

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)

VII. Bishop Kallistos' Answer

In *The Orthodox Church*, Bishop Kallistos makes some wholly Orthodox statements concerning the nature of the Church and salvation. Among them are the following:

Orthodoxy also teaches that *outside the Church there is no salvation*. This belief has the same basis as the Orthodox belief in the unbreakable unity of the Church: it follows from the close relation between God and His Church. "A person cannot have God as His Father if he does not have the Church as his Mother." So wrote Saint Cyprian; and to him this seemed an evident truth, because he could not think of God and the Church apart from one another. God is salvation, and God's saving power is mediated to humans in His Body, the Church." *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. All the categorical strength and point of this aphorism lies in its tautology. *Outside the Church there is no salvation because salvation is the Church.*⁷⁸

This teaching is found throughout the writings of the Fathers.⁷⁹ They use the term "salvation" in several interchangeable ways: at times referring to an eternal state in the Kingdom of Heaven, and at other times implying the means by which we achieve this state—the Church being the only place where it can be found. In this tautology lies the essence of the problem for those trying to understand the implications of Orthodox ecclesiology for the non-Orthodox, to wit: Is a person required to believe that everyone outside of the Church is damned? As we demonstrated in previous chapters, the affirmation that heterodox Christians are separated from the Church does not imply that we pass judgment on them or make any pronouncements about their eternal destiny. "[B]ut he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. . . ." (I Cor. 4:4-5). In keeping with Her apophatic mindset, the Church remains circumspect. Therefore, to state that there is "no salvation outside of the Church" is not the same as stating "no one outside of the Church can be saved."

Had Bishop Kallistos made these points and left it at that, we would have no problem. However, as is common throughout his helpful but uneven book, impeccably

⁷⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 247.

⁷⁹ For example, cf. Saint Ignatius, *Letter to the Philadelphians* (3:2-4:1); Saint Cyprian, *Epistle LXXII*, "To Jubaianus" and *Epistle LXXIII*, "To Pompey;" and Saint Augustine, *Discourse to the People of the Church at Caesarea* (6).

Orthodox statements juxtapose ones that are either misleading or erroneous. Furthermore, “as is so often the case..., we are given the impression that logical deduction, in Orthodoxy, always yields to the ostensibly acceptable process of ‘different approaches.’”⁸⁰ Before examining the sets of misleading statements that mar His Grace’s treatment of Orthodox ecclesiology, we must touch upon his penchant for espousing multiple approaches to controversial issues.

Of Birds and Men

At times His Grace uses the terms “hawks” and “doves” to distinguish between two types of Orthodox theologians: Traditionalists, and those who are of a more liberal and “lenient” mindset, apparently lacking any Patristic support for their opinions. In the chapter that deals with the question of heterodox status, Bishop Kallistos introduces two new categories which “smack of the same spirit”⁸¹: the “rigorists” and “moderates.” While these labels may be convenient, they raise the question, “Are both approaches legitimate in the light of Holy Tradition?” We think not. Unfortunately, his presentations of the various dual approaches to controversial topics leave many with the impression that there are no discernible clear-cut answers. To those not grounded in Orthodox theology there is the danger that the views of both groups will seem legitimate. This manner of presenting the different “camps” may be acceptable for the realm of *theologoumena*, but not for ecclesiology.

Furthermore, these labels carry with them some rather misleading connotations. (“Hawkish-”?) rigorism implies an attitude of rigidity, callousness, and a legalistic attention to details. In contrast, moderation connotes a “kindler, gentler” Orthodoxy, an Orthodoxy that implicitly emphasizes the dove-like qualities of meekness, peace, and harmony. (We note that the latter two are prominent buzzwords of the *Zeitgeist*.) However, these are false connotations that we hope were not intended by His Grace. Laudably, he rescues the “rigorist” position from potential disapprobation by accurately presenting it in a balanced way.

But there also exists in the Orthodox Church a more rigorous group, who hold that since Orthodoxy is the Church, anyone who is not Orthodox cannot be a member of the Church.... Of course (so the stricter group add [*sic*]) divine grace may well be active among many non-Orthodox [as already shown, through clarifying the distinction between “general” and “ecclesial” Grace], and if they are sincere in their love of God, then we may be sure that God will have mercy upon them; but they cannot, in their present state, be termed members of the Church. *Workers for Christian unity who do not often*

⁸⁰ Hieromonk Patapios, “A Traditionalist Critique of *The Orthodox Church*,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Volume XVI, No. 1, p. 66.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

*encounter this rigorist school should not forget that such opinions are held today by Orthodox of great holiness and loving compassion.*⁸²

This is a succinct, lucid, and theologically correct summary that neatly sets forth the Traditional view of the Church concerning the heterodox. It also demonstrates that the “rigorist” position has nothing whatsoever to do with “rigorism” as one typically thinks of it. (That he deems it necessary to add “Workers for Christian unity who do not often encounter this rigorist school...” is but a sad commentary upon the state of the ecumenical movement and the understanding of Orthodoxy among its members in general.)

Before commenting upon the accuracy of the connotations arising from the use of the term “moderate,” we must first state our assumption that Bishop Kallistos would place Orthodox ecumenists in that group. We base this supposition on his description of the moderate views, admitting that he does not specifically mention those who might be called, in his parlance, the “ultra-moderates.”

Having said this, we make the following observations. First, the well-documented hostility towards and misrepresentation of Traditionalists that is so prevalent among ecumenists today⁸³ leads us to view any label which connotes “moderation” as a misapplication. Appearing superficially to be the most moderate and expansive of all, many Orthodox ecumenists show that their “love” is mere hypocrisy.

The key to uncovering the lie hiding under the “loving” mask of ecumenism is its own delusion. It preaches love and practices hatred. It champions peace and fosters violence. It advocates relativism in an absolutist spirit. And it has engendered division in the Orthodox Church, setting brother against brother, so that the heterodox and unbelievers are invited into the fold, while the most loyal and faithful sheep are relegated to a place beyond the boundaries of the false Church which it has created in the name of Orthodoxy.⁸⁴

Furthermore, by failing honestly to confront the heterodox about their heresy, true ecclesial status, and the claims of the Church; and by failing to explain forthrightly that true Christian unity can only be achieved by a return to Holy Orthodoxy, such ecumenists undermine that very unity which they claim to be seeking. What incentive is there to work for unity based in truth—as preserved by the Church, “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15)—if the heterodox are continually told that they are

⁸² *Op. cit.*, p. 309. Interestingly, Hieromonk Patapios points out that “in the original text, this rejoinder reads ‘...by many Orthodox of great learning and holiness’ (p. 317)” (*Ibid.*)

⁸³ See “The Psychological Anatomy of Ecumenism” and the multi-volume series *Contributions to a Theology of Anti-Ecumenism* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies), *passim*.

⁸⁴ “Ecumenical Delusion: The Vicious Life of False Love,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. X, No. 2, p. 11.

merely estranged “families”⁸⁵ and asynchronous “lungs”⁸⁶ with “valid” sacraments? These examples of ecumenist “love”—based as they are upon dogmatic minimalism and religious syncretism—only serve, as we have said, to confirm the heterodox in their errors. *This makes them the truly harsh and unloving ones.* Consider these words of a noted “rigorist,” Saint Maximus the Confessor, which describe in what “true ecumenism” consists. We hold this forth as a model for all those who seek Christian unity:

I write these things not wishing to cause distress to the heretics or to rejoice in their ill-treatment—God forbid; but, rather, rejoicing and being gladdened at their return. For what is more pleasing to the Faithful than to see the scattered children of God gathered again as one? Neither do I exhort you to place harshness above the love of men. May I not be so mad! I beseech you to do and to carry out good to all men with care and assiduity, becoming all things to all men, as the need of each is shown to you; I want and pray you to be wholly harsh and implacable with the heretics only in regard to cooperating with them *or in any way whatever supporting their deranged belief. For I reckon it*

⁸⁵ The June 1997 edition of *The Word*, the official publication of the Antiochian Archdiocese, records a dinner event for the Coptic Pope Shenouda attended by Bishop Joseph:

During the month of November 1996, the Copts all over the world celebrated the Silver Jubilee of His Holiness Pope SHENOUDA’s enthronement on the seat of St. Mark the Evangelist. St. Mark founded the Coptic Church in 61 A.D. and His Holiness Pope SHENOUDA III is the 117th *successor of St. Mark*. On Saturday, December 1, 1996 His Grace Bishop JOSEPH, accompanied by Protosyngelos Paul Doyle and Archpriest Michel Najim joined the Coptic communities of the West Coast in a dinner banquet honoring His Holiness at the Los Angeles Bonaventure. In his address, Bishop JOSEPH commended His Holiness’ contribution in rejuvenating Eastern Christianity and his monumental endeavor in materializing *the unity of the two Orthodox Families*, describing them as having “*the same spirit of Orthodoxy*.” “It is a great mystery,” said His Grace, “to see that fifteen hundred years of alienation within *the branches of the two Orthodox Families* were unable to shake the oneness of faith and spiritual legacy. . . . After fifteen hundred years. . . , Your Holiness was able to ascertain that *the two families have kept the same Eastern Christian Faith*. This is a great witness to the meaning of the continuity in sharing the same doctrine, as a fruit of our participation in the Fountain of Truth” (p. 47, emphases ours).

⁸⁶ In his Foreward to *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue*, Metropolitan Maximos of Aenos made the following scandalous remarks:

Common prayer and participation as far as possible in the prayer life of the other church has also been part of our lives together in dialogue. . . . We have responded to the work of the Joint Theological Commission for the dialogue between our two sister churches, the “two lungs” of the one Church of Christ. These two have to synchronize anew their breathing, so that the Church of Christ may begin breathing properly again. (Eds. John Erickson and John Borelli. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press and Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1996, p. 3.)

Given our analysis in Appendix I, it is not surprising to find Professor Erickson listed as one of the editors of this lamentable volume.

*misanthropy and a departure from Divine love to lend support to error, that those previously seized by it might be even more greatly corrupted.*⁸⁷

The “Moderate Group”

Having touched upon the more aberrant forms of an ultra-moderate position, we now turn our attention to His Grace’s portrayal of a seemingly more benign ecclesiological moderation.

There is first a more moderate group, which includes most of those Orthodox who have had close personal contact with other Christians. This group holds that, while it is true to say that Orthodoxy is the Church, it is false to conclude from this that those who are not Orthodox cannot possibly belong to the Church. Many people may be members of the Church who are not visibly so; invisible bonds may exist despite an outward separation. . . .

There is only one Church, but there are many different ways of being related to this one Church, and many different ways of being separated from it. Some non-Orthodox are very close indeed to Orthodoxy, others less so; some are friendly to the Orthodox Church, others indifferent or hostile. By God’s grace the Orthodox Church possesses the fullness of truth (so its members are bound to believe), but there are other Christian communions which possess to a greater or lesser degree a genuine measure of Orthodoxy. All these facts must be taken into account: one cannot simply say that all non-Orthodox are outside the Church, and leave it at that; one cannot treat other Christians as if they stood on the same level as unbelievers.

Such is the view of the more moderate party.⁸⁸

Reflection upon the main tenets of the moderate position reveals that it ventures unnecessarily into speculative territory, resulting in an obfuscation of Orthodox ecclesiology. Given that the “moderate group...includes most of those Orthodox who have had close personal contact with other Christians,” it is safe to assume that the motivation for this ecclesial expansiveness stems from the commendable desire to uphold the “*extra ecclesiam*” aphorism without having to deny the possibility of salvation to those who are dedicated followers of Christ but outside the Church. However, this speculation causes more problems than it solves.

Let us now examine some examples of the “moderate” view provided by Bishop Kallistos, all in an attempt to answer this question: Is an approach legitimate—i.e., justifiable from Holy Tradition—which affirms that “there are many different ways of being related to this one Church”?

⁸⁷ *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 91 col. 465C; as cited in *The Panheresy of Ecumenism*, by Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili (Etna, CA: The Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1995), p. 32, emphasis ours.

⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 308-9.

