## Historical Articles Pertaining to the Orthodox Church of Greece, Holy Synod in Resistance



Recent misleading statements to the effect that Metropolitan Cyprian's ecclesiology has changed over the years are refuted, and quite clearly, by the following two articles which were published in The Orthodox Word in 1976 and 1980, and by the following letter of 1969 by Archimandrite Philotheos (Zervakos) which appeared in Orthodox Tradition.



THE ORTHODOX WORD

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OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA

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#### CONTENTS

- 135 Christianity vs. Sorcery
- 136 The Life of Sts. Cyprian and Justina
- 143 The Royal Path: True Orthodoxy in an Age of Apostasy
- 150 The Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina by Archimandrite Cyprian
- 160 Epistles of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, September, 1976
- 174 Some Miracles of Sts. Cyprian and Justina

COVER: St. Cyprian the Former Sorcerer. This, the color icon on page 137, and illustrations on pages 151-2 and 157-8 (Icons are from the Monastery's Icon-painting workshop), courtesy of the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Fili, Attica, Greece.

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# The MONASTERY of Sts. CYPRIAN and JUSTINA

### In Fili, Attica

#### WITNESS OF TRUE ORTHODOXY IN GREECE

#### BY ARCHIMANDRITE CYPRIAN

A Letter to the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood from the Abbot of the Monastery, who himself has been subjected to persecution by the State and the Official Church of Greece.

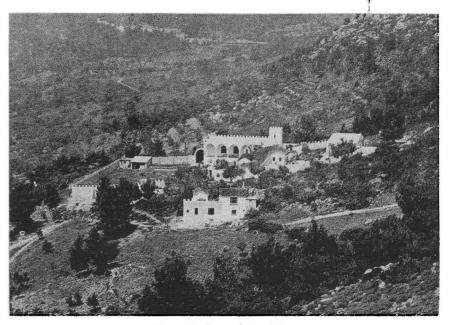


Y GOD'S GRACE, the life of our monastery began in 1961. When I was a young man, in 1951-52, as a result of a very shaking personal event, I made a promise to St. Cyprian, the former magician, with

God's help to build him a "house" where I could weep for my sins and call others to repentance, especially young people who were going so much astray. In the meanwhile, I received a great blessing in that Father Philotheos Zervakos,\* the abbot of Longovarda monastery on Paros, became my spiritual father, and it was with his blessing that I proceeded to the fulfillment of my promise. Thus, when I had served my time in the army, the present location of the monastery was miraculously found and obtained, and I came to live here on 12th September, 1961, in the first two poor cells, whose foundation we had laid the previous July.

On 7th March, 1962, the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the newly-built church, and on 13th June, 1963, my humility first served as a

<sup>\*</sup> See The Orthodox Word, January-February, 1968, pages 11-20,



General view of the Monastery



The Monastery from the east (the "Skete" in the foreground)



Archimandrite Cyprian, the Abbot



Monks and novices of the Monastery, September, 1976

#### STS. CYPRIAN AND JUSTINA

priest in the hermitage. I had become a monk of the small habit at Patmos, at the monastery of the Theologian, for to begin with we were a metochion of that historic monastery. As time went on, our little hermitage increased in size as new monks came: In 1967 we were seven or eight monks altogether, and today we are 18. In 1966 we were obliged to become a metochion of the Holy Mountain in order to avoid certain complications with the local bishop. It should be understood that all this time we belonged to the official church and followed the new calendar in our worship, something with which I was not satisfied, for from all that I had heard about them, especially from my elder, I had formed a great sympathy for the old calendarists, believing that they really struggle for the traditions with true zeal and piety. For this reason I wished to belong to them, but certain extreme declarations of theirs concerning the new calendarists had made me hesitate. Finally, starting from the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1968, we began to observe the old calendar, but without leaving the official church, following in this matter the policy of the Holy Mountain.

