

Whom the two natures are inseparably united without confusion of either the uncreated divine essence and the created humanity of Jesus, born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.

The Church is not an invention of man, but God's creation within which God's communion with man and the entire created order takes place in the person of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. The common element in all these metaphors is the person of Christ, Who is the formative factor and the connecting link of the members. This is how St. John Chrysostom speaks about it in his homily on 1 Cor. 8:4:⁵ "Christ is the head, we are the body....He is the foundation stone, we are the building; he is the vineyard, we are the wine; he is the groom, we are the bride; he is the shepherd, we are the sheep; he is the way, we are the walking ones; we are also the temple, he is the resident; he is the first-born, we are the brothers; he is the heir, we are the co-heirs; he is the life, we are the living; he is the resurrection, we are the risen; he is the light, we are the enlightened."

The Apostles were the ones who knew Jesus in His earthly life and were the sole authorities as to His teaching. Their teaching and their writings in the New Testament are the only authority we have for Jesus' ministry. By the year 100AD, the writings we call the New Testament are generally believed to have been in existence, but they were not officially recognized as Holy Writ until later. In these early years the only "scripture" they knew was the Old Testament; which means, wherever you read the word "scripture" in the New Testament it is the Old Testament they are referring to.

The teaching of these disciples was passed on to those we call the Fathers of the early Church and comprises the **Tradition** by which the New Testament itself is to be understood. Evidence as to the seriousness with which the Church regarded, and continues to regard tradition, is preserved in statements by the **First Council of Nicea (325AD)**: "If anyone rejects any written or unwritten tradition of the Church, let him be anathema."

And the **Seventh Ecumenical Council (757AD)**: "Let everything that conflicts with ecclesiastical tradition and teaching, and that has been innovated and done contrary to the examples outlined by the saints and the venerable Fathers, or that shall hereafter at any time be done in such a fashion, be anathema."

My initial thought was to introduce patristic figures whom the early church had recognized as illustrating how to understand and explain the Bible. There is a technical term for this, it is called *hermeneutics*. The word implies that there is a

⁵ Christian Classics Ethereal Library 2000 – CD-ROM

correct interpretation of the Scripture; however, as we all know that there are a great many different interpretations rather than one agreed upon by all. It was these differing interpretations that the Seventh Ecumenical Council, cited above, inveighed against and said anything “that has been innovated and done contrary to the examples outlined by the saints and the venerable Fathers, or that shall hereafter at any time be done in such a fashion, be anathema.”

Ultimately, it is a communal act rather than a private and individualistic pursuit. In this, they were simply in accord with Peter’s admonition: “*And we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which ye do well to take heed, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day should dawn and the morning star should arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, **that every prophecy of Scripture cometh not out of private interpretation**, for prophecy was not brought about at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke while borne along by the Holy Spirit.*”⁶

This, however, is not the method used in many, if not most Protestant and Anglican seminaries today, where the emphasis is upon interpreting the Bible in accordance with the alleged insights of modern psychology and sociology. Writing about this modern reinterpretation of the Bible, William Abraham in an article in *The Reformed Journal* (1990), wrote: “Any consensus in theology today begins with the rejection of the classical Christian tradition as this is generally known in Western Culture.” Those who espouse this view regard the Fathers’ interpretations as hopelessly inadequate and revision is the order of the day.

For another thing, the modern student of Greek and Hebrew generally has an inadequate understanding of the nuances of these languages. Indeed, most Anglican and Protestant seminaries do not require knowledge of either, unless one intends to go on for a graduate degree. Today, English translations abound, each seeking to make the Scripture more readable and consonant with modern speech. This is not to disparage these efforts, but it is to say that none of them can adequately convey the highly nuanced Greek, for example; or the metaphorical usage typical of Hebrew.

For most Protestants there is little awareness of the Church Fathers. Their seminaries are not noted, for the most part, for directing their students to reading the Fathers. There is a suspicion that because the Fathers were either Orthodox or Roman Catholic they are not to be trusted. Some will cite the case of Martin Luther who asked: “what good does it do to rely on the venerable old Fathers, who have been approved through such a long succession of ages. Were not they too all equally blind, or rather, did they not simply overlook the clearest and most explicit statements of

⁶ 2 Pet. 1:19-21

Paul?”⁷ Luther’s hermeneutics (biblical interpretation) leaves much to be desired. He believed in private interpretation (at least his own) rather than in Peter’s admonition that “no scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of men, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God”⁸

Let me now undertake a digression into some generally unknown facets of early Church history. One cannot help but wonder about those whose names are mentioned who seem to be only bit players in the drama of the Church. Whatever happened to Salome, Mary Cleopas, Mary Magdalene, or Martha, Lazarus, the man born blind, the son of the widow of Nain, to mention only a few? Is there any record at all of these individuals? From the Apocalypse of John we learn of seven churches in Asia Minor at Tarsus, Paul’s hometown, in Crete, in Antioch in Syria, and the isle of Cyprus, how did they come into being? These were places to which many Jewish followers of Christ who had fled from the persecution following Stephen’s martyrdom. Is there any evidence of missionary activity by others than the Apostles? And what about Mary the mother of Jesus who was placed under the care of John the Beloved disciple?

There are traditions concerning many of these persons that are of major significance and I would like to trace a few. Remember that tradition is not the same thing as legend or myth. There is historical evidence in many instances for tradition. An example, is St. James the Greater, son of Zebedee, his mother was Salome. You may recall, she had petitioned Jesus on behalf of her two sons, James and John, that they might have the chief places in the kingdom.⁹ It is related of James that he was a missionary to the isle of Sardinia and Spain. We know that he was martyred in Jerusalem in 44AD.¹⁰ Where was he in the years between Jesus’ crucifixion and 44AD? James wrote a letter addressed to “*the twelve tribes in the dispersion.*” This refers to the Jewish tribes that had been dispersed by the Babylonians and the Assyrians in Old Testament times, leaving only Judah and a portion of the tribe of Benjamin in the Holy Land. Obviously, their whereabouts were known.

That James went to one of the locales of the dispersed Hebrews in Spain is an authentic tradition. Could it be that Paul, in his letter to the Romans (written c. 53-58AD), knowing of James’ death, was concerned about the mission in Spain and he wanted to go there in order to see to the continuance of the work there? Or, what about Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead, it is known that he was the bishop in Cyprus at Kition, known today as Larnaca. His burial crypt is in the church there but

⁷ Martin Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, in Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings, ed. Timothy F. Lull, P. 200

⁸ 2nd Peter 1:21

⁹ Matt. 20:20

¹⁰ Acts 12:2

the Roman Emperor Leo removed his relics to Constantinople in 891AD.¹¹ They were looted by the Crusaders in 1204AD, and a portion of them were taken to Marseilles leading to the Roman Catholic claim that Lazarus was Bishop in Marseilles. The relics have since disappeared and their whereabouts are no longer known.¹²

Another person of interest is Joseph of Arimathea. Early Britain's history is replete with references to him. The route St. Joseph of Arimathea followed in pursuit of his trade in tin from Britain is known to have followed the ancient Phoenician trading route along the Mediterranean and thence into Glastonbury in Britain. There is strong archaeological evidence of his presence there and I shall have more to say about that latter. For the moment my purpose is to assert that the Anglican Church in its beginnings was a constituent part of the Orthodox Church in the east. My intent is to show historically how far the Christian faith of the Apostles and early Church Fathers had been carried in a few short years after Pentecost.

There is solid historical evidence for the existence of Orthodox Christianity in Britain in the 1st century A.D. We know Christianity was well established in southern England and Wales while the Roman armies occupied Britain. Three British bishops, Eborius, Restitutis, and Adelphius, are listed as attending the regional Council of Arles in France in 314AD.¹³ Bishops from Britain are listed as attending the Council of Nicea in 325AD, the Council of Sardica in 342/43, and the Council of Arminium in 359AD. However, long before this Origen, who lived from 185-254AD, in his homily on Ezekiel 4, states, "Christianity was a unifying force among the Britons."

