

Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies

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**“The Old Calendar movement is neither a heresy nor a schism,
and those who follow it are neither heretics nor schismatics, but
are Orthodox Christians.”**

*Archbishop Dorotheos of Athens (1956-57)
State (New Calendar) Church of Greece*

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PASCHAL ENCYCLICAL

From the Tomb the Great Sun Has Shone Forth

“Let us not sleep, but let us watch and be sober.”¹

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ
and Children in the Risen Lord:*

“Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!”²

Let us thank and glorify the heavenly Father, Who, through His immeasurable compassion, has given us new birth into the new life of Grace, through the Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, and Who has granted us the vivid hope that we, too, being united with Him, shall be resurrected.

Today, with the Resurrection of our Lord, our holy Church, the New Jerusalem, is illuminated and made radiant by the uncreated rays of Divine Light: “Shine, shine, O New Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord hath risen upon Thee.”³

From the life-containing Tomb, the “Timeless Light in body,”⁴ the most radiant “Sun of Righteousness,”⁵ that is, the Only-Begotten Son of God Himself, the eternal and true Light, without beginning, “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”⁶

And the Dawning of the Sun—Christ—has dispelled the night of ignorance and the realm of darkness. The Resurrection of the Lord has marked the beginning of a new spiritual Day, of that mystical Day⁷ which shall be without end. This God-Man is the Great Sun⁸ which was brought into the world by the never-setting Star,⁸ the *Theotokos*, never to set again.

Beloved Children in the Lord:

The Church of Christ lives in the midst of this never-ending mystical Day⁷ and is illuminated by the Paschal Sun. Her light-bearing children “walk honestly, as in the day,” clothed “in the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹ The holy Apostle Paul reminds us of this saving truth with particular emphasis: “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness,” “ye are all the children of light, and children of the day; we are not of the night nor of the darkness.”¹⁰

From the Tomb there arose True Life and the Never-Ending Day of Grace. And henceforth, the Faithful have continually taken refuge, through the Church and within the realm of Her Mysteries, in the rays of the True Light, which purifies, enlightens, and sanctifies them. The “light-bearing day of the Resurrection”⁴ extends on, thereby holding us in a continual state of vigilance and watchfulness and preparedness, that we might go forth on the path of salvation and labor by the Light, and in the Light, of the Resurrection of Christ, for the glory of God.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Resurrection of Christ gives us a powerful impetus for spiritual awakening and watchfulness. The voice of the Lord continually urges us: “Awake” and “Be watchful.” Moral sloth, heedlessness, and hedonistic idleness deviously plunge a soul into spiritual drowsiness and the passionate sleep of sin, such that our hearts are darkened and become enslaved by the gloomy spirits of wickedness, “slumbering” and performing “the works of darkness.”¹¹

The *Kontakion* of the Great Canon, which we chanted three weeks ago, expresses with particular compunction this exhortation to our resurrection and to watchfulness: “My soul, my soul, rise up! Why dost thou slumber? The end draweth nigh and thou shalt be troubled. Be watchful then, so that Christ God take pity on thee, He that is everywhere present and filleth all.”¹²

The memory of death and of the fearsome Judgment protects the soul and inspires Divine fear and sincere repentance. “Remember thine end,” says the Wisdom of God, “and thou shalt not sin forever.”¹³ The Lord also taught us vigilance and the work of watchfulness, in order to keep us from temptations: “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”¹⁴

If we continually force ourselves in the task of repentance; if we continually awaken our indolent hearts; if we pray without ceasing and partake always of the most pure Mysteries; if we take refuge persistently in the intercessions of the Most Blessed *Theotokos*, who is the “Dawn of the Mystical Day,”⁷ then we shall be found in the Light of the Divine Resurrection; then, we shall live in the Day of Grace, which has no end; then, the Great Sun⁸ will shine upon us with His uncreated rays, and we shall assuredly be “sons of the Light and sons of the Day,”¹⁵ ever vigilant and prepared to receive the Bridegroom Christ, to Whom be all glory, honor, and thanksgiving, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, unto the ages. Amen.

Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

Your Intercessor Before the Risen Lord,
 † *Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*,
 President of the Holy Synod in Resistance

Notes

1. I Thessalonians 5:6.
2. I St. Peter 1:3.
3. Canon of Pascha, Ode 9, *Heirmos*.
4. Canon of Pascha, Ode 7, *Troparion* 3.
5. Malachi 4:2.
6. St. John 1:9.
7. Akathist to the *Theotokos*, Oikos, I, 1: “Rejoice, Dawn of the Mystical Day.”
8. Canon of the Akathist to the *Theotokos*, Ode 9, *Troparion* 2: “Rejoice, never-setting Star that bringeth into the world the Great Sun.”
9. See Romans 13:13-14.
10. I Thessalonians 5:4-5.
11. See I Thessalonians 5:6-7; Romans 13:12.
12. Great Canon, *Kontakion*.
13. Wisdom of Sirach 7:36.
14. St. Matthew 26:41.
15. I Thessalonians 5:5.

The Square and Circle in Orthodox Ecclesiastical Architecture

by Ana Botez

IT IS SOMETIMES SAID, and not wholly without justification, that attempts at identifying symbols in Church art and architecture often fail because scholars try to find hidden meaning in what are, in fact, only matters of function or structure. Certain elements in Church architecture did, in fact, initially appear for these reasons, and only gradually did they assume symbolic significance. Certain shapes, thought to be well-suited to Church architecture functionally or structurally, have—by way of extensive development—come to be associated with a constellation of meanings, even if, before their appearance, no one noted their absence. The most obvious example of this is the dome, a typical element in the vault over the *naos* of Eastern Churches, which appeared only after the first few centuries of Christianity and then later became a virtually indispensable part of Orthodox ecclesiastical architecture. It is my view, again, that in such developmental processes one cannot simply look at the symbolism attached to some element of Church art and architecture as distinct from its practical function, or assume that symbolism and function are necessarily mutually exclusive, thus obscuring a certain commonality. Rather, I would argue that the consistent choice of certain shapes over others, despite their equal value in the functional or structural sense, derives essentially from the *inner symbolic value* of these shapes, which prove themselves over time to be more suitable to the purpose (in a broad and encompassing sense) which they serve.

A Brief Historical Overview. It seems that for the first Christians, the space where they met was not of great importance; usually, this was a room in a private residence, without any specific architectural alterations. Symbolic representations, such as fish, bread and wine, or

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the Good Shepherd, individualized the space without transforming its structure. Only when Christianity developed and communities became larger and more numerous did believers start to meet for the Liturgy in public spaces of basilican type, following the example of Jewish synagogues.

The fact that the first Christian Churches had a basilican form has often given rise to speculation that this happened because the Church had submitted to imperial authority, making it logical that the place of worship should imitate the architecture of imperial buildings. It has, however, been demonstrated that the apparently surprising choice which Christians made—that of using the basilica instead of other spatial configurations—, far from being an act of acquiescence to imperial power, was actually simply their recognition of the fact that a basilica was a common and typical building. Basilicas had always been an appropriate space for gathering large groups of people. A basilica is typically divided by columns into three components, called naves, the main nave being higher than the collaterals, in order to provide place for large clerestory windows over the roof, with an apse on the short side (or sometimes, in imperial edifices, two apses on each short side). Nothing here is adventitious: the division of the basilica into three naves stems from the impossibility, at that time, of covering a space of such width without intermediate supports. This form of construction also ingeniously brings light into the core of the building. The apses, at the same time, have a raised floor, which allows for better visibility, and their curved shape, aside from its symbolic meaning, offers important acoustic qualities.

The choice made by Christian architects should not, therefore, be surprising, considering the fact that they were following the example of synagogue architects, who were the first to adjust the basilica to the renovations cited by Bruno Zevi: eliminating one of the apses and moving access to the short side, as well as very sensibly reducing the structure's dimensions—from “imperial” scale to human scale. This apparently insignificant gesture transformed the static sense of Roman space, inertly turned into itself on a central point determined by two axes of symmetry, into a dynamic space, decidedly oriented along the axis uniting the entrance and the apse, which became the favored direction of motion. This axial route became the symbol of advancement from the secular to the sacred, always accompanied by the light coming from above, which more than likely was also understood in a symbolic sense.

The next step in establishing the symbolic structure of Churches was that of erecting a dome over the basilica, an architectural element associated with the firmament and, therefore, with the Transcendent. There had been domes on basilica structures previously, but they undoubtedly never floated so ethereally over earthly space, as in Christ-

ian architecture, where they form a space filled with the presence of humans. The dome of the Pantheon, with all of its gigantic weight, rested on the circular contour of the edifice, defining an almost spherical space, fully turned on its center. Neither the *oculus* at the top of the dome nor the recesses in the wall—once reserved for sculptured idols—succeeds in penetrating the space in general or its sterile sense of self-sufficiency. By contrast, the domes in Christian Churches rise above the space of the basilica, which was heretofore uniformly determined by the longitudinal axis, bringing into focus a second point of visual interest, beyond the apse.

In the Christian basilica, the path of the believers to the Altar, a material image of their passage through life towards the Heavenly Kingdom, is covered by the heavenly symbol of the dome. The bearing points that support it, usually four columns (and, at times, more), are placed at the corners (and, when necessary, also on the sides) of a square. It was not until spherical pendentives were discovered that the transition from this square plan to circular vaulting was made, and intervening developments were not without their awkward effects. Here, *in nuce*, is the source of the notion of the Church as a symbol of the cosmos, divided (but not separated) between Heaven and Earth, where Heaven, although untouchable from a physical point of view, is firmly attached to the Earth that it envelopes and protects.

The initial emergence of the dome in Christian Church architecture exerted such an influence over the conception of the place of worship, that a time of bold experimentation followed, abandoning the idea of axiality and favoring that of centrality, as one can see at San Vitale in Ravenna or at Sts. Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople. And this was no longer a centrality closed in on itself, as in the Pantheon, but an expansive centrality, cast outward in concave shapes that tenderly embrace the assembly of believers, in the same manner that God, in His great love for the community of believers (and also for His entire Creation), bends downward, bringing all to Himself. However, even in this transformation, there is a favored direction: towards the apse, which is oriented to the East, in contrast to the Pantheon, where there is an equality of direction. The most important symbol of this period of experimentation is the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia (St. Sophia), in Constantinople, where the pronounced centrality created by its grand dome (over thirty meters in diameter) is softened by a corresponding sensation of space, mainly along the West-East direction. We find, here, that balance between the vertical axis, defined by the dome, and the main horizontal axis which is so typical of Orthodox Churches.

After this period of experimentation, abrupt changes seem to have come to an end. Churches with an inscribed Greek Cross appeared, representing a synthesis of all of the principles drawn from extensive

experience in building domed basilicas and buildings with a central focus. It is impossible to say whether Churches with an inscribed Greek Cross simply developed from a domed basilica that was shortened until it became square, or from a building with a central focus which limited its loving embrace to four directions; whatever the case, Churches with an inscribed Greek Cross unite the clarity and simplicity of the former with the spatial and symbolic richness of the latter. The dome reposes on four arches, corresponding to the four parts of the Earth, which in turn define a square. The transition from the heavenly dome to the earthly square is made by four pendentives, which are themselves spherical surfaces. It is, thus, not by accident that there are painted on these either Angels or the four Evangelists. The four arches expand to the four cardinal directions, under the form of four vaults that define a Greek Cross (with equal arms). The spaces between the arms of the Cross, covered with smaller vaults, become the corners of a great square space in which the Cross is inscribed.

In the *Katholika* of Mount Athos, the Northern and Southern arms of the Cross were later furnished with semicircular apses, in order to accommodate the two choirs for the antiphonal chanting of the monks. There was also, perhaps, a symbolic complement to this acoustic innovation, since monastics represent the “Angelic orders.” At any rate, after the proliferation of this innovation in monasteries, it appeared in non-monastic Churches, as well, and especially under a form in which the Greek Cross is reduced, on the North-South direction, to the two arches and the two apses that are joined to them. The symbol of the Cross is, of course, still present and is also visible from the outside, and especially if the Church is viewed from above.

