

THE CHURCH OF THE FATHERS

Reflections of American Clergy and Others on Orthodox Ecclesiology

-A-

From *Thoughts of New Skete*, a newsletter published
by the largest monastic community of the
Orthodox Church in America

“Most of us here [at the New Skete monastic community—*Ed.*] were born and raised as Roman Catholics. ...When, some thirteen years ago, I was impelled to become Orthodox, I did not do so to leave the *false* [Roman] church for the *true* [Orthodox] church. ...For me, the Orthodox churches and the Roman church, together with the various other eastern, non-Chalcedonian churches—these are all the one, true, apostolic, *catholic* church of Jesus Christ. The divisions between them are the result of human sibling rivalry and politics. The theological differences, when all is said and done, are more the result of mutual alienation and polemical attitudes than true theology.

“The sacraments in these churches, the priesthood, the basic doctrines, are essentially the same—contrary to the thinking of theologians on each side, who seem to glory in finding errors in the theology of others.

“...The mystery that is the church of Jesus Christ is being quickly strangled to death by the defenders of ‘the institution.’ Sweet Jesus! Help us out of our pride and self-righteousness. Show us that our real zeal is misdirected, and that you alone, the sweet life of the *entire* body of believers, are far more precious than our so-called theological meanderings and arrogances. Amen.”

Abbot Laurence

-B-

A private letter from an Archpriest of the Orthodox Church
in America to Archimandrite Akakios, Abbot of the
St. Gregory Palamas Monastery

I find most of what you write repulsive. You are, of course, outside the Church, schismatics, without grace and heretics. You are not Orthodox, but part of that patristic bigotry that has kept the east isolated and downtrodden. Let me say it plainly. You are the ones who are unbaptized and, yes I'll say it, your sacraments are nothing, absolutely nothing. ...There is only one Church and the Gospel tells us clearly that it is built on the successor to Peter, the Holy Father of Rome. Orthodox or whatever you call yourself, this is beyond dispute. The issue is the infallibility of the Pope. This is why many of us entered into the Orthodox Church. We believe that Constantinople belongs to Rome. It is that part of the Church standing up against papal infallibility, that has separated the Church of Christ. This is our fight. ...The Church of Rome is our Mother. It is simply our task to erase from her the scar of papal infallibility, which after all is only a few hundred years old."

-C-

Excerpts from a conversation between a tradition-minded New Calendarist priest and his presiding Bishop about the moderate Greek Old Calendarists, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and the Blessed Archbishop John of San Francisco

"Cyprian and this Chrysostomos in Etna are nothings, 'zeros,' schismatics, and so are all the so-called bishops of the Greek Old Calendar church and the so-called Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. These are synagogues of Satan..., half-educated people, illiterates, if that, who do not know that the head of our church is the Patriarch [in Constantinople] and his brother in Rome, who is a true bishop. They are not [true Bishops—*Ed.*]. Anyone who is not in communion with Constantinople is not a Christian and is a schismatic and heretic, outside of Christ. ...These vultures are growing in number and threatening our church and union with our brothers in Rome ...This so-called Archbishop John was a schismatic. If he performs miracles, maybe he does it with demons—no?"

-D-

"Already there are strangers in our midst, teaching us things foreign to the faith of our Fathers and telling us that falsehood, heresy, and Orthodoxy, the Church of Christ, are one. Blasphemy!"

The Blessed Archimandrite Philotheos (Zervakos)

-E-

"To believe that the Orthodox Church is not the historical Church of Christ and that those of other confessions are equal to Her is to deny the message of Christ and to place oneself outside the truth of our faith. This is not ecumenism, but error."

Protopresbyter Georges Florovsky

-F-

"...For Papo-Protestant ecumenism, with its pseudo-church and its pseudo-Christianity, there is no way out of its deadlock save wholehearted repentance before Christ the God-Man and His Orthodox Catholic Church."

The Blessed Archimandrite Justin (Popovich)

-G-

"...[A]...clergyman outside Greece recently complained that, though in eight full years he had not Baptized a single heretic returning to Orthodoxy, the ecumenists in the Phanar had not promoted him! Could there be a more hard-hearted act of hatred than this act of denying salvation to other souls?

"The wretched ecumenists push aside the Orthodox Faith. ...They deny the Grace of Baptism to those of other religions. ...They discourage repentance and the Christian work of salvation of the Orthodox Church. Like their counterparts, the Christ-despising Hebrews, they 'shut up the kingdom of heaven against men...' (St. Matthew 23:13-14)."

Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili

-H-

"We have cut ourselves off from the Latins for no other reason than the fact that they are not only schismatics but heretics."

St. Mark of Ephesus

-I-

"...The Baptism of the Latins...cannot be accepted or recognized..., because they are heretics."

St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite