

This is a chapter from *The Non-Orthodox: The Orthodox Teaching on Christians Outside of the Church*. This book was originally published in 1999 by Regina Orthodox Press in Salisbury, MA (Frank Schaeffer's publishing house). For the complete book, as well as reviews and related articles, go to <http://orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/status.aspx>. (© Patrick Barnes, 1999, 2004)

Appendix I: An Extended Critique of Ecumenist Reasoning

Preliminary Remarks

Before beginning our analysis, a few words need to be said about the term “ecumenist.” First, we Orthodox opposed to the more aberrant forms of ecumenism are *not* against ecumenism in its true and proper form—i.e., activities proper to the Apostolic mark of the Church (to be “sent out”), conducted in ways that do not violate Orthodox canonical guidelines. “Ecumenist” and “ecumenism” carry both positive and negative connotations which should be respectively qualified by words such as “true” or “political”. In this book “ecumenist” is employed in its negative connotation, referring to a person “infected” with what the Holy Fathers call the *bacterium* of an ecclesiological heresy. The chief symptoms of this disease are statements and activities that contradict or compromise the unity and uniqueness of the Church, and which expand Her boundaries in ways that are foreign to Her self-understanding. At an advanced stage, these symptoms often include an open espousal of various forms of the heretical Branch Theory of the Church, accompanied by an open disdain for those Faithful who stand opposed to the erosion of Holy Tradition and the Patristic mindset which so often characterizes Orthodox involvement in the ecumenical movement.

Second, this clarification puts our critical observations in proper perspective. There are generally two types of afflicted people: conscious betrayers of the Faith and unwitting victims of the syncretistic *Zeitgeist*, the latter often being unaware of their illness. The former, however, are the “wolves” of whom Christ spoke. No attempt is made, here, to label these Orthodox spokesmen as one or the other. That a member of the Church is infected with the *bacterium* of wrong belief does not necessarily make him a heretic. In most cases, such individuals are only spiritually ill, *and if their souls are not cured, it may lead to their separation from the Church*. This is a complex issue beyond the scope of this book.¹²⁷

Thus, in critiquing anti-traditional statements by Orthodox ecumenists, no attempt is made to question their overall sincerity, impugn their motives, or call them heretics. In God’s good time, their own words and actions will be shown for what they truly are, and the *Church* in a synodal gathering, not individual persons, will render judgment.

¹²⁷ For further discussion see “The True Nature of Heresy,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XIII, Numbers 3&4, pp. 75-77, and a “Question and Answer” on heresy in an earlier issue of the same: Vol. IV, No. 3, pp. 18-20.

Modernist Scholarship Versus Ecclesial Consciousness

Orthodox Ecumenist John Erickson is Professor of Canon Law and Church History at Saint Vladimir's Seminary in Crestwood, N.Y. His numerous articles on the reception of converts, *oikonomia*, etc., are a good study in the way *not* to present an academically honest and Orthodox view.

It would take a separate book to answer all of his assertions point by point. But this would be the wrong approach to take anyway—a move away from the firm foundation of Holy Tradition and onto the rationalistic and deceptive ground of a historical-critical method¹²⁸ detached from the spiritual life of the Church. Another way of stating the problem would be to say that Erickson appears to view Holy Tradition as a collection of documents and facts rather than as a mosaic that one perceives intuitively through the mind of the Fathers. As Father Georges Florovsky puts it:

It is not enough to be acquainted with the texts and to know how to draw from them quotes and arguments. *One must possess the theology of the Fathers from within.* Intuition is perhaps more important for this than erudition, for intuition alone revives their writings and makes them a *witness*. It is only from within that we can perceive and distinguish what (actually) is a catholic testimony from what would be merely theological opinion, hypothesis, interpretation, or theory.¹²⁹

With these wise comments in mind, and in order to counter more appropriately Erickson's allegations, we should first point out that the reasoning reflected in his articulation of "secondary theology" is incompatible with the Church's "essential theology." What is meant by these two terms?

There are, in the Orthodox Church, two ways of theology; two levels, as it were, at which the divine truth might be approached. The first of these, essential theology, proceeds out of the spirit of the Church, from the very experience of the God-bearing Fathers, who, in their theological writings and expressions, bring to full bloom the sweet-scented flower of their spiritual vision. And this flower is nourished by the very Vine of the Faith, rooted in the same vineyard where Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors have toiled for centuries untold, and planted in the sure foundation of the truth itself. Such theology is not the domain of the scholar, nor is it ultimately the concern of the intellect. It cannot be separated from the spiritual life itself. (So it is, for example, that the great luminary of Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas, is characterized by the Church as

¹²⁸ In his article "The Reception of Non-Orthodox into the Orthodox Church" (*St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 1) Erickson says that "the view of early church life and practice on which [the 'economic approach'] is based is quite at odds with the findings of serious historical scholarship" (p. 16). Not only is this questionable, but more importantly, Orthodox Tradition does not hinge upon the findings of modern scholarship. His very *modus operandi* is foreign to the mind of the Fathers.

¹²⁹ "The Ways of Russian Theology," *Collected Works*, Vol. IV, *Aspects of Church History*, p. 191, first emphasis ours.

“the perfection of monks,” the “wonder working Gregory,” a “preacher of Grace,” and, in consequence of this, “theologian invincible among theologians.”) In bestowing the title “theologian” on so few of the Fathers (and only on several, formally), the Orthodox Church pays great homage to the truth which She embodies, which is inextricably bound to the spiritual life which She directs, guides, and imparts to the humble and Faithful: a truth which is the highest form of theology, a “spiritual knowledge” of God. It is precisely this changeless, revealed theology which we dare not claim to capture in the pages of this small book.

The second form of theology, which the Church allows us, is secondary theology, primarily entailing the explication of the spiritual life, according to, and consistent with, the divine revelation of essential theology. This theology encompasses the process by which we lift up our intellects to the mental contemplation of the divine truth, by which we attempt to approach God in a form of mental discipline, the ultimate experience of truth being fulfilled only by the enlightenment of His Grace. Thus we have, today, “theologians,” students of this secondary way of theology, who can help us in our strivings to elevate the mere intellect to the understanding of what is “incomprehensible.” To the extent that such efforts recognize the greater worth and importance of essential theology, they remain true to Patristic tradition. While not proceeding from the mystical mind of the Fathers, they at least faithfully express it. To the extent, too, that these efforts are fixed on divine truth, they of necessity inspire humility in the student. And where humility is, the Fathers teach us, God dwells. And where God dwells, there truth is to be found.¹³⁰

This leads us to the concept of “ecclesial consciousness,” and the concomitant spiritual authority that it wields. As we have already clearly shown, the Orthodox Church’s view of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism is not ambiguous or undecided. However, for the sake of argument let us assume that no “formal declarations by an official body of the Church” have been made about them. This will afford us an opportunity to examine this concept. Doing so will shed more light on the methodology of men like John Erickson.

