effort of the Turkish government the Armenians and Assyrians, who were equally saved by the Greek Army.

A related statement from US Consul General George Horton:

“This process of extermination was carried on over a considerable period of time, with fixed purpose, with system, and with painstaking minute details; and it was accomplished with unspeakable cruelties, causing the destruction of a greater number of human beings than have suffered in any similar persecution since the coming of Christ.”


The Genocide of the Greeks was already underway many years before the BEGINNING of the World War I. Initially, the Turks had the support and encouragement of Germany to exterminate the Greeks (and also the Armenians and Assyrians) since the Greeks were in the way of the Germans for their plans to dominate the entire region.

The Greek Genocide was INTENSIFIED during World War I, which provided political excuses and a cover up to the Turkish government to torture with unimaginable cruelty and then kill several hundreds of thousands of Greek children, men and women of ALL AGES.

After the end of the World War I, in which the Germans and Turks were defeated with an important participation of the Greek Armed Forces, which fought along side the US Armed Forces, the Turks saw the extermination of the Greeks not only as a way to get rid of them and to STEAL all their belongings but also as a way to push Greece to a war against Turkey.
A related statement from another important witness from the USA: “The Turks knew that these deportations would precipitate a war with Greece; in fact, they welcomed such a war and were preparing for it. So enthusiastic where the Turkish people that they had raised money by popular subscription and bad purchased a Brazilian dreadnaught which was then under construction in England.”


The Turkish government underestimated the capacity of Greece to fight to save their compatriots (and also the Armenians and Assyrians) and thought that with the war provoked by the ongoing Genocide of the Greeks Turkey would recover territories liberated previously by Greece. The Greeks could fight much harder than than the Turks expected and were at about to win the war and finally put an end to the Greek genocide.

In the same way that in 1940 the Italian dictators thought they could obtain a quick victory over Greece (which once again had a MUCH smaller population than its enemies), Turkey was surprised by the brave and efficient fight of the Greeks. The Greeks were fighting for their nation and for the millions of children, men and women who could still be saved.

Another statement from US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau:

“The Armenians are not the only subject people in Turkey which have suffered from this policy of making Turkey exclusively the country of the Turks. The story which I have told about the Armenians I could also tell with certain modifications about the Greeks and the Syrians. Indeed the Greeks were the first victims of this nationalizing idea.”


In the same way that Italy had to require the help of Germany and also Bulgaria to defeat Greece in 1940, Turkey in the war of 1919 - 1922 had to be supported by France and Italy and to some extent by the Russians too. Greece was not defeated by Turkey but by France and Italy. They supported the criminal forces of Mustafa Kemel in all ways they could, including giving the Turks strategic weapons like planes and tanks.

France and Italy preferred a weak Turkey that they could easily manipulate just like Germany had already manipulated for many years than the strong competition of Greece,
which was quickly becoming a powerful nation just a few years after part of its territory and part of its population had been freed from 400 years of the cruel Turkish occupation and slavery.

The support given by France and Italy to Turkey meant total freedom to the Turks to continue the Genocide of the Greeks and also the Genocides of the Armenians and Assyrians who would also have been saved by the Greek Army. Millions of persons were tortured and massacred to protect the economical interests of those corrupt governments.

Those facts were documented in detail by several sources of several nations, including the USA. Those facts are IRREFUTABLE.

It's as clear as the Genocides perpetrated by the Nazis in the World War II that the Genocide of the Greeks of Pontos, Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace, Constantinople and Imvros and Tenedos was and STILL IS a planned and systematic effort to exterminate all Greeks Turkey can reach.

The Turkish government never stopped giving the world more proofs of the Greek Genocide. We can see RIGHT NOW in Cyprus how the total impunity for the Greek Genocide allowed the Turks once again to invade, torture and massacre thousands of Greeks. We can see the same in Imvros.

Please, do not INSULT the entire humanity by praising a criminal who will soon be known in the whole world as the precursor of Adolf Hitler. Please, consider the endless and irrefutable facts that show how the Turkish government treated and still treats everyone else who's not Turkish.

Please, base your decision on the FACTS and not on false WORDS.

The Turks are trying to mislead you to associate the name of the State of Alabama and its people to efforts to try to deny or at least minimize some of the most hideous crimes of the entire human History:
- The Armenian Genocide (about 2,000,000 persons massacred)\textsuperscript{79}

- The Assyrian genocide (at least 750,000 persons massacred)

- The Hellenic (Greek) Genocide (about 1,750,000 persons massacred)

This work shows a small part of the documentation already available about the Genocide of the Greeks and will show much more soon:

The Hellenic Genocide

Quotes from historical documents and related Photos. \url{http://www.greece.org/genocide/quotes}

There you can find many more statements from several witnesses of the Genocide of the Greeks. Here’s another statement from George Horton:

“The conduct of the Greeks towards the thousands of Turks residing in Greece, while the ferocious massacres were going on, and while Smyrna was being burned and refugees, wounded, outraged and ruined, were pouring into every port of Hellas, was one of the most inspiring and beautiful chapters in all that country’s history. There were no reprisals. The Turks living in Greece were in no wise molested, nor did any storm of hatred or revenge burst upon their heads. This is a great and beautiful victory that, in its own way, rises to the level of Marathon and Salamis.”

George Horton \url{http://www.greece.org/genocide/quotes/p-mov-smyrna-5.html}

Please, don't let your State become an instrument of dissemination of lies.

\textsuperscript{79} Generally, in this quotation from Roberto Lopes, we will note a few things:

Firstly, the numbers presented for the Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek Genocide of 2,000,000 and 750,000 and 1,750,000 are written in a notation which is equivalent to using commas (as we in the United States are used to seeing), so the above numbers are 2,000,000 and 750,000 and 1,750,000, respectively.

Secondly, there are a number of minor typographical errors present in the quotation (either in Roberto Lopes’ original email or perhaps in some transcription from the original email). The errors are minor and it is absolutely obvious what Roberto Lopes is generally trying to say regarding the betrayal of the afflicted peoples by the dishonorable conduct of some European nations; and it is also absolutely obvious that Roberto Lopes is giving a very truthful confession of the great bravery and faithfulness of the Greek Armed forces who heroically fought against staggering circumstances to save their own people and others. May their memory be eternal!
Thank you very much for your attention. I am at your disposal to clarify any doubts you might have or to suggest a detailed bibliography.

Best Wishes,

Roberto Lopes

Sao Paulo, Brazil.

roblopes@uol.com.br

PGP Public Key available.

(Lopes, R., 2001)

May God remember the Orthodox heroes in the Greek Army who fought against unbelievable odds during that genocide, grossly outnumbered as they tried to save the Greek, Armenian and Assyrian populations (Lopes, R., 2001). And we should remember that we were told by a non-Greek, Roberto Lopes, who has done outstanding research, that the Greeks would have likely won that war against Turkey and would have ended the genocide—had not other European powers stepped in to render significant assistance against the Greek Army. May the memory of these and all Orthodox heroes be eternal! And may God remember all who suffered through this genocide.

*The Great Self Inflicted Genocide: The Great Mass Murder of Innumerable Unborn Children Through Abortion, Committed by Nominally Orthodox Christians*

Let us now look at the great self inflicted genocide of abortion, which great numbers of Orthodox Christians have committed against countless unborn children. What follows pertains to what some Russian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox priests, and others, have said about Greece and Russia—but all of what is quoted and said here equally applies to all Orthodox nations, all of which have had great numbers of people who have often shown no regard for the lives of their unborn children. Some of what pertains to this self inflicted catastrophe, committed by nominally Orthodox Christians against themselves, has already been discussed in Chapter 5 of this work.

Let us look at the great contradiction and irony frequently to be seen in life, and to be seen in the field of medicine itself—which, when medical science has used the knowledge that it has attained by the grace God for good, then it has, by the grace of God, done truly great work for the lives of all people, including children. Conversely, and tragically, many of those same
medical professionals help women to murder their unborn children. Elena Piskareva’s film “Alive” talks about this reality.

As part of the Thirteenth International Charitable Film Festival “Radiant Angel,” in Moscow’s “October” cinema center, Elena Piskareva’s short film “Alive,” dedicated to the everyday life of Russian maternity houses, where, along with births at the state’s expense, are performed hundreds of thousands of abortions […] (Pravoslavie.ru, 2016a, paragraph 1)

The irony, and tragedy, is great—practically, side by side, in the very same medical centers, many children are saved whereas many others are murdered through abortion. Again, Elena Piskareva speaks of what she saw, experienced, and researched:

[Elena Piskareva] “Once, being pregnant, I was lying on bed rest in an ordinary Russian maternity house,” said Elena Piskareva, telling the story of the creation of the film, “and there were some women lying in the beds next to me: some were on bed rest fighting for the children’s lives, others came for an abortion and fighting for death, literally. And the irony is that the same doctors did the operation for those fighting for their lives, and for the others condemned to die. It was like a conveyor. Then I went home, my pregnancy having ended well, but this topic gave me no rest and I started to dig.”

[...]

[Elena Piskareva]… “every year in Russia there are a million abortions (officially, per Wikipedia), and six million (unofficially, including commercial centers).” (Pravoslavie.ru, 2016a, paragraph 2)

The numbers that we just saw are frightening; and why on earth would Orthodox Christians want to decimate their own people anymore than has already been done to them—by so many catastrophes in modern history alone—and anymore than they have already done to themselves? One would think that “enough is enough” and that we would all one day come to our senses and realize that the murder of our unborn children will, obviously, never fare well for our people. Father Dmitry Smirnov, of the Russian Orthodox Church, discusses these matters powerfully and admonishes the people of Russia—who have such a heroic and glorious history, as a great Orthodox Christian nation—to stop the godless murdering of their unborn children through abortion.
Father Dmitry rightfully warns of the impending wrath of God if we do not come to our senses, for it is only by the unfathomable grace and mercy of Almighty God that we all even exist and are still here—despite our great willful stupidity. Father Dmitry rightfully warns the Russian nation regarding the genocidal conduct of many of its people, but he could just as easily be warning the Greeks, the Rumanians, the Serbs, the Georgians and all of the other predominately Orthodox nations (and all Orthodox Christians living everywhere) regarding such godless, murderous conduct which must come to an end. With that kept in mind, we consider the following:

Before the film’s premier at the festival, Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov, representative for the Patriarchal Commission for Family, and the Protection of Motherhood and Childhood, gave a presentation, once again drawing attention to the impermissibility of the government’s funding of this terrible operation and called on Russian women to stop killing their own children.

[Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov] [...] “to kill your own children is very bad. And don’t then hope that after your arms are stained with blood up to the elbows, and your feet slosh through the blood of your murdered children you’ll find some kind of happiness. To expect some prosperous marriage or some kind of joyous life after infanticide is simply ridiculous. A person can find no kind of happiness if he is a murderer of his own children. Such cannibals, as our people, need to be wiped off the face of the earth, and only the great grace of God towards us (for we are all his children) will save us from the wrath of God. But if we don’t wake up, the wrath of God will fall upon us,” stated Fr. Dmitry.

According to the priest, the film “Alive,” which shows all the ordinariness and commonness of killing children in Russian maternity homes, prompts us to ponder the issue. “3,500 years ago, the commandment was given to a completely wild people, nomads: Thou shalt not kill (Ex. 20:13). We, a people who have survived such wars where a sixth of the land was colonized on horseback, should especially observe this commandment. A very talented people has become killers and cannibals,” said the head of the patriarchal commission. ([Pravoslavie.ru], 2016a, paragraphs 3-5)

As was just mentioned, by the incomprehensible grace of God, one sixth of the earth’s land mass “was colonized on horseback” by a great Orthodox Christian nation, Russia—and this was done long before the embrace of atheism by many of its people and by many other people from throughout the Orthodox Christian world. For the longest time atheistic philosophies and
Ideologies had little or no power in the predominately Orthodox nations. One cannot help but see that the embrace of atheistic philosophies and ideologies—by so many people from predominately Orthodox nations—could, in the end, make us nothing more than “killers and cannibals.” Let us remember Dostoevsky’s analysis of atheistic philosophies and where they inevitably lead: “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 elsewhere we see: “There is no virtue if there is no immortality” (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 70). People have rightfully paraphrased such incredibly insightful statements as essentially meaning: If there is no God, then everything is allowed to a godless person. Indeed, this was, and is, where atheism culminates—always and everywhere, regardless of when and where it takes hold (and regardless of political and nominal religious affiliations). Namely, the following inevitably happens with atheism: A great amount of evildoing becomes largely permissible and not even regarded as evil anymore (individually, or collectively in society). That was true one hundred years ago when the atheistic Marxist elite took power in Russia and it is true now—in fact, obviously, this is true in countless circumstances (great and small) and has been seen throughout human history, among all peoples.

We Orthodox allowed, and continue to allow in predominately Orthodox nations, the influence of ideologies and philosophies hostile to human life and generally very hostile to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. This never ends right for Orthodox Christians, nor has it ever—but perhaps the contrast of such atheism with the incomparable truth of Holy Orthodoxy will bring us to our senses and bring us all closer to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. May God have mercy upon all of us and restore our fallen nations, so that we can correctly witness to our families, to one another and to the whole world regarding Christ and the Holy Orthodox Church (and this will be allowed for us to do only by the unfathomable grace of Almighty God). Only with God’s grace can we accomplish anything—to God belongs all glory! We continue to look at what Father Dmitry Smirnov has to say in reference to what happens when we disregard what our God taught us, and its inevitable consequences to Orthodox Christian nations.

In this regard, the priest recalled that “100 years ago, Russian families had on average eight children.” “To have fifteen—twenty children was a normal story. Mendeleev was the nineteenth child. Now, under the Soviet regime, it’s impossible to expect any kind of Mendeleev,” he said.

80 Such as Marxism, secular humanism, and ecumenism (which attempts to equate all of the religions of world in its denial of the Only True Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ) to name but a few.
“There is ancient term—repentance. In Greek it means ‘change of thoughts,’ and the main thought we need to change is the idea of the permissibility of infanticide. Maybe, to begin with, we should change this idea amongst the Russian people, because more than anything we are responsible for this piece of land which the Lord entrusted to us for the labors of our ancestors. They hoped we would populate this land, but for 100 years our numbers have not increased, although during the reign of Nicholas II the Russian population increased by more than 50 million people. We can’t understand these numbers. To kill 50 million—we can’t understand. And how to birth 50 million in such a short time? Nicholas Alexandrovich himself they killed, when he was fifty. Something must have happened in our brains,” Fr. Dmitry sadly remarked. (Pravoslavie.ru, 2016a, paragraphs 7-8)

Under the Tsar, St. Nicholas II, a humble and great Orthodox Saint, Russia remained a great nation and its population of Orthodox believers increased tremendously. But under the godless power elite of Marxism (under Lenin, Trotsky, and countless others who profoundly hated Christ and his Holy Orthodox Church) the Orthodox Christian population of Russia was decimated greatly—through unprecedented mass murder within the vast networks of concentration camps, through anti-Orthodox propaganda encouraging the “freedom” to murder unborn children, and through the general attempt (which ultimately failed) to destroy the Orthodox Church. Perhaps, most tragic of all is that very many—but by no means all—nominally Orthodox Christians embraced this unprecedented catastrophe as some sort of progress and expansion of freedom. What we Orthodox have done to ourselves throughout history—especially in modern history—is to help our enemies destroy us much more than they could ever do by themselves. Our profoundly stupid and willful embrace of our own destruction and that of others must end—and unborn children are at fault for nothing, and should, obviously, never be murdered.

“In the years since Lenin first issued the ukaz allowing abortion, a sizable portion of our country’s population has been killed. What Hitler did to our country and with our people is small potatoes compared to what we did to ourselves, incited by the Bolsheviks. And now it’s the common trend in all of Europe, except in two countries where abortion is prohibited. There are many talks across the planet about human rights, and now about the rights of children, and there’s even a special person allocated to fight for children’s rights. But children don’t even have the most important right—to live. They can’t even squeak in their own defense. Thus they are killed in our country by the millions. There’s five million abortions—approximately—the number is carefully hidden. About a million abortions take place in state institutions, and even more absurd, most often in maternity
homes. There’s another four million in private abortion clinics operating within ‘family planning,’” stated the head of the Patriarchal Commission.

“As a result, Russians have become a very old people. “The average age of Russians is forty, but it should be ten for normal life. Any normal people should be a country of children, and adults should be busied with raising and educating and teaching children. And most importantly, of course, is the Christian attitude to life. But we can’t even talk about Christianity in our demographic situation of suicidal catastrophe,” Fr. Dmitry concluded. (Pravoslavie.ru, 2016a, paragraphs 9-10)

Without a doubt—based on earlier numbers and information already quoted—when Father Dmitry says, “There’s five million abortions—approximately—the number is carefully hidden”, he is speaking of the mass murder through abortion, in Russia, of approximately 5 million unborn children per year. And it would certainly make sense for those who hate Orthodox Christians to keep the numbers hidden, lest the Orthodox people come to their senses and work to stop the great decimation of their own people and their Orthodox nation.