Saint Augustine's "Sheep Without"

We begin with remarks that come well before any mention by His Grace of the "moderate-rigorous" categories. This is noteworthy, for his statements are presented as the teaching of the Church when in reality much of what is said belongs more appropriately in the "moderate" camp. After correctly stating that "outside the Church there is no salvation" he writes:

Does it therefore follow that anyone who is not visibly within the Church is necessarily damned? Of course not; still less does it follow that everyone who is visibly within the Church is necessarily saved. As Augustine wisely remarked, 'How many sheep there are without, how many wolves within!' While there is no division between a 'visible' and an 'invisible Church', yet there may be members of the Church who are not visibly such, but whose membership is known to God alone. If anyone is saved, he must *in some sense* be a member of the Church; in *what sense*, we cannot always say.

This section begins well. However, with the introduction of Saint Augustine's "wise remark" a door is opened that could lead one to an improper understanding of Orthodox ecclesiology and the status of the heterodox. When taken in context, the selection from the Blessed Bishop of Hippo does not support the concept of invisible Church membership.

Therefore "the Lord knoweth them that are His;" they are the sheep. Such sometimes do not know themselves, but the Shepherd knoweth them, according to this predestination, this foreknowledge of God, according to the election of the sheep before the foundation of the world: for so saith also the apostle, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." According, then, to this divine foreknowledge and predestination, how many sheep are outside, how many wolves within! and how many sheep are inside, how many wolves without! How many are now living in wantonness *who will yet* be chaste! how many are blaspheming Christ *who will yet* believe in Him! how many are giving themselves to drunkenness *who will yet* be sober! how many are preying on other people's property *who will yet* freely give of their own! Nevertheless *at present* they are hearing the voice of another, they are following strangers.⁸⁹

The "sheep [who] are without" are those persons who are *presently outside* the visible flock of God but who *will be* numbered among the sheep at the Final Judgment (Saint Matt. 25:31-33). The "sheep who are inside" comprise some percentage of the Church's membership (Saint Matt. 7:21-23; 13: 24-30). In the sense in which Saint Augustine here speaks, these sheep—both inside and outside—are known by God according to His divine foreknowledge. The Church, on the other hand, acknowledges as sheep only those who in this lifetime were Orthodox and who have been glorified as Saints. For the

⁸⁹ Trans. the Rev. Dr. John Gibb and the Rev. James Innes, *NPNF 1st ser.*, Vol. 7, p. 254, emphases ours.

rest of Her faithful—*i.e.*, those “inside,” both living and reposed—the Church lovingly continues to offer up prayers that God may grant them salvation and “commit their souls to where the righteous repose.”

Bishop Kallistos’ use of the “wise remark” is not consistent with this framework. Rather, he suggests that “...there may be *members of the Church* who are not visibly such, but whose membership is known to God alone.” Had he said “...there may be members of the Church in Heaven who were not visibly members of the Church on earth” we would have no problem.

Even if one were to admit that Saint Augustine held to some form of an “invisible true Church” concept⁹⁰—an overly-logical extension of his flawed doctrine of predestination⁹¹—, it is highly debatable whether the expansiveness implied by Bishop Kallistos’ use of this (“dovish”?) Saint’s homiletic phrase is justified.

[Saint Augustine’s] doctrine of the church was more seriously affected by his view of predestination than was his doctrine of the sacraments. It was by no means self-evident that those who “participate physically in the sacraments” were to be regarded as members of the body of Christ, the church. For “in the ineffable prescience of God, many who seem to be on the outside are in fact on the inside, and many who seem to be on the inside are nevertheless in fact on the outside”; therefore the true church consisted of “the fixed number of the saints predestined before the foundation of the world,” even though some of them were now wallowing in heresy or vice. These belonged to the city of God, predestined and elected by grace, aliens here below but citizens above. When the church was defined this way, it was valid to say that God had none who were outside the communion of the church.