There is much evidence for lively trade between the British Isles and Rome and the Middle East for tin and lead from the mines in Wales and Cornwall. Tin is a necessary ingredient for copper to be made into bronze. It enabled weapons to be made that were nearly as strong as iron and not as brittle. In fact, it was a major reason for Rome to undertake the conquest of Britain. St. Joseph of Arimathea's name, who is described in Scripture as "a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus..."¹⁴ is associated with Cornwall. There is both historical evidence and archaeological evidence that he was engaged in trading for tin from Britain. There was far more commercial intercourse in the world of that day than we are generally aware. As early as 445BC Herodotus spoke of the British Isles as the Cassiterides or Tin Islands. Pytheas 352-323BC, Polybius c. 160BC and Diodorus Siculus in the last years BC all mention the tin trade The Prophet Ezekiel

¹¹ *Orthodox Saints*, v.4, Fr. George Poulos, Holy Cross Orthodox Press. See also, St. Lazarus, The Friend of Christ and First Bishop of Kition, Larnaca, Cyprus, M. G. Michaelides, 1984; at www.serfes.org/lives/stlazarus..htm#top

¹² *The Coming of the Saints*, John W. Taylor, Covenant Publishing Co., Ltd, England 1969

¹³ *ibid*, John W. Taylor, p. 236 (See Mansi , Vol. II, pp. 476-477)

¹⁴ Matt. 27:57

mentions the tin trade in his prophecy against Tyre: “*Tarshish (that is Spain) trafficked with you because of your great wealth of every kind; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares.*”¹⁵ Spain was the locale for a number of Phoenician colonies on the Phoenician trade route and amongst them were Jews from the dispersion. St. James went to Tarshish to carry the message of Jesus as Messiah to these Jews—“lost sheep of the House of Israel”. Following his martyrdom his body was returned to Tarshish and he was buried there. Pilgrimages were made to his burial site at Santiago di Compostella. Both Tacitus in his *Annals*, Vol. II and Josephus in his *Antiquities*, book xviii, both written 1st century AD mention this.

There is abundant evidence of Christianity being brought to Britain in the very early years. We know that St. Alban, the Protomartyr of the Anglican Church, who is recognized by the Orthodox Church as well as other English saints, was martyred in 304AD. His saint’s day is observed on 22 June. Also, the Greek monk, Theodore of Tarsus who was sent to England by Pope Vitalian in 682AD. Vitalian was the Orthodox Patriarch of Rome when Rome was still a member of the Pentarchy of Jerusalem, Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria. Theodore, a Greek, was the first Archbishop of Canterbury. He brought all the Christians together and established the diocesan system in the British Isles that is substantially intact to this day. Thus the Church in Britain was united before the seven separate kingdoms became united in the 8th century, giving rise to the claim that Britain was the first nation to declare itself Christian.

The British historian, Gildas, (AD 502– 560) states that the Gospel was introduced into Britain five years after the Crucifixion. Now the Crucifixion took place in the seventeenth year of Tiberius. If we follow Gildas, and accept the date of the Crucifixion as April 3, 33 AD, the day before Passover, Christianity was introduced into Britain in 38 AD. This date does coincide with the first persecution of the Church and the stoning of Stephen, witnessed by Saul of Tarsus as an official representative of the Sanhedrin—resulting in, as Scripture tells us, a severe persecution against the church in Jerusalem and, “*They were all scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria , except the apostles.*”¹⁶ The *all* would have included Joseph of Arimathea about whom Maelgwyn of Llandaff in Wales, the uncle of St. David of Wales, writing in 450AD,¹⁷ says, “Joseph of Arimathea, the noble decurion, received his everlasting rest with his eleven associates in the Isle of Avalon. He lies on the southern angle of the Oratorium of the adorable Virgin.”

¹⁵ Ezek. 27:12

¹⁶ Acts 8:1f; 11:19

¹⁷ Vellum MS in the Cottonian Library (British Museum)

This is a reference to the interior of the Church at Avalon, now called Glastonbury, giving the exact spot where Joseph is said to be buried. Also, in the Latin MS, by Baronius in his “Ecclesiastical Annals,” *ad annum 35*, that is, the same year AD in which the Acts of the Apostles refers to the scattering of believers in Jerusalem, *except for the Apostles*. He records that in this year 35AD, (quote) “at the instigation of the Sanhedrin, Lazarus, Mary mother of Jesus, Martha, Mary Magdalene, Marcell their servant, Maximim a disciple, St. Philip, and Joseph of Arimathea were banished from Judea and exposed to the sea in a vessel without sails or oars. The vessel drifted for many days in the Mediterranean, but ultimately arrived safely at Marseilles. St. Philip remained in these parts and sent Joseph with a few companions into Britain to preach the Gospel there and convert the Britons to the faith. On their arrival they were hospitably received by the ruler Arviragus.¹⁸ Arviragus gave them the island then called Ynys Wydrin or Ynys Avàlon, now Glastonbury. Here they built a small church of “hurdle-work, and here they watched, prayed, fasted, preached, converting many to the Christian faith. Here, too, Joseph and his companions lived and died, and here they were buried.”

In 407AD Rome withdrew the last of her legions, the 6th Victrix, from Britain because of the barbarian assaults threatening Rome.¹⁹ For nearly 200 years after there was very little, if any, contact between Britain and the continent. Then, in 597AD, Pope Gregory the Great, who was still an Orthodox patriarch of the Church of Rome, learning about the Angles from seeing slaves in the slave market in Rome, sent the monk Augustine and his small retinue to conduct mission work in Britain. To their surprise, when they landed on the Isle of Thanet on Pascha, 597AD they were met by, among others, the chaplain of Queen Bertha. Bertha was the daughter of the King of the Franks, who was a Christian and had her own chaplain and chapel in Canterbury. Her husband, King Ethelbert, who was a pagan but inclined towards Christianity was baptized by St. Augustine, June 2, 597AD. Thousands of his followers followed him in accepting the Christian faith which was so unlike their former worship of the pagan god Odin, the Saxon god of war and death who demanded human sacrifice. In the meantime, there were still surviving those early Christians, descended from the days of Joseph of Arimathea, who had been driven into the mountains of Cornwall and Wales by the invading pagan Saxons from Germany, and Vikings from Scandinavia.

Suffice to say, I knew about Orthodoxy in England, but did not realize that it had really been subverted with the Norman Invasion of England by William the Conqueror. Old Rome had been conquered by the Franco-Latins in 1052. Fourteen years later William was sent to conquer England with the blessing of the **first** Frankish Roman Catholic Pope, Alexander II in 1066AD. The Orthodox English

¹⁸ Juvenal, Sat. IV, 126 [from Mystical web site]; also www.britannia.com/history/biography/arvirag.html

¹⁹ <http://www.roman-britain.org/military/leg6victrix.htm>

Christian King Harold was killed in the Battle of Hastings²⁰ and William saw to it that all other possible contenders were removed as well. All Orthodox English bishops were either killed or imprisoned and their successors were appointed by the Bishop of Rome, who now claimed primacy over all Christendom as Vicar of Christ. This beginning of the destruction of Orthodoxy in England was finally completed by Henry VIII in the 1500s, who rejected Roman Catholic control and declared himself “Supreme head of the Church of England.”

Monasticism was once an integral part of church life in the British Isles and began its decline only after the invasion and conquest of England by William the Norman in 1066. It virtually disappeared in the time of Henry VIII, who despoiled the monasteries and convents for the sake of money for his treasury. The true Church, however, cannot ignore monasticism. This is, to be sure, an exceptional discipline – a calling for some, not all. However, all Christians are called to pursue spiritual perfection which is the underlying motivation for monasticism. St. Matthew records Jesus’ instruction, “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Which is in Heaven is perfect*” (5:8) Concerning this, St. John Chrysostom gave the following instruction, saying, “You are very mistaken if you think that one thing is expected of lay people and something else from a monastic. The difference is that one enters into marriage and the other does not; in everything else they have the same responsibilities.”²¹

With that excursus let me now turn your attention to what I understand to be the Orthodox meaning of Church – *Ekklesia* in the Greek. Jesus Himself appointed and ordered the Apostles, saying, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*”²² He also said, “*Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive, they shall be forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any they are retained.*”²³ These two statements concerning the commissioning and the authority of the Apostles and their appointed successors are not ambiguous. Christian tradition is virtually unanimous that during the forty days after His Resurrection,²⁴ until the time He ascended into heaven, the Risen Christ instructed the Apostles to engage in establishing His Church upon the earth. Which Church He promised would never be overcome by the powers of darkness.²⁵

²⁰ www.battle1066.com

²¹ All quotes from Early Church Fathers are from Christian Classics Ethereal Library CD-ROM Version 4

²² Matt. 28:18-20

²³ John 20:22-23

²⁴ Acts 1:3

²⁵ Matt. 28:18b, 19

However, He warned that there would be opposition and resistance; that not everyone would believe or accept their message of salvation.²⁶ He also said there would be false prophets who would arise and lead many astray. The history of the Church since its inception gives abundant evidence of the truth of what He said. The Church is made up of fallible human beings in the process of spiritual healing, people very much like ourselves, so that it bears the imprint of both the heavenly and the earthly. Christ alone is the head of the Church. Rome erred grievously in calling the Pope the ‘Vicar of Christ’, that is, Christ’s sole true bishop and spokesman here on earth. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, insists that no mortal is entitled to that title. Only Jesus is the head of the Church. What is required of every Church leader— bishop, metropolitan, archbishop, patriarch is their confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that no single bishop is above any other bishop. In Orthodox ecclesiology there is no difference between the bishop of a small place in, let us say, Bulgaria or Romania and the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople. As eucharistic churches established upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, they are all equals.

