THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION OF THE
ORTHODOX SAINTS: HISTORICAL AND
THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

by

James Maillis

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Thesis Chair: Dr. John M. Zbikowski

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Thesis Approved

James Maillis

Date:____________________

Committee Members:

Dr. John M. Zbikowski __________________________

Dr. Paul Yvarra __________________________

Dr. Anthony L. Truog __________________________
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To My Children,

Christos, Sotirios, and Athanasia
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Abstract of Thesis

James Maillis

The Philosophy of Education of the Orthodox Saints:
Historical and Theological Perspectives

May 8, 2006

Dr. John M. Zbikowski, Thesis Chair

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
ABSTRACT

This thesis, presented as a curriculum, discusses the profound and inspiring educational example, which is given to the world by the Orthodox saints, who have completely submitted themselves to God, the Holy Trinity. The Orthodox saints and martyrs, unmatched in their God-inspired courage, wisdom and holiness of life, have taught and defended the unique, absolute truth that is Orthodox Christianity, without change and throughout history, for the good of all mankind. The discussion contrasts the cowardly subservience and relativism practiced, and consequently taught to the world, by many Orthodox ecumenists and others, with the great courage and holiness of life, in the face of immense danger and suffering, that is practiced, and consequently taught to humanity, by the Orthodox saints.
THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION OF THE ORTHODOX SAINTS: HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Course Information\(^1\)

*Course Description*

This course of study being presented for Orthodox Christians and for those interested in Orthodoxy is intended to be a part of an Adult Education ministry\(^2\) for Orthodox parishes and for Orthodox schools of Theology, as deemed applicable by particular Orthodox parishes and schools. The intent of this course of study is to offer an Orthodox perspective on the philosophy of education lived and taught by the Orthodox saints throughout history--a philosophy of education that is clearly theanthropic (Christ-centered) in which all heresies, past and present, are contradicted by the exposition of the unique truth of Orthodox theology taught by the Orthodox saints, in both word and deed, throughout history. This course of study in examining the Orthodox theanthropic philosophy of education\(^3\)--exemplified by the Orthodox saints, in their great wisdom and heroic lives--discusses much of what and how the Orthodox saints teach to the world.

*Philosophical Considerations and Approach to this Course of Study*

In much of the discussion, particular attention will be given to the “panheresy of

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1 Very many of the ideas pertaining to the structure of this entire Course Outline being presented--its format and terminology--were obtained from an excellent Course Outline template offered by the University of New South Wales (Sydney, Australia). The web site to search pertaining to the above mentioned Course Outline template and related matters is http://www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/ref4-2-4.course.outline.template.cfm (retrieved 1/14/06).

2 The idea for this was given to me by Dr. Paul Yvarra, Professor of Education, when he saw something similar to what I was trying to accomplish being done by people associated with Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church in Linthicum, Maryland. Pertaining to this matter, the following websites were very useful references: http://www.holycrossonline.org/adult-education/ and http://www.holycrossonline.org/worship-trinity/. This last website listed is a course on Orthodox Christianity called “Worshipping the Undivided Trinity” developed by Subdeacon Robert Miclean.

3 This terminology of “theanthropic philosophy of education” is very accurate and powerful, and is borrowed from St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije.
ecumenism”--to some of its underlying assumptions, and to those who religiously embrace ecumenism--and how its basic beliefs and assumptions, mired in relativism, radically differ from the unique truth of Orthodox theology faithfully taught by the Orthodox saints, in both word and deed, throughout history. The basic beliefs and assumptions underlying the so called validity of ecumenism radically differ from those of Orthodox Christianity, as does the conduct (very often) of those mired in ecumenism compared to the faithful and heroic teaching of the Orthodox saints. In short, the basic beliefs and assumptions that underlie ecumenism, and those of any other heresy, are radically different from those of Orthodox Christianity; and subsequently, not only what, but how, many of the adherents of ecumenism and the other heresies teach to others--through their conduct (their words and actions)--is something, very often times, profoundly different from the truthful and courageous teaching of the Orthodox saints.

Especially among people of faith pertaining to matters of their faith, more often than not, knowledge of profound theological matters is regarded as something which is divinely revealed--and ultimately unattainable by human logic and deduction alone. Any philosophy of education pertaining to a particular faith, would almost certainly have to keep this mind. Certainly, the Orthodox saints in their defense throughout history of what they believed to be the one and only true Faith, Orthodox Christianity, acknowledged divine revelation as the source of the Orthodox theology which they taught and regarded as perfect--something that was clearly seen in their theanthropic philosophy of education. With this in mind, regarding any philosophy of education for the teaching of a particular faith, the basic beliefs or presumed realities of great importance of that faith motivate the proponents of any particular educational philosophy pertaining to their

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I first encountered this expression when I saw it used in some of the writing of an Old Calendar Greek Orthodox Bishop, Metropolitan Cyprian, (Cyprian, 1995, p. 6).
faith, and are used for the justification of the particular philosophy being advocated. For any particular religion and the teaching of that religion, the basic beliefs or presumed realities of great importance consist of all the most significant and fundamental elements or beliefs of the religion, i.e. its theology. A philosophy of education for the teaching of a particular faith cannot be separated from the faith itself, from its most significant and basic beliefs, its theology. Having said this, the Orthodox saints’ theanthropic philosophy of education will be examined within the context of human history and considered within the light of Orthodox theology; when this is done, it will be seen that the Orthodox saints’ philosophy of education is something radically different from all other philosophies--both in regard to what the Orthodox saints taught and how they taught it.

Course Aims

The aims of this course consist of the following:

1) To explain and discuss the theanthropic philosophy of education of the Orthodox saints--seen within the context of human history and the unique truth of Orthodox theology.

2) To discuss, clarify and teach numerous important aspects of Orthodox theology.

3) To contrast the great uniqueness and truth of Orthodox Christianity and its theology with all the falsehood and heresies of the world and of history.

4) To explain and discuss the panheresy of ecumenism, and its relationship to all the other humanisms--and to all the other falsehoods and deceptions of the world and of history.

5) To explain and discuss the dreadful educational example given to the Orthodox faithful, and to others, by some Orthodox leaders’ participation in ecumenism.

6) To contrast the Orthodox saints’ heroic teaching, in both word and deed, of the
Orthodox Faith and its Theology, with the subservience and falsehood often taught by others.

Learning Outcomes
At the end of this course, you should be able to do the following:

1) Summarize the Orthodox theanthropic philosophy of education--exhibited by the saints in their teaching of Orthodox theology--with reference to the Orthodox doctrine of theosis.

2) Recognize and express the numerous important topics of Orthodox theology discussed in this course; and with this knowledge of Orthodox theology be able to defend, at least academically, the Orthodox Faith against heresy.

3) Differentiate Orthodox Trinitarian Theology from the theology of the other faiths discussed.

4) Summarize the view presented regarding ecumenism and the other philosophical systems (i.e. the various humanisms and other heresies); and compare these systems--based on the argument presented in the course--to the philosophy of education of the Orthodox saints.

5) Compare the Orthodox saints’ heroic teaching, in both word and deed, of the Orthodox Faith and its Theology, with the subservience and falsehood often taught by others.

Teaching Strategies
The predominant teaching methods in this course will consist of the following:

1) The entire work, The Philosophy of Education of the Orthodox Saints: Historical and Theological Perspectives, will be required reading for the course. Before the completion of each unit to be discussed, it is expected that students will have read that entire unit from the text. Thus, by the end of the course, it is expected that this text--The Philosophy of
Education of the Orthodox Saints: Historical and Theological Perspectives—will have been read in its entirety.

2) Daily—according to, and consistent with, the Schedule of Topics to be discussed—there will be a lecture and group discussion on particular sections from the particular unit being covered during that time. By the end of the course, all sections from all units will have been covered in class, in a lecture and group discussion format.

3) The lecture and group discussion format to be used in this course will strongly emphasize the content and subject matter of the text being used for course. Thus, because the expected Learning Outcomes for this course are closely aligned to the content of the text—which itself largely forms much of the structure of the course—the successful completion of the course should bring the student to the expected Learning Outcomes.

4) Within the lecture and group discussion format to be used throughout the course, strong emphasis will be given to open discussions related to the subject matter and to various forms of question and answer exercises—between teacher and students, and between students themselves in small groups. In short, within the lecture and group discussion format, a strong emphasis on cooperative learning will certainly be pursued.

Assessment

To help the student determine his (or her) progress in the knowledge of the subject matter of this course, each student will be asked to adequately complete the following means of assessment (to be used in this course):

1) Individual project

The Individual project will be a roughly 5 to 10 page paper and/or presentation

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5 Given that this particular course is a non-credit course designed for the personal enrichment and education of Orthodox Christians and those interested in Orthodoxy, there is at the end of the course no formal grade assigned to the student. However, this assessment component, which is presented here, can easily be modified to make this same course into a course that is offered for credit.
pertaining to one or more of the five expected Learning Outcomes outlined earlier. The teacher will meet individually with students to advice students regarding their proposed choice of project. (This assignment will be due at approximately the middle of the semester.)

2) Group project

Groups of students will be formed. Each group of students will give a presentation in front of class pertaining to one or more of the five expected Learning Outcomes outlined earlier. The teacher will meet individually with each group to advice the group of students regarding their proposed choice of project. Each group will present an approximately 1 to 4 page summary or outline of their presentation to all the members of the class before the presentation of their project. The presentation of the project and any associated activities should be expected to take anywhere from about 20 minutes to an hour. (This assignment will be due during the final week of class.)

3) Class Participation

Attendance and class participation in discussions, question and answer sessions, and the other activities of the class are taken into consideration regarding the final assessment of progress. Much of the discussion, and many of the questions asked by the teacher of the students (questions asked of individual students and collectively asked of all the students) will emphasize the expectation of a strong academic knowledge pertaining to the five Learning Outcomes mentioned earlier for this course.

Note: Further details of these assessment components, here outlined, will be presented in class.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

It is expected that students hold themselves to the highest standards of academic honesty
and integrity. As such, plagiarism will not be tolerated. To help clarify this, the following is excerpted, word for word, from the excellent Course Outline template offered by the University of New South Wales (Sydney, Australia):

**What is Plagiarism?**

Plagiarism is the presentation of the thoughts or work of another as one’s own. Examples include:

- direct duplication of the thoughts or work of another, including by copying material, ideas or concepts from a book, article, report or other written document (whether published or unpublished), composition, artwork, design, drawing, circuitry, computer program or software, website, Internet, other electronic resource, or another person’s assignment without appropriate acknowledgment;
- paraphrasing another person’s work with very minor changes keeping the meaning, form and/or progression of ideas of the original;
- piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole;
- presenting an assessment item as independent work when it has been produced in whole or part in collusion with other people, for example, another student or a tutor; and
- claiming credit for a proportion a work contributed to a group assessment item that is greater than that actually contributed.

For the purposes of this policy, submitting an assessment item that has already been submitted for academic credit elsewhere may be considered plagiarism.

Knowingly permitting your work to be copied by another student may also be

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This information—like so much of the other structure and terminology of my Course Outline—is to be found at http://www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/ref4-2-4/course.outline.template.cfm (retrieved 1/14/06).
considered to be plagiarism.

Note that an assessment item produced in oral, not written, form, or involving live presentation, may similarly contain plagiarised material.

The inclusion of the thoughts or work of another with attribution appropriate to the academic discipline does not amount to plagiarism. (University of New South Wales, 2005)

Course schedule

The following is the schedule of topics to be covered in this course:

UNIT 1: FOREWORD  PROLOGUE  

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

a) The Uniqueness of Orthodox Christianity

b) “Better, Indeed, a Laudable War Than a Peace Which Severs One From God”

c) The Strength of God Perfectly Manifested, Despite the Weakness of His Servants

d) Orthodoxy: Alone the True Faith, In Spite of the Profound Unworthiness of Orthodox Christians

(Appendices A and B will be studied and referenced to supplement Unit 1.)

UNIT 2: CHAPTER 2 THE ABSOLUTE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD, THE SUPRASUBSTANTIAL TRINITY

a) The Absolute Transcendence of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, in Relation to Creation

b) The Essence-Energies Distinction in God, the Suprasubstantial
Holy Trinity

i) “Distinguishing in God the three hypostases, the one nature and the natural energies”.

ii) The divine energies are not creation, nor are they created.

c) “God Reveals Himself to Himself From All Eternity”

d) The Statement, “Partakers of the Divine Nature”, Must Not be Misunderstood

e) The Essence-Energies Distinction Confessed Throughout the History of Orthodox Christianity

(Appendices C, D, and F will be studied and referenced to supplement Unit 2.)

UNIT 3: CHAPTER 3 THE PROBLEM OF ECUMENISM

a) Orthodox Patriarch, Diodoros I, of Jerusalem and his defense of Orthodoxy

b) Ecumenism, a Falsehood and Stumbling Block Embraced By Many

c) The Orthodox Saints Venerated and Respected as Teachers in the Face of Ecumenism

d) St. Justin Popovich and Others Confess the Uniqueness of Orthodoxy

e) The Orthodox Saints Teach People About the Futility and Falsehood of All the World’s Humanisms

i) Seen in the light of Orthodoxy: Marxism and all other humanisms, because of their propagation of evil and
falsehood, are doomed to failure.

ii) Relativism is inherent to all the humanisms and associated with their inevitable fall into evil.

iii) The experience of the Orthodox saints teaches the world that Orthodoxy is the one true Faith, and that it defeats all falsehood and evil.

iv) Orthodox ecumenists confuse and undermine Orthodox faithful.

f) The Orthodox Fathers on the Holy Mountain Defend Orthodox Christianity Against the Relativism and Subservience of Ecumenism

g) The Experience of the Orthodox Saints is a Condemnation of Heresy and all Other Falsehood

(Appendix A will be referenced in order to supplement Unit 3.)

UNIT 4: CHAPTER 4 THE HEROIC CONFESSION OF ORTHODOXY

a) Orthodox Leaders Not Courageously Confessing Orthodoxy

b) An Orthodox Confession From Relative Safety

c) The Heroic Orthodox Confession of St. Maximos

d) The Heroic Confession of Orthodoxy Made By the Orthodox Saints, Throughout History

i) A look at some ancient Orthodox saints.

ii) A look at some Orthodox martyrs from the time of the Ottoman empire.

iii) St. Sergius of Radonezh and St. Dmitri Donskoi.

e) The Great Humility of the Orthodox Saints
f) The Great Courage of the Martyrs, a Great Educational Example for all Humanity

g) Ecumenism: A Violation of Orthodox Canons

h) Ecumenism and Evangelicalism Both Erroneously Claim to Possess “True Christianity”

I) Evangelical Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism

   i) The Orthodox saints defy worldly power for Christ the Theanthropos.

   ii) Evangelical Christian Zionism seemingly subservient to Jewish Zionism.

   iii) People, from among all groups of people, have, throughout history, committed atrocities.

   iv) St. John of Damascus comments regarding the apostasy of the Jews.

   v) Evangelicalism’s attempt to justify radical zionism.

   vi) Orthodoxy must be confessed without subservience to worldly power.

(Appendices A and B will referenced in order to supplement Unit 4.)

UNIT 5: CHAPTER 5 ORTHODOX TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

CONTRADICTS THE ERROR OF THE FILIOQUE INNOVATION

   a) The Filioque Innovation Contradicted by Orthodox Tradition

   b) God the Father is Uniquely the Source of the Other Two Divine Persons, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit

   c) The Filioque Innovation Contributes to the “Relativization” of
the Suprasubstantial Trinity

d) The One and Only True God is the Suprasubstantial Trinity
e) The Nicene Creed, by Itself, is Not the Sole Determination of Orthodoxy

UNIT 6: CHAPTER 6 ORTHODOX ECUMENISTS’ RELATIVISM

a) Ecumenism, Ambiguity, and the Relativization of God

b) The Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition Proclaim Christ the Son of God; the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition Proclaim the Suprasubstantial Trinity

UNIT 7: CHAPTER 7 ORTHODOXY CONTRADICTS THE ERROR OF PERSONAL INFALLIBILITY

a) Orthodox Christianity Has Uniquely Preserved the Holy Scriptures Throughout History

b) The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, Uniquely the Church

c) Orthodox Ecumenism: For Some, An Encouragement and Opportunity to Attack Orthodox Christianity

(Appendix E will be studied and referenced to supplement Unit 7.)

UNIT 8: CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

References

Bibliography

APPENDIX A ECUMENISM: SUBSERVIENT TO THE PHILOSOPHY AND POWER OF THIS WORLD

a) Dostoevsky Saw the Hypocrisy, Futility, and Danger of Humanism
b) St. Justin of Chelije Rightfully Condemns Humanism

c) Marxism and Other Humanistic Systems are Profoundly Similar to One Another, in Their Alienation From God and the People Whom They Oppress

d) Political Correctness: An Attempt to Control and Suppress Freedom of Expression

e) The Orthodox Saints Fight Against the Evil and Hypocrisy Inherent to All Humanistic Systems

APPENDIX B  THE LAST JUDGMENT

APPENDIX C  THE HOLY EVER-VIRGIN MARY

a) God in His Dispensation Prepared the Human Race for His Incarnation

   i) “The name of the Mother of God (QeotokoV) contains the whole history of the divine economy in the world” (St. John of Damascus).

   ii) The great mercy of God to the people of Israel and to the entire human race.

   iii) Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Virgin Mary.

b) The Incarnation of God the Word from the Virgin Does Not Imply Pantheism

c) In Orthodox Christianity, the Veneration of the Mother of God is Balanced, Never Heretical

APPENDIX D  CAPITA 96 AND 97 FROM ST. GREGORY PALAMAS,

ANOTHER TRANSLATION
APPENDIX E  THE ORTHODOX VENERATION OF THE SAINTS AND THEIR ICONS

APPENDIX F  THE INCARNATION OF GOD THE WORD

   a) The Incarnation of God “As He Himself Saw Fit”
   b) The Orthodox Defense Against Monophysitism, A Defense Against Pantheism
   c) The Eternal Divine Will for the Incarnation, Seen Within the Context of the Essence-Energies Distinction
   d) The Great Holy Synods of St. Gregory Palamas’ Time

GLOSSARY

Appendix and Glossary References

Resources for students

1) The text for this course is hoped to be of some value for the Orthodox education of students interested in the subject matter of Orthodox theology and the Orthodox theanthropic philosophy of education of the saints.

2) All the resources listed in the Reference and Bibliography sections of the text (at the end of the body of the text and at the end of the Appendices and Glossary) are, for the most part, outstanding resources to consult to further one’s Orthodox education.

3) The resources just mentioned from the text are by no means exhaustive, and further examples of excellent resources pertaining to the subject matter of this course will continually be mentioned in class.

Continual course improvement

Throughout the course, and at the end of the course, the teacher will gather feedback regarding what students think of this class (i.e. its structure, content, delivery, etc.) and
how it can be improved. All feedback will be voluntary, and when not publicly offered (such as spoken in front of class, for example), will be confidential. Means will be taken for the voluntary and confidential written feedback--intended to take place at the end of the semester--to not be seen by the teacher until the final evaluation of students’ progress is complete.
FOREWORD

This thesis is presented as a curriculum and is about what and how the Orthodox saints and martyrs teach to humanity, which can be seen, academically, in all that Orthodox Christianity, by the grace of God, professes to the world, but which potentially and most significantly can also be lived, as much as humanly possible, as the Orthodox saints lived Orthodox theology--through pursuing and ultimately fulfilling all that Christ commands of us to pursue, salvation and sanctification (offered to us by God Incarnate, Christ the Theanthropos, within His Holy Orthodox Church). I have written this thesis by drawing from the God-inspired wisdom of the unconquerable Orthodox saints and martyrs whose confession of the eternal Holy Orthodox Faith--which these saints and martyrs were able to courageously bring forth, by the mercy of the Triune God, united to Christ the Theanthropos--is forever true and unconquerable. Drawing from some of the God-inspired wisdom found throughout the Holy Orthodox Tradition--though I am a cowardly, unworthy and sinful man--the discussion of Orthodox theology in this thesis is faithful to the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. This is so not through any merit of my own, but rather because I have drawn immensely from highly regarded Orthodox theologians, who were immersed in the teachings of the Fathers (the Patristic writings and the entire Holy Orthodox Tradition). Additionally, I have sought guidance in Orthodox theology from many Orthodox Priests throughout the years and I have also directly drawn a great amount from the writings of numerous Orthodox Fathers, both ancient and modern. As such-- and with Orthodox Christians being forever cognizant of the great honor and veneration rightfully offered to the God-inspired Orthodox saints and martyrs whose heroic confession of the one and only Truth, Christ the Theanthropos, and whose heroic confession of the one and only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity, is
clearly seen throughout history--this thesis is offered for any and all Orthodox educators (Orthodox Hierarchs, Priests, and Lay people) as a brief educational resource on certain topics of Orthodox theology and as an exhortation to all Orthodox Christians (myself included) to strive to one day be able to follow the heroic sacrifice of all the Orthodox saints and martyrs, both known and unknown, who throughout history, in an unparalleled fashion, have confessed the one and only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity, and never compromised with the falsehood, which is to be abundantly found in this world.

It can be said that every Orthodox Christian (whether that person be an Orthodox Hierarch, a Priest or a Lay person) is called to be a saint and thus called to be an educator. For in the strictest and most true sense of the word only an Orthodox saint is an educator, by word and deed, and by the very projection of his or her sanctity united to Christ in the unique truth of the Holy Orthodox Church, which is His Body. And all of this is accomplished by the Orthodox saint through his or her cooperation with the grace of God, which God freely offers to humanity--for without God nothing is possible. Ideally, the Orthodox Hierarch as a spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians must, through his words and conduct, remain faithful, publicly and privately, to the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and be willing, if necessary, to give his life in martyrdom--following the example of his Master, Christ the Theanthropos--for his flock, which has been entrusted to him by the Lord Christ Himself. An Orthodox Hierarch is called by Christ to righteously teach the Orthodox Faith, through his correct glorification of the Triune God (Orthodoxia)--manifested in his words of truth, and in his works of righteousness (Orthopraxia)--courageously following the Holy Tradition of all the Orthodox saints and martyrs who have lived and died for Christ the Theanthropos
throughout history. The Orthodox Hierarch is called to do this in order to defend, with his own life, if necessary, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ against all false teaching. The Orthodox person who has taken monastic vows, and is either a Priest or a Lay person, has essentially this same aforementioned obligation as the Orthodox Hierarch does, only obviously without the same spiritual leadership and authority associated with his or her calling; nonetheless, the monastics’ Orthodox confession of Christ the Theanthropos can be every bit as significant, and far reaching, as that of the Orthodox Hierarch, sometimes even more so. The same can be said for the Orthodox Priest who is the spiritual leader of a particular parish, and much the same can be said for every other Orthodox Christian. Each and every Orthodox Christian, in a sense, is called to be an Orthodox Christian educator, for every Orthodox Christian is called to seek salvation and sanctification in Christ the Theanthropos within His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body. In the process of doing so (seeking salvation and sanctification), Orthodox Christians have the potential--if they accomplish, by the grace of God, that for which God has created us in the first place (sanctification, theosis)--to truly educate themselves and others. We must note that, certainly, every Orthodox Christian is called to learn as much as he or she can possibly learn about their Faith, academically, if you will--through the study of the Holy Scriptures, and through the study of all the rest of the Holy Orthodox Tradition (the teaching of the Fathers and all the other saints, the decisions and teachings of the Holy Ecumenical Councils, the guidance of Orthodox Priests and theologians, etc.)--but this knowledge which is available for us to experience, academically, by the infinite grace of God, within the Holy Orthodox Church, is also

1 Orthodox Priests will often tell their congregations, “Orthodoxia means Orthopraxia”. What this means is that the correct glorification of God, Orthodoxia, is accomplished not just through words of righteousness, but must be accompanied by works of righteousness, Orthopraxia, as well.
knowledge that God calls us to experience and live with every aspect of our very being, as much as is humanly possible— as the Orthodox saints and martyrs did, united to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. The very sanctity which the Orthodox saints attained, by the grace of God, not only gave them great knowledge and holiness of life with which they could, as no one else could, educate others, academically, in Orthodox theology; but, even more profound than the profession of this knowledge, academically, that same sanctity also enabled these saints, in both word and deed, to call people to pursue and attain that same knowledge pertaining to Orthodox theology, not just academically, but with every aspect of their very being, as much as humanly possible—as the Orthodox saints themselves were able to do, by the grace of God.

For as St. Justin Popovich faithfully teaches us in accordance with Holy Orthodox Tradition:

Education (enlightenment) is simply the projection of sanctity, the radiation of light; the saint shines and, thereby, enlightens and sanctifies. Education is entirely conditioned by sanctity; only a saint can be a true educator and enlightener. Without the saints, there can be no enlighteners; without holiness, there can be no education; without enlightenment there can be no sanctification. Sanctity is sanctity only by divine light. True enlightenment is simply the radiation of holiness; only the saints are truly enlightened and sanctified, for they have poured out the divine light over all their being by the practice of the evangelical virtues and have thereby purged themselves of all the darkness of sin and vice. … Education without sanctity, without sanctification by the Holy Spirit, education without the perfecting and completing of man by the God-Man, education without God, was invented by Europe in its humanistic idolatry. (Popovic, 2000,
Every Orthodox Christian is indeed called to become educated (enlightened), for himself (herself) and others, by pursuing sanctification, theosis, in Christ the Theanthropos within His Holy Orthodox Church which is His Body (and which Christ Himself established here on earth to provide for all of humanity the path to sanctification, theosis).

Orthodox Christianity through its saints and unmatched Holy Tradition confesses that Christ the Theanthropos is the Only-Begotten Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, our Creator and the only Way to salvation and sanctification. The Church which Christ Himself established to offer humanity the path to salvation and sanctification is one and only one, and it is His theanthropic Body here on earth, the Holy Orthodox Church. We see that within Christ, within His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body, in the light of His commandments: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself’ (cf. Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37-39), (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 171, ch. 29), every Orthodox Christian is called to pursue theosis, sanctification. But what does this mean exactly? The Orthodox saints and martyrs--through their great words of God-inspired wisdom and through their great actions of God-inspired courage, kindness and all other sanctity--teach Orthodox Christians (and the rest of the world) Orthodox Theology and they teach us that only Christ the Theanthropos can save us. All of these things--Orthodox Theology and all the virtues to which Christ calls us--which the

Orthodox saints and martyrs teach us, these saints and martyrs truly know and live, in  

\footnote{In whatever is quoted from the Philokalia in this thesis, if the terminology “cf.” occurs, it is a note from the editors (Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware) saying that “Where authors in the Philokalia merely refer to a passage or paraphrase it, but do not quote it exactly, ‘cf.’ is added before the reference.” This quotation pertaining to “cf.” is found in Palmer, G. E. H., Sherrard, P., Ware, K. (Eds. and Trans.) Philokalia II, (p.12).}
the fullest sense, not like the overwhelming majority of rest of us in this world (myself included, because of my great cowardice and sinfulness), who may know Orthodox theology academically but not in their heart and soul, as the Orthodox saints knew it. For indeed the Orthodox saints, unlike the overwhelming majority of the rest of us (myself included), truly confessed the Orthodox Christian Faith in every aspect of their life, in both word and deed, and were willing to suffer all manner of hardship and all manner of death for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, courageously fighting against all evil. This is why the Orthodox saints are the great educators that they are. Whereas the rest of us (myself included) are only capable of confessing Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church academically, the Orthodox saints, throughout history, confessed Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church with their very flesh and blood, even unto death, in the most torturous circumstances imaginable, when they were called to do so.

Throughout history, countless Orthodox saints have died for Christ, and there will always be Orthodox saints to do so until the end of time, gloriously proclaiming Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. And, of course, the Orthodox saints (the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Confessors and all the other Saints) have their power only by the grace of God, for God did not need to create anything or anyone, and as St. Justin Popovich tells us: “Sanctity is sanctity only by divine light” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132). We also observe that the Orthodox saints and martyrs educate the world not just with great academic knowledge and brilliance-- something which many of them certainly had, but which many other people who were not saints also had; the great significance of the Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the grace of God, is that they have, in all humility and faith, obeyed Christ by “taking up their cross”. They have followed Christ the
Theanthropos always remaining faithful to Him and not falling into heresy. Even in the most difficult and dangerous of circumstances, the Orthodox saints and martyrs, with unmatched courage, would remain united to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body. In this way, the Orthodox saints and martyrs are the great educators of humanity, for through every aspect of their life in Christ they epitomized the courageous and uncompromising fulfillment of the Lord’s commandment ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself’, (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 171, ch. 29).

With the great courage, wisdom and power that God gives to the Orthodox saints and martyrs enabling them to overcome all evil, God, once again, demonstrates His great love for mankind, for He invites all people to pursue this same salvation and sanctification in Christ the Theanthropos which, by the grace of God, the Orthodox saints and martyrs pursued and ultimately attained. The power of God makes all the Orthodox saints the great educators that they are, and they invite all of us to “take up our cross” and follow Christ, as Christ commanded us to do, and as the Orthodox saints, in the fullest sense, truly did. But how does God call us to “take up our cross” and follow Him—for indeed, when God voluntarily became Incarnate, He did tell us just that? The answer is found in the Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely the Body of Christ. Every baptized Orthodox Christian is called to remain Orthodox forever and never stray into the false teachings, philosophies, and religions of this world, no matter what temptations and difficulties that person may face in life. Every Orthodox Christian is called to remain united to Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church, through following all the teachings and commandments of Christ the Theanthropos--teachings and commandments which have been lived by countless Orthodox saints throughout history,
and are forever preserved, unaltered and undefiled, for all humanity to clearly see and experience, in the one and only Body of Christ, established by the Lord Christ Himself, the Holy Orthodox Church. One cannot adequately explain this reality, which uniquely encompasses and describes the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ (and someone as cowardly and as sinful as I am, certainly cannot adequately explain it). And this education, which is “entirely conditioned by sanctity” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132) and which a person, by the grace of God, can receive and give to others--as the countless Orthodox saints throughout history have done, through the pursuit and attainment of salvation and sanctification, united to Christ the Theanthropos in His Body, the Holy Orthodox Church--is certainly not something which can be deduced, quantified or otherwise rationalized. Instead, we can only point to where salvation and sanctification are certainly to be found: the Holy Orthodox Church, the Body of Christ, where God offers to every person the opportunity to strive, with all their created being and in all humility, for that which God created us in the first place, sanctification, *theosis*.

We say that we are given this opportunity to pursue sanctification by our Creator, and we must do so in all humility, for God did not need to create us, nor did He need to offer us the opportunity for salvation and sanctification after He created us--and for which He voluntarily became Incarnate. God, our Creator, voluntarily became Incarnate to save us and sanctify us and the Orthodox saints are an unmatched and unbroken testimony to this reality throughout history. The martyrlic life and death struggles miraculously accomplished, by the grace of God, within the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, by countless Orthodox saints, are an incomparable testimony, which educates the entire world, to God’s saving and sanctifying dispensation. Without Christ the Theanthropos the saints could do nothing, nor would they even exist, nor would
anyone else even exist--for as God, Christ, without any necessity to Himself (without needing to create), created everything and everyone. It is with this in mind, that we must understand the words of Christ, the Pre-eternal Son of God, God Himself, Who is of one essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, when He tells us: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). The Orthodox saints, throughout history, have demonstrated--with their great love for God and humanity, seen in both their words and heroic deeds, seen in their holiness of life--that only Christ our God can save us. And Christ Himself established His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body, and as such, the Orthodox Church, with Christ Himself as its Head, uniquely possesses the fullness of all truth, for all humanity to experience within its embrace. And no matter how much the Holy Orthodox Church is persecuted, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:16-18). Orthodox Christians are called to imitate the Orthodox saints, in both word and deed, by pursuing the commandments of Christ within the one and only Body of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church. This is a profound process, in many ways defying any sort of exhaustive description. For who can adequately describe Christ our God, or the mystery of salvation and sanctification offered to the entire human race to be pursued within the one and only Body of Christ, the Orthodox Church? The education of Orthodox Christians consists in this pursuit of salvation and sanctification offered by the Creator of all, Christ the Son of God. The mystery of our salvation and sanctification in Christ is accomplished for us by Christ Himself, when we, in all humility and love before Him, cooperate with His divine will for us, within His Holy Orthodox Church. Again, this process in many ways defies any sort of exhaustive description, and it certainly defies any rationalistic methodology. For to attempt to somehow deduce, rationalize or formulate some kind of “recipe” for
salvation and sanctification is tantamount to much of the absurdity of all the heresies and false religions of this world.

Ecumenism, the panheresy\(^9\) that it is, is the epitome of rationalistic methodology in religious matters, for it essentially equates all the religions of the world with one another (regarding their presumed validity). Additionally, irrespective of the falsehood inherent (to one extent or another) in each and every one of all the world’s religions (with the exception of the True Faith, Orthodox Christianity), we see ecumenism attempting to equate all these false religions of the world with the one and only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. Ecumenism, in a sense, gives life to all the dead ideologies and philosophies that have ever existed, for ecumenism attempts to validate and essentially equate all the false religions of the world, in its syncretism and relativism; and in the process it attempts to relativize Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body. To relativize Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church which is His Body and of which Christ Himself is the Head, is to deny Christ. Ecumenism, in its various forms, does just that, and in that regard (its denial of the uniqueness of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church), ecumenism is simply an elaborate, all encompassing panheresy which has features as old as Orthodox Christianity itself. The great falsehood to be found abundantly in the world and throughout history, and well represented by the panheresy of ecumenism, is contrasted with the God-inspired humility, love, and courage of the Orthodox saints and martyrs. The forthcoming discussion is about these Orthodox saints and martyrs, and much of what they taught the world, which can be seen, academically, and, most significantly, can be lived with every aspect of a person’s being--if that person follows

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\(^9\) This seems to be a common description of ecumenism by its critics. I heard a young Orthodox Priest, from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, call ecumenism a “Pan-heresy”. Likewise, an Old Calendar Greek Orthodox Bishop, Metropolitan Cyprian, uses the expression “the Pan-heresy of Ecumenism” (Cyprian, 1995, p. 6).
the Orthodox saints’ and martyrs’ heroic example. For indeed, these saints and martyrs, with incomparable sacrifice, pursued and ultimately attained that for which Christ the Son of God calls all humanity: sanctification (*theosis*)--united to Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church. The Orthodox saints and martyrs--with their God-inspired wisdom and with their God-inspired heroism--educate us, academically, and furthermore educate us to follow their incomparable example of courage and personal sacrifice leading to salvation and sanctification, in Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. This curriculum discusses much of what and how the Orthodox saints and martyrs teach us. The Orthodox saints and martyrs--with their God-inspired courage, wisdom and love for God, because they are truly united, as much as humanly possible, to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church--educate Orthodox Christians and the whole world as to how to follow and live the commandments of Christ. In the Orthodox saints and martyrs--with all that they accomplished by the grace of God, in their words and actions--we indeed see something which truly defies all the falsehood and power of this world. It is this great and necessarily courageous educational example--seen in the Orthodox saints and martyrs rejecting all falsehood and evil (no matter what the consequences), and forever remaining faithful to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church--that defies all worldly wisdom and power, including the Ecumenical Movement, and which will be examined in this curriculum.
This thesis will demonstrate the profound educational example given to the world by the Orthodox Christian saints, who, by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God, teach Orthodox Christians, and the rest of the world, Orthodox Trinitarian Theology--as is uniquely confessed within the Body of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church. This is something that, throughout history, these saints have accomplished miraculously, fearlessly and without compromise. By the grace of God, the Orthodox saints teach the world the eternal Holy Orthodox Faith, in the face of all oppression and persecution, not fearing nor serving anyone who hates Christ, but instead knowing, as St. Paul knew, that they could do all things in Christ Who would give them the strength that they needed to accomplish all things (Philippians 4:13)--for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body.

The Orthodox saints teach the world the unique and incomparable beauty that is Orthodox Christianity, by the grace of God, overcoming their own sinfulness and that of others (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132). The philosophy of education shown to the world by the Orthodox saints, as St. Justin Popovich faithfully relates to us, is the following: Only when a person is united to Christ can that person be saved, sanctified, enlightened and educated, and this is made possible by God Himself for His creation, humanity, with His own Incarnation and establishment of His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body--and which, by the unfathomable grace of God, preserves, defends and confesses all that God has uniquely given to it (Popovic, 2000, pp. 129-132). Through its saints, by the infinite mercy of the Triune God, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ seeks to educate and enlighten all its members (and all the rest of humanity for that matter) preserving, defending, and teaching the fullness of all truth, which was uniquely
given to it, as the one and only Body of Christ, by God Himself. Through its saints, by
the grace of God, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, uniquely possessing the fullness
of all truth, preserves, defends, teaches and lives Orthodox doctrine, as uniquely the One,
Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church--unchanged and unconquered throughout history.
For the Orthodox throughout history, only the Orthodox saints are the true educators and
they alone are the true educators (and this only by the grace of God); for the Orthodox
saints completely submitted themselves to God Who became man, Christ the
Theanthropos, as they remained united to His Body, the Holy Orthodox Church. The
Orthodox saints and martyrs with unparalleled wisdom and courage taught Orthodox
doctrine in the fullest sense, because, first and foremost, they struggled martyricly to do
the will of God pursuing the sanctification and holiness which only God could give them.
The great courage and wisdom with which Orthodox doctrine was taught to the world by
the Orthodox saints and martyrs is accomplished by the unfathomable grace of God. For
God gave the saints the courage, love and wisdom which they pursued, and which they
needed (which all the Orthodox saints throughout the ages needed and acquired by the
grace of God) in order to teach to the world Orthodox doctrine, undefiled and unaltered
(Popovic, 2000, pp. 129-132).

Only because God gave the saints this wisdom, love, courage and holiness--in
short only because God gave the Orthodox saints and martyrs the sanctification in Christ
the Theanthropos, which they pursued with all their heart, soul and might, in their love
for God and their fellow man (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 171)--are the
Orthodox saints and martyrs the great educators that they are (Popovic, 2000, pp. 129-
132). Without God we are nothing, and the Orthodox saints and martyrs knew that truth
and confessed it in every aspect of their life--united to Christ the Theanthropos, Who
gave them the courage, strength, love and wisdom to accomplish the will of God for their own salvation, and for the salvation of those around them. Through their martyrlic life and death struggles for Christ (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11)--united to Christ in His Holy Orthodox Church, which is His Body--the Orthodox saints and martyrs have taught Orthodox Christian doctrine unchanged throughout history. For the Orthodox saints and martyrs knew that they had to remain united to Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body, in order to correctly give praise to, and teach the faithful regarding, the absolutely transcendent Suprasubstantial Trinity. As Orthodox theologians will often tell us, Orthodox Christianity is, Orthodoxy, the correct worship of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. And these same theologians will likewise tell us that Orthodox Christianity is also, Orthopraxia, correct actions--that is, if the Orthodox Faith is lived and confessed as the Orthodox saints and martyrs have taught us, through following the example of their heroic life, death, and rebirth in Christ the Theanthropos.

The Orthodox saints and martyrs confessed, lived and taught the Orthodox Faith undefiled and unaltered throughout history, united to the one and only Body of Christ, The Holy Orthodox Church. For these saints and martyrs knew that to fall away from the Holy Orthodox Faith, and succumb to the heresies ravaging the world throughout history (but unable to prevail against Orthodox Christianity), was an immensely grave matter. For contrary to much of the contemporary ecumenism and syncretism, which seems to dominate religious discussion in many instances, the Orthodox saints and Martyrs knew the words of the Lord pertaining to heretics and the falsehood which they propagate, and pertaining to everyone who is not sincere in their love for Christ the Theanthropos:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly
they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits will you know them. Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord”, shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matthew 7: 15-23) (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, pp. 22-23).

St. John Chrysostom comments on one of the verses from this passage, Matthew 7: 16. Here is some of what he had to say:

“The thistles and thorns are heretics. As a thistle or a thorn has prickles on every side, so have the servants of the devil, being filled on whatever side you consider them with perversity. Such thorns and thistles can never bring forth the fruits of the Church.” (The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume 1), 1999, pp. 92-93)

We can see a striking similarity between what an ancient Orthodox Father, St. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407)\(^\text{10}\), had to say regarding heretics, and what a modern day Orthodox saint, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, had to say about them. Here is some of what St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije had to say regarding heretics and the false teachings (heresies), which they propagate:

“The teaching of the Orthodox theanthropic Church of Christ through the holy apostles,

\(^{10}\) Dates obtained from the Preface, p. xii, of The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume 1)
the holy fathers and the holy Councils concerning heretics is this: heresies are not the Church and can never be it” (Popovic, 2000, p. 156). The Orthodox saints and martyrs are consistent with one another, throughout the unmatched and unbroken history of Orthodox Christianity. Their faithfulness to the Holy Orthodox Tradition has enabled them, through the unfathomable mercy of the Triune God, to successfully defend the Holy Orthodox Church against all the heresies which have risen up to destroy it.

The Orthodox saints and martyrs teach the world through their unmatched courage and faithfulness to Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church. The Orthodox saints are unwavering in their faithfulness to Orthodox Christianity and its eternal Holy Tradition. These saints heroically lived and died confessing Orthodoxy and teaching other Orthodox Christians to follow their example. This call to be faithful to Orthodoxy, and to all its written and unwritten Tradition, and to reject any and all heresy and innovation, is found throughout Holy Orthodox Tradition. For in the Holy Seventh Ecumenical Synod we are told: “If anyone breaks any ecclesiastical tradition, written or unwritten, let him be anathema” (Cavarnos, 1992a, p. 37).

Orthodox Christianity’s unequaled consistency has been heroically guarded by every Orthodox saint throughout history. St. Athanasios the Great speaks in agreement with every Orthodox saint, when he tells us: “I have taught according to the Apostolic faith handed down to us by the Fathers, devising nothing outside it” (Cavarnos, 1992a, p. 14). Likewise, St. Photios the Great teaches us to follow Orthodox teaching, which has been handed down to us undefiled, and not attempt to alter it: “In matters of the Faith, even a small deviation is a sin that leads to death” (Bishop Angelos of Avlona, 1998, p. 42).

These statements are certainly consistent with what the Holy Scriptures say, where for example the Apostle Paul teaches us, concerning written and unwritten tradition:
“Brethren, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which ye were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:15) (Cavarnos, 1992a, p. 37).

This thesis is about the unwavering confession of Orthodox Christianity made by the Orthodox saints in the face of all hardship, persecution and evil. This, of course, is contrasted with the cowardly relativism and syncretism of many of the world’s philosophies, including ecumenism. In this thesis, working under the Orthodox premise that the Holy Orthodox Church is indeed the one and only True Church of Christ--possessing the fullness of all truth in its Theology and worship (for it is uniquely the Body of Christ, established by Christ the Theanthropos Himself Who is its Head)--we contrast the absolute truth of Orthodox Christianity with all the other religions and philosophies of the world, which do not possess the fullness of all truth as Orthodoxy does. In our discussion in order to show what by the grace of God is the great educational accomplishment of the Orthodox saints in heroically living, confessing, and teaching the Orthodox Faith to the world, we have to discuss, to at least some significant extent, the Orthodox Faith itself, which (under Orthodox presuppositions) is the one and only True Faith.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is to discuss the incomparable educational example given to the world by the Orthodox Christian saints, who by their great courage and sanctity have throughout history confessed Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Holy Orthodox Church in the face of all adversity, persecution and oppression. The Orthodox saints through no intrinsic merit of their own, only by the unfathomable grace of God--for otherwise they, as all the rest of us, would be hopelessly lost in the evil and stupidity of this fallen world--teach all Orthodox Christians and all of humanity in general that only by the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, can man transcend the evil and stupidity that rules this world, and attain to the sanctification for which God has created us. The Orthodox saints, with their God-inspired fearlessness in the face of all evil, powerfully give a great educational example to the whole world through their holiness of life in Christ that defies all worldly power, no matter how frightful and all encompassing that worldly power may happen to be. This profound example of courage and holiness given to us by the Orthodox saints teaches us, warns us, exhorts us, and inspires us to seek God, the Holy Trinity, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. (cf. Lev. 19 : 18; Deut. 6 : 5; Matt. 22 : 37-39) (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 171, ch. 29).

The Orthodox saints epitomize the pursuit and ultimately the fulfillment of the Lord’s commandment, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself” (cf. Lev. 19 : 18; Deut. 6 : 5; Matt. 22 : 37-39) (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 171, ch. 29). In doing this, the Orthodox saints teach and encourage all of us by the grace of God, through their

\[^{11}\text{The “cf.”, in relation to all quotations from the Philokalia, as mentioned and outlined earlier, is the editors’ note.}\]
martyric witness (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11), to abandon our own willful wrongdoing and embrace of all the evil which dominates this fallen world. For indeed, evil is something into which we are all prone to fall, and is something into which we all are inevitably doomed to fall, whenever we willfully alienate ourselves from one another and our Creator, God, the Holy Trinity. With this in mind, it is the regrettable embrace of the ecumenical movement on the part of some Orthodox leaders and others, that is a clear example of people embracing some of the dead ideologies, and other evils of this fallen world, which are to be found abundantly in “the Pan-heresy of Ecumenism” (Cyprian, 1995, p. 6), this rather than attempting to imitate the Orthodox saints in their courageous and uncompromising confession of the unique and unadulterated truth of Orthodox Christianity.

From an Orthodox Christian perspective, though I am sinful and cowardly, I will try to discuss the participation of various Orthodox leaders in the “Ecumenical Movement” and examine the effect and relationship that this participation has to Orthodox Christian witness and education worldwide (both to Orthodox and non-Orthodox persons). For indeed, Orthodox Christianity cannot be taught in the fullest sense apart from courageously witnessing to the world for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, independent of all evil and danger which is inevitably encountered in so doing. But who, by the grace of God, has taught and witnessed to the whole world for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is His Body, more courageously and eloquently than the Orthodox saints have? The answer is--no one. For many Orthodox ecumenists and others do not confront much of the evil and falsehood of this world, but instead embrace it and validate it through their participation in the ecumenical movement. The striving for material comfort and self preservation apparently dominates the lives of such
people—as it does the lives of most other people, myself included—as they pander to
people and forces that have great worldly power, who often have profound hostility
towards Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. Depending upon the extent to which it is
pursued, ecumenism is, at its worst, an arrogant, false ideology that knowingly seeks to
encompass and somehow give validity to all the false ideologies and religions of the world.
Either way, ecumenism is indeed a false ideology that seeks to embrace and validate much
of the falsehood of this fallen world. Who engages in ecumenism willfully to do these
things with great evil intention in their hearts, and who does these things out of naivety
and ignorance, and who does these things out of fear because they are confronted by
overwhelming worldly power, and who does these things from whatever other reasons
may exist? Only God can answer such things and only God can answer all other matters,
and in the end His judgment will be perfect and final (see Appendix B).

*The Uniqueness of Orthodox Christianity*

Orthodox Christianity makes the claim that it is the “One, Holy, Catholic and
Apostolic Church” founded by our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ through His
apostles, who have led us to the right (Orthodox) worship of the Holy Trinity, the One
God Who is the Three Divine Persons (Hypostases): the Father, and the Son, and the
Holy Spirit. From its beginning, the Orthodox Church having the fullness of the Holy
Spirit has taught and defended the Orthodox worship of God, the Holy Trinity,
throughout the ages against all false teaching (heresy). The question is therefore asked,
why have numerous Orthodox leaders of recent times sought to establish union with
people and religious confessions that clearly do not confess nor believe in the teachings of
the Holy Orthodox Church? It would seem by the actions and comments of some of
these Orthodox leaders that they somehow regard Orthodoxy as a “relative truth” to be
placed alongside other “relative truths” in the contradictory, syncretistic panorama and confusion that is the “Ecumenical Movement.” It seems that there are Orthodox leaders who either themselves do not believe that the Orthodox Church is itself uniquely the Church and that the decisions of the Holy Seven Ecumenical Synods are infallible, having been guided by the Holy Spirit, and are therefore nonnegotiable and not subject to interpretation outside of the Holy Tradition once and for all given uniquely to the Orthodox Church on the day of Pentecost; or these same leaders simply do not have the courage to teach undefiled and without compromise the incomparable Orthodox Christian Faith. This last matter, that of courage, is of immense importance regarding the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Faith in the face of everything and everyone that is against Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church. At this point, we must clarify some terminology to avoid confusion, the Holy Seven Ecumenical Synods or Councils were convened by the ancient, undivided Church to defend against heresies which had arisen and threatened the Orthodoxy of the Church. Nothing new was formulated or confessed at these Holy Ecumenical Synods; simply the ancient Orthodox Christian Faith received from Jesus Christ through His Apostles was defended. These Seven Ecumenical Synods or Councils were held from 325 A.D. to 787 A.D. in the Byzantine Empire, an empire which, by the mercy of God, defended Orthodox Christianity for more than 1,100 years before it fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, by which time Byzantium had managed to confess and spread Orthodox Christianity to much of the world, in particular to Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Orthodox Christianity, with absolutely no intrinsic merit belonging to Orthodox Christians themselves, uniquely to this day and forever, follows (without innovation or change) the decisions of the Holy Ecumenical Synods and the entire Holy Orthodox Tradition given
to the Church on the day of Pentecost. So, despite the same word “Ecumenical” used in both of the expressions: “The Holy Ecumenical Synods or Councils” and “The ecumenical movement”; the two expressions have absolutely nothing to do with one another. The Holy Ecumenical Synods or Councils have to do with the ancient defense of the unique truth that is Orthodox Christianity, whereas the ecumenical movement and ecumenism have to do with the attempt to trivialize practically all theological differences (no matter how profound they may be) in order to follow the faithless, cowardly, pandering that is the “dialogue of love”, of which the ecumenists are so fond of speaking. The ecumenical movement and ecumenism are well characterized by the Orthodox scholar, Dr. Constantine Cavarnos (1992a) when he writes, “Ecumenism is obviously not simply an innovation, but is a dreadful hodgepodge of innovations and heresies, a frightful syncretism which aims to overthrow the entire Divine edifice that is called the Orthodox Christian Church and to erect in its place the new Tower of Babel” (pp. 34-35).

The fathers of the Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory (Monastery of Gregoriou) Mount Athos (1996), Greece summarize the Orthodox view when they say:

The One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, that is, the Orthodox Church, is “the pillar and ground of the Truth” (I Timothy 3:15). It is impossible to confess the Christian Faith truly and fully, save in the Orthodox Church alone. How, then, can we Orthodox acknowledge the Truth of the Faith in places other than the Church?” … “In keeping with this spirit, the phrase: “We now clearly understand…,” has no place among Orthodox. The classical Patristic dictum, “Following the Holy Fathers…,” is the only one which expresses how Orthodox understand themselves. (p. 6)

At this point it must be noted that the fathers on Mount Athos are here
addressing specifically the dialogues that have gone on and apparently are still going on
with the non-Chalcedonian heretics, the Monophysites, but they clearly are also speaking
of all dialogues with any and all other non-Orthodox confessions, as we shall see. They
go on to tell us, fully in conformity with Orthodox Christian Tradition:

We do not believe that the present theological engagement of heretics outside the
Church serves the Truth. First, because the language of the Church with regard to
heretics has always been, since Apostolic times, refutative: “Better, indeed, a
laudable war than a peace which severs one from God” (St. Gregory the
Theologian). This stand of the Church is actually charitable, for it both protects
the Flock of Christ from heresy and provides heretics with motives and reasons
for returning to the Church.

Let it be noted, in passing, that the Ecclesiastical Body is comprised of
Baptized Orthodox Christians, and of them alone. The preservation of the unity
of the Ecclesiastical Body means, consequently, the ensuring of their Orthodoxy
and their perseverance to the end within the bosom of the Church; and this
precisely constitutes an important part of the Church’s pastoral concern. We do
not include within the Ecclesiastical Body, however, heretics outside the Church.
The struggle and the concern of the Church reach even to them, but the intent of
that struggle is their return to the Church and not the devising by contrived means
of peaceful coexistence with them under some nebulous kind of ecclesiastical
communion. (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 7)

“Better, Indeed, a Laudable War Than a Peace Which Severs One From God”

As was just seen, faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. Gregory the Theologian
teaches all Orthodox Christians: “Better, indeed, a laudable war than a peace which
severs one from God”. The call to pursue this kind of uncompromising defense of the 
unique and unparalleled truth that is Orthodox Christianity is of immense importance for 
the truthful and courageous confession of the one and only Truth, Christ the 
Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body (Popovic, 
2000, pp. 1, 48, 53, 154-155). Such a defense is characteristic of the life and death 
struggles of every Orthodox saint and martyr who has ever lived, and is accomplished by 
the infinite grace of God, in the face of all falsehood and evil. As such, and obviously, the 
above beautiful statement of St. Gregory the Theologian must never be misunderstood. 
And indeed, anyone familiar with the incomparable history of Orthodox Christianity will 
not misinterpret this statement. Unlike what has been characteristic of Islam, throughout 
its history, and which is also to be found within the more radical elements of Judaism, and 
which, generally speaking, is also to be found prominently among certain people from the 
various faith communities of the world, including many who identify themselves as 
Orthodox Christian, the Orthodox saints and martyrs never worked for the propagation 
and justification of violence to further political and religious goals. The glorification and 
justification of violence promulgated exclusively (or nearly so) for clearly non-defensive 
purposes, and serving expansionist political and religious ideologies is seen throughout 
history and to this very day. We see such non-defensive, and one could better say, 
“satanic”, violence (not that any violence is good, because it never is) as something which 
is glorified and perpetrated, throughout history, by many of the followers of the various 
humanistic philosophical and political systems (see Appendix A). For example, many of 
the most ardent followers of Capitalism and Marxism have exalted aggression and non- 
defensive violence as something which is justified to accomplish their goals. We have 
seen, throughout history, humanity’s crimes and evil against humanity. We see this on an
individual scale, person against person, and on an international scale as well, when more powerful nations attack weaker nations, unprovoked. People with great worldly power at a particular moment in history, whoever they may be, oftentimes use their political and economic power to support, defend and impose their philosophy and religion against others, in one way or another. And those very same powerful people oftentimes use their philosophy and religion as their justification for the economic and political exploitation of others, as well. Orthodox Christianity, as the Body of Christ, transcends all such evil and oppression. However, countless Orthodox Christians, and others, do not transcend all such evil and oppression, but instead cooperate with it. To find the people who have transcended all such evil and oppression, we again must look to the Orthodox saints who epitomize virtue for all of humanity to clearly see, and this only by the mercy of God.

From an Orthodox perspective, Orthodox Christianity is the one and only true Church of Christ. From an Orthodox perspective, Orthodox Christianity is the one and only true Faith. Orthodox Christians believe that the Holy Orthodox Church was created and established by God Himself and as such, in terms of its Theology and its unmatched historical continuity, is without error, for it is uniquely the Body of Christ with Christ our God as its Head. Only by the mercy of the Triune God, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, in its Theology and historical continuity, is flawless. This does not change the fact that countless Orthodox Christians have sinned greatly throughout history and continue to do so. Nor does it justify the perpetration of evil by many Orthodox Christians in both war and in peace, which has occurred throughout history and continues to this day. The statement of St. Gregory the Theologian: “Better, indeed, a laudable war than a peace which severs one from God”, is a call to each and every Orthodox Christian
inspiring them to remain Orthodox forever, no matter what hardship and persecution will follow because of their rejection of heresy. When St. Sergius of Radonezh encouraged St. Dmitri Donskoi to fight the Islamic Mongols, in order to liberate Orthodox Russia from the persecution and oppression which was being inflicted upon countless Orthodox Christians, he was inspiring St. Dmitri Donskoi to stand and lead his people against almost insurmountable power and oppression. If St. Dmitri Donskoi had not heroically followed the advice of St. Sergius, the Mongols would have likely killed countless more people in their rampage through history, as they were seeking to destroy Orthodox Christianity in Russia, and replace it with Islam (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40).

*The Strength of God Perfectly Manifested, Despite the Weakness of His Servants*

God will judge all people and their actions. Orthodox Christianity having been persecuted relentlessly throughout history by countless adversaries, and sometimes most significantly by Orthodox Christians themselves, remains alive forever as the one true Faith, by the mercy of God. When the Orthodox saints and martyrs were persecuted and overwhelmed by people and forces who were much more powerful than they, God never forsook them and even in their weakness in relation to others, which was a humbling reality that they were forced to bear, this further made them realize their complete dependence upon God, much more vividly than people who had more power than they. The Orthodox saints and martyrs were humbled, realizing that they were powerless (as all people are) without the power that only God can give. In a sense the saints and martyrs were spared the blindness and delusion often seen throughout history (and to this very day) among those with great power. For the people who had great worldly power failed to humbly acknowledge the One Who had given them their power, God. For as God revealed to St. Paul and he understood, we can likewise say that all the rest of the
Orthodox saints and martyrs “fought the good fight” (2 Tim 4:7), and they also understood what God revealed to them. The Orthodox saints and martyrs knew that in their struggles they could do nothing without God, and the grace of God was all that they needed. And indeed, this unfathomable grace of the Triune God is what has eternally sustained the Holy Orthodox Church through its incomparable history, and it always will. Confirming such things, we listen to the God-inspired wisdom of St. Paul the Apostle, as God taught him, and as God teaches all of us:

My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.
Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) (The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: according to the received Greek text together with the English authorised version, p. 464) (Translated from the Greek).

So, first and foremost, we can understand the earlier statement of St. Gregory the Theologian, as something which is consistent with the heroic struggles of all the Orthodox saints and martyrs, for they suffered and persevered and they all can say, along with St. Paul: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”(2 Tim 4:7) (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 499).

Orthodoxy: Alone the True Faith, In Spite of the Profound Unworthiness of Orthodox Christians

Again, I absolutely must make it clear that I am a pretentious, lustful, hypocritical, jealous, and cowardly man; in all my unworthiness and sinfulness I am not much different than most other people, in fact in many regards I am sure that I am worse.
As Orthodox Christians we look to the countless Orthodox saints who have cooperated with the uncreated grace of God and have been able to confront all evil courageously to the glory of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church which is His Body. Through no intrinsic merit of our own do we Orthodox Christians possess this incomparable, absolute truth called Orthodox Christianity, it is simply a gift from God. Orthodox Christians are under no circumstances any better or any more worthy, than anyone else, we simply by the unfathomable grace of God, the Holy Trinity, possess uniquely the fullness of all truth called Orthodox Christianity which is found only in the Orthodox Church, the Body of Christ. We quote Bishop Kallistos Ware (1997) to aid in the elucidation of this point:

Orthodoxy, believing that the Church on earth has remained and must remain visibly one, naturally also believes itself to be that one visible Church. This is a bold claim, and to many it will seem an arrogant one; but this is to misunderstand the spirit in which it is made. Orthodox believe that they are the true Church, not on account of any personal merit, but by the grace of God. They say with Saint Paul: “We are no better than pots of earthenware to contain this treasure; the sovereign power comes from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians IV, 7). But while claiming no credit for themselves, Orthodox are in all humility convinced that they have received a precious and unique gift from God; and if they pretended to others that they did not possess this gift, they would be guilty of an act of betrayal in the sight of heaven. (p. 246)

Again, we also say with Bishop Kallistos Ware (1997):

Does it therefore follow that anyone who is not visibly within the Church is necessarily damned? Of course not; still less does it follow that everyone who is
visibly within the Church is necessarily saved. As Augustine wisely remarked, “How many sheep there are without, how many wolves within!” [Homilies on John, xlv, 12]¹² (p. 247)

Again, in all sincerity and in no uncertain terms, it must be noted that Orthodox Christians are in absolutely no way, intrinsically, “better” or “more worthy” or “more significant” than any other people are. Regarding Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians from the innumerable denominations and sects which tragically are separated from Orthodox Christianity, and any and all other peoples, the fact remains: Obviously, there are multitudes of people to be found in the innumerable faith communities (both Christian and non-Christian) throughout the world which, as we said, are not Orthodox Christian and yet these same non-Orthodox communities (both Christian and non-Christian) nonetheless have countless people who are kinder, more generous, more honorable and more courageous than multitudes of Orthodox Christians are. Intrinsically and innately Orthodox Christians possess what all other people possess: absolutely nothing. We, all of humanity without exception, in and of ourselves possess absolutely nothing, because our very existence, our very being, is a gift from God, with God having been under absolutely no necessity or compulsion whatsoever to create us. We, absolutely, do not have anything in and of ourselves. This having been said, Orthodox Christianity, also in no uncertain terms, believes itself to be uniquely the one True Church of Christ, founded by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Pre-eternal Son of God Himself. The Orthodox believe that the Holy Orthodox Church is--through no merit of their own--uniquely, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Body of Christ, and there is no other. The living, unconquerable and unchanging reality of Holy Orthodoxy, by the

¹² Bishop Kallistos Ware mentions this as the source of the quotation from Augustine, in the form of a footnote. I have provided that information in bracketed form.
mercy of God, the Holy Trinity, teaches to the entire world the Orthodox (right) worship of God, the Holy Trinity.

All that has been said so far in the introductory paragraphs must be kept in mind throughout this entire thesis, otherwise I myself, and this entire discussion will be grossly misunderstood and misinterpreted.
CHAPTER 2
THE ABSOLUTE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD, THE SUPRASUBSTANTIAL TRINITY

In discussing the incomprehensibility and absolute transcendence of the Triune God, we will use as our guides the unconquerable Orthodox saints, who by the grace of God have become spiritual parents to all Orthodox Christians. The Orthodox saints, throughout human history, have each conformed their created human will to the uncreated will of God. These saints have each cooperated with the uncreated energies of God, while themselves forever remaining created and human and God forever remaining uncreated and God. The inherent attributes and limitations associated with being human (namely that we forever remain created and human) are truly the way that things are and always will be, both in this age and in the age to come (for all eternity), and this pertains to each and every human being, to all of humanity without exception. This includes and pertains to the Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God (Theotokos), herself a human being created by God, the Holy Trinity, (see Appendix C), and likewise these things also pertain to the Holy Apostles and to any other human being.

Regarding these things about all the Orthodox saints, and about all of humanity in general--and in fact pertaining to all of creation in general and its relationship to God, Who is absolutely transcendent--Orthodox Christianity confesses the following:

Since God is absolute existence, absolute goodness and absolute wisdom, or rather to put it more exactly, since God is beyond all such things, there is nothing whatsoever that is opposite to Him. Creatures, on the other hand, all exist through participation and grace, while those endowed with intelligence and intellect also
have a capacity for goodness and wisdom. Hence they do have opposites. As the opposite to existence they have non-existence, and as the opposite to the capacity for goodness and wisdom they have evil and ignorance. Whether or not they are to exist eternally lies within the power of their Maker. But whether or not intelligent creatures are to participate in His goodness and wisdom depends on their own will....

But we maintain that only the divine essence has no opposite, since it is eternal and infinite and bestows eternity on other things. The being of created things, on the other hand, has non-being as its opposite. Whether or not it exists eternally depends on the power of Him who alone exists in a substantive sense. But since “the gifts of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29), the being of created things always is and always will be sustained by His almighty power, even though it has, as we said, an opposite; for it has been brought into being from non-being, and whether or not it exists depends on the will of God. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990b, pp. 87-88)

Orthodox Christianity, in confessing and emphasizing the absolute incomprehensibility and absolute transcendence of God, the Holy Trinity, uses, oftentimes, language and terminology such as this, which is found in the immensely influential work (from an Orthodox perspective) attributed to St. Dionysios the Areopagite, Mystical Theology: “Trinity superessential, more than divine and more than good” (Τριαν τον άνωτερον πάνων ἄνωτερον άλλοτερον) (Lossky, 1976 p. 43). Such words about God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, are found throughout the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

It must clearly be noted that God is the Holy Trinity not in any way because of
creation, creation does not determine the fact that God is the Holy Trinity nor is the Holy Trinity a means or a mode in which God chooses to communicate Himself and relate to His creation nor anything like that. God does not “express” Himself as Trinity, God is the Holy Trinity independent of all that is, not determined by anything or anyone.

Speaking about the incomprehensible, undetermined and utterly transcendent reality of God, the Holy Trinity, Lossky confesses Orthodox Trinitarian Theology faithfully when he says: “The term ‘expresses itself’ is improper, for the divinity has no need to manifest its perfection, either to itself or to others. It is the Trinity, and this fact can be deduced from no principle nor explained by any sufficient reason, for there are neither principles nor causes anterior to the Trinity” (Lossky, 1976, p. 47).

The Absolute Transcendence of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, in Relation to Creation

Utilizing the God-inspired wisdom of the Holy Fathers, in this particular instance that of St. Athanasius of Alexandria and that of St. John of Damascus, Lossky (1976) contrasts creation with the Creator, God, the Holy Trinity.

If the very foundation of created being is change, the transition from non-being to being, if the creature is contingent by nature, the Trinity is an absolute stability. One would say an absolute necessity of perfect being; and yet the idea of necessity is not proper to the Trinity, for It transcends the antinomy of what is necessary, and the contingent; entirely personal and entirely nature; liberty and necessity are one, or, rather, can have no place in God. There is no dependence in relation to created being on the part of the Trinity; no determination of what is called “the eternal procession of the divine persons” by the act of the creation of the world. Even though the created order did not exist, God would still be Trinity-Father, Son and Holy Ghost--for creation is an act of will: the procession of the
persons is an act “according tona ture” [sic. “according to nature”] (κατὰ φύσιν).

(p. 45)

Following Holy Orthodox Tradition, Fr. Michael Azkoul likewise confesses the absolute transcendence of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Fr. Azkoul speaks, regarding some of what God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, has revealed through divine inspiration to the Holy Orthodox Church:

According to the Fathers, all three Persons of the Trinity were involved in the creation, even as all Three will have some share in its judgment. The Father took no direct role in the formation of the cosmos, but He devised the plan for it and the Son executed it. As the anonymous author (2nd c.) wrote in the seventh chapter of his Letter to Diognetos, God the Father “sent the very Artificer and Maker of the cosmos, He by Whom He created the heavens, the One by Whom He enclosed the ocean in its proper bounds, Him Whose mysterious laws all the elements faithfully observe, and by Whom the measures to the length of days was given to the sun to guard, Him Whom the moon obeys—the heavens and things in the heavens, the earth and the things on the earth...the things in the heights and in the depths and those things between, to them He sent Him...

He sent Him to save the world.

Because the Son carried out the work of creation—and with Him the Holy Spirit—one must not draw the wrong conclusion about the dignity of each Person. “Let no one imagine that somehow our faith dims the glory of the Father.” cautions St. Niceta of Remisiana. “Rather it adds to the glory of the Father to refer to the creation of all things to the Word of which He is Father or to the Spirit to which He is the Source. The fact remains that when His Word and Spirit
create, it is He Who creates all things. The Trinity, then, creates...” (Azkoul, 1986, pp. 66-68)

The Three Divine Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are each of equal dignity with one another. Each one is fully God, without any one them being of more significance (or less significance) than the other two, and together they are the Suprasubstantial Trinity, the one true God. Consistent with Holy Tradition, Fr. Azkoul tells us this: “There is no subordination in the Trinity, no rank, only order of action. Why, in the mysterious council of the divine Community, certain decisions were taken, we shall never know” (Azkoul, 1986, pp. 66-68). Father Azkoul continues in his faithful presentation of Orthodox theology, saying the following:

We must not infer that because one Person is more conspicuous than the other, that somehow He is less powerful or less important. Thus, when the work of creation was performed and the Scriptures say only a few words about the Third Person--“The Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2)--we may not conclude that the work of the Holy Spirit is less significant than the work of the Father and the Son. “The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father,” writes St. Niceta, “...He creates along with the Father and the Son; He gives life; He has foreknowledge just as the Father and the Son; He makes revelations; He is everywhere; He fills the world....” The equality of the Spirit to the Son and the Father cannot be denied. He is the “life-giver” and “sanctifier” of the universe, a function which is neither of the other Persons fulfills. (Azkoul, 1986, pp. 66-68)

As we continue to look at Fr. Azkoul’s brilliant discussion of Orthodox theology, we find something which is commonly mentioned by Orthodox theologians, something which is found throughout the Holy Tradition and the Patristic writings, namely, the fact that the
Triune God created in complete freedom. That is, God was in no way necessitated to create, He chose to create. Fr. Azkoul is consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition when he writes the following:

In connection with His actions--or more precisely the operations or energies of the Spirit, the Son and the Father--we must make another observation. Whatever their actions, whatever the motive for the creation, the Trinity acted from no necessity; in fact, we have no way of knowing why God created, even if such noble sentiments as love may be inferred. To be sure, as the Fathers say, He wanted His creation to share His life, but God was not lonely and He did not need to create the world to comfort Himself. Nothing is added to Him by the existence of the cosmos.

God created mysteriously and freely. He might not have created at all. His choice was sovereign and what He created was only one choice in an infinite number. The universe and its inhabitants might have taken another form. Nevertheless, as St. Athanasios the Great so often said, God’s act of creation was an act of condescension. Creation was not a tour de force, a feat of accomplishment, a demonstration of power. It was not, as the Incarnation was not, something done for applause. The existence of the world is an example--even as the Incarnation--of self-limitation, an act of incredible humility. (Azkoul, 1986, pp. 66-68)13

So, with this incomprehensibility and transcendence of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, being forever faithfully confessed by Orthodox Christianity, we observe the following quotations, which are a further confession of God’s absolute transcendence in

13 In Appendix F, there is further discussion of God’s condescension--seen in His voluntarily becoming Incarnate for humanity.
relation to all creation--and all of these quotations are in complete agreement with the witness of countless Orthodox saints throughout history:

“God, full beyond all fulness, brought creatures into being not because He had need of anything, but so that they might participate in Him in proportion to their capacity and that He Himself might rejoice in His works, through seeing them joyful and ever filled to overflowing with His inexhaustible gifts” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990b, p. 90).

The creature is thus, by virtue of its very origin, something which changes, is liable to pass from one state into another. It has no ontological foundation either in itself (for it is created from nothing), nor in the divine essence, for in the act of creation God was under no necessity of any kind whatever. There is, in fact, nothing in the divine nature which would be the necessary cause of the production of creatures: creation might just as well not exist. God could equally well not have created; creation is a free act of His will, and this free act is the sole foundation of the existence of all beings. (Lossky, 1976 p. 93)

St. Philaret of Moscow says: “All creatures are balanced upon the creative word of God, as if upon a bridge of diamond; above them is the abyss of the divine infinitude, below them that of their own nothingness.” (Lossky, 1976, p. 92, Quoted by Fr. Florovsky in The Ways of Russian Theology, Paris, 1937, p. 180 (Translated from the Russian))

“So some say that the created order has coexisted with God from eternity; but this is impossible. For how can things which are limited in every way coexist from eternity with Him who is altogether infinite?” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990a, p. 101).

So far as we are able to understand, for Himself God does not constitute either an origin, or an intermediary state, or a consummation, or anything else at all which
can be seen to qualify naturally things that are sequent to Him. For He is undetermined, unchanging and infinite, since He is infinitely beyond all being, potentiality and actualization. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 114)

“Thus nothing whatsoever different in essence from God can be envisaged as coexisting with Him from eternity—neither the aeon, nor time, nor anything which exists within them. For substantive being and being which is not substantive never coincide” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 115).

No origin, intermediary state or consummation can ever be altogether free from the category of relationship. God, being infinitely beyond every kind of relationship, is by nature neither an origin, nor an intermediary state, nor a consummation, nor any of those things to which it is possible to apply the category of relationship. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 115)

Indeed, St. Maximos the Confessor elsewhere refers to the absolutely transcendent God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, as being forever inaccessible to Its creatures and calls the Holy Trinity, “The Good that is beyond being and beyond the unoriginate” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 164). With this in mind, we see St. Maximos the Confessor telling us the following about this God, the one and only God, the Triune God (the Holy Trinity):

The Good that is beyond being and beyond the unoriginate is one, the holy unity of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is an infinite union of three infinites. Its principle of being, together with the mode, the nature and the quality of its being, is altogether inaccessible to creatures. For it eludes every intellection of intellective beings, in no way issuing from its natural hidden inwardness, and infinitely transcending the summit of all spiritual knowledge. (St.
Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 164)

St. Maximos the Confessor in speaking about the Creator calls God, the Holy Trinity, the “divine Cause of created beings” Who “does not exist as a being with accidents because if that were the case the divine would be composite, its own existence receiving completion from the existence of created beings. On the contrary it exists as the beyond-beingness of being”… “how much more does God Himself bring into existence out of nothing the very being of all created things, since He is beyond being and even infinitely transcends the attribution of beyond beingness” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 165).

God, in whose essence created beings do not participate, but who wills that those capable of so doing shall participate in Him according to some other mode, never issues from the hiddenness of His essence; for even that mode according to which He wills to be participated in remains perpetually concealed from all men. Thus, just as God of His own will is participated in--the manner of this being known to Him alone--in the surpassing power of His goodness, He freely brings into existence participating beings, according to the principle which He alone understands. Therefore what has come into being by the will of Him who made it can never be coeternal with Him who willed it to exist. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 165)

The Essence-Energies Distinction in God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity

“Distinguishing in God the three hypostases, the one nature and the natural energies”. These passages should give us some sense of the absolute transcendence and incomprehensibility of God, the Holy Trinity, and with absolutely no doubt these quotations point to the reality forever confessed by Orthodox Christianity, that all of
creation, without any exception, is completely dependent upon the Creator of all that is, God, the Holy Trinity. This as all creation, having been brought into being from absolutely nothing by the unfathomable power of the Triune God, in no way defines or determines that same God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, in any way whatsoever. Creation, as was said, was a free act of will accomplished by God. We also, in these above passages, see some reference to the Orthodox affirmation that there is a distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies in the One God, the Holy Trinity, without this in any way introducing any composition in God. For just as the One God is the Three Divine Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, and yet this fact produces no composition, confusion or division in the One God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, so also the Essence-Energies distinction produces no composition, confusion or division in God, the Holy Trinity. Mindful of this, one can observe, from some of Vladimir Lossky’s work, the following Orthodox confession of the Essence-Energies distinction and note its significance in Orthodox soteriology:

While distinguishing in God the three hypostases, the one nature and the natural energies, Orthodox theology does not admit any kind of “composition” in Him. The energies, like the persons, are not elements of the divine being which can be conceived of apart, in separation from the Trinity of which they are the common manifestation, the eternal splendour. (Lossky, 1976, p. 79)

The distinction between the essence and the energies, which is fundamental for the Orthodox doctrine of grace, makes it possible to preserve the real meaning of St. Peter’s words “partakers of the divine nature”. The union to which we are called is neither hypostatic--as in the case of the human nature of Christ--nor substantial, as in that of the three divine Persons: it is union with God in His
energies, or union by grace making us participate in the divine nature, without our essence becoming thereby the essence of God. ...We remain creatures while becoming God by grace, as Christ remained God in becoming man by the Incarnation. (Lossky, 1976, p. 87)

By His unfathomable grace, God allows for us to participate in His uncreated divine energies, so that by grace we may become what He is by nature. There is no pantheism whatsoever in this Orthodox affirmation; we are not united to the Hypostasis of any One of the Three Divine Hypostases (Persons), nor anything like that, nor are any of us added to the Holy Trinity as an additional Divine Hypostasis so that the Holy Trinity has a complement to It and increases in number--God forbid that any such insanity be proclaimed. We also know that there is no pantheism in the above Orthodox affirmation because this union with God, the Holy Trinity, is not a union with God in His absolutely transcendent, incommunicable, and forever unapproachable essence. God, the Holy Trinity, without any compulsion or necessity to have done so and without being defined or determined in any way--simply by an absolutely free act of will--allows for His creatures to participate in Him according to His energies, but not according to His unapproachable essence. While forever remaining creatures, while forever remaining created and never becoming anything other than what we are, created and human, we are allowed by the infinite grace of the Triune God to be become one with God by grace, not by nature (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). This is what Lossky meant when he said: “We remain creatures while becoming God by grace, as Christ remained God in becoming man by the Incarnation” (Lossky, 1976, p. 87).

We become one with God through cooperation with His uncreated divine energies, while forever remaining created and human, but we cannot ever participate in the very
nature of the Triune God (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). We cannot ever participate in the unapproachable essence of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. God calls on us to pursue theosis, or deification, which means that we are called to pursue—with all our mind, body, and soul, and with all our might—union with God in His energies, but not in His essence, for that is impossible. This union ultimately is accomplished through a person’s synergy (cooperation) with the uncreated energies of God, as we have said. And in fact this very opportunity for theosis to which we are all called and which is the glory for which we have been created in the first place is granted to us by grace, and not because it is necessitated, in any way, by anything in the very essence or nature of the Triune God. “For the salvation of the saved is by grace and not by nature (cf. Eph. 2:5).” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 127). For it is only by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God that we even exist.

God grants us the opportunity to pursue union with Him in His energies. In so doing, God, the Holy Trinity, forever remains Uncreated and God, and we, all of us without exception, forever remain created and human. Once again, the wisdom of St. Gregory Palamas and that of other Orthodox Fathers, to whom St. Gregory Palamas makes reference, is insightful to our discussion here:

St. Basil the Great says, “The energies of God come down to us, but the essence remains inaccessible.” And St. Maximos also says, “He who is deified through grace will be everything that God is, without possessing identity of essence.” Thus it is impossible to participate in God’s essence, even for those who are deified by divine grace. It is, however, possible to participate in the divine energy. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 397)

By looking at the following Orthodox confession of St. Gregory Palamas, we see
that what was quoted a little earlier from Vladimir Lossky is in conformity with the Holy Fathers:

Three realities pertain to God: essence, energy, and the triad of divine hypostases. As we have seen, those privileged to be united to God so as to become one spirit with Him—as St. Paul said, “He who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with Him” (1 Cor. 6:17)—are not united to God with respect to His essence, since all the theologians testify that with respect to His essence God suffers no participation. Moreover, the hypostatic union is fulfilled only in the case of the Logos, the Godman. Thus those privileged to attain union with God are united to Him with respect to His energy; and the ‘spirit’, according to which they who cleave to God are one with Him, is and is called the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit, but not the essence of God, even though Barlaam and Akindynos may disagree. Thus God prophesied through His prophet saying, “I shall pour forth”, not “My Spirit”, but “of My Spirit upon the faithful” (cf. Joel 2:28. LXX). (Palamas, 1995c, p. 380)

Profound theological realities are mentioned in this last quotation. One sees reference to the fact that the uncreated energies of God are not the Divine Person (Hypostasis) of the Holy Spirit, but instead are the energies of the Holy Spirit which are the same energies equally possessed by the Father and the Son. In fact, the divine energies are not to be identified as being any, nor all, of the Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity nor are they to be identified as being the absolutely transcendent divine essence common to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is so, for the divine, uncreated energies are not hypostases (persons) nor are they essences, nor do they have any individual existence by themselves apart from God, the Supra-essential Trinity; instead, they are eternal processions from the Triune God which are common to the Father, and to the Son, and to
the Holy Spirit (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 10, 3a). The divine energies in no way define or determine God, the Supra-essential Trinity, but they do manifest His presence and make knowledge of God possible for humanity, this while God remains forever unknowable in His essence. So when we speak of God, the Holy Trinity, we know that He is absolutely transcendent, incomprehensible and unapproachable in His essence and at the same time we know that by His grace, God is approachable in His divine, uncreated energies. For as St. Gregory Palamas (1995c) tells us:

For to God pertains both incomprehensibility and comprehensibility, though He Himself is one. The same God is incomprehensible in his essence, but comprehensible from what He creates according to His divine energies: according, that is, to His pre-eternal will for us, His pre-eternal providence concerning us, His pre-eternal wisdom with regard to us, and--to use the words of St. Maximos--His infinite power, wisdom and goodness. But when Barlaam and Akindynos and those who follow in their footsteps hear us saying these things which we are obliged to say, they accuse us of speaking of many gods and many uncreated realities, and of making God composite. For they are ignorant of the fact that God is indivisibly divided and is united dividedly, and yet in spite of this suffers neither multiplicity nor compositeness. (p. 384)

To avoid any confusion, it must be clearly emphasized, and understood, that the one and only true God is the Suprasubstantial Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Palamas, 1995b, p. 323). God the Father--by the very nature of Who He is, and not by any act of will--is pre-eternally the source of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 13, 1). The Three Divine Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are “undivided in nature, will, glory, power,
energy, and all the characteristics of divinity” (Palamas, 1995b, p. 323). Each of the Three Divine Persons is fully God when considered by Himself, and is not partially God or merely a part of God (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990e, pp. 137-138). Each of the Three Divine Persons is fully God when considered by Himself, and is not lacking in anything that the other Two Persons possess, because They all are eternally within one another, yet They remain distinct as the Three Persons of the Suprasubstantial Trinity--the one true God. St. Maximos the Confessor beautifully teaches this when he says:

For the whole Father is completely in the whole Son and Spirit; and the whole Son is completely in the whole Father and Spirit; and the whole Holy Spirit is completely in the whole Father and Son. Therefore the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God. The essence, power and energy of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one, for none of the hypostases or persons either exists or is intelligible without the others. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990e, pp. 137-138)

The one true God is the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And it is from this one true God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, that the divine energies eternally proceed. As was mentioned earlier, these divine energies have no existence by themselves apart from God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, from Whom they eternally proceed. The divine energies of the Suprasubstantial Trinity are not, in any way, any of the Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, nor are they the essence of the Suprasubstantial Trinity. For as St. Gregory Palamas teaches, faithful to Orthodox Tradition, “God’s processions and energies are uncreated, and none of them is either divine essence or hypostasis” (Palamas, 1995c, p. 389). These divine energies proceed from all Three Persons of the Suprasubstantial Trinity (Palamas, 1995c, pp. 389-390),
and have no existence apart from the Suprasubstantial Trinity from Whom they proceed. Again, these divine energies in no way are to be identified as being any of the Three Divine Hypostases (Persons) nor as being the essence of the Suprasubstantial Trinity; instead, they are simply the energies of God--proceeding from God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, as their source. As such, they neither define nor determine who God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, is. For God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, in His very essence infinitely transcends the very energies which eternally proceed from Him (Palamas, 1995a, p. 422-423). With this in mind, one can see St. Gregory Palamas, in conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition, commenting on the wisdom of St. Dionysios the Areopagite pertaining to the Essence-Energies distinction. St. Gregory Palamas comments that St. Dionysios refers to the energies of God as “the distinction of the Godhead”; and St. Gregory comments further that St. Dionysios teaches “that according to the divine processions and energies God multiplies Himself and makes Himself manifold, and he [St. Dionysios] states in this respect that the procession may be spoken of both in the singular and in the plural” (Palamas, 1995c, p. 386). This “distinction of the Godhead”--manifested “in the divine processions and energies” of God, according to which “God multiplies Himself and makes Himself manifold”--pertains to the divine energies eternally proceeding from the Suprasubstantial Trinity, the one true God (Palamas, 1995c, p. 386). The Suprasubstantial Trinity, the one true God, “multiplies Himself and makes Himself manifold” regarding His divine energies, but (as was said earlier) these divine energies are not in any way the Three Divine Hypostases. For the Three Divine Hypostases, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are not energies of God proceeding from God; instead, They are the one and only true God, They are who God eternally is. For God does not “multiply Himself and make Himself manifold” regarding who He eternally is,
the Suprasubstantial Trinity. “God simply is what He is” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 8), the
Triune God. St. Gregory Palamas’ God-inspired wisdom--seen in his commentary on St.
Dionysios’ exposition of the Essence-Energies distinction--is brilliant and immensely
useful at this point: “In regard to the distinction of the hypostases, however, the Deity
certainly does not multiply Himself, nor as God is He subject to distinction. For us God
is a Trinity, but not triple” (Palamas, 1995c, p. 386). God simply is Who He is. God is
nothing other than what He eternally is, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the
Suprasubstantial Trinity.

*The divine energies are not creation, nor are they created.* Also, the uncreated
energies of the Triune God are absolutely different from anything which is created;
creation is not among the energies of God, but instead it is that which God, the Holy
Trinity, has created by His divine uncreated energies. We see this confessed in the Holy
Orthodox Tradition:

Thus that which is created is not God’s energy--this is impossible--but what is
effected and accomplished by the divine energy. This is why St. John of
Damaskos teaches that the energy, although distinct from the divine nature, is also
an essential, that is to say, a natural activity of that nature. Since, then, it is the
property of the divine energy to create, as St. Cyril has said, how could this
energy be something created, unless it was activated by another energy, and that
energy in turn by still another, and so on ad infinitum? In this way we would
always be looking for the uncreated source of the energy. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 379-
380)

The divine energies are absolutely different from, and independent of, creation.
Though God created all things by His divine energies, the divine energies’ existence does
not, in any way, make creation necessary to God, the Holy Trinity, nor does the fact that God, the Holy Trinity, chose to create cause, in any way, the existence of the eternal processions or manifestations of God, otherwise known as the divine energies. For as Vladimir Lossky tells us, faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition:

There are in fact two main errors into which it is possible to fall in regard to the divine energies:

First, the energy is not a divine function which exists on account of creatures, despite the fact that it is through His energies, which penetrate everything that exists, that God creates and operates. Even if creatures did not exist, God would none the less manifest Himself beyond His essence; just as the rays of the sun would shine out from the solar disk whether or not there were any beings capable of receiving their light. Indeed, expressions, such as “manifest Himself” and “beyond” are really inappropriate, for the “beyond” in question only begins to exist with the creation, and “manifestation” is only conceivable when there is some realm foreign to Him who is manifested. In using such defective expressions, such inadequate images, we acknowledge the absolute, non-relative character of the natural and eternal expansive energy, proper to God.

But, secondly, the created world does not become infinite and coeternal with God because the natural processions, or divine energies, are so. The existence of the energies implies no necessity in the act of creation, which is freely effected by the divine energy but determined by a decision of the common will of the three Persons. Creation is an act of the will of God which makes a new subject outside the divine being, ex nihilo; to the sphere of God’s manifestation comes into being. As for the manifestation itself, it is eternal, for it is the glory of
God. (Lossky, 1976, pp. 74-75)

“God Reveals Himself to Himself From All Eternity”

Giving us further insight into the Essence- Energies distinction which exists in God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, we see Lossky, in his brilliant research, utilizing the God-inspired wisdom of St. Philaret of Moscow:

Philaret of Moscow expresses this doctrine of the Eastern Church in a Christmas sermon, in which he speaks of the angels’ hymn “Glory to God in the highest”: “God”, he says, “has from all eternity enjoyed the sublimity of His glory...His glory is the revelation, the manifestation, the reflection, the garment of His inner perfection. God reveals Himself to Himself from all eternity by the eternal generation of His consubstantial Son, and by the eternal procession of His consubstantial Spirit; and thus the unity, within the Holy Trinity shines forth imperishable and unchangeable in its essential glory. God the Father is the Father of glory (Eph. i, 17); the Son is the brightness of His glory (Heb. i, 3) and He Himself has that glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John xvii, 5); likewise, the Holy Spirit of God is the Spirit of glory (I Pet. iv, 14). In this glory, uniquely proper to Himself, God dwells in perfect felicity above all glory, without having need of any witness, without admitting of any division. But as in His mercy and His infinite love He desires to communicate His blessedness, to create for Himself beings capable of sharing in the joyfulness of His glory, He calls forth His infinite perfections and they disclose themselves in His creatures; His glory is manifested in the celestial powers, is reflected in man, and puts on the splendour of the visible world; He bestows it, and those who become partakers thereof receive it, it returns to Him, and in this perpetual circumvolution, so to
say, of the divine glory, the blessed life, the felicity of the creature consists.”

(Lossky, 1976, p. 75)

In the above quotation from St. Philaret of Moscow, the statement, “His glory is the revelation, the manifestation, the reflection, the garment of His inner perfection”, refers to the eternal uncreated energies of the Triune God which proceed from the very essence of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, but which are, of course, not the absolutely unknowable and transcendent essence of the Triune God. In the line which immediately follows in the quotation, “God reveals Himself to Himself from all eternity by the eternal generation of His consubstantial Son, and by the eternal procession of His consubstantial Spirit; and thus the unity, within the Holy Trinity shines forth imperishable and unchangeable in its essential glory”, St. Philaret of Moscow is faithful to Holy Tradition, as only an Orthodox saint can be, when he confesses the Orthodox teaching that God the Father uniquely and eternally begets God the Son, and uniquely and eternally sends forth God the Holy Spirit. God the Father eternally begets His consubstantial Son and eternally sends forth His consubstantial Spirit, and this pertains to the very nature of Who God the Father is; it is not an act of His will. God the Father, by the very nature of Who He is and not by any act of will, eternally begets God the Son and eternally sends forth God the Holy Spirit. In short, according to Orthodox teaching, “God the Father begets the Son and sends forth the Holy Spirit by nature and not by will” (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 13, 1). God is eternally the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is no other God but the Suprasubstanstial Trinity. The One true God is the consubstantial Holy Trinity, there is no other God. For “God reveals Himself to Himself from all eternity by the eternal generation of His consubstantial Son, and by the eternal procession of His consubstantial Spirit”, and this is so not by any necessity or act of will,
rather this is Who God is, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the
Suprasubstantial Trinity. God is the Holy Trinity not, in any way, because of creation;
creation was brought into being by the common will of the Suprasubstantial Trinity,
without any necessity for the Triune God to have created at all. God is eternally the
Suprasubstantial Trinity, because that is Who God is. For when we speak of God, the
Suprasubstantial Trinity, we say: “In this glory, uniquely proper to Himself, God dwells
in perfect felicity above all glory, without having need of any witness, without admitting
of any division.”

The very essence or nature which is common to the Suprasubstantial Trinity, is
absolutely transcendent, whereas the energies common to the Holy Trinity can, by the
infinite grace of God, be approached by God’s creatures. We see St. Philaret of Moscow
confessing this when he tells us: “But as in His mercy and His infinite love He desires to
communicate His blessedness, to create for Himself beings capable of sharing in the
joyfulness of His glory, He calls forth His infinite perfections and they disclose
themselves in His creatures”. The last part of the above statement, “He calls forth His
infinite perfections and they disclose themselves in His creatures”, must not be
misunderstood. “He calls forth His infinite perfections and they disclose themselves in
His creatures” means that God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, eternally and freely willed
to create; God was not necessitated, in any way, by anything in the divine essence which
would have somehow made creation something compulsory or inevitable to God. God
eternally willed that He would create at some point and indeed He did fulfill His eternal
will, and created, when (and as) He chose to do so. “His infinite perfections” pertain to
the eternal divine will for creation to take place. “His infinite perfections” refer to the
divine ideas for creation which are associated with the divine will; all of this pertains to
the energies of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, but not to the absolutely transcendent essence. God freely willed to create from all eternity, but He was not compelled nor necessitated to will this, in any way, just as he was not compelled nor necessitated to actually create, when He chose to do so. God eternally planned creation, but creation did not receive its existence until God actually created it. Creation is not coeternal with God. Creation was brought into being by God, according to His eternal free will to do so, at the point when God actually created. The divine ideas for creation belong to the eternal will of God, they belong to the divine energies, but not to the very nature or essence of God (Lossky, 1976, p. 95). Additionally, “His infinite perfections”, these divine ideas, are part of the uncreated divine energies and are therefore not creation itself, in any way. Additionally, these divine ideas (and all the divine energies, in general) do not in any way belong to the very nature or essence of the Triune God (Lossky, 1976, p. 95). Thus there is no pantheism in the above statement, “He calls forth His infinite perfections and they disclose themselves in His creatures”. God created us and by His unfathomable grace we are given the opportunity to approach Him in His energies, but not in His essence which is absolutely transcendent and beyond any participation.

_The Statement, “Partakers of the Divine Nature”, Must Not be Misunderstood_

Continuing our discussion, consistent with what we have said, regarding these divine energies by which God created us, sustains us and allows us to approach Him, we once again draw from Lossky’s faithful presentation of Orthodox theology, where we observe the following:

The divine energies are within everything and outside everything. One must be raised above created being, and abandon all contact with creatures in order to attain to union with “the rays of the Godhead”, says Dionysius the Areopagite.
Despite this, these divine rays penetrate the whole created universe, and are the cause of its existence. ... God has created all things by His energies. The act of creation established a relationship between the divine energies and that which is not God, and constituted a limitation, a determination (προορισμός) of the infinite and eternal effulgence of God, who thereby became the cause of finite and contingent being. For the energies do not produce the created world by the mere fact of their existence, that they are the natural processions of the essence of God; if they did, either the world would be as infinite and eternal as God Himself, or the energies would be only His limited and temporal manifestation. Thus the divine energies in themselves are not the relationship of God to created being, but they do enter into relationship with that which is not God, and draw the world into existence by the will of God. For, according to St. Maximus, the will is always an active relationship towards another, towards something external to the subject which acts. This will has created all things by the energies in order that created being may accede freely to union with God in the same energies. “God”, says St. Maximus, “has created us in order that we may become partakers of the divine nature, in order that we may enter into eternity, and that we may appear like unto Him, being deified by that grace out of which all things that exist have come, and which brings into existence everything that before had no existence.” (Lossky, 1976, p. 88-90)

The phrase, “God has created us in order that we may become partakers of the divine nature”, must not be misunderstood as an indication of some sort of pantheism, where we would participate in the very nature or essence of the Triune God. Instead, in this context, “partakers of the divine nature” is understood, in Orthodox Teaching, to mean
that we can participate in the energies of God, but certainly not in the very nature or essence of God, which is absolutely transcendent and forever unapproachable to any creature.

Keeping in mind these things which have just been mentioned, pertaining to the Essence-Energies distinction, we are able to better understand the following from the Holy Father, St. Maximos the Confessor, as he faithfully teaches us Holy Orthodox Tradition—regarding the salvation which the absolutely transcendent God freely offers to us: “He encompasses all that comes from Him, but nothing enjoys kinship with Him by virtue of natural relationship. For the salvation of the saved is by grace and not by nature (cf. Eph. 2:5).” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 127).

Elsewhere, closely related to the passage just quoted, St. Maximos tells us:

Ages, times and places belong to the category of relationship, and consequently no object necessarily associated with these things can be other than relative. But God transcends the category of relationship; for nothing else whatsoever is necessarily associated with Him. Therefore if the inheritance of the saints is God Himself, he who is found worthy of this grace will be beyond all ages, times and places: he will have God Himself as his place, in accordance with the text, “Be to me a God who is a defender and a fortified place of my salvation” (Ps.71:3. LXX ). (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990d, p. 127-128)

Faithful to the Holy Tradition just confessed pertaining to humanity’s God given opportunity for salvation, St. Gregory Palamas, drawing from the wisdom of St. Maximos the Confessor, tells us how the Orthodox saints cooperated with the uncreated energies of God, when he writes: “According to St. Maximos ‘Moses and David, and whoever else became vessels of divine energy by laying aside the properties of their fallen
nature, were inspired by the power of God’; and, ‘They became living ikons of Christ, being the same as He is, by grace rather than by assimilation’” (Palamas, 1995c, p. 381). Elsewhere, St. Gregory Palamas tells us:

If we have conformed ourselves to God and have attained that for which we are created, namely, deification--for they say that God created us in order to make us partakers of His own divinity (cf. 2 Pet. 1 : 4)--then we are in God since we are deified by Him, and God is in us since it is He who deifies us. Thus we, too, participate in the divine energy-- though in a different way from the universe as a whole--but not in the essence of God. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 393)

Orthodoxy confesses that God is in no way determined by what or whom He has created, creation was and is in no way necessary for God, the Holy Trinity, nor does it determine or define God, the Holy Trinity, in any way. God is absolutely transcendent over all that He has created and brought into being and over all that is. Consistent with what has been mentioned pertaining to the grace of God being associated with the energies, and not the absolutely transcendent nature, of the Triune God, we forever keep in mind the words of St. Gregory Palamas as he teaches about the Essence-Energies distinction as it points to the absolute transcendency of God, regarding the divine nature or essence, and as it points to the immanence of God, regarding the divine energies:

Every created nature is far removed from and completely foreign to the divine nature. For if God is nature, other things are not nature; but if every other thing is nature, He is not a nature, just as He is not a being if all other things are beings. And if He is a being, then all other things are not beings. And if you accept this as true also for wisdom, goodness, and in general all things that pertain to God or are ascribed to Him, then your theology will be correct and in accordance with the
saints. God both is and is said to be the nature of all beings, in so far as all partake of Him and subsist by means of this participation: not, however, by participation in His nature--far from it--but by participation in His energy. In this sense He is the Being of all beings, the Form that is in all forms as the Author of form, the Wisdom of the wise and, simply, the All of all things. Moreover, He is not nature, because He transcends every nature; He is not a being, because He transcends every being; and He is not nor does He possess a form, because He transcends form. How, then can we draw near to God? By drawing near to His nature? But not a single created being has or can have any communication with or proximity to the sublime nature. Thus if anyone has drawn close to God, he has evidently approached Him by means of His energy. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 382)

The Essence-Energies Distinction Confessed Throughout the History of Orthodox Christianity

Fr. George Florovsky gives us brilliant insight, fully consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition, pertaining to the Essence-Energies distinction in the Supra-essential Holy Trinity:

“One insults God who seeks to apprehend His essential being,” says Chrysostom. Already in St. Athanasius we find a clear distinction between God’s very “essence” and His powers and bounty: *Kai en pasi men esti kata ten heautou agathoteta, exo de ton panton palin esti kata ten idian physin.* [He is in everything by his love, but outside of everything by his own nature (*De Decretis II*)]14. The same conception was carefully elaborated by the Cappadocians. The “essence of God” is absolutely inaccessible to man, says St. Basil (*Adv. Eunomium* 1:14). We

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14 Bracketed entry from the cited text.
know God only in His actions, and by His actions: *Hemeis de ek men ton energeion gnorizein legomen ton Theon hemon, te de ousia prosengizein ouch hypischnoumetha hai men gar energeiai autou pros hemas katabainousin, he de ousia autou menei aposritos.* [We say that we know our God from his energies (activities), but we do not profess to approach his essence--for his energies descend to us, but his essence remains inaccessible (*Epist.* 234, ad Amphilochium)]

Florovsky continues in his faithful presentation of Orthodox theology when he tells us:

*It starts with the clear distinction between “nature” and “will” of God.* This distinction was also characteristic of the Eastern tradition, at least since St. Athanasius. It may be asked at this point: Is this distinction compatible with the “simplicity” of God? Should we not rather regard all these distinctions as merely logical conjectures, necessary for us, but ultimately without any ontological significance? As a matter of fact, St. Gregory Palamas was attacked by his opponents precisely from that point of view. (Florovsky, 1987, p. 9)

Western theology acknowledged the truth forever confessed in Orthodox Trinitarian Theology regarding the simplicity of the Triune God, but it erred by introducing the divine energies into the very Being of the Holy Trinity. The West erred in introducing the divine energies into the very Essence of God, the Holy Trinity, thereby denying the real Essence-Energies distinction in God. Those who deny the Essence-Energies distinction, in effect, deny the absolute transcendence of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, by introducing necessity and contradiction into the Triune God, as we shall later clearly see. Western Christianity’s denial of the Essence-Energies distinction in God,

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15 Bracketed entry from the cited text.
starting from at least Augustine, continues to this day, and its argument for this denial of Orthodox doctrine goes something like this: “God’s Being is simple, and in Him even all attributes coincide” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 9). Father Florovsky insightfully comments on this particular error which St. Augustine made—an error which had, in this regard, put him outside of the Patristic concensus of Orthodox Christianity—an error which was subsequently embraced, and, according to some Orthodox theologians, magnified, by Western Christianity (Papademetriou, n.d.): “Already St. Augustine diverged at this point form the Eastern tradition. Under Augustinian presuppositions the teaching of St. Gregory is unacceptable and absurd” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 9).

But let us look at the error of the West, in its denial of the Essence-Energies distinction, seen in the light of Orthodox teaching which exposes the contradiction of the above claim, ‘God’s Being is simple, and in Him even all attributes coincide’. This last quotation essentially says that the energies are no different from the essence and are no different from one another since they all coincide, ‘in Him even all attributes coincide’. St. Gregory Palamas (1995c) in conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition teaches us differently:

If the energies of God do not in any respect differ from the divine essence, then neither will they differ from one another. Therefore God’s will is in no way different from His foreknowledge, and consequently either God does not foreknow all things—because He does not will all that occurs—or else He wills evil also, since He foreknows all. This means either that He does not foreknow all things, which is the same as saying that He is not God, or that He is not good, which is also the same as saying that He is not God. Thus God’s foreknowledge does differ from His will, and so both differ from the divine essence. (p. 392-393)
If the divine energies do not differ from one another, then God’s creative power is not distinct from His foreknowledge. But in that case, since God began to create at a particular moment, He also began to foreknow at a particular moment. Yet if God did not have foreknowledge of all things before the ages how could He be God? (p. 393)

If God’s creative energy does not differ in any respect from divine foreknowledge, then created things are concurrent with God’s foreknowledge. Thus because God unoriginately has foreknowledge and what is foreknown is unoriginately foreknown, it follows that God creates unoriginately, and therefore that created things have been created unoriginately. But how shall He be God if His creatures are in no way subsequent to Him? (p. 393)

If God’s creative energy in no respect differs from His foreknowledge, then the act of creating is not subject to His will, since His foreknowledge is not so subject. In that case God will create, not by an act of volition, but simply because it is His nature to create. But how will He be God if He creates without volition? (p. 393)

Regarding the real, and not just conceptual, Essence- Energies distinction in the Triune God:

‘St. Gregory himself anticipated the width of implications of his basic distinction. If one does not accept it, he argued, then it would be impossible to discern clearly between the “generation” of the Son and “creation” of the world, both being the acts of essence, and this would lead to utter confusion in the Trinitarian doctrine. St. Gregory was quite formal at that point.

If according to the delirious opponents and those who agree with them, the
Divine energy in no way differs from the Divine essence, then the act of creating, which belongs to the will, will in no way differ from generation (*gennan*) and procession (*ekporeuein*), which belong to the essence. If to create is no different from generation and procession, then the creatures will in no way differ from the Begotten (*gennematos*) and the Projected (*problematos*). If such is the case according to them, then both the Son of God and the Holy Spirit will be no different from creatures, and the creatures will all be both the begotten (*gennemata*) and the projected (*problemata*) of God the Father, and creation will be deified and God will be arrayed with the creatures. For this reason the venerable Cyril, showing the difference between God’s essence and energy, says that to generate belongs to the Divine nature, whereas to create belongs to His Divine energy. This he shows clearly saying, “nature and energy are not the same.” If the Divine essence in no way differs from the Divine energy, then to beget (*gennan*) and project (*ekporeuein*) will in no way differ from creating (*poiein*). God the Father creates by the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Thus He also begets and projects by the Son and in the Holy Spirit, according to the opinion of the opponents and those who agree with them. (*Capita* 96 and 97.)*16

St. Gregory quotes St. Cyril of Alexandria. But St. Cyril at this point was simply repeating St. Athanasius. St. Athanasius, in his refutation of Arianism, formally stressed the ultimate difference between *ousia* [essence] or *physis* [substance], on the one hand, and the *boulesis* [will], on the other. God exists, and then He also acts. There is a certain “necessity” in the Divine Being, indeed not a necessity of compulsion, and no *fatum*, but a necessity of being itself. God simply is what He

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*16 See Appendix D*
is. But God’s will is eminently free. He in no sense is necessitated to do what He does. Thus *genesis* [generation] is always *kata physin* [according to essence], but creation is a *bouleseos ergon* [energy of the will] (*Contra Arianos* III. 64-6).

These two dimensions, that of being and that of acting, are different, and must be clearly distinguished. Of course, this distinction in no way compromises the “Divine simplicity.” Yet, it is a real distinction, and not just a logical devise. St. Gregory was fully aware of the crucial importance of this distinction. At this point he was a true successor of the great Athanasius and of the Cappadocian hierarchs. (*Florovsky*, 1987, p. 8) 

These things, and many others not here mentioned, are profound truths which are confessed by the Holy Tradition of Orthodox Christianity. These truths have not been derived nor deduced through any philosophical reasoning, but rather—as Orthodox theologians will rightful tells us—they have, by the infinite grace God, been lived by the Orthodox saints throughout history, and put into words for our education and enlightenment. By the mercy of God, the Holy Trinity, these truths have been revealed to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ through the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Fathers, and the Holy Synods, and through the martyric witness and lives of the countless Orthodox saints who, throughout history, have fearlessly confessed Christ, the God-Man, and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is His Body (*Cavarnos*, 1992c, p. 11).

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17 Regarding the quotations from Florovsky, all the bracketed entries are from the text that is cited.
CHAPTER 3
THE PROBLEM OF ECUMENISM

The problem with ecumenism, the ecumenical movement, is essentially the same problem that every other rationalistic, humanistic social theory and philosophy has, and that is the erroneous belief that humanity has the answers to, and can solve all of, humanity’s problems (or at least most of them), independent of God, The Holy Trinity.

A great number of avid ecumenists, tragically many of them calling themselves Orthodox Christians, tend to speak of God and discuss theology with purposely ambiguous, dechristianized, non-Orthodox Christian terminology at ecumenical gatherings and consultations. This can be seen throughout the history of the ecumenical movement for example at interfaith and inter-religious dialogues that address theological, or even environmental, issues--as a pretext for syncretism (Agiokyprianites, 2000, p. 90). Some Orthodox leaders’ purposeful vagueness in relation to Orthodox Trinitarian Theology, frequently seen in ecumenical encounters, apparently is pursued so as not to offend our “ecumenical brothers and sisters”. This theological vagueness, entrenched in relativism and minimalism, serves greatly the goal of building the “spirituality” that is ecumenism and further contributes to “mutual understanding and agreements” of the kind which essentially deny the uniqueness of Orthodoxy. In my humble opinion, these Orthodox ecumenists would do much more for their own salvation and for the salvation of their spiritual children whom God has given to them if they would strive to confess the eternal truth that is Orthodox Christianity unapologetically, without compromise and with the courage of the Orthodox saints whom they should be attempting to imitate.

It would, in the opinion of many Orthodox (myself included), be advisable for Orthodox leaders to completely withdraw from active participation in ecumenical
encounters and organizations because such entities, *by their very nature*, clearly do not nor will they ever embrace Orthodox Christianity for what it is: The “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church” of Christ. Ecumenism, *by its very nature and goals*, explicitly and implicitly, denies the incomparable uniqueness of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and all that Holy Orthodoxy has uniquely received from God, the Holy Trinity. So, with the sorrowful goals and attributes of ecumenism in mind, the opinion of many Orthodox Christians for the faithful witness of Orthodoxy throughout the world tends to follow along the lines of the advice given by people such as Alexander Kalomiros (1967) when he says:

The Fathers did not enter into discussions with heretics. They confessed the truth and refuted their claims without courteousness and compliments. They never arrived at mutual understandings with heretical “churches.” Their dialogue was always public and had a view to the salvation and edification of souls. The Orthodox Church did not converse with “churches” of the heretics. It was not a discussion of the Church with churches, but a dialogue between the Church and souls who had lost their way. The Church does not discuss, for she does not seek. She simply gives--because she has everything. (p. 6)

Orthodox ecumenists would do well to courageously heed such advice, with humility and love for all humanity, without fear for the consequences of so doing. Regarding ecumenical activities and associations in which some Orthodox leaders involve themselves, one must ask how it is possible to deny Christ and the uniqueness of His Holy Orthodox Church in numerous, sometimes blatantly disrespectful ways at these consultations (which are mired in syncretism and relativism) and still claim to be giving an Orthodox Christian view and call oneself Orthodox. Such conduct frequently confuses and
scandalizes Orthodox Christians, leading many astray into disbelief and ignorance, taking them away from the incomparable beauty and truth that is Orthodox Christian Theology.

*Orthodox Patriarch, Diodoros I, of Jerusalem and his defense of Orthodoxy*

The Orthodox Patriarch of blessed memory, Diodoros I, Patriarch of Jerusalem, rightfully, condemned the Ecumenical Movement on the Sunday of Orthodoxy in 1992 at the Phanar in Constantinople, in the presence of other Orthodox leaders from throughout the world. Here is some of what Diodoros I, Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, had to say, may his memory be eternal:

… “we think that theological dialogues with the heterodox have no positive outcome. Already some of the heterodox have diverged from their original position, adopting innovations alien to the spirit of the Church. Some of the Orthodox Bishops are engaging in dialogues with them, and worse than this, are praying with them, which causes scandal to the faithful and damage to their souls.” (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 44)

Diodoros I continues along these lines in his defense of Orthodox Christianity when he further describes the sorrowful reality that is ecumenism as he tells us the following:

“In this hodgepodge of Christian confessions, the voice of Orthodoxy is desperately raised, but disappears in the ocean of resolutions of the World Council of Churches, the style and content of which are far removed from true confession. With particular reference to the pitiful image--from an Orthodox perspective--evoked by the inaugural sessions, the festivals at the conclusion of the proceedings and its manifestations in general, which have a peculiar liturgical character and form a pandemonium of joint prayer and worship of anti- Orthodox
Through their comments and actions, many Orthodox ecumenists and their non-Orthodox “spiritual brethren” communicate to the world that no faith has all the answers and therefore these dialogues and consultations seemingly become “necessary” for there to be “mutual understanding and agreement” in theological matters. This is all done so as to better humanity as these leaders faithlessly reject the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Holy Orthodox Church. Seeing these things, many Orthodox cannot help but be confused and confounded by the actions of some of their leaders. Given this ecumenical climate of glorified relativism, it should not be surprising to anyone that many Orthodox Christians do not marry other Orthodox Christians and consequently many do not raise their children Orthodox, given the message sent and taught by some of their most prominent leaders, who have embraced the contradiction and confusion of the ecumenical movement. Many Orthodox leaders with their ecumenical activities, essentially, communicate that their unparalleled, eternal Holy Orthodox Faith is somehow a “relative truth”. This apparent attempt on the part of numerous Orthodox ecumenists—undoubtedly much to the delight of their non-Orthodox “ecumenical brethren”—to relativize Orthodox Christianity does nothing to serve the unique truth, for which countless Orthodox saints and martyrs have given their lives: The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

Ecumenism, a Falsehood and Stumbling Block Embraced By Many

When Orthodox ecumenists and their non-Orthodox “spiritual brethren” and...
allies attempt to make Orthodoxy into a “relative truth” by their confused and confusing actions and comments, they are in effect looking to place the incomparable Holy Orthodox Christian Faith (which for them apparently is relative) alongside other “relative truths” in the contradictory sea of confusion that is one of the New World Order’s most faithful servants--the contemporary Ecumenical Movement.

At this point, we should define the term “New World Order”, as it will be understood for the purposes of this discussion. The term New World Order itself, in many usages, is rather ambiguous--seeming purposely so--used by politicians, mass media power elite, and other very influential and powerful people to explain, legitimize, and justify the oppression, exploitation, and devastation of other people for the furthering of the goals of this same power elite who are striving for world domination. This attempt at world domination by some of the world’s most powerful people has an embrace and promotion of humanism at its heart, and a consequent rejection of the Triune God. Thus, in this discussion, the term New World Order will be understood as this far reaching attempt to build a new “Tower of Babel” of global proportions founded on humanism and the rejection of the Triune God--following many of the same strategies used by earlier attempted New World Orders, such as Marxism and Nazism. This latest New World Order, apparently announced by George Bush Sr., ironically enough on September 11 of 1990 (Evans and Newnham, 1992, pp. 219-220)--with subsequent administrations faithfully adhering to it, including that of his son, George W. Bush, who used the events of September 11, 2001 as his pretext for New World Order--uses exploitative capitalism as the economic means for this order to be obtained.

This global economy of exploitative capitalism is clearly international in character and works to undermine the sovereignty of nations. With this in mind, ironically,
oftentimes nations’ leaders work to promote a misplaced nationalism among their people-when these leaders feel that it will further the globalism of the New World Order to which they are subservient. So with a misplaced nationalism, fostered by ignorance and mass media propaganda, people--serving an agenda which undermines the very sovereignty of their own nation and that of others--are encouraged to sometimes “defend” their nation against people who have done them no harm, and fight other people’s wars under false pretexts. Relatively few very powerful people, from a few nations, have at their disposal unprecedented and continuing advances in all forms of technology, and they have control of unequaled military power, as well; this helps them to insure that the current New World Order’s implementation will proceed, at all costs to humanity.

The research of D. L. Cuddy points to a long history of the term “New World Order” (Cuddy, n.d.). And Cuddy’s research points to more recent attempts of some of the world’s power elite to not use the term New World Order, because of the “political liability” associated with it; so instead, it sometimes gets called something else, such as “global governance” (Cuddy, n.d., paragraph 115), for example. In Cuddy’s research (Cuddy, n.d.), one sees an indication that the current New World Order is a continuation of an historic phenomenon, dating from at least the early 20th century, describing a deliberate process among the world’s power elite to move the world towards an ever increasing globalization--to be manifested economically, culturally, politically and militarily--culminating in the goal of one world government founded on the principles of humanism. D. L. Cuddy’s research speaks to this. Here are some examples:

June 28, 1945 -- President Truman endorses world government in a speech:

“It will be just as easy for nations to get along in a republic of the world as it is for us to get along in a republic of the United States.” (Cuddy, n.d., paragraph 30)
1950 -- In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, international financier James P Warburg said:

“we shall have a world government, whether or not we like it. The question is only whether world government will be achieved by consent or by conquest.”

(Cuddy, n.d., paragraph 43)

1959 -- The Mid-Century Challenge to U.S. Foreign Policy is published, sponsored by the Rockerfeller Brothers’ Fund. It explains that the U.S.:

“...cannot escape, and indeed should welcome...the task which history has imposed on us. This is the task of helping to shape a new world order in all its dimensions -- spiritual, economic, political, social.” (Cuddy, n.d., paragraph 51)

Perhaps, ecumenism is that “spiritual dimension” of the new world order, for in its unmatched relativism and syncretism, subservient to great worldly power, it should prove inoffensive and harmless enough to any very powerful people to be allowed to exist, even flourish, and thus be promoted as some sort of global spirituality or religion.

Regarding the phrase “the new world order” and its current usage, one has to go back to the preparations which were being made for the first Gulf War in order to begin to appreciate its frightful significance--only made more clear by the second Gulf War:

This phrase is usually associated with President George Bush and came into prominence in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990....

In a speech to a joint session of both houses of Congress on 11 September 1990, President Bush outlined five ‘simple principles’ which should form the framework of an evolving international order: ‘Out of these troubled times, our fifth objective--a new world order--can emerge: a new era--freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice and more secure in the quest for peace, an era in which the
nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony.’ (Evans and Newnham, 1992, pp. 219-220)

The terminology, “the new world order”, was often used by President George Bush Sr.--as he and his allies demonstrated that this new world order was really nothing but the same order of old, the well known and ancient practice of “Might makes right”. Again, this has been made only more clear by the second Gulf War and the catastrophe which has followed. President George Bush Sr. spoke of “a new era--freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice and more secure in the quest for peace” (Evans and Newnham, 1992, pp. 219-220), to do this he and his powerful allies advocated and started a war. President George Bush Jr. and his powerful allies have done the exact same thing, by preemptively starting a war in order to promote peace. This is baffling, but excuses need to be made to justify “the law of the jungle”. As an ancient Greek, Thucydides, once said: “We both alike know that into the discussion of human affairs the question of justice only enters where the pressure of necessity is equal, and that the powerful exact what they can, and the weak grant what they must” (Spykman, 1942, p. 11).

The hypocrisy, deception, will to control, and violence of much of the world’s power elite--which is augmented by the ever-present and ever-advancing technology available to them, and is coupled to their unmatched military might--makes them frightful advocates of fallen humanity’s law of the jungle, only on a scale never before seen. This is the New World Order, nothing new, only more pervasive than ever before. Nicholas Spykman once wrote: “Plans for far-reaching changes in the character of international society are an intellectual by-product of all great wars” (Spykman, 1942, p. 458). This certainly seems to be true, great plans for a “better world” always seem to follow great
wars. But did some of these “great plans” exist before some of the conflicts, only needing the conflicts as an excuse for their implementation. Theoretically and obviously, a crisis can be caused in many ways. Remember a war was fought to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism connections--the weapons of mass destruction and terrorism connections, it was clear to many, never even existed. Yet, this unnecessary war has plunged the world into great fear with the problems that it has now truly created, providing governments with an excuse to exercise more control over people than ever before. A crisis provides governments with an opportunity to find and implement great plans to help people, this is certainly true. A crisis also provides governments the opportunity to exploit and devastate people for the ruling elite’s own agenda. 

At this point, an editorial from a college newspaper from February 28, 1991, is very useful in its honesty of opinion and boldness, contrasting it from much of the pro-war propaganda that was to be found in so much of the mass media of that time. The insight of the editorial staff regarding the cycle of war that the New World Order was bound to create and their condemnation of the delusion, stupidity, and hypocrisy of the might makes right mentality deserves our attention.

*Novus Ordo Seclorum*, Latin for “New World Order”, appears below the pyramid on the back of the one dollar bill. The Latin hearkens back to the conquest by the greatest of all empires; its appearance with a Masonic symbol alludes to that other greatest conquest--the triumph of capitalism.

The New World Order, Bush’s attempt to assure himself a place in history’s footnote, is neither new nor orderly--merely the Pax Americana of military superiority.

Championing this slogan, Bush alludes to himself as Caesar leading the
Roman Legions, as well as to Hitler and to God. Hitler’s New World Order was to recreate a never-existent Aryan supremacy. It also resonates with the language of Genesis--of God bringing order out of chaos.

“Order” also means to command with authority based upon the threat of violence.

As this skirmish with Iraq indicates, the New World order creates a cycle of war. Conquest and redivision of territory and hegemony brings only an illusion of stability. (The UWM Post, 1991, p. 8)

Later on the editorial concludes thus, in its condemnation of the New World Order and the suffering which it brings to people:

Rome was a slave society with a small, “ethnically-pure” Roman aristocracy wielding all power of toiling millions of nationalities. The oligarchs decided which of their number would be the next emperor.

The U.S. popular mythology conflates military success with moral righteousness. The Good Guys always win. God rewards the righteous with material success.

World leadership by virtue of having the most powerful army is a poor substitute for leadership by virtue of the most powerful economy. Neither has anything to do with justice or moral leadership.

Being the Roman Legions of the 21st Century promises only suffering and instability to the people of the U.S. as well as for the great majority of the people of the world. (The UWM Post, 1991, p. 8)

Of great significance are the following sentences from the above quotation: “The U.S. popular mythology conflates military success with moral righteousness. The Good
Guys always win. God rewards the righteous with material success” (The UWM Post, 1991, p. 8). Such thinking exemplifies the delusion and subservient beliefs characteristic of the heresy of Evangelicalism, in its manifold varieties. So many of the evangelical and tele-evangelical leaders came out unequivocally in support of both Gulf wars, with practically no regard for the suffering that countless people were about endure because of war. One could have easily thought that these evangelical leaders were little more than propaganda outlets for the government and its allies. The Orthodox saints would have never done this, they would have condemned evil, no matter who was guilty of it, whether those guilty were weak or strong. The Orthodox saints would have condemned the conduct of all the guilty parties, both weak and strong alike, and would have heroically witnessed to Christ the Theanthropos in any suffering that would have befallen them for their righteous confession. This is so because the Orthodox saints knew and confessed, with their entire created being, what St. Aleksandr Nevskii once said, “God is not in might, but in the right” (Kulybin, 1997, paragraph 4).

The New World Order exacted a heavy toll against Orthodox Christians in the 20th century; one only has to look at the example of the catastrophe which Orthodox Russia suffered at the hands of those who embraced Marxism to see this:

Especially difficult trails and travails beset the Russian Nation and Orthodoxy in the XX-th century. Throughout the course of the entire century there occurred persecutions on so great a scale as had never before been seen in the history of humanity; and warfare was also waged by the forces of world-evil against Orthodoxy and the Church, with an aim toward establishing their New World Order, with antichrist--“the prince of this world”, at its head. The overthrow of the Tsar’s authority in February 1917 and the destruction, thereby, of the
Orthodox form of government, laid the groundwork for an entire epoch of militant atheism, which, to this day, wages both open and concealed warfare against the Church and the Faith, alike, its objective being to uproot and annihilate them entirely. (Hold fast the Orthodox Faith, O Holy Rus, 2000, paragraph 2)

Orthodox Christianity has suffered greatly under the New World Order, and continues to do so to this day. The sinfulness of Orthodox Christians themselves (myself included) has contributed greatly to this reality, as has the sinfulness of the entire human race. With this in mind, we observe that “Mankind, not wanting to unite in Christ, is now uniting in the ‘New World Order,’ that it might greet the antichrist with ardent enthusiasm--and few there be who oppose this” (Kulybin, 1997, paragraph 3). For even with the abomination of Marxism behind them, Orthodox Christians are still beset by the attacks engendered by New World Order politics. One can see this by again looking at the example of Russia--though the same thing is essentially happening in other predominately Orthodox nations--where modernism, ecumenism and other influences foreign to Orthodoxy attempt to undermine and erode the presence of the Orthodox Faith from among the people. These next two quotations point to this reality of the continuing attacks against Orthodoxy:

Today, a new stage has begun in their war against Holy Orthodoxy. We have become witnesses to a wide-scale religious expansion on the part of Catholicism, occultism, Protestant heresies and sectarianism, the aim of all of which is the gradual spiritual colonization of the Russian Nation. (Hold fast the Orthodox Faith, O Holy Rus, 2000, paragraph 5)

For the second of the two quotations, which is about to follow, as with the first quotation, the difficulties facing Orthodox Russia in the contemporary new world order
are mentioned, but these certainly are the same sort of difficulties faced by any predominately Orthodox nation. Mindful of this we observe the following: “The corruption of the Church through modernism and ecumenical activity continues. The country is despoiled; immoral mass- ‘culture’ is dominant; Russia is descending ever deeper into a masonic-mondialistic ‘world-association’” (Kulybin, 1997, paragraph 7).

But in spite of anything that happens, Orthodox Christians know that the Holy Orthodox Church will forever remain unconquerable and will emerge victorious. This is so through no merit on the part of Orthodox Christians, but rather because the One who established the Orthodox Church is Christ the Theanthropos Himself, the immortal King and God. When Christ comes again to judge the world, no one will escape His judgment and nothing will be hidden from Him, all worldly power will be brought to nothing. The Orthodox Church confesses this reality throughout its life and worship. For example, this is seen in the following Kontakion (Tone One):

When Thou comest, O God, upon the earth with glory, the whole world will tremble. The river of fire will bring men before Thy judgment seat, the books will be opened and the secrets disclosed. Then deliver me from the unquenchable fire, and count me worthy to stand on Thy right hand, Judge most righteous.

(Sunday of the Last Judgment, 1994)

The phrase mentioned earlier, “The corruption of the Church through modernism and ecumenical activity continues” (Kulybin, 1997, paragraph 7), is significant, in that it can refer to the actions of people explicitly external to Orthodoxy, but it can also refer to the actions of people ostensibly within Orthodoxy who through their conduct are seemingly more loyal to forces external to the Orthodox Faith than to anything else. With this in mind, the oftentimes irresponsible, ignorant, and cowardly striving to compromise
and be politically correct in matters of Faith, on the part of numerous Orthodox ecumenists, does nothing to serve the unique truth of Jesus Christ and His Church, the Orthodox Church. In fact, such conduct by people sworn to defend and teach Orthodox without change does more than not just serve the truth, it is a mockery of the countless Orthodox martyrs and saints who have suffered throughout history to bring, undefiled, the Holy Orthodox Faith to all people and to all generations. To those Orthodox hierarchs and leaders, to all clergy and lay people alike (myself included, because of my cowardice), and to any and all to whom this applies, who choose to not confess Orthodox Christianity with courage for the salvation of the spiritual children entrusted to them, the words of Christ are clear:

St. Luke 17:1-2: Then He said to His disciples, “It is impossible that the stumbling blocks should not come, but woe to him through whom they come! “It is more profitable for him if a millstone turned by an ass is put about his neck, and he is cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble. (The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume 1), pp. 265-266)

The Orthodox Saints Venerated and Respected as Teachers in the Face of Ecumenism

Orthodox through respect for, and cognizance of, Holy Tradition honor and venerate their saints and martyrs who by the grace of God remained united to Christ, the Son of God and His Holy Orthodox Church, despite oftentimes being confronted with the most dreadful persecution and death imaginable. We note that Orthodox Christians venerate their saints but, of course, do not worship them, for worship is due to God, the Holy Trinity, alone and to no one else and this fact has always been confessed in Orthodox Christianity (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p.
800). It is with this in mind that the Orthodox venerate their saints and look to them for guidance and instruction, because these saints (through their cooperation with the grace of God, the Holy Trinity) teach all of mankind (and not just Orthodox Christians) that the Truth is unchangeable and can never be conquered no matter how powerful the people and forces are who fight, in vain, against that same immortal Truth: Christ our God. By the grace of God, the Orthodox saints teach their spiritual children and the entire world, not only with their words, but more significantly through their humility, kindness, and great courage. These Orthodox saints, through their actions and comments, through their holiness of life and willingness to die for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, educate their Orthodox brethren and the whole world regarding what it is to believe, in the fullest sense, the words of Christ when teaches us: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

It is as we keep in mind the great sacrifice of the Orthodox martyrs and saints that the following poem by a Serbian Orthodox priest is very illustrative of the God-inspired courage and wisdom that these same martyrs and saints possessed and inspired others to pursue:

LIFE

Just to be alive
Is a victory.
To be created and to be
Makes life long enough.
Those who choose the length of life
Live briefly.
Those who learn what life is
Have no fear of death.


By the power and mercy of God, the Orthodox saints are a living, unbroken testimony (unmatched in human history) exemplifying holiness of life and complete submission to the will of God, the Holy Trinity, as they fearlessly teach the whole world that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate, Who has established His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church and through their great courage and martyrlic witness (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11) they teach all of humanity that there is no persecution, inflicted by powerful people and forces who hate Christ, which can ever change that reality. The countless Orthodox saints (both known and unknown), through their courage and martyrlic witness (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11), teach humanity that the Truth is indestructible and immutable, and that no worldly power or cowardly subservience to great worldly power can ever change that fact. The Orthodox saints teach the world that this is so, because they know and confess, through every aspect of their life in Christ, that “the Truth is a Person, the Person of Christ” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 154-155). Bowing down to their Creator--God, the Holy Trinity--and to no one else, the Orthodox saints, courageously and free of hypocrisy, teach Orthodox Christians and the whole world that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Pre-eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity Who, without change and without any necessity to His Person19, became Man and established His Holy Orthodox Church on Himself, for the salvation of all humanity.

These Orthodox saints by the unfathomable mercy of God, the Holy Trinity, taught the Orthodox Faith fearlessly and without regard for the great danger to themselves

19 For there was no necessity to the Person of the Son of God which would have somehow made it inevitable or compulsory that He become Man. Of course, consistent with that fact, there was no such necessity to the Holy Trinity which would have somehow compelled or “forced” the Incarnation to take place, as something inevitable or necessitated by the very nature of God.
in so doing. The great educational example and legacy of the Orthodox saints--from which we can always learn and be inspired--is that the Orthodox saints and martyrs never taught humanity in general and Orthodox Christians in particular to compromise regarding the indisputable, unique truth that is Orthodox Christianity. For them, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Holy Orthodox Church which He has uniquely established and which is His Body, is absolute Truth which the saints by the unfathomable grace and power of God never forsook. In the face of the most horrific persecutions, tortures and agonizing means of death imaginable these countless Orthodox saints have, in an unparalleled and unbroken continuity throughout history, confessed Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church against all His enemies, and there will always be such saints to do so until the end of time. For, as Christ promised:

St. Matthew 16:16-18: And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(New Testament: Greek and English, pp. 43-44)

This rock, in Orthodox theology, is none other than the Only-Begotten Son of God, Who became man, the Lord Jesus Christ (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 46).

St. Justin Popovich and Others Confess the Uniqueness of Orthodoxy

The God-inspired confession of St. Peter is an unshakable rock of faith (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 46), and the Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, having become man and as the God-Man (Theanthropos)
establishing His Church, the Orthodox Church, is for Orthodox Christians an indisputable, unique historical reality. The modern day Orthodox saint, St. Justin Popovich (2000) helps us to see this when he tells us:

Ecumenism is a movement that generates a multitude of questions. All these questions, in fact, spring from and flow into a single desire for only one thing: the True Church of Christ. The True Church of Christ supplies, as it should, the answers to all the primary and secondary questions posed by ecumenism. For if the Church of Christ does not solve the eternal questions of the human spirit, it serves no purpose. … This is why God came down to earth and became man: to give us, as the God-Man, the answers to all our tormenting, eternal questions. For this reason He remained in His fullness on earth in His Church, of which He is the Head and which is His Body: the True Church of Christ, the Orthodox Church.

(p. 1)

St. Justin Popovich (2000) goes on to tell us:

Like the holy apostles, the holy fathers and teachers of the Church, with a godly wisdom and zeal like that of the cherubim and seraphim, confess the unity and uniqueness of the Orthodox Church. … As the Lord Christ cannot have several bodies, there cannot, in Him be several Churches. According to its theanthropic nature, the Church is one and one only, as the God-Man Christ is one and one only. … The Church has never been divided, nor can it ever be, but fallings away from the Church have taken place and will again, as the dry and barren branches fall away by themselves from the eternally-living theanthropic Vine, the Lord Christ (Jn. 15:1-6). At various times, heretics and schismatics have separated and fallen away from the one and only indivisible Church of Christ, and have thus
ceased to be members of the Church and parts of its theanthropic Body. The Gnostics first fell away, then the Arians, the Nestorians, the Monophysites and the Iconoclasts, the Roman Catholics, Protestants and Uniates, then, in their turn, the other adherents of the heretico-schismatic legion. (p. 48)

The Orthodox saints teach us to seek Christ in His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church, and we need not look elsewhere into empty rationalistic systems, such as the ecumenical movement, which seem to merely serve very powerful political forces that are very hostile to Christ and His Orthodox Church. The fullness of truth is found in the Holy Orthodox Church and in its incomparable Holy Tradition, it is thus that St. John of Damascus teaches all Orthodox Christians when He says:

Therefore, my brethren, let us stand on the rock of faith and in the Tradition of the Church, not removing the landmarks set by our holy Fathers; not giving room to those who wish to introduce novelties and destroy the edifice of God’s holy, universal and apostolic Church. For if everyone is allowed to do as he pleases, the entire body of the Church will, little by little, be destroyed. (Popovic, 2000, p. 53)

St. Justin Popovich (2000) gives us further insight when he teaches us the following:

Holy Tradition comes entirely from the Theanthropos, from the holy apostles, from the holy fathers; from the Church, in the Church and by the Church. The holy fathers are nothing other than “the guardians of apostolic tradition”. They are all, as are the holy apostles, only “witnesses” of the one and only Truth, the ultimate Truth: Christ the Theanthropos. (p. 53)

With that same Truth in mind, St. Justin Popovich, in full conformity with Orthodox Tradition, goes on to tell us that we have no existence whatsoever, in and of ourselves, we exist only because the Son of God created us and gave us existence. And
the Second Person (Hypostasis) of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is alone the Truth. We say with St. Justin Popovich (2000): “Until His advent and in His absence, both now and always, it seems as if truth has no existence. And indeed it has none, for the theanthropic Hypostasis is alone the Truth: I am the truth (John 14:6). Man has no truth without the God-Man, for man does not exist without the God-Man” (p. 146).

The problem that the ecumenical movement has, as was mentioned earlier, is that it essentially attempts to make Christ into a “relative truth”, thereby exposing its depraved, “withered humanistic roots” (Popovic, 2000, p. 155). Contemporary ecumenism, in one way or an other, attempts to deny Jesus Christ and the uniqueness of His Church, the Orthodox Church. Orthodox participation in such humanistic philosophies, tragically and understandably, gives to many in the world the unwarranted impression that such philosophies with their false, heretical assertions are somehow valid. And how could such impressions not be given when numerous Orthodox leaders themselves, knowingly and willingly, in violation of Orthodox canons, engage in actions and statements that seemingly deny Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the incomparable beauty, richness and uniqueness of His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church?

The fullness of truth and unity that Christ gave, once and for all, uniquely, to His Holy Orthodox Church, cannot be constructed by humanity or found elsewhere. We quote the modern day Greek Orthodox saint, St. Nectarios who writes: “Unity is internal, mystical, direct… and does not need any external bond” (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 37).

No man-made philosophy, system, or organization (including ecumenism), regardless of how powerful the worldly and political interests being served, can ever replace, overcome or destroy the Orthodox Church of Christ.
The Orthodox Saints Teach People About the Futility and Falsehood of All the World’s Humanisms

Seen in the light of Orthodoxy: Marxism and all other humanisms, because of their propagation of evil and falsehood, are doomed to failure. If we consider the great atrocities of Marxism (see Appendix A), we clearly see an example of the futility of all man-made systems and philosophies and of their incapability to save humanity or even to bring justice to all human beings, for only Christ can do this. Whether one speaks of Marxism, Nazism, fascism, ultra-nationalism, racism, political correctness, exploitative capitalism, New Age philosophy, the New World Order, the doctrine of preemptive war or any other philosophy or system that is contrived by humanity in its self-worship to exploit people and to further the goals of very powerful people who hate Christ and His Orthodox Church, we know that in the end Christ and His Orthodox Church will never be defeated. The Orthodox saints teach us that overwhelming power which hypocritically is used to intimidate, lie to, torture and destroy people is doomed to fail, because in the end God will completely destroy all such power. We see this confirmed throughout Holy Scripture:

Revelation 6:15-17: And the kings of the earth, and the grandees, and the tribunes, and the rich, and the strong, and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, “for the day, the great one, of His wrath is come, and who is able to stand?” (The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2), 1999, p. 520.)

The Orthodox saints were never “politically correct”; they rejected and confronted
all worldly power and the hypocrisy and exploitation that came with such power. They, by the grace of the Triune God, stood in the face of terrible hardship and death. The saints stood in the face of overwhelming power, exploitation and oppression and heroically set the example for the rest of humanity. The saints educate the world that injustice, lies, hypocrisy and the cowardly pandering to people with great worldly power is clearly wrong; even though practically everyone of us (myself included in my cowardice) have at one time or another bowed to the power of this world.

Until the end of time there will be Orthodox saints to give their lives for Christ:

Revelation 6:9-11: And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who were slain on account of the word of God and on account of the testimony of the Lamb which they were holding; and they cried with a great voice, saying, “Until when, O Master, the Holy One and the True One, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood from those dwelling on the earth?” And there was given to each of them a white robe; and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little time, until there should be fulfilled also their fellow slaves and their brethren, those being about to be killed even as they. (The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2), 1999, pp. 519-520)

As Orthodox Christians, Christ commands each of us to “fight the good fight” (2 Tim 4:7) and not to be cowards in the face of evil. He tells us the following through St. John the Theologian:

Revelation 21:6-8: And He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to the one thirsting out of the fountain of the water of life freely. To him, the one overcoming, shall be these things, and I will be God to him and he himself shall be to Me a son. But to the cowardly and
unbelieving and those having become abominable and murderers and fornicators
and users of drugs, potions and spells, and idolaters, and all the liars, their part
shall be in the lake, the one burning with fire and brimstone which is the death, the
second one.” (The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation
(Volume 2), 1999, p. 546.)

Relativism is inherent to all the humanisms and associated with their inevitable fall
into evil. Looking at the humanistic political and philosophical systems that have come to
dominate the world in modern times, and of which the Ecumenical Movement is
undoubtedly a part, we see that these systems reject Christ and embrace relativism. Let
us see what St. Justin Popovich (2000) says regarding these matters: “All the
humanisms of European man are essentially an unceasing rebellion against Christ the God-
Man” (p. 149).

Shrivelled, stunted, alienated and degenerate humanistic man has rightly claimed,
through his sages, to be descended from apes. Having made himself equal in
descent to the animals, what reason has he not to make himself equal to them in
morality? … As there is nothing immortal and eternal in man, all ethics are
ultimately reduced to instinctive desires. … It could not be otherwise, as only a
sense of man’s immortality can be the basis of a higher and better morality than
that of the animals. (Popovic, 2000, pp. 93-94)

Relativism in the philosophy of European humanistic progress necessarily
resulted in relativism in ethics, and relativism is the source of anarchism and
nihilism. Consequently, the practical ethics of humanistic man are nothing other
than anarchy and nihilism. They are the inevitable, terminal and apocalyptic phase
of European humanistic progress. (Popovic, 2000, p. 94)
“European man is catastrophically stupid if he is able, while not believing in God and the immortality of the soul, to believe in progress as the purpose of life, and work on that. What good is progress to me if it ends in death?” (Popovic, 2000, p. 94).

“When there is neither the eternal God nor an immortal soul, then there is nothing absolute; there are no universal values. Everything is relative, ephemeral and mortal” (Popovic, 2000, p. 102).

In this climate of relativism, all sorts of atrocities and crimes become “justified”; only the world’s power elite do not need to acknowledge their own perpetration of these crimes when they commit them but instead, go to great pains to point out the commission of the same kind of crimes when perpetrated by weaker nations and members of society. Truly, “The big fish eats the small fish”. Its the same “Law of the jungle” that has always ruled the world and humanity’s relationship to itself. Its as though we (both the earth’s most powerful people and the earth’s weakest people and everyone else in between, in short all of humanity) do not believe in the immortality of the soul. But Christ, the God-Man, through His glorious Resurrection taught us that He created us for glory and immortality, not to devour one another. We only need to look at some of the fruits of humanistic political philosophies and systems to see that these systems cannot bear to have Christ in their midst. Again, looking at the atrocities and crimes against humanity perpetrated by Marxism for the “good of the people”, we see that the instigators of the abomination that is Communism had no belief in God and therefore they had no moral problem murdering tens of millions of people and creating the biggest police state that the world had ever seen.

In the same way that those who hated Christ wanted Him dead and removed from the world altogether and so they crucified Him, so also, the leaders of Marxism
attempted, with all their formidable might, to erase all memory of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church from Orthodox Christians in the communist controlled lands.

Historically, there have always been people who hate Christ and who love to attack Him, some people substantially more guilty of this than others. In fact, in our sinfulness and unworthiness, we are all guilty of this evil, to various extents, and (as was said) with some of us being much more guilty of this than others. And in the end, God alone will be the Judge of everyone. At this point, a few words from St. Justin Popovich will give us much insight into the futility and inherent deception common to all humanisms, past and present, as we continue to see people attack Christ, in vain:

Death is a dreadful mystery, brother, but it is more dreadful still when men condemn God to death and want to kill Him entirely, completely eliminate Him, so that He would be altogether dead, without any trace remaining. On this day men are more to be dreaded than God, for they torment God although He never tormented anyone; for they spit on God although He never spat on anyone; for they strike God though He never beat anyone. Let all be silent, who call themselves men! “Let all mortal flesh be silent!” (Cherouvikon, Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, Great Saturday) Let no one praise man, let no one praise humanity, for behold: humanity does not bear God to be in its midst, it kills God. Can anyone boast of such a humanity? Let no one praise humanism! It is nothing more than Satanism, Satanism, Satanism... (Popovich, 1998, pp. 7-8)

The experience of the Orthodox saints teaches the world that Orthodoxy is the one true Faith, and that it defeats all falsehood and evil. The cultural, and vast physical, genocide suffered by Orthodox Christians, perpetrated by Marxism and by the stupidity, ignorance and sinfulness of Orthodox Christians themselves, is a catastrophe of the
magnitude that has practically never been seen before. St. Justin Popovich goes on to tell us, that despite the catastrophes that the Holy Orthodox Church has experienced throughout history (many of them brought on by Orthodox Christians themselves), Orthodox Christianity is uniquely the Church of Christ and is present now and always will be for all of humanity:

Contemporary, godless social humanism is, ideologically and methodologically, engendered and invented by a pseudo-Christian Europe bound by our sinfulness. How did it get onto the soil of Orthodoxy? God tests the forbearance of the righteous, visits the sins of the fathers on the children and confirms the strength of His Church by leading it through fire and water. According to the words of Macarios of Egypt, wise in God, this is the only path for true Christianity:

“Wherever the Holy Spirit is, there follows, as a shadow, persecution and strife… It is necessary that the truth be persecuted”. What are the fruits of theanthropic society? The saints, the martyrs, the confessors. This is its goal and its purpose, and is also the proof of its indestructible strength, not the books or libraries, systems and cities that exist today and are gone tomorrow. Various pseudo-Christian humanisms fill the world with books, but Orthodoxy fills it with saints. Thousands and hundreds of thousands, millions, of martyrs and New Martyrs who have perished for the Orthodox faith--these are the fruits of theanthropic society. Hence the famous Francois Mauriac, a Roman Catholic, sees on the dark horizon of the contemporary world, that is sinking more and more into the darkness of European soul-destroying man-worship, one single bright point that gives hope for the future of that world: the Orthodox faith, washed by the blood of martyrs and New Martyrs. (Popovic, 2000, p. 125)
As St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije has written in the passage above: The Orthodox Church is unconquerable and eternal, *through no intrinsic merit possessed by Orthodox Christians themselves*, only by the unfathomable grace of God, the Holy Trinity. St. Justin informs us of a prominent non-Orthodox Christian, Francois Mauriac, and his profound respect for Orthodox Christianity. From such people we Orthodox can learn much. Referring to the research of Dr. Constantine Cavarnos, let us look at the following comments of two other people who are also not Orthodox, but who, like Francois Mauriac, have deep respect for Orthodox Christianity:

The Protestant E. Seeberg, Professor at the University of Berlin, says: “The Orthodox Church is the one Church, the Catholic Church, the Apostolic Church. She has remained faithful to the Apostolic teaching and the Apostolic canons, and through uninterrupted succession has preserved undiminished the connection to the Apostles.” (quoted in Cavarnos, 1992a, p. 14)

John Brownlie, a distinguished Anglican hymnologist, in his book *Hymns of the Holy Eastern Church*, makes the following important observations: “They tell us that the Greek Church is a dead Church, without missionary zeal. But how can a Church be characterized as not missionary, which stretched out her hands to the Far East, giving the blessing of the Gospel to the Tatars and the Indians; in a southerly direction, putting up the Cross in Arabia, Persia and Egypt; and in a northerly direction, spreading the light to the ends of Siberia? How can a Church be called dead, which engaged in hand-to-hand combat with idolatry, not only in the first centuries, but also in the last six centuries, under the abominable superstition of the Turks, preserving her faith in Christ throughout this interval? No Church offered so many martyrs to the Christian faith…. If under the
persistent, ceaseless persecution—not for generations, but for centuries—a Church can maintain her Faith and preserve her witness, then the term “dead” cannot be applied to her (John Brownlie, *Hymns of the Holy Eastern Church* [Paisley, 1902], pp. 18-19). (Cavarnos, 1992a, p. 17)

Regarding this last quotation, in particular, it would be of great significance if the facts contained therein were to be respected by “evangelical”, tele-evangelical and other “Christian” groups which in their imaginary “Church” regard themselves as uniquely being in possession of the title “Christian” and in their delusion of self-righteousness, and in their ignorance, view practically everyone else as having fallen away from that same imaginary “Evangelical”, “Apostolic Church”. This imaginary “Apostolic”, “Evangelical”, “Christian Church”, which is nothing other than an innovation and a constantly changing, ever mutating conglomerate of heresies and heretics, has much in common with the Ecumenical Movement which also has been categorized by Orthodox scholars as being “a collection of heresies” (Popovic, 2000, p. 153).

Regarding the Ecumenical Movement and its similarity to any one of the various heresies, in fact regarding its inherent connection to all of them, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000) tells us:

“Ecumenism” is a collective name for pseudo-Christianities, for the pseudo-Churches of Western Europe. All European humanisms, headed by papism, have given it their wholehearted support. And all these pseudo-Christianities, all these pseudo-Churches, are nothing other than a collection of heresies. … There is, in fact, no substantial difference between papism, protestantism, ecumenism and the other sects whose name is legion. (p. 153)

Orthodox ecumenists confuse and undermine Orthodox faithful. Again, in
connection with all of this, one cannot help but come back to this foolish propensity which some Orthodox hierarchs and leaders have to pursue and embrace the ecumenical movement and its inherent glorification of relativism, seemingly oblivious to the ammunition that such conduct provides to the enemies of Orthodox Christianity, seemingly oblivious to the fact that their actions arm those who wish to undermine and replace Orthodox Christianity itself. For what better empowerment to the enemies of Orthodoxy can there be, than for people to see Orthodox hierarchs and leaders themselves denying the incomparable mystery and profound uniqueness of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ through involvement in the relativism of the Ecumenical Movement? It is truly irresponsible, to say the least, for some Orthodox hierarchs and leaders to be willingly manipulated and zealously engaged in the syncretism and glorified relativism that is ecumenism, all this seemingly without concern for the immense confusion and harm that it causes to the Orthodox faithful. We take for example what the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople said about the Holy Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism in a “Joint Communiqué” of 1995 at the Vatican: “...the Joint Commission was able to proclaim that our Churches are recognized mutually as Sister Churches, responsible together for the preservation of the one Church of God” (quoted by Bishop Angelos of Avlona, 1998, p. 38).

This same Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, goes on to essentially criticize the Holy Orthodox Faith and its Tradition by making remarks such as these to a Roman Catholic delegation on November 30, 1998--where at the very least, according to the Orthodox monks who are quoting him, he is speaking of Orthodox Christianity’s history and ecclesiastical leadership since the Great Schism: “We are obliged from this...to reconsider our policy, to clean away the old yeast, to become new dough...” and
elsewhere, “Our repentance for the past is indispensable’ ” (quoted in The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 9).

*The Orthodox Fathers on the Holy Mountain Defend Orthodox Christianity Against the Relativism and Subservience of Ecumenism*

In response to Patriarch Bartholomew’s remarks, such as the ones that we have just quoted, and in response to other equally outrageous remarks and actions, which we will shortly see, the Orthodox Fathers on the Holy Mountain of Athos answer any such compromise and syncretism with the following beautiful statements and questions, to which Orthodox ecumenists, and the rest of us, need to pay attention:

Are we obliged then, Your All-Holiness, to reconsider the Tradition of our Saints, from Photios, Gregory Palamas and Mark of Ephesus, up until Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain and Athanasios of Paros, whose struggles against the heterodox teachings of Rome and whose unrelenting persistence in the holy dogmas and ethos of Orthodoxy constitute our legacy from them? Can we ignore the words of Gregory Palamas that: “Our confession (of faith) is secure in all things and is for us a crown of pride and our hope which cannot be put to shame”? (The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 10)

Using the God-inspired wisdom of St. Gregory Palamas, here the Athonite monks essentially are making reference to the fact that Orthodoxy, as the One and Only True Church of Christ, is continuous and completely unbroken throughout history, from ancient times into the present, and Orthodoxy forever will stand as uniquely the Church of Christ, by the mercy of God. Furthermore, we can also get a sense, from the following remarks of St. Gregory Palamas, that Orthodoxy, as the One and Only True Faith, rejects the heresies of all the other faiths:
Is then our holy Tradition “old leaven” and must we now reconsider this mindset (phronema) and adopt the “new dough” of a false union with Rome, in as much as she continues to be heterodox? And is not the same Saint Gregory’s [St. Gregory Palamas]\(^{20}\) characterization of Western heretical dogmas still timely in our day: “These are the deep secrets of Satan, the mysteries of the Evil One” and his words to those in the West “We will never accept you in communion as long as you confess the Spirit to be also from the Son.” (The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 11)

The statement of St. Gregory Palamas, “We will never accept you in communion as long as you confess the Spirit to be also from the Son”, is of course a reference to the heresy of the *Filioque*, which is followed by Roman Catholicism. The Athonite monks continue their discussion, as they bring to our attention the following:

Furthermore, how can we rectify with our conscience the following statement from your address: “Those of our forefathers from whom we inherited this separation were the unfortunate victims of the serpent who is the chief of all evils; they are already in the hands of God, the righteous judge”? (quoted by The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 12)

This last statement by Patriarch Bartholomew is inexplicable; it seems to both equate Orthodoxy with Roman Catholicism, and at the same time it lays equal blame on both Orthodoxy and the heretics of the West for the Great Schism. The Athonite monks refute such relativism, pandering, and syncretism with the following Orthodox affirmation which confesses that those in the West, who had embraced heresy, were indeed the ones who had brought about the schism:

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\(^{20}\) This bracketed entry has been made by me.
According to the Holy Fathers, the Popes of Rome and their representatives are the true cause of the West’s schism from the Universal (Katholike) Orthodox Church. Your All-Holiness, you are aware that Saint Mark says literally: “For they have given cause for the schism, having obviously carried out the addition...We had previously broken from them, or rather had cut them off and separated them from the common body of the Church, as being of an improper and impious mindset (phronema) and for irrationally having made the addition. Therefore, we turned away from them since they were heretics and for this reason separated from them.” And in our century, Saint Nectarios wrote: “Thenceforth the separation of the Churches began, which came into completion quite rightly under Photios, since the Church was in danger of going away from the One, Catholic, and Apostolic Church to become a Roman Church, or rather a papist Church, professing no longer the dogmas of the holy Apostles, but those of the popes”.

And these men, being the causes for the schism, are now in the hands of God, the righteous judge. But is it possible that the holy Fathers, who rightfully cut heretical Rome off from the body of the Church as one would amputate an incurable body part, and stitched back together the seamless tunic of Christ--is it possible that they are “unfortunate victims of the serpent, chief of all evils?” What Orthodox Christian cannot help but grieve just by hearing those words alone? (quoted in The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraphs 13-14)

As we proceed in the discussion, we see Patriarch Bartholomew in what appears to be his continuing efforts to equate the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ with Roman
Catholicism, and we see that such ecclesiology is definitely not Orthodox, as the Fathers on the Holy Mountain point out to us:

And how then can we accept the following statement from your address “Since in as much as one Church recognizes another Church to be a repository of divine grace, capable of granting salvation,... the attempt to break believers off from the one and attach them to the other is impossible”?

Have we then ceased to believe that only the Orthodox Church constitutes the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church?

Are we returning to the unorthodox ecclesiology of the Balamand document, which You yourself admitted to Austrian journalists, was not accepted by any Orthodox Church save the Church of Romania, and which, as you are aware, was condemned conciliarly by the Church of Greece and rejected by our Holy Community and by many bishops and theologians as being unorthodox?

But even if one interprets the above statement as being against Rome’s proselytism via the Unia, its formulation denies to the Orthodox Church the right to consider herself the only true Church.

Are we then condemning the Unia solely because by its actions it undermines the theory of the “sister churches” and the recognition of Rome as the complete Church of Christ which arises from this theory? Are we not condemning the Unia because it has been the devious enemy of the Orthodox for centuries and because it is impossible, based on Orthodox ecclesiology, for even the existence of Uniate groups to be acceptable?

How can we accept as being consistent with Orthodox ecclesiology the statement that “each local Church is not a competitor with other local Churches,
but of one body with them...” when it is totally impossible to consider heterodox Rome as being one of the most holy Orthodox Local Churches and of one body with them? (quoted in The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraphs 15-20)

Similar to what we have seen earlier, it appears that the Patriarch is denying the fact that the Holy Orthodox Church is uniquely the Body of Christ, with Christ our God as its Head. For indeed, as the Body of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church uniquely possesses the fullness of all truth. With this in mind, the Athonoite Fathers are right to be “deeply pained” when they point out:

Finally, how can we not but be deeply pained by the epilogue of the address: “May the Lord make us worthy to see the resurrection of unity of His One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church” when by this statement the impression given is that since the time of the schism with Rome, the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church ceased to exist, so that we must pray for her “resurrection?” In other words, were we not born into, baptized, and reared in the embrace of the One Holy Catholic Church, but are anticipating her resurrection? Is then our faith in vain? Are we dashing off into the void? (The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 21)

We also see in this discussion that the monks on the Holy Mountain are right to condemn “pan-religious common prayers”, as being clearly against Orthodox Christianity. In the following quotation, we observe that these “pan-religious common prayers” are condemned by the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church:

We are also grieved and in anguish by the occurrence of pan-religious common prayers whose syncretistic nature is obvious.
From the first such common prayer which took place in Assisi (1986), these pan-religious spectacles have never ceased to be celebrated annually, reaching distressing proportions for the Orthodox during the 12th pan-religious common prayer on the 30th of August 1998 in Romania. Why must we Orthodox be dragged into such common prayers by the Roman Catholic agents who mastermind them, when their goals are to serve papal pretensions for, at the least, spiritual leadership in Europe?

In addition, common prayers, such as are practiced, stand clearly against the Holy Canons of the Church. To be sure, You have not personally participated in such common prayer, but Orthodox Hierarchs and indeed, Heads of Churches have participated. In Romania, the papal cardinal and the Patriarch together blessed a mixed congregation of Roman Catholics, Uniates, and Orthodox.

The common prayer in Romania opens the Kerkoporta, through which the Orthodox Church will be in danger of spiritual capture. The Most Blessed Presiding Hierarch of the Church of Romania is too weak, it would seem, to stand up to the politics of his nation’s leaders who are making provisions to open towards the West; in this context an official visit of the Pope to an Orthodox nation recently took place for the first time in history. Are they suffering amnesia when it comes to the crimes committed by the Uniates against the Orthodox for centuries? Are we now to accept de facto the existence and activities of Uniate groups?

Besides, since there seems to be no chance that heterodox Christians will abandon their heretical dogmas and unbiblical teachings, what purpose do common prayers serve, except to blunt Orthodox sensitivity and to create a syncretistic
convergence?

Finally, how can we justify common prayer with heterodox? Do the Orthodox representatives who partake in these common prayers recognize that the rest of the heterodox and those of other religions properly give praise to and worship God? Is not such a position antithetical to the holy Gospel and thus, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

We would reverently recommend to Your attention the prohibition of common prayer with heterodox and to be sure, with non-Christian religions by means of a pan-orthodox decision, in as much as this common prayer stands against the commands of the Old and New Testament as well as the Holy Canons, as they prepare the way for the pan-religion of the so-called “New Age” in denial of the uniqueness of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (quoted in The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part B, paragraphs 26-32)

We also share, along with the Orthodox Fathers on Mount Athos, who in their moving defense of Orthodoxy inspire us, the same great disappointment and sorrow regarding remarks and actions of other Orthodox hierarchs, who are likewise entangled in ecumenism’s glorified relativism. For example, in complete disregard for Holy Orthodox Tradition and the sufferings of countless Orthodox saints, we see the following: ... ‘in June of 1998 when in Rome, the Most Reverend Metropolitan of Pergamon spoke of the so-called “two lungs” with which the Universal Church of Christ breathes’ (quoted in The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part A, paragraph 5).

The Metropolitan of Pergamon was attempting, inexplicably and in complete contradiction to Holy Orthodox Tradition, to give equal validity to, and place side by side with one another: Roman Catholicism, which abides in heresy, and The Holy Orthodox
Church of Christ which *alone* and forever uniquely *is* the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. The Metropolitan of Pergamon’s June, 1998 remark claiming that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church, is but one part or “lung”, if you will, to the Universal Church of Christ, along with the heresy of Roman Catholicism, is obviously absurd. The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is not a part of any church, it, uniquely and by itself, *is the Church, in all its fullness and in all its entirety*, despite the fact that some Orthodox ecumenists seem bent on trying to undermine that unconquerable reality.