This definition of the church as the “number of the predestinated” was to figure prominently in the polemics of the late Middle Ages and the Reformation against the institutional church, *but in Augustine’s theology it had precisely the opposite function*. It enabled him to accept a distinction between the members of the empirical catholic church and the company of those who would be saved *while at the same time he insisted that the empirical catholic church was the only one in which salvation was dispensed; “for it is the church that gives birth to all.” Although God predestined, “we, on the basis of what each man is right now, inquire whether today they are to be counted as members of the church.”* It was to the church as now constituted that

⁹⁰ This concept, at least as held by most Protestants today, is absolutely foreign to Orthodoxy. Indeed, there is an “invisible Church.” However, this refers to the Church Triumphant—the Heavenly Church—, with which the Church Militant is one. See “Is There An Invisible Church?” by Father Michael Pomazansky (OCIC).

⁹¹ For a balanced critique of Saint Augustine’s doctrine of predestination see Father Seraphim (Rose), *The Place of Blessed Augustine in the Orthodox Church* (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1996 [1983]), Ch. III. He opens the chapter by stating that “[the] most serious of the exaggerations into which Blessed Augustine fell in his teaching on grace is to be found in his idea of *predestination*.” At the same time, however, Fr. Seraphim stresses that the Saint “most certainly did not teach ‘predestination’ as most people understand it today” but rather “in an exaggerated way which was easily liable to misinterpretation” (p. 43).

one was to look for grace, for guidance, and for authority. Those who accepted “the authority of the Scriptures as preeminent” should also acknowledge “that authority which from the time of the [earthly] presence of Christ, through the dispensation of the apostles and through a regular succession of bishops in their seats, has been preserved to our own day throughout the world.” This authority of orthodox catholic Christendom, “inaugurated by miracles, nourished by hope, enlarged by charity, established by antiquity,” was so powerful as even to validate the very authority of the Bible. “For my part,” Augustine declared, “I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the catholic church....

There is no other valid means of making Christians and remitting sins, except by causing men to become believers by the institution of Christ and the church, and through the sacraments....⁹²

There is no doubt that Saint Augustine believed in the necessity of visible Church membership for salvation, regardless of how imprecisely or inconsistently he may have at times reasoned concerning ecclesiology.

The “sheep without” remark was thus employed inexpediently. His Grace’s statements can be too easily misread in support of the un-Orthodox notion of an “invisible true Church,” especially in the light of his later claim that “we know where the Church is but we cannot be sure where it is not.” This line of thinking—especially when conjoined with an illicit recognition of heterodox sacraments—is not far removed, if at all, from the Branch Theory. We are not suggesting, however, that His Grace would sanction such a corollary.

Khomiakov’s “Invisible Ties”

His Grace places in the ranks of the so-called “moderates” the views of the famous Russian lay-theologian and dialectician Alexei Khomiakov:

The Spirit of God blows where it chooses and, as Irenaeus said, where the Spirit is, there is the Church. We know where the Church is but we cannot be sure where it is not. This means, as Khomiakov insists, that we must refrain from passing judgment on non-Orthodox Christians:

Inasmuch as the earthly and visible [Orthodox] Church is not the fullness and completeness of the whole Church which the Lord appointed to appear at the final judgement of all creation, she acts and knows only within her own limits. . . . She does not judge the rest of humankind, and only looks upon those as excluded, that is to say, not belonging to her, who exclude themselves. The rest of humankind, whether alien

⁹² Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, Vol. I, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1974) pp. 302-303, 306.

from the Church, *or united to her by ties which God has not willed to reveal to her*, she leaves to the judgement of the great day.⁹³

This passage often comes out in a discussion of heterodox status. At the outset we posit that the entire discussion of this matter might arguably end with this observation:

In response to this [“invisible tie”] line of thought, let us point out that since the Church on earth is a visible organism through which Her members are united with God and with each other by their participation in the Holy Mysteries, being “invisibly” linked to Her without the benefit of the Mysteries *is of no avail whatsoever*. So what point have we made, if we accept this kind of non-Patristic speculation?⁹⁴

However, it is still worth proceeding with some amplifying remarks.