The Church has, from her beginning, been characterized by certain specific characteristics that are the same today as with the Apostles in the beginning. Composed of separate local congregations, it was and is meant to be a single united body world-wide, visibly sharing the same Faith and Grace. It was not meant to be made up of separate denominations, all of them claiming to possess the fullness of the Faith and Practice. The Apostles, as mortals, were fated to die, as are we all. But the Lord did not mean for His Church to die with them; so, in order to perpetuate the Church until He comes again the Apostles ordained their successors called Elders in Titus 1:5 by which he means Bishops as he writes in verses 5 and 6 “ *appoint elders in every town... For a bishop, as God’s steward, must be blameless.*”.

The Orthodox Church is also known as the church of the Fathers. By Fathers, we mean the successors of the Apostles called bishops, those who preside over Baptism and the Eucharist. They are called Fathers in a spiritual sense, for it is they who through the waters of baptism initiate the newly baptized into Life in Christ – *a new creation*. Not everybody serves the Mysteries of Christ to the local church—not everybody celebrates the divine Eucharist, or performs the Christian sacraments of initiation and growth. In the first instance, it is the bishop who does this. By extension the presbyters – the priests – are also called Father because they are the bishop’s surrogates in his absence. They participate in his episcopal functions through baptizing and the celebration of the Eucharist and through their pastoral ministry to the congregation of the local church. So it is that in the Orthodox tradition all bishops and presbyters, and even deacons, are called Fathers, because they serve

²⁶ John 16

the mysteries of Christ and, thus, provide spiritual birth (baptism) and food to all Orthodox Christians (Eucharist).

The bishop is the *eikon* of Christ for the whole diocese, not in a merely symbolic way, but in a real and living way. As Saint Ignatius said: "where the bishop is, there is Christ."²⁷ The Church of Christ, of which our Diocese is not just a part, but its fullness at every Eucharist in every parish, is His Risen Body: it is the Body which was born of the Virgin; the Body which grew into mature humanity; the Body which went through all our human needs and tests, struggles and temptations; the Body which suffered and was crucified; the Body which is Risen from the dead and ascended into Heaven, sitting at the right hand of the Father; the Body which was given to His disciples at His Last Supper under the forms of bread and wine; the Body which is still there at every Altar as food and drink at the Eucharist. Thereby transforming us into one and uniting us into the oneness of His Heavenly Life.

In the very early years of the Church the leaders were confronted with a difficult decision. In the beginning it was made up entirely of Jews who came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Not long after Pentecost, however, the Apostles were confronted with the question of, what to do about Gentiles who wanted to become followers of the Way? Peter was the first to decisively encounter this when the Roman centurion in Cæsarea had sent for Peter in Joppa to come and heal his servant who was at the point of death. Peter went and the servant was healed. At the same time, these Gentiles displayed the signs of having received the Holy Spirit and that led Peter to baptize Cornelius and his entire household. Peter was summarily called to Jerusalem to account for his action to the Jewish Christian authorities. After hearing Peter's story, the council's decision resulted in their declaring that Peter's account of this incident must mean that Gentiles, too, were intended to become followers of Christ. At the same time we become aware that James the Less, the step-brother of Jesus, was now the leader of the Jerusalem Christians, not Peter. That was the first council meeting of the Christian Church. You can read this episode for yourselves in the Book of Acts, chapters 10 and 11.

Ultimately, the commission to the Gentiles, so far as the apostles are concerned, largely devolved onto Paul along with Barnabas and Mark, while Peter remained more involved with his fellow Hebrews. However, it should be noted that Peter was the first bishop of Antioch, a mixed congregation of Gentiles and Jews (45-53AD) and later in Rome, where he was executed during the reign of the infamous Emperor Nero (ca. 64/65AD), as was Paul. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD led to a great dispersal of Jews throughout the Middle East. The Christians

²⁷ St. Ignatius of Antioch, CCEL, op. cit

among them were also dispersed, and thus accelerated the spread of Christianity among the nations of the world.

For the first thousand years the Church was ONE in the faith and Tradition, although there were individuals who interpreted the Scriptures on their own, disputing the decisions of the Fathers. These had to be dealt with lest the Church dissolve into a morass of private opinion about the Faith and its practice. We call these teachings that rejected the teaching of the Apostles and their successors' heresies, and their leaders' heretics.

The heresies that arose in the early centuries of Christianity were all of them assaults, in one way or another, on the Church. The question today is whether there are heresies now as well. Sadly, the answer is *yes*. As Christians we need to heed Peter's admonition: "*And we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which ye do well to take heed, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day should dawn and the morning star should arise in your hearts: **Knowing this first, that every prophecy of Scripture cometh not out of private interpretation, for prophecy was not brought about at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke while borne along by the Holy Spirit.***"²⁸ Concerning this St. Irenaeus said: "We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, that is in the New Testament, to be the pillar and ground of our faith..."²⁹

It is well for us to remember that every great heretic was once a member of the Church for a time, whose fault was his own private interpretation of Scripture. Paul, too, warned us that, "*Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.*"³⁰ As was said earlier every heresy distorts the Church's teaching and structure. Since the Church is the "Body of Christ" any alteration in the teaching about Christ, about the Holy Spirit, about the way to mankind's salvation has serious consequences affecting the ordered life of the Church. The technical term for the Church's ordered life is *ecclesiology*.

The great ecclesiological heresy today, I believe, revolves around the very question of 'what is the Church?' There is great confusion in the predominantly Protestant western Christian world about what the true Church is and who are its true members. The evidence for that is the fact that there are now more than 33,000 separate Protestant churches in the world – not to mention Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox, as well as Coptic and Armenian and other assorted Orthodox – rather than

²⁸ 2 Pet. 1:19-21

²⁹ "Against Heresies," Bk. III, Ch. I(1), in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

³⁰ Acts 20:30

the Church Christ prayed would be a unity of One, even as He and the Father are One.³¹

This is a troublesome matter for Christians living, as we do, in a secular society. The IRS lists nearly 8,000 separate and independent Christian denominations in the United States, including Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican. That major Christian groups are aware of the scandal this poses for Christianity is evidenced by the fact that there have been serious movements afoot since the early 1900s to bring all Christian groups under one umbrella and declare them all as being equally legitimate ways to salvation. Both the World Council of Churches founded in 1950 and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S. founded in 1948, attempt this by seeking a least common denominator to define who shall be called Christians.

Historical circumstances have confronted Orthodoxy, a fairly recent arrival in the West, with the unique opportunity to bear witness to its universality and essential truth. For despite its historical eastern origin the Orthodox Church has never claimed to be anything less than universal in its essence. Orthodox leaders are becoming increasingly aware that they must overcome both their isolation and inclination to live apart from other Orthodox as well as from other Christian brethren. Indeed, how else, can the strength and unity of Orthodox truth be revealed if not through a common witness? So long as the Orthodox in America are divided into several different ethnic patriarchies they will be considered by most westerners as separate churches. Archbishop IAKOVOS is quoted as saying, “We rarely give the impression of united orthodoxy as we should, and as others expect of us. They think (and not wrongly) that we are first Greeks, Russians, Serbs, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Arabs or Ukrainians and then Orthodox. We often deny ourselves the honor to speak as Orthodox and to demonstrate our theological and ecclesiastical unity and identity.”³²

In the latest issue of *The Word* our Metropolitan PHILIP addressed this issue as it pertains to the Orthodox, he said, and I quote, “At the beginning of the twentieth century, Orthodoxy in North America was united, although under a foreign synod. After the 1917 Communist Revolution in Russia, we witnessed the total fragmentation of North American Orthodoxy, and the emergence of the jurisdictional era on this continent. In every major city in North America, we have at least three major jurisdictions, if not more. I was very dismayed when two venerable non-Antiochian hierarchs protested the naming of our bishops where these non-Antiochian hierarchs reside. For the past thirty-nine years of my episcopate, I have condemned the uncanonical and unorthodox chaos which exists in the Americas, against all Orthodox principles. Today, from this podium, I am challenging all

³¹ John 17:20-23

³² Orthodox Observer, 21 Sept. 1983, p. 2

members of SCOBA to put on the agenda of our next meeting, the question of Orthodox Unity in North America, and we will see who wants to end this uncanonical chaos, and who does not.”