*The Experience of the Orthodox Saints is a Condemnation of Heresy and all Other Falsehood*

We must again note to avoid any misunderstanding, and in conformity with what was said earlier (in the introduction to this work), that this condemnation of heresy and this condemnation of many Orthodox ecumenists’ conduct--related to their ignoring, minimizing, and seeming validation of, heretical beliefs--is not a judgment on the morality and integrity of Roman Catholics, in general, nor of anyone else, in general. It is simply a condemnation of heresy, and the relativism and syncretism, pursued by many Orthodox ecumenists and their non-Orthodox “spiritual brethren”, as they seek to compromise with, and somehow validate, falsehood and heresy, at the expense of teaching, and confessing, the one and only True Faith, Orthodox Christianity, to the world. And with this in mind, there are countless Roman Catholics, and others (both Christians and non-Christians), who are kinder, more honorable, more generous, and more courageous than countless Orthodox Christians are. There are countless people, who are not Orthodox Christian, who have greater moral character than multitudes of Orthodox Christians. As such, this discussion, to a large extent, is not a condemnation of people for believing
something, it is a condemnation of falsehood and heresy, from an Orthodox perspective, argued by a very cowardly, hypocritical, and sinful man: myself. For as we will see elsewhere, the Orthodox attitude regarding heresy, deception and sin, and regarding heretics, the deceived, and sinners (a group of which we are all a part) is beautifully summarized by the following: “God loves mankind, but He does not love falsehood and deception.” .... “All Christians do the same. They love the sinner but hate the sin. They love the heretics but hate the heresy. They love the deceived but hate the deception” (quoted in Degyansky, 1997, pp. 87-88).

When Orthodox Christians throughout the world hear of and see some prominent Orthodox hierarchs and their ecumenical, non-Orthodox, spiritual “brethren” all involved in their faithless, cowardly “theology of love” discussing--effectively on equal terms (and seemingly negotiating)--the theological traditions of numerous faiths, including the Orthodox Faith, then understandably many Orthodox and others become baffled with such conduct as they wonder what is unique, significant and absolute about Orthodox theology, if it is discussed on equal terms with theological traditions which clearly do not agree with Orthodox Trinitarian Theology? The absolute, incomparable truth that is Orthodox Trinitarian Theology found uniquely in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ cannot be relativized, compared, negotiated nor discussed on equal terms with the theology of the heterodox nor with the theology of the non-Christian religions. Consequently, those Orthodox hierarchs responsible for attempting to relativize Holy Orthodoxy should know better.

When an Orthodox hierarch proclaims that a church, which has not renounced its innovations and heresies and which consequently has different theology and beliefs than those of Orthodox Christianity, is, nonetheless, a “Sister Church” to the Holy Orthodox
Church of Christ then no one should be in the least bit surprised (least of all, Orthodox ecumenists themselves) when we see the loss of many Orthodox Christians as they leave their eternal Holy Orthodox Church and go to the “Sister Church” or to some other “Church”. None of this should surprise anyone given the apostasy, ignorance, confusion and relativism that abides in the world and which is reflected and promoted by the ecumenical movement itself. In contrast to the great courage, steadfastness and humility of the Orthodox saints and martyrs, who are the great teachers of Orthodoxy to all humanity, Orthodox are confronted with the reality of some prominent Orthodox hierarchs and leaders slavishly embracing and expounding the confusion and relativism of this world which is clearly represented in the ecumenical movement, among other places. In all honesty, this cowardly, hypocritical subservience to people and forces with great worldly power, which is exhibited by numerous Orthodox hierarchs and leaders, especially evident in their ecumenical activities, is simply a reflection of the ignorance, confusion, apostasy and cowardice which is generally to be found in the overwhelming majority of people throughout the world (myself included). It is with these sorrowful realities in mind that we turn for inspiration and guidance to those same Orthodox saints and martyrs, about whom we spoke earlier, who by the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, transcend the cowardice, stupidity and hypocrisy of this world in order to teach and confess to the whole world concerning the absolute Truth that is the Theanthropos (the God-Man), Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Holy Orthodox Church.

The countless Orthodox saints and martyrs teach all humanity to bow down to the Suprasubstantial Trinity, and to no one else, for no one else but God, the Holy Trinity, can save humanity. This fact, the Orthodox saints and martyrs prove to all of humanity (once again, by the unfathomable grace and power of the one and only God: the
Holy Trinity) through their unmatched kindness, wisdom, humility and courage unto even unspeakable tortures and death. In sharp contrast to the heroism of the Orthodox saints, we see how people who leave Orthodoxy are essentially encouraged to do so by the pronouncements and actions of some Orthodox leaders themselves, who religiously promote the relativism of the ecumenical movement, obviously at the expense of Orthodoxy, as they and their non-Orthodox ecumenical brethren communicate to everyone that it all really does not matter, with any real significance, regarding what people believe or where they go to worship. This, the Orthodox and non-Orthodox ecumenists faithfully communicate to the whole world in accordance with the all-encompassing, man-made, syncretistic principles of ecumenism. This sort of recklessness, irresponsibility, willful ignorance, and cowardly syncretism, on the part of many Orthodox ecumenists, is inexcusable. All these sad things (seen reflected in the actions and pronouncements of some prominent Orthodox leaders, who are grossly involved in “the Pan-heresy of Ecumenism” (Cyprian, 1995, p. 6.)) we saw exposed earlier by the Athonite monks in their beautiful and inspiring letter to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew as they admonish him and others to firmly confess Orthodoxy and not forsake it. The significance of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and its Theology is called into question by many, obviously and understandably, because of the cowardly subservience and relativistic compromise inherent to Orthodox participation in ecumenism.

Many Orthodox ecumenists, seemingly mindful and fearful of powerful people and political forces, purposely attempt to compromise the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Faith in their, inevitably, relativistic, inter-faith endeavors, which are more commonly known as ecumenism. No man-made, humanistic system, which is what
ecumenism is, has the power to unite humanity in peace and love nor does it have the power to unite divided Christendom. Only Orthodox Christianity which is, by itself, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ has the power to do such things by the grace of God. This is all true only by the grace of God and not by any power or merit that Orthodox Christians have by themselves. This is so, because each and every person has absolutely nothing except for what God has given to him or her. And regarding groups of people, any and all persons, the same obviously holds true.
CHAPTER 4

THE HEROIC CONFESSION OF ORTHODOXY

The heroic confession of Orthodoxy, as taught to the world by the Orthodox saints, is radically different from the empty relativism which is promoted and taught by many Orthodox ecumenists. To demonstrate this, we will look at some more examples of how some Orthodox leaders, in their fervent striving to embrace ecumenism, seem to be willing to compromise Orthodox canons for the goal of furthering their relations with both Christians and Non-Christians, who reject Orthodox Christianity. We will also continue to look at what some people who reject ecumenism have to say regarding the actions and comments of Orthodox ecumenists, and, generally speaking, we will continue to attempt a strong Orthodox defense in this discussion.

All of this with the goal of furthering Orthodox Christian awareness and education.

Orthodox Leaders Not Courageously Confessing Orthodoxy

As has been mentioned, among the great challenges facing Orthodox education and witness is the relativism of some prominent Orthodox leaders on various occasions. Examples of such relativism (and syncretism) are the following statements made by two late Patriarchs of the Orthodox Church which are to be found in some of Father Daniel Deyansky’s excellent research:

… In December of 1972, the late Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I shocked the Christian world with the following message to the Moslem community, on the occasion of their feast of Bairam: “The one Great God of all- all we who worship and adore Him are His children- desires us to be saved and to be brothers. Though we belong to different religions- and have nonetheless learned of and acknowledge the Holy God as the beginning and end of all things- He desires that we should
love one another. This is the present hour’s commandment for the world: love and goodness. Of course, all faithful and good Muslims are filled with this same ideal, and with the same joy will accept this message of brotherhood in God, which is addressed to you on this great feast day of Islam.” (quoted in Degyansky, 1997, p. 87)

The late Patriarch Parthenios of Alexandria made the following declaration: The prophet Mohammed is an apostle. He is a man of God, who worked for the Kingdom of God and created Islam, a religion to which belong one billion people.... Our God is the Father of all men, even of the Moslems and Buddhists. I believe that God loves the Moslems and Buddhists.... When I speak against Islam or Buddhism, then I am not found in agreement with God.... My God is the God of other men also. He is not only the God for the Orthodox. This is my position. (quoted in Degyansky, 1997, p. 87)

The words of Patriarch Parthenios in the above quotation are indeed found in his responses to various questions which were asked of him in an interview with the German reporter Harold Brandt. The Greek Orthodox periodical Orthodoxos Typos, having translated the interview word for word into the Greek Language, concludes by expressing its disappointment with Patriarch Parthenios, saying, “These ecumenical words speak for themselves” (translated from Greek) (Orthodoxos Typos, 6, Oct., 1989). In fact it must be noted that in both these previous quotations: these are Orthodox Patriarchs glorifying relativism and pandering to powerful non-Christian and oftentimes anti-Christian forces. These are Orthodox Patriarchs to whom Orthodox Christians throughout the world look for inspiration and guidance in matters of faith. Their remarks are more suited to a Freemason or politician devoted to secular humanism, rather than to Orthodox Patriarchs
sworn to defend the Orthodox Faith, even with their lives, if necessary. In all fairness, it must be said that most other people--including myself in my faithlessness, laziness and cowardice--would also cave in to overwhelming political pressure and power, if they were in the hostile environment in which the two former Orthodox Patriarchs found themselves, surrounded by militant political and Islamic forces, which have historically persecuted Orthodox Christianity immensely.

Orthodox Christianity is confessed and taught to the whole world by the Orthodox saints and martyrs, who do so with love and compassion for all humankind, with humility and with great courage, but never through cowardly subservience to people who hate Christ and His Orthodox Church. By the mercy of God, the Holy Trinity, when it was their time, the Orthodox saints and martyrs never bowed down to great worldly power, regardless of how terrifying the consequences were of confessing Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. For most of the rest of us, myself included, the defense of the Orthodox Faith is possible, due to our cowardice, only from places of relative safety.

An Orthodox Confession From Relative Safety

With this in mind, never forgetting the countless Orthodox martyrs and saints throughout history, we are also inspired (though understandably oftentimes to a lesser extent) by numerous defenses of the Orthodox Christian Faith that have been made by people not under any visible, immediate danger. As an example of this, we observe the strong defense of the Orthodox Faith by the Greek periodical Epignosis, responding with irony to Patriarch Parthenios’ outrageous remarks, as they write: ‘So “Mohammed is an apostle” and the New Martyrs [who were slain because they would not accept Islam]? This bracketed entry is found in Degyansky’s work, from where the above quotation was obtained. The bracketed entry helps explain the quotation, and is not found in the original source.
then, are “not found in agreement with God’” (quoted in Degyansky, 1997, pp. 87-88).

This same periodical calls Patriarch Parthenios to task for the great falsehood that he spoke, when they write the following Orthodox response to the late Patriarch’s unbelievable remarks:

We also believe... that God is the Father of all men and that He loves both the Muslims and the Buddhists. God loves mankind, but He does not love falsehood and deception. He loves the Muslims and the Buddhists, but He does not love Mohammedanism and Buddhism. All Christians do the same. They love the sinner but hate the sin. They love the heretics but hate the heresy. They love the deceived but hate the deception. (quoted in Degyansky, 1997, pp. 87-88)

Alexander Kalomiros is the one who wrote this response in his periodical Epignosis—with Athanasios Katsikis as editor.22 This publication and the people responsible for it were based in a predominantly Orthodox nation, Greece. So, one has to ask, would the people responsible for this moving statement even have written it were they living under similar oppressive and hostile circumstances as the Patriarchs in question were having to live, as they failed to courageously confess the Orthodox Faith? Would most other Orthodox have stood their ground courageously in similar hostile circumstances? Would I have done so? Obviously, in the strictest sense, no one can speak for sure about what someone else (or about what they themselves for that matter) would or would not do in extremely dangerous circumstances. However, from the experience of

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22 Fr. Basil at Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Old Calendar) in Boston, MA, told me [March, 2006] that typically Alexander Kalomiros was the author of the articles in Epignosis, for it was his periodical and he was responsible for its publication—though when he wrote the articles he would not put his name to the articles. Athanasios Katsikis was the editor. The quotation in Degyansky’s work, originally from Epignosis, is an accurate translation of the original Greek. In the original text, Kalomiros writes, “We also believe, sir Parthenios, that God is the Father of all men” (Epignosis, no. 20, Dec., 1989). In Degyansky’s work we see that the phrase “sir Parthenios” is taken out; this takes nothing away from the meaning of the original statement in Epignosis.
human history, it is rather obvious that most people, most of the time, do things which they feel that they can do and which they believe will subsequently leave them surviving, unharmed and safe. As I have alluded to earlier: Because of my grossly lacking the perseverance, faith, hope, love and courage which are required to witness boldly and truthfully to the one and only Truth that is Christ the Theanthropos, it is very likely that I would, in a cowardly manner, fail to stand my ground for the Orthodox Faith.

*The Heroic Orthodox Confession of St. Maximos*

The moving defense of the Orthodox Faith, found in the periodical *Epignosis*, written by people who do not live in the same danger in which the two aforementioned Patriarchs lived, still is very impressive and inspiring. This defense reminds one of something that St. Maximos the Confessor once said. And he, indeed, did live under very dangerous circumstances and suffered tremendously for his Orthodox confession of Christ. In the following courageous and uncompromising Orthodox confession from St. Maximos the Confessor we see that which epitomizes the Orthodox attitude towards the various heresies and towards those who follow any of those heresies:

I do not wish heretics to suffer, nor do I rejoice in any evil that befalls them; God forbid!—but I take the greatest joy and pleasure in their conversion. For what can be dearer to the faithful than to see God’s scattered children gathered together? I am not so insane as to suggest that mercilessness should be valued above love for mankind. On the contrary, I advise that we should, with care and experience, do good to all men, and be all things to all men according to their need. Together with this, I desire and advise that heretics as such should not be supported in their senseless beliefs, but in that case one must be firm and implacable. For I do not call it love, but hatred and a falling-away from theanthropic love, when someone
supports a heretical fallacy to the ruination of those who hold that fallacy.

(Popovic, 2000, p. 156)

It would be beautiful for all Orthodox Christians, including Orthodox hierarchs, to follow this advice of St. Maximos.

*The Heroic Confession of Orthodoxy Made By the Orthodox Saints, Throughout History*

**A look at some ancient Orthodox saints.** Let us look at some Orthodox saints, who courageously lived and taught the Orthodox Faith, as Christ commanded of everyone who would follow Him. And these Orthodox saints, about whom we will speak, in the forthcoming discussion, both ancient and more recent, are obviously but a few of the countless saints and martyrs whom we can find within the unmatched history of Orthodox Christianity. Let us begin this part of the discussion by briefly looking at the lives of three great ancient Orthodox saints: St. Haralambos, St. George, and St. Demetrios. Let us look at some of the history and discussion, offered by an Orthodox Priest, the Reverend Father George Poulos, pertaining to the Great Martyr, St. Haralambos, whose fearless Orthodox confession of Christ, in the face of those who hated Christ, is never forgotten by Orthodox Christians:

What has prompted the Orthodox Christians throughout the world to display such love and affection for St. Charalambos [St. Haralambos]? Why has he been so very close to the hearts of all of us for over 1700 years? Perhaps it is because of the fact that no other Priest in the history of Christianity suffered so much in one lifetime for his religious convictions. In the city of Magnesia, the Governor of the province, Loukianos, inflicted great pain upon St. Charalambos because he refused to worship the idols of the Empire. The saintly Priest was

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23 The text from which we will quote spells “St. Haralambos”, as “St. Charalambos”.

24 The bracketed entry is my addition.
first tied to a post in the public square and ridiculed by the pagans. His body was slashed by heavy cutting irons used by the Governor’s soldiers. St. Charalambos in spite of the terrible pain, refused to deny Christ and accept the pagan gods. After much torture, he was dragged by his beard through the streets of Magnesia by soldiers on horseback. Many forms of torture were used to force Charalambos to give up his faith, yet he would not. During the ensuing months, St. Charalambos miraculously survived all forms of torture. Eventually the people called him “the man they cannot kill.” People spoke of many miracles attributed to St. Charalambos during his imprisonment. Thousands came to the jail to seek his blessing. Hundreds of afflicted souls came to be healed of their sicknesses.

(Poulos, 1974, pp. 50-51)

The Orthodox saints used their entire created being given to them by God to selflessly serve their Creator and their fellow man with great love and courage. This great love and courage was something which continually and miraculously grew in them, by the grace of God, through their life in Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church. This is certainly seen in the miraculous life and death struggles of St. Haralambos [St. Charalambos] and in countless other saints. And there really is no greater educational example given to Orthodox Christians by their spiritual leaders than this. Again, we consider the life of St. Haralambos:

Charalambos became known also as the miracle-worker. He caused the lame to walk and the blind to see. Some thought he was the Resurrected Christ who had returned to earth. St. Charalambos proclaimed to all that he was not the Messiah but that he was only the instrument of the Lord’s Divine Grace.

The Roman Emperor, Servius, was enraged by the action of Charalambos and
ordered the Saint brought to the capital of the Empire which was then located in the ancient city of Antioch (192 A.D.) Syria. In the city of Antioch, Charalambos was led about the city with a horse bridle in his mouth. This was done to ridicule both him and the Christian faith, which he continued to uphold. The soldiers of the emperor then nailed Charalambos to a cross with over 100 large spikes which pierced the skin of the pious Saint. Other forms of torture were administered, and yet Charalambos did not relent nor die. In his great anger, the Emperor ordered Charalambos beheaded. As the two executioners raised their swords to kill the Saint, suddenly a voice was heard from heaven saying, “well done my faithful servant, enter into the kingdom of heaven.” At this moment, St. Charalambos passed away without a blow being struck. The executioners were dumbfounded. They knelt at the body of the Saint and asked God for forgiveness. The Emperor became more enraged and ordered the two would-be executioners of Charalambos beheaded. Their names were Porphirios and Bapto, whose feast day we celebrate today also.25 Thus the beloved Saint Charalambos truly had become “the man they couldn’t kill,” for he was taken by God himself into the Kingdom of Heaven.

(Poulos, 1974, pp. 50-51)

Now, we will once again refer to the research of Father George Poulos, to learn some things about the life of another Great Orthodox Martyr, St. George, whose great courage and love for Christ, in the face of great evil and oppression, is an inspiration and lesson to all Orthodox Christians, and to the whole world:

St. George is called the “Victorious Great Martyr,” and he was the most famous Saint of Syria. He was an officer in the army of the Roman Emperor Diocletian,

25 The Feast Day of St. Haralambos and these other two saints is February 10th.
the great persecutor of the Christians. As a Christian, George refused to make pagan sacrifice, and he gave up his military commission. For this, and because he was against the cruel persecution, he was tortured by being beaten with spears; cuts were inflicted upon his body, and he was bound to the rim of a wheel set with sharp spikes. These tortures had no effect on his steadfastness, and his example persuaded many Christians to hold fast in the faith and many pagans to be converted. He was finally beheaded at Nicodemia, a town in Asia Minor on an inlet of the Sea of Marmora, about the year 303 A.D.

The fame of St. George spread throughout the Eastern world, and he came to be invoked in time of trouble by Christian and Moslem alike. The Emperor Constantine is said to have dedicated a Church to St. George not long after the martyr’s death, and devotion to him soon spread to the West and increased greatly after the Crusaders returned to their homes after touring the Holy Lands of the East.

The cheerful Christian fortitude of the warrior Saint inspired those who came after him, and from the time of Constantine to the Crusades, St. George symbolized the struggle against paganism. In later years he became the type of the never-ending combat between good and evil, one of the Sons of Light who ever strive to vanquish the ancient Dragon of Darkness. With the passage of the years so many legends were woven about him that his original personality was obscured beneath a cloud of romance. St. George is not a myth, although many of the stories told about him are. His courage and strength, however, will continue to support his admirers for many years to come. (Poulos, 1974, p. 66)

To conclude this part of the discussion (pertaining to St. Haralambos, St. George,
and St. Demetrios), we now refer to the web site of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, where, faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, some of the remarkable details of the life of the Great Martyr St. Demetrios are given to us. We will see in this discussion of the heroic life and death of St. Demetrios, that this glorious saint, by the unfathomable grace of God, truly taught the Orthodox Faith, by both word and deed, as all the Orthodox saints have done throughout history. The God-inspired holiness of life which St. Demetrios led--his great courage and faith, his humility, kindness and great love for Christ the Theanthropos--was something clearly seen by many people during his lifetime, and it truly inspired these people and educated them. For, we are reminded of the words of great wisdom offered to us by St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, as he faithfully confesses the Orthodox understanding of education and its intrinsic relationship to sanctity, when he tells us: “Education (enlightenment) is simply the projection of sanctity, the radiation of light; the saint shines and, thereby, enlightens and sanctifies. Education is entirely conditioned by sanctity; only a saint can be a true educator and enlightener” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132). We will see that this is so, in the story of St. Demetrios, which we are about to present. Certainly, from considering the following about St. Demetrios, we can understand some of the significance of what St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije has told us:

Despite the persecution directed against Christians by the Emperor, Saint Demetrios brought a large number of pagans to the faith. His words convinced them because they saw in the righteousness, peace and brotherly love that marked his life an illustration of the truth of which he spoke. (Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Saint Demetrios, the Myrrh-Streamer, 1998)

By the grace of God, St. Demetrios’ words of wisdom were consistent with Orthodox
teaching and worship, *Orthodoxia*, and so were his actions and life, *Orthopraxia*, which validated for people much of what he said. Indeed, the words of St. Demetrios had real significance to many people and “convinced them because they saw in the righteousness, peace and brotherly love that marked his life an illustration of the truth of which he spoke” (Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Saint Demetrios, the Myrrh-Streamer, 1998). Regarding all the Orthodox saints, their great love for Christ the Theanthropos was manifested, by the grace of God, in every aspect of their life, in their great words of wisdom and heroic deeds. With these things in mind-- that only the Orthodox saints are the true educators and enlighteners (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132)-- we look at some of the story of the Great Martyr St. Demetrios:

Saint Demetrios suffered in Thessalonica during the reign of Galerius Maximian (c. 306). He belonged to one of the most distinguished families of the province of Macedonia and was widely admired not only because of his noble ancestry and grace of bearing, but also for virtue, wisdom and goodness of heart surpassing that of his elders.

The military expertise of Saint Demetrios led Galerius, as Caesar of the Eastern Empire, to appoint him commander of the Roman forces in Thessaly and Proconsul for Hellas. But for all this, Demetrios remained ever aware of the underlying realities of life.

Since faith in Christ had touched his heart, all the glory of this world meant nothing to him, and there was nothing he preferred to teaching and preaching the word of God. (Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Saint Demetrios, the Myrrh-Streamer, 1998)

St. Demetrios heroically taught the Orthodox Christian Faith, as was mentioned earlier, in
both word and deed. By the grace of God, what he taught to people in word, he lived in
every aspect of his life, in all humility and courageously, with great love for God and his
neighbor. He was soon to prove his great love for God and humanity, by rejecting great
worldly power, which had been given to him, and by suffering martyrdom confessing
Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church:

The Emperor Maximian had just won a series of brilliant victories over the Scythians and was on his way back to Rome when he halted at Thessalonica to receive the acclamations of the populace and to offer sacrifices in thanksgiving to the idols. A number of pagans, envious of the success of the Saint, took advantage of the Emperor’s presence in the city to denounce Demetrios as a Christian. Maximian’s astonishment gave way to violent indignation when he was told that Demetrios’ was making use of his official position to spread the faith. Demetrios was summoned and confined in a cell, located in the basement of nearby baths.

Maximian arranged for games and gladiatorial combats to take place in the amphitheater of the city. He had brought with him a man of gigantic stature and Herculean strength called Lyaios, a Vandal by origin. Such was this man’s strength and skill in single combat that no one could withstand him. There was in the city a young Christian called Nestor, who observing the empty pride of the Emperor in the victories of his champion, made up his mind to show him that real power belongs to Christ alone. He ran to the baths where Demetrios was imprisoned and asked for the protection of his prayer in going to confront the giant. The Martyr made the sign of the Cross on the brow and the heart of the boy, and sent him like David before Goliath. He reached the amphitheater just as the heralds were crying out on all sides for any who would stand against Lyaios.
Advancing towards the Emperor, Nestor threw his tunic to the ground and shouted, “God of Demetrios, help me!” In the first encounter, at the very moment the giant rushed upon him, Nestor slipped aside and stabbed him to the heart with his dagger. There was uproar and amazement at the marvel, and people asked themselves how a mere child, relying neither on strength nor weapons, could so suddenly have brought down the barbarian.

Rather than yield to the sign of the sovereign power of God, the Emperor flew into a rage and ordered the immediate arrest of Nestor and his beheading outside the city. He had heard Nestor calling upon the God of Demetrios and, supposing the Saint had used some kind of witchcraft, Maximian ordered his soldiers to go and thrust Demetrios through with their lances, without trial, in the depths of his prison cell. There were some Christians, including Demetrios’ servant Lupus, present at his martyrdom, and when the soldiers had gone, they reverently buried the Saint’s body. (Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Saint Demetrios, the Myrrh-Streamer, 1998)

By the grace of God, the Orthodox saints educate and enlighten people through their holiness of life. And even after their earthly life, God in His grace, gives life to the saints, so that they can intercede on behalf of, and help, people. Only by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God, do the Orthodox saints have the power to intercede on people’s behalf and help them, even after these saints have departed this earthly life. Mindful of this, we consider the example of St. Demetrios, who, by the grace of God, has continued to work miracles and help people, long after his life here on earth:

It was God’s will that the grace with which He filled Saint Demetrios should remain active even after his death. This is why He caused to flow from his
body a myron with a delightful scent, which had the property of healing all who took it as an unction, with faith in the intercession of the Saint. Time and again, during sixteen hundred years, Saint Demetrios has given proof of his benevolent care for the city of Thessalonica and its inhabitants. He has defended them from the attacks of barbarians, he has preserved them from plague and famine, healed the sick and comforted the afflicted. (Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr Saint Demetrios, the Myrrh-Streamer, 1998)

_A look at some Orthodox martyrs from the time of the Ottoman empire._ Let us also look at some Orthodox saints who lived during the Islamic occupation of traditionally Orthodox lands in what was then the Ottoman empire. Obviously, these are but a few of the countless New-Martyrs for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, but their example of faith, love, and fearlessness which they set for us and teach us is something that is in the sharpest contrast to the cowardly pandering and subservience that is often observed in the world. One will see that the previously quoted remarks of the two late Patriarchs, Parthenios of Alexandria and Demetrios I of Constantinople, Ecumenical Patriarch, are far removed, unfortunately, from the courageous confession and witness of these saints. Let us observe the heroic confession of these Orthodox saints which resulted in their being martyred for Christ. Let all Orthodox Christians learn from their courage:

St. Euthymios the Student from Demitsana, Peloponnesos, martyred for our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ the Son of God on March 22, 1814; said the following as he confronted people with great worldly power who hated Christ and who oppressed Orthodox Christians:

Jesus Christ was true God who became man for the salvation of all people. He will come again to judge all people and to render to each according to their works!
Moreover there is only one true faith, that of the Orthodox Christians, and one God with three hypostases, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one undivided nature of divinity, in whose name I was baptized and became a son of God by Grace. How then can I [Euthymios asks] believe in your false prophet, Muhammad the antichrist? (Vaporis, 2000, p. 27)

St. Gabriel the Deacon from Alloni, Proikonesos, martyred for the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church on February 2, 1676; likewise in similar circumstances to those of St. Euthymios said the following in his fearless defense of Orthodoxy:

God forbid I should be so crazy and ignorant as to call my Lord Jesus Christ a mere man when he is the true son of God, true God and true man. [As for] your Muhammad, I declare he is not a prophet but an ordinary man, an illiterate, a falsifier, an enemy of our Savior Jesus Christ. Consequently, I feel contempt and I detest him and his faith. (Vaporis, 2000, p. 127)

St. Constantine the Servant From the Island of Hydra, martyred for Christ on November 14, 1800; said this in his uncompromising defense of Orthodox Christianity, while in great danger the whole time, and like countless other Orthodox saints was ready to suffer fearlessly for Christ:

Lord Jesus Christ, our God, You condescended to descend from the heavens and to put on flesh from the ever-virgin Mary to save the human race from the oppression of the devil, and You were spit upon. Help me in this hour and strengthen me, Your unworthy servant, that I may confess boldly that You are the Son of God and true God, and that You created the heavens and earth and the sea and all visible and invisible creation. Yes, King of the ages, sweetest Jesus Christ,

Vaporis has apparently made this bracketed entry, as well as having apparently made all the other bracketed entries in his work, related to the saints whom he quotes.
hear me the sinner and give me the strength to defeat the enemy who has defeated me and to step upon all his servants for the glory and honor of Your holy name.  

(Vaporis, 2000, p. 242)

St. Constantine the Servant from the Island of Hydra continues in his defense of Orthodox Christianity, as he follows all the Orthodox saints who preceded him, fighting against all the deception and oppressive power of this fallen world, in this particular instance, heroically fighting against the falsehood that is Islam, by saying:

I told you to believe in Christ who is the true God because your faith is abominable and false, because you believe in a liar who never performed any miracle, nor did he teach you any truths or anything good. He only taught you myths and instructed you to engage in adulterous conduct and homosexuality and other evils. You the blind believe he is a prophet. Because of this you will go to eternal hell and eternal fire with him to burn forever together with your brethren the demons. Only now come and become an Orthodox Christian so you may enjoy Paradise eternally with Christ. (Vaporis, 2000, pp. 242-243)

And elsewhere we continue to see the great courage and love for Christ which St. Constantine had, by the mercy of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, as he fearlessly accepted suffering and death to confess the truth of Orthodoxy against the falsehood of Islam, by saying:

… “I don’t speak nonsense but believe and confess Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three Persons and one true God. Him I worship. Him I glorify, and I anathematize your religion” (Vaporis, 2000, p. 243).

St. Sergius of Radonezh and St. Dmitri Donskoj. We also look, for inspiration, to other great Orthodox saints and heroes (both known and unknown) whose great love for
Christ and Orthodox Christianity, and whose unmatched courage in the face of unbelievable evil and persecution, stand as a lesson of perseverance and hope for all humanity. With this in mind, let us consider the example of faith and courage set for us by two great Orthodox heroes and saints of Russia, about whom we spoke earlier in our discussion: St. Sergius of Radonezh and St. Dmitri Donskoii. Here is some more of their story:

St. Sergius of Radonezh, the guiding light of the Russian church during the fourteenth century and founder of the wilderness monastery in the dense forests of northeastern Rus, also did not shun political affairs. Princes and boiars came to the abbot of Trinity Monastery for advice, blessings, and prayers. Sometimes they also asked him for help in purely political matters. Dmitrii Donskoii, the celebrated hero of the Kulikovo battle, turned to St. Sergius for advice and assistance many times. For example, he visited St. Sergius Trinity Monastery before a critical and terrifying moment in Russian history, the 1380 campaign against the Tatars. There, St. Sergius blessed the prince to go into battle against Mamai, promised that God would help the Russian army, and sent Peresvet and Osliabia, two monks and former valiant warriors from Trinity monastery, to accompany him into battle against the Tatars. The two monks died heroes, and the Kulikovo battle ended in victory and glory. (Pushkarev, et al., 1989, p. 11)

Let us look, in some more detail, at this remarkable story in Russian history. Indeed, St. Dmitrii Donskoii and his brave soldiers, by the grace of God, defended Orthodox Russia against the Islamic Mongols. As we shall see the Christian West was, once again, against Orthodox Christianity and Russia, having sided with the Mongols. The Mongols were among the most feared warriors in history, and at that time were one of the
most powerful empires that the world had ever seen. This is what St. Dmitri Donskoi and his brave Orthodox warriors faced:

The Russians had by now so recovered their sense of independence that Dmitri decided to erect round his capital the stone walls which were forbidden by the Tartars. This act provoked the suspicion of the Mongols, and their Khan, Mamai, decided to inflict an exemplary punishment upon the disobedient Russians. An army 400,000 strong was gathered against Moscow. As in the thirteenth century, the attack on Russia from the East was supported by the Christian West. Yagailo, Prince of Lithuania, promised to assist the Tartars; the Republic of Genoa provided the Mongols with military experts and modern armaments. Russia stood alone against her formidable enemy. (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40)

There was, understandably, great confusion regarding how to face the persecution and oppression, long posed by the Mongols, and which appeared about to take on even more staggering proportions. As Nicholas Zernov tells us: “Prince Dmitri [St. Dmitri Donskoi] was afraid to take the last step on his own responsibility; there was still a possibility of laying down arms, of imploring mercy in the hope of appeasing the wrath of the Tartars. It was a moment of extreme tension; every one knew the price which would have to be paid for a wrong decision” (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40). For indeed, the Mongols, having accepted Islam, had become hostile to Orthodox Christianity, and if Russia were defeated in its resistance, or if it simply surrendered, it would mean great devastation (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40). There was great danger associated with all possible decisions in this matter. Regarding this horrifying threat, which the Mongols clearly presented to Orthodoxy and to Russia, St. Dmitri Donskoi visited St. Sergius of

27 I have made this bracketed entry.
Radonezh for advice and guidance. The venerable saint unequivocally encouraged St. Dmitri to fearlessly defend Orthodox Russia:

St. Sergius, usually so reticent, was this time firm and explicit. Confronted with supreme danger, he did not evade its challenge. He gave his blessing to Dmitri and, promising him victory, urged the Prince to meet the attack of the enemy in the open steppes of the south. His last words were, “Go forward and fear not. God will help thee.” (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40)

The holiness of life and great courage of the Orthodox saints--which, only by the unfathomable mercy of the Triune God, they all possess--is truly what makes their words and their teaching so believable and inspirational to others. This is certainly why the Orthodox saints are, by the grace of God, the great educators that they are. Because to believe a person and be inspired by him or her, one must first believe in the integrity of that person, seen in that person’s words and actions. This reminds one of the ancient Greeks’ analysis of effective communication, and the different ways in which to appeal to people’s understanding and consciousness. It was Aristotle who said, that there were three different ways in which to appeal to one’s audience in order for communication to be effective. In ancient Greek thought, communication was most effective through consideration of the following: ethos, logos, and pathos. Ethos pertains to ethical appeal, logos pertains to logical appeal, and pathos pertains to emotional appeal. The most important of these considerations is ethos, which is associated with ethical appeal. This is so, because, no matter how logical a person’s argument is or how passionately that argument is made, if a person’s ethos, ethic, integrity, are questionable then the argument itself oftentimes gets called into question. For Orthodox Christians, no one has had

28 These matters related to ethos, logos, and pathos, I first learned in High School. Mr. Streff was the teacher.
more integrity, by the grace of God, throughout history, than the Orthodox saints. Therefore, what the Orthodox saints teach us, in both their words of great wisdom and heroic deeds, is truly believable and inspirational, for their integrity is unquestionable. Nicholas Zernov relates to us how one Orthodox saint inspired another, when he tells of St. Sergius’ encouragement of St. Dmitri Donskoi, shortly before the battle of Kulikovo:

The determination displayed by Prince Dmitri was due to St. Sergius’ influence. The old monk stood behind the military leader of the Russian nation. On this fateful day of final decision, a special envoy, sent from Radonezh, reached the camp. He brought from St. Sergius a message addressed to Dmitri and through him to the rest of the Russian men. Its content was as follows: “Be in no doubt, my lord; go forward with faith and confront the enemy’s ferocity; and fear not, for God will be on your side.” (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40)

At the battle of Kulikovo, neither St. Sergius of Radonezh nor St. Dmitri Donskoi was to compromise, in any way, with any of the philosophy and power of this world, which sought to overwhelm their nation and their Faith. This frightful worldly philosophy and power, in this instance, was, primarily (though not exclusively), to be seen in those, who followed the false religion of Islam and who in their delusion attacked the True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. Neither St. Sergius of Radonezh nor St. Dmitri Donskoi demonstrated subservience or relativism, at this frightening moment in history, though it likely would have been much less dangerous for them had they done so. St. Sergius of Radonezh and St. Dmitri Donskoi refused to be subservient to the enemies of Orthodoxy. For they knew that such relativism and subservience would have likely been much more dangerous for their own people, than anything else. St. Sergius faithfully advised St. Dmitri Donskoi, and St. Dmitri Donskoi and his brave soldiers faithfully risked their
lives, in confronting their oppressors, to save Orthodox Russia. Zernov describes the battle of Kulikovo, as follows:

On September 8th, 1380, the two armies met at last. No battle in Russian history can be compared with that of Kulikovo Pole. Here occurred the clash between two irreconcilable powers. Four hundred thousand nomads, with their camels and horses and inspired by the sight of the Crescent, faced a much smaller army of Russians, gathered under the eight-pointed Eastern Cross. Kulikovo Pole occupies a place in history similar to that of the battle of Poitiers (732), when France saved the West from Mahometan invasion; or to the fatal defeat of Kosovo in 1389, which marked the beginning of the five-centuries-long Moslem domination over the Christians of the Balkans.

The struggle was fierce and the losses on both sides were enormous. At first the Tartars had the upper hand but, at the critical moment, when the main Russian force was precipitated into a disorderly retreat, the fortunes of war were suddenly reversed by an unexpected attack of Russian reserves, and a crushing blow was inflicted upon the Mongols. St. Sergius’ prophecy was fulfilled: the advance of the Mahometans was arrested; Russia was to remain a Christian country. (Zernov, 1978, pp. 37-40)

Unlike what was seen among the aforementioned modern day Orthodox Patriarchs and among some other Orthodox leaders and lay people (myself included, because I am a coward), there is no cowardly subservience to be seen here among these Orthodox saints to very powerful anti-Christian people and forces. The Orthodox martyrs, from ancient times and throughout history, along with all the other countless Orthodox heroes, boldly, free of hypocrisy, with great courage and with love for all humanity (including love for
their enemies in spite of the fact that, in the case of the countless Orthodox martyrs, they suffered torture and were killed by these same enemies) have confessed Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. The Orthodox saints and martyrs in their heroic struggles teach us faith, love, hope and courage and they teach us to bow down to God, the Holy Trinity, our Creator, and to no one else. They follow the words found in the Orthodox Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom:

We give thanks to You, invisible King. By Your infinite power You created all things and by Your great mercy You brought everything from nothing into being. Master, look down from heaven upon those who have bowed their heads before You; they have bowed not before flesh and blood but before You the awesome God. *(The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, 1985, pp. 27-28)*

The Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the unfathomable mercy of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, confront all evil and unjust worldly power against all odds, which seem insurmountable, and because of their martyrlic witness emerge victorious for all Orthodox Christians (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11). They know and confess, by their martyrdom, that overwhelming, oppressive worldly power is but temporary and given by God, Who allows it to exist, but that same God will one day bring such power to nothing; they are fully aware of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ when they hear Him say: ‘Thou wouldest have no authority at all against Me, except it were given to thee from above.’ *(John 19:11)* *(The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume 1), 1999, p. 459).*

*The Great Humility of the Orthodox Saints*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God Himself, tells us that no one has any power, whatsoever, except for what is given to them by God. So we are taught that what is given
to us, (namely, everything including our very being, our very existence which was created by God, the Holy Trinity, with God having had absolutely no need of any kind whatsoever to create anything or anyone), is not intrinsically our own but a gift from God and therefore must be used with all humility. Let us see what some Orthodox saints say regarding humility: St. Nikolai (Velimirovich) of Zêica quotes St. Paul: “If thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (I Cor. 4:7) (Velimirovich, cited in Popovic, 2000, p. 176).

And St. Maximos the Confessor (1990c) tells us: “For every humble person is invariably gentle and every gentle person is invariably humble. A person is humble when he knows that his very being is on loan to him. He is gentle when he realizes how to use the power given to him in a manner that accords with nature”… (p. 297).

And St. Andrew of Caesarea tells us:

… “the humility of wisdom of the saints who, saying from all their heart, I am but earth and ashes (Gen. 18:27), by this very confession rip apart all the nets of the devil. For, as was revealed by the angel to the divine Anthony, nothing so crushes and cuts off the power of the devil as humility” (Taushev, 1995, p. 184).

All the countless Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the grace and power of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, trample on the power of the devil through their complete submission to the will of God in all humility. They know and teach us, by their exemplary lives, to use whatever power has been given to us with all humility, because any power which we have has indeed been given to us and is in no way intrinsically our own. We quote from the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom once again to emphasize this reality: “For Yours is the dominion, the kingdom, the power, and the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages” (The

And elsewhere we also see: “For every good and perfect gift is from above, coming from You, the Father of lights. To You we give glory, thanksgiving, and worship, to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen” (The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, 1985, p. 35).

*The Great Courage of the Martyrs, a Great Educational Example for all Humanity*

Let us see what St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain teaches us, concerning these Martyrs. We will see that St. Nicodemos is here speaking primarily of the New-Martyrs, but of course, what he is saying about the New-Martyrs is also applicable to all Orthodox Saints and Martyrs of all times and places throughout history.

With this in mind, St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain teaches us:

In addition, these New Martyrs *renew* in the hearts of present-day Christians the *preaching* of the holy Apostles. They *confirm* the divine Gospel and the divinity of Jesus Christ, that He is truly the Son of God, consubstantial with His Unoriginate Father, and they proclaim the great mystery of the Holy Trinity. And simply speaking, they *put a seal on the entire Orthodox faith of the Christians*—not only with words, but rather with the all-dreadful tortures that they received and with this very blood and their martyrlic deaths. (St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain, cited in Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11)

We continue to learn from St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain as he teaches us to follow the example of the Orthodox Saints and Martyrs, who courageously confessed Christ, against all falsehood and evil:

Do not let the tortures frighten you, because they kill only your bodies, but are unable to kill your souls—rather, they give life to them. Hence, your Lord
encourages you when He says: “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul” [St. Matthew 10:28].

Do you want us to show you what you ought to fear, brethren? Denying Christ and not bravely confessing Him. This alone is truly worthy of fear. Because if you deny Christ, alas! Christ will deny you on the Day of Judgment. For, as He Himself says: “Whosoever denies Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father Who is in Heaven” [St. Matthew 10:33’]. (St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain, cited in Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 16)

Ecumenism: A Violation of Orthodox Canons

Now we will turn our attention to more inexplicable ecumenical comments and activities of some prominent Orthodox hierarchs. And to further our education we will attempt to give an Orthodox response to such conduct utilizing much of the wisdom of some Orthodox saints and Orthodox scholars.

We now consider the ecumenical contacts that were pursued and continue to be pursued by some Orthodox and Roman Catholic leaders in their quest to glorify relativism and ignore profound theological differences which exist between the two traditions; all this, as these leaders attempt to establish “union of the Churches” apparently with indifference and disdain towards the truth, which is, in all its fullness, found in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. Much of this modern day dialogue with Roman Catholicism on the part of some Orthodox leaders had a substantial part of its beginning with the ill-conceived visit to the Vatican of the late Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in 1967 and the mutual lifting of the anathemas (These anathemas in 1054 had for all intents and purposes finalized the “Great Schism”.). Clearly, this action of the lifting of the anathemas was done without theological justification, as Roman Catholicism has not
renounced any of its many innovations and heresies. But Patriarch Athenagoras, serving God only knows whose interests (certainly not those of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ), proceeded to lift the anathema anyway. But before we look further at other ecumenical occurrences and their impact let us quote Father Daniel Deyansky (1997) regarding some of the direct consequences of Patriarch Athenagoras’ 1967 ecumenical adventure:

The act of the lifting of the anathemas and the visit of Patriarch Athenagoras to the Vatican on October 26, 1967, was to have a direct effect on relations between the Latin and Orthodox Churches. Shortly after these events, the Roman Catholic Church unilaterally declared that its members could fulfill their “Sunday obligation” at an Orthodox Church. More importantly, it was declared that Roman Catholics could now partake of the Eucharist in an Orthodox Church. This unilateral decision by the Roman Catholic Church was made without consultation with the Orthodox, who forbid Roman Catholics to receive Communion in Orthodox Churches. In fact, by the strict interpretation of Her Canons, Roman Catholics are still considered heretics by the Orthodox Church and their sacraments without Grace. Here again, Roman Catholic-Orthodox ecumenism led to a violation of the Orthodox Church’s ecclesiastical integrity. By trying to force the issue of inter communion, the Latin Church encouraged Orthodox ecumenists to abandon their doctrines and participate in an absolutely illicit act. (p. 50)

Let us proceed and look further into ecumenical “agreements” and “understandings” between Orthodox and Non-Orthodox leaders, for example we will continue our look at the interactions between Orthodox and Roman Catholic leaders, as they religiously embrace the humanistic principles of ecumenism. And, in general, we will
look at the relationships being constructed between some Orthodox and Non-Orthodox leaders in their seeming attempt to build an all encompassing “Super-church” founded on the man-made, humanistic, relativistic, “spiritual” principles of ecumenism with indifference to the absolute Truth that is Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church.

Once again, to avoid confusion we note that the term “Ecumenical” in “Ecumenical Patriarch” pertains to a primacy of honor afforded to the Patriarch of Constantinople within Orthodoxy throughout the world and has nothing to do with the “Ecumenical Movement” and “Ecumenism”, though unfortunately numerous Orthodox Patriarchs, among them Ecumenical Patriarchs, have in recent times been grossly involved in the ecumenical movement and ecumenism. The title “Ecumenical Patriarch” is given to the Patriarch of Constantinople because historically the Patriarchate of Constantinople has been given primacy of honor among both the ancient and more recent Patriarchates of Orthodoxy and the Patriarch of Constantinople is regarded as the “first among equals” among Orthodox bishops but he does not dictate nor determine dogma. Theology and dogma are by the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, revealed to the whole body of the Orthodox Church through the Holy Scriptures interpreted within the Holy Orthodox Tradition, through the Saints, Martyrs, Ascetics, Confessors, the Holy Synods and generally through the unchanging and unconquerable reality that is Orthodox Christianity lived by both clergy and laity throughout history in the Body of Christ, The Holy Orthodox Church. Let us continue to consider what the current Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, has reportedly said and done in some other instances. Quoting some of the research of the Greek Orthodox Old Calenderist Bishop, Angelos of Avlona, we see Patriarch Bartholomew following closely in many of the footsteps of some of his recent predecessors, unfortunately. We observe the following which is alleged to have happened,
again this is according to Bishop Angelos of Avlona (Greek Orthodox, Old Calenderist):

Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople on June 27, 1995 gave a homily in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Transtevere before countless young Papists, after praying together with them. Among other things he said the following: “Children of the Church, blessed and beloved in the Lord”; “We, the East and the West, are concelebrating [the Patronal Feast of Rome]--it is a gift of God”; “We are celebrating, because we are the communion of saints journeying on earth”; “The Feast of the Church is fulfilled when the youth are present and celebrating together”; “You received the gifts of the Holy Spirit through Holy Baptism and Chrismation: you bear in your souls and on your foreheads the signs of the Kingdom of God.” (1998, p. 23)

The Ecumenical Patriarch’s alleged actions regarding the young Roman Catholics with whom he had (according to the Greek Orthodox Old calendrist Bishop, Angelos of Avlona) prayed and called “Children of the Church” (Bishop Angelos of Avlona, 1998, p. 23), if true, are confusing and astonishing. For as was mentioned earlier by Father Daniel Degyansky, strictly applying Orthodox canons: Roman Catholicism is considered a heresy with its numerous innovations and heresies to which it continues to adhere in its centuries of separation from Orthodox Christianity. So for an Orthodox Patriarch to pray with heretics and call them the “Church” and acknowledge their heretical baptism and chrismation as having grace, as we saw in the above alleged actions and comments, is clearly wrong from an Orthodox Christian perspective. Again, the question needs to be asked, whose interests are being served, when an Orthodox leader of prestigious stature effectively attempts to make relative that which is impossible to be made relative: the unique, absolute truth of Orthodox Christianity? Such “ecumenical” actions and
comments serve to only confuse and discourage many Orthodox Christians and others, as the absolute truth that is Orthodoxy is not confessed as such by some Orthodox leaders themselves. In my opinion, if certain Orthodox hierarchs choose to publicly deny through their remarks and conduct, what for Orthodox Christianity is the truth, that the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is uniquely the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, then those same hierarchs should repent of their actions or if they refuse to do so, they should at least explicitly leave the Orthodox faith which they are unwilling to confess and teach. All this would do much to not further confuse and discourage Orthodox Christians and it would leave the tremendous responsibility of courageously confessing and teaching the incomparable Holy Orthodox Christian Faith to the entire world to those Orthodox hierarchs who are actually willing to do so.

Those Orthodox hierarchs who in complete violation of their episcopal calling attempt to trivialize and relativize the absolute Truth of Jesus Christ the Son of God and His Holy Orthodox Church which is His Body, need to listen to St. Justin (Popovich) of Cheliye as he makes reference to the Holy Apostles and Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church in his admonition to Orthodox ecumenists regarding their relations with the heterodox. St. Justin of Cheliye educates us pertaining to the aforementioned as follows: “The supreme Apostle decrees, with total theanthropic authority: ‘A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition reject’ (Tit. 3:10)” (Popovich, 2000, p. 158).

Canon 45 of the Canons of the Apostles thunderingly decrees: “Any bishop, presbyter or deacon who prays with heretics, should be barred; moreover, if he allows them to serve as clerics, he should be deposed.” …

Canon 65 of the Canons of the Apostles decrees: “ Any cleric or lay person
who attends a synagogue or a heretical place of worship in order to pray, should be deposed and barred.” …

Canon 46 of the Canons of the Apostles: “We decree that a bishop or presbyter who acknowledges heretical baptism or sacrifice be deposed. What concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (II Cor. 6:15)”…

It is obvious even to those who have no eyes that this decree specifically orders us not to recognize any of the heretics’ holy mysteries, to consider them invalid and devoid of grace. (Popovic, 2000, p. 158)

The Orthodox confession, free of syncretism and pandering, of St. Justin of Chelije and of countless other Orthodox saints, ancient and modern, apparently does not affect or inspire many Orthodox ecumenists, who in their rationalistic, humanistic “theology of love” disregard and disrespect the undefiled Holy Orthodox Faith which these same saints by the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, have handed down for all of humanity throughout history. It would appear by their actions and comments that many of these Orthodox ecumenists regard themselves as wiser, more loving, and more knowledgeable than the Orthodox saints who suffered to bring to the entire world the Holy Orthodox Faith, undefiled and without change. Many Orthodox ecumenists’ disregard and disrespect for the Holy Orthodox Tradition is seen in their trivializing or ignoring of some of the dogmatic decisions of the Holy Ecumenical Synods. This is particularly obvious regarding their actions and comments in the World Council of Churches (WCC) and within other ecumenical contexts. Let us come back to the inexplicable statement of Patriarch Bartholomew, which was quoted earlier: Patriarch Bartholomew again, in the ‘Joint Communiqué’ of 1995 at the Vatican, made this typical
pronouncement: … ‘the Joint Commission was able to proclaim that our Churches are recognized mutually as Sister Churches, responsible together for the preservation of the one Church of God’ (As cited in Bishop Angelos of Avlona, 1998, p. 38).

As was mentioned earlier, the Holy Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism have profound Theological differences separating them, due to Roman Catholicism continuing to adhere to its numerous innovations and heresies. Quoting the Orthodox priest and monk, Heiromonk Patapios, we observe the following:

Roman Catholics not only reject the Essence-Energies distinction, but have, over the course of their centuries of apostasy from the Orthodox Church, introduced a host of innovations into Christianity, chief among which are the dogmas of Papal Supremacy and Infallibility, the Filioque, Created Grace, the Immaculate Conception, and Purgatory. (Patapios, 2000, p. 25)

So, for an Ecumenical Patriarch (or anybody else for that matter) to call Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism “Sister Churches” is something which has absolutely no Theological or Dogmatic justification whatsoever and is therefore something which is, from an Orthodox perspective, categorically absurd.