In the meanwhile, the reputation of the hermitage was steadily growing; this was due to two factors: the first is the gift which St. Cyprian has for aiding those who suffer from satanic influences and releasing from black magic. Today many who suffer as a result of these demonic arts come to St. Cyprian to find their cure, and thus the flow of pilgrims is ever increasing. The second factor is that our monastery is near the world and people who thirst for spiritual rest come to confess and pray in surroundings which savor of the Tradition of our Church. Many miracles have happened and innumerable souls have confessed and do confess here to the glory of God.

On 9th September, 1967, the main church of the monastery and the side-chapel of St. Nectarios of Pentapolis were consecrated. In August, 1968, we built the chapel of St. Seraphim of Sarov and in 1969 the chapel of St. Gerasimos of Kefallinia. Finally, the enormous flow of pilgrims obliged us in the summer of 1975 to construct the new section of our monastery, consisting of a large church, rooms for receiving guests, a shop for our handicrafts, a confessional and other rooms, so that the faithful can easily be received without disturbing the brothers, who are now free to follow without distraction their monasic regime. The consecration of the new church took place last May on the Sunday of the318 Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. It is worth noting that these new buildings are a great miracle, for they were erected in a very short space of time and under financial and legal conditions which were far from favorable.

#### ATTHE ORTHODOX WORD

#### THE CHURCH OF THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS

H OWEVER, OUR CONCERN and agony over matters of the faith had not ceased. Thus, when the official church, as represented particularly in the person of Archbishop Ieronymos, the successor of the outstanding and traditionalist Archbishop Chrysostomos,\* showed no inclination to oppose the heresy of Ecumenism, which was constantly gaining ground, above all in the completely anti-orthodox actions and statements of Patriarch Athenagoras, we decided we had to leave it and join the Holy Synod of the True Orthodox Christians for reasons purely of faith, following the dictates of the traditions, as expressed especially in the 15th canon of the First and Second Council. This decision was realized by the grace of God, in January, 1969.

What are the basic aims of the struggles which began in 1924? We have as our example the wondrous patristic and orthodox policy which was set out by the saintly Archbishop Chrysostomos Kavourides (formerly of Florina), the first shepherd of the True Orthodox Christians. This holy hierarch preached and followed faithfully the following line: "We joined the struggle under the flag of the restitution of the Fathers' calendar to the Church, setting as our aim not the creation of a permanent ecclesiastical division, but the pacification of the Church and the unity of all Christians in the celebration of the feasts. When we have restored this flag of orthodox unity to its place, not only will we support the orthodox authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Church, which the modernists have unworthily upset, but also we will restrain the extremes to which the calendar struggle has gone, deprived of pastoral supervision and headed by priests who through their lack of theological and canonical education have proceeded to chrismate the children of new calendarists, thereby greatly harming our struggle, and lessening its orthodox authority" (from a letter of Archbishop Chrysostomos to Bishop Germanos Varykopoulos of the Cyclades, Athens, 9th November, 1937).

#### A SOBER-MINDED ZEALOTRY

UNFORTUNATELY, this orthodox policy is not always followed, for it sometimes happens that godly zeal may turn into an absurd extremism. The "zeal not according to knowledge" has sadly infected some, who we pray will yet return to the royal path; we would like to hear more words of mod-

<sup>\*</sup> See The Orthodox Word, July-August, 1968. pages 156-158.

#### STS. CYPRIAN AND JUSTINA

eration. Your introduction to Metropolitan Philaret's letter\*\* made a considerable impression on us, for it is spiritual, deep and discerning. Indeed, some do want everything to be simple and black-or-white: either they have grace or they do not! Either they are heretics or not! However in judging such views it is also necessary to have in mind the extremist attitude of the State (new calendarist) Church, which by official decisions has declared the necessity of re-ordaining our clergy and repeating the marriages of such as go over to them. And when the choice is between the heresy and apostasy of the State Church on the one hand, and certain extremisms on the other, there is no question of where our Orthodox conscience directs us.