The Metropolitan’s remarks were in reference to Orthodoxy’s principle of one Church in any given country, not many. However, there is need for Orthodox to be wary of the lure of cooperation with the various ecumenical institutions who emphasize what has been called “least common denominator Christianity of the Protestant variety.” Orthodoxy believes that it still possesses both the unity and the faith which alone will produce the reunion all who are truly Christians seek. It is also, at the same time, painfully aware of the scandal of Christian division. This is the reason for some Orthodox participation, since the 1920s, in the ecumenical movement and in the later World Council of Churches. Not all Orthodox, it is true, are of one mind about this policy. Some, understandably, and I believe rightly, are convinced that the Orthodox understanding of the Church is totally incompatible with the confessional ecclesiology which dominates the World Council. Thus, the Protestant notion that the historic aggregations of separated churches are simply separations still within Christ’s Church itself is totally unacceptable to the Orthodox.

As the Orthodox statement at the Evanston Assembly of 1954 states, it is to “the faith of the ancient, united and indivisible Church of the seven ecumenical councils, namely to the pure and unchanged and common heritage of the forefathers of all divided Christians that we bear witness”. This was at marked odds with the official slogan of that assembly: “Let the World Set the Agenda.” In the light of the foregoing, what do we as Orthodox understand and believe about the Church? As Fr. Chris has reminded us in sermons and in Bible study and catechism classes, the word *ekklesia* is a Greek word that means, ‘call’, ‘call out’, ‘call together’, or as we might say in English, ‘gather together.’ Church therefore means a gathering of people, or a congregation of believers. In ancient Greece it meant to ‘call together’ the free people of a city to discuss issues of common concern. The Old Testament uses the phrase, ‘ekklesia of saints’, and ‘ekklesia of laity’ in some of the Psalms.³³ We encounter the phrase in the New Testament where it has a similar but deeper meaning.

The deeper meaning is, that it is not just a gathering of any people. The true Church is NOT just a gathering of people without regard to the truth. It is a gathering of the Faithful, who in their collective body are the actual presence of the Body of Christ in the world until He comes again. As proof, consider Jesus’ statement to Peter, who had just confessed His divinity: “*I say also to thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against her.*”³⁴

³³ See Pss. 22:22, 68:26

³⁴ Matt. 16:18

The word translated as “rock” is “petra”, in Greek, (hence, Simon’s nickname Peter). The word “rock” is a metaphor for the Faith upon which the Church is founded, the faith Peter had professed when he said that ‘Christ is the Son of God’, not Peter as an individual.

Concerning this, Blessed Theophylact said: “The Lord is saying, “this confession which you have made shall be the foundation of those who believe.”³⁵ St. Chrysostom said: “‘Upon this rock I will build’: that is, on the faith of the confession.”³⁶ St. Bede said: “Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock from which thou didst receive thy name, that is, upon Me Myself, I will build my Church. Upon this perfection of faith which thou didst confess, I will build My Church, and if anyone turns aside from the society of this confession, even though it may seem to him that he does great things, he will not belong to the building which is My Church.”³⁷ The phrase “on this rock” in Greek, it is worth noting, is the *feminine* demonstrative pronoun and article—it does not refer to the person of Peter. Jesus would have used the *masculine* if He has intended to refer to the person of Peter.³⁸

The Apostle Paul repeatedly speaks of the Church as the “Body of Christ.” In Ephesians he makes the statement: “*and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the energy of the might of His strength, which He energized in the Christ, after He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right in the heavenlies, above every principality and authority and power and lordship, and every name which is named, not only in this age, but also in the coming one. And He put in subjection all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, **which is His body**, the fullness of Him Who filleth all things in all.*”³⁹ What Paul is saying is that when we as a Eucharistic community of baptized believers come together we then become the Church wherever we may be. The question is, Do we realize that, as individuals we become the members of the very Body of Christ in our gathering, and we receive the very Body and Blood of Christ for our spiritual nourishment in the Eucharist? What an awesome privilege!

It is worthy of note that the Greek word *enérghia* – ‘energy’ in the above quote – and its derivatives appears some twenty–seven times in the New Testament. It is almost always translated into English as some sort of *work* or derivative thereof. In actuality, it means the ‘force’ or impulse behind our will, that Paul in Phil. 2:13 speaks about: “*For it is God [Who is] energizing in you all both to will and to energize for the sake of His good pleasure.*” It is the divine agency or impulse that enables a grace of God

³⁵ P.G.123:85B (col. 320)

³⁶ Homily 54, P.G. 58:518 (col. 534)

³⁷ Homilies on the Gospel, After Epiphany, Bk. One., 163

³⁸ The Orthodox New Testament, Holy Apostles Convent, p. 105, 148, 16:18a

³⁹ Eph. 1:19-23

to become a reality. St Chrysostom says: “God is the *One* Who energizeth in you both to will and to energize for *His* good pleasure.” There is a clear distinction in Greek between ‘a potential’— *dynamis* in the Greek – and *enérghia*, which affects the capacities of reason and free will. *Dynamis* is the word from which we derive dynamite. A stick of dynamite is a potential until it is energized by a detonator and then it becomes a reality. Paul illustrates this by saying: “*Inasmuch as His divine power – dynámeos - hath freely given to us all the things for life and piety, through the full knowledge of Him Who called us by glory and virtue, by which He hath freely given to us the very great and precious promises, that through these ye might become partakers of the divine nature.*”⁴⁰ It is God’s ‘divine power’— *dynámeos* – when it has been ‘energized’ by the grace of God that enables us to ‘*become partakers of the divine nature.*’

An illustration of this unity is from the description of the preparation of the elements for the Eucharist. A quotation that I found on the internet attributed to St. Symeon of Thessalonika, speaking of the holy paten upon which the Eucharist bread is placed, says, “God among gods (small caps) who are deified by Him Who is God by nature.” This is symbolized by the manner in which bread is placed on the paten, the *diskarion*. In the middle there is a portion representing the Lamb of God, Christ Himself, on His right the portion of the Theotokos and on the left the portions of the saints, and in front the Bishop of the local Church with the living and those who lie asleep whom the priest mentions during the *proskomidi*. Hence, the reason for St. Symeon’s metaphor: “God among gods (small caps) who are deified by Him Who is God by nature.”

The comment is, of course, based upon Jesus’ words in John 10:34 on an occasion when the Jews were intent upon stoning Him and He said: “*Is it not written in your law, I said, ‘Ye are gods (small caps)?’⁴¹ If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came to pass—and the Scripture is not able to be broken – do ye say therefore of Him (referring to Himself) Whom the Father sanctified and sent forth into the world, ‘Thou blasphemist,’ because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?*” In saying this Jesus is also alluding to the fact that Adam and Eve as first created were possessed of bodies that were capable of immortality – deification. Their bodies lost that capacity for deification and became subject to death and corruption after they sinned by eating of the forbidden fruit. Flesh and blood bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is God’s intent that those who believe in His Son as the Christ—“the Son of the living God”—shall again one day be deified, clothed in the garments of immortality. This process begins in the baptismal water when Paul says, “*Do you not know that all*

⁴⁰ See 2 Pet. 1:3-4, The Orthodox New Testament, Vol. 2

⁴¹ See Ps. 82:6

*of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”*⁴² In essence Paul is saying that in baptism we are clothed invisibly in the garment that permits our deification when we are resurrected. No longer flesh and blood destined for corruption, but a spiritual body suited for immortality. Thanks be to God! However, it remains for us to heed Jesus’ admonition—“*For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*”⁴³

Concerning the Origin and Revelation of the Church

It is often said that the Church came into being on the day of Pentecost with the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the assembled disciples. This is true enough in the sense that it was the event of Pentecost in which the Church became the Body of Christ through the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Church acquired visible existence at that time which many witnessed. However, there is something that I recently read, written by the late John Karmiris, who was Professor of Theology at the Athens Academy that gives a broader, and I think more accurate picture of the Church in her fullness. Paraphrasing him, he wrote, “It is a teaching of the holy Fathers that with the creation of the angels we have the emergence of the first Church. In Genesis 1:26 we read: *Then God said, ‘let us make man in Our image...’* The *us* is understood to be referring to the Trinity.” Dr. Karmiris further argues that there are phases in the emergence of the Church in her fullness. The first being the creation of angels and later Adam and Eve, the second phase being the period of the Old Testament with the call to Abraham and later to Moses, and a third phase is the Incarnation of Christ. The final phase, when the fullness of the Church will take place is the Second Coming of Christ.