First, the following astute points made by Orthodox layman Justin Zamora during his correspondence with a Protestant inquirer put Khomiakov’s statements in the proper light:

Khomiakov’s point is to assert that God is not bound by the visible limits of the Church, not to assert that those visibly outside the Orthodox Church are in fact members of the Church. After all, Khomiakov asserts that the ties, if they exist at all (note that Khomiakov does not say that they exist with certainty), have not been revealed to the Church. Thus, Khomiakov is arguing that while God is not bound by such visible ties, *we are*, because “God has not willed to reveal to [us]” any way of being united to the Church other than visibly. To assert that those visibly outside the Orthodox Church are part of the Church is to assert that God has revealed other ties by which mankind can be united to her, an assertion that Khomiakov explicitly denies. Khomiakov’s point is simply to say that God is not bound by the limits he has placed on us, and that accordingly we must not judge God’s actions. Thus, this is more a statement about God and the Church’s proper response to his actions than about the limits of the Church *per se*.

Second, the reader should know that Khomiakov’s essay was also entitled “Experiment in a Catechetical Exposition of the Teaching on the Church.” As Father Florovksy notes:

The “literary type” to which this catechetical “experiment” related must immediately be specified. In Khomiakov one seeks in vain for definitions and proofs. He poses and solves another problem. Actually, from the outset he excludes the possibility of defining or proving anything by formal argumentation, which might also tie and bind the unbeliever. Khomiakov denies the very possibility or hope of “demonstrating the truth

⁹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 308, emphasis his. The full text of Khomiakov’s famous essay “The Church Is One” can be found on the Internet at <http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets>.

⁹⁴ “A Traditionalist Critique of *The Orthodox Church*,” p. 66, emphasis ours.

and reaching it by the power of one's reason." He is speaking here about the knowledge of Christian truth. "But the powers of reason do not reach the truth of God, and human weakness is made manifest in the weakness of proofs." He consciously refrains from giving proofs or definitions—he testifies and describes.⁹⁵

In short, Khomiakov's essay was largely a heuristic exercise in keeping with the apophatic tradition of the Church. His point was that one should not pass judgment on those outside of the Church, but simply leave them to the mercy of God. Khomiakov was not always trying to making precise theological statements but rather theorizing or describing potential solutions to various enigmas. One must be careful not to read too much into his famous lines. Certainly, he is widely honored as a great nineteenth-century articulator of the Faith; but this respect "is based not on his strict adherence to Patristic theology, but rather on the fact that he paved the way for a return to the Fathers of the Church."⁹⁶ Moreover, his theology is not without its ecclesiological limitations, as the eminent scholar Father John Romanides points out:

In contradiction to the doctrine of creation, which he accepts, Khomiakov opposes the spiritual and material. It is exactly here that he differs from Orthodox patristic and Biblical tradition, and it is because of this spiritualism that his ecclesiology is disconnected from Orthodox soteriology.⁹⁷

The ecclesiology of the Fathers is inseparable from soteriology and Christology. The pivotal point of all their thinking is the necessity of liberation from the powers of death and the devil through communion with the Source of Life in the human nature of Christ. . . .⁹⁸

This flesh of Christ is itself the foundation of dogma. . . . For this reason [the ecclesiology of the Slavophile movement—of which Khomiakov was a founder and leading thinker] overlooked the patristic dogma of the Church as a real union with each other in the flesh of Christ for the double purpose of communicating with divine life for immortality and of destroying the powers of the devil.⁹⁹

Indeed, contrary to Bishop Kallistos, Father Romanides ultimately concludes that Khomiakov "fails to propose any explanation of how conversion is possible for one outside the Orthodox tradition."¹⁰⁰ Of course, this does not imply that either

⁹⁵ *Ways of Russian Theology, Part Two*, p. 43.

⁹⁶ Father John Romanides, "Orthodox Ecclesiology According to A. Khomiakov" *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. II, No. 1 (1956), p. 73.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67, fn. 47.

Khomiakov or Father John believes that one could *not* be saved who was not in visible communion with the one true Church of God.

In light of what has been said thus far—buttressed by the clear impression one gets from Khomiakov's other traditionally-minded writings about the Western confessions¹⁰¹—it is difficult not to conclude that Bishop Kallistos has done a disservice to his thought, ultimately misplacing him in the camp of the “moderates.” It is doubtful whether Khomiakov would have agreed with their ecclesiological waffling; and he most certainly would have objected to the use of his speculative views for ecumenist ends.

“We Know Where the Church Is But . . .”