Ecumenism and Evangelicalism Both Erroneously Claim to Possess “True Christianity”

Earlier in the discussion, when Patriarch Bartholomew allegedly called the young Roman Catholics, “Children of the Church” (Bishop Angelos of Avlona, 1998, p. 23), about what “Church” was he speaking? The Orthodox Church? The Roman Catholic Church? The imaginary, confused, ever-changing, multivariant and ever-splitting non-denominational and inter-denominational Evangelical “Christian” Church? Or is he referring to the branch of Evangelicalism which features the media business known as Televangelism and its imaginary “Church” with its propaganda for, and political
subservience to, powerful people and forces, many of them non-Christian and anti-Christian? Given the ambiguity with which many ecumenists speak, including some Orthodox ecumenists, it's really hard to know where they regard their imaginary Church to have its boundaries and not have its boundaries, since with Ecumenism relativism reigns supreme, independent of the unique truth of Orthodox Christianity. Ecumenists arrogantly look to rediscover or construct the “True” Church of Christ or Christianity as it “truly” is or should be, ignoring the fact that the True Church already exists, and it is uniquely the Orthodox Church—and it was not nor could it ever be established by man, but instead was established by God Incarnate, Christ the Theanthropos. Christ the Theanthropos established the Holy Orthodox Church on Himself and it is uniquely His Body and He is its Head.

Very similar to the arrogance of many ecumenists, many Evangelicals and Tele-Evangelicals also look to bring people to what they feel is True Christianity, namely, their own individual interpretation of Christianity based on each Evangelical’s “infallible” understanding of Holy Scripture—which accounts for theoretically as many different “Apostolic Churches” as there are people implying that their understanding of Holy Scripture is infallible (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 21). And apparently none of these “Apostolic Churches” need to agree on all matters of faith. For how could they given the fact that each Evangelical’s “infallible” interpretation of Holy Scripture is his or her own, and likely different from some other “infallible” person’s interpretation, hence the fact that these churches constantly split into more and more denominations. For the Evangelicals, in their delusion, it would seem that such confusion and anarchy is far superior to the unconquerable witness of countless Orthodox saints and martyrs who throughout history have confessed Christ the Theanthropos, by the unfathomable mercy of the
Suprasubstantial Trinity, in an unchanging and unbroken succession.

*Evangelical Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism*

*The Orthodox saints defy worldly power for Christ the Theanthropos.* In contrast, evangelicalism and ecumenism are subservient to worldly power. Let us talk about some of the previous questions related to which “Church” ecumenists are possibly referring. For example, it is a well known fact that very many Evangelical and Televangelical leaders and their followers—adhering to their own conception of what the “Church” is, centered on personal infallibility (Popovic, 2000, p. 153) in their interpretation of the Bible and other religious matters—strongly support the government and leadership of the modern state of Israel, no matter what policies are followed by the Israeli government and its leaders, even if those policies are sometimes inhumane, racist and against peace. At that point the Evangelicals’ confused, multivariant, ever-changing heretical system which they call “the Church” becomes little more than a political system subservient to powerful people, such as government leaders and radical Zionists, many of whom do not even believe in Christ, with some even hating Christ and Christianity. Ecumenism is also subservient to powerful political forces and hence the heresy of ecumenism is similar to the heresy of Evangelicalism. By the unfathomable grace of God, the Orthodox saints and martyrs—in so many ways, the only true revolutionaries and radicals—would never allow themselves to be manipulated or dominated by powerful people and forces, which exploit other human beings and through their actions hate Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. The Orthodox saints and martyrs educated the world about Christ the Theanthropos, not just through their words, but through their great courage and perseverance in the face of

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29 Archbishop Christodoulos, Primate of the Orthodox Church of Greece, one time quoted something to the effect, from the great Russian Orthodox writer Dostoevsky, that “the only true revolutionary is a Christian”. 

tremendous danger, suffering, and the most frightful kinds of death imaginable (Cavarnos, 1992c, p. 11). In this regard, because of their great courage, the Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the grace of God, are (for Orthodox Christians) the world’s greatest educators--showing the world that the power of this world is nothing, and that it will one day be brought to nothing by Christ Himself. The martyric life and death struggles of the Orthodox saints--done in all wisdom and humility, with great courage and love for Christ—is truly the great educational legacy of the Orthodox saints and martyrs for the world to plainly see. This is obviously contrasted with the subservience, hypocrisy, and great cowardice of most other people, including very many Ecumenists, Evangelicals, Muslims, Jews, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians and countless others from every other group of people. In this condemnation of subservience, hypocrisy and great cowardice, I must obviously include myself as worthy of condemnation, because of my great sinfulness and because I am the worst coward of all.

_Evangelical Christian Zionism seemingly subservient to Jewish Zionism._ It seems that very powerful and influential Evangelical Christian Zionists are, in many ways, often subservient to very powerful Jewish Zionists. Both sides seem to need one another in this syncretistic alliance, in order for many of the supporters of Israel, both Evangelical Christian and Jewish, to accomplish their goals. As a reporter for Fox News, Kelley Beaucar Vlahos, tells us:

“An increasingly close alliance between the powerful pro-Israel Jewish lobby and fundamentalist Christians has been warning President Bush against withdrawing support from Israel and ceding too much to the Palestinians in his peace-building efforts” (Vlahos, 2003).

This sort of peculiar and very powerful alliance can be see in many instances. For
example, we see some Jewish and fundamentalist Christian Zionists working closely together in organizations such as Christian Friends for Israeli Communities which “funds programs in one-third of the 150 or so Jewish settlements in Gaza and on the West Bank” (Broadway, 2004). The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews is also an organization for Jewish and Christian Zionists to support Israel and aid Jewish people with their religious and political goals. Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein [head of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews] “said most people who contribute to the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews do so for religious reasons but also want to show their solidarity with Israel. They oppose any withdrawal of Jewish settlers and ‘are very distrustful of Palestinians’... ‘They would make good Likudniks,’ he said.” (Broadway, 2004). In addition, Rabbi Eckstein “recently launched the Stand for Israel advocacy group with Christian conservative Ralph Reed [former head of the Christian Coalition, a group founded by Televangelist Pat Robertson]” (Vlahos, 2003).

With these things in mind, we observe the following:

Critics of the alliance between American Jews and Christian conservatives say they are worried that the partnership is generating too much influence on Capitol Hill and could drown out the Palestinian perspective. “The political agenda, combined with the religious agenda--you have this killer, killer combination against world peace,” charged Faiz Rehmanen, a spokesman for the American Muslim Council.... “We won’t be able to match those resources and efforts.” (Vlahos, 2003)

That is probably very true, the power that Jewish Zionists and Evangelical Christian Zionists wield independent of one another, and together in their syncretistic alliance--in

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1 This bracketed entry was made by me.
what one could say is their Jewish / Evangelical Christian ecumenism--is, by practically all accounts, tremendous. The Jewish and Evangelical Christian Zionists are looking to serve what they feel is their best interests, and they do it very well; in so many ways they are no more worthy of condemnation than anyone else, they simply do what it is that they do, much more effectively than many others. Regarding the Jewish Zionists and Evangelical Christian Zionists, many of their good and evil intentions are no better or worse than anyone else’s, they simply have much more power with which to enact them than many others do, in many instances that is really the only difference. This having been said by no means relativizes evil or in any way justifies it; the evil and stupidity embraced and enacted by many Jewish Zionists and Evangelical Christian Zionists is just that: evil and stupid. In the same way that the evil and stupidity often embraced and enacted by very many Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Roman Catholics and countless others is just that: evil and stupid.

People, from among all groups of people, have, throughout history, committed atrocities. So earlier when speaking of the great power of Jewish and Evangelical Christian Zionists, the Muslim spokesman, Faiz Rehmanen, made what very many people (myself included) would regard as a realistic and factual statement by saying: “The political agenda, combined with the religious agenda--you have this killer, killer combination against world peace. We won’t be able to match those resources and efforts” (Vlahos, 2003). The power of Jewish Zionism and Evangelical Christian Zionism in world politics is enormous, something to which Faiz Rehmanen rightfully alludes in his statement, but one must note that he ignores the oppression and tremendous cultural and physical genocide committed by many of the followers of Islam throughout the ages against countless people. Rehmanen ignores the very violent legacy of Islam throughout its
history, when he speaks about world peace. And generally, each and every person from every religion needs to acknowledge their own wrongdoing and the wrongdoing of their ancestors. Orthodox Christians--most unworthy to possess what they indeed uniquely truly possess: the fulness of all truth in the one and only Body of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church-- must come to terms with their own extreme failures and evildoing, both individually and collectively, throughout history. Regarding Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, Roman Catholics, and all other peoples and religious groups--which have had, at some point or other, some measure of power in history--each and everyone of these groups of people has at times shown great compassion, humility and fairness towards others who do not share their beliefs; and each and everyone of these same groups, has also at times committed great evil against those who do not share their beliefs. Orthodox Christians must acknowledge the fact that countless Orthodox Christians throughout history have been guilty of atrocities against other human beings, for this accusation of violence and inhumanity which is rightfully leveled at Muslims, is also rightfully leveled at all other religious groups, including Orthodox Christians.

Though Orthodox Christianity is the one and only Body of Christ, with Christ the Theanthropos Himself as its Head, and as such uniquely possesses the fulness of all truth, unchanged and unconquerable throughout history; nonetheless, countless Orthodox Christians have committed great evil throughout history just as countless other people from all the other faiths of the world--which do not possess the fulness of all truth that Orthodox Christianity uniquely does--have also committed great evil throughout history. Having said all of these things, we must also say that the fulness of all truth uniquely possessed by the unconquerable Holy Orthodox Church of Christ has nothing to do with the great evil that countless Orthodox Christians have chosen to commit throughout
history. For Orthodox Christianity has never justified nor glorified non-defensive violence and other wrongdoing, as Judaism and Islam frequently have. For example, we see that countless Muslims have also chosen to commit great evil throughout history, just as countless Orthodox Christians have, with the difference being that the Muslims were frequently sanctioned to commit their evil by the great falsehood and deception that is Islam, which they were following; whereas Orthodox Christians obviously never received such sanction from the True Faith, Orthodox Christianity. With this in mind, Muslims need to acknowledge and lament the tremendous number of people whom very many Muslims have murdered throughout the world and throughout history, and not insanely justify the violence as something which is righteous and justified by their faith. Similarly, the Jews-- having rejected God Incarnate, Christ the Theanthropos, Who alone is the Truth (Popovic, 2000, p. 146)--have sought to find the truth elsewhere, such as in their interpretation of the Mosaic Law; this they attempt to do independent of the Son of God, God Himself. From the perspective of Orthodox Christianity, this obviously is a great error, for it is the Son of God Himself Who created the Jews and all the other peoples and it is the Son of God Who Himself gave the Law to Moses and became Incarnate for all the peoples of the earth, whom He created by an act of free will--and this divine will, which is “eminently free” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 9), the Son of God eternally shares in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Suprasubstantial Trinity, by an act of free will, common to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, created all things (and that obviously includes the entire human race) and so to deny the Son of God, Who voluntarily became man, is to deny God Himself. To deny the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, Christ the Theanthropos, is to deny the one and only True God, the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Such a denial of the
one and only True God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, can never lead to the truth. The Jews’ and other peoples’ rejection of the one and only Truth, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, Christ the Theanthropos, is consequently an embrace of falsehood and delusion, which often leads to the attempted justification and sanction of various evils—something which is to be found in these same theological systems (to be found in Judaism and Islam, for example) which reject Christ. Likewise countless other people following all the other heresies and deceptions of the world and of history—all of which are foreign to the unique truth of Orthodox Christianity—have also committed evil, frequently sanctioned by the falsehood and deception of their religion.

With all of these things in mind, Orthodox Christians must acknowledge and lament the violence and injustices committed by very many Orthodox Christians against huge numbers of Jewish people, and against huge numbers of Muslims, as well. For example, many times the violence and injustice against Jews manifested itself in pogroms where very many innocent Jewish people were murdered by Orthodox Christians, and apparently not enough Orthodox Christians cared enough or had enough courage to stop it. The mass murder of up to 6,000,000 Jews in W.W.II by Nazi Germany must never be forgotten—as one of the most horrible chapters in human history—nor ever allowed to be repeated against any people. And yet, during their reign of terror, the followers of Marx tortured and killed more people, by far, than the Nazis ever did—what a dubious distinction. An incredibly huge proportion of the people murdered by Marxism were Orthodox Christians or the descendants of Orthodox Christians. Great numbers of these people, who were killed, were killed by other Orthodox Christians (or descendants of Orthodox Christians). These people—Orthodox Christians or descendants of Orthodox Christians, who participated in this enormous and unparalleled genocide against other
Orthodox Christians--in their willful stupidity, ignorance and blindness, insanely followed the great lie of Marxism to self-destruction, murdering their own people and others. In the former Soviet Union alone--not even counting the incredible loss of human life that occurred from the two world wars--an estimated 66,000,000 people died because of Marxism and its followers (Pushkarev, S., Rusak, V., Yakunin, G., 1989, p.78). In Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union, the overwhelming majority of the countless people murdered by Marxism were Orthodox Christians or the descendants of Orthodox Christians (see Appendix A). And very many of the most powerful people in Marxism--who presided over this nearly successful, yet ultimately failed, attempt to wipe out Orthodox Christianity, through unequaled mass murder and cultural genocide--were Jewish. Each and every group of people, without exception, has something to

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11 Geoffrey Hosking makes the observation that many Jews figured prominently in Soviet Government, and benefited from the Communist coup which destroyed the Tsarist order. He writes: “Discriminated against by the tsarist government, the Jews were natural recruits to the revolutionary movement, and in many respects beneficiaries of the events of 1917- 21. They were numerous in the Communist Party, and included some of its best-known figures” (Hosking,1993, p.255). Karl Marx (whose infamous political and philosophical system bears his name), along with other prominent leaders of Communism such as Leon Trotsky, Yakov Sverdlov, Lazar Kaganovich, Grigory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, Karl Radek, Alexander Parvus (Israel Lazarevich Helphand), Genrikh Yagoda, and Matvei Berman (in addition to lesser known people, such as Aron Solts, Naftaly Frenkel, Yakov Rappoport, Lazar Kogan--who were in charge of various communist slave labor camps, in the Gulag system), were all of Jewish heritage, as were countless others, great and small, who were instrumental in Marxism’s great reign of terror in Eastern Europe and Russia. A biography of Karl Marx, which also mentions that this philosopher’s heritage was Jewish, is found in (Landauer, 1969, pp. 987-988). A biography of Leon Trotsky, which mentions that he was Jewish, is found in (Schapiro, 1969d, pp. 261-262). An interesting biography of Yakov Sverdlov is found in (Schapiro, 1969c, p. 473), and mention of the fact that Sverdlov’s heritage was Jewish is to be found in (Hosking,1993, p.255). David Floyd mentions the fact that Kaganovich was Jewish, in his biography of this prominent Marxist leader (p.186). That Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Radek were of Jewish heritage is mentioned by Hosking (p.255). Robert V. Daniels(1967) likewise mentions that Trotsky (p.23), Zinoviev (p.25), and Kamenev (p.25) were all Jewish. In a more detailed biography than that provided by Daniels, L.B. Schapiro(1969a) mentions the fact that Kamenev was of Jewish heritage (pp.199-200). Likewise, Schapiro(1969b), within a short but informative biography, mentions the fact that Karl Radek was Jewish (p.1023). Solzhenitsyn (1976) provides an insightful discussion about Alexander Parvus (pp. 285-287); and Michael Scammell (1985) mentions the fact that Alexander Parvus was Jewish (p.942). In the Gulag Archipelago, Solzhenitsyn (1975) speaks at length about some of the crimes against humanity committed by Genrikh Yagoda, Matvei Berman, Naftaly Frenkel, Aron Solts, Yakov Rappoport, and Lazar Kogan (pp.75-87); and Scammell (1985) makes mention of the fact that all six of these people were Jewish (p.959). These historic facts are in no way a condemnation of the entire Jewish people, nor justification for any kind of anti-Semitism, any more than the willful stupidity and brutality of countless Orthodox Christians towards their own people and others is a condemnation of all Orthodox Christians.
acknowledge and lament, regarding the great evil committed by many of their own people.

St. John of Damascus comments regarding the apostasy of the Jews. Regarding the Jews’ rejection of Christ the Theanthropos and their consequent embrace of all manner of falsehood and delusion which continues to this day, St. John of Damascus comments32:

It should be known that the Antichrist is bound to come. Every one, therefore, who confesses not that the Son of God came in the flesh and is perfect God and became perfect man, after being God, is Antichrist. But in a peculiar and special sense he who comes at the consummation of the age is called Antichrist. First, then, it is requisite that the Gospel should be preached among all nations, as the Lord said [Matt. 24: 14], and then he will come to refute the impious Jews. For the Lord said to them: *I am come in My Father’s name and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive* [John 5: 43]. And the apostle says, *Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness* [2 Thess. 2: 10-12]. The Jews accordingly did not receive the Lord Jesus Christ who was the Son of God and God, but receive the impostor who calls himself God. For that he will assume the name of God, the angel teaches Daniel, saying these words, *Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers* [Dan. 11: 37]. And the apostle says: *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself

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32 Some of the quotations and references from the Holy Scriptures used by St. John of Damascus are noted by the translator, S.D.F Salmond, in the form of footnotes to the translation. I have used these footnotes where I have deemed appropriate and made note of the Scriptural references in the form of bracketed entries, to be seen in the next few quotations from St. John of Damascus.
above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God [2 Thess. 2: 3,4], shewing himself that he is God; in the temple of God he said; not our temple, but the old Jewish temple. For he will come not to us but to the Jews: not for Christ or the things of Christ: wherefore he is called Antichrist. First, therefore, it is necessary that the Gospel should be preached among all nations [Matt. 25: 14]: And then shall that wicked one be revealed, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, whom the Lord shall consume with the word of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming [2 Thess. 2: 8- 10] (St. John of Damascus, 1898, pp. 98-99).

St. John of Damascus tells us that the Antichrist will be of this fallen world and will attain to great worldly power, and having done so will persecute the Church of God, showing truly how evil he is:

He is, therefore, as we said, the offspring of fornication and is nurtured in secret, and on a sudden he rises up and rebels and assumes rule. And in the beginning of his rule, or rather tyranny, he assumes the role of sanctity. But when he becomes master he persecutes the Church of God and displays all his wickedness. But he will come with signs and lying wonders [2 Thess. 2: 9], fictitious and not real, and he will deceive and lead away from the living God those whose mind rests on an unsound and unstable foundation, so that even the elect shall, if it be possible, be made to stumble [Matt. 24: 24].(St. John of Damascus, 1898, p. 99)

St. John of Damascus, faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, goes on to confess the great
mercy of the Triune God. For when we see God’s compassion and longsuffering towards
the Jewish people, and towards all of humanity in general, truly it is nothing other than an
example of the unfathomable grace and mercy of God which is clearly seen, for indeed
none of us are worthy of it. Rather than completely rejecting the Jews for their long and
stubborn rejection of the Only-Begotten Son of God, Christ the Theanthropos, God once
again shows His great mercy by calling the Jews to salvation and sanctification in Christ,
the only Truth. The mercy of the Triune God is offered to all of us, Jew and non-Jew
alike, though, in our sinfulness, none of us is worthy of it. Indeed, all that people have
they have by the grace of God, intrinsically possessing nothing themselves. Mindful of
these things, the Orthodox confession of St. John of Damascus, pertaining to the mercy of
the Triune God and the Second Coming of Christ, continues to inspire us:

But Enoch and Elias the Thesbite shall be sent and shall turn the hearts of
the fathers to the children [Mal. 4: 6, Apoc. 11: 3], that is, the synagogue to our
Lord Jesus Christ and the preaching of the apostles: and they will be destroyed
by him. And the Lord shall come out of heaven, just as the holy apostles beheld
Him going into heaven, perfect God and perfect man, with glory and power, and
will destroy the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, with the breath of His
mouth [Acts 1: 11]. Let no one, therefore, look for the Lord to come from earth,
but out of Heaven, as He himself has made sure [2 Thess. 2: 8]. (St. John of
Damascus, 1898, p. 99)

Indeed, Christ transcends all worldly power and when He comes again from Heaven, He
will bring all the power of this world to nothing.

Evangelicalism’s attempt to justify radical zionism. “We won’t be able to match
those resources and efforts” (Vlahos, 2003), is what Faiz Rehmanen said, regarding the
great power of Jewish and Evangelical Christian Zionists. But what if the Muslims were able “to match those resources and efforts”? Would there then be peace in the Middle East, and in much of the rest of the world for that matter? Or would the Jews be robbed of a homeland to call their own and suffer yet another Holocaust? One never knows. The violence with which Islam was first spread, and its relationship to many non-Muslims to this day, would seem to indicate that the Middle East and the world would not be a safer, more peaceful place if the Muslims had the upper hand over the Jewish Zionists and their fundamentalist Christian Zionist allies. Regardless, the current situation is that Jewish and Evangelical Christian Zionism reigns supreme in the Middle East, and it has many people worried:

“These lobbying organizations--both Christian and Jewish and others--set back the cause and prolong it, and it is going to fuel more international terrorism without question,” said Don Wagner, director of the Middle Eastern Studies Program at North Park University in Chicago. Wagner said if Bush comes out too strongly in favor of Israel, the United States will not be perceived as an honest mediator in the peace process. (Vlahos, 2003)

We also observe the following:

The [Evangelical] Christians refute characterizations that their support is based on an apocalyptic prophecy that says the second coming of Christ will see a conversion of Jews to Christianity and usher in the end of the world. Critics have pointed to this “end times” scenario as a “creepy” basis of support for Israel by evangelical Christians. “It’s pretty terrifying,” said Jean Abinader, managing

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\[33\] This bracketed entry was made by me, in order that Evangelicals be rightfully associated with their political conduct and confused beliefs--and this is done so that they not be confused as somehow being the only Christians on earth.
director of the Arab American Institute.... He said Christian [sic. Christians] and Jews are using each other to forward both theological and political missions, and worries about the influence of the more radical elements of the pro-Israel lobby. “We are concerned about the present position of American interests in the region because people are literally interpreting scripture as a basis of foreign policy rather than what’s best for the country,” he added. “Anytime you apply theology to politics it’s very counter-productive.” (Vlahos, 2003)

The deception and extreme danger of “Christian Zionism” is seen even by many of the mainline Protestant denominations--even though according to Orthodox Christianity all of the Protestant denominations themselves have fallen into heresy, to one extent or another. With that in mind we observe the following:

“Not all Christians want to be considered supporters of Israeli policy. Corrine Whitlatch, executive director for the Churches for Middle East Peace, said plenty of mainline Protestant churches decry their conservative brethren’s unbridled support for Israel” (Vlahos, 2003).

The unquestioning support of Israeli and US policy in the Middle East by Evangelical Christian Zionists, independent of any compassion for all of the people in the Middle East--and without any regard to the violence and hatred that this hypocritical support engenders, and without any regard to the untold suffering that it brings to the people of the region--has prompted the concern of many mainline Christians:

“It is their application [of the Bible]\textsuperscript{34} to public policy that we feel creates a situation where one needs to take responsibility and say, ‘This is just wrong,’” Whitlatch said, adding that both sides in the Middle East fight must be urged to

\textsuperscript{34} Bracketed entry was in the website article.
end the violence. “We’re reclaiming the name of Christianity and asserting the commitment toward peacemaking.” (Vlahos, 2003)

As we saw, there are mainline Protestant denominations (such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for example)--all of which, as was mentioned, Orthodoxy regards as having fallen into heresy to one degree or another and from which the other heresies of Evangelicalism and Televangelism were themselves born--that are appalled by what even they rightful call the heresy of “Christian Zionism”. For example, Dr. Munib A. Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jerusalem has this to say about Christian Zionism, from his January 2003 Newsletter:

35. **Bishop Younan Declares Christian Zionism to be a Heresy**

Recently Bishop Younan was interviewed by a Danish newspaper. He was asked for his opinion of Christian Zionism and the bishop said, “I hereby declare that Christian Zionism is not only a sick theology but it is a heresy, right along with Arianism and Nestorianism and others. I believe it is time we named this misinterpretation of Christ and the gospel for what it is.”

First of all, the bishop states, Christian Zionism promotes Christ not as the Savior but as a military general, readying his forces for a huge battle, Armageddon. “The true Christ is the Christ of the cross and the open tomb, bringing hope, peace, reconciliation and new life. This is the Christ in whom I believe.”

Secondly, Christian Zionists pretend to be philosemitic, to love the Jewish people, but in the long run they are actually anti-Semitic in their teachings. The

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35 I first came across this part of the January 2003 Newsletter, by Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan, in the endnotes of Ann E. Hafften’s article *Challenge the Implications of “Christian Zionism”*.  
36 The January 2003 Newsletter was in three parts, discussing some of the many difficulties that Palestinians face living under Israeli occupation. The third part of the Newsletter is where the Lutheran bishop explicitly condemns Christian Zionism. This third part is what is being reprinted for our discussion.
Jewish people are simply characters in the Christian Zionist heresy and in the so-called final battle; two-thirds of the Jewish people will be destroyed because they do not believe in Christ, while the other one-third will be converted to Christ. As Palestinian Christians we cannot accept such a heresy that loses sight of the core Gospel of Christ which is love for everyone, not only the Christians, without discrimination.

Thirdly, Christian Zionism is anti-justice, anti-peace, anti-reconciliation. Bishop Younan states that the teachings are racist, calling for the transfer of Palestinians out of this land. “Christian Zionism is the enemy of peace in the Middle East.” Christian Zionism is imported into the Middle East and is not limited to one or more church bodies, but its adherents can be found in every church body.

Declaring Christian Zionism to be a heresy, Bishop Younan states, is intended to alert all Christians everywhere to its dangers and false teachings. (Younan, 2003)

Ann E. Hafften had the above discussion by Bishop Younan from the January 2003 Newsletter, reprinted in her article, Challenge the Implications of “Christian Zionism”; we now continue to look at her insightful research and commentary pertaining to the great dangers and injustice inherent to following the falsehood and deception that is “Christian Zionism”. Here are some more significant points made by Ann E. Hafften, which are to be found in her article Challenge the Implications of “Christian Zionism”, as she speaks to her fellow Lutherans (Hafften, 2003) and to others:

[1] The ubiquitous “rapture” story, elaborate end-times constructs, and fervent, unquestioning support for the state of Israel are now firmly embedded in U.S. Christian culture. Among these touchstones of pre-millennialism, a new

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[1] All the bracketed numbers in this article are from the article itself, from the actual website.
“Christian Zionism” has found its way into the congregations of the ELCA. It is doubtful that many ELCA pastors teach or preach the tenets of pre-millennialism. The question is whether or not these leaders are willing to challenge the implications of a popular belief that has no place in Lutheran doctrine, because there is too much at stake to take it lightly anymore.

[2] The Rev. Munib Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jerusalem, has gone so far as to urge western Lutherans to consider the new Christian Zionism to be “heresy” in an effort “to alert all Christians everywhere to its dangers and false teachings.”

[3] Support among Christians for Israel as a safe homeland for the Jews is one thing, a form of Zionism that involves participation in a Jewish political movement leading to the establishment of the nation state of Israel.

[4] “Christian Zionism” as manifested in the programming of the Christian Broadcasting Network (www.cbn.org) and the Trinity Broadcasting Network (www.tbn.org) is another thing altogether. It is a movement with serious political and economic leverage that advocates Israel as a nation that reaches from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River or even the Euphrates; the transfer of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza to other Arab states; the destruction of the mosques in the Old City of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of a Jewish temple there. When the Christian Coalition of America met in October 2002 the conference began with a videotaped benediction direct from the Oval office. Some of the most influential Republicans in Congress at that time addressed the group, including--not once, but twice--Tom DeLay, arguably one of the most powerful people on Capitol Hill. The web site of the International Christian Zionist Center
(www.israelmybeloved.com) puts forth the most recent theme to emerge, and one that participants have raised in every ELCA setting where I have been the speaker lately: “There never was a Palestine.”

[5] Lutheran scholars and pastors may once have grimaced at fundamentalist biblical interpretations or scoffed at the more inventive readings of Revelation, but it just isn’t funny anymore.

[6] In Bishop Younan’s experience, Christian Zionism is anti-justice, anti-peace, and anti-reconciliation. It calls for the transfer of Palestinians out of the land of their homes. “Christian Zionism is the enemy of peace in the Middle East.” Younan wrote. It is imported into the Middle East and is not limited to one or more church bodies, but its adherents can be found in every church body, he said.

The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek called pre-millenialism a “heresy” and Christian Zionism a “menace” when he spoke at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas on Nov. 7, 2002. Ateek is director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Jerusalem. He said the implications of Christian Zionism are “life or death to people in Palestine on a day-to-day basis.”

[7] Apocalyptic lore has been present in U.S. religious communities since the Hal Lindsey’s Late Great Planet Earth was published in 1970. In recent years the Left Behind fiction series has captured the imaginations and bookshelves of countless US Christians - Lutherans among them. A show of hands in any group of ELCA pastors will indicate the startling presence of the Left Behind phenomenon in their congregations, a tribute to the success of this $8 million franchise.

[8] Dr. Barbara Rossing of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago describes the situation this way: “Many Americans interpret God’s action in the world
through pre-millennialism, as evidenced in the popular *Left Behind* series (nine novels, a web site, two movies, a board game). Sales of so-called “prophecy” books have surged since September 11, 2001. Their understanding of Revelation is consumed with the ‘rapture’--the belief that God will snatch true Christians up into heaven before the disastrous events of Revelation’s seven-year tribulations are visited on the earth. This belief unfortunately is connected to unquestioning political support and military aid for Israel, arguing that the Jewish Temple must be rebuilt in order for Christ to return and usher in the end-times.” This belief results in a peculiar understanding of the very nature of the state of Israel and its relation to the fulfillment of a covenant with God and the second coming of Jesus. Rossing writes, “No Lutheran or mainline Christian doctrine endorses such an escapist theology of the rapture or such Middle East policies, yet this view of the end-times has virtually taken over American Christian views of the book of Revelation.”

[9] So where are our people getting this stuff? In addition to the “Left Behind” products, there’s television, especially cable TV. The enormously popular televangelists Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Benny Hinn broadcast this biblical interpretation over religious cable channels every day. The ideas of Jack Van Impe and Kenneth Copeland, receive generous play on Christian TV.

(Hafften, 2003)

Ann E. Hafften’s concise and brilliant research helps reveal to us the injustice, confusion and heresy associated with the falsehood and deception that is “Christian Zionism”.

Indeed, as we just saw, this is something of which even many people who are associated

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38 The reader is referred to Appendix B, for a brief discussion on the Orthodox understanding of the Second Coming of Christ.
with the heresy of Protestantism are aware, for Ann E. Hafften and Bishop Younan are Protestant (Lutheran). Additionally, criticism of the policies of governments and their actions in alliance with powerful business and religious leaders, such as occurs with Jewish and Evangelical Christian Zionism, must never be misunderstood as anti-Semitism. With these things in mind, we conclude our look at Ann E. Hafften’s brilliant research and discussion:

...we should not fear to speak honestly about Israel. At an event for journalists in April 2002, Benny Avni of Kol Israel Radio said that criticism of Israel or U.S./Israeli policy should not ever be misunderstood as anti-Semitism.

... My hope is that ELCA pastors and leaders will make good use of our strong Lutheran theology to help our members understand these issues, to guide them beyond the cartoon stories provided by pre-millennial Christian Zionism. In a letter to President Bush in October 2001, former presiding bishop George Anderson vouched for the ELCA’s affirmation of Israel’s “right to exist peacefully within recognized and secure borders and its call upon the international community to recognize the same right for the Palestinian people.” Bishop Anderson also described the violence which torments the region, “The cycle of violence includes the violence inherent in decades of occupation: imprisonment without trial, demolition of homes, torture, intimidation, destruction of thousands upon thousands of olive trees and other crops, confiscation of land and the building of settlements in disputed areas, economic strangulation, and so on. Addressing the root causes of the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians is in the best interest of both parties.” (Hafften, 2003)

Orthodoxy must be confessed without subservience to worldly power. Many
Evangelicals are allied, and it seems subservient, to some of the more radical elements of Zionism--propagated by many Evangelical and Jewish leaders. Ecumenists are likewise frequently subservient to others more powerful than themselves, as we all are. This sort of cowardly, hypocritical pandering to people who have more worldly power than oneself, without regard for the truth, is something of which we are all guilty from time to time. I, of course, must include myself in this condemnation, because of my hatred, lack of faith, hypocrisy and great cowardice. Such pandering and subservience on the part of Orthodox hierarchs and leaders to powerful people and forces who are not Orthodox, with many of these same non-Orthodox people and forces oftentimes being ignorant of, and hostile to, the unique truth of Orthodoxy, does absolutely nothing to serve the truth of confessing and teaching the Holy Orthodox Faith to the entire world. Powerful people and forces, who are not Orthodox Christian, could be Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Roman Catholic, Protestant, atheist, “New Age” proponents, “New World Order” political power elite or whoever else that could possibly have great power in a particular situation. The innumerable Orthodox saints and martyrs courageously taught and confessed the Orthodox Christian Faith to their flock and to the whole world; Orthodox hierarchs and leaders, who choose to not follow their example need to pay close attention to the following (as we, Orthodox Christians, all need to do so):

The Orthodox attitude to the episcopal office is well expressed in the prayer used at a consecration: “Grant, O Christ, that this man, who has been appointed a steward of the episcopal grace, may become an imitator of You, the True Shepherd, by laying down his life for Your sheep. Make him a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, a teacher to the unreasonable, an instructor to the foolish, a flaming torch in the world; so that having brought to perfection the souls
entrusted to him in this present life, he may stand without confusion before Your judgment seat, and receive the great reward which You have prepared for those who have suffered for the preaching of Your Gospel.” (Ware, 1997, p. 250)
CHAPTER 5

ORTHODOX TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY CONTRADICTS THE ERROR OF THE FILIOQUE INNOVATION

Before we proceed further, to illustrate some of the absurdity and irresponsibility of some of the previously quoted remarks made by ecumenists--which are irreconcilable with the truthful and heroic witness of the Orthodox saints--let us look at the Roman Catholic theological innovation known as the *Filioque*, the addition into the original Symbol of Faith of the words “and from the Son”, regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit. This *Filioque* claim violates the ancient defense and proclamation of Orthodox Dogma as confessed by Holy Ecumenical Synods. People who advocate and propagate such innovations, arguably, in effect, attempt to trivialize and relativize the Holy Ecumenical Synods themselves, which since ancient times and throughout the subsequent history of the Church have proclaimed and defended Orthodox Trinitarian Theology and Dogma without change. Additionally, as St. Nectarios and other saints will tell us, this apparent trivialization and relativization of Holy Ecumenical Synods has the obvious effect for many people of calling into question the validity, significance and authority of these same Holy Synods, which in turn causes confusion and harm to many of the faithful (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 21). This is all closely connected--as St. Nectarios and St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije and others will teach us--to issues and claims of individual “infallibility”, regardless of whether those claims are being made on the part of the Papacy or by people within Protestantism or by anyone else. In addition to looking at the

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39 The original Symbol of Faith, also known as the Nicene Creed, was and is a profession of Orthodox Faith composed during the course of the first Two Ecumenical Councils (finalized at the Second Ecumenical Council, 381 A.D.). According to Orthodox theologians (and according to Orthodox Tradition) the Symbol of Faith summarizes the basic beliefs of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church has kept the Symbol of Faith of the ancient, undivided Church (the Orthodox Church) unaltered to this very day.
original Greek text of the Symbol of Faith (also known as the *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed* or oftentimes simply referred to as the *Nicene Creed*), we will consider an official translation into English of that same Creed by the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Chicago honoring the 1600th anniversary of the Second Ecumenical Council, 381 - 1981 A.D.

This Second Holy Ecumenical Synod finalized and (one could better say) formalized the Symbol of Faith which had, in essence, always been confessed by Orthodox Christianity since Apostolic times in the life and worship of the Church, the Orthodox Church. In actuality, regarding all Seven Holy Ecumenical Synods: We must state the sad fact that many Christians, including Orthodox Christians, and countless non-Christian groups, are completely ignorant of many of the eternal Dogmatic truths and definitions which were confessed and proclaimed in these Holy Ecumenical Synods in order to defend the Apostolic Faith, Orthodox Christianity, from the error of false teaching. Nothing new was proclaimed at these Holy Ecumenical Councils, simply the ancient and eternal Apostolic Faith, Orthodox Christianity, was defended against any and all heresy. This, by the grace of God, was done both for the Orthodox faithful and for the entire world, for all of humanity in general.

An obvious question needs to be asked given the fact that numerous, prominent Orthodox leaders are willfully entrenched in the syncretistic contradiction and confusion that is contemporary ecumenism. How will these same leaders teach to the Orthodox flock entrusted to them, and to the whole world, the incomparable truth of Holy Orthodoxy, when they oftentimes are publicly embracing the glorified relativism of the ecumenical movement?
So, let us look at the Symbol of Faith in both the original Greek⁴⁰ and in English translation and then look at some Orthodox arguments against the Roman Catholic _Filioque_ innovation.

**THE SYMBOL OF FAITH**

(The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed)

1. I believe in one God, the Father almighty,
   Maker of heaven and earth,
   and of all things visible and invisible;

2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
   the Only-Begotten Son of God,
   begotten of the Father before all ages;
   Light of Light, true God of true God,
   begotten, not made,
   of one essence with the Father
   by Whom all things were made;

3. Who for us men and for our salvation
   came down from the heavens
   and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit
   and of the Virgin Mary and became man;

4. Crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,

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⁴⁰ The original Greek of the ancient Symbol of Faith has various accent marks--intonation marks, breathing signs, etc.--that are to be seen in Liturgical texts of the Orthodox Church, where the Greek language is used; and these same accent marks thus are also to be seen in the publication of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Chicago honoring the 1600th anniversary of the Nicene Creed. Unfortunately, the computer software which was readily available to me, in the writing of this thesis, did not have the appropriate features to allow for these accent marks to be shown, and thus they are not shown, in this thesis, pertaining to the Symbol of Faith. Additionally, for the same reason just outlined, such accent marks are not to be found in any other Greek text in this thesis.
He suffered and was buried,

5. Rising on the third day according to the Scriptures;

6. And ascending into the Heavens, He is seated at the right hand of the Father;

7. And coming again with glory to judge the living and the dead, His kingdom shall have no end;

8. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets;

9. In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church;

10. I accept one baptism for the remission of sins;

11. I look for the resurrection of the dead;

12. And the life of the age to come. Amen.

ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΚΑΘΗΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΦΑΘΟΥ, ΚΑΘΗΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ, ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΥ ΕΥΘΥΟΜΕΝΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΟΥΝΑΙΝ ΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΑΟΡΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΦΑΘΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΟΥ ΓΕΝΝΗΘΗΝΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΣ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΤΑ ΙΑΙΝΩΝ ΦΑΘΟΥ. ΑΚΓΩΣΤΟΙ ΦΑΘΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΥ ΕΥΘΥΟΜΕΝΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΟΥΝΑΙΝ ΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΑΟΡΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΦΑΘΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΟΥ ΓΕΝΝΗΘΗΝΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΣ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΤΑ ΙΑΙΝΩΝ ΦΑΘΟΥ.
The Filioque Innovation Contradicted by Orthodox Tradition

Having just seen the original Symbol of Faith, both in Greek and English, it is obvious that the clause, “and from the Son”, regarding the supposed double procession of the Holy Spirit, is nowhere to be found. That is because it was never in the original text of
the Creed, which was universally accepted in both East and West of the ancient undivided Church. And it is Orthodox Christianity which is, uniquely, that ancient Undivided Church, preserving the Holy Tradition given to it on the day of Pentecost without change. Let us call upon the research of Dr. Constantine Cavarnos, rooted in the Orthodox saints and Holy Orthodox Tradition, so that we can further clearly see that the Filioque innovation is wrong from an Orthodox perspective:

Another important dogmatic innovation of the Papal Church is the so-called *filioque*, the addition to the Symbol of Faith (the Creed) of the phrase: “and from the Son.” According to this innovation, the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the first person of the Holy Trinity, the Father, but also from the second, the Son, Christ. This addition, as St. Nectarios writes, “came about in the Symbol of Faith in the West for the first time in the third local Synod, which was convened in Toledo, Spain, in the year 589. Other local Synods that were later convened subsequently ratified this addition, and especially the one convened in Aquistrano, which proclaimed this addition to be a dogma of the faith. But after all this, the addition was not generally spread through all the Churches of the West…. The addition of “and from the Son” to the Symbol of Faith… received acceptance in Rome only in 1014 under Pope Benedict VIII [Historical Study Concerning the Causes of the Schism, vol. 2, p.14]". (Cavarnos, 1992b, p23)

With regard to this innovation, we must note that it is illicit, because in its seventh Canon the Third Ecumenical Synod anathematizes those who compose another Symbol of Faith apart from that which the Holy Fathers of the

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On an earlier page, Cavarnos cites volume 1 of this same work by St. Nectarios. I have here, in brackets, explicitly mentioned that work by St. Nectarios, because otherwise in this particular quotation Cavarnos, only cites the work by writing, “*(ibid., vol.2, p.14)*.”
Ecumenical Synod of Nicea formulated. Commenting on this canon, St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite says that St. Cyril, who was exarch of the Third Ecumenical Synod and fully understood the meaning of the canons of this Synod, wrote to Patriarch John of Antioch that no one is permitted to alter even a single syllable of the Symbol of Faith. And St. Nicodemos observes: “If nobody is permitted to alter even one syllable, much more is it not permitted to add anything to or take anything away from it” (Pedalion [Athens, 1957], p. 174). The Papal Church, disregarding this canon, and defying the anathema of the Third Ecumenical Synod, added the phrase “and from the Son” to the Symbol of Faith. This illicit addition, says St. Nicodemos, “was enough to divide the Westerners from the Easterners” [Pedalion (Athens, 1957), p. 174]. (Cavarnos, 1992b, pp. 23-24)

It is, I believe, very significant and insightful to our discussion to use some of the terminology and research of Fr. John Meyendorff as he draws from the wisdom of the Orthodox saints, in this particular instance from St. Gregory Palamas and St. Gregory Nazianzen. We observe the following discussion of Meyendorff (1998) as he draws heavily from the insight of St. Gregory Palamas pertaining to the error of the Filioque innovation:

The Latins “have no answer to those who blame them for introducing two origins for the Spirit,” because the Father and the Son, as hypostases, are two and not one, and because the procession is a hypostatic act of the Father. …They are one by nature, but the Spirit equally possesses that unique nature and should proceed from itself if procession was conceived as an act of nature. (p. 230)

As one sees from this last quotation, Fr. John Meyendorff’s research exposes
some of the theological pitfalls of the rationalistic, Roman Catholic innovation that is the “double Procession” of the Holy Spirit, known as the Filioque. Orthodox theologians regard the innovation of the Filioque--which is completely foreign to Orthodox Trinitarian Theology and therefore forever unacceptable to Orthodox Christianity--as a threat to the right confession of the Persons (Hypostases) of the Holy Trinity. This concern frequently centers around the confusing of the Persons (Hypostases) of the Holy Trinity by the pre-eternal Procession of the Holy Spirit being ascribed to both the Father and the Son. This rationalistic conclusion, foreign to divine revelation, arguably results in marginalization and trivialization of the Persons (Hypostases) of the Holy Trinity as unbalanced emphasis on the divine Essence common to the Holy Trinity is asserted (in the Filioque innovation) in order to describe the “double Procession” of the Holy Spirit, at the expense of fully confessing the truth of divine revelation which is uniquely found in Orthodox Trinitarian Theology.

God the Father is Uniquely the Source of God the Son and of God the Holy Spirit

With this in mind, let us look at some of the research of Vladimir Lossky, pertaining to what some of the ancient Orthodox Fathers had to say regarding the Holy Trinity, completely contradicting the error of the Filioque innovation: “‘A single God because a single Father’, according to the saying of the Greek Fathers.” … “For the Greek Fathers, to confess the unity of the nature is to recognize the Father as unique Source of the persons who receive from Him this same nature” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 58-59).

St. Athanasius of Alexandria says: ‘There is a single principle of the Godhead, whence there is strictly a monarchy’ (Lossky, p. 58).

“The Greek Fathers always maintained that the principle of unity in the Trinity is the person of the Father” (Lossky, p. 58).
St. Gregory the Theologian says: … ‘one safeguards one only God in referring the Son and the Spirit to a single Principle, neither compounding nor confounding them; and in affirming the identity of substance and what I will call the unique and like motion and will of the Godhead’ (Lossky, p. 59).

St. Basil the Great tells us: … “we do not count by addition, passing from the one to the many by increase; we do not say: one, two, three, or first, second and third. ‘For I am God, the first, and I am the last’ (Is 44:6). Now we have never, even to the present time, heard of a second God; but adoring God of God, confessing the individuality of the hypostases, we dwell in the monarchy without dividing the theology into fragments.” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 47-48)

As St. John of Damascus teaches us:

The Father derives from Himself His being, nor does He derive a single quality from another. Rather He is Himself the beginning and cause of the existence of all things both as to their nature and mode of being. All then that the Son and the Spirit have is from the Father, even their very being: and unless the Father is, neither the Son nor the Spirit is. And unless the Father possesses a certain attribute, neither the Son nor the Spirit possesses it: and through the Father, that is, because of the Father’s existence, the Son and the Spirit exist. …When, then, we turn our eyes to the Godhead, and the first cause, and the sovereignty… what is seen by us is unity. But when we look to those things in which the Godhead is, or, to put it more accurately, which are the Godhead, and those things which are in it through the first cause… that is to say, the hypostases of the Son and the Spirit, it seems to us a Trinity that we adore. (Lossky, 1976, pp. 59-60)
passages which immediately precede it as well, could easily be misunderstood to be false statements of the kind which profess the Father to have superiority over the Son and the Holy Spirit. And consequently, in that kind of false conception, the Son and the Holy Spirit would have to be regarded as inferior to the Father. Vladimir Lossky asks some very important questions related to such possible misunderstandings and misconceptions, namely: “…does not this monarchy of the Father savour of subordination? Does not this conception confer upon the Father, the one unique source, a certain pre-eminence as the divine person?” (Lossky, 1976, p. 63). The answer to both of these questions is a resounding “No”, as St. Gregory the Theologian answers any and all such questions, beautifully, in these following quotations from him which are a profound confession of Orthodox Trinitarian Theology:

I should like... to call the Father the greater, because from Him flow both the equality and the being of the equals… but I am afraid to use the word Origin, lest I should make Him the Origin of inferiors, and thus insult Him by precedencies of honour. For the lowering of those who are from Him is no glory to the Source.

Godhead… neither increased nor diminished by superiorities or inferiorities; in every respect equal, in every respect the same; just as the beauty and the greatness of the heavens is one; the infinite connaturality of Three Infinite Ones, each God when considered in Himself; as the Father so the Son, as the Son so the Holy Ghost; the Three, one God when contemplated together; each God because consubstantial; the Three, one God because of the monarchy. (Lossky, 1976, p. 63)

Remaining within this same eternal Holy Orthodox Tradition, let us continue and look further at what the saints have to teach to the world regarding God, the Holy
Trinity. St. Thalassios the Libyan faithfully teaches Orthodox theology when he confesses that the Father is eternally and uniquely the Source of the Son and the Holy Spirit, saying:

We regard the Father as unoriginate and as the source: as unoriginate because He is unbegotten, and as the source because He is the begetter of the Son and the sender forth of the Holy Spirit, both of whom are by essence from Him and in Him from all eternity. (St. Thalassios the Libyan, 1990, p. 331)

Although the Father is uniquely and eternally the Source of the Son and the Holy Spirit, there is no superiority or inferiority between the Three Divine Persons, as St. Gregory the Theologian explained earlier (Lossky, 1976, p. 63). For the Son and the Holy Spirit, both come forth eternally and impassibly from the Father, the unique Source of Divinity within the Holy Trinity, and are indeed both “by essence from Him and in Him from all eternity” (St. Thalassios the Libyan, 1990, p. 331).

Consistent with this, St. Maximos the Confessor has the following to say:

“The Father is unoriginate Intellect, the unique essential Begetter of the unique Logos, also unoriginate, and the fount of the unique everlasting life, the Holy Spirit” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 165).

“There is one God, because the Father is the begetter of the unique Son and the fount of the Holy Spirit: one without confusion and three without division” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 165).

God the Father, as the unique Source from Whom pre-eternally God the Son is Begotten and from Whom pre-eternally God the Holy Spirit Proceeds, is the principle of unity in the Holy Trinity. But this monarchy of the Father as the unique Source of Divinity within the Holy Trinity does not mean in any way that there is any superiority
or inferiority within the Holy Trinity. On the contrary, because of this monarchy of the Father as uniquely the Source of Divinity within the Holy Trinity, the Three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are, regarding Their Divinity, “in every respect equal”, They are “in every respect the same” [as was quoted from the God-inspired wisdom of St. Gregory the Theologian] (Lossky, 1976, p. 63). For indeed the Son and the Holy Spirit eternally come forth from the Father, and They are in no way inferior to Him, for regarding Their very essence or nature, They are from the Father and in the Father from all eternity (St. Thalassios the Libyan, 1990, p. 331). St. Thalassios beautifully confesses this reality when he says:

The individual characteristics of the Father are described as unoriginateness and unbegotteness; of the Son, as co-presence in the source and as being begotten by it; and of the Holy Spirit, as co-presence in the source and as proceeding from it. The origin of the Son and Holy Spirit is not to be regarded as temporal: how could it be? On the contrary, the term ‘origin’ indicates the source from which Their existence is eternally derived, as light from the sun. For They originate from that source according to Their essence, although They are in no sense inferior or subsequent to it. (St. Thalassios the Libyan, 1990, p. 331-332)

The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are the one and only true God. ‘Godhead… neither increased nor diminished by superiorities or inferiorities; in every respect equal, in every respect the same; just as the beauty and the greatness of the heavens is one; the infinite connaturality of Three Infinite Ones, each God when considered in Himself’…. ‘the Three, one God when contemplated together’…. [St. Gregory the Theologian] (Lossky, p. 63).