To continue with Professor Karmiris’ own statement, he says: “It can be seen in the Fathers’ writings that the Angels too are members of the Church. This is evidenced by the credal statement that God is the creator of ‘all things visible and invisible.’ Among the invisible are the stars and the angels, who sing the praise of God. For we read in the book of Job: ‘*When the stars were born all the angels in a loud voice sang in praise of Me*’ i.e., God. This clearly means that angels were the first to be created.” He then mentions that among the *troparia* – (as most of you probably know these are scriptural verses appropriate to the day being celebrated) – one of these is: “By Thy Cross, O Christ, one flock came into being, of angels and men, and one Church: heaven and earth rejoice, O Lord, glory to Thee.”

⁴² Rom. 6:3-4

⁴³ Matt. 7:14

Prof. Karmiris continues: “In Holy Scripture it is taught that the angels constitute the first church. St. Paul writing to the Hebrews says: “*You have come to Mount Zion to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousand of angels in joyful assembly.*”⁴⁴ Thus, the first church was spiritual, concerning which Clement, Bishop of Rome, 1st century AD, says the Church “from above, first created spiritual before the sun and the moon, and being spiritual, it was made manifest in the flesh of Christ.”

In light of the foregoing, the first Church, we could say, was completed with the creation of man, Adam and Eve, and their being placed in Paradise. They lived a spiritual life akin to the angels while in Paradise and could engage in direct conversation with God, although there is no indication that they could see God, “*No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known,*”⁴⁵ however, in His essence they were aware of His presence. They were in what the saints call a ‘state of illumination’ of the *nous*—a Greek word. *Nous* is a word that I had encountered in reading the Greek text where it appears twenty-four times, and is generally translated simply as ‘mind’ in most English translations. However in Orthodox writings I have since learned it has nuances of meaning such that English has no word to adequately express (like *enérgeia* discussed earlier). According to Orthodox teaching, in the writings of the New Testament and the Fathers, the soul is identified with the *nous*. St. John of Damascus writes that the *nous* is the purest part of the soul. Quoting him: “The soul does not have the *nous* as something distinct from itself, but as its purest part, for as the eye is to the body, so is the *nous* to the soul.” St. Gregory Palamas says, “The heart is the essence of the soul, and activity of the *nous* consisting of thoughts and conceptual images is the energy of the soul.”

Nous is a term, I daresay, whose nuanced meanings are probably unfamiliar to most of us. It can be illustrated by a quote from St. Paul’s 1 Corinthians letter: “*If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding [nous in the Greek] is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding [nous] also. I will chant with the spirit and I will chant with the understanding [nous].*”⁴⁶ In his letter to the Ephesians, he writes: “...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes [nous] of your hearts being enlightened that ye may know the hope of His calling.”⁴⁷ The *nous* is called the essence of the soul, that is, the ‘eye’ of the heart. In this conception *nous* and heart are identical, since Christ dwells in the heart.

⁴⁴ Heb. 12:22-23

⁴⁵ John 1:8

⁴⁶ I Cor. 14:14-15 [This translation is from the Greek by the Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO]

⁴⁷ Eph. 1:17-18, ditto above.

Our minds and the way we think are inescapably influenced by the culture in which we are raised. Since the so-called Enlightenment in the 18th century, western culture has steadily moved away from thinking in spiritual terms. This movement began with the recovery by European scholars of writings by pagan Greek philosophers, most notably that of Aristotle, during the Reformation in the 15th Century. For Aristotle the only knowledge possible was based on only what our five senses can tell us. Suffice to say, there was thereafter an almost universal acceptance of the rational mindset. This makes it very difficult to communicate the things of the spirit. Some of Augustine of Hippo's Christian teaching was flawed by his commitment to Aristotle's philosophy, and for these errors he is recognized by Orthodoxy as Blessed but not a Saint. Whereas, he is recognized by the Roman Catholic Church as a Saint since their great theologian Thomas Aquinas was strongly influenced by Aristotle and Augustine of Hippo. Much the same is true for Protestant (particularly Lutheran) and Anglican theology and teaching.

Today's western world is strongly influenced by both Aristotle and Augustine of Hippo. There is an urgent contemporary need for Christians, to seek to acquire the mindset of the Church. There is a Greek word to express this, it is *phrónema*. St. Paul uses the word four times in his epistle to the Romans⁴⁸ to express the carnal (earthly) mind versus the spiritual mind. It means a certain "mindset," or "attitude" – in other words, our basic assumptions about reality. For most of us our basic assumptions are of a purely rational material reality that consists only of what our five senses can tell us. This causes us to question things that are spiritual. If we can't 'see', 'hear', 'taste', 'touch' or 'smell' it, and then rationalize it, then – with our mindset it just doesn't exist. Our thought, our life, our mode of living, our desire, and our will needs to be altered by the alteration effected by actively seeking and acquiring the mind of the Church.

The Apostle Paul writing to the Philippian Church urges: "*Let this mind – phrónete* in the Greek – *be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*"⁴⁹ Which means that since the Church is not a human organization, but the holy and blessed Body of Christ, we too are commanded to think with the spiritual mind of the Church and be animated by the life of the Church, not to do anything apart from its life and teaching.

This is pertinent and connected with two facts in today's secular world. First, there are many Christians today who do not have the mind of the Church, that is to say, their mind is on "earthly things" (Phil. 3:19). Their minds are estranged from the mind of the Church, simply worldly. Their lives are not in tune with the mind of the Church. Secondly, the fact is that acquiring the mind of the Church is related to the

⁴⁸ Rom. 8:6, 7, 27

⁴⁹ Phil. 2:5

"making" or perfecting of a man or woman, which is connected with their deification. In so far as they have an unclean and darkened nous – “the eye of the soul” – they are as Paul wrote, an infant and a baby in the faith.⁵⁰ To the extent that one grows in illumination of their nous, they also are made fully human, which means that they are "Christified", if I may put it that way, and "made Church".

In the foregoing perspective we can look at the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians: *“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”*⁵¹ If this passage is read in context with what the Apostle said before and after it - where he was speaking of the "perfect" in relation to what is "in part" and about seeing God "face-to-face" in relation to "seeing in a mirror dimly" – then we can understand that the mind of the Church is connected with man's spiritual fulfillment, which consists in partaking of the purifying, illuminating and deifying energy of God. It is important, in any case, to know that to understand what you are reading in the Scriptures you must always read them in their context – not just as isolated verses.

Through the centuries there have appeared many, no doubt well-intentioned, but nonetheless heretical teachings which distorted the revealed truth, and which the holy Fathers confronted by the power of the Holy Spirit guiding them. And this is so because the holy Fathers were the bearers of the pure Tradition of the Church, as St. Peter reminds us in his earlier quoted comment about Scripture not being a matter of private interpretation apart from Holy Spirit– guided statements by the Apostles and Fathers.

In the very early centuries of the Church, among these misguided and heretical teachings were Arianism, the Nestorians, the Nicolaitans, the monophysites, the iconoclasts, etc. All these heresies refer chiefly to the Person of Christ, but also to the Holy Spirit, and of course they distort the foundational beliefs about man's salvation. For if Christ is not of the same essence with the Father, but is simply God's first creature, and if the Holy Spirit is not is not also true God, man's salvation is put in doubt, and the possibility of deification is cut off.

Are these heresies just ancient history or are they still around? The answer is, they are very much with us still, persons that are, in their thinking about spiritual matters, unwitting descendants of the great heretics. And there are heretical teachings being expressed, not deliberately but through ignorance by some, who believe that they are really fully members of the Church of Christ and claim to speak for the Church. Perhaps the most prevalent heresy today is that which denies the divinity of Jesus.