The “argument from officialdom”—aside from the fact that it is completely overturned by historical evidence—is ultimately a sophistical one that carries no weight except for those who have an ecumenical agenda or who view the Sacred Canons as a legal system in which Western-minded Canon “lawyers” can find a way to “make a case” for an idea that is completely out of tune with the choir of the Fathers. In a brilliant article on the concept of canonicity, Father Alexander Schmemmann discusses the emergence and symptoms of a legalistic mindset that has infected some in the Church today:

Finally, [the problem of “canonical subordinationism”] leads to (and also in part proceeds from) the harmful and un-Orthodox reduction of canonicity to an almost abstract principle of *validity*. When a man has been consecrated bishop by at least two

¹³⁰ *Scripture and Tradition*, pp. 1-2.

other bishops, he is considered as a “valid” bishop regardless of the ecclesiastical and ecclesiological content of his consecration. But Orthodox tradition never isolated validity into a “principle in itself,” i.e. disconnected from truth, authenticity and, in general, the whole faith and order of the Church. It would not be difficult to show that the canonical tradition, when dealing with holy orders and sacraments, always stresses that they are valid because they are acts *of*, and *within*, the Church which means that it is their authenticity as acts of the Church that make them valid and not *vice-versa*. To consider validity as a self-contained principle leads to a magical understanding of the Church and to a dangerous distortion of ecclesiology. . . .

What is important for us here and what constitutes the “disease” mentioned above is that this organic blend of State regulations, ethnical solidarity and Church organization led little by little to a divorce of the canonical consciousness from its dogmatical and spiritual context. Canonical *tradition*, understood at first as an organic part of the dogmatical tradition, as the latter's application to the empirical life of the Church, became Canon *law*: a system of rules and regulations, juridical, and not primarily doctrinal and spiritual, in their nature and interpreted as such within categories alien to the spiritual essence of the Church. Just as a lawyer is the one who can find all possible precedents and arguments that favors his “case,” a canonist, in this system of thought, is the one who, in the huge mass of canonical texts, can find that one which justifies his “case,” even if the latter seems to contradict the spirit of the Church. And once such “text” is found, “canonicity” is established. . . . Canons do not constitute or create the Church, their function is to defend, clarify and regulate the life of the Church, to make it comply with the essence of the Church. This means that in order to be properly understood, interpreted and applied, canonical texts must be always referred to that *truth* of, and about, the Church, which they express sometimes for a very particular situation and which is not necessarily explicit in the canonical text itself. . . .

The dogmatical or spiritual essence of the Church as unity is thus the criterion for the proper understanding of canons concerning Church organization and also for their proper application.¹³¹

These incisive remarks are quite relevant to our discussion. Failure to grasp or acknowledge the ecclesiological significance of numerous Sacred Canons containing timeless dogmatic principles¹³² is one of the main reasons why certain people in the Church today attempt to argue for the “validity” of heterodox sacraments and a whole host of related novelties. This problem is connected with a failure to comprehend the boundaries of right belief and practice according to the medical model of the Church—*i.e.*, the Patristic concept of the Church as a spiritual Hospital, with the Priests and

¹³¹ “Problems of Orthodoxy in America: The Canonical Problem,” *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1964, pp. 73-76.

¹³² One should not confuse fidelity to the Holy Canons with canonical literalism. All Canons are not of equal weight. Some are not authoritative for our times. Regarding how one should view the Sacred Canons, see Fr. Alexander Lebedeff, “Some Thoughts on the Holy Canons” (OCIC).

Bishops functioning as the therapists and physician's assistants to Christ the Healer.¹³³ Arguing that the Canons proscribing common prayer and worship with heretics, or prescribing how they are to be received into the Church, are outmoded (because they were not written during the unique situation in which the Orthodox Church finds Herself in the post-Christian pluralistic West), Orthodoxy's professional theologians overlook the fact that these Canons contain important guidelines that protect both the Faithful from infection with the *bacterium* of heretical beliefs, and the Hospital Ship from foundering or breaking up. Failure to heed these boundaries has resulted in many of the modernist illnesses that plague "world Orthodoxy" today, as well as the gradual erosion of a *true* ecumenical spirit—one that can only be nurtured with a proper Orthodox self-understanding.

Entirely *apropos* of our discussion are some remarks made by Father Alexander concerning a Canon about the requirements for Episcopal Consecration:

The canon both reveals and safeguards an essential truth about the Church and its proper application is possible, therefore, only within the full context of that truth. And only this context explains why canons which apparently are anachronistic and have nothing to do with our time and situations are not considered as obsolete but remain an integral part of Tradition. To be sure the Melitian schism which divided Egypt at the beginning of the fourth century [and as a consequence of which this canon was written] has in itself no great important for us. Yet the canons of the First Ecumenical Council which defined the norms for its solution keep all their significance precisely because they reveal that truth of the Church in the light of which, and for the preservation of which that schism was solved. *All this means that the search for canonicity consists not in an accumulation of "texts", but in the effort, first, to understand the ecclesiological meaning of a given text, and then, to relate it to a particular and concrete situation.*¹³⁴

What is missing today in the arguments of John Erickson and other Orthodox ecumenists is precisely this fidelity to the Church's self-understanding. This will become more clear as we proceed.

A Misunderstanding of Fundamental Orthodox Teachings

Professor Erickson writes:

Some have found [*oikonomia*] a welcome panacea for all manner of ecclesiastical ills. . . . Others—quite a different group!—have been attracted by its Cyprianic exaltation of the Church as the exclusive vehicle of salvation. For them, outside the canonical limits of

¹³³ For more on the "medical model," see the many works by Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos) of Nafpaktos.