History has shown that the best way to perpetrate a genocide is not let people know the extent of it—or to not let them know that it is even occurring, in the first place. Very effective propaganda is necessary for this to take place. So to effectively conduct a genocide—on a very large scale, for a very long period of time (something brought almost to perfection by the atheistic power elite of Marxism)—it is necessary to “win the hearts and minds of people”81 by first having people, in the case of Russia and other Orthodox nations, renounce or relativize their incomparable Orthodox Faith and heritage. Now, once people’s Orthodox Faith is undermined through anti Orthodox propaganda, cultural genocide, or perhaps through the threat of being one of the countless victims of mass murder, or simply because of many people’s own will to fall away from Orthodoxy—all of which, to various degrees and at various times, clearly happened in Russia and in other Orthodox nations—then this makes the promotion of the mass murder of unborn children all the more acceptable and more likely to proceed (as it has proceeded, for many years, in many predominately Orthodox nations). Certainly, how could genocide of any and all forms not be more likely to proceed, when an atheistic regime (in the case of the Soviet

81 This technique, or at least phraseology, of “winning the hearts and minds of people”—as they are being killed through wars and other catastrophes—is also effective propaganda, fed to a gullible public, making it much easier to promote exceptionalism and start wars. American politicians and many others have seized upon this rhetoric with remarkable effect.
Union) had diligently, within their godless empire, attempted to kill Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church from the memory of all Orthodox Christians.

Additionally—within the same philosophical trend and mindset of all who deny the unique truth of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and who consequently embrace relativism and various forms of atheism—powerful people who promote ecumenism and relativistic ecumenical ideologies work hard to undermine Orthodoxy, by making it into a relative “truth”, so that even Orthodoxy’s defense of the humanity of an unborn child can be called into question for some nominally Orthodox—if they allow themselves to be deceived. We must remember, that in accordance with the principles of ecumenism, “diversity”, “multiculturalism”, “inclusiveness” and “tolerance”—when these principles are most hypocritically, and militantly, enforced—Orthodox teaching and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is certainly not tolerated as an absolute truth, instead it is viewed only as “one perspective of many.” What more effective way is there to commit a genocide than to not even have it identified as one—given so many “valid” perspectives on abortion, “diverse” from Holy Orthodoxy (and with so many of these “diverse” perspectives frequently found to be embraced among a great number of Orthodox and non Orthodox alike)?

May this horrific catastrophe, that is the genocide of abortion in predominately Orthodox nations, come to an end—and may it end everywhere else, as well. Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin makes the following powerful statement:

“The Soviet Union was the first country in the world to legalize abortions. At that moment it was obsessed with atheism and hatred toward mankind. Unfortunately, our path of official recognition of abortions was repeated by some other countries. We were the first in this sin, now let us be the first in repentance, correction of our lives and restoration of our moral system through a resolute reduction of abortions and, in the future, through their total rejection by society.” (Pravoslavie.ru, 2015, paragraph 5)

May God have mercy upon, and restore, all the Orthodox Christian nations and may God allow those nations to be a powerful witness, regarding the light of Christ and Holy Orthodoxy, to the whole world. We note that Muslim nations prohibit abortions (Pravoslavie.ru, 2016b, paragraphs 1-2), but we Orthodox who have the only True Faith often ignore that unmatched and unconquerable True Faith, that is Holy Orthodoxy—and consequently we see multitudes of abortions occurring in predominately Orthodox nations. With that in mind, we observe the following wise words of advice, from Archimandrite Ephraim of Mount Athos:
In the course of shooting the documentary “Athos—for Life!” the crew of Sobor.by had the opportunity to visit Holy Mount Athos and talk with Archimandrite Ephraim, Abbot of the great Vatopedi Monastery. The elder answered a question about abortion.

“You need to work hard and do your best in order to live according to Church rules, if you want to seriously combat abortion. Today people easily kill each other—parents kill their own children. We are praying on Holy Mount Athos, and you should try and explain to people that abortion is dreadful murder. A heavy responsibility lies on the shoulders of those who allow abortions. A crime is committed by physicians, parents and the woman who gets an abortion. Abortions are prohibited in Muslim countries. But, unfortunately, in our countries where we keep the truth of Orthodoxy they are legalized—and that is very sad. That is why all of us must struggle with the murder which is called abortion,” he said. (Pravoslavie.ru., 2016b, paragraphs 1-2) (From Holy Mount Athos)

In Russia, many people in government and in society in general, are seeing how dreadful circumstances are—regarding the horrible crime of abortion and its great prevalence in Russia—and they are aware that this great prevalence of abortion is clearly an immense threat to the security of their nation. All predominately Orthodox nations need to always remember this and act accordingly. With this in mind, we observe the following quotations:

[From] A round table entitled “Abortion and its state funding as factors undermining the sovereignty of Russia and threatening its national security,” was held on July 20 [2016] in Novosibirsk […]

Representatives of traditional religious confessions, public organizations, political and patriotic movements, and specialists of aid professions providing services in the field of the protection of motherhood and childhood in Novosibirsk and the Novosibirsk Oblast, doctors, and the teaching and parental communities took part in the work of the round table. (Pravoslavie.ru., 2016c, paragraphs 1-2)

[…] Participants in the meeting noted that Russia is the world “leader” in number of abortions. According to official statistics of the Russian Federation’s Ministry of Health there 746,736 unborn victims of abortion in 2015. However, according to independent expert evaluation, the real number reaches 5-8 million a year, as official statistics do not take into account abortions performed in private clinics.
Procedures for terminating pregnancy in state institution budgets are financed by funds from compulsory medical insurance. Only 3% of the total number of abortions are for medical or social reasons. Members of the round table consider it unacceptable to pay for abortions in the absence of any medical reason at taxpayer expense.

According to the participants, the question of increasing the population is one of the survival of a sovereign state. Therefore the issue of abortions in Russia due to its prevalence acquires in terms of the demographic crisis the character of a national threat. Some of the participants called for a legal approach to protecting the lives of unborn children, implemented in the legislation of a number of states, expressed in the recognition of the human right to life and the protection of this right from the moment of a child’s conception. (Pravoslavie.ru, 2016c, paragraphs 4-6)

Clearly, Russia is not alone among predominately Orthodox nations which have—in great ignorance and in reckless disregard for the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ—allowed abortion to become commonplace in their nation (and that obviously has been to these nations’ great detriment). We see the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Ignatius of Demetrias giving much of the same type of warnings to Greece that were being given, by others, to Russia. As we near the end of our current discussion, in this particular section, all of these warnings—where the numbers are clearly pointing to a demographic and national catastrophe for both Greece and Russia—are very dire, for the numbers are truly terrifying and very real and are pointing to a tremendous moral crisis for both nations. And as such, we, as an Orthodox Christian people, must awaken from our willful and truly inhumane stupidity, and condemn abortion as having no place in any Orthodox Christian nation. We see that Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin essentially spoke in this same manner, where we quoted him earlier, and he is absolutely correct in his inspiring words calling Orthodox Christians to repentance—for there is no other way for us to proceed as Orthodox Christians but through sincere repentance before God. And that which we say about Greece and Russia, regarding the genocide of abortion, is essentially applicable, with little modification of details and discussion, to all Orthodox nations.

Having mentioned his Eminence Metropolitan Ignatius of Demetrias earlier, let us now look at some of what this Orthodox Hierarch had to say regarding the spiritual crisis in Greece which has given rise to a catastrophic demographic crisis in that nation—a demographic crisis which the Greek people have very largely brought onto themselves. Once again, all Orthodox Christian nations are facing similar crises and need to repent before God, as do the Greek people. May God have mercy upon us.
Demographic studies predict that the population of Greece will decrease by 500,000 - 1,000,000 over the next twenty years, according to the report of one Greek hierarch at a recent conference in Athens.

The population of Greece will drop to 8 million by 2030, according to experts, while the population of neighboring Turkey will reach 100 million, and that of Albania 16 million. “We are faced with a national catastrophe,” Metropolitan Ignatius of Demetrias remarked in his report, “The Church’s View on the Demographic Problem,” according to AgionOros.ru.

The main cause of the demographic collapse is the drop in the birth rate. “Financial incentives are certainly necessary,” to deal with this drop, according to the metropolitan, “but the long experience of the Church shows that the demographic problem has its basis primarily in spiritual causes.”

According to the bishop, among the main factors in the decline in fertility are the continuous and systematic belittling of the sacred institution of the family, the psychological and intellectual immaturity of society, the frighteningly large number of abortions in Greece, the seeming well-being in which several generations were raised, the devaluation of motherhood, the desacralization of man, and the relativistic approach to faith in God. (Pravoslavie.ru, 2017, paragraphs 1-4)

[...]