⁵⁰ 1 Cor. 3:1

⁵¹ 1 Cor. 13:11

The rational mindset says we know that Parthenogenesis (virgin birth) is contrary to what we can observe, therefore it cannot happen. The facts are that there weren't many in Jesus' day who believed it either. The only evidence we have for this absolutely unique event is the word of Scripture where in the Gospels we find the authors (who, I daresay, were as well-informed about the usual facts of life as we are) asserting it as a fact, and who were willing to die rather than deny it. That's the only evidence the early believers had and that's the only evidence we have. We accept it on faith. Do we accept the Scripture as valid evidence or do we not? That is the question. All the heresies distort the ecclesiology, the proper understanding of the Church. Orthodoxy does not back away from such "impossibilities" that lie at the basics of Christianity. It is for this reason that one is reminded in Orthodox liturgical texts that "*when God so wills it, the order of nature is overcome.*"

Through Adam's fall, man's communion with God, with others, and with the whole creation was broken. "*And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them.*"⁵² This was the Hebrew way of expressing the fact that having fallen into sin, Adam's and Eve's bodies were no longer capable of immortality, as was said earlier. God had to create new bodies for them. After the fall, all mankind was thereafter wearing the garments of flesh and blood, the skin of decay and mortality, and resulting in the whole creation falling into darkness, which, as Paul says, "*... has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*"⁵³ It is with the incarnation of Christ that we have the earthly manifestation of the Church. The Church becomes the visible Body of Christ and acquires its Head, Who is Christ, both fully God and fully man. Proof of this is that Jesus' Who had the perfect nature of God, and that of mankind's flesh and blood body, "*was crucified, dead and buried...and on the third day He rose again.*" Through His defeat of death and rising to life again, His human body now divine and incorruptible, He offers to all who receive Him as Lord and Savior the same prospect of rising to eternal life in Him in a body suited to the spiritual realm.

When we recite, "I believe...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God who was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary...of one essence with the Father"—those creedal statements are the Church's declaration that Christians believe that when Christ, Who was perfect God, assumed our human flesh and blood body He was also perfect man. Thus, in Him human nature was deified. Paul in his letter to the Romans says, "*Are you ignorant that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by the baptism into the death, that even as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the*

⁵² Gen. 3:21

⁵³ Rom. 8:22

Father, thus also we should walk in newness of life."⁵⁴ Through Baptism we have been clothed, albeit invisibly to our earthly eyes, in the garment of salvation and made members of the Body of Christ, the Church, *if* we continue steadfast in the faith.

However, if I correctly understand the Fathers' comments on the Life after death there will be a continuous perfecting of this participation in the glory of God. This is important, because if the future life is a stationary condition, then it will not have fullness.

In this sense we can say that after the Second Coming of Christ we shall have a more complete manifestation of the glory of God. And it is in this perspective that we should interpret the teaching of the saints that what we have now is a pledge, a foretaste of the good things of the Kingdom of God.

To repeat, the Church is not a human contrivance, but a Divine-Human Organism. It is a living Being, in the fullest sense of the term. The source of the Church is God Himself. It is not man's invention, it is not a result of man's social need; it is most certainly not a placebo to calm our superstitious fears, but it is the sole place and means of man's salvation. Members of the Church exist in all the ages and will continue to exist eternally. Even now we are living with a heavenly host that have gone before us, although they are not visible to our earthly eyes. As I quoted earlier, on the paten during the Liturgy in a spiritual sense there are many of God's creation. They are the Angels, the Prophets, the holy Fathers, the great martyrs, and, in general, the witnesses of the faith, the saints and ascetics, the living and the dead who have a share in what Orthodox theologians categorize as the purifying, illuminating and deifying uncreated energy of God. We are not alone. St. Paul reminds us that we are not "*foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens **with** the saints and members of God's household*" (Eph. 2:19).

The greatest gift of grace which you and I have in this life is that we belong to the Church – that we are in this great Family. We should cherish this gift, we should feel very deeply moved and struggle to acquire the mind of the Church, experiencing her sanctifying grace and showing by our lives that we are in its place of redemption and sanctification. Thus we shall also have the great gift of the "blessed ending", when we are granted to lie asleep "in the midst of the Church".

Needless to say, this is not readily apparent to us, living as we do in a secular and materialistic culture far removed from the ancient and "organically" Orthodox world and its culture. Orthodoxy for the first time in its long history has to live in a non-

⁵⁴ Rom. 6:3-4

Orthodox world, largely Protestant Western in its religious traditions, secularist and materialist in its culture, and pluralistic in its "world view." It challenges the Church with problems unknown to the Orthodox communities of the "old world." Orthodox leaders here in the West are confronting theologies and a mindset among the many denominations that is radically different and it cannot help but influence and affect the response of many in a way that is not congenial to Orthodoxy.

The fact that Orthodoxy has been largely confined to the East until recently is due to the exigencies of history. The rise of Islam in the 7th century and its eventual conquest of nearly all of the Orthodox territories, with the exception of Russia and the Balkins, is probably the most significant reason. Once Islam conquered and the Turkish Ottoman Empire came into being Orthodox Christians were cut off from virtually all contact with the west. That fact, coupled with the Franco-German conquest in western Europe in the 11th century, eventuated in the takeover of old Rome. Placing a Frankish emperor on the throne in Rome and a Frankish Pope with a radically different theology as head of the western Church proved disastrous for Christianity. The excesses of Rome eventually led to the Reformation in Europe and in England in the 15th and 16th centuries and the shattering of any notion of unity in the Faith in Christendom. This was further exacerbated by the rationalist minded Enlightenment in the 17th century when man supplanted God as the center of the universe.

As a recent convert to Orthodoxy I find myself still in the process of breaking out of that mindset and I know how pernicious it can be. We all swim in our culture as a fish does in water without being aware of the water that supports it. In Greece or Russia, or any other Orthodox country, culture itself, the values, norms and ideas by which man evaluates his life, were and are still related in some deep sense to the Orthodox faith, which is in some measure a continuation with the early Church's "world view."

Whatever their failings, these countries remained for a long time organically shaped by the Orthodox mindset. But this has never been so in the cultural world of America. America's founding fathers were Deists, The definition of 'deism' is: "the belief that the truth of the existence of God can be discovered only by the individual through the evidence of *reason* without any resort to any particular church or revelation."⁵⁵ Both Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson rewrote the Bible as they understood it.

Here the rupture between the Orthodox world view and the pluralistic religious culture of the west is so radical that Orthodoxy finds virtually no point of contact, and the language by which Orthodoxy is largely transmitted, that of the Liturgy, spirituality and ethics, rather than doctrinal theologies based on individual and private

⁵⁵ Anglicans claim Scripture is to be understood based on the Triad of: Scripture, Tradition, and Reason; i.e. rationalist thought.

interpretations, remains "foreign" to the average non-Orthodox western man or woman. As the melding of the formerly "immigrant" Orthodox community into American culture and into the "American way of life" progresses, there is a kind of schizophrenic situation in which deep attachment to Orthodox symbols and "externals" (e.g., worship, chant, icons, architecture) seeks to coexist with an almost totally materialistic philosophy and way of life.

Whether such a situation can continue to exist without seriously eroding the Orthodox mindset remains to be seen. How long Orthodoxy can remain true to itself and avoid being seduced into that peculiar blend of secularism and vague religiosity that is so characteristic of American religion is an open question. There is always that very human tendency to make concessions to the surrounding cultural values—"to go along to get along." This spiritually alien culture of the West makes Orthodoxy's presence a challenge, and the Orthodox faith, if it is to be true to itself, must be consciously accepted by its members, clearly understood in its implications for life, and constantly defended against the unrelenting pressures of secularism.

And in the Church itself there was the temptation on the part of her leaders to emulate the ways of the world and to forget that Jesus had said: "*He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*"⁵⁶ After all, the temptation to acquire the chief places affected even the disciples. The Gospel tells of Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, who came to Jesus asking that her sons be given the chief places in the kingdom. When Jesus asked them if they thought they were suited for the positions they said: "We are able." When the other ten heard of this they were indignant because they all had the same ambition and Jesus said: "*You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant; and whoever would be first among you must be your slave.*"⁵⁷ A stinging rebuke, then and today, to those who cling to the world's values in the Church. Another example is the 13th chapter of John's Gospel where Jesus washes the feet of the disciples.