¹³⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 76, emphasis ours.

the Orthodox Church there is simply undifferentiated darkness, in which rites like baptism and ordination have no more significance than non-baptism and non-ordination.¹³⁵

Erickson is also fond of saying that the “Cyprianic view” means that “outside the Orthodox Church as we see it there is simply undifferentiated darkness in which the Pope is no different than a witchdoctor.”¹³⁶

These misleading caricatures lack the sober-mindedness and precision that one would expect from a man of his position. Moreover, they are quite astounding in the light of contrary evidence from Holy Tradition. Whether wittingly or unwittingly, he has helped to foster the oft-repeated but false accusation that those who affirm the invalidity of heterodox sacraments also believe that there is no Grace whatsoever outside of the Church. He obviously fails properly to acknowledge the distinction between the general and special ministries of the Holy Spirit, as outlined in Chapter Two.¹³⁷ Orthodox Christians who affirm the invalidity of heterodox sacraments *do* affirm that the Spirit of God operates outside of the boundaries of the Church for the salvation of the whole world. No one can come to saving faith and enter the Church without the aid of the Holy Spirit. It is thus incorrect for one to state that those outside of the Church are completely lacking in Grace.

Professor Erickson’s untraditional views have likely affected many others, including Father Thomas Hopko, the seminary Dean and Professor of Dogmatic Theology. This is evident in Father Hopko’s answer to the question posed at the beginning of Chapter Five:

Oikonomia does not mean “making something present that is not there” but rather “affirming that something was present even in the divided circumstances” and therefore can be “validated,” fulfilled, and sanctified when brought into the Church. And the teaching that is becoming popular today, that the Orthodox should baptize

¹³⁵ *The Challenge of Our Past* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991), p. 117.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹³⁷ Another such prominent figure who teaches falsely and confusingly on the issue of grace is the aforementioned Metropolitan Maximos. We trust that having read this book the reader will be able to see the fallacious reasoning in these statements from his official diocesan publication *The Illuminator* (Summer, 1995):

To treat Trinitarian Christians as unbaptized heathens is an injustice committed against Christian baptism, and eventually a blasphemy against God’s Holy Spirit Who is at work at any Christian baptism....

When we confess faith in *one* baptism for the forgiveness of sins, we do not mean by that Orthodox baptism, but any Christian baptism. [The Holy Spirit is not] limited by human canonical boundaries we have established for our convenience. We cannot bind the spirit, and not allow Him to work with all the other Christians, just because some of us so decided.

everyone who was not baptized by immersion in an Orthodox Church (because everything outside Her canonical boundaries is absolutely nothing, dark and graceless)—all I can say is that this is a *radical innovation!* It is being presented as if it is a conservatism, but it is in fact an innovation. Because throughout history the Orthodox Church was willing under certain circumstances to recognize the real activity of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the rites and teachings of other ecclesial communities with which it is not in communion because it felt they were, to one degree and way or another, defective, though not totally and completely defective so as to not be Christian. It's an issue of truth. An example of this would be something Father Peter Gillquist once told me. He was talking to an Orthodox bishop overseas before being received into the Church. And this bishop said to him "outside the Church there is no Holy Spirit, and no grace." And Father Peter responded, "well then what Spirit brought me here today, your eminence?" What Spirit inspired Cornelius to call for the apostle Peter? God is not a prisoner of His own Church! . . . And to answer your question more directly, yes, someone with a true baptism is "somehow" a member of the Church, united to the Church, joined to it, etc.; but it's very difficult to find a way to speak about this "somehow" without falling into one trap or another—that it doesn't matter, the Church is defective, invisible, etc. No! We need to protect the full meaning of the word "Church" and how we have always viewed it. On the other hand, we don't want to claim that "outside the canonical boundaries of Orthodoxy there is only 'undifferentiated demonic darkness.'" That is just not true.

This response—characteristic of the so-called "moderate group"—confuses the definition of *oikonomia* (the opposite of what it should be) and fails both to distinguish between the two senses of the term "validity" (*per se* and form) and between the different aspects of the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Divine Economy (general and special)—and this from a professor of dogmatic theology, whose views on such matters were criticized by others over ten years earlier!

Father Thomas' further problem with baptism, that of his difficulty in believing "that God would require the 're-baptism' of those whose intentions were pure, but whose faith and/or ritual forms were defective at the time of their original baptism," is a puzzling one. Is it not precisely because we Orthodox recognize the charismatic Grace of God in all Christian religious acts that we extend the Church's wing to cover the non-Orthodox by economy? When we do indeed receive converts by baptism, is this to say that we receive them as formerly evil and heathen by virtue of their non-Orthodox baptisms? Of course not. We introduce them into the fullness of the Orthodox Faith, baptizing them into the *pleroma* of Grace, and making internal that which might have been so beautifully and sincerely external—even impinging on the internal—yet never having had internal efficacy in the fullest way. The Church comes to fulfill, not deny, the faith of those believers who are not yet within Her boundaries. Were it not so, then why have a Church? Why believe that any boundaries at all have been set? Why believe that the Orthodox Church has mystical dimensions and that She is grounded in truth itself? Why believe that, in constituting the criterion of truth, the Church is the source and fulfillment of all those relative Christian truths derived from Her? With all due

respect, Father Thomas' question addresses itself away from sober theologizing, not towards it.¹³⁸

Therefore, to affirm the "Cyprianic-economic" view of the Church and Her manner of relating to the heterodox does not entail disdain for the rites of pious heterodox Christians. In fact, to hold to the illegitimately expansive views of the representatives of Saint Vladimir's Seminary is largely to eliminate the possibility of addressing this issue in a theologically consistent manner.