Theological Considerations. In his *Mystagogia*, St. Maximos the Confessor shed light on the mystical significance of the Church and of the Liturgy celebrated therein. The architecture of the place of worship is one of the many arts that contribute to the celebration of the Holy Liturgy, together with music and poetry, painting (and mosaics), woodcarving and metalwork, and the embroidery and weaving of precious fabrics. St. Maximos does not refer, in his treatise, to the meaning of the geometric elements of Church architecture, but solely to the symbolic meaning of the Church itself and the spaces that compose it. Nonetheless, his comments are of interest. And while they apply specifically to the Byzantine (or post-Byzantine) Churches, which inspired them, they more generally apply to any Orthodox Church, as well.

First of all, the Church is “the icon and image of God” (“icoana și chipul lui Dumnezeu”), because, as does God, it effects a unity among the Faithful which overcomes the differences between them (an observation which I made above, with regard to the embracing nature of Byzantine space). Second, it is an “icon of the cosmos, composed of

beings seen and unseen” (“icoană a cosmosului, alcătuit din ființe văzute și nevăzute”), which is, on the one hand unitary and, on the other hand, divided into these two parts, which are distinct and, at the same time, in close communion, like the *naos* and the sanctuary of the Church. The place of worship is both an “icon of the merely sensible world” (“icoană și numai a lumii sensibile”)—its heavens the sanctuary, its Earth the *naos*—, and it “symbolically portrays man” (“închi-puiește simbolic pe om”). The sanctuary corresponds to the soul and the *naos* to the human body, thereby rendering man, in turn, a “mystical Church” (“biserică tainică”). The Church is also an “icon of the soul itself” (“icoană a sufletului luat în sine”), in which the sanctuary symbolizes “the contemplative part” (“partea contemplativă”) and the *naos* “the practical part” (“partea practică”) of the soul.

In drawing an analogy between the Church and the cosmos, comprised of the sensible and the noetic, and the Church and man, who is composed of body and soul, St. Maximos emphasizes, once more, that both the world and man are mystical Churches of God, made up of a symbolic *naos* and sanctuary. We see, here, the expression of an ancient belief, that man is a microcosm and that the world is a “macro-anthropos.” I would simply add that it is natural for God, Who “does not dwell in temples made by hands,” to take as His “house” an edifice that captures in a limited way the cosmic model of the “Church,” composed as it is of the seen and the unseen, or of Heavens and the Earth.

What St. Maximos sets forth in his *Mystagogia* is expressed in the symbolism of Church architecture as follows: the sanctuary, in most instances, is defined by its semicircular shape, covered by a semi-dome—which is a symbol of Heaven (seen or unseen) and of the soul (or of its contemplative faculty)—, while the *naos* normally has an orthogonal structure (the three naves separated by columns), on one axis or two, where these elements define a cross of cardinal points, the symbol of the ordinary space of the Earth. The dome over the *naos*, then, represents the cosmos—the Earth covered and protected by the sky. In this vein, Paul Evdokimov quotes a passage from St. Maximos: “It is a wonderful thing that, in its smallness, the temple resembles a great universe.... Its dome is like the Heaven of Heavens.... It is built firmly on the lower part. Its arches represent the four parts of the world” (“De mirare lucru este că, în micimea lui, templul este asemănător marelui univers.... Cupola sa este asemeni cerului cerurilor.... E zidită cu temeinicie pe partea sa de jos. Arcele sale reprezintă cele patru părți ale lumii”).

The Symbolic Meaning of the Church's Geometric Forms. The circle, the trace of the dome in the horizontal plan, is also a symbol of Heaven. The motion of heavenly bodies in the firmament is circular, and those bodies themselves are also circular (or spherical): the sun,

the moon, the planets, etc. The circle is associated with perfection, not only because everything that has to do with Heaven is circular, but also because a circle is perfectly symmetrical; any straight line that passes through its center divides it into two perfectly equal halves. Moreover, it is the one figure in plane geometry wholly confined to itself, having the highest ratio between its surface and its perimeter. If we look at it, by *reductio ad absurdum*, as a polygon, it can be either a polygon with a single continuous side—uninterrupted by any vertex—or a polygon marked by an infinity of infinitesimal sides. And unity and infinity are considered Divine attributes.

As I said above, the dome is clearly a symbol of Heaven, whether sensible or noetic; geometrically, it is half a sphere, which corresponds to the circle in three-dimensional space. Perhaps this is why the dome is less than a circle turned in to itself and more one that covers, protects, and even embraces the space below it. The dome is also an image of the skull. Rotated in the horizontal plane (with some adaptation), it becomes the Altar apse, conveying the same qualities and symbolic meaning. I made note of this fact in my foregoing comments on St. Maximos the Confessor and his *Mystagogia*.

The square, which I have already described as a symbol of the Earth, is dominated by the number four. This number corresponds to the four parts of the Earth, the four cardinal points, the four arms of the Cross, and so on. Moreover, the stability of the square ties it to the seeming stillness of the Earth, in contrast to the circle, which reflects the continuous motion of the sky. Like its three-dimensional form, the cube, the two-dimensional square is also an image of firmness and immobility. The Heavenly Jerusalem, belonging to a timeless or post-temporal “age,” and therefore beyond the transformations inherent to time, is an enormous cube—extremely large, though in a way beyond our common understanding of physical quantities.

The Cross is, from a geometric point of view, the element that unites the circle and the square. Its arms, coinciding with the diameter of the circle, are perpendicular to the sides of the square, corresponding to the four cardinal points. Their intersection defines the center of the circle, as well as that of the square: *a universal Center*. Raised to the vertical, the Cross becomes a symbol of the intersection between the axis of the Earth and the horizontal plane of earthly existence. The intersection of two Crosses produces a three-dimensional Cross with six arms, corresponding to the cardinal points (East, West, North, South, Zenith, Nadir) that “generate” space. This is also known in its profane form as the Cartesian coordinate system, consisting of three perpendicular axes. However, let us not forget that the latter has no center, but an origin arbitrarily and subjectively designated by the observer, as is also the case with regard to the the direction of the axes. As an axis of the world, the Cross is an abstraction of the sym-

bol of the Cosmic Tree, which contains between its roots and branches all three levels of the world: Hell, Earth, and the Heavenly. There is here a congruence with Calvary, carved from the wood of the Tree of Knowledge.

There are so many other things, indeed, that can be said regarding the theological meaning of the Cross. But these cannot be captured in a few lines, and certainly in their subtle complexity they go beyond my competence to describe them in detail. However, in keeping with what I have already said, I *can* observe that the Cross is an image of the world which Christ “embraced” in order to redeem it. Golgotha, the place where this event occurred, thus becomes the universal Center of the world. Moreover, the Cross is “the sign of the Son of Man,” which will appear in the Heavens, at His Second Coming, as a sign of His definitive victory. The Cross is spatialized in Church architecture, as we saw above, in the scheme of the inscribed Greek Cross (*e.g.*, St. Nicolae Domnesc in Curtea de Argeş) and in the post-Byzantine triconch scheme (*e.g.*, Cozia, Curtea Veche, or the beautiful Stavropoleos Church in Bucharest), as well as in the transept basilicas which are widespread in the Occident. The structure of these buildings generates space which is delineated by the horizontal and vertical bars of the Cross, symbolizing the entirety of the universe, made up of Heaven and Earth, the latter, again, having four parts, corresponding to the four cardinal points.

Finally, let me refer, just incidentally, to another geometrical shape, the octagon, which is occasionally present in Christian architecture—*e.g.*, at San Vitale in Ravenna—has eschatological significance. Its eight sides remind us of that which passes beyond the week: the eighth day, or the Sunday of Resurrection, which replaces the seventh day, the Hebrew Sabbath. If the number seven represents the continuous cycle of time, of weeks that follow one upon another (though not this alone, since the number seven has many symbolic applications in the Church), the number eight is the mark of that event which breaks this cycle, the Resurrection, the end-point of which will be the abolition of time as we know it. It is, then, with the Second Coming of Christ, that all of the continuous movements and transformations found in created existence will come to an end. If we look at the creation week and its seventh day, on which God rested, as representations of earthly existence up to the time of the Resurrection, the eighth day of the week heralds a new creation, which begins with the Resurrection and is fully actualized in the *Parousia*.

The number eight and the octagon are symbols of the equilibrium and perfection that are to be attained at that time. This quality is reflected in the calm appearance of the octagon, which unites in itself—and it is for this reason that I have made incidental reference to it, here—the roundness of the circle and the stability of the square, pro-

ducing a circle which can no longer roll. This makes the octagon, geometrically speaking, an excellent mediator between the earthly square of the *naos* and the Heavenly dome above it.

Concluding Remarks. The impoverishment of Church architecture, a phenomenon that manifests itself in the Occident in the use of excessively simple or grossly extravagant shapes—both devoid of authentic spiritual value—and in Romania by concentration on a sterile, graceless, unintelligent, and insipid imitation of shapes wrongly taken to be traditional, is a reality that cannot be ignored. To do so will have serious consequences. It is imperative that we rediscover the authentic traditions of Orthodox ecclesiastical architecture, not simply by copying what is old (since, in such a case, we can no longer speak of tradition, but of mere pastiche), but by actualizing these genuine traditions in contemporary architectural expression, as far as possible. Such a rediscovery will be successful only to the extent that we understand that a return to tradition implies the assertion of certain universal “archaisms,” belonging to past ages, in contemporary architectural language. In order to protect contemporary ecclesiastical architecture against extreme proclivities—whether towards absolute innovation or absolute historicism—and against an arbitrary or subjective interpretation of what tradition actually means, there is need for us to conduct studies and to detect, in traditional Church buildings, the theories of symbol that define them and the geometric elements that reify these theories. We must, at the same time, identify those merely structural elements which have taken on symbolic significance of less importance and which are more essentially the products of structural concerns, separating them from the larger issues. In this way—if, to be sure, only after a long quest—, we may achieve an architectural expression that belongs to our time but which is, simultaneously, faithful to the symbolic traditions that ideally bring Orthodox Church architecture into a oneness—reconciling the square of time and the circle of eternity in the very image of the Cross.

Christian Gratitude

A Fundamental Hallmark of of Orthodox Spirituality

by Archimandrite Cyprian

The text of this article, translated from the Greek, is taken from an address by Father Cyprian, a brother of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Fili, Greece, and Secretary of the Holy Synod in Resistance. It was delivered on October 4, 1999 (Old Style), at the convocation held annually at the Novotel Convention Center, in downtown Athens, to honor the Name Day of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili.

Our Much-Revered Metropolitan and Spiritual Father, Beloved of Christ:

My heart is inundated with sincere joy at this moment, because, by the Grace of Christ our Savior, I am fulfilling an obedience which, although very difficult, is at the same time very gratifying. The great difficulty in question concerns my many inadequacies, of which you have assuredly always been well aware; and I ask your forgiveness for these. However, the great delight involved derives from the fact that this evening, at our annual “Εὐχαριστήρια” [“Thanksgiving”],¹ we are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of your Episcopacy.

This anniversary is very important for our monastic Brotherhood, for your wider flock, and for our Church; it is an anniversary which prompts us to undertake an historical retrospective of two decades filled with accomplishments for the glory of God. Such an anniversary is, naturally, a source of special joy and gladness for your spiritual children.

Now, every happy anniversary is directly bound up with gratitude; that is, it reminds us of, and underscores, our debt of gratitude and thanksgiving both to our Lord and to the people whom His philanthropic right hand has used as instruments for His glory, for our sanctification, and, in general, for the progress of His salvific work.