Confirming that about which we speak, regarding Orthodox Trinitarian Theology,
we again refer to the God-inspired wisdom of St. Maximos the Confessor where the following quotations from this great saint continue to beautifully give an Orthodox presentation about God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, and summarize much of what we have said, and will say, in our discussion:

Mystical theology teaches us, who through faith have been adopted by grace and brought to the knowledge of truth, to recognize one nature and power of the Divinity, that is to say, one God contemplated in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It teaches us to know God as a single unoriginate Intellect, self-existent, the begetter of a single, self-existent, unoriginate Logos, and the source of a single everlasting life, self-existent as the Holy Spirit: a Trinity in Unity and a Unity in Trinity. ... the Unity and the Trinity are both affirmed and conceived as truly one and the same, the first denoting the principle of essence, the second the mode of existence. The whole is the single Unity, not divided by the Persons; and the whole is also the single Trinity, the Persons of which are not confused by the Unity. Thus polytheism is not introduced by division of the Unity or disbelief in the true God by confusion of the Persons. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990c, pp. 295-296)

Again, elsewhere, St. Maximos the Confessor continues to teach the Orthodox Faith pertaining to the Three Divine Persons Who are the One True God:

God is one because there is one Divinity: unoriginate, simple, beyond being, without parts, indivisible. The Divinity is both unity and trinity—wholly one and wholly three. It is wholly one in respect of the essence, wholly three in respect of the hypostases or persons. For the Divinity is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and is in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The whole Divinity is in the whole Father and the whole Father is in the whole Divinity. The whole Divinity is in the whole Son
and the whole Son is in the whole Divinity. The whole Divinity is in the whole Holy Spirit and the whole Holy Spirit is in the whole Divinity. The whole Divinity is both Father and in the whole Father; the whole Father is in the whole Divinity and the whole Divinity is in the whole Father. The whole Son is in the whole Divinity and the whole Divinity is in the whole Son; the whole Son is both the whole Divinity and in the whole Divinity. The whole Divinity is both the Holy Spirit and in the whole Holy Spirit; and the whole Holy Spirit is both the whole Divinity and in the whole Divinity. For the Divinity is not partially in the Father, nor is the Father part of God. The Divinity is not partially in the Son, nor is the Son part of God. The Divinity is not partially in the Holy Spirit, nor is the Holy Spirit part of God. For the Divinity is not divisible; nor is the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit incomplete God. On the contrary, the whole and complete Divinity is completely in the complete Father; the whole and complete Divinity is completely in the complete Son; and the whole and complete Divinity is completely in the complete Holy Spirit. For the whole Father is completely in the whole Son and Spirit; and the whole Son is completely in the whole Father and Spirit; and the whole Holy Spirit is completely in the whole Father and Son. Therefore the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God. The essence, power and energy of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one, for none of the hypostases or persons either exists or is intelligible without the others. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990e, pp. 137-138)

Orthodox Christianity, by the mercy of God, has always taught the following: The Hypostasis (Person) of God the Father is uniquely and pre-eternally the Source of the Hypostases (Persons) of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, and God the Father is
also uniquely the Source of the Divine Essence or Nature that is common to the Holy Trinity. The Father is uniquely the Source of the Divine Essence in that the Divine Essence is His very Essence or Nature which He Himself possesses as God, and which is equally and fully possessed by the Only-Begotten Son of God, and which is also equally and fully possessed by the Holy Spirit. For the Son of God is “begotten of the Father before all ages;” He is “Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father” and the Holy Spirit is also God of one Essence with the Father for He pre- eternally Proceeds from the Father, it is in this sense that the Holy Spirit is called “the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified”. It is not the Divine Essence or Nature which is the Source of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rather, it is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Who possess one and the same undivided Nature or Essence. For as St. John Chrysostom confesses in the Divine Liturgy: “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Trinity one in essence and inseparable” (The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, 1985, p. 18). Orthodox Christianity does not accept nor confess in any way the impersonal Essence-God of the Greek Philosophers and of others. The Divine Essence or Nature is not the Source of Divinity, it is not the Source of itself nor of the Holy Trinity, rather, as we have already mentioned, it is the Person of the Father Who is the unique Source of Divinity in that the Father pre-eternally begets the Son and pre-eternally sends forth the Holy Spirit and the Three Divine Persons have the same Divine Nature or Essence, for the Son Who is pre-eternally Begotten of the Father and the Holy Spirit Who pre-eternally Proceeds from the Father are of one Essence with the Father. The Divine Essence or Nature of the Father is equally and fully possessed by the Son and the Holy Spirit. ‘The Three have one Nature--God. And the union ([.union]) is the Father, from
whom and to whom the order of Persons runs its course, not so as to be confounded, but so as to be possessed, without distinction of time, of will, or of power’ (St. Gregory the Theologian, cited in Lossky, 1976, p. 59). The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church teach that “God the Father begets the Son and sends forth the Holy Spirit by nature and not by will” (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 13, 1).

God the Father pre-eternally begets God the Son and pre-eternally sends forth God the Holy Spirit by the very Nature or Essence of Who He is, and not by will. God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit not by will, but by the very nature of Who God is. God the Father by His very nature, by Who He is in His very Essence and not by any act of will, pre-eternally begets God the Son, Who also has the very Essence of the Father. And God the Father by His very nature, by Who He is in His very Essence and not by any act of will, also pre-eternally sends forth God the Holy Spirit, Who also has the very Essence of the Father. The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are “undivided in nature, will, glory, power, energy, and all the characteristics of divinity” (Palamas, 1995b, p. 323).

As Fr. Florovsky told us earlier, “There is a certain ‘necessity’ in the Divine Being, indeed not a necessity of compulsion, and no fatum, but a necessity of being itself. God simply is what He is” (Florovsky, 1987 p. 8). As God tells us in the Holy Scriptures, “I am He Who is” [Ex. 3:14]43 (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, pp. 39-40). God is the Three Divine Persons (Hypostases), the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is the Holy Trinity and this fact that God is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is not caused by anything nor anyone, for God is not caused by anything nor anyone. Faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. Maximos the Confessor beautifully teaches this when he says that the Father is eternally the Father, and that “the Son and

43 The bracketed entry is mine.
the Holy Spirit coexist with Him eternally in substantial form, having their being from Him and by nature inhering in Him beyond any cause or principle” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990c, p. 291). Following Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. Maximos the Confessor teaches these things brilliantly, when he is commenting on the Lord’s prayer, saying:

For the Father’s name is not something which He has acquired, nor is the kingdom a dignity ascribed to Him: He does not have a beginning, so that at a certain moment He begins to be Father or King, but He is eternal and so is eternally Father and King. In no sense at all, therefore, has He either begun to exist or begun to exist as Father or King. And if He exists eternally, not only is He eternally Father and King but also the Son and the Holy Spirit coexist with Him eternally in substantial form, having their being from Him and by nature inhering in Him beyond any cause or principle: they are not sequent to Him, nor have they come into existence after Him in a contingent manner. The relationship of coinherence between the Persons embraces all three of them simultaneously, not permitting any of the three to be regarded as prior or sequent to the others. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990c, p. 291)

God simply is Who He is, God is the Holy Trinity, and “there are neither principles nor causes anterior to the Trinity” (Lossky, 1976, p. 47). All these things which are mentioned confess the truth, plainly and simply, as has been revealed to the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ by the mercy of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. Orthodox Christianity confesses that the one true God is the Three Divine Persons (Hypostases), the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. None of the Three Divine Persons or Hypostases “either exists or is intelligible without the others” (St. Maximos the
Confessor, 1990e, pp. 137-138), for there is no other God, but God, the Holy Trinity.

Indeed, Orthodox Christianity has always taught the following, beautifully confessed by St. Gregory Palamas:

‘The Lord your God is one Lord’ (cf. Deut. 6:4), revealed in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit: in the unbegotten Father; in the Son, who is begotten eternally, timelessly and impassibly as the Logos, and who through Himself anointed that which He assumed from us and so is called Christ; and in the Holy Spirit, who also comes forth from the Father, not begotten, but proceeding. This alone is God and alone is true God, the one Lord in a Trinity of Hypostases, undivided in nature, will, glory, power, energy, and all the characteristics of divinity. (Palamas, 1995b, p. 323)

The Filioque Innovation Contributes to the “Relativization” of the Suprasubstantial Trinity

The Filioque innovation denies the monarchy of the Father as the unique Source of the Son and the Holy Spirit and instead seems to give pre-eminence to the divine Nature or Essence of the Holy Trinity over the Hypostases (Persons) of the Holy Trinity. To answer any such erroneous tendency in anyone’s theology we keep in mind the words of St. Gregory Palamas who faithfully follows ancient Orthodox Tradition when he writes about God, saying: “When God spoke to Moses, He did not say, ‘I am the essence,’ but ‘I am He Who is’ [Ex. 3:14]”44; that which is does not come from the essence, but the essence from that which is; for He Who is encompasses the whole of being in Himself”45 (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, pp. 39-40).

This unfortunate tendency of attempting to somehow “generalize” and “de-

44 The bracketed entry is mine.
45 This quote from St. Gregory Palamas can be found among his writings in Triads III, 2, 12.
Personalize” God is primarily to be seen in the non-Christian philosophies and religions, including the various humanisms. For example this tendency can be found in “New Age” philosophies and New World Order politics. We include within these philosophies and political schemes: contemporary ecumenism. But this same tendency has occurred within Western Christianity, though mostly to a substantially lesser extent than in the non-Christian philosophies and religions; nonetheless, this tendency has occurred in Western Christianity--seen in the Filioque and in various other heresies. We will use some of Meyendorff’s ideas and some of the terminology which he uses--such as, “essentialism” and “personalism” (1998, p. 215)--to help us see this. From the context of Meyendorff’s brilliant discussion of Orthodox theology grounded in the witness of the Church Fathers, we can understand “essentialism” to pertain to a belief, and way of thinking in theology, that gives primacy to a philosophy of essence in all that pertains to God and in all that can be said about God (Meyendorff, 1998, pp. 212-215). The ancient Greek philosophers and others spoke, and many people to this very day still speak, of an impersonal Essence-God--some kind of ambiguous God of essence. This philosophical conception of a non-personal God of essence has historically been seen, in one form or another, in many places, and continues to be seen, to one extent or another, to this very day--in many philosophies and religions, among many people. This conception that God is comprehensively, or at least primarily, essence and non-personal--which supposedly accurately depicts who or what God is--describes a God which is necessarily different from the One and Only True God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Indeed, a form of essentialism, though admittedly not in the extreme form just outlined, has a substantial existence and is to be seen in much of Western Christianity. The heresy of the Filioque and what follows from it is a striking example of this kind of essentialism. Vladimir
Lossky discusses brilliantly the essentialism into which the error of the Filioque inevitably leads:

The Greeks\textsuperscript{46} saw in the formula of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son a tendency to stress the unity of nature at the expense of the real distinction between the persons. The relationships of origin which do not bring the Son and the Spirit back directly to the unique source, to the Father--the one as begotten, the other as proceeding--become a system of relationships within the one essence: something logically posterior to the essence. Indeed, according to the western conception the Father and the Son cause the Holy Spirit to proceed, inasmuch as they represent the one nature; while the Holy Spirit, who, for western theologians, becomes ‘the bond between the Father and the Son’, stands for a natural unity between the first two persons. The hypostatic characteristics (paternity, generation, procession), find themselves more or less swallowed up in the nature or essence which, differentiated by relationships--to the Son as Father, to the Holy Spirit as Father and Son--becomes the principle of unity within the Trinity. The relationships, instead of being characteristics of the hypostases, are identified with them. As St. Thomas\textsuperscript{47} was later to write: ‘Persona est relatio’, inner relationship of the essence which it diversifies. It can scarcely be denied that there is a difference between this trinitarian conception and that of Gregory Nazianzen with his ‘Thrice-repeated Holy, meeting in one ascription of the title

\textsuperscript{46} The “Greeks” here likely means the Fathers of the Orthodox Church, many of whom spoke and wrote Greek, without themselves necessarily all being ethnically Greek. “Greeks” could also mean Orthodox Christians who are obviously not necessarily ethnically Greek. Oftentimes in history Eastern Europe was referred to as “Greek” and Western Europe as “Latin”, regarding cultural influence; certainly this was not to describe the ethnicity of vast regions of Europe, which were ethnically very diverse.

\textsuperscript{47} “St. Thomas” here refers to St. Thomas Aquinas, a saint of Roman Catholicism--but he is not a saint of the Orthodox Church. His teachings regarding the Holy Trinity are substantially different from those of Orthodox Fathers such as St. Gregory Nazianzen (St. Gregory the Theologian), as we have just seen, briefly.
Lord and God.’ (Lossky, 1976, p. 57)

The Orthodox Fathers taught something profoundly different, regarding the Suprasubstantial Trinity, than what St. Thomas Aquinas taught—as was aluded to by reference to St. Gregory the Theologian (Gregory Nazianzen) in the above quotation. This brings us to the term “personalism”. By considering Meyendorff’s discussion (1998, pp. 212-215), we can understand the term “personalism” to refer to the Orthodox teaching of the fathers pertaining to the Suprasubstantial Trinity—in which the primacy that each of the Three Divine Persons has over the Divine Nature or Essence is confessed. Orthodoxy clearly proclaims that the Father alone is the source of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and this same Father is uniquely the source of the divine essence which is common to the Three Divine Persons—this without there being any superiorities or inferiorities between the Three Divine Persons of the Suprasubstantial Trinity (Lossky, 1976, p. 63); for They are “in every respect equal, in every respect the same” (Lossky, 1976, p. 63) and the source of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Who possess one and the same essence as the Father) is not the divine essence, nor any essence, but instead is the Divine Person of the Father. Orthodox Christianity confesses the Father as the principle of unity within the Holy Trinity, “‘A single God because a single Father’, according to the saying of the Greek Fathers” (Lossky, 1976, p. 58). Because the Father is eternally and impassibly the source of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and all Three possess the same divine nature of which the Father is uniquely the source, the Three are eternally and impassibly the one True God (Lossky, 1976, p. 63); there is no other God, but the Suprasubstantial Trinity. With the error of the Filioque, the nature or essence becomes the principle of unity in the Holy Trinity, because there is no unique personal source of both the Son and the Holy Spirit (according to the Filioque innovation). Referring to what Lossky said earlier, we see
that this is so:

Indeed, according to the western conception the Father and the Son cause the Holy Spirit to proceed, inasmuch as they represent the one nature; while the Holy Spirit, who, for western theologians, becomes ‘the bond between the Father and the Son’, stands for a natural unity between the first two persons. The hypostatic characteristics (paternity, generation, procession), find themselves more or less swallowed up in the nature or essence which, differentiated by relationships--to the Son as Father, to the Holy Spirit as Father and Son--becomes the principle of unity within the Trinity. (Lossky, 1976, p. 57)

In contrast to any form of, or tendency towards, essentialism, we can speak of the personalism clearly, uniquely and unambiguously confessed by Orthodox Christianity. Each of the Three Divine Persons is “source and not product of nature” (Meyendorff, 1998, pp. 212). What this means is that each of the Three Divine Persons has an “autonomous existence”, in that none of Them originates from the Divine Essence or Nature (Meyendorff, 1998, pp. 212), but instead each fully possesses the Divine Nature, which is common to the Three. Each of the Three Divine Persons fully possesses the Divine Nature and yet none of Them originates from it. This is so because, as was mentioned earlier, the Father is uniquely and eternally the source of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and the Father Who alone is without source, is the source of His very essence (the Divine Nature) which He fully and undividedly confers on the Son and on the Holy Spirit Who both eternally and impassibly come forth from Him. The Son and the Holy Spirit are in no way inferior to the Father because the Father is uniquely, eternally, and impassibly Their source and “none of the hypostases or persons either exists or is intelligible without the others” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990e, pp. 137-
138). Thus, God is, eternally and impassibly, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, there is no other God.

The innovation of the *Filioque* and what came with it was devastating to Western Christianity. What was seen in the West was the consequent embrace, to a large extent, of a philosophy of essence to replace Orthodox theology, this in order to rationalistically and foolishly attempt to describe that which is indescribable—the absolutely transcendent Holy Trinity. All of this amounted, for Western Christianity, in so many ways, to a pathetic reversion to the essentialism of the Greek Philosophers. All of this having been chosen by the West—rather than remaining Orthodox and following Orthodox Trinitarian Theology—accomplished, tragically, the same thing (in the West) of allowing the “generalization” and qualification of the incomprehensible God, the Supra-essential Trinity.

It is with this sort of worrisome developments and realities in mind that we are well advised to learn from and heed the insightful comments of the famous Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Lossky as he expresses his thoughts on the inappropriate *Filioque* innovation of Roman Catholicism:

…by the dogma of the *Filioque* the God of the philosophers and savants is introduced into the place of the Living God. …The Unknowable Essence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit receives positive qualifications. It becomes the subject of a Natural Theology, concerned with “God in general,” who may be the God of Descartes, or the God of Leibniz, or even perhaps, to some extent, the God of Voltaire and the dechristianized Deists of the eighteenth century. (Vladimir Lossky, cited in Meyendorff, 1974, p. 189)

According to the brilliant remarks of Vladimir Lossky seen in this last quotation,
we see that the *Filioque* innovation assails the Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity and in effect goes a long way towards promoting the attempts--which have been made throughout history and are continuing to be made to this day--which strive to qualify and to relativize God, the Holy Trinity. The rationalism of the *Filioque* innovation, in complete contradiction to the eternal revealed truth found in Orthodox Trinitarian Theology confessed by the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, works in the favor of all those who hold that God, the Holy Trinity, is merely a “concept” or “a particular way of looking at God”, though to many such people it is not the only way to “view” God nor is it necessarily the correct view of God at all. All this as many such people take, what for them is, the “concept” of the Holy Trinity and make it into a “relative concept” subservient to and by no means necessarily associated with their own vague, generalized and ambiguously formulated God. Rationalistic conclusions, such as the *Filioque*, promote concepts of God reminiscent of Greek philosophy to be found in Plato and other Greek and Hellenistic philosophers. The Roman Catholic, rationalistic, philosophical “deduction” of *Filioque* works to take the dogma of the Holy Trinity away from Orthodox Trinitarian Theology and put it into the philosophical realm, doing so the God of the philosophers and philosophical speculation is given primacy over the divine revelation of Orthodox theology found in the Holy Orthodox Church.

Associated with the heresy of the *Filioque* and its assault on the Orthodox Dogmatic teaching pertaining to God, the Holy Trinity, we see that such heresies and innovations encourage the relativization of God, the Holy Trinity, and this having been done we can see how such relativistic theology in turn justifies the glorified relativism of ecumenism. When God, the Holy Trinity, is made into a “relative conception” made to conform to a more generalized, “more inclusive”, “not necessarily Trinitarian” God which
is what ecumenism essentially attempts to accomplish in its various manifestations, then we can see how various theologies which have nothing to do with Orthodox Trinitarian Theology become promoted as all being somehow equally valid since they all seek to describe the same, generalized, purposely ambiguous, “not necessarily Trinitarian” God. With this in mind, we can see how numerous ecumenists, some of them, tragically, Orthodox (as we saw from some of the remarks made by some Orthodox Patriarchs themselves), attempt to essentially validate and equate various religions (many of them non-Christian) in their faithful subservience to the principles of ecumenism. When we look at some of the remarks which have been made by some Orthodox Hierarchs, and indeed by some Orthodox Patriarchs, we see how these people seem to be striving to give equal validity to the various religions of the world, both to Christian and non-Christian faiths alike, ignoring the fact that Orthodox Christianity is uniquely the Church.

The One and Only True God is the Suprasubstantial Trinity

In this climate of confusion and ambiguity promoted by rationalistic innovations and heresies such as the Filioque, all of which can find their home within the Pan-heresy of ecumenism, it is not surprising that some people would try to put the theological traditions found outside of Orthodox Christianity onto some sort of equal plain with Orthodox Christianity itself. For example, Islam and Judaism, though undoubtedly monotheistic faiths, clearly and avowedly do not believe in God, the Holy Trinity, and therefore do not worship the same God as Orthodox Christianity does. Orthodox Christianity confesses belief in the one and only true God: the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Islam and Judaism clearly do not believe in the one and only true God, for they do not believe in the Suprasubstantial Trinity. With all these things in mind, and in contrast to the willful syncretism which we have seen manifested by some Orthodox leaders who
embrace ecumenism, the following Orthodox confession of God, the Holy Trinity, made by St. Maximos the Confessor is insightful, profound and free of all syncretism and relativism:

Moreover, in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew (cf. Gal. 3:28). By this is meant differing or, rather, contrary views about God. The Greek affirms a host of ruling principles and divides the one fundamental principle into opposing operations and powers, devising a polytheistic worship full of contradictions because of the multitude of objects to be venerated, and ridiculous because of its many modes of veneration. The Jew affirms a fundamental principle which, although one, is narrow, imperfect and almost non-existent, since it is devoid of immanent consciousness and life; and so he falls into an evil which is just as bad as that into which the Greek falls for the opposite reason, namely disbelief in the true God. For he limits the fundamental principle to a single Person, one that exists without Logos and Spirit, or that merely possesses Logos and Spirit as qualities; for he fails to realize what kind of God this would be if deprived of these two other Persons, or how He could be God if assigned them as accidents by participation, as is the case with created intelligent beings. Neither Greek nor Jew, then, has any place at all in Christ. In Him there is only the principle of true religion and the steadfast law of mystical theology, that rejects both the dilatation of the Divinity, as in Greek polytheism, and the contraction of the Divinity, as in Jewish monotheism. In this way the Divine is not full of internal contradictions, as it is with the Greeks, because of a natural plurality, nor is it regarded as passible, as it is by the Jews, because of being a single Person, deprived of Logos and Spirit, or only possessing Logos and Spirit as qualities, without itself being
Intellect and Logos and Spirit. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990c, p. 295)

It is clear that when St. Maximos the Confessor is speaking of Intellect and Logos and Spirit he is speaking of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, respectively. And St. Maximos the Confessor is affirming in his discussion the Orthodox teaching that the Suprasubstantial Trinity is the one and only true God, and therefore cannot be made relative.

*The Nicene Creed, by Itself, is Not the Sole Determination of Orthodoxy*

The innovation of the *Filioque* and all other innovations born of empty rationalism come from, and encourage, a theology of philosophical deduction and speculation, independent of divine revelation; as such these innovations and philosophical schemes resemble, and easily fit into, the various humanisms which exist in the world. Within the ecumenical movement, that syncretistic forum and glorified collection of heresies, such innovations and speculations--foreign to divine revelation--find fertile ground in which to be justified and promoted.

Having said all this, we again need to mention that the *Filioque* innovation is but one of the numerous innovations and heresies of Roman Catholicism which have separated it from Orthodox Christianity. For even if Roman Catholicism were to renounce its *Filioque* innovation and once again confess the original Nicene Creed (The Symbol of Faith), there would still be profound theological differences and matters to be resolved before Roman Catholicism could once again be in communion with the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. To illustrate this fact, we can look at the example of the Non-Chalcedonians (i.e., the Armenian Church, the Ethiopian Church and the Coptic Church of Egypt) who over more than fifteen centuries have persisted and continue to persist in their ancient heresy of Monophysitism and
who, consequently, are not Orthodox and obviously are not in communion with the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and yet they still accept the original Nicene Creed.

Additionally, the Uniates, a religious group of Roman Catholic origin and affiliation, who have historically, and aggressively, attempted to undermine and replace Orthodox Christianity, also accept the original Nicene Creed and yet they are not, nor have they ever been, in communion with the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. The point clearly being made here, through the aforementioned examples, is that even the acceptance of the original Nicene Creed does not, in and of itself, make any group Orthodox nor put any group in communion with the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. The acceptance of the original Nicene Creed, by itself, never has been, nor will it ever be, the sole determination of Orthodoxy.

Father Daniel Degyansky brilliantly argues against minimalistic formulas for the union of divided Christians because such formulas and schemes are, invariably, associated with the compromise, negotiation, contradiction and glorified relativism of the Ecumenical Movement, but in the end can have nothing to do with the unchanging reality that is Holy Orthodoxy. Father Daniel Degyansky’s (1997) insight regarding this issue is inspiring:

There are, admittedly, some Orthodox ecumenists who have suggested that unity can be achieved by such things as the universal acceptance of the Nicene Creed as a “sign of membership” in the True Church. However, this concept, like other similar ones, is also minimalistic; for even Uniates and Monophysites accept the original Nicene Creed. In fact, even the Unitarians, a group holding largely humanistic religious views, recite the Nicene Creed once a year “for historical reasons”--yet they reject the doctrine of the Holy Trinity! The Orthodox Church does not imagine Christian unity to come from a common creedal confession
among people separated by different traditions or from simplistic formulae for union, but from the acceptance of a creedal statement that reflects a commitment to common traditions and which rejects the idea of ecclesiastical relativism. (p. 66)
CHAPTER 6

ORTHODOX ECUMENISTS’ RELATIVISM

Orthodox ecumenists’ relativism, which can be seen in their conduct towards other faiths (both Christian and Non-Christian), essentially teaches Orthodox Christians, and the rest of the world, that theological relativism is the truth, rather than Orthodox Christianity. That is a dreadful educational example for some Orthodox leaders to set. Consistent with this and as was mentioned earlier, many Orthodox ecumenists are not simply content at attempting to minimize and relativize the Orthodox faith when dealing with representatives of the various Christian denominations, but they feel the right and apparently the need to do so when witnessing to non-Christians as well. Let us consider some more amazing comments on the part of prominent Orthodox leaders who appear to be more concerned with providing an articulate witness to the ambiguously “Deistic” views of the confused, humanistic religious conglomerate, known as the ecumenical movement, rather than witnessing to the Pre-eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ and His Holy Church, the Orthodox Church. We observe—as we quote from some of the research of the Old Calendrist Greek Orthodox Bishop, Angelos of Avlona (1998)—the following syncretistic remark of the Patriarchal Metropolitan of Switzerland, Damaskinos: ‘We should be prepared to seek and to recognize the presence of the Spirit—which means: the Church--outside our own canonical boundaries’ ...(p. 38).

In response to such relativism and syncretism, which profoundly contradicts what the Orthodox saints have taught humanity throughout history, it should be said that it is outrageous for an Orthodox hierarch to deny, what for Orthodox Christianity is the truth, namely, that the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ is uniquely the Church and that there is no other.
Once again, in close conformity to what has been mentioned earlier in the discussion: If an Orthodox hierarch chooses to not defend and confess the unconquerable Holy Orthodox Christian Faith then he should explicitly leave that same Orthodox Faith and confess whatever he chooses within some other context without defiling Orthodoxy and the sufferings of countless Martyrs. It is with this in mind that the following words of Dr. Constantine Cavarnos (1996), regarding the Holy Ecumenical Synods and the pathetic disrespect afforded to the Theology confessed in those same Holy Synods by numerous Orthodox ecumenists, need to be considered:

Now the Divine dogmas of the Faith and the Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church were elaborated by these Synods, and are traditionally regarded as God-inspired. They constitute the law of the Church. Accordingly, those who do not take these doctrines seriously and violate these Canons cannot be regarded as Orthodox, and their Ecumenism should not be called Orthodoxy Ecumenism but Anarchical Ecumenism. (p. 14)

In addition, quoting Hieromonk Klemes Agiokyprianites (2000), we see the following which is related to what we have just mentioned:

In November of 1994, at the World Conference on Religion and Peace (Riva del Garda, Italy, November 4, 1994), Patriarch Bartholomew said the following: “Roman Catholics and Orthodox, Protestants and Jews, Muslims and Hindus, Buddhists and Confucians: the time has come not only for rapprochement, but also for an alliance and joint effort” to “contribute--all of us--to the promotion of the spiritual principles of ecumenism, brotherhood, and peace,” since “we are united in the spirit of the one God.” (p. 73)

We also quote from the research of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili (1997),
where we continue to see the relativism and syncretism so common to ecumenists:

In 1990 (January 9-15), the WCC organized a Meeting in Baar, Switzerland, in which twenty-one Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic theologians took part, as well as other specialists, from fifteen countries, and they hammered out a text entitled “Religious Pluralism-Theological Perspectives and Affirmations.”

In this text, aside from other surprises, we read that: “We recognize the need to move beyond a theology which restricts salvation to a particular explicit commitment to Jesus Christ” and “We explicitly affirm that the Holy Spirit works in the life and the traditions of peoples of living faiths”! (pp. 26-27)

Well, needless to say, from the perspective of Orthodox Christianity and its Theology, the previously quoted remarks and affirmations, which were either made, or accepted, by some prominent Orthodox leaders, who are Ecumenists, are obviously false and border on the insane, bearing no witness to the absolute truth of divine revelation. Any Orthodox Christian who chooses to embrace such foolishness and essentially deny Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church should listen to St. Nikolai Velimirovich who tells us:

[O]f all forms of folly, it is difficult to find one greater than this: that someone who calls himself a Christian should go and glean miserable proofs of God and of eternal life from other faiths and philosophies. He who does not get gold from a rich man is not likely to have it from a poor one. (St. Nikolai Velimirovich, cited in Patapios, 2000, p. 71)

Jesus Christ, the Son of God is the world’s only salvation. It is with this in mind that Orthodox Christianity teaches and proclaims in the Divine Liturgy the following:

Only begotten Son and Word of God, although immortal You humbled Yourself
for our salvation, taking flesh from the holy Theotokos and ever virgin Mary and, 
without change, becoming man. Christ, our God, You were crucified but 
conquered death by death. You are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the 
Father and the Holy Spirit--save us. (The Divine Liturgy of Saint John 
Chrysostom, 1985, p. 6)

Ecumenism, Ambiguity, and the Relativization of God

As we saw earlier, Patriarch Bartholomew--in what obviously appears to be 
purposely vague, generalized and politically correct theological language--effectively says 
(by making the expression ‘we are united in the spirit of the one God’) that people who 
do not confess Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, God Himself, are united spiritually to 
those who do confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. About what God then is the 
Patriarch speaking in his seemingly purposeful and uninspiring ambiguity? It is certainly 
not God, the Holy Trinity, because many of the people to whom he is speaking clearly 
do not believe in God, the Holy Trinity. Apparently ‘the promotion of the spiritual 
principles of ecumenism, brotherhood, and peace,’ are enough to unite all present to the 
one God who is not the Holy Trinity or at least not necessarily the Holy Trinity or 
maybe for some it can be that God is the Holy Trinity but for others it is not necessarily 
so and does not need to be so. Or maybe these are all “culture-specific” details that are 
biased and not worth mentioning or the “concept” of the Holy Trinity is simply a 
historical and cultural peculiarity that is but one of many “diverse” views that are all 
equally “acceptable” to describe the the one, generalized, politically correct, “not 
necessarily Trinitarian” God. According to this line of reasoning, common to much of 
what is seen and accepted in various ecumenical encounters, there is clearly an attempt on 
the part of many ecumenists to deny (either explicitly or implicitly) the eternal
Theological truth--always confessed throughout the ages by Orthodox Christianity--that the one God is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity. Explicitly or implicitly, this denial of Orthodox doctrine has become something frequently seen and accepted in the Ecumenical Movement. Sadly, as we have seen, many Orthodox ecumenists participate in and frequently lead the charge into the appalling, cowardly theological syncretism and relativism that is a dominant feature of the ecumenical movement. How will these same Orthodox hierarchs and leaders answer to God, the Holy Trinity, on the Day of Judgment when they refuse to courageously and without any compromise teach to their Orthodox flock and witness to the entire world the incomparable and unique truth that is the Holy Orthodox Christian Faith established by the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ?

_The Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition Proclaim Christ the Son of God; the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition Proclaim the Suprasubstantial Trinity_

To those who, in any way, deny the uniqueness of Christ, the Son of God, and by so doing are essentially supporting those who deny that God is the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit--the Holy Scriptures are very clear:

1 John 2:18-26: Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.⁴⁸ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that

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⁴⁸ Of interest is the commentary of the _The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms_ regarding 1 John 2:18: “The last hour is the era of the New Covenant, the ‘eleventh hour’ (Matt. 20:6). The deceptions at hand are in view, rather than a specific prediction of the end of the world. Many antichrists are the heretics, through whom the Antichrist of the end of time (see 2 Thess. 2) is doing his spade work.”(_The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms_, 1993, pp. 572-573). Here we see some of the sobriety and balance, which is characteristic of Orthodox teaching, this is in strong contrast to the sensationalism and subservience, which is characteristic of Evangelicalism and so many of the other heresies.
they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us--eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, pp. 572-573)

1 John 4:2-3: By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 575)

2 John 7-9: For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 579)

John 15:4-5: Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,
unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the
vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit;
for without Me you can do nothing. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament
and Psalms, 1993, p. 253)

Orthodoxy confesses that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Holy
Trinity; He is God the Word (the Logos), He is the Son of God, He is God Himself. The
Son of God, without any need or necessity to His Person and without ceasing to be God,
voluntarily condescended to become that which He was not before, man, for the salvation
of all humanity. The Only-Begotten Son of God, God the Word, voluntarily became what
He was not before, He became a human being, He became fully man, while remaining fully
God. As such, the entirety of Holy Scripture, both the Old Testament and the New
Testament, when interpreted within the Holy Orthodox Tradition, confesses the Son of
God as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Scriptures, having been brought
forth and defended by the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, were inspired by the
Suprasubstantial Trinity, and they clearly confess the truth that the Suprasubstantial
Trinity is the one true God. Let us look briefly at what some of the Orthodox Fathers
have to say regarding the Divinely inspired Holy Scriptures:

“Brethren, be contentious and zealous for the things which lead to salvation! You
have studied the Holy Scriptures, which are true and are of the Holy Spirit. You well
know that nothing unjust or fraudulent is written in them” (St. Clement of Rome, 1st

“When you hear the words of the Prophets, spoken as it were personally, do not
imagine that they are spoken by the inspired persons themselves. It is the Divine Word
who moves them” (St. Justin Martyr, 2nd century)(The Orthodox Study Bible: New

“Moreover, in regard to the righteousness which the law enjoined, the Prophets and the Gospels are found to be consistent with each other, because they all spoke as being inspired by the one Spirit of God” (St. Theophilus of Antioch, 2nd century)(The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, section I, p. ii).


If, however, we are not able to find explanations for all those passages of Scripture which are investigated, we ought not on that account seek for another God besides Him who exists. This would indeed be the greatest impiety. Things of that kind we must leave to God, the One who made us, knowing full well that the Scriptures are certainly perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and by His Spirit. (St. Irenaeus, 2nd-3rd century)(The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, section I, p. iii).

The Only-Begotten Son of God, God the Word, revealed Himself to the prophets, to the apostles, and to countless other saints, who throughout history confessed Him. Orthodox theologians, following the Holy Tradition passed on to humanity throughout the ages by the Orthodox saints themselves, confess that before the Incarnation the Old Testament prophets and saints of ancient Israel, by the unfathomable grace of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, knew and confessed the Son of God. The research of Dr. George S. Gabriel (2000) is greatly insightful, regarding this matter:

In the uncreated glory of God, the holy Prophets and saints of Israel were
able to converse with and see the Son of God. This takes place in another reality, one that men do not ordinarily know: the uncreated reality of God. They were taken into the uncreated energies of the divine will, rule or reign, and prescience. And because they were in God, “within the light,” He gave them to know things that are in His foreknowledge, and they learned what His will had foreordained before the ages.

“After this invisible manner, therefore, did they see the Son of God as a man conversing with men, while the prophesied what was to happen, saying that He Who was not come as yet was present....They saw the dispensations and the mysteries through which man should afterwards see God.” [St. Irenaeus] “It is evident that God appeared to them as a man...the image and type of what was yet to come. For the invisible Son and Word of God was to become truly man that He might be united to our nature and be seen on earth.” [St. John of Damascus] “You see, therefore, that the Prophets also in those times beheld Christ but as much as each was able....The forefather David knew Him....Moses also saw Him, Isaiah also saw Him, Jeremiah also saw Him, and not a single one of the Prophets did not know Him.” [St. Cyril of Jerusalem] (p. 117). “All who have known God from the beginning and have foretold the coming of Christ have received the revelation from the Son Himself.” [St. Irenaeus] (p. 119)

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cannot be made into a relative truth, no matter how powerful certain people and forces may happen to be who advocate this kind of apostasy and to whom many ecumenists and others zealously pander and ally themselves. Christ clearly tells us that He is the Lord, and nothing and no one can change that fact, for all

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49 The bracketed entries in this entire block quotation pertaining to p. 117 and p.119, from Gabriel (2000), were inserted by me--and are consistent with Dr. Gabriel’s footnotes for these pages.
that exists is because of Him. With this mind, we observe the words of Christ, the Son of God: John 10:30: “I and the Father are one” (The Orthodox New Testament: The Holy Gospels (Volume 1), 1999, p. 436). Christ the Theanthropos having made this particular statement of fact, among others, affirming that He is the Only-Begotten Son of God, God Himself, caused very many Jews to want to kill Him. We clearly see this, among other places, in John 10:31-39:

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?” The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, ‘You are gods’”? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.” Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 241)

Certainly, of great significance is the Orthodox understanding of these passages from the Holy Scriptures. Regarding John 10:30-33, we see that Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, “reveals Himself as fully God: one means one in nature. He was God before the Incarnation, and He remains fully God after that union of God and man in His one Person. The verb are indicates the Father and the Son are two Persons. They are always distinct, but united in essence, will and action. Jesus’ bold claim causes a violent
reaction: they attempt to stone Him, accusing Him of blasphemy” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 241). Christ quotes from the Holy Scriptures, which He Himself (as God) inspired, in response to their charge of blasphemy. We see this in John 10:34-36: Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, ‘You are gods’”? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 241). The Orthodox understand this passage as an affirmation of the following fact: Whatever people have, they have by the infinite grace of God, by no means possessing anything in and of themselves, for all creation was created from nothing by God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, with God having had absolutely no need to create anything or anyone. Therefore, seen from this Orthodox perspective, by the unfathomable grace of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, humanity is given the opportunity to pursue “theosis”. In other words, in Christ the Theanthropos, God gives every person the path to become “godlike” by grace, while forever remaining human by nature (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). In theosis, we forever remain what God created us to be, human (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). In theosis, we forever remain created and human, and the Triune God forever remains Uncreated and God (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). In humanity’s pursuit of theosis we do not, nor can we ever, become what the Triune God is, for God is God and we obviously are not God, nor can we ever be God (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). Therefore, in the Orthodox doctrine of theosis, as in all aspects of Orthodox theology, the false teaching of
pantheism, in all its forms, is rejected. Indeed, Orthodox Christianity confesses that this opportunity for each and every person to cooperate with the infinite grace of God and pursue theosis, to become that for which God has created us, is contrasted, of course, with the fact that Christ the Theanthropos is God Incarnate--the Pre-eternal Son of God Himself, Who chose to become Man. Christ the Theanthropos is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, He is God Himself Who, without any necessity to His Divine Person, voluntarily became that which He was not before, Man, in order to save humanity and offer it the path to sanctification, theosis. As such, and in conformity with the Holy Orthodox Church’s rejection of any form of pantheism, the opportunity for theosis (and theosis itself) is not necessitated by anything in God, the Holy Trinity, it is not necessitated by the divine nature of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, rather it is simply a gift of grace offered to humanity by that same absolutely transcendent God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Therefore, within this context of Holy Orthodox Tradition, the wisdom of St. John Chrysostom is very enlightening to us, regarding Christ’s response to His enemies in John 10:34-38: “If those who have received this honor by grace are not found at fault for calling themselves gods, how can He who has this by nature deserve to be rebuked?” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 241).

For as Christ Himself tells us: Revelation 22:13: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” [Translated from the Greek] (H KAINH ΔΙΑΚ ΕΚ, 1980, p. 1061). Indeed, this passage of Holy Scripture is fully consistent with countless other passages from Holy Scripture, such as the following: Ex. 3:14, Rev. 1:8, Rev. 4:8, and Rev. 11:17. In fact, the entirety of Holy Scripture, when seen within the light of the eternal Holy Orthodox Tradition, gives us affirmation that Christ
the Theanthropos is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, God Himself. Let us look at two of these other passages from the Holy Scriptures and let us look at some corresponding commentary from Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, all of which confess the Divinity of Christ the Only-Begotten Son of God, and affirm, along with the entire Holy Orthodox Tradition, the truth that God is the Suprasubstantial Trinity: Rev. 1:8: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, He Who is and He Who was and He Who is coming, the Almighty” [Translated from the Greek] (H KAINH ΕΙΣΗΓΗΣΗ ΧΟΡΗΓΗ, 1980, p. 997). This beautiful passage of Holy Scripture applies to Christ the Only-Begotten Son of God and confesses His Divinity as One of the Holy Trinity, for as St. Gregory the Theologian tells us: “This is clearly spoken of the Son” (The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2), 1999, p. 551). Additionally, and certainly consistent with Orthodox Trinitarian Theology, St. Andrew of Caesarea tells us that the words in Rev. 1:8 also apply to each of the Three Divine Persons of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity separately, and they also apply to All Three Divine Persons together: “The divinely splendid words are fitting equally for each of the Persons separately and for All together” (Taushev, 1995, p. 65). We see this in other passages of Holy Scripture, and confirmed by Holy Orthodox Tradition, for example, we observe this in Rev. 4:8: “And the four living creatures, each one having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God the Almighty, He Who was and He Who is and He Who is coming’” [Translated from the Greek] (H KAINH ΕΙΣΗΓΗΣΗ ΧΟΡΗΓΗ, 1980, p. 1007). Indeed, it is not just the creatures which are six-winged and many-eyed that praise their Creator, the Triune God, but the entire Holy Orthodox Church does the same, in every aspect of its life, a life which has been given to it and is sustained by that same God, the
Suprasubstantial Trinity. For example, we can see this when we consider the following concise and illustrative reference to the Triune God, from countless such references which are to be found throughout the Liturgical Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church: “O Trinity, one in Essence and undivided, Unity in three coeternal Persons, to Thee as God we sing the angels’ hymn: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, our God” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 1978, p. 664). Some more commentary, from Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, beautifully confesses that God is the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Regarding Rev. 4:8, we listen to St. Gregory of Nyssa: “The mystery of the Trinity was luminously proclaimed when they uttered that marvelous cry, ‘Holy’, being awestruck with the beauty in each hypostasis of the Trinity” (*The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2)*, 1999, p. 559). And regarding that same passage of Holy Scripture (Rev. 4:8), St. Ambrose tells us: “They repeat thrice and say the same word, that even in a hymn you may understand the distinction of Persons in the Trinity, and the oneness of the Godhead, and while they say this they proclaim God” (*The Orthodox New Testament: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (Volume 2)*, 1999, p. 560).

Orthodox Christianity is *uniquely* the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church with unparalleled, unbroken continuity and it forever teaches that the one true God is the Holy Trinity as is uniquely and correctly confessed in Orthodox Trinitarian Theology within the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. Orthodoxy teaches that there is no other God but God, the Holy Trinity. Orthodox ecumenists and all other Orthodox Christians, myself included, need (to the best of their ability) to work towards, courageously and uncompromisingly, confessing this fact, following the example set throughout history for all humanity by the unconquerable Orthodox saints.
CHAPTER 7

ORTHODOXY CONTRADICTS THE ERROR OF
PERSONAL INFAILIBILITY

The error of personal infallibility, which is seen in Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and Ecumenism (and among other places where such arrogance is exulted above humility, an arrogance of which we are all guilty, from time to time), is contradicted by Orthodox Christianity. Many Orthodox ecumenists, regarding themselves as empowered to violate and ignore much of Orthodox theology and Tradition, including decisions of the Holy Ecumenical Synods, seem to consider themselves by their actions and comments as some how “infallible” when they are engaged in their relativistic, syncretistic “theology of love”. This disregard for much of Holy Orthodox Tradition on the part of numerous Orthodox ecumenists and their reaching “understandings” with the heterodox outside of that same Holy Tradition, resembles the arrogance of “Papal infallibility” and for that matter their actions also resemble the arrogance of Protestant “infallibility”. For as some modern day Orthodox saints teach us: we see that just as each Pope claims to be infallible in matters of dogma and faith so also theoretically each Protestant can do the same, interpreting the Holy Scriptures to his or her liking and convenience, independent of a Holy Tradition (which they lack), creating the ecclesiastical anarchy that is Protestantism in its manifold varieties. Included within Protestantism we can number its “Evangelical” offspring: the endlessly various, ever-changing, ever-splitting Pentecostal, Neo-Pentecostal, interdenominational, and non-denominational “Apostolic” and “Christian” groups and whatever other group or sect exists or will exist (after subsequent splits or consolidations).
Let us look more closely at what these Orthodox saints teach us regarding individual claims of infallibility to be found in Roman Catholicism and in the innumerable sects of Protestantism.

Individual claims of infallibility (either directly made or implied) make the Holy Tradition, which countless Orthodox saints throughout history have suffered to bring to all of humanity without alteration or innovation, of insignificant value to “infallible” people and their allies.

St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000) explains regarding individual claims of infallibility as follows:

By the appropriating, through the dogma of infallibility, of all the power and rights belonging solely to Christ the God-Man, the Pope, a man, has, in fact, by this act, proclaimed himself a Church within the papist Church and has become all-powerful in it. He has become his own version of the “upholder of all things.” (pp. 144-145)

Papism has determinedly and persistently worked at replacing the God-Man by a man, until it has replaced Him forever with the ephemeral ‘infallible’ man, with the dogma of papal infallibility. By this dogma, the Pope was clearly and decisively pronounced to be not only somewhat higher than a man, but also higher than the holy apostles, the holy fathers and the holy Ecumenical Councils. (pp. 119-120)

Make no mistake: Papism is the most radical Protestantism, for it has transferred the foundations of Christianity from the eternal God-Man to ephemeral man. It has proclaimed this as its central dogma, as the highest truth, the highest value, the highest norm for all beings and things in all worlds. The
Protestants only accepted the essence of this dogma and worked it out to a fearsome extent and in fearsome detail. In fact, Protestantism is nothing other than generally-applied Papism, for in Protestantism every man individually lives-out the main principle of Papism. Following the example of the infallible man in Rome, every Protestant is an infallible man, for he pretends to personal infallibility in matters of faith. (p. 120)

“Ecumenism” is a collective name for pseudo-Christianities, for the pseudo-Churches of Western Europe. All European humanisms, headed by papism, have given it their wholehearted support. And all these pseudo-Christianities, all these pseudo-Churches, are nothing other than a collection of heresies. …There is, in fact, no substantial difference between papism, protestantism, ecumenism and the other sects whose name is legion. (p. 153)

Protestantism, the dearest and most loyal child of papism, blunders from heresy to heresy through its rationalist scholasticism, constantly drowning in divers poisons of its heretical fallacies. In all this, papist arrogance and “infallible” insanity hold absolute sway and ravage the souls of their adherents. In principle, every Protestant is an independent pope, an infallible pope, in all matters of faith. (p. 153)

The modern day Greek Orthodox saint, St. Nectarios (Kephalas) of Pentapolis teaches us essentially the same thing as the modern day Serbian Orthodox saint, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, regarding individual claims of infallibility. St. Nectarios makes the following observations:

His Beatitude the Pope sinned greatly when he proclaimed himself infallible and sinless…. Infallibility abrogates Synods, takes away from them significance,
importance, and authority, and proclaims them incompetent, disturbing the confidence of the faithful in them. The proclamation of the infallibility of the Pope disturbed the foundations of the Western Church; because it provided ground for suspicion about the authority of the Synods, and secondly it made her depend on the intellectual and spiritual development of a single person, the Pope…. Since every Pope judges concerning what is right as it seems to him, and interprets Scripture as he wills, and lays down the law as he considers right, in what respect is he different from the multifarious dogmatists of the Protestant Church?… Perhaps in that in the case of the Protestants each individual constitutes a Church, while in the Western Church one individual constitutes the entire Church, not always the same individual but ever a different one. [The Seven Ecumenical Synods, [Athens, 1892], pp. 22-23, 27] (Cavarnos, 1992b, p. 21)

Orthodox Christianity Has Uniquely Preserved the Holy Scriptures Throughout History

As we look at Protestantism with its minimalization and subsequent denial (to varying degrees, depending upon the sect) of the Church in favor of the “infallibility” of individual interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and Theology, we are drawn to the research of the Old Calendrist Greek Orthodox Hierodeacon Gregory (1995), who in full conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition informs us of the following:

By the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, Orthodox Christianity has throughout its incomparable and unbroken history preserved the Holy Scriptures without alteration and has given them to all of humanity and will forever preserve these same Holy Scriptures within its Holy Orthodox Tradition until the end of the world (p. 16-17).

With this in mind we quote Hierodeacon Gregory: “This Trinitarian cornerstone of Holy Tradition is confirmed by the existence of the Textus Receptus, which the Orthodox
Church bequeathed to Western Christianity”... (p. 16).

Regarding this gift of the Holy Scriptures and their being preserved throughout the ages without change for the whole world, which was accomplished only by the grace of God and through no personal merit on the part of the Orthodox and which the Holy Orthodox Church was able to give to Western Christianity, we continue to see the relevance of Hierodeacon Gregory’s (2000) discussion and research, as he tells us:

Historical fact compels Evangelicals to admit this: “It was only those in the Greek-speaking [i.e., Orthodox]\textsuperscript{50} churches in Greece and Byzantium that continued to make copies of the Greek text [of the New Testament]\textsuperscript{51}. For century after century--from the sixth to the fourteenth--the great majority of the New Testament manuscripts were produced in Byzantium, all bearing the same kind of text.” [Philip W. Comfort, “Texts and Manuscripts of the New Testament,” in The Origin of the Bible, ed. idem [Wheaton, IL : Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992], p.188.] (p. 16-17)

In view of these facts just mentioned, it is truly baffling that many Evangelical “Christian” groups, in their self-appointed authority and self-righteousness, accuse Orthodox Christianity of not following the Holy Scriptures, when these same elitist “Christian” people and their ever changing, ever splitting communities owe their possession of these Holy Scriptures to the very same Holy Orthodox Church which they love to attack.

\textit{The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, Uniquely the Church}

The heresy of Evangelicalism was itself born from earlier heresies within Protestantism. The heresy of Evangelicalism was born from the heresy of Protestantism.

\textsuperscript{50} This bracketed entry is in the text cited.  
\textsuperscript{51} This bracketed entry is in the text cited.
In a sense, Evangelicalism is merely a branch of Protestantism. With that in mind, we must further consider the issue of Protestantism, which is one of the heresies to be found within Ecumenism, and we are educated by the words of St. Hilarion (Troitsky) the New Hieromartyr, who like countless other Orthodox saints suffered greatly and lost his life heroically defending Orthodox Christianity: “It is Protestantism that openly proclaimed the greatest lie of all: that one can be a Christian while denying the Church” [Holy New-Martyr Archbishop Ilarion (Troitsky), Christianity or the Church?, (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1985), p.29] (Gregory, 1995, p. 3).

“… [I]t must be considered as the most vital necessity of the present time to confess openly that indisputable truth that Christ created precisely the Church and that it is absurd to separate Christianity from the Church and to speak of some sort of Christianity apart from the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ” [Holy New-Martyr Archbishop Ilarion (Troitsky), Christianity or the Church?, (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1985), p.48] (Gregory, 1995, p. 3).

“All the points of discord between… sectarians and the Orthodox Church come from the denial of the Church in the name of an imaginary ‘Evangelical Christianity’” [Holy New-Martyr Archbishop Ilarion (Troitsky), Christianity or the Church?, (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1985), p.29] (Gregory, 1995, p. 4).