Without going into the particulars involved in the reception of converts, it is worth mentioning that Traditionalists emphatically do not prohibit the use of *oikonomia* on rare occasions, contrary to Father Hopko's comments. What traditional Orthodox object to is the fact that current practice has degraded to such an extent—and this largely due to ecumenism—that *what should be the exception (oikonomia) has become the norm.*

As another example, consider these statements from Erickson's chapter on "The Problem of Sacramental 'Economy'" in *The Challenge of Our Past*:

A final point should also be mentioned. The charge is sometimes made that, if we recognize the "validity" or "authenticity" of sacraments administered outside the canonical limits of the Orthodox Church, we are as it were condoning the establishment of an anti-Church bent on our destruction. If the sacraments of the separated churches were indeed *theirs* there might be some force to this argument. But are the sacraments administered by the non-Chalcedonians and the Roman Catholics—and maybe by others as well—truly non-Chalcedonian or Roman Catholic sacraments as distinct from the Church's sacraments, in a way, e.g., that Montanist baptism is distinct from the Church's baptism? Certainly not. These sacraments—which are in fact the Church's sacraments—point beyond division, schisms and even false teaching to the fulness of unity in truth and love which is proper to Orthodox, so that when, e.g., a Roman Catholic is baptized, he becomes a member of the body of Christ, not a servitor of the Pope; and when he is ordained, it is for the upbuilding of that body, not for promotion of the *filioque*.¹³⁹

The same kind of muddled hyperbole is found in this passage as in his "Pope and the witchdoctor" derision. An "anti-Church bent on our destruction" is not the issue, but, rather, fidelity to Orthodox dogmatic principles: in this case the unity of the Church and the interrelatedness of the Mysteries. As Saint Hilarion points out in *The Unity of the Church*:

If the mysteries are valid outside the one Church of Christ, if the fullness of the ecclesiastical life in grace is not limited to the boundaries of the Church, then there exist

¹³⁸ Bishop [Archbishop] Chrysostomos, "Father Thomas Hopko on BEM," *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. III, No. 2, p. 65.

¹³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

several churches and not semi-churches, then the ninth article of our Creed [“. . .and in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. . ."] should be dropped. There can be no semi-churches of any kind. . . . If the recognition of the beneficence of the Latin hierarchy and its religious rites does not contradict the truth of Church unity, then I must, bound by my conscience, enter into unity with the Latins at once. . . . No, the truth of ecclesiastical unity does not recognize the grace of the mysteries administered within extra-ecclesiastical communities. It is impossible to reconcile Church unity with the validity of extra-ecclesiastical sacraments.¹⁴⁰

To acknowledge that the heterodox have the Mystery of Baptism is, by a theologically consistent extension, to acknowledge that they have *all* of the Mysteries.¹⁴¹ *This is simply a disguised form of the Branch Theory.*

To drive home the point further, compare Professor Erickson's reasoning with these wholly Patristic remarks by Archbishop Chrysostomos:

The ecumenical concerns of BEM [the "Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry" Statement] have led a few Orthodox thinkers to speak of a Christian presence in the eucharistic ceremonies and commemorations of the heterodox, in an effort to extend the profoundly eucharistic life of Orthodoxy to those outside her boundaries. One must laud these efforts in recognizing a rightness of intention [in the heterodox rites]. However, it should be clear that the spiritual meaning of the eucharist in the Orthodox church life precludes a recognition of eucharistic reality, as we understand it in the heterodox confessions. . . . We must flatly and clearly deny that what they possess is analogous to or isomorphic with the Orthodox eucharist. . . . The faith of the Orthodox Christian is perfected fully in the eucharist—the eucharistic rite constituting the very *raison d'etre* of the assembled body of believers—and it is unthinkable that one should imagine the eucharist as the Orthodox Church understands it to exist beyond those who define it and whom it defines. It is the body, forms the body, and exists for and through the body of Orthodox believers: "*kata panta kai dia panta* [on behalf of all and for all]". . . . It is quite wrong, then, for contemporary Orthodox observers to imagine (indeed, "fantasize") that the Orthodox priesthood exists "*kat' oikonomia*" outside the boundaries of Orthodoxy, for

¹⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁴¹ That the Mysteries are all interrelated has been eloquently demonstrated by Saint Justin (Popovich) of Chelije throughout his many writings. This excerpt is particularly relevant:

Immersed in the God-man, [the Church] is first and foremost a theanthropic organism, and only then a theanthropic organization. In her, everything is theanthropic: nature, faith, love, baptism, the Eucharist, all the holy mysteries and all the holy virtues, her teaching, her entire life, her immortality, her eternity, and her structure. Yes, yes, yes; in her, everything is theanthropically integral and indivisible Christification, sanctification, deification, Trinitarianism, salvation. In her everything is fused organically and by grace into a single theanthropic body, under a single Head—the God-man, the Lord Christ. All her members, though as persons always whole and inviolate, yet united by the same grace of the Holy Spirit through the holy mysteries and the holy virtues into an organic unity, comprise one body and confess the one faith, which unites them to each other and to the Lord Christ. ("The Attributes of the Church," *Orthodox Life*, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 28)

any exercise of economy with regard to the priesthood rests in an understanding of the “communal” experience in the life of the mysteries.¹⁴²

This passage, especially the closing sentence, comports nicely with what Father Alexander Schmemmann said earlier, to wit, “The dogmatical or spiritual essence of the Church as unity is thus the criterion for the proper understanding of canons concerning Church organization and also for their proper application.”

Misuse of the Holy Fathers

This leads us to another example from Erickson’s writings, namely, his review of Father George Metallinos’s book *I Confess One Baptism*.¹⁴³ In a two-pronged critique, Erickson attempts to refute the author’s well-supported claim that Baptism must be performed according to Apostolic form (i.e., triple immersion) by referring to alleged archeological evidence regarding the shallowness of some ancient Baptismal Fonts. He thus concludes that “the Church has not insisted, always and everywhere, that baptism be performed by submersion (total immersion).”

The question is whether these failures of the Church to insist upon immersion were legitimate—i.e., sanctioned by Holy Tradition—, or a result of temporary lapses in fidelity to the canonical norms. Granting that at times the Apostolic injunction of triune immersion was not carried out,¹⁴⁴ his argument fails for at least two reasons. The first is methodological: he attempts to generalize “from the specific to the universal”:

. . .if our Faith is the same one which was given by Christ, preached by the Apostles, and preserved by the Fathers, we are outside this transmission of truth (the true meaning of “*paradosis*” or tradition) when we model the Church on what is the exception

¹⁴² “BEM and Orthodox Spirituality,” pp. 58-59, 60.

¹⁴³ *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1997, pp. 77-81.

¹⁴⁴ One can indeed find many examples of the failure of local churches to adhere properly to the Sacred Canons. At the appointed time, however, God always raised up His Saints to help restore the traditional practice. For example, two Saints from the late eighteenth century, Cosmas Aitolos and Macarios of Corinth, were active in this endeavor.