I hope, therefore, our Most Reverend Metropolitan, that you will allow me, rather than mentioning those historic stages in your twenty

years as a Hierarchy that portray your contribution to the Church, to focus my attention, instead, on the topic of gratitude.

Let me take this opportunity to proclaim “with a loud voice,” from this podium, that we are most deeply grateful to you, since, among many other things, you have taught us, and continue to teach us, in word and deed, that very gratitude which is the predominant component of your personality. Hence, let my address this evening, which centers on gratitude, be viewed as a spiritual repayment to Your Eminence for your untiring toils, during twenty continuous years, for our edification and consolation. I invoke the protection and strengthening of our Lady *Theotokos* and our Holy Patrons, Saints Cyprian and Justina, that, by your prayers, I might expound on this subject.

I shall, at the onset of my address, pose a crucial question: Is gratitude really a matter of concern in our crisis-ridden era? Unfortunately, this question is raised not only by worldly people, but also by pious Christians, who not only do not practice gratitude in their lives, but who neither reflect on it nor perceive its absence as a serious deficit. This constitutes, in the fullest sense of the term, a very grave *sin*. How, indeed, is it possible for Christians, who are deemed worthy of the greatest gift—that is, of being members of the Body of Christ—to be unaware that gratitude is the fundamental hallmark of Orthodox spirituality and an indispensable element of our Christian identity?

We observe with profound distress that this ignorance concerning gratitude constitutes yet another proof of the corruption which the Orthodox ecclesiastical ethos has undergone, owing to the influence of a worldly mentality. Such a mentality leads man, a rational creature fashioned according to the image of God, into behavior that is more irrational than that of irrational animals. Is this characterization perhaps exaggerated? I shall let a Patristic text provide us with the answer. This text relates a very charming, moving, and instructive event, which speaks for itself and introduces us to the important issue of gratitude.

A hyena, having a blind whelp, took it in her mouth and delivered it to St. Makarios of Alexandria. She pushed open the hatch of his dwelling with her head, went inside, and threw her whelp at his feet. St. Makarios picked it up and ascertained that it was blind. He spat on its eyes and prayed; the whelp then immediately opened its eyes. After suckling it, its mother took it and departed.

On the following day, the hyena brought St. Makarios the hide of a large sheep. The Saint looked at it and said to her: ‘Where did you find this? You must have eaten a sheep. And so, since it is the result of an injustice, I will not accept it from you.’ The hyena then bowed her head, knelt, and left the hide at the Saint’s feet.

The Saint said to her: ‘I tell you, I will not accept it, unless you swear to me that you will never again cause distress to poor folk by eating their sheep.’ At this, she nodded her head, as if to agree with St.

Makarios. The Saint then accepted the hide which the hyena had [in gratitude—*Trans.*] brought him.²

Let us now attempt to approach, as succinctly as possible, the theological foundations of gratitude as an indispensable hallmark of human nature. Orthodox Tradition teaches us that man is a “eucharistic being,” that is, a rational creature who exists in an unceasing communion of love (ἀγάπη) with his Creator and is oriented towards Him with an insatiable disposition of gratitude, thanksgiving, and doxology. Man has this innate capacity for love and thanksgiving because he is fashioned “according to the image and likeness” of God;³ it is precisely for this reason that he bears the seal of gratitude indelibly within himself. God freely created man out of His exceeding goodness, in order that man might participate in Divine Goodness; and the Lord created *beneficently* so that His creatures, the recipients of this beneficence, might *gratefully* commune with Him, offer thanksgiving and glory to Him, and thus become partakers of Divine glory. “The desire to glorify God,” says St. Basil the Great, “is by nature implanted in all rational creatures.”⁴ St. John of Damascus, in a summary of Patristic teaching on this subject, makes these telling remarks:

Since, therefore, God, Who is good, and preëminently good, was not satisfied with contemplation of Himself, but in His exceeding goodness willed that certain things should come into existence which would enjoy His benefits and participate in His goodness, He brought all things, both invisible and visible, out of non-being into being and created them—including man, who is a compound of the visible and the invisible.⁵

In connection with this, it should be firmly emphasized that we become fully aware of this loving, grateful, and eucharistic nature of man in the sacred Mystery of Divine Communion. What takes place here? In this Divine Mystagogy, we have a foretaste of the eschatological glory of Deified human nature in the sanctified atmosphere of thanksgiving and doxology to God; in the Liturgy, there is revealed to us the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven—that is, the communion of God with His rational creatures in the glorified Body and Blood of the God-Man, Christ the Savior—and we experience this fulfillment in our lives.

Man’s gratitude to his Creator reaches its highest point in this supernatural Mystery, because his fallen nature receives the most sublime gift of *re-creation*, renewal, and Deification in Christ, as St. Symeon the New Theologian writes with profound lyricism:

Therefore, in partaking of Thy Flesh, I partake of Thy Nature, and I truly participate in Thine Essence, becoming a communicant and also an heir of Thy Divinity in the body, greater than the Bodiless Powers, I reckon, and I become a son of God, as Thou didst say, not to the Angels, but to us, thus calling us gods: ‘I said: Ye are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High.’⁶

Therefore, the supernatural and all-holy Mystery of Divine Communion is, in truth, the Mystery of Gratitude. “For this reason,” as St. John Chrysostomos marvelously puts it,

the dread Mysteries, full of such great salvation, which are celebrated at every Liturgy, are also called a Thanksgiving [Εὐχαριστία] because they are the remembrance of many benefits, and they signify the culmination of God’s Providence towards us, and in every way cause us to be thankful to Him.⁷

From this perspective, that is, of man’s nature as a eucharistic being, we can now understand very clearly the persistence of the Holy Fathers in exhorting us to be unceasing practitioners of gratitude. “This is the will of God,” St. John Chrysostomos pithily assures us, “that we always give thanks; this is the mark of a virtuous soul.”⁸ And to the question of why “this is the will of God,” the same Saint responds simply and precisely: “God accepts nothing so much as a grateful and thankful soul.”⁹ In another place, he reiterates: “Nothing so gladdens God as when one is thankful.”¹⁰

However, it would be very useful for us to mention also the immediate practical results of blessed gratitude, in order to dispel—apart from anything else—the mistaken idea of some, that gratitude pertains only to the contemplative life and eschatological recompense. In the first place, we should not forget the following important truth: in order to preserve a benefaction in the best way possible, we should always remember it and constantly thank God for it. “For the best preservative of any benefaction,” say the Saints, “is the remembrance of that benefaction, and a continual thanksgiving.”¹¹

Next, the immediate result of continual thanksgiving is the following: when our Lord ascertains that we respond with gratitude to His gifts, He gives us richer gifts and never ceases from doing good to us: “For such is our Master,” affirm the Saints, “that, whenever He sees that we are grateful for what has already come our way, He bestows lavish gifts on us and never desists from doing good to us, rewarding the gratitude of those who show obedience.”¹² In emphasizing this idea, Abba Isaac the Syrian adds that, when he who is benefitted thanks God, it is as if he provokes His Goodness to give greater gifts than the previous ones: “Gratitude on the part of one who receives provokes the Giver [God] to give greater gifts than before.”¹³

We should also keep in mind that constant remembrance of God’s gifts ultimately proves to be our best instructor in the virtuous life, since it unceasingly prompts us to strive gratefully to reciprocate God’s love: “Remembrance of benefactions [and gratitude for them] will be a suitable instructor for us in the virtuous way of life.”¹⁴

I shall conclude this section on the immediate practical benefits of Grace-filled gratitude by extolling, in particular, its value for us as an invincible weapon whereby we can repel all the devices of the de-

mons: "There is nothing so good as thanksgiving.... We have one weapon which is the best, and sufficient to repel all such devices as these: in everything to give thanks to God."¹⁵

* * *

With the hope that I am not tiring you, I would like to forestall a misunderstanding: as we proceed and delve into this astonishing principle of Orthodox spirituality, perhaps you are thinking that gratitude, on the basis of all that we have expounded hitherto, is a simple and easy matter. Let us dispel this misunderstanding. When the Saints exhort us to thank our Lord "not only in words, but also with deeds and actions,"¹⁶ they present us with a vast arena in which to practice gratitude; that is, we must give thanks unceasingly and for all things: for our illnesses, for poverty, for pleasant and unpleasant things, for visible and invisible things, "for all the things we know and do not know, for the seen and unseen benefits that come to us,"¹⁷ "giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁸

The Divine Chrysostomos asks: "What then? Are we to show gratitude for all that happens to us?" And he immediately replies:

Yes. Even if it be disease or poverty..., for seen and unseen benefits..., and for those which we receive against our will; ...but also whenever we are either in poverty, or in sicknesses, or are being insulted, then let us intensify our thanksgiving; thanksgiving, I mean, not in words, nor with the tongue, but in deeds and works, in mind and in heart; let us give thanks to Him with all our souls.¹⁹

The height of holiness to which thanksgiving exalts us, especially in unpleasant occurrences, is so great that the Saints consider those who show gratitude to be equal to the Holy Martyrs:

Have you fallen seriously ill? [asks St. John Chrysostomos]. This brings you the crown of martyrdom [through thanksgiving].²⁰ Nothing is holier than that tongue which gives thanks to God in evil circumstances; truly in no respect does it fall short of that of Martyrs; both alike are crowned, both the former and the latter.²¹

While we are on this subject, we should not forget that St. John Chrysostomos himself, whose end was truly martyric, did not cease, until his dying breath, to exclaim those famous words: "'Glory to God for all things'; I will not cease from saying this always, in all that happens to me: 'Glory to God for all things!'"²²

Now, I hasten once again to anticipate the objections of some, that these demands of gratitude are excessive and unattainable, given the realities of life today; and so, before I attempt my final ascent to the highest peaks of blessed gratitude and thanksgiving, it would be good for us to receive some encouragement and fortification. In response to these objections, therefore, I will not bring to mind things that took place in times of old, such as the astonishing gratitude shown by a lion

towards St. Gerasimos of the Jordan,²³ lest I make my speech too lengthy, but rather a very moving and instructive event from our own day and age.

The Athonite Elder Philaret, who was Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Kostamonitou and who reposed in 1963, had the particular spiritual gift (χάρισμα) of love. His love was not restricted only to human beings, but extended further, to inanimate objects, animals, and nature. We perceive this empathy for irrational nature as a typical feature of the Grace-filled lives of God's chosen servants.

One day, there was great commotion outside the Elder's cell: two swallows had started a fierce fight with each other! The Elder was troubled. He went outside and beheld a distressing spectacle: the stronger swallow was attacking the other with its beak and literally plucking out its feathers. Without wasting any time, he chased the stronger swallow away. He lovingly took the injured bird in his hands and rescued it; as a result of his nursing, it survived.

Thereafter, just as the lion of St. Gerasimos used to follow the Saint everywhere, showing its gratitude and dedication, so also did this swallow: it flew in front of the Elder, fluttered its wings, frolicked, and sang.

One day, the Elder went outside, either to marvel at God 'in His works' or to pray in silence. The swallow, his faithful friend and companion, was happily flying beside him.

The Elder sat down in the fruit-drying room a short distance from the monastery, and fell asleep without realizing it; but the swallow suddenly began to flutter rapidly above his head, chirping loudly, as if it wanted to wake him up and warn him of some danger.

And in very truth, when the Elder awoke, what did he see? A large reptile not too far away from him. His companion had in turn performed its own act of charity for the merciful Elder.²⁴

However, I must now round off the benefits of gratitude with their crowning point: love for God and love for one's neighbor. The Saints teach—and our own experience confirms it—that gratitude brings us closer to God, and thereby our love for the Lord becomes exceedingly fervent.

Let us give thanks to God continually. For, it is outrageous that when we enjoy His benefaction to us in deed every single day, we do not acknowledge the favor with so much as a word; and this, when the acknowledgment confers great benefit on us. He does not need anything of ours, but we stand in need of all things from Him.