The Constantinian Era

Illustrative of the pernicious tendency to exercise authority and power as the world understands these terms can be clearly seen after Constantine legalized the Christian Faith. This resulted in a great change in the Church. A change that was not altogether favorable. Prior to then the persecution of Christians did not attract many, if any,

⁵⁶ Matt. 23:11

⁵⁷ Matt. 20:20-27

worldly ambitious men to become Christians. The threat of Martyrdom was not conducive to attracting such persons. But after 312AD many of these individuals actively sought to be made Bishops and Priests, with some success. To complicate matters, there was a large influx of converts, who were not always as fervent and sincere as those during the era of persecution, when being a Christian invited martyrdom. Still, it had its benefits. The aims of Christianity and the Empire when the ruler was a Christian frequently tended to overlap. No separation of Church and State then, although both operated separately, but it was moral influence that directed both.

The Emperor Constantine also set into motion something that one can be sure he did not foresee; namely, the full extent of the consequences when he moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople or New Rome. It was there that the second great council of the Church was held in 381AD. At the first council in 325AD the main issue was the divinity of Christ. This second Council was concerned with, among other things, the heresy of Macedonius, who, somewhat like Arius, was misinterpreting the Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit. He taught that the Holy Spirit was not a person ("hypostasis"), but simply a power ("dynamis") of God. Thereby, making the Spirit inferior to the Father and the Son. The Council condemned Macedonius' teaching and defined the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Council decreed that there was one God in three persons ("hypostases" in the Greek): Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The holy fathers of the second Council did this by adding the following articles to the Creed. They read as follows: *"And (We believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father: who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified: who spoke by the prophets. I believe in one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."*

As I view our situation today, I wonder how long will it be before the U.S. repeats the mistakes of religious intolerance? The current persistent efforts of the ACLU to rid all vestiges of public Christian religious expression raises the question in my mind: how long before a secular culture seeks to abolish any public recognition of religion altogether, under the guise of protecting citizens from the alleged intolerant behavior of religious groups? No human beings by themselves can begin to know anything about 'God', 'life', 'death' and 'eternity', unless God reveals it to them. Natural knowledge, the scientific method, observation, philosophy, or research, will not tell us anything about God, and the meaning of human existence. It is logically beyond their competence. There is no rational or logical proof available for them to deny or affirm spiritual reality. All that human knowledge can do is to describe what

our five senses tell us. We cannot describe what we cannot perceive with our senses. Anything beyond that requires **divine revelation**. This latter is what they specifically deny, calling it sheer speculation. They have no faith in the Faith.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1) Where does faith come from? "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ", said Paul, (Romans 10:17) All that we know by faith comes from the word of God as communicated to us by Christ through all the Scriptures, because He is the Word of God.

It is also a means of salvation. When Jesus spoke he forgave sinners, he healed the sick, and he delivered the possessed. He gave us the sword of the Spirit to use in the conflicts we experience in life. *"For," said St. Paul, "though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."* (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

The first thing to notice about the word of God is that it is dynamic. It has the *dynamis*, the potential of bringing conviction. In Hebrews 4:12 we are told: *"...the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."* It is the sword of the Spirit, and therefore has all the energy and power of the living God. The Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit —*"all Scripture is God-breathed,"* (2 Timothy 3:16). We are told that the writers *"spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,"*—2 Peter 1:21. God used the Holy Spirit-inspired words of the prophets and the apostles to communicate his message. Just as the invisible wind moves a sailing ship through the water. Divine inspiration makes the written Word of God unique in all the literature of the world.

Yet, it must be admitted, the written word can be dead and meaningless to us. It takes the work of the Holy Spirit – *energeia* – to apply the word of God to our hearts. God reveals his message of love and grace to us as we prayerfully seek the illumination of his Spirit. For our part, we have to be aware of our need for forgiveness, for healing, for deliverance. We have to be eager to listen and learn before these words become living and active to us.

The Orthodox Church, as the Church of the saints, is the Church of the people of God. Here there is no tension between the shepherds and the flock. Those who minister, and those who are ministered to pursue the same aim: participation in the

grace of Christ and the Holy Trinity. The call to holiness binds them all into one Church. Whatever one's position in the Church on earth—clerical, monastic, or lay—it is the one Body of Christ and the one grace of the Holy Trinity that remains the central focus. Each person is appreciated fully as a person in his relation to this one Body and to the one common life and witness. Everyone is called to be a saint and, as such, to serve the mystery of Christ. Therefore, everyone, whatever his place or capacity, will be equally asked to give an account of his response to this calling on the day of judgment. **The Church is holy, or called to be holy, and this is an essential characteristic of Orthodox ecclesiology.** Hence, all Orthodox Christians pray together for "a Christian end to their lives, and a good answer before the judgment seat of Christ."

“In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.”

Appendix—

Statements on Christianity in ancient Britain—

Joseph from Arimathaea, was (*according to a manuscript at Jesus College Oxford*) **brother** to Bianca and **Anna** (Virgin Mary's mother); **uncle** to Virgin Mary and great-uncle to Jesus, whose body **he** claimed from Pontius Pilate, as, by law, **only** a relative could.

The **Catholic** priest Polydore Vergil who was born in Italy in 1470; studied at Bologna and Padua; was so renowned for his literary talents that catholic Henry 7th (**NOT the Protestant 8th**) asked him to write an English History. As an Italian and a **Catholic** proxy Bishop; Prebendary and Archdeacon who became **Chamberlain to Pope Alexander VII**, he had **no** axe to grind on behalf of Britain or the **British Church**. It would **no doubt** have suited him much better if he could have written of Rome as being the first Christian church

but he could **not** and did **not**. He **wrote**:-"**Britain**, partly through Joseph of Arimathaea, partly through Fugatus and Damianus, **was** of all kingdoms **FIRST TO RECEIVE THE GOSPEL.**"

The antiquity of the **British** church had been challenged by the ambassadors of **Spain** and **France** before the **Roman Catholic Council** of Pisa (A.D. 1417). The British (*catholic*) delegates Robert Hallam, Bishop of Salisbury, Henry Chichele, a former Archbishop of Canterbury and Thomas Chillendon, won the day, the council **affirmed** that the **British** church (*not the Church of England and not catholic because it was pre-catholic, i.e., Orthodox*) was the **first** Christian church (*community*). The ambassadors appealed to the **Roman Catholic Council** of Constance, also in A.D. 1417, and that council **confirmed** the findings of the Council of Pisa. A **third** decision by the **Roman Catholic Council** at Sienna 1424 again confirmed the antiquity of the **British** church and, **finally** at the Council at Basle in 1434 it was laid down that the churches of **Spain** and France **had to** accept the **precedence** of the **British Church**, which it was **affirmed**, was founded by **Joseph of Arimathaea** (*Mary's uncle*) "immediately after the passion of Christ."

"The Mother Church of the British Isles is the Church in Ynys Avàlon-Insula Avallonia, called by the Saxons 'Glaston'", wrote the learned Archbishop Ussher of Ireland.

"It is certain that Britain received the Faith in the first age from the first sowers of the Word. Of all the churches whose origin I have investigated in Britain, the church of Glastonbury is the most ancient," wrote Sir Henry Spelman in his *Concilia*, and again he wrote in the same work: "We have abundant evidence that this Britain of ours received the Faith, and that from the disciples of Christ Himself, soon after the Crucifixion of Christ."

Robert Parsons, a Jesuit, in his *Three Conversions of England* [first under St Joseph, second under Fagan and Dyfan, third under St Augustine], admits that "The Christian religion began in Britain within fifty years of Christ's ascension". His co-religionist, the very learned Alford, in his *Regia Fides* says: "It is perfectly certain that, before St. Paul had come to Rome, Aristobulus was absent in Britain".

The historian Fuller goes so far as to say: "If credit be given to these ancient authors, this Church without competition was senior to all Christian Churches in the world."