One more parallel with the Saint of Aitolia is worth nothing. In the life of Cosmas we read that he persuaded the wealthy to buy large baptismal basins to be dedicated to churches, so that the children might be baptized in the proper manner. Similarly, in the life of St. Macarios we are told that while Archbishop of Corinth he “gave away to all the towns and villages of the province capacious baptismal fonts, so that Holy Baptism might be performed in a perfect manner, as our Holy Eastern Orthodox Church teaches.” (Dr. Constantine Cavarnos, *Modern Orthodox Saints*, Vol. 2, *St. Macarios of Corinth* [Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1972], p. 14)

and justify the exception by the whims of modern man. In this vein, Canon XVII of the so-called First-Second Synod is quite instructive. Speaking of the past practice of the rapid Consecration to the Episcopacy of laymen and monks—though out of necessity and resulting in good fruit—, this Canon states: “[T]hat which is rare [exceptional] should not be taken as a rule of the Church....” In his interpretation of this Canon, St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite repeats this warning about generalizing from the specific to the universal: “. . . However, what is specific and rare [exceptional], and comes about in a time of necessity, does not become a universal rule in the Church (something which is also stated by St. Gregory the Theologian and in the second Act of the Council held at the Church of St. Sophia, which says: ‘Those things which are good in rare [exceptional] instances must not be a rule for the many’),” *Pedalion (The Rudder)*, pp. 360-61.¹⁴⁵

Saint Vincent of Lerins also addresses this principle:

What, if some novel contagion seeks to infect not merely an insignificant portion of the Church, but the whole? Then it will be his care to cleave to antiquity, which at this day cannot possibly be seduced by any fraud of novelty.

But what if in antiquity itself there be found error on the part of two or three men, or at any rate of a city or even of a province? Then it will be his care, by all means, to prefer the decrees, if such there be, of an ancient General Council to the rashness and ignorance of a few. But what, if some error should spring up on which no such decree is found to bear? Then he must collate and consult and interrogate the opinions of the ancients, of those, namely, who, though living in divers times and places, yet continuing in the communion and faith of the one Catholic Church, stand forth acknowledged and approved authorities: and whatsoever he shall ascertain to have been held, written, taught, not by one or two of these only, but by all, equally, with one consent, openly, frequently, persistently, that he must understand that he himself also is to believe without any doubt or hesitation.¹⁴⁶

In keeping with this, we come to the second reason why Erickson’s argument fails: the early *consensus patrum* clearly contradicts his claims. For example, the *Catechetical Lectures* of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem contain detailed instructions for how a person is to enter the Church through Baptism. In Chapter 20, he writes:

After these things, ye were led to the holy pool of Divine Baptism, as Christ was carried from the Cross to the Sepulcher which is before our eyes And each of you was asked, whether he believed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and ye made that saving confession, and descended three times into the water, and ascended again; here also hinting by a symbol at the three days burial of Christ. For as our Savior passed three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, so you also in your first ascent out of the water, represented the first day of Christ in the earth, and by your descent, the night; for as he who is in the night, no longer sees, but he who is in the day, remains in the light, so in the descent, as in the night, ye saw nothing, but in ascending again ye were as in the day. And at the self-same moment ye were both dying and being born; and that

¹⁴⁵ “Some Remarks to a Priest Concerning Holy Tradition and Modernism” (OCIC).

¹⁴⁶ *A Commonitory*, Ch. III.

Water of salvation was at once your grave and your mother. And what Solomon spoke of others will suit you also; for he said, in that case, There is a time to bear and a time to die; but to you, in the reverse order, there was a time to die and a time to be born; and one and the same time effected both of these, and your birth went hand in hand with your death.¹⁴⁷

Likewise, in Saint Basil the Great's *On the Holy Spirit* (Chapters 15 and 27), we read the following:

In three immersions, then, and with three invocations, the great mystery of baptism is performed, to the end that the type of death may be fully figured, and that by the tradition of the divine knowledge the baptized may have their souls enlightened....

Moreover we bless the water of baptism and the oil of the chrism, and besides this the catechumen who is being baptized. On what written authority do we do this? Is not our authority silent and mystical tradition? Nay, by what written word is the anointing of oil itself taught? And whence comes the custom of baptizing thrice?¹⁴⁸

And in his sermon "On the Baptism of Christ," Saint Gregory of Nyssa says:

Let us then leave the task of searching into what is beyond human power, and seek rather that which shows signs of being partly within our comprehension:—what is the reason why the cleansing is effected by water? And to what purpose are the three immersions received? That which the fathers taught, and which our mind has received and assented to, is as follows. . . .¹⁴⁹

Erickson's sole Patristic citation in the first section of his review is inconclusive at best. He uses the sentence from Saint John Chrysostom's *On John 25.2* (PG 59:151)—"It is as in a tomb that we immerse our heads in the water. . . , then when we lift our heads back the new man comes forth"—in such a way as to suggest that in most cases *only* the candidate's head was immersed in ancient times. But as a similar passage in his *Baptismal Instructions* bears out, it is highly unlikely that this is what Saint John actually meant:

Next after this, in the full darkness of night, he strips off your robe and, as if he were going to lead you into heaven itself by the ritual, he causes your whole body to be anointed with that olive oil of the spirit, so that all your limbs may be fortified and unconquered by the darts which the adversary aims at you.

¹⁴⁷ Rev. and trans. Edwin Hamilton Gifford, *NPNF* 2nd ser., Vol. 7, pp. 147-148, emphasis ours.

¹⁴⁸ Trans. the Rev. Blomfield Jackson, *NPNF* 2nd ser., Vol. 8, p. 22, 42. Cf. Saint John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book IV, Ch. IX, "Concerning Faith and Baptism."

¹⁴⁹ Trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, *NPNF* 2nd ser., Vol. 5, p. 520. See also the extended discussion on immersion imagery in Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), Ch. 2.

After this the priest makes you go down into the sacred waters, burying the old man and at the same time raising up the new, who is renewed in the image of his Creator. . . . Instead of the man who descended into the water, a different man comes forth, one who has wiped away all the filth of his sins, who has put off the old garment of sin and has put on the royal robe. . . .

When the priest says: "So-and-so is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," he puts your head down into the water three times and three times he lifts it up again, preparing you by this mystic rite to receive the descent of the Spirit. . . .