#### THE LIFE OF THE MONASTERY

N OUR MONASTERY we venerate especially, apart naturally from our saints, St. Nectarios of Pentapolis, St. Gerasimos of Kefallenia, St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. Demetrios the great-martyr, to whom we have chapels, as also St. Christopher and St. John Kalyvites, to whom are dedicated the side altars of our new church. In Athens we have a metochion with a church of St. Theodore the Studite and a lecture hall. Also, with the grace of our Lord we have founded this year a metochion on the isle of Euboia in honor of St. John the Forerunner (24th June) and on the island of Kalymnos, a hieromonk of the monastery, Fr. Kallinikos, works in a missionary capacity, having created a parish of St. Niketas, a convent and a monastery. A few years ago, with the blessing and constant supervision of the monastery, a convent was begun at Afidne in Attica, dedicated to the Holy Angels, with the most pious mother Kypriane as its abbess. At present we are a metochion of the Athonite monastery of Xenofondos. A few months ago we were found worthy to bring into being a small home for old people close to the monastery, where a few aged ladies rest bodily and spiritually in preparation for their eternal journey to the bosom of our holy forefather Abraham.

<sup>\*\*</sup> See The Orthodox Word, January-February, 1976, pages 3-5.

#### THE ORTHODOX WORD

Our typicon is as follows: every day we celebrate the Holy Liturgy in the morning; until recently, we celebrated the Liturgy at night, but the flow of the faithful and the toll of exhaustion on the brothers obliged us to make this change, keeping the midnight Liturgy only on Monday night. After the morning Liturgy, there is breakfast on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and until noon the monks are busy at their obediences. Before the midday meal, the Hours are read, and the Trapeza (main meal) is at twelve noon. A time for study and rest follows, and at 3:15 we say the Ninth Hour and Vespers with the Theotokarion. Afterwards the brothers devote themselves to their obediences again until 6:30 p.m., when we have tea, followed by Compline and Matins, with some reading from a patristic book. When this finishes, the brothers retire to their cells for study and to perform their personal rule of prayer. At five a.m. all will rise. On Sundays and great feast days, the order changes somewhat, for many people come to worship, even from quite large distances, drawn by the contrite monastic prayer to our God. Thus, into the life of the monastery has entered missionary work, with confession, preaching and the publication of spiritual books, including the Life of our patrons, Sts. Cyprian and Justina, the Life of Blessed Xenia of Petersburg, and the Life and Service to St. Herman of Alaska. On Wednesdays after Vespers, we have arranged that there should come those who suffer from demonic influences as a result of black magic, etc., and a paraclisis to our Saints is sung together with the prayers of exorcism. The number of faithful who come for such reasons to our monastery is ever expanding, a fact which demonstrates how much the world suffers in this externally happy age, and also how much echo the voice of our holy Mother the Church finds in their souls.

The monks, being continually revivified by the grace of the Holy Mysteries, struggle with prayer to sanctify the handicraft which they regard as a secondary occupation, while their main task is internal cultivation, and the achievement of the image of God. Prayer joined with silence, the study of the treasures of the Fathers, and sacramental life bring about the longed-for renewal in Christ, and there reigns in the earthly paradise of our monastery love, humility and meekness. Much emphasis is given to the matter of obedience, above all internal obedience, that is, the spiritual unity of spiritual father and disciple; when the monk sincerely loves his elder, respects him, and has unshaken faith that through him God's providence works for his salvation, then he has laid a firm foundation for the building of the radiant structure of his life in Christ. If the monks are spiritually united with their superior,



The Upper Church of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, where daily services are celebrated



The new church, consecrated in May, 1976



Altar of the Chapel of St. Seraphim of Sarov

(The Antimension on the Holy Table was consecrated by Blessed Archbishop John Maximovitch; in a reliquary are some hairs of St. Seraphim, given by Abbess Elizabeth of London; at right, a photograph of Metropolitan Chrysostomos (†1955), first bishop of the True Orthodox Christians.)

#### STS. CYPRIAN AND JUSTINA

then naturally all will be united one to another in Christ, making up one body whose members work together to the glory of the one God in Trinity, and to the greatest benefit of the Church at large; for good monasteries are the lungs of the Church, with them the Church breathes, and when they are healthy in Christ, then the body is healthy also.