"Britain," wrote the erudite Polydore Vergil, (see Catholic Encyclopedia) "partly through Joseph of Arimathea, partly through Fugatus and Damianus, was of all kingdoms the first that received the Gospel". Polydore Vergil had special access to sources of the Glastonbury story. He was Prebendary of Brent in Wells Cathedral, and Archdeacon of Wells, six miles from Glastonbury. In 1504 he was actually enthroned Bishop of Bath and Wells as proxy for his foreign non-resident kinsman, Adrian de Castello, and acted for him. He was very critical. He believed in the account of St. Joseph. He was also a very liberal-minded man. In 1547 he signed a declaration in favour of the Communion in both kinds. He was born at

Urbino in Italy about 1470. He came of a literary family for four generations. One brother was a Professor of Philosophy at Pavia; another, Jerome, was a London merchant. He himself, after studying at Bologna and Padua, and acting as Chamberlain to Pope Alexander IV (1492-98), came to England as Sub-Collector of Peter's Pence, and for some time he led a literary life in London, and Henry VII asked him to write an English History. Such was Polydore Vergil who bore the above testimony. The testimony of a learned Italian steeped in English history, resident in England, well-versed in the lore of Glastonbury, that England was the first country to receive the Gospel is particularly valuable.

It is a matter of distinct interest, which we commend to modern Roman Catholics, that Cardinal Pole, twice over, when solemnly reconciling England to the Pope and the Church of Rome, at the beginning of Queen Mary's reign, claimed that Britain was the first country to be converted to Christianity. Before Philip and Mary under a cloth of state, and the assembled Lords and Commons in the great Chamber at Whitehall, the Cardinal said, "The See Apostolic from whence I come hath a special respect to this realm above all others, and not without cause, seeing that God Himself, as it were, by providence hath given to this realm prerogative of nobility above all others, which to make plain unto you, it is to be considered that this island first of all islands received the light of Christ's religion", evidently confirming Gildas' statement!

The next day in Westminster Abbey, before Philip and Mary in state, and the Lords and Commons assembled for the act of reconciliation, the Cardinal uttered these words: "Once again God hath given a token of His special favour to the realm, for as this nation in the time of the Primitive Church was the first to be called out of the darkness of heathenism, so now they are the first to whom God has given grace to repent of their schism," etc.⁵⁸

Modern developments in the Middle East—Balfour Declaration

The Balfour Declaration, a letter from British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Lord Rothschild in which the British made public their support of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, was a product of years of careful negotiation. After centuries of living in a diaspora, the 1894 Dreyfus Affair in France shocked Jews into realizing they would not be safe from arbitrary anti-semitism unless they had their own country. In response, Jews created the new concept of political Zionism in which it was believed that through active political maneuvering, a Jewish homeland could be created. Zionism was becoming a popular concept by the time World War I began. During World War I, Great Britain needed help. Since Germany (Britain's enemy during WWI) had cornered the production of acetone -- an important ingredient for arms production -- Great Britain may well have lost the war if Chaim Weizmann, a chemist, had not invented a fermentation process that allowed the British to manufacture their own liquid acetone. It was this fermentation process that brought Weizmann to the attention of David Lloyd George (minister of munitions) and Arthur James Balfour (previously the British prime minister but at this time the first lord of the admiralty). Chaim Weizmann was not just a scientist; he was also the leader of the

⁵⁸ Op.cit., Taylor, *The Coming of the Saints*, pp. various

Zionist movement. Weizmann's contact with Lloyd George and Balfour continued, even after Lloyd George became prime minister and Balfour was transferred to the Foreign Office in 1916. Additional Zionist leaders such as Nahum Sokolow also pressured Great Britain to support a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Though Balfour, himself, was in favor of a Jewish state, Great Britain particularly favored the declaration as an act of policy. Britain wanted the United States to join World War I and the British hoped that by supporting a Jewish homeland in Palestine, world Jewry would be able to sway the U.S. to join the war.⁵⁹

Though the Balfour Declaration went through several drafts, the final version was issued on November 2, 1917, in a letter from Balfour to Lord Rothschild, president of the British Zionist Federation. The main body of the letter quoted the decision of the October 31, 1917 British Cabinet meeting. This declaration was accepted by the League of Nations on July 24, 1922 and embodied in the mandate that gave Great Britain temporary administrative control of Palestine.

In 1939, Great Britain reneged on the Balfour Declaration by issuing the White Paper, which stated that creating a Jewish state was no longer a British policy. It was also Great Britain's change in policy toward Palestine, especially the White Paper, that prevented millions of European Jews to escape from Nazi-occupied Europe to Palestine.

Jordan as a nation⁶⁰

In biblical times, the country that is now Jordan contained the lands of Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Bashan. Together with other Middle Eastern territories, Jordan passed in turn to the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and, about 330 B.C., the Seleucids. Conflict between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies enabled the Arabic-speaking Nabataeans to create a kingdom in southeast Jordan. In A.D. 106 it became part of the Roman province of Arabia and in 633–636 was conquered by the Arabs. In the 16th century, Jordan submitted to Ottoman Turkish rule and was administered from Damascus. Taken from the Turks by the British in World War I, Jordan (formerly known as Transjordan) was separated from the Palestine mandate in 1920, and in 1921, placed under the rule of Abdullah ibn Hussein.

In 1923, Britain recognized Jordan's independence, subject to the mandate. In 1946, grateful for Jordan's loyalty in World War II, Britain abolished the mandate. That part of Palestine occupied by Jordanian troops was formally incorporated by action of the Jordanian Parliament in 1950. King Abdullah was assassinated in 1951. His grandson Hussein, born on Nov. 14, 1935, succeeded him.

From the beginning of his reign, Hussein had to steer a careful course between his powerful neighbor to the west, Israel, and rising Arab nationalism, frequently a direct threat to his throne. Riots erupted when he joined the Central Treaty Organization (the Baghdad Pact) in

⁵⁹ Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, Topic: Balfour Agreement.

⁶⁰ Google, search for "Jordan". Various web sites are available.

1955, and he incurred further unpopularity when Britain, France, and Israel attacked the Suez Canal in 1956, forcing him to place his army under nominal command of the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria. The 1961 breakup of the UAR eased Arab national pressure on Hussein, who was the first to recognize Syria after it reclaimed its independence. Jordan was swept into the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, however, and lost the old city of Jerusalem and all of its territory west of the Jordan River, the West Bank. Embittered Palestinian guerrilla forces virtually took over sections of Jordan in the aftermath of defeat, and open warfare broke out between the Palestinians and government forces in 1970.

Despite intervention of Syrian tanks, Hussein's Bedouin army defeated the Palestinians. The Jordanians drove out the Syrians and 12,000 Iraqi troops who had been in the country since the 1967 war. Ignoring protests from other Arab states, Hussein, by mid-1971, crushed Palestinian strength in Jordan and shifted the problem to Lebanon, where many of the guerrillas had fled. As Egypt and Israel neared final agreement on a peace treaty early in 1979, Hussein met with Yasir Arafat, the PLO leader, on March 17, and issued a joint statement of opposition. Although the U.S. pressed Jordan to break Arab ranks on the issue, Hussein elected to side with the great majority, cutting ties with Cairo and joining the boycott against Egypt.

Jordan's stance during the Persian Gulf War strained relations with the U.S. and led to the termination of U.S. aid. The signing of a national charter by King Hussein and leaders of the main political groups in June 1991 meant political parties were permitted in exchange for acceptance of the constitution and the monarchy. King Hussein's decision to join the Middle East peace talks in mid-1991 helped restore his country's relations with the U.S.

In July 1994, King Hussein and the Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin signed a declaration ending the state of belligerency between the two countries. A peace agreement between the two countries was signed on Oct. 26, 1994, although a clause in it calling the king the "custodian" of Islamic holy shrines in Jerusalem angered the PLO. In the wake of the agreement Jordan's relations with the U.S. and with the moderate Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, warmed. In 1997, Jordan began negotiating with the United States about membership in the World Trade Organization, determined to attract foreign investment. On Feb. 7, 1999, King Hussein died of cancer after 46 years on the throne, sending the Middle East and much of the world into mourning for the influential Middle East statesman. Just weeks earlier, on Jan. 26, King Hussein unexpectedly deposed his brother, Prince Hassan, who had been heir apparent for 34 years, and named his eldest son, Abdullah, 37, as the new crown prince. King Abdullah II, a popular military leader with little political experience, became king. In June, King Abdullah dismissed conservative prime minister Abdul Raouf al-Rawabdeh and replaced him with Ali Abu al-Ragheb, a liberal with strong business ties.

In 2002–2003, Jordan found itself caught in the middle of the mounting hostility between the U.S. and Iraq—many of Jordan's 5 million Palestinians were supporters of Hussein's Iraq. But at the same time, Jordan could not anger its superpower benefactor—the U.S. is its largest aid donor. The first parliamentary elections under King Abdullah took place in June 2003, and resulted in a two-thirds majority for the King's supporters.