In point of fact, thanksgiving adds nothing to Him, but it brings us closer to Him. For if, when we recall the benefactions of men, we are the more warmed by affection for them; much more, when we continually bring to mind the benefits of the Master towards us, shall we be more earnest with regard to His commandments.

For this cause Paul also said, 'Be ye thankful.'²⁵ For the best preservative of any benefaction is the remembrance of the benefaction, and a continual thanksgiving for it.²⁶

At the same time that love for God in our hearts increases through gratitude, love for our neighbor also increases. Experience has shown that thanksgiving is a very effective method for curing whatever weaknesses we might have when it comes to fellowship with our neighbor.

It is striking how the Saints insist that we give thanks to our Lord, not only for the personal benefits that we receive, but also for “common” benefits and those granted to other people; such a thankful attitude on our part turns us from men into Angels: “Let us be thankful,” St. John Chrysostomos urges us, “also for the blessings of others; this makes us Angels instead of men; let us give thanks continually.”²⁷ Indeed, it is worth our while to observe how this wondrous subject of love is analyzed by the Saints, who connect it with the sublime Mystery of the Divine Eucharist:

Let us therefore give thanks to Him continually, and let this precede both our words and our works. But let us be thankful not for our own blessings alone, but also for those of others; for in this way we shall be able both to destroy our envy and to reinforce our love and make it more genuine. For you will no longer be able to envy those on whose behalf you give thanks to the Master.

Wherefore, as you know, when this Sacrifice [of the Eucharist] is being offered, the Priest also enjoins us to give thanks for the whole world, for things past, for the things present, for what has previously happened to us, and for what will befall us hereafter.

For, this is what frees us from earth and translates us to Heaven, and makes us Angels instead of men... We have been taught to treat our fellow-servants in such a way as to consider even their blessings ours. Hence, throughout his Epistles, St. Paul gives thanks for God’s benefactions to the world.

Let us, too, therefore continually give thanks, for our own blessings, and for those of others, alike for the small and for the great.²⁸

Perhaps this is the most appropriate moment for me to mention something which I hope will contribute positively to your understanding of these thoughts concerning the two aspects of love expressed by means of gratitude. Some time ago, a certain monk confided to me a very beneficial experience of his, in order to edify me and fortify me spiritually; I will summarize his main points, and I especially ask our beloved brethren in Christ to pay attention to these:

As you know, brother, I am weak and have made no spiritual progress.... Despite my efforts, I have never succeeded in offering anything to our Lord.... I do not know how it happened, but I once began to invoke the prayers of my Elder and the help of the *Panagia*, and to ponder on the love and bounties of our Lord to me in my wretchedness.... Since then, I have not ceased to cultivate this inward activity.... My heart gradually began to soften and feel compunction.... A fire was kindled inside me and it blazes unceasingly.... And it dominates me more and more.... I cannot get my fill of love for Christ...or of love for my fellow-

men and for the whole of creation.... Whenever I give thanks, this flame flares up. I continually entreat Christ, saying:

‘O my Christ, do not deprive me of Heavenly blessings for the sake of being satiated by earthly ones.... Deem me worthy to be in the celestial Paradise with the Heavenly Angels and to enjoy the good things of Heaven, just as I am in this earthly Paradise with the earthly Angels, my brothers, and enjoy the good things of this earth in such abundance.’²⁹

In referring to this truly wondrous experience and to the most sublime benefits which flow from gratitude, that is, the benefits of love for our Lord and for our brother, we have thus, now, attained to the highest pinnacle: “Love is the fulfillment of the Law,”³⁰ the “recapitulation”³¹ of all the commandments, and the “bond of perfection.”³²

Consequently, someone with great interest in this subject will rightly pose the crucial question: “Well then, how are we to become grateful, given that our hearts are hard and proud? Is there any method that we can follow?” This very serious question has, of course, been answered in all that I have hitherto expounded; however, I think it expedient for us to invite our Holy Fathers to enlighten us yet again, and in this way to conclude our stroll in this beautiful garden. St. John Chrysostomos asserts clearly: “Let us become grateful by continually turning over in our minds the bounteous gifts of God and remembering the magnitude and multitude of His benefactions.”³³ And he continues:

For if we constantly call to mind the benefits which God has bestowed upon our nature, we shall be grateful, and this will become for us the greatest incitement to embark on the path of virtue. For, it is evident that he who remembers the benefits of God will be zealous not to prove unworthy thereof, but to display such eagerness and gratitude that he will be vouchsafed other benefits as well. For, our Master is generous, and when He sees that we are grateful for what He has already given us, He lavishes Grace upon us and grants us yet greater gifts.³⁴

But an additional question arises: What exactly does it mean for us to be in constant remembrance of God’s bounties? To this equally serious question, the Saints reply by listing examples of God’s benefactions,³⁵ in an attempt to arouse in us the feeling of gratitude to the Lord. For example, St. Basil the Great, with reference to the verse in which the Holy Prophet David asks, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all that He hath rendered unto me?,”³⁶ majestically enumerates gifts which we, being more irrational than the irrational animals, habitually forget.

He brought us from non-being in being; He dignified us with reason; He provided us with crafts to help sustain our lives; He causes food to spring up from the earth; He has given us cattle to serve us. For our sake there is rain, for our sake there is the sun; the hills and plains have been adorned for our benefit, affording us refuge from the peaks of the mountains. For our sake rivers flow; for our sake fountains gush forth;

the sea is made calm for our trading; riches come from mines and delights from everywhere, and the whole of creation is offered as a gift to us, on account of the rich and abundant Grace of our Benefactor towards us.

But why speak of minor gifts? For our sake God lived among men; for the sake of our corrupt flesh, ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’^{36a} To the thankless He was their Benefactor; to those sitting in darkness, the Sun of Righteousness; upon the Cross He was the Impassible One; in death, the Life; in Hades, the Light; the Resurrection for the fallen;^{36b} the spirit of adoption into sonship, bestowals of spiritual gifts, and promises of crowns.

In addition to such great and splendid benefits, or rather, benefits *par excellence*, the benefits that He promises us in the future life are many times greater: the delight of Paradise, glory in the Kingdom of Heaven, honors equal to those of the Angels, and the vision of God, which, for those counted worthy of it, is the highest of all goods; every rational nature desires this, and may we also attain to it, after we have cleansed ourselves of carnal passions.³⁷

* * *

*Our Most Reverend Metropolitan and
Much-Revered Spiritual Father:*

The twenty years of your Episcopacy have prompted us to give a lengthy account of blessed gratitude, since it is through your own teaching that we have come to realize its value and importance. In truth, I must repeat with particular emphasis that we are most profoundly grateful to you, since you have taught us gratitude in word and deed. At this point, I would not want to weary you any further by opening yet another chapter, in order to deal specifically with gratitude towards one’s spiritual Father; for now, I confine myself to stating concisely the content of such a future chapter: *A grateful attitude towards God and a grateful attitude towards one’s spiritual Father are two sides of the same coin—that is, of thrice-blessed gratitude, without which it is impossible for us to pass through the gates of Paradise.*

Finally, let me close my meager address by conveying the grateful thanks of our entire Brotherhood for all that our Savior, in His love for mankind, has bestowed upon us through your prayers, and especially during these two decades. Our humble, but heartfelt prayer is that our Lord may grant you length of days, so that you might pasture your rational flock for many more years in the verdant meadows of Grace. And may our All-Holy Mother vouchsafe that you always taste the most sweet and exhilarating waters of the thanksgiving and gratitude of those dear to you, so that you might derive courage, hope, and consolation therefrom, to the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Notes

1. Since 1976, the Brotherhood of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Fili, Attica, has held an annual “Thanksgiving,” that is, a special convocation, on the occasion of the Name Day of its spiritual Father and Abbot.

2. Palladios, *Lausaic History*, in *Χαρίσματα καὶ Χαρισματοῦχοι* [*Spiritual Gifts and Persons Endowed with Spiritual Gifts*], 8th ed. (Oropos: Holy Monastery of the Paraclete, 1995), Vol. I, p. 241 (cf. *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXIV, col. 1060CD). The aforementioned volume contains a similar and equally moving story about Abba John the Sabbaites and a wild boar: “On one occasion, a female boar came to Abba John the Sabbaites, carrying a whelp in her mouth; when she drew near to the Elder, she left the youngling at his feet. On seeing that it was blind, he spat in the dust, made some clay, and anointed the eyes of the little animal. The whelp at once regained its sight. Its mother then went up to it, took it, and departed, rejoicing. On the following day, she came again, dragging an enormous cabbage with great effort. The Saint looked at it, smiled, and said: ‘Whence did you bring this? You must have stolen it from the gardens of the ascetics. But I do not accept stolen goods. Go, therefore, and leave it where you found it.’ The animal, in embarrassment, took it and left” (*ibid.*, pp. 252-253). This story is taken from the critical edition by F. Nau (*Oriens Christianus*, Vol. II [1902]).

3. Genesis 1:26-27.

4. Homily 15, “On Faith,” §1, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXI, col. 464B.

5. *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book II, ch. 2, “On Creation,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCIV, cols. 864C-865A.

St. Gregory the Theologian makes the following beautiful remarks concerning creation on the basis of Divine goodness: “Therefore, since this movement of Self-contemplation alone could not satisfy Goodness, but Good must be poured out and go forth beyond Itself, so as to multiply the objects of Its beneficence—for this is the nature of the supreme Goodness—, He first conceived the Angelic and Heavenly Powers; and this conception was a work fulfilled by His Word and perfected by His Spirit.... [And wishing to produce] a single living being out of both (the invisible and the visible creation, I mean) He fashioned man..., in one person combining spirit and flesh: spirit because of the Grace bestowed upon him, flesh on account of the height to which he had been exalted; the one, that he might continue to live and glorify his Benefactor, the other, that he might suffer, and by suffering be put in remembrance and be corrected if he became proud in his greatness” (Homily 45, “On Pascha,” §§5-7, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXVI, cols. 629A-632C; cf. Homily 38, “On Theophany,” §9, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXVI, col. 320C).

6. “Hymn 7,” vv. 30-36, in *Ἔργα* [*Works*] (Thessaloniki: “Orthodoxos Kypselé” Publications, 1990), Vol. III, p. 60.

7. Homily 25 on St. Matthew, §3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LVII, col. 331.

8. *Idem*, Homily 10 on I Thessalonians, §2, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 457.

9. *Idem*, Homily 52 on Genesis, §3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LIV, col. 460.

10. *Idem*, Homily 19 on Ephesians, §2, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 129.

11. *Idem*, Homily 25 on St. Matthew, §3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LVII, col. 331.

12. *Idem*, Homily 41 on Genesis, §3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LIII, col. 378.

13. Homily 30, “On Giving Thanks to God,” in *Ἄπαντα τὰ εὐοσθέντα Ἀσκητικά* [*The Complete Extant Ascetical Works*], reprinted by C. Spanou (Athens: n.d.), p. 126.

14. St. John Chrysostomos, Homily 26 on Genesis, §5, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LIII, col. 238.

15. *Idem*, Homily 1, “On the Statues,” §11, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLIX, col. 41.

16. *Idem*, Homily 18 on Romans, §5, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LX, col. 579.

17. *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostomos*, prayer of the *Anaphora*.

18. Ephesians 5:20.

19. St. John Chrysostomos, Homily 19 on Ephesians, §2, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, cols. 129-130.

- St. John’s idea that we should thank God, among many other things, “both for the Kingdom and for Hell,” “for Hell, for punishment, for the Kingdom of Heaven” (Homily 10 on Colossians, §§2-3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 368) is truly very profound and astonishing.