And along the same lines, the denial of Holy Tradition by the multi-varient branches of Protestantism is exposed as contradictory and lacking justification by St. Nikolai Velimirovich, when he explains:

The Orthodox Church surpasses all other Christian groups in the richness of her Tradition. Protestants look only to the Holy Scriptures, but the Scriptures can only be interpreted within the Tradition. …The tradition concerning Prince Avgar
is doubtless an apostolic tradition, although it is not referred to by any of them in their epistles. The Apostle Thaddaeus wrote nothing, and therefore, according to Protestant thinking, he said nothing, gave nothing to the faithful. Why was he then an apostle of Christ? (St. Nikolai Velimirovich, cited in Gregory, 1995, pp. 12-13)

Orthodox Ecumenism: For Some, An Encouragement and Opportunity to Attack Orthodox Christianity

Once again, to avoid any misunderstanding, Orthodox Christianity--through absolutely no intrinsic merit belonging to Orthodox Christians themselves, only by the unfathomable mercy of God, the Holy Trinity--has preserved and defended the Holy Scriptures, without change and in an unparalleled manner, throughout history for all of humanity, and it will continue to do so until the end of time. So its very sad when Protestant and other Christian groups which are not Orthodox attempt to undermine and replace Orthodox Christianity, sometimes under the cover of ecumenism and the ecumenical movement. With this in mind, some of the unfortunate examples of these occurrences cited in Fr. Daniel Degyansky’s (1997) research is of interest and should be noted by Orthodox ecumenists. We observe the following:

... immediately after the overthrow of the communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, 10,000 copies of the Bible in the Romanian language were sent to the Romanian Orthodox parishes by a Protestant source in the United States. It was subsequently discovered that the word *idol* had been consistently translated *icon*, in a blatant attempt to undermine Orthodox dogmatic teaching. Such are the fruits of ecumenism: an Orthodox country requests aid and this request becomes the occasion for an attack against Orthodoxy. Similar ecumenical fruits are evident in Ukraine. While the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch exchange greetings in the
true spirit of a “theology of love,” Ukrainian Uniates are proselytizing among the Orthodox, misrepresenting their minority church--the product of forced conversions and Jesuit chicanery--as an ancient Ukrainian institution to the world press, and taking over Orthodox Church buildings by force. (pp. 88-89)

(Regarding the Orthodox veneration of the saints and their icons, see Appendix E)

As we see, perhaps such groups, which are attempting to undermine and replace Orthodoxy, are, in some sense, being encouraged to do so and are taking their lead, if you will, from Orthodox ecumenists themselves. Prominent Orthodox leaders, by their very participation in ecumenism, oftentimes and not surprisingly, tragically send the erroneous message to many, including to Orthodox Christians, that the Holy Orthodox Church is not uniquely the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. The message being sent to the world, by many Orthodox leaders’ irresponsible participation in ecumenism, is that Orthodox Christianity is merely a part of some larger “True” Christianity. And this “more inclusive”, “Universal”, “True” Christianity is something that the followers of contemporary ecumenism--no matter who they may happen to be, whether they be Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant or whatever else--must seek to rediscover and teach to the whole world. And to do this, these ecumenists--ignoring and denying the truth that the fullness of divine revelation is to be found uniquely in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and nowhere else--insist that there must be some kind of Universal agreement in matters of faith, or at least in matters of faith that they deem to be significant. Or, maybe it is that many or all of the vast theological differences--inevitably encountered in these ecumenical consultations and negotiations--are insignificant for these people, and need not be considered at all in this framework of glorified relativism and syncretism, where the “theology of love” will build a “Super-Church” in which relativism
will reign supreme in place of Christ, the God-Man, and His Holy Orthodox Church. But why are some Orthodox leaders willfully entrenched in this denial of Orthodoxy? The message sent to the world and to their Orthodox flock is devastatingly wrong, whenever Orthodox leaders, through their actions and comments, refuse to confess the truth that Orthodoxy is uniquely the Church. Regarding these aforementioned matters, we see the dangers of Orthodox leaders’ participation in ecumenism and its consequent harmful effects to Orthodox Christian witness and education, as is clearly exposed by Dr. Constantine Cavarnos (1992a):

Contemporary “Ecumenism,” like all the other innovations or modernizations about which I have spoken, is an invention of the heterodox. …The Ecumenical Movement aims at the union of the various “Churches,” with indifference about Tradition and the truth. The “Orthodox” Ecumenists regard the Dogmas, the sacred Canons, and the totality of Tradition as insignificant matters, things that are not worth discussing, because it appears that deep down they do not believe that there is absolute truth, that there is Divine revelation. …They disregard the fact that there is only one Church, as the Symbol of Faith (the Creed) says: “I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church;” and that this one Church is the Orthodox, because only she has remained a faithful keeper of Tradition. …

With the disdain that the “Orthodox” Ecumenists show for Tradition and the very provocative manner in which they trample on the sacred Canons, they scandalize the Orthodox people and cast many down into the abyss of unbelief and perdition. (p. 34)

The Orthodox saints and martyrs always taught the uniqueness of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and would have never thought of being involved in the
glorified ambiguity and relativism that is ecumenism. The pan-heresy of ecumenism can have no place in the Body of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church, for no heresy has ever had any place in the Holy Orthodox Church. Orthodox Christianity has never embraced heresy nor will it ever be replaced by any heresy, including ecumenism. Christ established His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church, and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against her” (Matt. 16:16-19). The “gates of hell” have never prevailed, nor will they ever prevail against Orthodox Christianity. One sees this, through the ages, in the unparalleled and incomparable experience of the Orthodox Church, where Orthodox Christianity has remained unchanged and unconquered throughout history since its establishment by Christ Himself. Those who seek the Truth, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will find Him in His Church, the Holy Orthodox Church which is His Body. And there always have been Orthodox saints who have heroically lived and died confessing the one and only Truth, Christ Who is found in His Holy Orthodox Church which He Himself has established and which is, uniquely, His Body. Unlike many Orthodox ecumenists, the Orthodox saints and martyrs never sought to essentially make relative the Orthodox Faith, for they knew that it was absolute and established by Christ, our God. To the contrary, unlike many Orthodox ecumenists and others (myself included), the Orthodox saints and martyrs were willing to suffer and die confessing and teaching, without any compromise, that same Holy Orthodox Faith established by God Himself.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

The Orthodox saints knew that all man-made systems, such as Ecumenism, were powerless to save humanity. They knew that humanity has absolutely nothing except for what God in His immeasurable grace has given to us. And as such all their hope was in God and not in humanity, for, as Orthodoxy teaches, humanity has nothing in and of itself. St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000) tells us what all the Orthodox saints have realized throughout history:

“From the depth of the ages, there echo the bitter words of the melancholic Prophet of God, Jeremiah: ‘Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.’ (17:5)” (p. 121).

Knowing this, the Orthodox saints, cleaving to God alone and trying with all their might, rejected all the power of sin which was manifested in themselves and others--and which inevitably is manifested in all of us, for the power of sin dominates this fallen world. The Orthodox saints knew that by themselves they could do absolutely nothing, for without God no one can do anything. The Orthodox saints, in sharp contrast to those who embrace worldly philosophical systems, such as ecumenism, rejected the “wisdom” and “logic” of this fallen world and in doing so accepted to stand in the face of great danger and suffering. This is the great educational example given to the world by the Orthodox saints, in sharp contrast to the safety of relativism and cowardice pursued by many within the ecumenical movement. The Orthodox saints teach us that if a person is united to Christ and given the strength by Him, then that person can do all things. St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000), in conformity with the Holy Scriptures and the entire Holy Orthodox Tradition, teaches us this beautifully, defying the power and “wisdom” of this fallen world, when he tells us:
As the Holy Apostle Paul says: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Phil. 4:13). A man of Orthodox faith, by living in the theanthropic organism of the Church, always lives in union with all the saints (Eph. 3:18), which helps him in a mysterious way to fulfill all the evangelical commandments. For this reason, a member of the Orthodox Church has a vivid sense of being of the same faith as the apostles, martyrs and saints of all ages, that they are ever alive, and that they also are permeated by the same theanthropic power, the same theanthropic life, the same theanthropic truth. In the Church, the past is always contemporary, for Christ the Theanthropos, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, lives unceasingly in His theanthropic Body by the same truth, the same holiness, the same goodness, the same life, ever making all the past present. Hence, a man of Orthodox faith is never alone, but is in the company of all the holy members of the Church. When he thinks, he thinks with fear and prayerful trembling, for he knows that all the saints are also participating in a mysterious fashion. The Orthodox are Orthodox through having this sense of unbroken theanthropic conciliarity, nurturing and preserving it by prayer and humility. They never preach themselves, never boast by man, never stop at sheer humanity, never idolize humanism. Wherever they go, they confess and profess the God-Man, not man. Their guiding principle is that theanthropic goals can be achieved only by theanthropic means; evangelical goals can be reached only by evangelical paths. A theanthropic ideology of Christianity can be preserved only by a theanthropic methodology of Christianity. The Lord Jesus is both the Truth and the Way; not only the Truth but also the Way, the only Way that leads to the Truth. The abandoning of theanthropic methodology inevitably leads to the
abandoning of theanthropic ideology, of Christ the Theanthropos. (pp. 118-119)

The Orthodox saints through their martyric struggles and God inspired wisdom
teach us that knowledge of God is not something derived or deduced, instead it is revealed
to humanity by God Himself, Who chose to become man. Knowledge of God, the Holy
Trinity, is given to us by God, the Holy Trinity, for the Second Person of the Holy
Trinity, the Son of God, chose to become man “for us men and for our salvation” (The
Symbol of Faith). The philosophy of education found in Orthodox Christianity can be
nothing other than the Truth, Christ the God-Man (the Theanthropos). Christ the
Theanthropos is the Source of our very existence, for He is God our Creator, and He is
the Source of all our knowledge, as well. Having said this, the Orthodox saints teach us
that knowledge of God is not deduced, but lived and experienced united to Christ in His
Holy Orthodox Church. So it becomes clear, that the Orthodox Christian saints live and
confess Orthodox Christianity’s philosophy of education which is entirely centered on
Christ the God-Man, for no one has anything without Christ. As such, Orthodox
Christianity has a ‘theanthropic philosophy of education’… ‘In it, God is always in first
place, man in second; man lives, thinks, feels and acts by God; i.e. man is educated and
enlightened by God. Not by some kind of abstract, transcendent, super-heavenly,
Platono-Kantian God, but the God of direct earthly and human reality, the God who
became man and, in the human context, has given us all that is divine, immortal and
eternal’ (Popovic, 2000, pp. 129-130).

Ecumenism and its followers deny the fact that the Holy Orthodox Church is
uniquely the Church, the Body of Christ, with Christ the Theanthropos, Himself, as its
Head. Doing so, the ecumenists seek to derive their knowledge of things pertaining to God
through humanistic philosophical deduction; and similarly, through the same sort of
humanistic philosophical process, they seek to construct a ecclesiastical and theological unity in place of the true unity that already exists in the one and only Church of Christ, the Holy Orthodox Church. Ecumenism and all the other similar humanistic philosophies, seeking to unite all the heresies and call them the truth, have relentlessly denied Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. Regarding ecumenical activities and consultations: When Orthodox Christian leaders are merely present at such gatherings and even minimally participate in various aspects of this denial of the uniqueness of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, a certain false validity is given to these kinds of proceedings, which further adds to the confusion already present in the world, and among Orthodox Christians.

Again, we come back to the wisdom of St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije who rightfully condemns the “dialogue of love”--of which the ecumenists are so fond of speaking and using as the pretext for their ecumenical activities--as the hypocrisy and deception that it truly is. Faithful to the eternal and unconquerable Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000) confesses the great uniqueness of Orthodox Christianity as the one and only Church of Christ, when he tells us the following:

The contemporary “dialogue of love”, that is conducted in the form of empty sentimentalism, is, in fact, a faithless negation of the saving sanctification of the Holy Spirit and belief of the truth (II Thess. 2:13). ...The essence of love is truth, and love lives by speaking the truth. Truth is the heart of every theanthropic virtue, including love. Every one of them reveals and proclaims the Theanthropos, the Lord Christ, who is the one incarnation and personification of divine truth, the supreme Truth. If Truth were anything but Christ the Theanthropos, it would be
small, insufficient, ephemeral and mortal. It would be such if it were a concept or an idea, a theory, a scheme, reason or science, a philosophy, a culture, man or mankind, the world or all worlds, anybody or anything or all these put together. But the Truth is a Person, the Person of Christ the Theanthropos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, and this is why it is perfect, enduring and eternal. In the Lord Christ, the Truth and the Life are of the same essence: eternal Truth and eternal Life (cf. Jn. 14:6, 1:4,17). Whoever believes in the Lord Christ constantly grows by His Truth into its divine infinities; he grows with all his being, his mind, his heart and all his soul. (pp. 154-155)

This entire quotation from the God-inspired wisdom of St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, and the following statement in particular: “Whoever believes in the Lord Christ constantly grows by His Truth into its divine infinities; he grows with all his being, his mind, his heart and all his soul” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 154-155), is a profound confession of the potential that each person has to grow with his entire created being--and thus be truly educated, in his pursuit of sanctification--in the one and only Truth, Christ the Theanthropos. The very truthful and insightful statement, made by St. Justin of Chelije, “The essence of love is truth, and love lives by speaking the truth. Truth is the heart of every theanthropic virtue, including love” (Popovic, 2000, pp. 154-155), clearly points to the reality that if what we pursue and do in our endeavors is not motivated by love for the one and only Truth, Christ the Theanthropos and all that He commands of us, but instead is motivated by subservience to worldly power and personal gain, and pursued through hypocrisy and falsehood, then our conduct is not love, for it does not serve or abide in the unique Truth, Christ the Theanthropos, and in all that He commands of us. The end never justifies the means, if the means are evil then what is being done is, indeed,
evil. All people, the strong and the weak alike, must realize this. Those with tremendous power in world politics, and those subservient to them, must realize this. Those with power over someone in a particular situation, and in general all people who have the power to commit evil, and that includes all of us, must all realize this. St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije further speaks about these realities when he faithfully confesses the one and only Truth, Christ the Theanthropos and His Holy Orthodox Church which is uniquely His Body, against those in ecumenism, and elsewhere, who (in one way or another) attempt to deny Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. This is seen in the following quotations from St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije:

Make no mistake: a “dialogue of lies” also exists when negotiators, consciously or unconsciously, lie to each other. Such a dialogue is characteristic of the father of lies, the devil, for he is a liar and the father of it (Jn. 8:44). It is also characteristic of all his willing and unwilling collaborators, when they want to achieve their good by means of evil, to find their “truths” by means of lies. There can be no “dialogue of love” without a dialogue of truth. Such a dialogue is otherwise unnatural and false. Hence the commandment of the Christ-bearing Apostle: Let love be without dissimulation (Rom. 12:9). …

The heretical, humanistic division and separation of Love and Truth is simply the sign of a lack of theanthropic faith and a loss of theanthropic balance and common sense. In any case, it is never the way of the holy fathers. The Orthodox, rooted and founded with all the saints in truth and love, have and profess, from the time of the Apostles to this day, this theanthropic saving love for the world and all of God’s creatures. The barren moralistic minimalism and hoministic pacifism of modern ecumenism do only one thing: they reveal their
withered humanistic roots, their sick philosophy and their helpless ethics after the tradition of men (Col. 2:8). Furthermore, they reveal the crisis of their hoministic faith in the truth, and their docetic insensitivity towards the history of the Church and its apostolic and conciliar theanthropic continuity in truth and grace.

(Popovic, 2000, p. 155)

Very many ecumenists and others deny the uniqueness of the Orthodox Church as the one and only Body of Christ, established by Christ Himself Who is its Head. Thus, having essentially rejected where the fullness of all truth is uniquely to be found, Orthodox Christianity, such people in “their docetic insensitivity”52 compromise and collaborate with the hypocrisy and all other evil that exists in the world (Popovic, 2000, p. 155), looking to find and establish the truth in places where it clearly is not, in falsehood and heresy. St. Justin of Chelije continues to confess these realities, and courageously defend Orthodoxy, in the following:

“The teaching of the Orthodox theanthropic Church of Christ through the holy apostles, the holy fathers and the holy Councils concerning heretics is this: heresies are not the Church and can never be it” (Popovic, 2000, p. 156).

Hence, only in the Church--that unique universal mystery of Christ’s--can there be any mysteries. For the Orthodox Church, as the Body of Christ, is both the source and the criterion of the mysteries, never the other way round. The mysteries cannot be elevated above the Church and examined outside the Body of the Church….

Therefore, according to Orthodox ecclesiology and in accordance with the whole of Orthodox Tradition, the Orthodox Church does not recognize any

52 See glossary for a definition and discussion of “docetism”.
mysteries outside itself, nor does it consider them as mysteries until someone from a heretical “Church”, i.e. a pseudo- Church, approaches the Orthodox Church of Christ with repentance. (Popovic, 2000, p. 157)

Beautifully summarizing his defense of Orthodox Christianity, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (2000) quotes from the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Synodicon of Orthodoxy, where we see the following uncompromising confession of Orthodoxy:

And we believe that we have been saved, not by an agent or an angel but by the Lord Himself (cf. Is. 63:9).

Following Him and making His voice our own, we cry aloud: Neither a council, nor imperial power, nor a plot of the damned has saved the Church from idols, as such nonsense was invented by the Jewish Sanhedrin, but the Lord of glory alone--God incarnate--has saved and freed the Church from idolatrous folly. To Him, therefore, by glory, to Him be grace, gratitude, thanks and majesty, for His redemption is ours, His salvation is ours, for He alone has the power to save completely, and no miserable man on earth.

So, as the prophets foretold, as the apostles taught, as the Church has received, as the teachers put into dogma, as the universe agreed, as grace has illuminated, as the truth has proved, as the lie has been banished, as Wisdom has boldly proclaimed and as Christ has confirmed: thus we think, thus we speak, thus we preach Christ our true God. This is the apostolic faith, this is the patristic faith, this is the Orthodox faith! This faith sustains the universe’ (Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, session 4, and the Synodicon of Orthodoxy). (pp. 178-179)
The Orthodox saints have throughout history courageously confronted and rejected all falsehood and evil; they certainly were not subservient to such things nor did they attempt to validate and compromise with falsehood and evil as many Orthodox ecumenists and others attempt to do. It is therefore the Orthodox saints to whom we look for encouragement, inspiration and education. This because they are the most believable of educators having by the grace of God transcended the tragedy of what is--to this fallen world--inevitable and necessary, for by the grace of God they have transcended the supremacy of selfishness and self interest which dominates this world. The Orthodox saints, in an unbroken and unparalleled continuity throughout history, have by the grace of God conquered their own selfishness and sinfulness, and have overcome the hypocrisy, hostility and evil of this world. The Orthodox saints, utilizing the power and free will given to them by God, have with all their being pursued the courage and holiness which only God can give to people--and which God in His unfathomable grace did indeed give to the Orthodox saints, showing forth His unfathomable power and mercy for all mankind to see. For God by His unfathomable grace gave the Orthodox saints that for which they aspired with all their created being, they attained to the holiness for which God had created them, and for which God has created all of us. The Orthodox saints, by the infinite grace of God, demonstrate incomparable love, humility, wisdom, courage and holiness of life which defies, and indeed shatters, all the logic and power of this fallen world. By the grace of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, this is the great educational example given to all Orthodox Christians, and to the whole world, by the Orthodox saints.
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*Ἄθρα ἄνωθεν, καλοὶ κόσμοι ἐν οἴκῳ κόσμου, ἱερά ἐκκλήσια* [Gregoriou tou Palama]

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APPENDIX A:

ECUMENISM: SUBSERVIENT TO THE PHILOSOPHY AND POWER OF THIS WORLD

Ecumenism is closely related to all the other humanisms (for, indeed, it is not only one of them, but also seems to have the feature of trying to unite all of them)--it is closely related to all the other man-made, man-glorifying philosophical systems\(^5\)--many of which, ironically, have been catastrophic to countless human beings. Marxism of course is one such horrifying example of a man-destroying, anti-human, “humanistic” philosophy or system. All these lifeless humanistic systems, both religious and otherwise, both past and present, have no part in the unique truth that is Orthodoxy (which, by the mercy of God, is taught to us by the Orthodox saints, courageously and without compromise). So to fully understand what the Orthodox saints, by the mercy of God, teach to all of humanity, without compromise and in all truth, in sharp contrast to the relativism and confusion taught by ecumenism, we must first understand the tragic consequences of the Fall of Adam and Eve, we must look at the great tragedy of human history, of which we are all a part. We must consider our alienation from one another and from God, through sin, seen throughout the world and throughout history, which continues unabated to this day. This must be considered first, in order to put ecumenism within its proper context, in order to identify ecumenism for what it truly is: a man-made system that serves to compromise with, and validate, the alienation and injustice of this world. Ecumenism does not call mankind to salvation in Christ, for it does not serve Christ, but instead serves the philosophy and power of this fallen world. We see that this is so, for ecumenism tries to

\(^{53}\) St. Justin (Popovich) of Cheliye makes this truthful assertion throughout his book *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*.

\(^{54}\) Solzhenitsyn has called Communism “anti-human”, and rightfully so.
replace Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body, through construction of its own humanistic religion where relativism is paramount and the empty philosophical systems and power of this world are validated, or at least ignored, but never confronted.

Sartre said that “Hell is--other people!” (Sartre, 1947/1977, p. 61). He was right, in the sense that humanity, in its great self-love and self-worship, tortures humanity. All of us, individually and collectively, contribute and are responsible for much of the hardship that besets our fellow human beings and ourselves. Humanity tortures humanity; mankind is in need of salvation from itself. But humanity--contrary to the teachings of rationalistic, humanistic social philosophies--cannot save itself. Only God can save mankind, and that is why God, of His own free will, without Himself being under any compulsion or necessity to do so, chose to become fully Man while remaining fully God to save fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, God Himself, assumed human nature, of which He is the Creator, so as to save fallen humanity.

How does man oppress man? Let us look for example at the following reality: Certainly, there is an agenda with any power elite, whether we are talking about the world’s power elite, the power elite in a particular situation or the power that any particular individual (myself included) tries to wield with respect to another person. This is an unfortunate attribute of our fallen condition, that most people, most of the time (myself included of course), place their own interests above those of others. Before I go any further, I need to make it very clear that in my criticism and condemnation of various ideologies and people, I must acknowledge my love of self, my self righteousness, my hypocrisy, and my cowardice, in these regards, I am not much different than most other
people, in fact I am worse than most others. It is important for me to remember what Dostoevsky (1991) says in *The Brothers Karamazov* through the Orthodox Elder Zosima, (this character based on a real life Russian Orthodox saint) “truly each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone” (p. 298). What Dostoevsky says here is essentially that we are all responsible for one another, and we all in some sense share the guilt for what is wrong in the world. Indeed, a very beautiful and true conception brought forth by various characters in this wonderful yet tragically prophetic work. In conformity with these things, we also need to keep in mind the following Greek proverb: “One who has had enough to eat cannot understand someone who is starving.” Aleksander Solzhenitsyn tells us essentially the same thing, echoing what countless others must have felt in the communist concentration camps, “When you’re cold, don’t expect sympathy from someone who’s warm” (Solzhenitsyn, 1963, p. 26); indeed, a true testament to the alienation that each one of us has in regard to the rest of humanity, in this fallen world in which we all live and struggle. In the truest sense, only the Orthodox saints transcend this alienation and catastrophic selfishness, about which we speak and of which we are all guilty, and only by the infinite grace of the Triune God is this something that the Orthodox saints are able to accomplish and teach humanity.

**Dostoevsky Saw the Hypocrisy, Futility, and Danger of Humanism**

Regarding the tragic fall of man and our alienation from one another, let us continue to call upon the genius of Dostoevsky. In Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, indisputably one of the greatest novels ever written, one sees the unparalleled mysticism that is a feature of the Orthodox Faith. Dostoevsky valiantly argues against rationalistic philosophical systems and the lie of being able to “engineer human happiness” (Wasiolek, 1994, p. 245). Ecumenism, just like Marxism and other
systems, is a humanistic system, which glorifies the philosophy of this fallen world and
denies the uniqueness of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is His Body.
Dostoevsky was, it seems, primarily, arguing against the philosophy of Marx and his
followers, and against the impending disaster, which he was certain would occur, if
enough people believed in the lie of Marxism. Dostoevsky’s truthful argument against
Marxism could just as easily be applied to the deception that is ecumenism. Tragically,
Dostoevsky was largely ignored and the rationalistic lie of Communism prevailed.

Communism, as with all other godless ideologies that have ever existed (or will
exist)--by denying God, the Holy Trinity, and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ--
found evildoing to be an acceptable and useful means to accomplish its atheistic goals.
With this in mind, regarding the great atheistic lie of Marxism and its failed attempt to
destroy Orthodox Christianity, a few quotations are of great significance and warrant
consideration. From The Brothers Karamazov, Dmitri Karamazov asks the question:
“Evildoing should not only be permitted but even should be acknowledged as the most
necessary and most intelligent solution for the situation of every godless person! Is that it
or not?” (Dostoevsky, 1991 p. 69).
And his brother Ivan Karamazov remarks: “There is no virtue if there is no immortality”
(Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 70).

These quotations from The Brothers Karamazov, tragically describe not just the
beliefs and actions of many powerful people in their godless oppression of weaker
people, but they also generally describe all of us, to one extent or another, in our fallen
condition and alienation from one another. Humanity in its self-worship and self-
glorification, attempting to save itself and attain perfection independent of God, the Holy
Trinity, ends by torturing itself in its fruitless pursuits. The cruelty of human beings
towards their fellow human beings is a tragic, absolute historical reality, for which we all, to one extent or another, share responsibility. Again, we quote Dostoevsky (1991), as he speaks through one of the Brothers Karamazov, Ivan:

“I never could understand how it’s possible to love one’s neighbors. In my opinion, it is precisely one’s neighbors that one cannot possibly love. Perhaps if they weren’t so nigh…” (p. 236).

Elsewhere, Ivan Karamazov remarks, “Indeed, people speak sometimes about the ‘animal’ cruelty of man, but that is terribly unjust and offensive to animals, no animal could ever be so cruel as a man, so artfully, so artistically cruel. A tiger simply gnaws and tears, that is all he can do” (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 238).

Once again, we look at Dostoevsky’s character, Ivan Karamazov, as he continues to speak about humanity’s alienation from itself: “I think that if the devil does not exist, and man has therefore created him, he has created him in his own image and likeness” (Dostoevsky, 1991, p. 239).

Dostoevsky was right; when man rejects God, he becomes just like the devil. Mankind’s embrace of humanistic philosophy, and consequent rejection of Christ God and His Holy Orthodox Church, leads ultimately to an ideology which can justify all manner of evil and leads people to self-destruction.

St. Justin of Chelije Rightfully Condemns Humanism

St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije helps us to identify and confront the sorrowful realities which have been mentioned in the above discussion, and which were brilliantly brought to our attention by Dostoevsky; doing this, St. Justin gives us the Orthodox perspective regarding these same issues. These issues, as we have seen and will continue to see, are related, generally, to the fact that people are alienated from one another and
from God, through sin. These aforementioned issues brought to our attention and reflected upon by Dostoevsky are, for example, related to the fact that human beings, oftentimes, choose to commit great evil against other human beings, in this fallen world in which we all live and attempt to survive. So, mindful of these things, we will first look at some of the comments of St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, this great modern day Orthodox saint, as he speaks of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, in full conformity with ancient Holy Orthodox Tradition. In so doing, St. Justin confesses mankind’s great limitations and sinfulness and the complete powerlessness of mankind to save itself from itself, and from the devil. Were it not for God willing to condescend and become fully man, while remaining fully God, all humanity would be entirely lost.

Now we read what St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije (1998) has to say, regarding some of the aforementioned issues:

Is it possible that anyone remembers that the earth was once Paradise? Today’s fall of man is incomparably greater than the first fall: then man fell away from God, but today he has crucified God, killed God. What should we call you, O man, if not Devil? That is slandering the Devil. The Devil was never as evil, never so artfully evil, as man. The Lord Christ descended into Hell, but that was not where He was crucified. We crucified Him! (Popovich, 1998, p. 5)

Even the Dread Judgment, brother, will not be more dreadful than Great Friday.

No, it will be incomparably less dreadful, for then God will judge man, but today man judges God. Today God is under Dread Judgment, mankind judges Him.

Today man appraises God, valuing Him at thirty pieces of silver. He puts a price on Christ of thirty pieces of silver. Could this be the final price? Could it be that Judas is our last word about Christ?
Today mankind condemned God to death. This is the greatest mutiny in the history of Heaven and earth. This is the greatest sin in the history of Heaven and earth. Such was not committed even by the fallen angels. Today is performed the Dread Judgment on God. Never has the world seen a more innocent victim condemned and a more mindless judgment. Never was God mocked more dreadfully. Today all the storm of Hell entered into man and derided God, and all that is Divine. (Popovich, 1998, pp. 5-6)

“No one, no one should be so ashamed of himself as much as man--none of the demons, none of the wild beasts, none of the animals… Men spit at God--is there anything more horrible than this? Men strike God--is there anything more devilish than that? Brother, if there had been no Hell, it would have to have been thought up for man, for man alone…”

“He, the Creator and God, was spat upon and struck, but He, meek and silent, bore it all.” … (Popovich, 1998, pp. 8-9)

God is crucified. Are you satisfied, fighters against God; are you appeased, killers of God? How do you assess Christ on the Cross? A deceiver, a ninny, a seducer; if Thou art the Son of God, come down from the Cross? O Thou Who buildest the Temple in three days, save Thyself and come down from the Cross!

What does the Lord on the Cross think about the people beneath the Cross? That which only the God of love and meekness could think: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (St. Luke 23:34) (Popovich, 1998, pp. 9-10)

St. Justin Popovich speaks here about what is, to Orthodox Christianity, the indisputable, historical, truth of the Cross, which Christ the God-Man voluntarily
endured, and His glorious Resurrection on the third day. These are not just historical
realities confined to the past; for Orthodox Christians, they are also forever present.

People’s love, hatred, or indifference towards Christ is as real and significant now as it
would have been during the actual historical time of the Crucifixion and glorious
Resurrection. It is in this spirit that St. Justin tells us the following:

  Alas, we ceaselessly persecute the Risen Christ…. How, how can we persecute
  Christ, says someone, when He is not with us physically, when we do not see His
  Body? Ah, we persecute Christ, brother, when we persecute His Spirit, when we
  persecute His teaching, when we persecute His Saints, when we persecute His
  Church. We persecute Christ when we drive away a beggar, for He it is Who in the
  beggars begs; we persecute Christ when we do not clothe the naked, for in the
  naked Christ goes naked; we persecute Christ when we do not feed the hungry, for
  in the hungry Christ hungers. In every sufferer, the Lord Christ suffers,… In His
  immeasurable mercy, He ceaselessly unites Himself with them: ‘Inasmuch as ye
  have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.
  Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me.’ (St.

  “The Theanthropos vanquished sin and death by His Resurrection, in order to
  awaken man to immortality and eternal life, to rejuvenate the stunted and paralyzed sense
  of immortality in man, so that he can sense that God and eternal life are the purpose of
  his life on earth and in heaven” (Popovic, 2000, p. 97).

  If Christ is not risen, then why believe in Him? To be honest, I would never have
  believed in Him had He not risen and had not thereby vanquished death. Our
  greatest enemy was killed and we were given immortality. Without this, our world
is a noisy display of revolting stupidity. Only by His Glorious Resurrection did our wonderful Lord free us from stupidity and despair, for neither in Heaven nor under Heaven is there a greater stupidity than this world without the Resurrection; and there is not a greater despair than this life without immortality. There is no being in a single world more miserable than man who does not believe in the resurrection of the dead. It would have been better for such a man never to have been born. (Popovich, 1998, p. 18)

As we just saw, St. Justin (Popovich) of Chelije, beautifully, gives an Orthodox perspective to many of Dostoevsky’s concerns and insightful descriptions of fallen humanity (which the Orthodox Christian, Dostoevsky, brought forth in his masterpiece *The Brothers Karamazov*).

*Marxism and Other Humanistic Systems are Profoundly Similar to One Another, in Their Alienation From God and the People Whom They Oppress*

The Marxists and other humanist groups rejected the God-Man, Christ, and His Glorious Resurrection and the immortality for humanity which came through the Resurrection. This willful and voluntary rejection of Christ on the part of the Marxists and other humanist groups, which continues to this day, left these same “self-sufficient” groups of people with the task of having to “build” the means for their own survival and salvation, by themselves. This striving to construct systems and plans for mankind’s “salvation”, independent of Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church (which is what the followers of ecumenism, and their powerful political allies, seek to accomplish) is something which these humanists, deluded by their temporary great worldly power, have attempted and continue to attempt, with devastating consequences for much of humanity. The followers of the humanistic philosophical systems in their rejection of Christ fail to
learn from or heed the advice of His saints when they teach us the following:

The essence of a fall into sin is always the same: the wish to become good, to become perfect, by one’s own efforts, the wish to become a god by oneself. But, by this, man has made himself equal with the devil, who also wanted to become a god by himself and so supplant God. In his arrogance, he suddenly became the devil, completely alienated from God and completely opposed to Him. In this arrogant self-deception lies the essence of sin, the ultimate sin. In this lies the essence of the devil himself, the ultimate devil: Satan. (Popovic, 2000, pp. 144-145)

The Marxists and their allies were able to commit their crimes and atrocities against innumerable people because for them there was no God to Whom they had to answer, and consequently no morals to restrain them from committing their abominations. This, they must have felt, gave them the right “to build a better world” by first tormenting and murdering countless people. The latest “New World Order”--which, among its numerous violations of human rights and international law, features “humane”, preemptive war in order to make the world a “better place” by first destroying people--seems to have fanatical advocates who have learned much from the terror tactics of Marxism and other similar humanistic philosophies. The world’s power elite feels, and always has felt historically, that “Might makes right”. Tragically, we all, to one extent or another, have been guilty of this kind of barbarism, as we feel justified in the injustices which we commit against other people, as we hypocritically strive to exercise some sort of dominion over others (provided that we have the power to do so). All such people (and that includes all of us to one extent or another, as was just mentioned), have justified themselves before men by claiming that their goals (their ends) will justify their means.
Obviously, we all do not have the same great power and influence that the world’s most powerful people have, which enables them to commit their evil, whenever they have the intention to do so, on a much larger scale than the rest are able to do. All people who have power in a particular circumstance (and that includes all of us, where to one extent or another, at various times and in various situations in life, we have some power over others) in their self-love, arrogance and hypocrisy, deluded by the temporary power that has been given to them--for all such worldly power is temporary and, in the end, will be brought to nothing when God comes again to judge the living and the dead--feel justified in the injustices that they commit against others. It must be noted, that the evil intentions (whenever present) of the world’s most powerful people--which are often manifested in their devastating actions towards others--are no less evil than the evil intentions frequently found in the rest of us. The world’s power elite simply have substantially more worldly power with which to accomplish their evil intentions than the rest of us do, that is all.

There is, oftentimes, as we see, a sort of disturbing and frightening moral equivalence to found, between, on the one hand, the world’s great leaders and other very powerful people of the world and, on the other hand, the rest of us. The very same powerful people whom we condemn for their works of evil, and rightfully so, are sometimes much more similar to the rest of us than we would like to admit either to ourselves or to others. In so many ways, the only difference between powerful people and weaker people is that of circumstance. Powerful people are powerful only because they have been given more power, by no means possessing this power intrinsically in themselves, and weaker people--who just like the more powerful people (and in fact just like all people, in general), possess absolutely nothing in and of themselves--are weak only because they
have been given less power than others in a particular circumstance, that is all. Evil intentions which are to be found among all people (among the weak and the strong), make all people, the weak and the powerful alike, practically indistinguishable from one another. Solzhenitsyn confesses this reality inspiringly when he tells us:

If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

During the life of any heart this line keeps changing place; sometimes it is squeezed one way by exuberant evil and sometimes it shifts to allow enough space for good to flourish. One and the same human being is, at various ages, under various circumstances, a totally different human being. At times he is close to being a devil, at times to sainthood. But his name doesn’t change, and to that name we ascribe the whole lot, good and evil.

Socrates taught us: *Know thyself!*

Confronted by the pit into which we are about to toss those who have done us harm, we halt, stricken dumb: it is after all only because of the way things worked out that they were the executioners and we weren’t. . . . From good to evil is one quaver, says the proverb. And correspondingly, from evil to good.

(Solzhenitsyn, 1973, p. 168)

The people with the greatest worldly power, whoever they may be in a particular circumstance, have most frequently attempted to justify their actions by their goals. People, in general, whenever they choose, and have the power, to engage in wrongdoing, oftentimes attempt to justify their wrongdoing by their supposedly just goals. Regarding
evil actions and the supposedly just goals pursued through such actions by many (by all of us sometimes), most frequently, the means and the goals, whether explicitly revealed or not, are equally misguided and deplorable. Again, one only needs to take a close look at some history to confirm this. People with great worldly power pursuing a godless agenda--with others stupid enough to follow them and do their bidding, or who are at least to fearful to confront them--more often than not, have essentially, through their conduct, responded “Yes” to questions similar to this one posed by Dostoevsky (1991) in *The Brothers Karamazov*, through the character Ivan Karamazov, who asks:

Tell me straight out, I call on you--answer me: imagine that you yourself are building the edifice of human destiny with the object of making people happy in the finale, of giving them peace and rest at last, but for that you must inevitably and unavoidably torture just one tiny creature, that same child who was beating her chest with her little fist, and raise your edifice on the foundation of her unrequited tears--would you agree to be the architect on such conditions? Tell me the truth. (p. 245)

When very powerful, hypocritical people advocate and start “humane”, preemptive wars in which of course they themselves are not willing to die or suffer, but who are more than willing to impose that same death and suffering on countless other human beings, then we clearly can see that these same very powerful people are responding with a resounding “Yes” to the above question of Dostoevsky’s.

When the world’s most powerful people decide to start wars for the “good” of humanity and inevitably innocent people die of famine, thirst, disease or wounds as a result of the “humane war” in question then the utmost sympathy is usually expressed by members of the world’s power elite without themselves acknowledging any
responsibility for the unfortunate collateral damage. Instead, usually the blame is placed on someone weaker who was formerly allied in some sense to that same power elite. These weaker people, with whom the world’s power elite did great business and with whom they played world politics, serve a purpose. After many years of doing business with, and selling arms to, these weaker nations and leaders, and after playing Geopolitics at the expense of countless human beings; inevitably and suddenly the very powerful people of the world discover that these weaker people are very evil and oppressive, and always have been, and therefore must be stopped immediately. And anyone and any nation that has ever done business with these newly proclaimed evil nations is also evil, with the exception of course that the most powerful people and nations (who uniquely have the best intentions for humanity and are the ultimate judges for what is good and evil in the world) are excluded from this categorization, and therefore need not answer for what they have done. Regarding this hypocrisy, let us look at one general example from very many possible examples: Much of the weapons that are used by all sides in the multitude of conflicts throughout the world tend to be manufactured by the same people and corporations, which is great business. Because, once a nation is destroyed it will need to be rebuilt and it will need to be sold arms once again, so that there will once again be a pretext to destroy that same nation and make the world a safer, more humane place. The tragedy and irony of all the countless examples of people’s hypocrisy and evil, found throughout the world and throughout history, is this: If the situation were reversed and the weak were now the strong and the strong were now the weak, then the newly strong would attempt to dominate the newly weak. The same law of the jungle would hold as the violence, hypocrisy, lies, exploitation, evil and devastation would in all likelihood be essentially the same, only with the circumstances being completely reversed, and that
would be just as wrong then as it is now, and as it always has been wrong.

There is no man-made organization, system, network or philosophy that can answer all of humanity’s most pressing questions and consequently save humanity. Humanistic philosophies and systems from Marxism to secular humanism, and from Tele-evangelism to religious ecumenism, and everything else in between all have “withered humanistic roots” (Popovic, 2000, p. 155), powerless to save mankind. In fact, historically and currently such organizations and systems pander to and serve very powerful people and political forces which would account for their unhampered existence in many spheres of society, while they do little to substantially help common people in their everyday struggles to survive.

Let us look at a specific example of just how humane a humanistic philosophy or system can be when given the chance to liberate and better the lives of people. We will look at the historical example of Marxism in predominately Orthodox Russia and in the surrounding areas. The following statistics pertain to what was the Soviet Union which had an enormous Orthodox Christian population. This profound, ever enduring Orthodox presence was something that the Marxist leadership and their blind, willfully stupid henchmen could not stand to have in their midst and so they did their best to decimate and destroy the Orthodox Christian population and heritage throughout Eastern Europe and Russia through intimidation, imprisonment, torture, and through vast cultural and physical genocide. We note that the statistics about to be seen, which predominately (though by no means exclusively) reflect the catastrophe suffered by Orthodox Christians, pertain only to the former Soviet Union and they do not even include the staggering losses of many millions of other Orthodox Christians and descendants of Orthodox Christians, in both Russia and throughout the rest of Europe, as a result of the
two world wars. We note, if we look far enough back into the history of Orthodox Christianity, that the mention of “descendants of Orthodox Christians” would include huge numbers of people from the populations of Europe, Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine and other parts of the world--many of whom have remained, miraculously, at least nominally, Orthodox throughout history and many others, tragically, have not remained Orthodox having broken away at various times, having succumb to various apostasies and heresies of the world and of history. So with this in mind we observe:

Not counting the two world wars, according to the calculations of Ivan Kurganov, who was once a professor of statistics in Leningrad, we lost sixty-six million (!!) people from civil discord and disorder alone, and from domestic, “class”, political and economic destruction. A significant percentage of this unbelievable number were clergy and believers. (Pushkarev, S., Rusak, V., Yakunin, G., 1989, p. 78)

The great Russian Orthodox writer, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in his monumental work *The Gulag Archipelago*, also quotes these same figures from the work of Professor Ivan Kurganov, and he also informs us as to the specific time period about which Kurganov’s research pertains, namely 1917-1959: “According to the estimates of émigré Professor of Statistics Kurganov, this ‘comparatively easy’ internal repression cost us, from the beginning of the October Revolution up to 1959, a total of . . . sixty-six million--66,000,000--lives” (Solzhenitsyn, 1975a, p. 10).

One can find other estimates dealing with roughly this same time period. Additionally, there are other estimates to be found which deal with the time period covering the entire reign of Marxism in Russia. Mindful of all these different estimates, we see that there are calculations which put the number of people lost to Marxism in the Soviet Union at about that same number which Kurganov calculates or at a somewhat
lower number than that figure. And in some other cases the estimates are very much lower than Kurganov’s calculations. However, there are still other estimates putting the total number of people killed by Marxism in the Soviet Union at a somewhat higher figure than that of 66,000,000 killed. And according to some calculations, the number of people who were murdered in the Soviet Union by the godless inhumanity of Marxism alone is estimated to be very much higher than even the figure of 66,000,000 people killed. (Rummel, 1990, pp 16-20, 24).

By simply considering the demographics prior to, and shortly after, the 1917 Communist Coup: it is completely logical to conclude that the overwhelming majority of these people who were killed in the catastrophe of Marxism were baptized Orthodox Christians and their sons and daughters, who themselves may or may not have been baptized Orthodox due to their potential apostasy for various reasons, including, but not limited to, those associated with the ignorance and fear engendered by Marxist restrictions, oppression and persecution.

We also note that the exploitation and evil associated with powerful people oppressing weaker people was a frequent occurrence in Tsarist Russia, and this provided the Marxist leadership with the opportunity, for which they had long awaited, to assume power and (among other things) do everything possible to destroy Orthodox Christianity. Of course, great injustice which was certainly to be found abundantly in Imperial Russia--before the incomparably greater devastation which was to follow because of Marxism--was not something that was unique to Tsarist Russia, because generally, such exploitation and evil has always occurred and has been seen in all places and times, throughout the world and throughout history. The sinfulness of Orthodox Christians and others contributed greatly to the horrific, all-encompassing, yet ultimately failed attempt on the
part of the communist power elite to destroy Orthodox Christianity and other faiths. This cultural and human genocide enacted by the Marxists was done so as to “liberate” the people from the “oppression of religion”. With Marxism’s proven hatred of both Orthodox Trinitarian Theology and Orthodox Christians, seen in communism’s catastrophic oppression of the Orthodox Church, one thing becomes clear: Communism attempted to destroy Orthodoxy in Russia, and elsewhere, so that the atheistic Marxists could exclusively, and “humanely”, oppress and devastate the same people about whom they cared so much.

The atheistic power elite of Marxism, and all their allies, “loved” the people so much that they subjected those same people to things to which they would never have subjected themselves or other people for whom they really cared. It is really just a matter of common sense for one to see the following: When people, who do not have any concern for you, tell you that they want to help you, their “help” is more likely to cause you harm than good. It is likewise self-evident that when people who hate you tell you that they are concerned for you and want to help you, they are likely to be lying, motivated purely by their own selfish goals and self interest, and consequently their “help” is something which is meant to lead to your destruction. This kind of evil and stupidity describes the actions and deceptions of the Marxist power elite and their allies towards Orthodox Christians and others, and in a sense it describes the willful stupidity of all Orthodox Christians who were willing to follow such people to self-destruction. Many Orthodox Christians, seeking what they perceived to be liberation from the real injustices which they were suffering, embraced a great lie which was told to them by people who hated them more profoundly than anyone else. And these same willfully deceived Orthodox Christians gladly slaughtered other Orthodox Christians in an attempt
to reach the false liberation offered to them by Marxism. Solzhenitsyn was right in his explanation of a Russian proverb, and all Orthodox Christians are well advised to pay attention to such reasoning, so as not to make the same mistakes made by many of our ancestors in embracing ideologies and systems which seek to undermine and destroy Orthodox Christianity: “We have a Russian proverb: ‘Do not call a wolf to help you against the dogs.’ If dogs are attacking and tearing at you, fight against the dogs, but do not call a wolf for help. Because when the wolves come, they will destroy the dogs, but they will also tear you apart” (Solzhenitsyn, 1975b).

The same sort of phenomenon is to be observed, throughout history and to this day, in countless other circumstances where we find very powerful people who are themselves the greatest proponents of their own man-made theological, philosophical and political systems and who within the delusion of these same man-made, humanistic systems promise other people that they will lead them to “the building of a better world” (much as the Marxists promised). But first those same people, who are to be led to this “better world”, must help in the destruction of any and all people who are deemed to be enemies of this future “New World Order” (whichever New World Order it may happen to be, depending upon where we are in human history and depending upon who has great power at a particular moment in history), a New World Order which the world’s power elite is “benevolently” trying to construct, through violence. With what we have just said being kept in mind, we look among the innumerable great evils that exist in the world and we draw our attention to the current New World Order, which is nothing other than a blatant, lawless, hypocritical attempt to justify and implement that which is unjustifiable: namely aggression, brutality and war for the fulfillment of the goals of the world’s most powerful people without concern for the cost to the rest of humanity. What else is new?
All these things described, born of lifeless humanism, apply to any and all “New World Orders” which have ever existed or ever will exist. And just like what happened with the enormous devastation of humanity caused by Marxism and by many of its blinded followers (and which occurred because of the sinfulness, stupidity and cowardice of humanity in general), there remain plenty of people who are ignorant or willfully stupid enough, or at least too fearful to courageously confront this latest evil which is being introduced into the world, so that the implementation of this latest global catastrophe is, tragically, almost assured.

I must note, regarding ignorance, stupidity and lack of courage, that we all to one degree or another possess these sorrowful attributes and the extent to which we possess them can of course vary with time and circumstance. Speaking for myself, the ignorance and stupidity with which I have lived and with which I have chosen to conduct myself in countless circumstances--and with which I continue to conduct myself in many instances--is a sad reality in my life, in need of correction. Regarding my lack of courage, I have, throughout my life, been a coward. And I remain, a pitiful coward, in need of the courage which only Christ can give me.

So how does humanity escape the dilemma of its own selfishness, hypocrisy, cowardice and evil-doing and that of its leaders? For Orthodox Christians, the countless Orthodox saints and martyrs--who by the grace of God, the Holy Trinity, possess indomitable courage and love for God and all humanity--are truly the great teachers and leaders of the Orthodox Faithful. This is so, because these same Orthodox martyrs and saints zealously sought to place the will of God, the Holy Trinity, above their own will and self-interest, thereby in themselves, by the grace of God, transcending the selfishness, stupidity and evil of this world, they help lead humanity to the one salvation and Truth,
Jesus Christ.

The communist power elite--which had no belief in God, the Holy Trinity, and consequently had no fear of God, the Holy Trinity--magnanimously decided, in its great atheistic love for mankind, to build the world’s first genuinely “humane” and “just” society, where man would no longer oppress man. To accomplish all of this, these same atheists--who hated God and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ--found it necessary and unavoidable to first oppress, torture and murder countless people in order to lay the foundation for their humane and democratic society. What Dostoevsky feared, and predicted, would happen did indeed happen through Marxism and its followers.

As we said, for the communists to build their perfect society they had to first destroy countless people, much like the doctrine of preemptive war which the world’s power elite of today advocate as they work to build the New World Order at any and all costs to humanity. The systematic torture and mass murder of countless people, on an unprecedented scale, in order to lay the foundation for a “better world” was something that the Marxist power elite zealously advocated and worked to attain, and they accomplished what they had set out to do: Tens of millions were persecuted, tortured and countless people were systematically worked to death in communist concentration camps in the most horrifying conditions imaginable. Tragically, very many Orthodox Christians, in Russia and throughout the world, were willingly stupid enough to be deceived by the great atheistic lie of Marxism. And to a large extent as a result of this willful stupidity on the part of very many Orthodox Christians, both weak and strong, Orthodox Christianity, once again, found itself having to survive almost insurmountable persecution, which by the grace of the Triune God it miraculously did survive inspite of devastating, almost unimaginable losses. Only by the mercy of the Triune God, and through no intrinsic merit
on the part of Orthodox Christians themselves, Orthodox Christianity in its unparalleled
history has never been conquered, nor will it ever be.

Keeping in mind that no ideology nor person has a monopoly on evil, I would like
to quote the Russian Orthodox priest, Father Vladimir Stepanov (Rusak) when he spoke
of Marxism’s great crimes against the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian people:

After the war people did not forget the vile things that the Nazis did on Russian
soil. The scale of what they did, it is true, is enormous. But as far as their acts
against the Church are concerned, they were not as terrible as the communists
would like everyone to believe. True, several dozen cathedrals were destroyed;
several hundred brutal acts of violence were committed against priests; but this is
nothing compared to the cruelty of the Soviet government toward the Church in
the entire period of peacetime after the Revolution of 1917.
The crimes of the Nazis against humanity have not been forgotten; they were
judged at the Nuremberg trials. The crimes of the Soviet government against the
Church, and against the Russian people were completely forgotten,
blasphemously and most sadly, by the Church itself. Will there be a new
Nuremberg trial at which the evils the Bolsheviks inflicted on the Church will be
judged? Such a trial must be held! And we are prepared to act as witnesses for
the prosecution! (Pushkarev, et al., 1989, p. 40)

There are so many injustices of human history that have been ignored, or not adequately
addressed. This apparently is so because very powerful people choose to ignore such
matters, and address them at some level, usually superficially, and only when they feel
that it is to their advantage, with the matter of justice being the last of their
considerations.
Political Correctness: An Attempt to Control and Suppress Freedom of Expression

We mention all these things about Marxism (and rightfully so, because of its unprecedented destruction of humanity), but, as was mentioned, the same sort of condemnation can be directed towards any other secular or non-secular rationalistic, humanistic philosophy or system. A relatively new humanistic ideology in name, but not in practice, is “Political correctness”, which is itself a blatant, oppressive and thus far amazingly successful attempt on the part of very powerful people to dictate to other people what it is that they are allowed to say, and not allowed to say. It seems that the goal of the world’s power elite using the tool of oppression known as Political correctness is to define, and confine, freedom of speech to their own exact specifications and desired restrictions (which of course ironically means that a person’s speech is no longer free). Does this sound like anything that the Nazis and Marxists did? Or does it sound like what any other oppressive regime or ideology has done? Now once people are told what is that they are allowed say and think and not allowed to say and think there are, understandably, punishments for transgressing the pre-approved and mandated limits to “free speech” which can range from losing one’s job to being imprisoned or killed, for having the wrong opinion or associating with the wrong organization. The so called “War on Terror”, unquestioningly embraced and propagated by the world’s major media networks, is a perfect excuse for many of the world’s most powerful people to terrorize anyone who gets in the way of their New World Order. Much like the Marxists used the oppression inflicted upon humanity by some of the Orthodox Tsars as an excuse for the oppression which they themselves liberally inflicted upon their own subjects within their communist empire, so also the New World Order power elite uses the real and horrifying threat from Islamic terrorists, and others, to justify their destroying anyone who gets in
their way. It must be made clear, in case that there is any doubt: All of what is said here is in no way to justify the evil and stupidity of Islamic terrorists, nor for that matter are these things said to justify the evil and stupidity of Jewish terrorists, Orthodox Christian terrorists, Roman Catholic terrorists or any other terrorists, all of whom are evil and stupid irrespective of who they are or from where they come.

One can say in a sense that Political correctness, in its numerous varieties, works to condition people to behave themselves within the all-powerful confines of New World Order politics. But of course, in the strictest sense, there is a Political correctness, that is to say coercive and threatening limitations on free speech and free expression, which people are forced to encounter, that are to be found in countless other human situations and not just in the “grand” scheme of New World Order politics. Some such examples of these threatening and oppressive situations, which are to be found, range from circumstances in a Middle school locker room to situations found in an abusive household, and from office politics in a big corporation to practically any place where a person is in some sense a minority, and generally speaking such circumstances exist in countless other situations where a person has less power than someone else. In short, mankind’s fallen condition is invariably associated with human beings threatening and oppressing other human beings.