As soon as they come forth from these sacred waters, all who are present embrace them, greet them, kiss them, rejoice with them. . . .¹⁵⁰

Is one to believe that the "whole body" is anointed with oil but not with water? Or that the "going down into" and the "coming forth" is not an allusion to immersion? Or that the above description is anything but what a person would witness at a Traditional Orthodox baptism today?¹⁵¹ To at least the first two questions the translator himself would answer in the negative, for in the footnotes to this passage he states: "The ritual act of immersion is rich in symbolism."¹⁵² "The triple immersion is symbolic of Christ's three days in the tomb." He then enjoins the reader to compare the Saint's passage with those of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (above), the passage from which Professor Erickson quoted, and *In. Col. 6* (PG 62.342-343).

As if this proof from antiquity was not enough, we set forth an excerpt from the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895, which amply supports our challenge of Erickson's views:

§ VIII. The one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of the first seven Ecumenical Councils baptized by *three immersions in the water*, and the Pope Pelagius speaks of the triple immersion as a command of the Lord, and in the thirteenth century baptism by immersions still prevailed in the West; and the sacred fonts themselves, preserved in the more ancient churches in Italy, are eloquent witnesses on this point; but in later times sprinkling or effusion, being privily brought in, came to be accepted by the Papal Church, which still holds fast the innovation, thus also widening the gulf which she has opened; but we Orthodox, remaining faithful to the apostolic tradition and the practice

¹⁵⁰ Trans. Paul W. Harkins, *Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. Johannes Quasten et al., Vol. 31, *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions* (New York: Newman Press, 1963), pp. 52-53.

¹⁵¹ Unfortunately, the qualifier "Traditional" needs to be added because in many Orthodox parishes the Baptismal rite is not performed correctly. This is due to a number of reasons, including simple negligence and ignorance. In Traditionalist parishes, one would almost never find these aberrant practices.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 226.

of the seven Ecumenical Councils, “stand fast, contending for the common profession, the paternal treasure of the sound faith.”¹⁵³

In view of all that has been said, it is ironic that in the very same issue of *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* in which his review of *I Confess One Baptism* appeared, Erickson makes these concluding remarks in his article on the reception of converts:

Many Orthodox as well as Catholics have a sincere desire for rapprochement and unity, but all too often their desire has been frustrated by the misinformation and the distrust of the few. Theologians [presumably including himself] can help to establish an atmosphere of trust by exposing falsehood and dispelling error.¹⁵⁴

Misapplication of History

For his second criticism of Father George's book—this one on the principle of *oikonomia*—, Erickson incorrectly uses a favorite passage of his from the writings of Saint Theodore of Studios during the “moëchian [adultery] controversy.”¹⁵⁵ Erickson wishes to show that one must distinguish between heretics as earlier Church Fathers described them—the un-Baptized or those “baptized” not in the name of the Holy Trinity—and those who are “heretics by extension.” The former are “wholly cut off and estranged with respect to the faith itself,”¹⁵⁶ while the latter are still somehow “of the Church.” When questioned as to why he did not think it necessary to (re)baptize those who received Baptism from clergy supporting the adulterous second marriage of Emperor Constantine VI, Saint Theodore replied that the Moëchian clergy were merely heretics by extension. Thus, their Mysteries were still valid.

While this is all true, as Bishop Auxentios of Photiki points out, debates about the technical definition of a heretic have little relevance to the modern situation with Protestants and Roman Catholics:

Professor Erickson's notion that the Church has always known separations and divisions, and that the issues of heresy and schism are complex, is well-founded and articulate. There have constantly been divisions in the Church, spiritual illnesses among local Churches, as Saint John Chrysostomos expresses this, and careful distinctions, as in the much-overused and abused First Canon of Saint Basil the Great, with regard to the degree and effects of various schisms and heresies. . . .

What separates the historical schisms and divisions which Professor Erickson cites from the past from the question of Monophysitism, Roman Catholicism, and

¹⁵³ This document was written as a reply to the Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII (1895) on Reunion and signed by thirteen Bishops of the Œcumenical Patriarchate. Emphasis ours.

¹⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁵ See also *The Challenge of Our Past*, p. 119.

¹⁵⁶ *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1997, p. 80.

Protestantism, today, is precisely time and the consensus of the Church over time. Many of these earlier divisions were cured, after an interval of time, and the administrative or institutional unity of the Church was restored. In other words, over time, spiritual unity prevailed. The Chalcedonian schism and the separation of Orthodoxy from the Papists (and thus from their Protestant descendants), however, *have withstood the test of many centuries*. While there are obviously common points in the liturgical and institutional lives of the Orthodox and these other churches, the spiritual unity between them has not been restored. Indeed, over time, the spiritual integrity of these heterodox groups, from an Orthodox standpoint, has been eroded. . . .

If, as Professor Erickson argues, by the eighteenth century the Orthodox Church was struggling to make a distinction between “heretics properly so-called (*sic*)” and “those whose separation admits of a remedy,” [*i.e.*, those who are “heretics by extension”] we would remind him that, aside from those who separate from the Church in willing defiance, *the best test in determining who is and who is not a heretic—who is properly so called—is once more the passage of time*, a kind historical counterpart to that personal intransigence which defines heresy at the individual level. It is in this context that one must understand the attempts by Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite to argue that by canonical exactitude (*akribeia*) the Church rejects the baptisms of heretics, while it is only by “economy” (“*oikonomia*”) that they are accepted (see, for example, the Saint’s commentary on the Forty-Seventh and Sixty-Eighth Apostolic Canons). . . . [Saint Nikodemos was trying] to express in canonical terms the spiritual alienation, over time, that separates heretics properly so called from those who are ill with heresy, but subject to the Church’s remedial efforts.¹⁵⁷

Saint Theodore’s remarks about the “Moëchians”—a group that, at the time of his comments in question, had not been synodally condemned—cannot be extended to groups such as Roman Catholics and Protestants. In attempting to do so, Erickson commits a gross historical anachronism.

This is an important point. A working presupposition in all of Erickson’s writings is that heterodox Christians are “heretics by extension.” This is a preposterous assumption. This distinction can only properly be applied to those who have emerged from the Church as heretics. It is wholly indefensible to apply the Sacred Canons and writings of the Fathers, which were dealing with those who had emerged from the Church and who believed themselves to be Orthodox and members of the one visible Church, to the situation that we face today. The Fathers equated Christianity with Orthodoxy. The concept of a “divided Christendom”—with believers holding to a wide range of divergent beliefs while considering themselves to be Christians (but in no wise Orthodox, or members of the Orthodox Church)—had not even occurred to them. It is

¹⁵⁷ Personal letter to the author dated April 22, 1997 (O.S.), emphases ours. This was written to the author during the course of his extended correspondence with Professor Erickson. The catalyst for the correspondence was the latter’s publicly televised involvement in a worship service at the Marble Collegiate Church during the WCC-sponsored “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.” The entire correspondence can be found on the OCIC.

only since the advent of ecumenism that the distinction between the Church and Christendom has become blurred, with Canons written centuries before our day being selectively applied to all followers of Christ, regardless of their relation to Orthodoxy.