- Interpreting his thoughts, the Saint says: “What is required is for a man to give thanks when he is in afflictions and discouragements.... And why do I speak of the afflictions of this world? We ought to give thanks to God, even for Hell itself, for the torments and punishments of the next world. For, it is very beneficial for those of us who are attentive, when the fear of Hell is laid like a bridle on our hearts.... For what else is the peculiar work of God if not this, that He benefits the human race through chastisements and refreshments alike?” (Homily 19 on Ephesians, §2, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 130).

20. *Idem*, Homily 3 on I Thessalonians, §5, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 412.

- The Saint is here referring primarily to the case in which a sick person does not yield to the pressures of others to have recourse to sorcerers for a cure, but “gives thanks to God”: then “you have dealt him [the Devil] a mortal blow” (*ibid.*, §6, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 414).

21. *Idem*, Homily 8 on Colossians, §5, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 357.

22. *Idem*, Epistle 12, “To Olympias the Deaconess,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LII, col. 610.

23. For this amazing story, see John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow*, ch. 107, trans. John Wortley (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992), pp. 86-88 (cf. *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXVII.3, cols. 2965C-2969B).

24. Archimandrite Ioannikios, “Philaret of Kostamonitou,” in *Σύγχρονοι Ἁγιορεϊτικὲς Μορφές*–9 [*Contemporary Athonite Personalities: Vol. IX*] (Oropos: Holy Monastery of the Paraclete, 1983), pp. 80-81.

25. Colossians 3:15.

26. St. John Chrysostomos, Homily 25 on St. Matthew, §3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LVII, col. 331.

27. *Idem*, Homily 25 on St. Matthew, §§3-4, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LVII, col. 331.

28. *Ibid.*

• We continually encounter in St. John's sacred writings this profound and moving exhortation: "Let us be thankful also for the blessings of others."

For example:

• "Nothing profits us so much as constantly to remember the benefactions of God, both public and private" (Homily 1 on St. Titus, §1, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 665).

• "Let us give thanks to Him for all things, public and private, for His goodness" (Exposition of Psalm 135, §3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LV, col. 404).

• "Let this, he says, be your work, to give thanks in your prayers both for the seen and the unseen.... Thus is it customary for the Saints to pray, and to give thanks for the common benefits of all" (Homily 10 on Colossians, §2, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 368).

• "We must give thanks to God also for the goods that befall others.... Do you see how he unites and binds us together, not only through prayer, but also through thanksgiving? For he who is urged to thank God for his neighbor's good is also bound to love him and be kindly disposed towards him" (Homily 6 on I St. Timothy, §1, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 531).

29. The confession of a monk known to us.

30. Romans 13:10.

31. *Cf.* Romans 13:9.

• "What is said through the many commandments is included, like a recapitulation—that is, a concise summary—, in loving one's neighbor" (Evthymios Zigabenos, Vol. I, p. 154).

32. Colossians 3:14.

• "He did not say that it is 'the summit,' but what is greater, 'the bond'; this is more necessary than the other. For 'summit' indeed is an intensity of perfection, but 'bond' is the holding fast together of those things which produce perfection; it is, as it were, the root" (St. John Chrysostomos, Homily 8 on Colossians, §2, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 354).

33. St. John Chrysostomos, Catechesis 5, *Ἑλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Vol. XXX, p. 442.

34. *Idem*, Homily 15 on Genesis, §5, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LIII, col. 124.

35. St. John Chrysostomos, for example, offers the following list of God's benefactions to mankind:

"Who could reckon what God has already done for us, what He has promised, and what He does each day? He brought us from non-being into being, bestowed upon us both body and soul, made us rational creatures, gave us the air to breathe, brought forth the entire creation for the sake of mankind, and willed that man should enjoy a state of Paradise from the very beginning and have a life free from any pain or toil, and that he be not one whit inferior to the Angels and the Bodiless Powers, and, though in the body, not subject to bodily needs" (Homily 27 on Genesis, §1, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LIII, col. 239).

36. Psalm 115:3, *Septuaginta*.

36a. St. John 1:14.

36b. These Patristic phrases are the source for the fourth *Sticheron* at the Praises on Sunday in the Seventh Tone.

- The Prophet David examines “his own poverty, for he has nothing worthy to give in return” for these most sublime and innumerable gifts; St. Basil provides the answer: the way out of this impasse is the “fellowship and affection” which ought to characterize human beings; when we give to the “least” of our Lord’s “brethren,” we are, in essence, giving to the Lord Himself, Who then “recompenses” us, rewarding us munificently, not as a “benefactor,” but as a “beneficiary”!

37. Homily “On the Martyr Julitta (and the Remainder of the Previous Homily on Thanksgiving),” §§6-7, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXXI, cols. 253B-256A.

- A fraternal observation. The booklet *Εὐγνωμοσύνη: ἡ χαρὰ τῆς ζωῆς* [*Gratitude: The Joy of Life*] published by Χριστιανική Στέγη in Kalamata (1st ed. 1998), although impressive at first sight, ultimately provokes caution and skepticism in the attentive reader. In essence, it is influenced—albeit unwittingly and with the best of intentions—, by the non-Orthodox ideas and practices of the school of “Positive Thinking” promoted in America, which has become familiar to us in Greece, and especially through the works of Norman Vincent Peale (see Protopresbyter Antonios Alevizopoulos, *Ἀὐτογνωσία-Ἀὐτοπραγμάτωση-Σωτηρία* [*Self-Knowledge, Self-Realization, and Salvation*] [Athens: 1991]).

An Oration on the Nature of Christian Doctrine*

by

*Saint Gregory the Theologian
Archbishop of Constantinople*

When I observe the present babbling, those who have just today become experts, and the self-appointed theologians, for whom to be wise it is sufficient just to will to be so, I long for the highest philosophy, I seek after the most distant lodge in the wilderness, as Jeremiah puts it (Jeremiah 9:2), and I want to be alone by myself. For, nothing seems to me so desirable as to close the doors of my senses and, escaping from the flesh and the world, having no involvement in human affairs beyond what is absolutely necessary, and conversing with myself and with God, to live above the level of visible things, always preserving within myself the Divine reflections pure and unmixed with the unstable impressions of the world below, both being and ever becoming like a spotless mirror of God and of Divine things, acquiring light by means of light and the clearer by means of the obscurer, until I reach the source of the effulgence which we enjoy here and attain to my blessed goal, once the mirrors have been destroyed by the Truth; for, it is only with difficulty that anyone, either by educating himself with a long course of philosophy, gradually separating the noble and luminous part of his soul from that which is debased and yoked with darkness, or by gaining the mercy of God, or by both of these together, and by making it a habit to look upwards as much as possible, can prevail over matter, which always drags us down. I do not reckon it safe either to undertake supervision of souls or to tackle theology, before I have overcome matter as much as I am able, and have sufficiently purified both my hearing and my understanding.

For what reason was I led to this fear? So that you might not suppose that I am more faint-hearted than necessary, but might even praise my foresight, I hear from Moses himself (Exodus 19:3) that when God was speaking to him, although many had been summoned to the mountain—including Aaron together with his two sons, who were priests—, the rest were all ordered to worship from a distance, while Moses was ordered to approach on his own, whereas the people were commanded not to ascend with him. Shortly before this, the rest

were kept back by lightning-flashes, thunderclaps, trumpet blasts, the entire mountain veiled in smoke, fearful threats and terrors of this kind (Exodus 19:16); and it was a great privilege for them just to hear the voice of God, and this after they had very diligently purified themselves. But Moses went up and entered into the cloud, communed with God, and received the Law, which for the majority is that of the letter, but for those above the level of the majority is that of the Spirit.

I am aware of Eli the priest (I Kings 4:18) and of a certain Oza a little later (II Kings 6:6): it was demanded of Eli that he pay the penalty for the transgression of his sons, which they dared to commit against the sacrifices, and this in spite of the fact that he did not condone their impiety, and had rebuked them severely and frequently; and because Oza merely dared to touch the ark, which was drawn by the bullock, although he had saved it, he died, for God was guarding the holiness of the ark. I know that it was not safe for the majority of the people to touch the walls of the Temple and that, for this reason, they needed other walls on the exterior; that it was not safe for the sacrifices to be consumed by those for whom it was not appropriate, or when and where it was not appropriate; so far was it from being the case, that anybody could with confidence approach the Holy of Holies, or behold or touch the veil or the mercy-seat or the ark.

Knowing these things, therefore, and that nobody is worthy of the great God, Who is both Victim and High Priest, if he has not first presented himself to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), or rather, has become a holy and living temple of the living God (II Corinthians 6:16), how could I either myself rashly undertake discourses about God or approve of one who boldly undertook them? The desire is not praiseworthy, and the endeavor is fearful. For this reason, we must first purify ourselves and then converse with Him Who is pure, unless we are to have the same experience as Manoah and to say, imagining that we are in the presence of God: "We are dead, woman, we have seen God" (Judges 13:22); or, like Peter, to send Jesus away from the boat, on the ground that we are not worthy of such a visit (St. Luke 5:8); or, like the centurion, to ask for the cure, but not receive the Healer. Let one of us say, assuming he is a centurion, commanding many men in wickedness and still serving in the army of Caesar, the universal ruler of those who crawl on the ground: "I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof" (St. Matthew 8:8). Whenever I shall see Jesus, although I am small in spiritual stature, like Zaccæus, and climb on top of a sycamore (St. Luke 19:3-4), having mortified my members which are upon the earth (Colossians 3:5) and humiliated my vile body (Philippians 3:21), then will I receive Him and hear Him say: "Today is salvation come to this house" (St. Luke 19:9); then will I attain salvation, and will practice the more perfect

philosophy, scattering generously what I have avariciously collected, be it money or teachings.

Now that we have purified the theologian by our sermon, come, let us speak briefly about God, having confidence in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the subjects of our oration. I pray that I may have the same experience as Solomon, neither to conceive nor to utter about God anything peculiar to myself. For when he says, "I am the most foolish of all men, and the wisdom of man is not in me" (Proverbs 30:2), he does not say this because he condemns his own lack of understanding. For, how could this be, when he requested this above all else from God, and received wisdom, spiritual vision, and a breadth of heart richer and more abundant than the sand? How is it that one who was so wise and obtained such a gift calls himself the most foolish of all men? Evidently, as not having any wisdom of his own, but as being inspired by the Divine and more perfect wisdom. For, when Paul said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20), he was certainly not speaking of himself as a corpse, but rather as one who lives a life superior to that of the majority by participating in Him Who is truly Life and Who is not in any way limited by death. Therefore, we worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, distinguishing Their hypostatic properties, but uniting Their Divinity; and neither do we coalesce the Three into One, lest we be afflicted with the disease of Sabellius, nor do we divide Them into three alien and unrelated entities, lest we imitate the ravings of Arios. Why must we forcibly bring back the Faith to the other side just as we would a plant that was completely bent in one direction, correcting the distortion by a distortion, rather than straightening it towards the middle and standing within the bounds of Orthodoxy?

When I say "middle position," I mean the truth, to which alone it behooves us to look, eschewing both the evil tendency to confound the Persons and the still more outrageous tendency to divide Them, lest our doctrine, by contracting God into a single Hypostasis, from fear of polytheism, leave us with mere names, supposing, as we do, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one and the same God, yet not defining Them all as one Person, any more than we fail to ascribe distinctive characteristics to each Person (for if They were to pass over and to change into one another, They would cease to be precisely what They are), or lest it divide Them into three essences that are either alien to each other, dissimilar, and severed, according to the correctly-named *lunacy* of Arios, or without source and order and, as it were, rival deities; on the one hand, by being reduced to the niggardliness of the Jews in limiting the Godhead to Him Who alone is Unbegotten, and, on the other hand, by falling into the opposite and equally pernicious error of positing three principles and three gods, which is even more ridiculous than the aforementioned inanities. We

should neither love the Father so much that we deprive Him of His Fatherhood (for whose Father would He be, if the Son were estranged from Him in nature and alienated from Him, along with the creation?); nor should we love Christ so much that we do not preserve even His Sonship (for whose Son would He be, if He were not related to the Father as His cause?); nor should we diminish the dignity of the principle that belongs to the Father as the Father and Begetter; for He would be the principle of small and worthless things, if He were not the cause of the Godhead contemplated in the Son and the Spirit. For, we must retain one God and confess three Hypostases, that is, three Persons, each with His own distinctive property.