In conclusion, the metropolitan declared, “Demographics are a huge national problem which threatens the existence of Greece. We must act before it’s too late.” (Pravoslavie.ru, 2017, paragraph 6)

We, nominally Orthodox Christians from many nations, have decimated and destroyed ourselves more than enough for a very long time—much to the joy of those who hate us—may God help us to end our hatred, and godless conduct, toward ourselves; may God help us to end our self inflicted catastrophe—there are enough people and forces who hate us, we do not need to help them in their attempts to destroy us. May Almighty God give us Orthodox Christians the strength and wisdom to work to protect our people and all the people of the world—for God alone can give us strength and without God we can do absolutely nothing.
Political Correctness: An Attempt to Control and Suppress Freedom of Expression

Earlier we mentioned many of the catastrophes that the atheistic leadership of Marxism helped to bring to predominantly Orthodox Christian nations (this certainly needed to be said because of Marxism’s 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 any and 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 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”, 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

82 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.
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 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;

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83 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 ενα θεόν, Πατερα Παντοκρατορα, Ποιητην ουρανου και γης, ορατων τε παντων και αορατων.
2. Και εις ενα Κυριον Ιησουν Χριστον, τον Υιον του Θεου, τον μονογενη, τον εκ του Πατρος γεννηθεντα προ παντον των αιωνων. Φως εκ Φωτος, Θεον αληθινον, εκ Θεου αληθινου, γεννηθεντα ου ποιηθεντα, ομοουσιον τω Πατρι, δι Όυ τα παντα εγενετο.

3. Τον δι ημας τους ανθρωπους και δια την ημετεραν σωτηριαν, κατελθοντα εκ των Ουρανων και σαρκωθεντα εκ Πνευματος Αγιου και Μαριας της Παρθενου και ενανθρωπησαντα.

4. Σταυρωθεντα τε υπερ ημων επι Ποντιου Πιλατου, και παθοντα, και ταφεντα.

5. Και ανασταντα τη τριτη ημερα. κατα τας Γραφας.

6. Και ανελθοντα εις τους ουρανους, και καθεξομενον εκ δειξιων του Πατρος.

7. Και παλιν ερχομενον μετα δοξης κριωνα ζοντας και νεκρους, Ου της Βασιλειας ουκ εσται τελος.

8. Και εις το Πνευμα το Αγιον, το Κυριον, το Ζωοποιον, το εκ του Πατρος εκπορευομενον, το συν Πατρι και Υιο συμπροσκυνουμενον και συνδοξαζομενον, το λαλησαν δια των προφητων.

9. Εις Μιαν, Αγιαν, Καθολικην και Αποστολικην Εκκλησιαν.

10. Ομολογο εν Βαπτισμα εις αφεσιν αμαρτιων.

11. Προδοκω Αναστασιν νεκρον.

12. Και ζωην του μελλοντος αιωνος. Αµην.

(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 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]*. (Cavarnos, 1992b, pp. 23-24)

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84 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)*”.

85 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.
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)

Certainly, Orthodox never forget that “Human beings can never understand the mysteries of God” (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 78). With that kept forever in mind, one sees that there are parts of Fr. John Meyendorff’s research (p. 230) 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 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 new presence of the humanity of Christ by the Holy Spirit. (Romanides, 1975)

By “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, when He freely chose to do so. Through no compulsion whatsoever, God created; and, 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.\(^{86}\) (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

\(^{86}\) 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.
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)

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. As we mentioned earlier in the work, 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.” (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 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]87, 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.” 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

87 Here the terminology “subsistences” means the same thing as Divine Hypostases or Divine Persons.
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
transcendence 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)

Πολύ υπέρ πασάν εἰκόνα καὶ τυπὸν ἡ ἁγία Τριας. μὴ τοκὸν ἀκουων εκ Πατρος,
σωματικὸν τοκὸν νοησῆς. μὴδὶ συν Λογον ἀκουων, λογον σωματικον υπολαβῆς. μὴδὲ
Πνεῦμα Θεοῦ ἀκουων, ανεμὸν καὶ αναπνοὴν νοήσης. αλλὰ πιστεί μονὴ απεριεργὸν
δοξαζε. Εκ γαρ των κτισμάτων αυτοῦ ἀναλογῶς ο δημιουργὸς νοείται. (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 (as Father Romanides tells us), looks at some of 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, nor anything else created, 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)

If our knowledge of God is revealed by God only through things which are created and, as such, if this knowledge pertaining to God is achieved only through experience of what is created, then by created means—through “symbols and concepts and rational knowledge” (Romanides, 1963-64)—we are then, supposedly, able to understand the Uncreated, absolutely incomprehensible and transcendent God, Who (according to the logic of the heretics, whether they acknowledge it or not) cannot be much different from creation since that same God can be expressed by created means and potentially understood by creatures (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2012, p. 256), [Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos] (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 259), (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2012, p. 259), (Romanides, 1963-64). Certainly, the heretical claim that God reveals Himself, and is known, by created means implies that God is similar to, or analogous to, creation—which of course confuses the absolutely transcendent and Uncreated God with creation itself; where, in contrast, we Orthodox Christians know that all of creation was brought into being from absolutely nothing, something that was accomplished by a completely free act of will (Lossky, 1976, pp. 92-94), by Almighty God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, Who has no similarity whatsoever with creation.

Of course, confusing the Uncreated God with anything created (such as with any words, concepts, symbols, rational knowledge, and anything else created and pertaining to creation in any way) is a grave theological error which leads, to one extent or another, to a form of idolatry (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 256), (Hierotheos, 2012, p. 259)—and it, arguably, leads to embracing the heresy of pantheism, to at least some extent. The implications and results of such “logic” are clearly found in all the heresies of the world, and of history, to one extent or another. 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. (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 (HYPEROYSIOS KRIFIOYS),’ 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.\textsuperscript{88} (Romanides, 1963-64)

\textit{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 \textit{theosis}, you discover that God is \textit{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.

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)

\textsuperscript{88}I have copied this quotation word for word, and with all of the punctuation present as it was written on the website \texttt{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.
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 Romanides’ 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. The Orthodox Saints knew what they definitely knew, and they also knew that there were other matters about which they, and all the rest of creation, would be forever completely ignorant pertaining to the incomprehensible and absolutely transcendent Suprasubstantial Trinity.

Father Romanides and others tell us much pertaining to the great God-inspired knowledge, humility and wisdom of the Orthodox Saints who knew very much about some of the aforementioned matters pertaining to God, and that they knew only from 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. With this in
mind, we observe some of the following—which is to be found in the Holy Orthodox tradition and in the grace filled experience of the Orthodox Saints:

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, cited in 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, cited in 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, cited in 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” (Romanides, 1963-64). 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, cited in 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 the very Essence or Nature which the Father Himself possesses as God, is equally and fully possessed by the Only-Begotten Son of God, and 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”. 89

Throughout this entire work, drawing from Holy Orthodox tradition, from great Orthodox Christian Saints and from others who are certainly faithful to Orthodox teaching, we have said and always will say—fully consistent with the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church—that the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity is forever absolutely transcendent and incomprehensible to everyone and to everything, to all creation forever, without any exception (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 75), (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 78), (Romanides, 2008, pp. 165-167), (Romanides, 2008, pp. 137-139), (Romanides, n.d.), (Romanides, 1963-64), (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 111), (Romanides, 1975). And, with this acknowledgement of God’s forever absolutely transcendent unknowability and incomprehensible power, we follow the Orthodox confession that none of our words, concepts, philosophies, nor anything else whatsoever associated with our created existence can ever describe or comprehend God, in any way whatsoever. So a philosophy of personalism subordinating the divine essence of

89 This quotation, and the two quotations immediately proceeding it, are from the Symbol of Faith of the Holy Orthodox Church, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.
the Holy Trinity to the supposed personhood of God (Romanides, 2008, pp. 137-139)—a personhood of God to which, in the heresy of personalism, our human personhood is analogous, and is an image of God’s uncreated supposed personhood—is a philosophy which confuses our forever deficient created language, words, thought process and all else in created existence, including our very existence, with the absolutely transcendent and incomprehensible Uncreated Suprasubstantial Trinity. In a sense, within the heresy of personalism created personhood and the Uncreated, absolutely transcendent Triune God become images of one another—of course such a theology is categorically absurd and a heresy (Romanides, 2008, pp. 141-142), (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 205). The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, by the unfathomable grace of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, has always confessed, through its unconquerable Saints, the absolute transcendence of God. Orthodox Christians never forget that “there is absolutely no similarity between God and creation.” (Romanides, 2008, pp. 128-129) And no heresy, whatsoever, based on any philosophy grounded in created existence and reality—whether it be Judaism since its rejection of Christ, Islam, Arianism, Monophysitism, personalism, Papism, Protestantism or any other heresy whatsoever—will ever defeat Orthodox Christianity and its defense and right teaching of Orthodox theology. For, the Holy Orthodox Church has always confessed the absolute incomprehensibility of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity and that there is, as such, “absolutely no similarity between God and any of His creatures.” (Romanides, n.d.), (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 205)