A BOUT VLADIKA John Maximovitch, we had heard much from our friend Fr. Ambroise Fontrier of Paris, and we have always had an especial veneration for him as a new saint of our Church. We have his icon in our church, and this year venerated it with reverence, and commemorated him in a lity after the Liturgy. I hold it as a great honor when I am given the opportunity to praise him and describe his holy feats. We will try with his help to write some hymns to his honor for coming years; for the present we have written a troparion as follows:

#### Tone 3, "Of Godly Faith."

Thou didst spread abroad the sweet-smelling myrrh of thy virtues to all the Orthodox, O John, offspring of Russia. Through feats of fasting and prayer thou didst become the prototype of bishops; pray, O Father, to the Trinity to save us from the danger of heresies.

We ask you not to cease praying to God that He should give peace and harmony to His holy local churches, so that all the Orthodox of the world together may glorify His "Honorable and Majestic Name with one mouth and heart."



From this day, from this boom, from this minute, let us strive to love God above all, and fulfill His boly will.

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CONTENTS

- 156 Elder Hilarion of Sarov and Valaam
- 162 A Short Spiritual Ladder by Elder Hilarion of Sarov
- 164 Concerning "Super-correctness" by Bishop Cyprian of Oropos and Fili
- 179 The New Martyrs of Russia by Archpriest Roman Lukianov
- 187 In Memoriam: Archimandrite Philotheos Zervakos

COVER: Elder Nazarius.

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### A WORD OF WARNING TO THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS OF THE WEST

# Concerning "Super-Correctness"

By Bishop Cyprian of Oropos and Fili

Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece

(Old Calendarist Jurisdiction of Metropolitan Kallistos of Corinth)

For over fifty years the Orthodox Old Calendarists of Greece have fought a courageous battle, in the face of a sometimes fierce persecution, for the preservation of genuine Orthodoxy against modernism and ecumenism. Unfortunately, their witness has to some extent been undermined by the presence among them of extreme view which have caused unnecessary schisms. In the end, this extremism has only aided the cause of modernism, which rejoices at every division among those of traditional views. This "temptation from the right side" is now making itself felt in America and the Western world in the form of new schisms, over-hasty accusations of "heresy" and "betrayal", and the spread of the spirit of suspicion towards everyone not of one's own "party". The present warning, in the form of a letter to Saint Herman Brotherhood from one of the most respected leaders of the Old-Calendarist movement in Greece, is a most timely one. Bishop Cyprian is also Abbot of the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Fili, near Athens (on which see The Orthodox Word, 1976, no. 70).

YOU HAVE WRITTEN asking me to put together a few words describing the dangers of the temptation of a "super-correctness" in questions of Orthodox faith and practice, and the damage it has caused to the Greek

#### A WORD OF WARNING

Church in our days. This you would like as a warning to those in America who are troubled by this same temptation, and you would like them to benefit from our experience here. Very gladly, therefore, we will attempt to do this, emphasizing from the beginning that we have no wish to criticize persons, but rather the mentality of extremism, the danger of temptation "from the right."

We must begin with a few words on our confession of faith: the Orthodox Church is deeply wounded by the heresy of ecumenism, the betrayal of the hierarchy in some communist lands, the abandonment of every vestige of Orthodox piety in some parts of the dispora. We have no doubt that the leaders of the ecumenical movement, in fully equating Orthodoxy with heresy, have fallen away from the Church. With such, and those who commune with them, we can have no communion at all, nor can we regard them any longer as Orthodox, but wolves, all too often in the sheep's clothing of Patriarch's and bishops. Every witness of the Fathers confirms that economy in matters of heresy constitutes betrayal. We regard the new calendar as the first step in the ecumenical movement, and thus can have no communion with new-calendarists.

From the above, two questions arise: firstly, have all those with whom we have severed communion fallen into heresy, and placed themselves outside the Church? Secondly, if they have not, what justification do we have in cutting off prayerful relations with them? Both these questions require much thought. Insofar as the ecumenists are concerned, one can discern three categories:

- (1) Those who wholly equate Orthodoxy with heresy, and thus voluntarily place themselves outside the Church in some sort of vague "superchurch."
- (2) Those who, while they in no way negate their Orthodoxy, nonetheless take part in joint prayer with heretics in transgression of the canons. We may perhaps call them anti-canonical rather than openly heretical.
- (3) Those who, while they disagree to a greater or lesser extent with ecumenism, commune with the ecumenists, perhaps considering that they do so using economy.