One God will be safeguarded, in my opinion, if the Son and the Spirit are related to a single cause, being neither compounded nor confused, in accordance with the unique and identical movement and will, so to speak, in the Godhead, and in accordance with the identity of the Divine essence. We will confess three Hypostases, if we envisage no coalescence, dissolution, or confusion thereof, lest our entire doctrine of God be destroyed by those who honor the unity more than is proper. We will confess the properties of the Father, if we conceive and speak of Him as unoriginate and as the principle (the principle, as being the cause, the source, and the eternal light); of the Son, as being in no way without a principle [*i.e.*, as not being “unoriginate,” in one very specific sense of the term—*Trans.*], but as the principle of all things; when I say “principle,” do not introduce time or set anything in between the Begetter and the Begotten, or destroy Their nature by wickedly interposing anything between Those Who are coeternal and united together. For, if time were older than the Son, the Father would evidently first be the cause of time. How could One Who was subject to time be the Creator of times? How could He be the Lord of all, if He were preceded and dominated by time? The Father, therefore, is unoriginate; for His being does not come from any other source, but from Himself. If you understand the Father as cause, the Son is not unoriginate; for the Father, as cause, is the principle of the Son; but if you conceive the principle in temporal terms, the Son, too, is unoriginate; for the Master of times is not subject to time.

However, if you think that because bodies are subject to time, the Son also is for this reason subject to time, you will be conferring a body on Him Who is bodiless; and if, because the things which are generated among us at one time did not exist and subsequently came into being, for this reason you compel the Son also to come from non-being into being, you will be comparing things that cannot be compared, God and man, the bodily and the bodiless; He will therefore suffer and be destroyed, just like our bodies. You think, therefore, that because bodies are generated, God is also generated in this way; but I do not think that, because bodies are generated thus, He is generated

thus. For of those things whose being is not similar, their mode of generation is not similar; unless God were also a slave in other respects to matter, for example, in suffering, in being hungry and thirsty, and in undergoing as many affections as there are either of the body or of both body and soul together. But your mind cannot grasp these points, for we are talking about God. Therefore, do not understand the generation in any other way than as Divine.

“But if He was generated, how was He generated?” you ask. Answer me, unerring logician: If He was created, how was He created? Next, you inquire of me: “How was He generated? Is passion involved in His generation?” Passion, I respond, is also involved in creation. Or does not the conception of an idea involve passion, and likewise thought and the sudden and particular expansion of what is conceived? “Is time involved in His generation?” Created things are in time, too. “Is place involved in His generation?” There is place in creation, too. “Was there any failure in His generation?” There is failure even in the creation. This is what I have heard from you philosophers; for what the mind outlines, often the hand does not accomplish. “But,” you say, “by His word and His will He established the universe: ‘For He spake, and they came to be; He commanded, and they were created’” (Psalm 148:5, *Septuaginta*). But when you say that all things were created by the Word of God, you do not introduce human creation; for, none of us accomplishes by a word anything that happens. Nothing would be too sublime for us or too free from difficulty, if we could accomplish anything merely by speaking; hence, if God creates created things by a word, it is not a human thing for Him to create. Either show me a man accomplishing something by a word, or admit that God does not create as a man does. Map out a city by your will, and let a city appear; will that a son be born to you, and let a son appear; will anything else that can be accomplished, and let your will result in a concrete thing. If none of these things follows your willing it, and God’s willing is an action, it is obvious that man creates in one way and God, the Creator of all, in another way. How is it, then, that He creates in a non-human way, but is compelled to generate in a human way? You did not exist, then you came into being and subsequently you generate; and on account of this you bring the non-existent into being? Or, to speak more profoundly, perhaps you yourself do not bring things out of non-being, since Levi, according to Scripture, was already in his father’s loins before he came into being (Hebrews 7:10). Let nobody speak disparagingly of my reasoning. For, I do not maintain that the Son exists from the Father in this way, as if He were first in the Father and subsequently journeyed into being; for He was not imperfect first and then perfect, as it is by the law of our generation.

Such are the words of our detractors; such are the words of those

who rashly pounce on everything that we say. We are not so minded, nor do we think thus; but this we profess, both that the Father exists ingenerately (He always existed, for the Mind never passes over into non-being) and, at the same time, that the Son exists by generation. Hence, the existence of the Father is concurrent with the generation of the Only-Begotten, Who is from Him, and not after Him, except in the sense of principle—principle, that is, understood as cause. I repeat the same argument many times, fearing the grossness and materiality of your mind. If you are not curious whether we should speak of the generation of the Son, or His hypostasis, or whatever more appropriate term anyone may devise (for what I am thinking and saying defeats my tongue), do not busy yourself with the procession of the Spirit. I am content to hear that the Son exists and that He comes from the Father, and that one is the Father and the other the Son; I am not concerned about anything beyond this, lest I should suffer the same fate as those voices which are totally ruined by excessive shouting, or the vision which strains to see the rays of the sun. The more one might wish to see and the more precisely, the more one damages his sensory faculties and deprives himself of seeing at all, because the object of sight, being too great, overcomes one's vision, if one wants to see the whole thing and not as much as it is safe to see.

Do you hear the term "generation"? Do not inquire how it takes place. Do you hear that the Spirit proceeds from the Father? Do not concern yourself with how He proceeds. If you concern yourself with the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, I am also curious about the union in you of body and soul; how is it that you are dust and an image of God? What is it that moves you, or what is it that is moved? How is it that the same thing both moves and is moved? How does perception remain in the same entity and attract what is external to it? How does the mind remain in you and engender discourse in another mind? How is thought handed on by discourse? And I am not yet speaking of greater things. What is the revolution of the heavens? What is the movement of the stars, or their order, or dimensions, or conjunction or disjunction? What are the boundaries of the sea? From where do the currents of winds come, or the cycles of the seasons, or the showers of rain? If you understand none of these things, O man (perhaps you will understand them someday, when you attain perfection; "For I will behold the heavens, the works of Thy fingers," says David [Psalm 8:4, *Septuaginta*]; so we may surmise that the things that we now see are not the truth, but images of the truth), if you do not know who you are, you who reason about these matters, if you do not comprehend these things of which perception is a witness, how do you suppose that you can know precisely what and how great God is? It is quite absurd for you to suppose any such thing.

Now, if you are convinced by me, who am a theologian lacking in

boldness, you have understood one thing, and pray that you may understand the rest. Be content with what abides in you and let the rest remain in the treasures above. Ascend through your way of life; acquire purity through purification. Do you wish someday to become a theologian and worthy of the Godhead? Keep the commandments; proceed on your journey by means of the Divine precepts. Action is a step towards the vision of God; on the basis of your body, attend to your soul. Who is there among men who can be exalted so high that he reaches the measure of Paul? Nevertheless, Paul says that he sees through a glass darkly and that there is a time when he will see face to face (I Corinthians 13:12). Are you more skilled in arguments than anyone else? You are certainly inferior to God. Are you more intelligent than anyone else? But you fall as far short of the truth, as your existence is subordinate to God's. We have the promise that one day we shall know as we are known (I Corinthians 13:12). If it is not possible to have perfect knowledge of existing things in this life, what is left for me? What am I to hope for? The Kingdom of Heaven, you will undoubtedly say. I think that this is nothing other than the attainment of that which is purest and most perfect; and the most perfect of all things is the knowledge of God. But let us keep hold of one part, and let us strive to understand another part, while we are on earth; let us store up the rest for the future life, so that we may have this profit of our labor: the complete illumination of the Holy Trinity, as to what He is, of what kind He is, and how great He is—if it is right to say this—, in Christ our Lord Himself, to Whom be the glory and the power unto the ages of ages. Amen.

* The Greek text of this homily is found in the *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXV, cols. 1065A-1080C. The oration appears, here, for the first time in English translation.



Book Reviews

AUGUSTIN IOAN, *Sacred Space*. Translated by Alina Ciric. With a Preface by Archbishop Chrysostomos. Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2002. Pp. 138.

At first glance, “sacred space” seems an innocuous and self-explanatory concept; yet upon a moment of reflection, the phrase which serves as the title and constitutes the theme of the work at hand reveals itself to be subtly provocative and paradoxical: Is not sacredness an eminently immaterial (and hence non-spatial) quality wholly unsusceptible to “enspacement” (to borrow a coinage from the text)? This is but one question of many which rapidly arise when the notion of sacred space is rigorously scrutinized, as it is in this book. It is, in fact, an especially rich notion not confined to study by any single academic discipline, but, rather, is of scholarly interest to theologians, philosophers, architectural theorists, sociologists, anthropologists, and archaeologists alike. This being the case, anyone daring to treat with such a daunting subject must be thoroughly erudite and energetic in his thinking. Happily, such is the case with the present author, Dr. Augustin Ioan, who is both an accomplished scholar of architecture and a practicing (indeed, award-winning) architect of Orthodox Churches. He thus brings the twofold authority of theoretical understanding and practical experience to his consideration of sacred space.

Sacred Space is not so much a systematic exposition as it is a series of ruminant essays, six in all. As Archbishop Chrysostomos avers in his introductory “Preface,” it is “a discourse on discursiveness itself” (p. 12), for by “employing and adapting to his subject the constructs, images, and terminology of existential philosophy” (p. 10), Dr. Ioan “open[s] up to us a new dimension of thought” (p. 12). Dr. Ioan’s own brief preface, “A Note About Sacred Space,” offers a technical definition of his subject matter:

Sacred space consists both of a place where an epiphanic event unfolds and of a place where a spatial aura is situated on the vertical axis of the ‘tunnel’—the qualitative axis of ‘existential space’—, in the dynamics of which lies the connection which unites what is ‘below’ with what is ‘above,’ ‘beyond,’ or transcendental [p. 13].

In other words, sacred space is, to use a pithy expression favored by Archbishop Chrysostomos, “where Heaven meets earth.”

As in his other writings, Dr. Ioan displays, here, a knack for un-

veiling paradigmatic truths embedded in Scriptural texts—an ability characteristic of Patristic hermeneutics. Thus, he opens his first essay, “Sacred Space,” with the story of the Old Testament Patriarch Jacob founding Bethel (“House of God”), illustrating therewith how hierophanies (manifestations of the sacred through Divine revelation), monuments, and rituals are all necessary ingredients for the establishment and maintenance of sacred spaces. He then critiques current definitions of sacred space, evaluating the thought of the most seminal thinkers on this subject—principal among them being Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Martin Heidegger, Christian Norberg-Schulz, and Leonardo Amoroso—, while offering his own insights on how to improve and expand our understanding of sacred space. Also in this essay the author explores the nexus between public place and private space within the unifying context of sacred space; asserts the existence of “mobile” or “evanescent” sacred spaces, *i.e.*, the possibility for sacred space to be detached from a specific locale (a phenomenon he illustrates with the Exodus of the Israelites); and demonstrates how cenotaphs and memorials act as “semi-sacred places.” In his next essay, “Sacred Space as a Potential Public Place,” the author grapples with the tension between the archetypes of the nomad/migrant and the settler/colonist and the relationship between the “smooth space” of the former and the “streaked space” of the latter. He also sets forth an etymologically clever corollary to *genius loci*, the benevolent spirit of a place, by positing corresponding “*jinn* of a place; that is, demonic spirits” (p. 61), an all-too-real negative counterforce to which crass architects are wholly insensitive.