Again, with all that has been said earlier being kept in mind (drawn from the Holy Orthodox tradition, from great Orthodox Saints and from faithful Orthodox theologians), we continue in the discussion and confess, contrary to the heresy of personalism, that there is no subordination whatsoever pertaining to the Uncreated, absolutely transcendent Triune God. As such (and once again, contrary to the heresy of personalism), this absence of any subordination in the Triadic Divinity certainly applies to the Supra-essential Divine Essence or Nature (the very Essence or Nature of the Supra-essential Holy Trinity) which exists without having been caused—just as the Father exists without having been caused: “The essence does not have a cause of existence. As the Father is without a cause, so the essence too is without a cause.” (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 82) With this understood, we also confess that it is not the Supra-essential Divine Essence or Nature (the Divine Essence or Nature) which is the Source of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 78). 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 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.

And as we saw earlier: Just as the Hypostasis of the Father is without a cause of existence (the Father exists without having been caused), also the Divine Essence or Nature is without a cause of existence (the Divine Essence or Nature exists without having been caused) (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 82). And regarding the Holy Trinity: ‘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). We say all of these things as we speak pertaining to the absolutely transcendent and incomprehensible God, but, as we do so, we creatures, without any exception, will forever never be able to understand or comprehend the incomprehensible, unfathomable Triune God (Romanides, 1975), (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 78), (Fr. Romanides, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, pp. 71-72), (Hierotheos, 2012, p.115).

With what we just said above, regarding the Orthodox teaching of God’s absolute transcendence and incomprehensibility, being kept forever in mind, we continue and say: 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 inhering 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\textsuperscript{90} 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 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\textsuperscript{91} 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 what the divine essence is. Cf. also Gregory the Theologian’s Third Theological Oration,

\textsuperscript{90} 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.

\textsuperscript{91} “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.
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. Following closely what Vladimir Lossky told us: 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. One cannot help but
see here that the heresy of personalism—seen in its followers’ arrogance and philosophical
delusion—also attempts to undermine the unconquerable, God-inspired, Orthodox teaching
pertaining to the Super-essential Trinity. For just as the Filioque is philosophically speculative in
nature and contrary to the divine experience of all the Orthodox Saints, so also is the heresy of
personalism; in contrast to such heresies, Orthodox teaching is divinely revealed in the life of the
Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and is seen, in an unparalleled way, in the grace filled lives our
God-inspired Saints.

As we continue, 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 passible, 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 Deyansky 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]92 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

92 Bracketed entry is mine.
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).

Additionally, many others have embraced the great error of personalism. Apparently, Bishop Kallistos Ware has, at the very least, 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 profound error of personalism is expounded as truth. Nowhere, in his endorsement, does Bishop Kallistos Ware address this great error of personalism; instead, his eminence wholeheartedly endorses Meyendorff’s book *A study of Gregory Palamas*, were this great error is to be found—all of this while Bishop Kallistos Ware ignores Father Romanides’ profound and very faithful Orthodox confession condemning the error of personalism.

It will not be denied that Bishop Kallistos Ware, in the past, has very often times, throughout many years, provided a significant service to Orthodox Christian education, particularly in the West—in regard to much of his academic confession of Orthodox theology to the general public—just as Father Meyendorff did. Nevertheless, it remains very unfortunate that we have to mention that Bishop Kallistos, in his book, *The Orthodox Church* (on page 330), endorses Father John Meyendorff’s work *A study of Gregory Palamas*; and his eminence gives this endorsement with, apparently, no reservations—for none are mentioned—telling us that this particular book of Meyendorff’s “still remains fundamental”. His eminence tells us this despite the fact that Father Meyendorff expounds—in this very same book—the very serious theological 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 confessed by the Holy Orthodox Church and is thus a very great theological error.
At the very least, Bishop Kallistos is perhaps not too familiar with Father Romanides’ brilliant and very faithful presentation of Orthodox theology; or perhaps Bishop Kallistos Ware simply chooses to profoundly underestimate or ignore Father Romanides’ very rightful condemnation of the great error of personalism—an error which, very regretfully, due to my own ignorance, I also wholeheartedly embraced at an earlier time (in the very first edition of this current work, some time ago) before I was corrected by Father Romanides’ brilliant work. May Father Romanides’ memory be eternal! And may Orthodox Bishops such as Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, and other Orthodox Bishops, Monastics, and Clergy throughout the world continue to rightfully teach Orthodox theology!

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.)

Metropolitan John (Snychev) of St. Petersburg and Ladoga also speaks some pertaining to Western influences trying to undermine Orthodoxy in Russia, as he discusses the life and works of the Holy Hieromartyr Hilarion (Troitsky), Archbishop of Verey.

One of the most eminent figures of the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1920’s was Archbishop Hilarion of Verey, an outstanding theologian and extremely talented individual. Throughout his life he burned with great love for the Church of Christ, right up to his martyrlic death for her sake.

His literary works are distinguished by their strictly ecclesiastical content and his tireless struggle against scholasticism, specifically Latinism, which had been influencing the Russian Church from the time of Metropolitan Peter Moghila [of Kiev].

(Metropolitan John (Snychev) of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, 2012, paragraphs 1-2)
Here we just saw, discussed by a Russian Orthodox bishop, that there were Western, non-Orthodox, influences attempting to find their way into the Russian Orthodox Church—as was unfortunately also the case, to various extents, in Greece and in other predominately Orthodox nations.

We also see in what follows that, tragically and unjustly, Peter I (called Peter the Great) destroyed the Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church—only for it to be restored, by the grace of God, some two hundred years later (as St. Hilarion rightfully admonished all that it had to be restored).

When the question arose as to whether the Russian Church should restore the Patriarchate […]

[St. Hilarion (Troitsky) speaking]:

The Russian Church has never been without a chief hierarch. Our Patriarchate was destroyed by Peter I. With whom did it interfere? With the conciliarity of the Church? But wasn’t it during the time of the Patriarchs that there were especially many councils? No, the Patriarchate interfered neither with conciliarity nor with the Church. Then with whom? Here before me are two great friends, two adornments of the seventeenth century—Patriarch Nikon and Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. In order to sow disagreement between these two friends, evil boyars whispered to the Tsar, “Because of the Patriarch, you, the Sovereign, have become invisible.” When Nikon left the Moscow throne, he wrote, “Let the sovereign have more space without me.” Peter gave flesh to this thought of Nikon’s when he destroyed the Patriarchate. “Let me, the Sovereign, have more space without the Patriarch…”

But Church consciousness, in the thirty-fourth Apostolic Canon, as well as in the Local Council held in Moscow in 1917, says one irrevocable thing: ‘The bishops of any nation, including the Russian nation, must know who is the first among them, and acknowledge him as their head.’

And I would like to address all those who for some reason still consider it necessary to protest against the Patriarchate. Fathers and brothers! Do not disrupt the joy of our oneness of mind! Why do you take this thankless task upon yourselves? Why do you make hopeless speeches? You are fighting against the Church’s consciousness. Have some fear, lest haply you begin to fight against God (cf. Acts 5:39)! We have already sinned—sinned in that we didn’t restore the Patriarchate two months
ago, when we all came to Moscow and met with each other for the first time in the great Dormition Cathedral. Was it not it painful to the point of tears to see the empty Patriarchal seat?...And when we venerated the holy relics of the wonderworkers of Moscow and chief hierarchs of Russia, did we not hear their reproach, that for two hundred years their chief hierarchical throne has remained desolate?"

(Metropolitan John (Snychev) of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, 2012, paragraphs 14-16)

From the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, and others, tell us that the great and long-suffering Russian nation, only by the grace of God, was able to overcome so much calamity and times of trouble throughout its remarkable history—that is, as long as it remained united to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. Russia encountered its most devastating danger and catastrophes when it turned its back on Christ and the Holy Orthodox Church; and, such disregard for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church obviously has occurred in all predominately Orthodox nations—in one way or another, and at various times in history, and in the present—when many people have forgotten Christ and their unconquerable Orthodox Faith, as many did in Russia for a time. All of us Orthodox have oftentimes, in our sinful conduct, renounced Christ our God and His Holy Church, the Orthodox Church—which alone is the true Church. May Christ our God have mercy on us.