Saint Theodore's remarks must be seen in this light. They were made during a unique situation two hundred years prior to the Great Schism. Saint Theodore's main point was that the "Moëchians"—all of them Orthodox Christians—should not be considered wholly estranged, especially since they had not been synodally declared to be heretics.¹⁵⁸ Erickson wishes to extend this Saint's reasoning to heterodox Christians: Roman Catholics who have been separated from the Orthodox Church for centuries, and Protestants who have never had anything to do with Orthodoxy, originating as they did from Roman Catholicism. It must be flatly stated, though with great sorrow, that from the Orthodox perspective, both of these heterodox bodies are wholly estranged from the Church, regardless of our "common heritage" or of the fact that some of them can still be shown to baptize in the Name of the Holy Trinity. Not a single Church Father or Saint has *ever* stated that Roman Catholics or Protestants are "somehow still a part of the Church"—i.e., mere heretics by extension.

It thus comes as no surprise to hear Father George Metallinos comment in a recent interview for a conservative Orthodox journal that, "When Professor Erickson criticizes my book, he does not insult me, but rather he insults the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church. These critics are not thinking as proper Orthodox Christians."¹⁵⁹

Having lost the distinction which we make between essential and secondary theology, heterodox writers (and, alas, many Orthodox writers) have come to an independent style of writing and research. Failing to acknowledge the revealed truth of essential theology, they likewise fail to use it as the criterion of truth, by which to guide their research and form their expressions. Having no criterion of truth, they often (and sometimes rather arrogantly) endow their own opinions with a supposedly self-evident aura of "truth." And the more that their opinions deviate from the truth of the Fathers, the more this aura becomes a blinding barrier of dark rays, hiding the light of truth. Secondary theology holds forth, in darkness, while the light of essential truth dims and fades into the recesses of the mind. In this way, sadly enough, all too many Orthodox Christians have come to misunderstand completely the meaning of Scripture and to distort and debase the Patristic witness. They have come to share the views of the heterodox and to lose sight of the Orthodox notion of truth.¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

¹⁵⁸ Incidentally, this distinction between potential heretics and heretics officially declared to be such is critical for the Church in other ways today. It is precisely a failure to acknowledge this distinction that has led to such divisions amongst Old Calendarists.

¹⁵⁹ "The Theological Question of Our Day," *Divine Ascent*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 59.

¹⁶⁰ *Scripture and Tradition*, p. 3.

What we have said carries great weight with those who understand that in Orthodoxy, the criterion for truth is the *consensus patrum*, or collective mindset of the Fathers. Given that “[t]he classical Patristic dictum, ‘Following the Holy Fathers. . .’ is the only one which expresses how Orthodox understand themselves,”¹⁶¹ it is certainly telling that modern scholars such as Erickson cannot find support from this *consensus patrum* for their attempted refutations of the “Cyprianic-economic” view. When they do appeal to the writings of the Saints, they do so—as Archbishop Chrysostomos has stated—in a way that separates “canons from theology and theological speculation from spiritual life” setting “Fathers at artificial odds with one another.” As Father Florovsky said, *One must possess the theology of the Fathers from within....*

Thus, when we turn to the writings of the Saints, and especially those who have lived during the ecumenical age—*e.g.*, Saint Hilarion the New-Martyr, Saint Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, and the Blessed Elder Philotheos (Zervakos)¹⁶²—, we discover that there is absolutely no support for the un-Orthodox ideas of academic elites who have little or no respect for, or sensitivity to, the spiritual wisdom contained in Holy Tradition.¹⁶³ These Saints have noetically “seen”—as a consequence of their ascetically-clarified vision—the “great gulf [that is] fixed” between Orthodoxy and the Western confessions.¹⁶⁴ They have also sensed the danger that the ecumenical movement poses for the Church. The writings of men like Professor John Erickson unfortunately serve the ends of this dangerous enterprise.

Furthermore, when we reflect on the views of men such as Father Thomas Hopko and John Erickson, it is difficult for us to determine what can be gained from believing as they do. What are the compelling aspects of their well-intentioned expansive position, either emotionally (that is, towards the heterodox) or theologically? If the traditional view of the Church was that, in affirming a “Cyprianic” ecclesiology, one must necessarily damn all outsiders to hell—living, as they claim that we Traditionalists believe, in “undifferentiated darkness,” completely devoid of Grace—then their

¹⁶¹ *The Non-Chalcedonian Heretics*, by the Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, trans. by Archbishop Chrysostomos and Hieromonk Patapios, 2nd ed. (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1996), p. 6.

¹⁶² A sample of their writings can be found on the OCIC: “Papism as the Oldest Protestantism,” by the Blessed Justin (Popovich) of Chelije; and “A Desperate Appeal to the Ecumenical Patriarch” by the Blessed Elder Philotheos. See also “Way Apart: What is the Difference Between Orthodoxy and Western Confessions?,” by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev and Galich.

¹⁶³ Monk Damascene Christensen, *Not of This World: The Life and Teachings of Father Seraphim Rose* [Father Seraphim Rose Foundation, 1993], Ch. 61, “Renovationism,” *passim*.

¹⁶⁴ In the Introduction to what is probably the best short overview of the differences between East and West available in English, the authors make the following comment: “For, indeed, the Eastern and Western Churches are still as far from one another as the East is from the West.” (Bishop [now Archbishop] Chrysostomos and Archimandrite [now Bishop] Auxentios, *The Roman West and the Byzantine East* [Etna, CA: The Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1988], p. 8).

seeming charity might be attractive. However, this is not the case. Furthermore, unlike the so-called “economic theory,” their view cannot account for the Church’s varied practice in the reception of converts throughout the centuries while at the same time remaining faithful to Her ecclesiology.