“Sacred Space and the Manifestation of *Untereinandersein*” deals with “the origin of architecture...and its relation to the sacred as the latter was defined by Goethe” (p. 75). Once again, Dr. Ioan effortlessly weds complex philosophical categories with paradigmatic Biblical imagery; for example, for him the story of the Tower of Babel, the hubristic ascent of man to God (in contrast to the hierophanic descent of God to man at Bethel), serves as a stark object lesson in how any architectural venture undertaken solely on man’s initiative and without Divine coöperation is utterly doomed to fail as a sacred space. We also find in this chapter his most perceptive and compelling evidence for “the central hypothesis of the present book, which is that sacred space exists not only as a fixed, stable, and definite place, but also as a trajectory in ‘smooth’ or ‘rambling’ space” (p. 23). “Smooth” or “rambling” space is any undifferentiated, homogenous landscape, devoid of distinctive landmarks or human habitations, where orientation is difficult, if not impossible—think of deserts, snowfields, grasslands, oceans, and virgin forests. (Interestingly, astronomers and cosmologists tell us that outer space looks uniform wherever we look, meaning that, at a cosmic level, the universe itself is one vast “smooth space.”) To use the phraseology

of Orthodox hymnography, such “smooth spaces” are the “trackless wildernesses” which attract a special kind of soul, that of “the one who prays alone”:

The hermit...does not ‘dwell’ and does not set up places for his prayer. ...Deliberately, as part of his penitence, more often than not he does not scoop his own domestic space out of *spatium*. Somehow ‘drifting,’ horizontally, his vectors of orientation in space and of communication—of stability, that is—are exclusively vertical [verticality being the architectural metaphor for man’s relationship to the Divine]. ...Location, stabilization, and the spatial embodiment of the sacred do not constitute the object of his asceticism. The hermit recalls the wilderness, the space where the eye glides and slides, not fixed on anything, and where there is nobody else. The wilderness is a terrible place of trial precisely because of the continuous and deceptive sliding of its space, which does not allow itself to be localized and stabilized, and therefore inhabited. From this viewpoint, the forest is just as efficient a wilderness as the desert, since both remain mute before the question: ‘Where?’ ...It is only after the physical disappearance of the hermit that the place of his struggle appears to the other as a sacred place: a destination of pilgrimage, perhaps. Finally, the space where he lived—the cell carved in the rock, the sparsely arranged cave, or any other form of necessarily rudimentary space from the point of view of domesticity—consents ‘to remain in place,’ revealing itself as a sacred space to be inspected by the Faithful...and thus becoming a public place at long last [pp. 82-83].

In “A Genealogy of the Temple,” Dr. Ioan argues that, “The Temple is one of the indisputable origins of the church as a sacred space configured by construction, even when it operated mostly as a textual reference, rather than a prototype followed by construction proper” (p. 94) and contends that a house is inherently capable of sacralization, thus rendering its transformation into a church an organic and seamless process: “Take a three-room peasant house, where the access is distributed through the central space, and change the manner of crossing it into a linear one going from west to east. You will get a church” (p. 86). In the following chapter, “Light and Visibility in Sacred Space,” he discusses how the distribution and significance of light contribute to a demarcation of public place and private space within a sacred space.

The last essay presented here is “Archives (Building in Time),” a meditation on the oft-overlooked *temporal* dimension of architecture, for architecture “date[s] our lives, offering us location in both space...and time” (p. 109). Thus, every *architectural* act—founding, building, remodeling, demolishing, rebuilding—becomes an *archival* act, either sustaining or obliterating the living memory of a place. The author faults modern architecture for its anti-archival quality, for it

“seems not so much timeless as deprived of time, frozen in a moment which it tries to turn into a continuous present” (p. 111). Dr. Ioan thus poses the poignant question, “Can a space be jointly inhabited; in other words, can we erect a new building without thereby eliminating the states through which the site has already passed and without relegating, in the process, the time they contain?” (p. 119), and persuasively answers in the affirmative with his concept of “co-presence”: “Co-presence refers to the possibility of making the ‘now’ and the ‘then’ coexist in a single house or building. The ‘then’ is not a spectre, a good genius watching over and justifying the new building, but an indissoluble part of it” (p. 119). An extensive bibliography concludes the book.

Dense with challenging observations and tantalizing ideas, *Sacred Space* is a brilliant aid in comprehending an expansive topic. In reading this work, one is struck by the obvious care and enthusiasm with which the author approaches his subject; it is clear that, for Dr. Ioan, architecture is never merely a utilitarian occupation, but is always an ennobling “ministry.” (Would that contemporary clergymen and parish councils responsible for the construction of ecclesiastical edifices had this attitude!) *Sacred Space* thus readily commends itself to scholars and architects, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox. As well, even though Dr. Ioan often speaks with a heavy scholarly accent, the general reader will nonetheless find it well worth his effort to muster the attentiveness necessary to grasp the timely message which Dr. Ioan communicates.

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REMUS RUS, *Dicționar Enciclopedic de Literatură Creștină din Primul Mileniu* [*Encyclopedic Dictionary of Christian Literature From the First Millennium*]. Bucharest, Romania: Editura Lidia, 2003. Pp. 900.

This hefty volume is far more than its title would suggest. It is encyclopedic in scope; it provides extensive commentaries on a number of figures and subjects. It is also certainly lexicological, since there are frequent references to the source and derivation of various theological and general terms used in theological studies (see, for example, the entry under “palimpsest,” p. 637). And, of course, it lists, in the typical alphabetical arrangement of an encyclopedia or dictionary, major Christian writers and various collections of Patristic and ecclesiastical writings from the first Christian millennium. However, neither does it limit its listings and entries to the first thousand years of Christianity (I might cite the excellent entry on Scholasticism [pp. 757-760], which is usually identified with thinking that, in its fuller form, dates from the late twelfth to the fifteenth century), nor is it a mere catalog of writers and

literary works from the first Christian millennium. Rather, it provides a theological commentary on the various works and authors covered. Thus, not only does it contain such entries as the aforementioned section on Scholasticism, but a number of similar commentaries on the theological trends and schools concomitant with these authors and works (e.g., among others, discussions of Nestorianism—a particularly erudite and striking summary [pp. 594-596]; an extensive and perceptive consideration of Manichaeism [pp. 529-534]; a treatment of Donatism [pp. 194-196], etc.). In this sense, this monumental volume—the first of its kind in Romania—can be compared to the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, the well-known English-language reference work for Church historians and students of theology.

There are two things which distinguish this text and make it of special interest to the Orthodox Christian. In the first place, in the Orthodox world there are few works of this kind—single-volume reference works—that adequately cover, as does this pioneering work, writers and literature or theological trends from the Orthodox world, the Western Christian tradition, and the Syrian and Coptic traditions, among others. In the extensive list of two hundred nine compendia and sources used in the compilation of materials that one finds in the introductory portion of this reference work (pp. X-XVI)—encompassing the basic Eastern and Western Patristic collections—, there are references in English, Greek, French, German, Romanian, Latin, and Spanish, including at least one of the author's own Romanian translations of the classical collections of Christian writings from antiquity. Masterfully in charge of his sources, Dr. Rus has produced a work not only unique to Romanian Orthodoxy but novel, in our times, for the Orthodox world in general.

In the second place, a work of this kind is a wonderful antidote to what is sometimes the sheer nescience of, and at other times, deliberate disregard for, the Orthodox tradition by Western scholars who compile reference works on Christian history, literature, and thinkers. Throughout Dr. Rus' virtual pandect, one sees constant references to the major figures of Eastern Christianity, many of them considered too obscure for the attention of Western compilers. Moreover, the theological discussions of various intellectual trends and Patristic traditions appear in the context of Orthodox theological thought, rich with a vocabulary familiar to Eastern Christians and properly cast in the light of the Eastern ecclesiastical and theological milieu in which they were often spawned and to which they sometimes peculiarly belong.

I would do Professor Rus a disservice were I to heap the foregoing praise on him without noting a few lapses in his Orthodox theological perspicacity. I wish, for instance, that he would have considered Father Georges Florovsky's assessment of the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia (see pp. 809-812). Unfortunately, the author adheres with

some fidelity to contemporary Western revisionist thinking about Mop-suestia. But lapses of this kind are so few in this massive work as to be insignificant. A spot of darkness in a quasar is hardly worthy of mention, except as a curiosity.

Finally, let me make a few personal remarks about the author of this work and the specific usefulness of the volume to readers without a knowledge of Romanian. With regard to Dr. Rus, he is a former Romanian Fulbright Scholar in America, a professor at the Patriarchal Faculty of Theology at the University of Bucharest, and a distinguished and, I would say, brilliant Orthodox theological thinker and writer. His articles, books, and translations have been widely published in Romania and have appeared abroad. Fluent in English, he has served in foreign relations positions in the Romanian Patriarchate and, as a presidential advisor, in the Romanian government.

As for Professor Rus' present book, though in Romanian, it is certainly useful to those not fluent in the language. While I would vehemently dispute the common notion that Romanian is a very easy language to learn—it is, in fact, an immensely complex language with a formidable grammar and very complicated structure—, nonetheless, anyone with a basic reading knowledge of Latin or one of the Romance languages and some knowledge of Greek or a Slavic language (theological and liturgical Romanian contains many words of clearly Latin, Greek, and Slavic provenance; *e.g.*, *binecuvînta* [blessing], *agheasmă* [blessed water], *slujbă* [Church service]) will be able, with the use of a Romanian-English lexicon, to use this book quite handily and to great benefit. This book should, however, most assuredly be translated into English. If it is destined to become a classic in the *corpus* of Romanian Orthodox reference books, an English translation of the book might very well catapult it into a more catholic fame in the larger Orthodox world.

I could not possibly be more enthusiastic about a publication than I am about this wonderful resource. I recommend it without reservation.

ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS

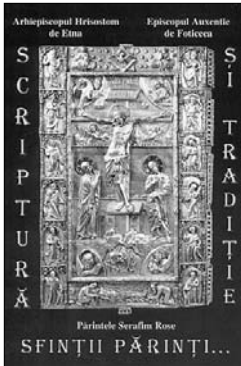
Bucharest, Romania

Synod News

Publications

The Summer 2003 issue of the Romanian literary quarterly, *Clouds*, features an article by Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, “Eastern Orthodox Church Art and Architecture and the Notion of Sacred Space,” and an article by Bishop Auxentios of Photiki, “The Miracle of the Holy Fire.”

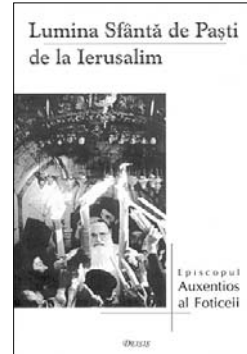
In March and April of 2003, a serialized version of Archbishop Chrysostomos’ review of Deacon P.I. David’s *Invazia Sectelor*, “Un Autodafé Ortodox” [“An Orthodox *Auto-da-Fé*”], appeared in the celebrated Romanian literary periodical “Dilema” (Vol. XI, Nos. 522, 523, & 524); see the English text in *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XX, No. 1, pp. 6-20). His Eminence’s review was translated by the prominent Romanian writer and poet, Ioana Ieronim.



The well-known Romanian religious publishing house, Editura Bunavestire, also published a book by Archbishop Chrysostomos and Bishop Auxentios on the historical, theological and philosophical meaning of the Bible and Patristic tradition, *Scriptură și Tradiție*. The editors attached, by way of an introduction to the volume, translated by Mariana Chiper, an essay on the Holy Fathers by the late Father Seraphim (Rose).

As well, the Romanian version of Bishop Auxentios’ book-length study of the history and theological significance of the Rite of the Holy Fire, *Lumina Sfântă de Paști de la Ierusalim*, was also republished this year in Romania by Editura Deisis in Sibiu. The work is part of the monograph series of Editura Deisis’ “Colecția Liturgică.” It was first published in 1993. The English version of the book is available from the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies.

Finally, the tenth volume of Constantine Cavarinos’ *Modern Orthodox Saints*, dedicated to Sts. Raphael, Nicholas, and Irene of Lesbos, recently appeared in an excellent Romanian translation by Professor Remus Rus (*Sfinții Martiri Rafael, Nicolae și Irina de Lesbos*), under the imprint of the Patriarchal Press in Bucha-



rest. Dr. Cavarnos serves on the Board of Advisors of the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies.

Pascha at the Dormition Monastery in Bucharest, Romania

Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna and Bishop Auxentios of Photiki had the distinct pleasure of celebrating Great Week and Pascha at the Monastery of the Dormition in the Military District of Bucharest this year. The beautiful services were attended by a huge crowd of Faithful. Pictured below and on the following page are the two Bishops at the Great Friday Burial Service (Matins of Great Saturday) and the Resurrection Liturgy.





Baptismal Theology*

by Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos) of
Navpaktos and Hagios Vlasios

THERE HAS BEEN in the past, and there is in our own day, a good deal of discussion about the Baptism of heretics (the heterodox¹); that is, whether heretics who have deviated from the Orthodox Faith and who seek to return to it should be Baptized anew or simply Chrismated after making a profession of faith. Decisions have been issued on this matter by both local and Ecumenical Synods.

In the text that follows, I should like to discuss, by way of example, the agreement reached between the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of America and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in America² on June 3, 1999. The Greek translation of the original text was made by Protopresbyter George Dragas, a professor at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston [Brookline—*Trans.*], who also provided a summary and critique of this agreed statement between Orthodox and Roman Catholics in America.

The basis of this document is the Balamand Agreement of 1993, “Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past and the Present Search for Full Communion,” which it evidently wishes to uphold.

The text on which we are commenting, that is, the agreement signed by Orthodox and Roman Catholics in America and entitled “Baptism and ‘Sacramental Economy,’” is based on several points, in my observation, that are very typical of the contemporary ecumenical movement and indicative of its entire substance.

The first point is that “Baptism rests upon and derives its reality from the faith of Christ Himself, the faith of the Church, and the faith of the believer” (p. 13). At first sight, one is struck by the absence, here, of *any reference to the Triune God*—perhaps in order to justify this flexible interpretation of Baptism. Faith, then, becomes the fundamental mark and element of Baptism.

The second point is that Baptism is not a practice *required by the Church*, but is, “rather, the Church’s foundation. It establishes the Church” (p. 26). Here, the notion that Baptism is not the “initiatory” Mystery whereby we are introduced into the Church, but the foundation of the Church, is presented as the truth.

The third point is that “Baptism was never understood as a private

ceremony, but rather *as a corporate event*" (p. 13). This means that the Baptism of catechumens was "the occasion for the whole community's repentance and renewal" (p. 13). One who is Baptized "is obliged to make his own the community's common faith in the Savior's person and promises" (p. 14).

The fourth point is a continuation and consequence of the foregoing points. Since Baptism rests upon faith in Christ, since it is the basis of the Church, and since, moreover, it is the work of the community, this means that any recognition of Baptism entails recognition of the Church in which the Baptism is performed. In the Agreed Statement we read: "The Orthodox and Catholic members of our Consultation acknowledge, in both of our traditions, a common teaching and a common faith in one baptism, despite some variations in practice which, we believe, do not affect the substance of the mystery" (p. 17). According to this text, there is a common faith and teaching concerning Baptism in the two "Churches," and the differences that exist do not affect the substance of the Mystery. The two sides each acknowledge an ecclesial reality "in the other, however much they may regard their way of living the Church's reality as flawed or incomplete" (p. 17). "The certain basis for the modern use of the phrase 'sister churches'" (p. 17) is to be found in this point. The Orthodox Church and the Latin Church are these two "sister Churches," because they have *the same Tradition, the same Faith, and the same Baptism*, even though there are certain differences between them. Hence, the following opinion is repeatedly affirmed in the text: "We find that this mutual recognition of the ecclesial reality of baptism, in spite of our divisions, is fully consistent with the perennial teaching of both churches" (p. 26). Misinterpreting the teaching of St. Basil the Great, the signers of this document aver that the two "Churches," in spite of the "imperfections" that exist, constitute the same ecclesial reality: "By God's gift we are each, in St. Basil's words, 'of the Church'" (p. 26).

The fifth point is that the authors of the Agreed Statement *find fault with St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite*, who, in interpreting the views of St. Cyprian of Carthage, St. Basil the Great, and the Second Œcumenical Synod, talks—as do all of the *Kollyvades* Fathers of the eighteenth century—about exactitude (ἀκρίβεια) and economy (οἰκονομία) with regard to the way in which heretics are received into the Orthodox Church. That is to say, the Fathers have at times received heretics by exactitude—namely, by Baptism—and at times by economy—namely, by Chrismation. However, even when the Church does receive someone by economy, this means that She effects the mystery of salvation at that very time, precisely because the Church is superior to the Canons, and not the Canons to the Church, and because the Church is the source of the Mysteries and, *eo ipso*, of Baptism, whereas Baptism is not the basis of the Church. The Church can receive this

or that heretic by the principle of economy, without any implication that She recognizes as a Church the community that previously baptized him. This is the context within which St. Nicodemus interprets the relevant decision of the Second Œcumenical Synod.

Confusion is certainly heightened by the fact that one of the recommendations of the Agreed Statement is subject to many different interpretations. According to this recommendation, the two Churches should make it clear that “the mutual recognition of baptism does not of itself resolve the issues that divide them, or reestablish full ecclesial communion between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, but that it does remove a fundamental obstacle on the path towards full communion” (p. 28).

From this brief analysis, it is obvious how much confusion prevails in ecumenist circles regarding these issues. It is also obvious that [Orthodox] ecumenists understand the acceptance of the baptism of heretics (Catholics and Protestants, who have altered the dogma of the Holy Trinity and other dogmas) to mean accepting the ecclesial status of heretical bodies and, worse still, that the two “Churches,” Latin and Orthodox, are united in spite of “small” differences, or that we derive from the same Church and should seek to return to it, thereby forming the one and only Church. This is a blatant expression of the branch theory.

When there is such confusion, it is necessary to adopt an attitude of strictness, which preserves the truth: that all who fall into heresy are outside the Church and that the Holy Spirit does not work to bring about their deification.

In any event, baptismal theology creates immense problems for the Orthodox. From the standpoint of ecclesiology, the text under consideration is riddled with errors. The Patristic Orthodox teaching on this subject is that the Church is the Theanthropic Body of Christ, in which revealed truth—the Orthodox Faith—is preserved and the mystery of deification is accomplished through the Mysteries of the Church (Baptism, Chrismation, and the Divine Eucharist). The essential precondition for this is that we participate in the purifying, illuminating, and deifying energy of God. Baptism is the initiatory Mystery of the Church. The Church does not rest upon the Mystery of Baptism; rather, the Baptism of water, in conjunction with the Baptism of the Spirit, operates within the Church and makes one a member of the Body of Christ. There are no Mysteries outside the Church, the living Body of Christ, just as there are no senses outside the human body.

In closing, I should like to cite the conclusion of Father George Dragas, which he appends to his “Summary and Critique”:

These recommendations will not win the agreement of all Orthodox, and certainly not of those who are Greek-speaking (or Greek-minded), and

consequently they are, by their very nature, divisive. My primary reason for coming to such a negative conclusion is that this inquiry into sacramental theology is devoid of any ecclesiological basis and that it one-sidedly interprets—or rather, misinterprets—the facts of Orthodox sacramental practice, and particularly vis-à-vis the heterodox at different periods in the history of the Church. These recommendations and conclusions and, indeed, the entire Agreed Statement are the epitome of Western skepticism. Their acceptance by Orthodox theologians signals a deliberate betrayal of Orthodox views and a capitulation to the outlook of Western ecumenism. This is something that we should reject.

Notes

1. We have retained, here, for the sake of faithful translation, the word “heretic,” though with some concern that many readers may assume that it carries with it the vitriol that has been attached to it in Western Christianity—and especially since the Inquisition—or by some of the more irresponsible and less reflective and spiritually-enlightened Orthodox traditionalists today. We could have justifiably used the word “heterodox,” which is not frequently used as an *ad hominem* epithet, as the word “heretic” so frequently is, but which simply indicates what both words actually mean: a person who holds to views that deviate from established belief and, in the Orthodox Church, who accepts an opinion held in opposition to the Patristic consensus and the conscience of the Church. The word takes on *wholly pejorative* meanings, in the Orthodox Church, *only* when applied to those who, in their absolute intransigence, fail to succumb to the entreaties of the Church (and to spiritual sobriety), in the face of their error, and thus cause harm to the harmonious ethos of Orthodoxy and lead others into error and delusion—*Trans*.

2. To be precise, the agreement in question was signed by members of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, meeting at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, New York—*Trans*.

* Translated from the Greek original in *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Παρέμβαση*, No. 71 (December 2001), p. 12.

Catechesis LXIV*

*Our Holy Father
Theodore the Studite*



Concerning the Incarnate Economy of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
and That We Ought to Celebrate Feast Days Spiritually;
Delivered on the Day of the Annunciation

Brothers and Fathers, the Annunciation has arrived and it is the first of the Feasts of the Master; we ought to celebrate it, not in a perfunctory way, as most people do, but with understanding and reverence for the Mystery. And what is this Mystery? That the Son of God becomes the Son of man by means of the Holy Virgin, dwelling in her, refashioning a temple for Himself from her, and becoming perfect Man. Why did He do this? “To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:5); in order that we might no longer be slaves, but free; no longer impassioned, but passionless; no longer lovers of the world, but lovers of God; no longer living according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. “For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit; for to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:5-8).

This, to put it in concise terms, is the meaning of the Mystery, and it is for this reason that we ought to celebrate it spiritually and conduct ourselves spiritually, in holiness and righteousness, in love, in meekness, in peace, “in longsuffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit” (II Corinthians 6:6), lest we show the œconomy of our Lord Jesus Christ to be vain and inefficacious in us. Moreover, we should also pray and grieve for the world. Why? Because the Son of God came to save the world, and the world despises Him; tribes and tongues despise Him; the barbarian nations despise Him; those who call upon His holy Name despise Him, some through heretical beliefs, but others through evil living. What ought He to have done that He has not done? Being God, He became man, “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross” (Philippians 2:8), He gave us His Body to eat and His Blood to drink, He deigned to be called our father, brother, head, teacher, bridegroom, fellow-heir,

and all of the other names, which I do not have the time to mention; and yet, He is despised, and yet, He endures. “For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (St. John 12:47).

What, therefore, is the message for you in this, brethren? That genuine disciples are distressed when their fellow-disciples despise Christ, thereby showing love both for the Teacher and for His disciples; likewise, genuine servants suffer the same thing when their fellow-servants fall into apostasy. For this reason, the great Apostle commands us to make “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority” (I St. Timothy 2:1-2), and elsewhere he says this about himself: “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:1-3). Do you see the power of love? Do you see the height of friendship? Moses manifestly said this to God: “And now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin, forgive it; and if not, blot me out of Thy book, which Thou hast written” (Exodus 32:32). Thus, therefore, should we, too, as true disciples and not false, not look out only for ourselves, but also grieve and pray both for our brethren and for the whole world; for in this way, doing what is pleasing to God, we shall become heirs of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord, to Whom be the glory and dominion, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

* Translated from the Greek original in St. Theodore the Studite, *Μικρά Κατήχησις*, ed. Archimandrite Nicodemos Skrettas (Thessaloniki: “Orthodoxos Kypsele” Publications, 1984), pp. 169-171. This is the first English translation of this selection from the Saint’s writings.



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