Many of the elites in pre-revolutionary Russia were making tremendous mistakes in forsaking Orthodoxy and encouraging others to do the same—with catastrophically grave consequences to follow. Such arrogance and apostasy can only lead to catastrophe for any people. With that in mind, we observe the following:

In the beginning of the 20th century, St Makary (Nevsky), Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomensk, cautioned: “We are now experiencing times of trouble. Russia has survived periods of tribulation, but they were never as dangerous as today. Then, everyone was for God, everyone wished to know His will, but today it is different. Then they supported the Tsar. Today that has changed. Today we hear blasphemy against God and plots against His anointed one…”

The educated classes in Russia, raised in so-called “Westernizing” traditions, pushed Russia with almost suicidal relentlessness into the abyss, pushing the Russian people in every way possible to reject their faith, their Tsar and their Fatherland. One cannot help but remember the words of the Psalmist David: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalms 14:1).
Indeed, what greater fools can we Orthodox Christians be, than when we reject Christ and the only true Faith, Orthodox Christianity; such denial of Christ and Holy Orthodoxy never ends right, but Christ our God is merciful and provides us with a path to repentance within the Holy Orthodox Church. We see that this is so, in Russia and elsewhere, and in every Orthodox nation. But first, we need to renounce everything and everyone that attempted, and attempts, to destroy people—and, of course, we all need to repent of our own sins.

What applies to Russia, applies to all of us Orthodox Christians—we all must repent of our sins and apostasy—for throughout history when Orthodox Christians have chosen to fall away it has obviously always been catastrophic for our people.

Even now, when in the words of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, “The Lord replaced wrath with mercy towards Russia,” all Russian people are Divinely granted the opportunity of returning to their Orthodox Christian roots. We must now make sense of our history and understand the reasons why Russia fell into such terrible tribulation. One of the reasons for those tragic times was the apostasy and neglect of faith in Christ, and the rejection of the Divinely-ordained government. We must not under any circumstances justify the actions of those responsible for the deadly revolution. A symbol of reconciliation of the Russian nation with the Lord would be to rid Red Square of the remains of the main persecutor and executioner of the 20th century, and the destruction of monuments to him. They are all symbols of catastrophe, tragedy, and of the destruction of our God-given Sovereignty. [...]
Metropolitan Laurus of blessed memory, addressing all those in attendance, said, “The Land here is abundantly soaked in the blood of martyrs, and it is planted with their bones; may it be as an altar unto Christ our God. A prophet said long ago about the persecutors of the Church of Christ: ‘I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found’ (Psalms 37:35-36). May their memory be wiped away in the hearts of men, and the Church of Christ established forever in the Russian land!”

We call upon our entire flock, and upon all Russian Orthodox people, in the Fatherland and in the diaspora: preserve as the apple of your eye the gift the Lord has given us—the holy and saving Orthodox Christian faith, remember always the words of Christ: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Amen.

With love in Christ,

[Metropolitan Hilarion and others]

(Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, et al., 2017, paragraphs 9-10)

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 hesychasm 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.” (Hierotheos, 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 to 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, cited in Hierotheos, 2012, p. 241)

Throughout all of what we say here, we must never forget that the apostasy from Christ and the Holy Orthodox Church of which we Orthodox Christians are often guilty—in our embrace of jealousy, falsehood and all manner of sin—is certainly something to be seen in all of us, to one extent or another, at least from time to time. We look at the great catastrophe of the massive number of abortions committed in predominately Orthodox nations—such as in Russia and in Greece, and certainly elsewhere—and, as such, we need not scapegoat here, ever. For our sins are our “choice” and our own stupidity—again to the great delight of those who hate Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, and often to the great delight of countless of us nominally Orthodox Christians in our jealousy and hatred of one another. We also note that throughout the Orthodox world—regardless of the catastrophes and great apostasies which have occurred, in one way or another, throughout history in Orthodox nations—we always know that there are Orthodox Christians to be found who by the grace of God are Orthodox saints, in those very same nations where these catastrophes are occurring. How many greatly oppressed and exploited Russian Muzhiks were great Orthodox saints, and how many Aristocrats in Russia were great Orthodox saints? Without a doubt, in both of the aforementioned groups there were great Orthodox saints to be found (either known or unknown to us). There were and are great Orthodox saints to be found having come from all social strata—in all Orthodox nations, regardless of the crisis in which the nation finds itself.

Additionally, it also must not be forgotten that anyone can fall—regardless of social standing, or lack thereof. And we are rightfully told that any mass apostasy of any Orthodox nation can lead to nothing but catastrophe. This is certainly not just something which occurred in Russia, but is something to be seen in all Orthodox nations—with their embrace of secularism and, for example, their indifference to the mass murder of their unborn children through abortion. The following quotations speak to us regarding the great and inevitable dangers associated with mass apostasy—again they speak of Russia here, but all predominately Orthodox nations have great need for repentance (certainly not just Russia).
Prince Zurab Chavchavadze is speaking here:

The catastrophe did, of course, hit the people—only not from the outside, but from within. The people as a whole, beginning from the top, to the middle classes, and finally to the broad masses of peasants had begun to gradually depart from the traditional foundations of life that had for centuries been closely bound up with Church institutions, which required all to test their deeds against the eternal, faith-based principles. That is why we not only can but must draw parallels with Old Testament and Christian eras in order to suggest to our social consciousness the thought that any mass apostasy from divine commandments inescapably leads to tragic events in the life of God’s people.

Nevertheless, these catastrophes came “unnoticeably, unexpectedly” only for those who had stopped learning from history. […]

(Davydov, P. & Chavchavadze, Z. M., 2015, paragraphs 9-10)

[…]

But there were other Russian people who had not broken from a life in Christ. They tirelessly called the people to come to their senses and warned them about God’s inescapable punishment for apostasy. (Davydov, P. & Chavchavadze, Z. M., 2015, paragraph 11)

Peter Davydov is speaking here and quoting some Orthodox saints of Russia:

—St. Theophan the Recluse wrote at the end of the nineteenth century, “Do you know what bleak thoughts I have? And they are not unfounded. I meet people who are numbered among the Orthodox, who in spirit are Voltairians, naturalists, Lutherans, and all manner of free-thinkers. They have studied all the sciences in our institutions of higher education. They are not stupid nor are they evil, but with respect to the Church they are good for nothing. Their fathers and mothers were pious; the ruin came in during the period of their education outside of the family homes. Their memories of childhood and their parents’ spirit keeps them within certain bounds. But what will their own children be like? What will restrain them within the needed bounds? I draw the conclusion from this that in one or two generations our Orthodoxy will dry up.” St. John of Kronstadt and St. Ignatius (Brianchininov) as well as the great Russian writers also shouted about the coming catastrophe. (Davydov, P. & Chavchavadze, Z. M., 2015, paragraphs 11-12)
The coming disaster was foreseen and forewarned by many Orthodox Christians, given the apostasy of the times—yet was ignored by many nominally Orthodox.

As we proceed, we see that Archimandrite Naum (Baiborodin) warns Russians to repent and remain Orthodox—but this undoubtedly applies, as we already said, to all Orthodox Christians within all Orthodox nations where there is mass murder of unborn children through abortion and other grave sins. What applies to Russia applies, to one significant extent or another, to every Orthodox nation, without exception—the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is alone the true Church and is perfect and our need for repentance is great.

In their time, the Jews—the sons of the Kingdom—erupted. The pagans, descendants of Japheth, the European peoples, who are now deviating more and more towards ungodliness, were called. And now, just as the Jews once did, the European peoples are erupting in unbelief, but the descendants of Ham—mainly living in Africa—are coming to know and confess Christ.

They used to teach the Law of God in schools in the Russian Empire. The people kept the fasts, and kept the apostolic rule. The monasteries were strongholds of faith, and how many miracles happened by the people’s faith! The Church educated the people; there were many parish schools. They would teach how to live for the salvation of the soul, how to save the family, how to raise children to be morally strong and healthy. Everything was done that there would be harmony in society, in families, and in souls. The Church was in alliance with the state; and how was this union incarnated? The Church taught that abortion is murder, and the state forbade abortion. The nation was not dying. We should have a population of almost a billion today! Throughout the twenty years of Tsar Nicholas’ II reign the population grew by fifty million. After the godless
period, the population declined by almost a million [per]$^{93}$ year. And how many abortions have there been so far? They kill and kill the babies, and the country needs soldiers, scientists… (Archimandrite Naum (Baiborodin), 2017, paragraphs 10-11)

Again, many Orthodox saw and knew that any mass apostasy—including the one which early twentieth century Russia was experiencing (and many nominally Orthodox were wholeheartedly embracing)—was diabolical in nature and a great catastrophe and an encouragement for people to commit the greatest sins against one another.