We, pursuing the purity of the faith, can have no communion of prayer with the clergy who belong to these categories. But the vexed questions are: how are we to treat their flock? What degree of economy is permissable in our dealings with them? Which of the above clergy have definitely lost the grace of the priesthood through their apostasy? It is much the same questions, so far as we know, which wracked the Catacomb Church in Russia in its early years (and perhaps now), and it is disputes over these questions which have caused the greatest troubles amongst the Old-Calendarists of Greece.

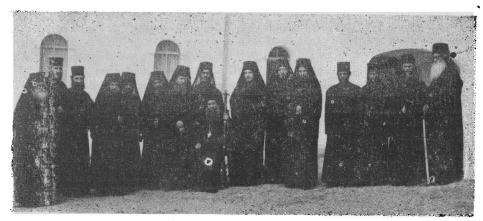
These troubles we will summarize very briefly: in 1935, three bishops of the new-calendar Church of Greece returned to the observance of the old calendar, and immediately consecrated four new bishops. The subsequent his-

#### THE ORTHODOX WORD

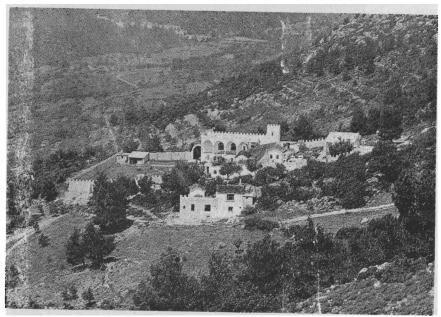
tory of these does not concern us here, except for one; he, Bishop Matthew, a man of great personal virtues but extremist temperament, in 1937 separated himself from the other hierarchs, forming a schism which exists to the present day. The reason for his action was that the senior bishop, Metroplitan . Chrysostomos, was asked in an interview if he considered that the State Church had lost the Grace of the Sacraments in accepting the calendar innovation. He replied no, only a future council could condemn the new-calendarists as definitely outside the Church; what we know is that they are seriously guilty before the Church, its canons and traditions, and therefore we can have no communion with them until such time as they return to the traditions and discipline of the Church. This truly Orthodox ecclesiology, which can be paralleled particularly in St. Theodore the Studite, met with incomprehension on both sides. Both the new-calendarists and a section of the old-calendarists condemned him as illogical: if they have grace, what justification exists for separation from them? As noted above, one of the newly-consecrated bishops departed and formed a schism which exists to the present day. We can only see this as a fruit of the mentality of "over-correctness," of a neglect of the economy which the Church requires to use for the salvation of souls. The damage caused to the Greek Church is immeasurable, for had this division not occurred, the State Church of Greece would long have been obliged to return to the old calendar.

We can cite other examples of this "overcorrectness" from our own experience. A fearful example is the following: A few years ago a woman, unfortunately a nun, reading through the works of St. Nectarios, the great wonderworker of our times, came across a few passages which she considered as not in accord with Orthodox teaching. A discerning mind would see in these passages the influence primarily of the westernised theological training which the Saint received, and of the historian Paparigopoulos (from whose book the passages are taken almost directly), and certainly no intentional contradiction of Orthodox teaching. The unfortunate nun, however, proceeded to write three books denouncing St. Nectarios as a "heretic, iconoclast, ecumenist, and Latin." Simple people were influenced, many souls were wounded and scandalized. This fanatical mentality, as so often, had seized a detail while ignoring the whole—the exemplary and holy life of St. Nectarios and his innumerable miracles.

Another example is provided for us by a group of persons who have severed all communion with all the Orthodox in Greece because the hierarchs will not officially condemn as heretical the western-style icon of the Holy Trinity (with God the Father represented as an old man, and the Holy Spirit as a dove). Neglecting everything else, they have seized on this detail, and have been led into schism. Their struggle for the removal of this iconic type has become an obsession, a prelest.