It is tragic that views such as those put forth by these Saint Vladimir’s Seminary professors have led to aberrant pastoral practices—*e.g.*, those of jurisdictions associated with the S.C.O.B.A.¹⁶⁵—that potentially deprive the souls of those seeking entry into the Church of the *pleroma* of Grace afforded only in Orthodox Baptism. Consider this sober warning from Saint Basil the Great:

Whence is it that we are Christians? Through our faith, would be the universal answer. And in what way are we saved? Plainly because we were regenerate through the grace given in our baptism. How else could we be? And after recognizing that this salvation is established through the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, shall we fling away “that form of doctrine” which we received? . . . Whether a man have departed this life without baptism, or have received a baptism lacking in some of the requirements of the tradition, his loss is equal.¹⁶⁶

At best, it appears that these Orthodox ecumenists have been duped into thinking that *akribeia* will greatly hinder the conversion of the heterodox. But are they more wise than Saint Cyprian?:

Nor let any one think that, because baptism is proposed to them, heretics will be kept back from coming to the Church, as if offended at the name of a second baptism; nay, but on this very account they are rather driven to the necessity of coming by the testimony of truth shown and proved to them. For if they shall see that it is determined and decreed by our judgment and sentence, that the baptism wherewith they are there baptized is considered just and legitimate, they will think that they are justly and

¹⁶⁵ The Antiochian Archdiocese forbids a Priest—on threat of suspension—from “re”-baptizing a heterodox Christian who has been “baptized” in the Name of the Trinity and in water. No mention is made of Apostolic Form (*i.e.*, triune immersion), one of the key prerequisites for an acceptable use of *oikonomia*. For that matter, *single* immersion is not even mentioned. It is common knowledge that Baptisms in modernist jurisdictions are routinely performed by sprinkling (aspersion) or pouring (affusion). Similarly we note the following excerpt from a May 19, 1997, “Memorandum” by the aforementioned Bishop [now Metropoli-tan] Maximos—an open supporter of the infamous Balamand Agreement—to his diocesan clergy:

Reception of Converts: Converts to our Faith, coming to us from the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches that baptize with a Trinitarian formula are received into our Church through the Sacrament of Chrismation. They are not received through the Sacrament of Baptism. Any one that receives such a convert through Baptism and not Chrismation will be immediately suspended and brought to a Spiritual Court hearing. This is not a new policy or directive. No one has the authority or right to arbitrarily change this practice of our Church.

¹⁶⁶ Trans. the Rev. Blomfield Jackson, *NPNF* 2nd ser., Vol. 8, p. 17.

legitimately in possession of the Church also, and the other gifts of the Church; nor will there be any reason for their coming to us, when, as they have baptism, they seem also to have the rest. But further, when they know that there is no baptism without, and that no remission of sins can be given outside the Church, they more eagerly and readily hasten to us, and implore the gifts and benefits of the Church our Mother, assured that they can in no wise attain to the true promise of divine grace unless they first come to the truth of the Church. Nor will heretics refuse to be baptized among us with the lawful and true baptism of the Church, when they shall have learnt from us that they also were baptized by Paul, who already had been baptized with the baptism of John, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁶⁷

It may be revealing when attempting to sort out these issues to step back and ask some simple questions. For example, why do those opposed to the Traditionalist view of the Church typically *prohibit* a convert from being received by Holy Baptism? Is it because they do not wish to offend them?¹⁶⁸ But what could be offensive about reception by Baptism—unless, of course, the person seeking entrance has been told that he is merely switching “camps” within the “divided Church”? If the new baptizand is not told such things outright, is it unreasonable to suppose that he will draw conclusions about his former confessional body that could undermine his conception of the Orthodox Faith, causing spiritual harm as a result of a subtle *bacterium* of relativism?

But again, *why* do some Orthodox Churches not return to the Traditional norm of reception by Baptism? It seems both strange and unwise that the “mainstream” Orthodox Churches in America—i.e., those who are members of the S.C.O.B.A.—do not resort to *akribeia* given the current ecumenical climate of ecclesiological relativism. The claim of their Church representatives—that their Church’s practice of receiving heterodox by *oikonomia* is not an innovation resulting from their involvement in ecumenism—is not at all convincing. Even if they *could* persuasively argue from Holy Tradition that *oikonomia* should be the rule and *akribeia* the exception, these Churches would be in error; for they miss the *spiritual importance*—given our times—of reinforcing in the minds of their flock the uniqueness of the Orthodox Church. Thankfully, the importance of this has not been lost on all Orthodox Churches:

Having in mind this circumstance and the growth today of the heresy of ecumenism, which attempts to eradicate completely the distinction between Orthodoxy and all the heresies, so that the Moscow Patriarchate, in violation of the sacred canons, has even

¹⁶⁷ *Epistle LXXII, “To Jubaianus” (24:1-2)*, trans. Rev. Ernest Wallis, *ANF*, Vol. 5, p. 385.

¹⁶⁸ It is possible that this is the case with Erickson. See “The Reception of Non-Orthodox into the Orthodox Church,” p. 16. We remind those who may think this way that the Traditional view is *not* against the reception of converts by *oikonomia* on a case-by-case basis. There are occasions when insistence upon Baptism might be judged by a Bishop to be harmful to the soul in question. But such selective uses of *oikonomia* are not what Erickson and others want. Rather, they argue for the blanket recognition of heterodox sacraments and reception by Baptism only in rare cases.

issued a resolution permitting Roman Catholics to receive Communion in certain cases, the Council of Bishops recognizes the necessity of introducing a stricter practice, i.e. that baptism be performed on all heretics who come to the Church, excepting only as the necessity arises and with the permission of the bishop, for reasons of economy or pastoral condescension, another practice of reception in the case of certain persons (i.e. the reception into the Church of Roman Catholics and those Protestants who perform their baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity) through the renunciation of their heresy and by chrismation.¹⁶⁹

May all those who are concerned about the welfare of Christ's Holy Church reflect soberly upon these things.

¹⁶⁹ "Resolution of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, 15/28 September 1971," *Orthodox Life*, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 43. This is the position held by numerous traditional Orthodox churches throughout the world. Recall the earlier words of Bishop Kallistos:

Guided always by practical considerations, Orthodoxy has exercised economy when this aided the reconciliation of heterodox without obscuring the truths of the Orthodox faith; *but when leniency seemed to endanger the well-being of the Orthodox flock, exposing them to infiltration and encouraging them to indifferentism and apostasy, then the Church authorities resorted to strictness.*