The year of 1917 surpassed by far all the previous periods of Russian history by intensity of its frenzy: “Demons dwelled in souls of Russian people and they have become possessed with devils” discerning Russian theologian, former spiritual father of the Tsar family Bishop Theophan of Poltava wrote. “It was intoxication with freedom, dissoluteness and impunity, - Duke Zhevakhov writes in his memoirs, savage jeering at the morals and law, an inconceivable satanic malignance, and under such circumstances all the attempts of correction only whipped up emotions”. (Memoirs, vol.2, p.14).

According to philosopher Ivan Ilyin the revolution of 1917 exposed all base passions and vices of the Russian people uncovering an abyss of the most sinful, mean and shameless, rude and ruthless. Hellish fire seemed to blaze over Russia, a host of Gadarene legions of demons stroke her body and totally destroyed her moral foundations, even the basic covenances. Many were stricken with exasperation to each other, strange anthropophobia. At that time it was nothing much to kill an innocent person, to rob, to destroy, to set on fire. So external and internal enemies of Russia making use of the war hardships whipped up sinful emotions of the crowd. At the charge of these forces “Russia collapsed, overwhelmed by revolution, V.F. Ivanov wrote, just at the peak of her

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$^{93}$ Father Naum was likely saying that the population declined by almost a million per year—hence my adding the bracketed entry of [per]—consistent with the great Holocaust facilitated, and committed, by the Marxist power elite and by countless of its blinded followers who insanely destroyed themselves and others (much to the delight of those who hated Orthodox Christians and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ).

This sort of willful embrace of stupidity and evil, to various extents, has occurred very often throughout predominately Orthodox nations—and has obviously occurred in my own life with my often embracing very sinful thoughts and conduct, and this is also seen in the actions of other nominally Orthodox Christians; and obviously this embrace of sinful thoughts and conduct is certainly something to be seen in all of fallen humanity—certainly this is something to be seen in our schadenfreude, and jealousy, and in all our other inhumane conduct, thoughts, and intentions.
development” (“Russian Intelligentsia and Freemasonry”, p.31). “Diabolic plot against Russia and her Tsar” (F. Vinberg) succeeded.

This fall of the god-bearing country was prepared during several centuries and was allowed by God for grave sins of the Russian people: “For the negligence of her Divine vocation Russia committed herself to the enemy of the human race and became satanocracy. There came total possession by evil spirits, the upper layer of the society had them - and Russian majesty collapsed. Starvation chaos today is the natural inheritance of Sovdepia (State of Soviet Deputies) (“Russky Palomnik” 320, p. 89; 1999).

“Russia, like France in the 18th century has gone through the period of total madness and only through suffering and tears starts to recover from her severe disease” Anna Vyrubova, maid of honour at Her Imperial Majesty, a friend of the last Russian Empress, wrote in her diary many years after those terrible events.

In her letter to Princess Victoria Great Duchess Elizabeth compares the state of the Russian people with delirium of an insane.

“Everything, gathered during centuries, is destroyed, - destroyed by our own people, whom I love with all my heart. It is true, they were morally ill and blind, not seeing where we were going. My heart aches, but I do not feel bitterness. How can I criticize or condemn a person, when he is insane and in delirium? (Quoted from book “Orthodox Tsar the Martyr” by Hegumen Seraphim, p. 67)

Actually the demonic essence of the revolutionary element was brilliantly and prophetically described by F .Dostoevsky (“The Possessed”, Raskolnikov’s oracular dream in “Crime and punishment” are vivid evidence of it). But stirring up and indulging the revolutionary flame, Russian people could not imagine, what result this dangerous play with fire could have. […] (Neviarovich, 2004, paragraphs 3-8)

An Orthodox Christian woman commented on the diabolical nature of the communist revolution, in the above quotation: “Everything, gathered during centuries, is destroyed, - destroyed by our own people” (Neviarovich, 2004, paragraphs 3-8). We Orthodox Christians have often been, by far, our own worst enemies—may God have mercy upon us and give us the strength to do what is right.

We see some of what Patriarch Kirill has to say regarding these matters, and he certainly is in agreement with what others have already said.
The 1917 October Revolution was the result of the spiritual degradation of the Russian people, according to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill. Speaking to the State Kremlin Palace, the patriarch emphasized, “The events of 1917 and the dramatic consequences that followed had profound spiritual causes. The fundamental break in the traditional way of life—I am not talking about the administrative or political model, but about the spiritual and cultural self-identity of the people—became possible only because the daily life of people, first of all among the elites, lost something very important,” [...] (orthochristian.com, 2017, paragraphs 1-2)

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill called the 1917 Revolution “a great crime.” At the foundation of the October Revolution lay the abandonment of spiritual values by the people. The people lost something extremely valuable: faith in and love for God and neighbor, they ceased caring about the sorrow of their fellow man. The main tragedy of the Russian nation is that, befogged by the idea of revolution, the people permitted the mockery of their faith, they allowed themselves to be divided into warring factions, to set political and social differences as a greater priority than national unity. (Sommer, A., 2017, paragraph 8)

All of this is certainly an important lesson and dire warning to all of us Orthodox Christians, for certainly no Orthodox Christians are inherently any “better” or less prone to jealousy, arrogance, abuse of power, or any other evil than any other group of Orthodox Christians. Anyone can fall and none of us Orthodox Christians are intrinsically or somehow innately better than other Orthodox Christians—anyone can fall and Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church is our only salvation.

With all of the aforementioned forever kept in mind, we proceed and have to say that 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. Under the influence of this arrogance and delusion, some influential people in Russia 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, cited in Hierotheos, 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, cited in 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, were embraced by 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,
Metropolitan Hierotheos informs us in an article (found in John Sanidopoulos’ outstanding

94 St. Nektarios and St. Justin Popovich teach us this, pertaining to the heresies which comprise Western
Christianity.
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-patristics 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,
thecologically, 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
dey 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.

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 inseparably linked with
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, 1975c). 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 we must confess that 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 by any means whatsoever 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, jealousy, 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 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

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95 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.
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)

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 I), 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, “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)

96 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.
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 Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2)*, 1999, p. 551). 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
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
559). 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

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
ORTHOODOXY 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 and Manuscripts of the New Testament,” in The Origin of the Bible, ed. idem [Wheaton, IL : Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992], p.188.](p. 16-17)

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 or the Church?, (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1985), p.48] (Gregory, 1995, p. 3).

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97 This bracketed entry is in the text cited.

98 This bracketed entry is in the text cited.
“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 Monastery, 1985), p.29] (Gregory, 1995, p. 4).

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 Velimirovich, cited in Gregory, 1995, pp. 12-13)

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 
denyng 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 
worship 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:
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” 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).

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

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99 See glossary for a definition and discussion of “docetism”.
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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[Originally from a work by Monk Parthenius published in Moscow in 1855]


[Much of this is taken from a work by Monk Parthenius (spelled Parthenios in this particular work), first published in Moscow in 1855]


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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 Popovich 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
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 their final recompense (John 6:39-40; Matt. 13:37-43).

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 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] 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.

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100 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.

101 I have inserted this bracketed entry.

102 I have inserted this bracketed entry.
4. The teaching of a sensual kingdom of Christ clearly contradicts the Word of God [Holy Scripture][103], 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 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.

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[103] I have inserted this bracketed entry.
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 ερχόμενον μετὰ δόξης κρίναι ζωντας καὶ νεκρους, οὐ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ εσται τελος.
(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, cited in 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 (as the Orthodox Saints rightfully tell us). 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, we all choose to be disgusting and dishonorable, from time to time. Indeed, are we not all guilty of this sort of cowardice and hypocrisy towards those perceived as weaker than we are (despite the fact that 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)
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, from absolutely nothing—as all creation, was created from absolutely nothing by Almighty God. And by God’s unfathomable grace and power she gave birth to God the Word in the flesh, when God chose to condescend to the level of creation—as God chose to save and sanctify mankind; and, as such, given this choice on God’s part of having created all things from absolutely nothing—and His choosing to provide all with the opportunity to follow the path of salvation and glorification—certainly we see that God did not need, in any way whatsoever, the Incarnation as something inevitable to Himself or that it was something in any way necessary to the Divinity. God was under no necessity to create or to become Incarnate—though Almighty God was certainly the only One Who could accomplish either of these things. With this in mind, we confess with our Orthodox sisters at Holy Apostles Convent, as they are consistent with the commentary of other Orthodox Christians and faithful to the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ:

The reverence and honor rendered to the Theotokos is not idolatrous. She is not the Lord, but the Handmaid of the Lord. She is not the King, but the Throne of the King. She is not the self-illumined Sun, but the Moon which reflects the Sun. She is not the Fountain, but the Conduit. She is not the bank of the River, but the Bridge which carries people to the other side. She is not the One who saves, but she is the one who leads people to Him Who saves; thus she is aptly named “the Directress” or Odeigitria. (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, pp. 522-523)

By God’s unfathomable grace we were all created from nothing and we exist, and are given the unspeakable grace and opportunity for salvation and sanctification (glorification). And, as Orthodox Christians we certainly confess the indescribable and incomprehensible grace of God—for the grace of the Supra-substantial Trinity is the Source of all that we have. We this in mind, we see that—through the following words which the Holy Ever-Virgin Mary spoke in all humility and truth, indeed a wonderful example to the rest of humanity—the Theotokos 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)

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

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104 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. Additionally, the exact same quotation is used earlier in this work—from the exact same aforementioned work.
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 [H]e submitted [H]imself to being emptied and “for the sake of the honor that was set before [H]im [H]e counted the shame as nothing” (Heb 12:2) and did not disdain the poverty of human nature. As God [H]e 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 [H]e restored flesh to what it was in the beginning. He did not consider it beneath [H]im to follow a path congruous to this plan, and so [H]e is said to have undergone a birth like ours, while all the while remaining what [H]e was. 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. He thought it good to be made man and in [H]is own person to reveal our nature honored in the dignities of the divinity. The same one was at once God and man, and [H]e was “in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:7) since even though [H]e was God [H]e 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 [H]e 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). [Homily “On the omnipotent Word of God”] (St. Nikolai Velimirovic, 2008, pp. 298-299)

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, cited in Hierotheos, 2013, p. 109)

“The purpose of the creation is the incarnation, according to the Fathers. Man was made for glorification.” (Fr. Romanides, cited in 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 inspiringly 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 He is the Maker of the ages, coeternal with the Father, and Creator of all; but, as we have already said, since He united to Himself hypostatically human nature from her womb, also He subjected Himself to birth as man, not as needing necessarily in His 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 His 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)

105 This bracketed entry was made by me, and is consistent with Dr. Gabriel’s footnotes.
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 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) 106

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
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 piti able 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

106 The bracketed entries in this entire block quotation were made by me, and are consistent with Dr.
Gabriel’s footnotes.
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 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 (Θεος) because He placed (τεθεικεναι) all things in the certainty afforded by Himself, and because 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)

107 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 (Lossky, 1976, pp. 92-94). 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\(^\text{108}\) with a child born to them in their old age, after so many

\(^{108}\) In the Holy Scriptures, the Apostle Paul speaks of the great significance of “faith, hope and love”. 
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 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 lovest 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).

*The Incarnation of God the Word from the Virgin Does Not Imply Pantheism*

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 accured 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”] (Maximovitch, 1987, p. 51).

St. John Maximovitch (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]. (Maximovitch, 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 Maximovitch 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.) (Maximovitch, 1987, p. 44)

Also in full conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. John Maximovitch (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 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”] (Maximovitch, 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.
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, cited in 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, cited in 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 Nestorianism109, conducted in the Third Ecumenical Synod, but was also consistent with the Orthodox confession of the distinction 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

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109 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).
doctrine 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 Monastery 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 Monastery 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)
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]¹¹⁰, we do not predicate of It the attributes of the Humanity [of Christ]¹¹¹; 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

¹¹⁰ Bracketed entry made by the Athonite monks who obtained the quotation, which they used in their work.

¹¹¹ Once again, the bracketed entry apparently was made by the Athonite monks who obtained the quotation, which they used in their work.
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 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)

“And 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 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.

112 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.
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 Epiphanius 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 Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 39)

For as the Fathers on Mount Athos brilliantly explain to us:

If the Divinity of Christ is passible 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 Monestery 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”113 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 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

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113 This quotation is from the Symbol of Faith of the Orthodox Church, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.
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 incommunicable 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, 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,

114 His name is oftentimes spelled: St. Maximus the Confessor.
“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:

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 (θεός) 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, cited in 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, ΦΩΣ Edition, Athens, 1958, p.159) 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—however, regardless of any formalities, the confession of Orthodox Theology at the Holy Synod of Constantinople in 1351 has all the significance of a Holy Ecumenical Council (Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, 2016), (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 Nafplakos 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, they 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 not 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 [H]is 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 sufferers, 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—
ever 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, cited in Hierotheos, 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 transcendence 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 Monotheletism 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, hatred, love of power, and all other manner of 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 [H]im hanging on the wood the former shook their murderous heads against [H]im 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 [H]e was beaten by their power and so had been seized and crucified; but they were mistaken, for they did not think that [H]e 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, [H]e revealed our nature as greater than death or corruption. What [H]e 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 wrong doing toward their fellow human beings—St. Justin Popovich and other Orthodox saints have clearly and truthfully said this. Dostoevsky and others were right, we are all responsible, we are all guilty, in a sense, for the sins of the world; and we say this without denying any of the great atrocities that have been committed in the world by some people and ignored by others—with these horrific atrocities having been of little or no concern to great numbers of people. Nor do we try to somehow minimize or somehow make relative such great atrocities, nor should we try to absolve ourselves of our own sins and our own great lack of concern for others. For, we all certainly contribute to the great injustice and sins found abundantly in our fallen world. 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—and this reality 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. We nominally Orthodox Christians are however clearly not alone in our oftentimes embracing what is deplorable and false, for all other people are also oftentimes guilty of doing the same deplorable things—and, whenever any of us (nominally Orthodox or not) embrace such evil, then this is clearly contrary to the only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. With all of this having been said, the conduct of humanity—with its multitude of sins and oftentimes cooperation with great injustice—never changes the fact that the Orthodox Church is uniquely the Body of Christ, with Christ Himself as its Head. The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is forever, and uniquely, infallible and unconquerable. To God Belongs All Glory!
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)


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115 By the terminology here of “Word of God”, within this context, we are to understand a message from God and obviously not the “carrying” of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, God the Word. In the strictest sense however—contrary to the meaning implied in the above quotation—the “Word of God” is indeed none other than the Son of God, God the Word. In the strictest sense, the Word of God is the Pre-eternal Son of God, Who is God Himself—Father Romanides brilliantly explains this to us, fully consistent with Holy Orthodox tradition.

116 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.
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 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)\textsuperscript{117}. 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\textsuperscript{118} of the Suprasubstantial Trinity (Lossky, 1976, pp. 92-94). God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, created all things from “absolute nothingness” (Lossky, 1976, p. 92),

\textsuperscript{117} “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.

\textsuperscript{118} 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.
not necessitated to have done so in any way. For creation is in no way found in, or necessitated 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] body and [the] 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) 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] which follows from it: let him be anathema’ (Patapios, 2000, p. 68). Nothing pertaining to the 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:

119 Hieromonk Patapios apparently has inserted this bracketed entry.

120 Hieromonk Patapios apparently has inserted this bracketed entry.

121 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.

122 Hieromonk Patapios has apparently inserted this bracketed entry, into the quotation he obtained, it is simply the Greek word for “restoration”.

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] 123.

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 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] 124, 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] 125.” 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.” 126 Refuting the Arian idea that the Logos was created in view of the world,

123 I have inserted this bracketed entry from information provided in the footnotes of the cited text.

124 I have inserted this bracketed entry.

125 This particular bracketed entry was made by Fr. Meyendorff, to help clarify to the reader what St. Athanasius [St. Athanasios of Alexandria] is saying.

126 This quotation is from St. Athanasius of Alexandria.
Athanasius affirms that “it is not He who was created for us, but we were created for Him.” …

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 ad extra, not His essence.

The difference 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 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. 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-

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127 What is quoted is from St. Athanasios of Alexandria.
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

**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 Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 798)

**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; 2:9). (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 800)

**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 absolutely nothing, 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 prescence 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).


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128 The bracketed entry is mine. “OT” here is an abbreviation of Old Testament.

129 The bracketed entry is mine.
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 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),

**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 and total sacrifice of Christ. *See* Lev. 1:1-7:38; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 9:1-10:18. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 806)

**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

**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; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 1 John 1:8. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 807)

**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, righteous works and rejection of evil (James 2:14-26). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 808)

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\textsuperscript{130}). 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 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

\textsuperscript{130} 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.
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!