Bishop Cyprian and Synodia



The Sacred Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina



BISHOP CYPRIAN

#### A WORD OF WARNING

We should, however, in fairness point out that these disputes have often been made much worse by the opponents taking an equally fanatical position. Discretion is needed on both sides. It is also true that extremism amongst the old-calendarists has been fostered by the savage persecutions which the State Church has launched from time to time.

One of the most disastrous examples of the phenomenon of which we are speaking is the disputes between the zealots of the Holy Mountain. Many, to be sure, are clearminded and sure of their purpose, but others waste so much time in useless disputes. In one and the same skete, one can find in each house a different ecclesiology, a different mentality, and not one in communion with their neighbors. They have seized on details, and all too often, in their lack of theological education, have seized on them quite incorrectly. Often their opinions are rational, but taken to extremes; others, however, become very strange; one group believes that the name of Jesus shares in His Divinity, and that all who do not so believe are heretics; another, that those who practice frequent Holy Communion are heretics and excommunicate; another has reached the old-believer position that the grace of the priesthoood has vanished from the Church; and so forth. We must emphasize again that we have no wish to criticize persons; many have a holiness which we never dare hope to attain. We only criticize that mentality which leads to division and schism.

Now, to return to the questions mentioned at the beginning, we would like to relate something which we observed recently. A few months ago I visited Romania, and in one of the celebrated historical monasteries (belonging, naturally, to the official Church of Romania), was very kindly received by the Abbot, a man of evident spiritual qualities and considerable education. He began to speak enthusiastically about the ecumenical movement and the reunion of the "churches." To this I replied with such words as God enlightened me with, and I observed from his reaction that he had never before heard a point of view opposed to ecumenism. After the meeting, he told the Romanian bishop who was accompanying us that he had been much edified by the conversation. This gave me occasion for thought: it would be easy to condemn him immediately as an ecumenist and a heretic. But this was not the case; despite his education, he had never given the matter deep thought (though certainly he should have done so), he had never heard any criticism of ecumenism, it had never occurred to him that it was a denial of Orthodoxy. To place him in the same category as, let us say, Meliton of Chalcedon, would be quite unjust. Perhaps it would be fair to use the same criteria to judge the faithful in the Soviet Union, who, with few exceptions, are obliged to have recourse to the Moscow Patriarchate, or the many faithful in outlying parts of Greece who have no conception of the calendar question. For every category we must use discretion; it is impossible in all cases to apply the same strictness, while on the other hand, we must remember that economy used as a measure in itself becomes an abuse, and that in matters of real heresy there can be no use of economy.

Continued on page 184.

# A WORD OF WARNING Continued from page 169.

In conclusion, we would say that the error of "over-correctness" is a form of prelest, and like the other forms, this means a blindness, an obsession. The Fathers say that prelest begins with self-reliance, and so it is: whilst pursuing some probably very laudable particular end, the general picture becomes forgotten, there sets in a hardening of mind and heart which results in dispute and fanaticism. The history of the Church provides us with many examples, and most obviously, the old believers of Russia.

We hope that these few words may help your American readers in the understanding of the mature Orthodoxy which your publications always seek to put forth.

# A. Archimandrite Philotheos Zervakos to Archimandrite Cyprian

Paros, February 14, 1969 [Old Style]

To the Very Reverend Archimandrite Cyprian, my spiritual child in the Lord, greetings and good wishes.

I received the copy of your reply to the Most Reverend Metropolitan of Attica and Megaris. The response is good and appropriate; only have courage and be prepared for the approaching temptations and afflictions that will come. In the world, said the Lord, ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for your tribulation shall be transformed into joy. Let us endure all things, and let us accept with joy the seizure of our goods, insults, reproaches, persecutions, and everything else, that we might only gain Christ.... Let us lift up our hearts. Let us raise our souls and hearts to Him Who dwells in Heaven, beseeching help and deliverance from the woes that are coming upon the world.

If I am alive in the second week of the Fast, I will come and we will put additional affairs in order.

With paternal love and heartfelt wishes,

† Archimandrite Philotheos

Source: Orthodox Tradition, Vol. XV(1998), No. 4, pp. 26-27.