The Spirit of God blows where it chooses [Saint John 3:8] and, as Irenaeus said, where the Spirit is, there is the Church. We know where the Church is but we cannot be sure where it is not.

This last sentence is quite possibly one of the most famous ecclesiological apothegms of the twentieth century. In our experience it is almost never absent from a discussion of heterodox status. Does the orthodoxy of this statement measure up to its popularity? Unfortunately we must answer in the negative. By now the reasons should be obvious.

First, His Grace illegitimately uses two senses of the term “Church.” In the light of his other remarks we read this apothegm as follows: “We know where the [visible, historical, and one true] Church is, but we cannot be sure where it [the Church in an indefinable or mysterious sense known only to God and containing people who are united by ‘invisible ties’] is not.” This is simply another form of the “invisible Church membership” concept that has already been addressed.

Second, Bishop Kallistos improperly makes use of another Patristic quote, this time from Saint Irenaeus of Lyons: “Where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace.” Protestants often take this out of context in order to support their vague notion of the true Church as “invisible” and “known only to God.” However, when read in context, this Holy Martyr's statement does not support such an idea. In fact, Saint Irenaeus was arguing for a refutation of Gnostic heresies based on the uniform teaching of a visible and historic Church and the necessity of being united to Her!

For this gift of God has been entrusted to the Church, as breath was to the first created man, for this purpose, that all the members receiving it may be vivified; and the [means of] communion with Christ has been distributed throughout it, that is, the Holy Spirit, the earnest of incorruption, the means of confirming our faith, and the ladder of ascent

¹⁰¹ Most notably, “On the Western Confessions of Faith” in *Ultimate Questions* and his correspondence with the Anglican deacon William Palmer in *Russia and the English Church*.

to God. "For in the Church," it is said, "God hath set apostles, prophets, teachers," and all the other means through which the Spirit works; of which all those are not partakers who do not join themselves to the Church, but defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behaviour. For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth. Those, therefore, who do not partake of Him, are neither nourished into life from the mother's breasts, nor do they enjoy that most limpid fountain which issues from the body of Christ; but they dig for themselves broken cisterns out of earthly trenches, and drink putrid water out of the mire, fleeing from the faith of the Church lest they be convicted; and rejecting the Spirit, that they may not be instructed.¹⁰²

We see from this that Saint Irenaeus' statement should not be used to support a "moderate" position. First, it begs the question of which extension of Grace in the ministry of the Holy Spirit—general or ecclesial—the Saint had in mind. In context, "Where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church" can only be a reference to the special ministry of the Spirit within the Church. Were it a reference to the general activity of the Holy Spirit, it would support a Protestant idea of an "invisible Church"—an idea foreign to the *phronema ton Pateron*.¹⁰³ Second, to imply that Saint Irenaeus' words lead to such forthright declarations as ". . .there are many different ways of being related to this one Church" is most unwise. Clearly, the venerable Bishop of Lyons did not hold to such a view.

Conclusion

The "moderate" view—which, revealingly enough, appears to be the bad fruit of frequent contact with the heterodox¹⁰⁴—does not stand up to close scrutiny. It is ambiguous, overly speculative, and fails to reflect accurately the true nature of the Church and the Mystery of Salvation found within Her. Lacking conclusive Patristic justification it should be rejected.

What is needed in these times is a reaffirmation of the so-called "rigorist" view. Orthodox should have no reservations about unequivocally stating that "all non-Orthodox are outside the Church." In so doing we are not inconsistent to affirm that heterodox believers have a deep and genuine faith in Christ and that God will have

¹⁰² *Against the Heresies*, III, 24, 1, emphases ours.

¹⁰³ *The Unity of the Church and the World Conference of Christian Communities*, pp. 18, 28-32. This is probably the best short treatise that one could read in order to complement the ideas in this book.

¹⁰⁴ Recall Bishop Kallistos' remark that the "moderate" view is typically found among "those Orthodox who have had close personal contact with other Christians" (p. 308). Cf. the comments by Dr. Cavarnos in Chapter One.

mercy upon them. To that end we humbly submit a new apothegm: "We know who is in the Church but we cannot be sure who will not be."