I must note, at this point, that I am fortunate to be writing this thesis in a great country which has fed me and helped me, the United States of America, where to a large degree I have the freedom to express myself. However, with political correctness and the supposed “War on Terror”, motivated by the world’s most powerful people pursuing their New World Order, we continue to see our freedoms in the United States and elsewhere, deteriorating. With Political correctness only speech which is approved is free
and any non-approved speech has potentially serious consequences for the person daring to speak too freely in all matters. Such potentially devastating consequences for anyone attempting to speak freely are manifested to try to make sure that no one exceeds any particular strict limits on “Free” speech (which are imposed by some of the powerful guardians of controlled “Free” speech). Daring to speak too freely can get a person into catastrophic problems, especially if the person’s speech is offensive to very powerful people, this is an obvious reality--which has existed throughout the world and throughout history, and continues unabated to this day, everywhere.

The world’s power elite has always, throughout history, tried to control what people say and think. Of course, it is no different now when, tragically to a significant degree, we have freedom of speech only in name, but not in practice because of, among other things, the “War on Terror” and the associated policies of very powerful governments which in “Orwellian” fashion violate human rights throughout the world in order to combat a terrorist problem which these same governments helped to create in the first place. Given the terror tactics of the world’s most powerful people and governments, as they fight against much weaker terrorists, we see political correctness and other constraints on free speech serving the latest New World Order, in which preemptive war is lauded as “humane” and the consequent exploitation and devastation of humanity is trivialized or completely ignored. We must note that the weaker terrorists, who were just mentioned, are no less evil than the more powerful terrorists, they simply have less power with which to influence and terrorize people. Once again, to which we have alluded earlier, this by no means justifies Islamic militants and their terrorism against unarmed civilians. Instead, generally speaking, we must condemn any and all terrorism against any civilian population regardless of who commits it, and regardless of whether or
not powerful governments and media networks choose to acknowledge such terrorism for what it is--terrorism. The Orthodox saints were not intimidated by powerful people, attempting to control free expression and thought, but most of the rest of us, myself included, are.

_The Orthodox Saints Fight Against the Evil and Hypocrisy Inherent to All Humanistic Systems_

Just as the Marxist power elite used much of the injustice and exploitation of this world as an opportunity to deceive anyone willfully stupid enough to follow them and serve their godless agenda, so also the New World Order power elite of today uses a terrorist problem, which they themselves have helped to create, as an excuse for attempting to dominate the world with their own godless agenda. The Orthodox saints and martyrs, by the infinite mercy and power of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, have always heroically fought against such evil and hypocrisy. The Orthodox saints’ and martyrs’ heroic fight against such evil, is a great educational example for all Orthodox Christians, and for the entire world. The Orthodox saints were never Politically correct. In contrast, ecumenism is simply a very powerful manifestation of Political correctness, constructed for the world’s religions to follow. In striking contrast to what many of the followers of ecumenism do, the Orthodox saints teach the world to follow the absolute Truth, Christ the Theanthropos, Who is found in His Holy Orthodox Church, which is uniquely His Body. The Orthodox saints teach us through their great courage, wisdom and holiness of life. The ecumenists, including Orthodox ecumenists, for the most part, do not do these things. For the ecumenists, including Orthodox ecumenists, have embraced a humanistic philosophy and system, ecumenism, that denies the unique, absolute Truth that is Christ the Theanthropos (the God-Man) and His Holy Orthodox Church, which is
uniquely His Body. Ecumenism does not lead people beyond the injustice and hypocrisy of this fallen world, but instead, through its relativism and subservience, cooperates with it.

Regarding the supposed “War on Terror”, which the world’s most powerful people use as an excuse to terrorize people, in order to dominate the world, we must say, that what people feel is in their vested interest greatly influences their opinion on particular issues, sometimes more than the truth does. With that in mind, and acknowledging that we are all guilty of this sort of selective cognizance, which of course is a form of hypocrisy, we should assert that terrorism is terrorism regardless of who commits it and regardless of the hypocritical, selective labeling that exists pertaining to it. Terrorism, whether it be committed by Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Jews, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs or by any other people from any other group, religious or otherwise, needs to be condemned for the evil that it is, independent of who commits it. All peoples have had and continue to have violent, misguided, hypocritical and cowardly people who view terrorism as somehow justified provided that they can get away with it, either by brute force, intimidation or by any other means. People choosing to employ terror, or any other evil, to achieve their goals justify the means by the ends, when in actuality the means and the ends are, most oftentimes, equally deplorable. We look at the horror of what goes on in the world, and we are compelled to hold responsible ourselves. Each and every one of us is in some sense responsible, collectively and individually, for the problems and sufferings of humanity (as was mentioned earlier). The Orthodox Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia helps us to see this as he quotes the great Russian Orthodox writer, Solzhenitsyn:

For most Orthodox Christians in the twentieth century, Communism has been the
enemy. But it is wise to remember that our enemy lies not only outside us but within. As Solzhenitsyn discovered in the prison camp, we should not simply project evil upon others, but we need to search our own hearts: “Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either- but right through every human heart--and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains… an unuprooted small corner of evil.” [The Gulag Archipelago, vol. 2 (London 1975), part iv, p.597] (Ware, 1997, p. 171)

In resistance to the evil that exists in this fallen world, in resistance to the devastating oppression and evil, which humanity inflicts upon itself, the Orthodox saints educate mankind that God, the Holy Trinity, as confessed in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, is humanity’s only salvation. Regarding these saints and martyrs, when it was their time to make this Orthodox Trinitarian confession--in the face of overwhelming, oppressive and hypocritical power--no intimidation or threat could force them to confess otherwise. Fearlessly confessing the truth of Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, the Orthodox saints and martyrs forever teach humanity that the fallen condition of the world, and all of us in it, is not the way that things were meant to be, nor the way that they will always be. The Orthodox saints prove this to themselves and to the rest of humanity, by the unfathomable grace and power of God, through their confronting the delusion and hypocrisy of great worldly power, without any regard for their own survival. The Orthodox saints and martyrs teach us--though most of us (myself included) greatly lack their courage--that the goal of our lives is to courageously serve our Creator,
God, the Holy Trinity, and to bow down to no one else.

There was no Political correctness, nor any other intimidation and worldly power, which could dominate the lives of the Orthodox saints and martyrs who had completely surrendered themselves to God and proved that they had done so, not just by their words of great wisdom, but by their courageous acceptance of all horrifying danger, suffering and death. It is in this regard that the Orthodox venerate their saints and look to them for enlightenment and education, because only by the unfathomable grace of God do the saints have their great sanctity with which they can teach us so much (Popovic, 2000, pp. 130-132).
APPENDIX B:

THE LAST JUDGMENT

Orthodox Christianity is Christianity as it began; it is the original and unadulterated form of Christianity, born on the day of Pentecost and filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ uniquely confesses and teaches the True Faith, the Orthodox Faith. The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ has uniquely confessed Christianity in its unadulterated form throughout the ages and to this day. And this same Holy Orthodox Church will continue forever to confess the Truth that is Christ, for it is uniquely the Church, the Body of Christ, with Christ our God as its Head. By the mercy of God, the Holy Trinity, the Holy Orthodox Church has overcome all heresies which have, throughout history, risen up against it. And having emerged victorious, Orthodox Christianity certainly does not embrace nor repeat these same heresies which have attacked it, for these heresies have threatened to overcome and deceive the whole world. But in contrast to the Orthodox Church, all other Christian groups have, to one extent or another, embraced heresy and thus have separated themselves from the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. All the various Christian groups which are not Orthodox have, to one degree or another, fallen into heresy. And this fact pertaining to the embrace of heresy--this fact pertaining to the embrace of falsehood and deception--obviously applies not just to these Christian groups which are not Orthodox, but it also applies to all the non-Christian religions as well, when viewed from an Orthodox Christian perspective. It is with this in mind that we look at the ancient heresy of chiliasm, which has once again emerged, powerfully, and has gained widespread acceptance among many people, especially among evangelical and non-denominational Christian groups. In the same way that many other heresies are offered to people in these times, this heresy is promoted by
the teaching and publications--brought forth by various people--which have become
popular in evangelical and non-denominational circles, and which have received substantial
attention within the general public as well. Additionally, as many other heresies are, the
heresy of chiliasm is made popular, and is reinforced, by the well funded and powerful
media business and political organization known as Televangelism, which makes sure not
to offend certain very powerful people and interests here in the United States as it seeks
to spread its political and religious propaganda both here and internationally.
Televangelism does these things as it shamelessly looks to undermine mainstream
churches throughout the world while faithful to, and slavishly serving, the construction of
the New World Order.

The heresy of chiliasm teaches that before the Final Judgment Christ will return to
earth, defeat the Antichrist, and then reign with His “elect” for literally one thousand
years in an earthly kingdom. And only after this earthly kingdom concludes its one
thousand years of existence, Christ will then do the Last Judgment. This sort of heresy
arises from an overly literal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, born of a rationalistic
religious tradition epitomized by Evangelicalism and its allies. This kind of religious
tradition—or better put, this kind of ecclesiastical anarchy in which confusion reigns
supreme—ignorantly and arrogantly places individual interpretation of theological matters
above the conciliar and divinely revealed understanding to be found in the ancient
undivided Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. Those embracing the traditions
of rationalistic religions such as Evangelicalism and televangelism are far removed from,
and are almost completely ignorant of, the ancient Holy Orthodox Tradition that has
brought forth and defended the Holy Scriptures throughout the ages.

Evangelicalism and televangelism, ignorantly and arrogantly, promote heresy, and
this contributes greatly to the confusion and deception that rules our fallen world. For confusion and deception are what the Antichrist and his allies will need to establish their earthly kingdom in an attempt to rule the world in complete opposition to God. These Evangelical and televangelical groups, or at least their leaders, seem intent to serve the most powerful people and forces of this world, independent of what is right, independent of truth. For to do so is much safer than what the Orthodox saints did: Confront those with great power who choose to commit great evil, and lose one’s life for Christ in doing so. Neither they, nor I, nor most other people are willing to follow the example of the Orthodox saints in their sacrifice for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. The Evangelicals’ and Televangelicals’ promotion of chiliasm—a future, earthly thousand year kingdom—is an embrace of things worldly over things heavenly. And their promotion and embrace of this heresy, which glorifies and looks forward to worldly power, is fully consistent with their support for the most powerful people of this world, who brutally misuse that same great power which has been given to them. For to confess the one Truth, Christ, in the face of people and forces who hate Him is dangerous to a person; to do so would be in sharp contrast to the subservience shown by many to powerful people and forces of this world. For, to courageously confess the one and only Truth that is Christ our God, something which is epitomized by the heroic life and death struggles of countless Orthodox saints and martyrs who by the grace of the Suprasubstantial Trinity have emerged victorious in Christ, is something that is in the sharpest contrast to the cowardly subservience which is hypocritically promoted as somehow being righteous by many Evangelical and Televangelical leaders. This sort of hypocritical subservience and cowardice—exhibited by many evangelists and televangelists—under the pretense of love and faithfulness to the commandments of Christ, is to be seen among many ecumenists,
including Orthodox ecumenists, and is to be seen among many others, myself included. In sharp contrast and for the world to clearly see, the Orthodox saints fought against the abuse of great worldly power. The Orthodox saints fought against the lie of “Might makes right”; they truly loved God and their neighbor with all their heart, mind and soul and by the strength that they sought to have, and which by the grace of God they eventually acquired, they were able to do the will of God, even when called to suffer all manner of hardship and death.

The Orthodox saints, through their unmatched courage, wisdom and love, teach all humanity that no earthly kingdom or power can bring salvation to this world, for Christ’s Kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36). And when Christ returns at His glorious Second Coming, His Judgment will be Final and there will be no time limit to His Kingdom, for as the ancient Symbol of Faith of the Holy Orthodox Church teaches us, “His Kingdom shall have no end”. With these things in mind, we see how the Orthodox saints and the Holy Orthodox Tradition which they defended contradict all falsehood and deception, we see how Orthodoxy contradicts every heresy, including the heresy of chiliasm. Regarding the “thousand year reign of Christ”, which is certainly mentioned in the Book of Revelation, let us look at some commentary grounded in the Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church which explains this biblical reference and which completely contradicts the heresy of chiliasm. To do this we will first look at some passages from the Book of Revelation and then we will look at some Orthodox commentary explaining these passages. We begin by looking at the first six verses of the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 20:1-6):

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, pp. 627-628).

Now let us look at some Orthodox commentary corresponding to these verses of Holy Scripture. In the same Orthodox Study Bible from which we quoted these verses, The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, (1993) we see the following insightful commentary for Revelation 20:1-6, fully consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition:

Regarding Revelation 20:1, we observe this commentary: “The **bottomless pit** (abyss) is the great nether region (Ps. 88:6) where the disobedient are confined awaiting final judgment. The demons fear it (see Luke 8:31; Jude 6). It is reached through a chasm,
the **key** to which is in the hand of the **angel**. The **great chain** binds Satan” (p. 627).

Regarding Revelation 20:2, we observe this commentary:

Though most did not, a few early Fathers and writers believed in a literal **thousand years** binding of Satan and reign of Christ and the saints on earth (vv. 2-7). The Church, however, authoritatively rejected this teaching (called *chiliasm*) at the Second Ecumenical Council. In apocalyptic literature, numbers have symbolic significance. “Thousand” is often used in the Scriptures to denote a long period of time, a great quantity, completion, perfection, thoroughness (Ps. 50:10; 2 Pet. 3:8). Here, a **thousand years** (vv. 2-7) is interpreted as the Church age, when Jesus reigns on earth in those who believe. It is that era between the First and Second Comings of Christ, also called the “last times”, when Satan’s effectiveness at deceit is restricted through the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, and the saints share in Christ’s earthly reign through the Church. For these persecuted Christians threatened by martyrdom, this is a consoling hope. (pp. 627-628)

Regarding Revelation 20:3, the following commentary provides some more insight pertaining to the **thousand year** reign of Christ on earth, as understood by the Orthodox Church--completely refuting the chilastic heresy:

The devil is thrown, **shut** and sealed into the pit for one **thousand years** (i.e., a long period of time) to allow the Church to be planted, to grow and to overcome, even in time of persecution and trial. The word “millennium” is synonymous with **thousand years**, and carries with it no connotations of peace and prosperity. The Bible teaches that Satan was bound at the completion of Christ’s saving work (Matt. 12:28, 29; Luke 10:17, 18; John 12:31, 32; Col. 2:15). He is not totally
inactive (Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 6:11), but he cannot deceive the nations by keeping the gospel from them. At the close of the millennium or Church age, Satan will be released for a while (vv. 7, 8). (p. 628)

Regarding Revelation 20:4-6, we observe this commentary:

Those who have died for their witness to Jesus are in heaven living and reigning with Him (Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12) as royal priests (1:6; 5:9, 10; Is. 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10) while the Church serves Him here on earth. The first resurrection (v. 6) is the heavenly life of souls who have died in Christ before His Second Coming. Those not in Christ who die are in Hades awaiting the resurrection of the body at His coming. For the righteous saints with Christ, the second death has no power (v. 6). These righteous spirits (Heb. 12:23) await only the reuniting of soul and body after the final judgment, when all things are made new (21:1). Hell or Hades (Sheol), where sinners’ souls are separated from their bodies, will give up its dead to Gehenna (vv. 13, 14), the lake of fire which burns with sulphur (21:8), eternal damnation (Matt. 25:41), and these will be excluded from the age of the blessedness to come. Hell cannot harm the victorious in Christ (2:11). (p. 628)

Just as in the aforementioned explanation of Holy Scripture, we continue to see commentary which remains consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition. The Orthodox hierarch and theologian, Archbishop Averky Taushev draws from St. Andrew of Caesarea, and from other ancient Orthodox Fathers, to explain the Orthodox teaching regarding the “thousand years”, in doing so he completely contradicts the deception of the chiliastic heresy. Archbishop Averky Taushev (1995) tells us the following:

This angel “laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent…and bound him a thousand years….” St. Andrew of Caesarea interprets this passage in this way: by this
“thousand years” one must understand the whole time “from the incarnation of Christ to the coming of Antichrist” (St. Andrew, ch. 60). With the coming of the Incarnate Son of God on earth--and in particular from the moment of His redemption of mankind through His death on the Cross--Satan was bound, paganism was cast down, and there came upon earth the thousand-year reign of Christ. The thousand-year Kingdom of Christ on earth is to be understood as the victory of Christianity over paganism and the establishment on earth of the Church of Christ. The definite number one thousand is used here in place of an indefinite number, signifying the long period of time until the Second Coming of Christ. (pp. 253-254)

And Archbishop Averky Taushev (1995) continues to teach us from the Orthodox Tradition as he writes:

These first six verses of the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse have served as a pretext for the development of a false teaching concerning the “thousand-year reign of Christ on earth” which has received the name of Chiliasm. In essence it teaches that not long before the end of the world, Christ the Saviour will come again to earth, defeat Antichrist, resurrect the righteous, and make a new kingdom on earth. As a reward for their struggles and sufferings, the righteous will reign together with Christ for the course of a thousand years, and will enjoy all the good things of temporal life. Only then will there follow the second, universal resurrection of the dead, the universal judgment, and the general giving of eternal rewards. This teaching is known in two forms. Some say that Christ will restore Jerusalem in all its beauty and reinitiate the fulfillment of Moses’ ritual law with all its sacrifices; and that the blessedness of the righteous will consist in all manner
of sensual enjoyments. In the first century this teaching was held by the heretic Cerinthus and other judaizing heretics: the Ebionites, the Montanists, and in the fourth century by the Apollinarians. Others, on the contrary, have affirmed that this blessedness will consist in purely spiritual delights. In this latter form, chiliastic ideas were expressed first by Papias of Hieropolis; later they are to be found in the holy Martyr Justin, in St. Irenaeus, in Hippolytus, Methodius and Lactantius. In recent times it has been revived with certain peculiarities by the Anabaptists, the followers of Swedenborg, the Illuminati and Adventists.

(Taushev, 1995, pp. 256-258)

Consistent with what was just mentioned, one must note that Archbishop Averky was writing this discussion sometime before the meteoric emergence of Evangelicalism, which, in its countless varieties, also propagates the heresy of Chiliasm throughout the world. Faithful to Orthodox Tradition, Archbishop Averky shows that, in both of its aforementioned forms, Chiliasm remains a heresy, as he writes:

One must be aware, however, that neither in its first nor in its second form can the teaching of Chiliasm be accepted by an Orthodox Christian for the following reasons:

1. According to the chiliast teaching, the resurrection of the dead will take place twice: the first, a thousand years before the end of the world--when only the righteous will be resurrected; and the second, at the very end of the world, when sinners also will be resurrected. However, Christ the Saviour clearly taught only one universal resurrection of the dead, when both the righteous and the sinners will be resurrected and all will receive their final recompense (John 6:39-40; Matt. 13:37-43).
2. The Word of God [Holy Scripture]\textsuperscript{\footnote{I have inserted this bracketed entry to clarify what, in this context, the usage of the terminology, “The Word of God”, means.}} speaks of only two comings of Christ in the world: the first in lowliness, when He came to redeem us; and the second in glory, when He will appear to judge the living and the dead. Chiliasm introduces one more--a third coming of Christ a thousand years before the end of the world. The Word of God [Holy Scripture]\textsuperscript{\footnote{I have inserted this bracketed entry.}}\textsuperscript{\footnote{I have inserted this bracketed entry.}}\textsuperscript{\footnote{I have inserted this bracketed entry.}}\textsuperscript{\footnote{I have inserted this bracketed entry.}} knows no such thing. (Taushev, 1995, pp. 256-258)

One must note that in this quotation and in this particular context, “The Word of God” means Holy Scripture, and does not mean the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Word. In other contexts, however, the terminology, “The Word of God”, can indeed mean God the Word, the Son of God. Mindful of this, we continue to look at Archbishop Averky’s discussion, as he refers to the Holy Scriptures and to other aspects of Holy Tradition, clearly showing that Chiliasm is a heresy:

3. The Word of God [Holy Scripture]\textsuperscript{\footnote{I have inserted this bracketed entry.}} teaches only of two kingdoms of Christ: the Kingdom of Grace which will continue until the end of the world (I Cor. 15:23-26), and the Kingdom of Glory which will begin after the Last Judgment and will have no end (Luke 1:33; II Peter 1:11). Chiliasm, however, allows yet a third, as it were, a middle kingdom of Christ, which will last only a thousand years.

4. The teaching of a sensual kingdom of Christ clearly contradicts the Word of God [Holy Scripture]\textsuperscript{\footnote{I have inserted this bracketed entry.}}, according to which the Kingdom of God is not “food and drink” (Rom. 14:17); in the resurrection of the dead they do not marry nor are given in marriage (Matt. 22:30); the rites of the law of Moses had only a
prefiguring significance and were forever done away with by the more perfect New Testament laws (Acts 15:23-30; Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:6; Heb. 10:1).

Certain ancient teachers of the Church--Justin, Irenaeus and Methodius--held Chiliasm only as a personal opinion. At the same time there were those who decidedly rose up against it such as Caius the Presbyter of Rome, St. Dionysius of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Epiphanius, Blessed Jerome, and Blessed Augustine. To hold Chiliasm even as a private opinion was no longer permissible after the Church, at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, condemned the teaching of the heretic Apollinarius concerning the thousand-year reign of Christ. At the same time this was confirmed by the introduction into the Symbol of Faith of the words “of His Kingdom there will be no end.” (Taushev, 1995, pp. 256-258)

The heresy of chiliasm, as the false teaching and deception that it is, was condemned in ancient times by the undivided Church, and it remains condemned, by that same ancient, unchanging, undivided Church, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. With this in mind, the Holy Orthodox Church confesses with all sobriety and expectation the truth that Christ will indeed come again and “of His Kingdom there will be no end” (pp. 257-258). We see this, as was mentioned earlier, in the Symbol of Faith which was finalized at the Second Ecumenical Council of the ancient, undivided Church, the Orthodox Church:

Και εἰρημέναι μετὰ τοῦ δικαίου κρισάς τῶν ζῶντων καὶ νεκρῶν, οὔτε ἡ Βασιλέα ταῦτά οὐκ ἔσται τέλος. (The Symbol of Faith, from the original Greek)

which when translated into English means: “And coming again with glory to judge the living and the dead, His kingdom shall have no end”. (The Symbol of Faith, in English
When Christ will come again, no one knows. But indeed Christ will come again, as He promised that He would. And at His Second Coming, Christ’s Judgment will be Final and His Kingdom will be eternal. With this in mind, we will mention here just two examples of Patristic wisdom--from the myriads of possible examples which are to be found in the Holy Scriptures, Patristic writings, and Liturgical Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church--which give one some sense regarding the Orthodox expectation of the Second Coming of Christ. Looking at some of the writings of the Orthodox Father, St. Maximos the Confessor (580-662 A.D.), we observe the following Orthodox confession regarding the Second Coming of Christ and the Final Judgment: “By a single infinitely powerful act of will God in His goodness will gather all together, angels and men, the good and the evil. But, although God pervades all things absolutely, not all will participate in Him equally: they will participate in Him according to what they are” (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990g, p. 249).

And the modern day Orthodox saint, St. Justin Popovich of Chelije, is faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition when he tells us the following about the Second Coming of Christ:

If the Lord Christ is of the same essence with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, then the judgment of mankind is an act of the whole Holy Trinity. … There is no being or created thing which the stream of time will not bring to that last day. Time will end its existence on that day and this is why it is, in the Revelation, called the Last Day, … in which He will judge the world (Acts 17:31), … the Day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God (Rom. 2:5), … the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (II Pet. 3:7; 2:9). …On this all-
important day, the Theanthropos, the Lord Christ, will pronounce His last
Judgment, the final judgment on the entire history of the world and men; all men
together and each man in particular. And as, after He completed the creation, He
surveyed every created being and thing and pronounced His judgment that it was
very good (Gen. 1:31), so on the last day shall the Triune Lord survey all beings
and creation at the end of their journey through history, and pronounce His
judgment on everything and everyone. He shall then finally separate good from
evil, and set an impassible barrier between them. (Popovic, 2000, pp. 87-88)
APPENDIX C:

THE HOLY EVER-VIRGIN MARY

The Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God (the Theotokos), is a woman like any other woman, is a human being like any other human being, for she was created by God, the Holy Trinity. And, through these words spoken in all humility, indeed a wonderful example to the rest of humanity, the Holy Ever-Virgin Mary truthfully acknowledges her complete dependence upon her Creator: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46-47). The Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, by the unfathomable grace of God, gave birth to God in the flesh. From the Holy Orthodox Liturgical Tradition, we observe a poetic and truthful confession of this great mystery, which God willed to accomplish, as He freely condescended in His love for mankind to become that which he was not before, Man:

Why art thou filled with wonder, O Mary? Why art thou amazed at that which is come to pass in thee? ‘Because I have given birth in time to the timeless Son, yet understand not how I have conceived Him. I have not known man: how then shall I bear a child? Who has ever seen a birth without seed?’ But as it is written, ‘Where God so wills, the order of nature is overcome.’ Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem of Judah. (The Festal Menaion, 1977, p. 267)

The Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God, gave birth, in the flesh, to her Creator, God and Saviour. The Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, a human being created by God, as each of us is created by God, by the infinite grace and mercy of God,

59 I am using the translation of this particular passage of Holy Scripture (Luke 1:46-47), which I found on an unnumbered introductory page, just before page 1, in the book, The Life of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, which is to be found in the references for these appendices.
gave birth, in the flesh, to the Creator, God and Saviour of all. God, in His dispensation, chose to accomplish the Incarnation for mankind’s salvation, providing the opportunity for theosis to all. For as we see confessed throughout Holy Orthodox Tradition: “The Creator, when He saw man perishing, whom He had made with His own hands, bowed the heavens and came down” (*The Festal Menaion*, 1977, p. 269). The Holy Orthodox Church offers all glory to God for condescending to become Incarnate through the Virgin. In conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition and consistent with what Orthodox saints and theologians tell us, the Virgin, a member of the human race and created by God, as we all are, is the human person who offers herself, and is offered by the rest of the human race, for the Incarnation of God to take place. We see this confessed in the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition:

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ, who for our sakes hast appeared on earth as man? Every creature made by Thee offers Thee thanks. The angels offer Thee a hymn; the heavens a star; the Magi, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, its cave; the wilderness, the manger: and we offer Thee a Virgin Mother. O pre-eternal God, have mercy upon us. (*The Festal Menaion*, 1977, p. 254) [I first saw this teaching, from the Holy Tradition, confessed by Dr. Demetrios Constantelos, an Orthodox Priest, in one of his books, where he also, and of course before me, used this same hymn from the Vespers for the Nativity of Christ, to help explain Orthodox Tradition.]

*God in His Dispensation Prepared the Human Race for His Incarnation*

“The name of the Mother of God (QeotokoV) contains the whole history of the divine economy in the world” (St. John of Damascus). Indeed, the whole history of ancient Israel, and of all humanity in general, is a preparation for the Incarnation of God
through a particular member of the human race, created by God: the Virgin Mary. The Virgin, a member of the human race and created by God, as each of us is, speaks for the entire human race when she gives her consent, in obedience to the will of God, for God to become Incarnate through her, for her own salvation and for the salvation of the rest of humanity. Some of the brilliant commentary of Vladimir Lossky, which is faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, is very insightful to us in these matters and helps us to understand certain aspects of the Incarnation. We observe the following:

In the person of the Virgin, humanity has given its consent to the Word becoming flesh and coming to dwell amongst men, for, according to the patristic phrase “if the Divine will alone was the creator of man, it could not save him without the concord of the human will.” (Lossky, 1976, p. 141)

Elsewhere, in conformity with what we are discussing, we see more of Lossky’s faithful confession of Orthodox Tradition, when he writes:

According to St. John of Damascus, “The name of the Mother of God (Δεήμου) contains the whole history of the divine economy in the world.”

“One could ask”--said St. Dimitri of Rostov (seventeenth century)--“why the Word of God delayed His descent to the earth and His incarnation to save fallen humanity. But before the middle of the 6th Millennium since the fall of Adam, it was not possible to find a virgin pure in body as well as in spirit. There was only one such, unique by her spiritual and bodily purity who was worthy to become the Church and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.”

The whole development of the Old Testament with its successive elections--the election of Noah, the election of the stock of Abraham, the election of the people of Israel, the election of the tribe of Judah, the election of the House
of David, the law which preserved the purity of the people of God, the blessing on the chosen descendants, the whole of this sacred history appears as a providential and Messianic process, as a preparation of the Body of Christ, of the Church--the very focal point of union with God, and above all as a preparation of Her who was to lend her human nature so that the mystery of the incarnation could be realized. (1976, p. 140)

Just like Vladimir Lossky’s work, George S. Gabriel’s commentary and research, pertaining to these matters, is excellent and consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition. Here Dr. Gabriel quotes St. John of Damascus, regarding the Virgin Mary and her having been created by God, in order for God to accomplish His eternal will for the Incarnation, with humanity’s consent:

“She lived a life that was above nature, not her ‘own’ life, because she was not born ‘for herself.’ Indeed, she lived for God. She came into life for Him, to serve in the salvation of the world so that ‘the ancient will of God’ for the Incarnation of the Word and our own theosis may be fulfilled through her. Her hunger was rather for nourishment by divine words, and by their nectar she increased. And in the temple of God, she became like a fruitful olive tree, a tree planted by the banks of the streams of the Spirit, a tree of life which, at the time appointed by God, brought forth its fruit: God in the flesh, the Life Eternal for all His creatures” [St. John of Damascus]. (Gabriel, 2000, pp. 23-25)

For, as Orthodox theologians tell us, God did not will to accomplish the Incarnation without humanity’s consent. The Virgin speaks for all of humanity, with her entire created being, as she voluntarily cooperates with the will of God, for her own salvation

60 This bracketed entry was made by me, and is consistent with Dr. Gabriel's footnotes.
and sanctification, and for that of rest of the human race.

God, in His unfathomable wisdom, under no necessity of nature to accomplish the Incarnation, prepared humanity for the Incarnation to take place from a Virgin. By sustaining the human race, and through “successive elections” (Lossky, 1976, p. 140) of certain members of the human race, who heroically cooperated with the will of God, God created the human being from whom He would voluntarily become Incarnate, the Ever-Virgin Mary (Palamas, 1995c, p. 371).

According to Orthodox Tradition, God created the Jewish people (and miraculously sustained them) to be the people from whom He would one day create the human being, the Virgin Mary, through whom He would voluntarily become Incarnate, for the salvation of the entire human race. In that sense--never understood apart from the economic dispensation of God, Who voluntarily became Man--by the grace of God, this created person, the Virgin Mary, is the fulfillment of all the promises and prophesies of the Old Covenant. No human hands could ever build the “living temple of God” (Gabriel, 2000, pp. 23-25) that she is. For, by the unfathomable grace of God, she contained the Uncontainable God in her womb when He voluntarily became Incarnate through her.

George S. Gabriel’s research and commentary, related to these matters, is outstanding, as he explains that all the history of ancient Israel was to find its meaning, and its purpose fulfilled, in the Ever-Virgin Mary--the person created by God, through whom God voluntarily became Incarnate for the entire human race:

Through her, the Mosaic Law arrived at the threshold of its fulfillment, and God’s promise to the world and covenant with Abraham was fulfilled: “God promised Abraham the forefather that in his seed shall the nations be blessed, O Pure One. And through you the promise comes to pass this day.” [Sixth Ode, Matins of the
Annunciation. The coming of Mary had been prefigured by the overwhelming presence of glory in the ark or vessel of the covenant, both in the time of Moses and in the temple. For over a millennium, the tabernacle, the temple, the veil, the ark of the covenant, the golden censer, the sacred table and the shewbread, the golden urn of manna, the lamps and all the vessels were all prefigurings of her. When Mary, the living temple of God, enters into the holy of holies, the old temple’s passing is foreshown: “Receiving the Untrodden Portal today, the house of God terminates the worship and shadow under the Law, and it cries aloud, Verily, the truth has appeared to those on earth.” [Fourth Ode, Matins of the Feast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple (Nov. 21).] The temple receives the East Portal prophesied by Ezekiel and it is at last completed, not in its architecture but in its divine purpose. Mary, the Ever-Virgin is the East Portal which “shall be shut...and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord God of Israel shall enter by it...and he shall depart from the same way.” [Ez. 44:1-3]. “With her entry, she introduces the grace of the Holy Spirit into the house of God,” [Kontakion of the Entry] and thereby “the temple receives her as its diadem.” [Sixth Ode, Matins of the Entry] Being divinely prepared in the temple to become the “chamber” of the Incarnate Lord of Glory, she fulfills the temple’s purpose and destiny and all that it had prefigured. She is the living promise and connection of the temple’s participation in the mystery of the Incarnation: “The fulfillment of the prophecy that the fallen temple of David would be raised up again is prefigured by her, through whom the dust of the earth that all men are made of is refashioned in a body for God.” [Ninth Ode, Canon 2, Matins of the Birth of the Theotokos (Sept. 8)] Therefore, she is the living proof of its
fulfillment and, in turn, she prefigures the temple’s passing and its rebirth in the Body of Christ. God has declared “a new covenant; He hath made the first obsolete. That which is obsolete and aged is ready to vanish.” [Heb. 8:13] The Old Testament Church, “the church that was formerly barren,” [Eirmos, Third Ode, Matins of the Universal Elevation of the Cross (Sept. 14)] now passes away. (Gabriel, 2000, pp. 23-25)\textsuperscript{61}

We also see one of the great defenders of Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas, speak of the Virgin Mary and her unique role in the divine economy:

That we should not be entirely ignorant of the superabundance of His compassion for us and the abyss of His wisdom, God deferred man’s death, allowing him to live for a considerably longer time. From the first God shows that His discipline is merciful or, rather, that He delays a just chastisement so that we do not utterly despair. He also granted time for repentance and for a new life pleasing to Him, while through the succession of generations He eased the sorrow produced by death. He increased the human race with descendants so that initially the number of those being born would greatly exceed the number of those who died. In the place of one man, Adam, who became pitiable and impoverished through the sensible beauty of a tree, God brought forth many men who by means of things perceptible to the senses became blessedly enriched with divine wisdom, with virtue, with knowledge and divine favour: for example, Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Melchisedec, Abraham, and those who were their contemporaries or who lived before them and after them, and who proved to be their equals, or nearly so. But there was no one among these great men who passed his life utterly free of sin, so

\textsuperscript{61} The bracketed entries in this entire block quotation were made by me, and are consistent with Dr. Gabriel’s footnotes.
that he might retrieve the defeat which our forefathers had suffered, heal the
wound at the root of our race and be sufficient warranty for the sanctification,
blessing and return to life of all who followed. God foreknew this; and during the
course of time He chose out people from among the races and tribes who would
produce that celebrated staff from which would blossom the Flower [Christ] that
was to accomplish the saving economy of our whole race (cf. Num. 17:8; Isa.
11:1). (Palamas, 1995c, p. 371)

The great mercy of God to the people of Israel and to the entire human race. We
come back to what we saw earlier from St. John of Damascus: “The name of the Mother
of God ( mamma ) contains the whole history of the divine economy in the world”
(Lossky, 1976, p. 140). This “divine economy”, about which we speak, namely, all that
God does for creation, and for that matter, all creation itself, is accomplished by the
unfathomable grace and power of the Triune God, without there being any necessity of
nature for God to accomplish what He indeed freely accomplishes. By His unfathomable
grace, God gave each us our very existence, not necessitated by anything in the Divine
Nature. Simply by a free act of will, under no compulsion or necessity, the Triune God
created all things from absolute nothingness. According to His eternal divine will for the
Incarnation to take place through the Virgin, whom He was to create for this purpose,
God by His infinite power, grace and wisdom created all things with the purpose of His
one day condescending to becoming Man. Without any compulsion or necessity of nature
for Him to have done so and while remaining fully God, God personally entered the
human race and dwelt among His creation through the woman whom He created for this
purpose, giving meaning to all the struggles and experiences lived by humanity throughout

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62 In other words, what the Triune God accomplishes, is indeed freely accomplished, for it is done without
any necessity to the Divine Nature of the absolutely transcendent Triune God.
history, fulfilling the promise and all the prophesies of the Old Testament. The Triune God created the people of Israel and chose them to be the people who would bring forth the Virgin, whom God would create and who would be His Mother according to the flesh, when God had condescended to become Incarnate from her. God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, created the people of Israel and chose them, from among all the other peoples, to be the people through whom God would voluntarily become Incarnate and enter His creation, humanity. The Triune God created the Jewish people, for the Triune God has created the entire human race of which the Jewish people are a part, and God miraculously sustained the Jewish people showing them, and the rest of humanity, His incomparable mercy, love, compassion and power. For, without Almighty God Who is the Creator and Upholder of everything and everyone, the Jewish people, and all the rest of us, would not even exist. For, without Almighty God, we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing.

Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Virgin Mary. Keeping in mind the great power and mercy of God, we see God’s unfathomable grace working throughout history, clearly seen in the Holy Scriptures and throughout Holy Tradition. The righteous parents of the Virgin Mary, Joachim and Anna, miraculously, when it was beyond hope, were rewarded by God for their perseverance, faith, hope and love with a child born to them in their old age, after so many years of barrenness. For as we see confessed in the Holy Orthodox Tradition: “Today the bonds of barrenness are loosed; for God hearkened to Joachim and Anna. And though it was beyond hope, He clearly promised them that they would bear a divine child, from whom would be born the uncircumscribable Himself, Who became mortal” [Dismissal Hymn of Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, Tone

63 In the Holy Scriptures, the Apostle Paul speaks of the great significance of “faith, hope and love”.
Four] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, p. 9). To translate from the original Greek is very difficult; by the words “divine child” in this hymn, we understand these words to be referring to the Blessed Ever-Virgin Mary, who is exceedingly blessed by God to be full of grace. But these words, “divine child”, in no way equate the creature, the Blessed Ever-Virgin Mary, with her Creator, God. For God, without any necessity of nature, by an act of free will, created Mary and asked her to consent to be the Birth-Giver of God, when God chose to become Man. With this in mind, we continue to look at more of the Holy Orthodox Tradition, where we see confessed the unfathomable grace and power of God, which God freely manifests towards creation--something which is clearly seen in God’s immeasurable grace and great mercy towards Joachim and Anna, and towards the Virgin Mary, and towards the rest of humanity. For God freely created the human race and then, by His unfathomable grace, He chose to become Incarnate through His own creation, humanity. God voluntarily created humanity and then chose various people from the human race, and prepared them, to participate in bringing forth the Virgin, a member of the human race whom God would create to be His Mother, according to the flesh (that is, according to His voluntarily assumed humanity). Mindful of these things, we observe some more passages from the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition, confessing these same realities that we are discussing:

O Lord, Thou hast opened the womb of Sarah, giving her Isaac as fruit in her old age (Gen. 21:1-3). Today, O Saviour, Thou hast likewise given to godly Anna a fruit born from her womb, even Thine own Mother without spot. [Matins Canon, Ode Four, Tone Plagal Four] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, p. 16)

Although by the will of God other women who were barren have brought forth famous offspring, yet among all such children Mary has shone most brightly with
divine glory. [Vespers Sticheron, Ideomelon, Tone Plagal Second] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, p. 16)

The barren woman gives suck to her child Mary, and Joachim rejoices at this birth, saying, “A rod is born unto me, and from it the flower that is Christ shall blossom from the root of David (Is. 11:1). Marvelous in truth is this wonder!” [Matins Sessional Hymn, Tone Plagal Fourth] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, p. 18)

These realities, about which we speak, are so, only by the unfathomable grace of God. God freely accomplishes all that he accomplishes in the divine economy, freely condescending for mankind’s salvation. With that in mind, we observe the following:

Today God Who rests upon the spiritual thrones has made ready for Himself a holy throne upon earth. He Who made firm the heavens in His wisdom has prepared a living heaven in His love for man. For from a barren root He has made a life-giving branch spring up for us, even His Mother, God of wonders and hope of the hopeless, glory be to Thee, O Lord. [Great Vespers, 8 Sept., Tone Plagal Second by Sergios] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, pp. 9-10)

For indeed, the absolutely transcendent God does not need anything, but instead condescends, out of love for mankind, to accomplish all things. This is confessed throughout Orthodox Tradition, for example, during worship services in the Orthodox Church for the Nativity of Christ, we observe:

Thou hast come to dwell in a cave, O Christ our God, and the manger received Thee; shepherds and Magi worshipped Thee. Then was the preaching of the prophets fulfilled, and the angelic powers marvelled, crying aloud and saying: ‘Glory to Thy condescension, O Thou who alone lovest mankind.’ (The Festal Menaion, 1977, p. 266)
Indeed, the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God condescended to become what He was not before, Man, through the Virgin whom He created to be His Birth-Giver according to His voluntarily assumed humanity. We again see this confessed in the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition, for example in the Vesper services for “The Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (\textit{The Festal Menaion}, 1977, p. 252), the following can be observed:

Come, let us greatly rejoice in the Lord as we tell of this present mystery. The middle wall of partition has been destroyed; the flaming sword turns back, the cherubim withdraw from the tree of life, and I partake of the delight of Paradise from which I was cast out through disobedience. For the express Image of the Father, the Imprint of His eternity, takes the form of a servant, and without undergoing change He comes forth from a Mother who knew not wedlock. For what He was, He has remained, true God: and what He was not, He has taken upon Himself, becoming man through love for mankind. Unto Him let us cry aloud: God born of a Virgin, have mercy upon us. (p. 253)

God, Who is absolutely transcendent, does not need anything. The Incarnation itself is not necessary to God, in any way; nonetheless, truly and voluntarily, God became Incarnate to save humanity and offer it the path to sanctification.

The Virgin Mary is the child of Joachim and Anna. She (the Virgin Mary) is the child-- whom God created through the natural process associated with physical union between man and woman--who was chosen by God to be the Birth-Giver of God in the flesh. This child (the Virgin Mary) was chosen by God to be the woman who would give birth to God in His voluntarily assumed humanity. For as we see in the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition: “Today the Virgin gives birth to Him Who is the Creator of all”
[December 25th, to be found in the chapter “The Birth according to the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ”, translated from the Greek] (ΜΕΝΑΙΟΝ ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ, 1993, p. 503). And elsewhere we see: “The Virgin today gives birth to Him Who is above Essence and the earth offers a cave to Him Who is Unapproachable. Angels with shepherds offer up glory. Magi are guided by a star. Because, He, Who is The Pre-eternal God, for us becomes a new-born Child” [Kontakion for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, December 25th, translated from the Greek] (ΨΩΛΟΣΙΩΓΩΝ ΤΟ ΜΕΓΑ, 1998, p. 281). The Holy Orthodox Tradition confesses the truth that the absolutely transcendent God and Creator of all chose to personally enter human existence by becoming Man, through the woman whom He created for this purpose. By the unfathomable grace of God, the Virgin Mary is that woman whom God created to be His Mother according to the flesh. The Virgin Mary is that woman, who was created by God and who was chosen by God, to be His Mother according to His voluntarily assumed humanity. By the infinite grace of God, the Virgin Mary is the woman, who was to be the fulfillment of the prophesy: “a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son” [Isaiah 7:14] (Brenton, 1851, p. 842). As we saw earlier, the Ever-Virgin Mary is that “rod”, prophesised by Isaiah [Isaiah 11:1], from which “the flower that is Christ” blossomed. For indeed the Son of God entered humanity “from the root of David”, through the Virgin, as He promised that He would [Matins Sessional Hymn, Tone Plagal Fourth] (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, p. 18). The Virgin indeed is “that celebrated staff from which would blossom the Flower [Christ] that was to accomplish the saving economy of our whole race” (cf. Num. 17:8; Isa. 11:1) (Palamas, 1995c, p. 371).
Lossky is fully consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition when he tells us:

According to St. John the Damascene [St. John of Damascus], who sums up the Christological doctrines of the Fathers, the Incarnation was accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit who caused the Virgin to be fit to receive in her the Deity of the Word, as well as through the Word Himself who formed in the Virginal flesh the first-fruits of His humanity [St. John of Damascus, *The Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, III, 2]. Thus, in the one and the same act the Word assumed human nature, gave it its existence, and deified it. The humanity, assumed and appropriated by the Person of the Son, received its being in the Divine hypostasis: it did not exist before as a distinct nature, and has not entered into union with God, but from the beginning it has appeared as the human nature of the Word. (Lossky, 1976, pp. 141-142)

Once again, we must make reference to the fact that the Incarnation was voluntary and in no way defines or determines God. Without any necessity to His Divine Person, the Incarnation was voluntarily and truly accomplished by God the Word, when “in the one and the same act the Word assumed human nature, gave it its existence, and deified it” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 141-142). To help us further understand this, we again draw from the Liturgical Tradition of the Orthodox Church:

He Who cannot be contained by all that is, how is it possible that He was contained in a womb? He Who is in the bosom of the Father, how is it possible that He was held in the arms of His Mother? All of this, He accomplished, as He Himself knew, as He Himself willed, and as He Himself was well pleased to do so. For He Who is bodiless, voluntarily became Incarnate. And, He Who is, became
that which He was not before, for us. And without putting aside His divine nature, He took part in what is our own substance. His will being to fill the heavenly world, Christ is born in two natures. [December 25th, to be found in the chapter “The Birth according to the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ”, translated from the Greek] (MENAION DEKEMBRIOU, 1993, p. 505)

The Son of God, God the Word, united human nature to His Divine Person (Hypostasis), where in His Divine Person (Hypostasis) human nature truly became the human nature of God the Word. For this human nature received its being in the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word (Lossky, 1976, pp. 141-142), when the Son of God condescended to become Incarnate. This human nature was united to the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word, while leaving the Divine Nature, which is also hypostatically united to God the Word, unaffected. God the Word became fully Man while remaining fully God; God the Word united human nature to His Divine Hypostasis, He did this without setting aside His Divine Nature which as the Son of God, God Himself, He eternally and entirely possesses in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And the Son of God voluntarily accomplished all of this, suffering no change to His Divine Nature. For the union of human nature with the Divine Person of the Son of God was accomplished by the Son of God Himself through a free act of will, it was not in any way an act necessitated by the Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, but rather it was a mode of economic condescension belonging to the eternal will of the Suprasubstantial Trinity which was accomplished by the Son of God in His Divine Hypostasis (Lossky, 1976, p. 138). “The humanity, assumed and appropriated by the Person of the Son, received its being in the Divine hypostasis” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 141-142), this assumed
human nature is truly the humanity voluntarily assumed by God the Word, without any necessity to His absolutely transcendent Divine Nature, which He shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The union of the two natures, the Divine Nature and the human nature, in the One Divine Person of the Son of God is accomplished voluntarily by the Son of God Himself, in His Divine Hypostasis. This is not accomplished in the Divine Nature nor is it in any way necessitated by the Divine Nature. The union of the two natures in the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word leaves the two natures completely unchanged, unmixed, and not affecting one another. For the union of the two natures is hypostatic, not essential, this means that the natures in themselves are not united, nor is either one of them to be found in the other, in any way whatsoever. So, the Divine Nature, which God the Word shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit, remains the Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity, unchanged and absolutely transcendent. The Incarnation, which was voluntarily and truly accomplished by God the Word in His Divine Hypostasis, was not accomplished in the Divine Essence or Nature of God the Word, a Nature which the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit. For the Divine Essence or Nature, which is common to all Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, is the very Essence, the very Nature, shared by the Three Divine Persons or Hypostases of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, and this very Nature of the Triune God is absolutely transcendent. Nothing created, including human nature, can ever participate in, nor is it in any way a part of, the absolutely transcendent Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity. With the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, the human nature which God the Word voluntarily assumed was not introduced into the very Being or Divine Nature of the Triune God, nor was this human nature eternally in the Divine Nature; this human nature was never in the Divine
Nature, nor can it ever be (Gabriel, 2000, p. 100). Therefore, based on what we have discussed here and elsewhere, consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition, the Incarnation in no way introduces pantheism into the Triune God, Who is absolutely transcendent. In Orthodox Christianity, the Veneration of the Mother of God is Balanced, Never Heretical

God--by a free act of will, without any necessity to Himself--created Mary and willed that she should offer her human nature for God to become Man. Mary used the free will with which God had created her, and submitted to the will of her Creator, and offered back to God all that God had given to her. What God had chosen Mary to do was not asked of any other woman ever before or since, and Mary freely accepted what God asked her to do. Offering herself completely to God, “Mary received the angelic good tidings humbly and submissively. ‘Then the Word, in a way known to Himself, descended and, as He Himself willed, came and entered into Mary and abode in Her’” [St. Ephraim the Syrian, “Praise of the Mother of God”] (Maximovich, 1987, p. 51).

St. John Maximovich (1987) draws from St. Irenaeus of Lyons when he says:

The rod of Aaron that budded, the rock torn away from the mountain without hands, seen by Nebuchadnezzar in a dream and interpreted by the Prophet Daniel, the closed gate seen by the Prophet Ezekiel, and much else in the Old Testament, prefigured the birth-giving of the Virgin. Just as Adam had been created by the Word of God from the unworked and virgin earth, so also the Word of God created flesh for Himself from a virgin womb when the Son of God became the new Adam so as to correct the fall into sin of the first Adam [St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Book III]. (pp. 22-23)

With Christ, the Son of God, all things are possible:
As lightning illuminates what is hidden, so also Christ purifies what is hidden in the nature of things. He purified the Virgin also and then was born, so as to show that where Christ is, there is manifest purity in all its power. He purified the Virgin, having prepared Her by the Holy Spirit, and then the womb, having become pure, conceived Him. He purified the Virgin while She was inviolate; wherefore having been born, He left Her virgin. I do not say that Mary became immortal, but that being illuminated by grace, She was not disturbed by sinful desires [St. Ephraim the Syrian, Homily Against Heretics, 41]. (Maximovich, 1987, pp. 51-52)

We again note that everything that the Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, has, she has by the unfathomable grace of God with God not being determined by anything that He has accomplished in His infinite goodness and love for mankind. And, in the most absolute and strictest sense, only God is perfect and sinless, and it is with this in mind that we see that St. John Maximovich is fully within the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church when he teaches us that the complete sinlessness of the Mother of God is not taught in Orthodox Christianity, neither in the Holy Scriptures, nor in Holy Tradition when he says:

The teaching of the complete sinlessness of the Mother of God (1) does not correspond to Sacred Scripture, where there is repeatedly mentioned the sinlessness of the “One Mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ” (I Tim. 2:5); “and in Him is no sin” (I John 3:5); “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” (I Peter 2:22); “One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15); “Him Who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf” (II Cor. 5:21). But concerning the rest of men it is said, “Who is
pure of defilement? No one who has lived a single day of his life on earth” (Job 14:4). “God commendeth his own love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us… If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:8-10).

(2) This teaching contradicts also Sacred Tradition, which is contained in numerous Patristic writings, where there is mentioned the exalted sanctity of the Virgin Mary from Her very birth, as well as Her cleansing by the Holy Spirit at Her conception of Christ, but not at Her own conception by Anna. “There is none without stain before Thee, even though his life be but a day, save Thou alone, Jesus Christ our God, Who didst appear on earth without sin, and through Whom we all trust to obtain mercy and the remission of sins.” (St. Basil the Great, Third Prayer of Vespers of Pentecost.) (Maximovich, 1987, p. 44)

Also in full conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. John Maximovich (1987) quotes St. Epiphanius of Cyprus to tell us:

“There is an equal harm in both these heresies, both when men demean the Virgin and when, on the contrary, they glorify Her beyond what is proper” (Panarion, “Against the Collyridians”). This Holy Father accuses those who give Her an almost divine worship: “Let Mary be in honor, but let worship be given to the Lord” (Panarion, “Against the Collyridians”). “Although Mary is a chosen vessel, still She was a woman by nature, not to be distinguished at all from others. Although the history of Mary and Tradition relate that it was said to Her father Joachim in the desert, ‘Thy wife hath conceived’, still this was done not without marital union and not without [sic. without] the seed of man” (Panarion, “Against
the Collyridians”). “One should not revere the saints above what is proper, but should revere their Master. Mary is not God, and did not receive a body from heaven, but from the joining of man and woman; and according to the promise, like Isaac, She was prepared to take part in the Divine Economy. But, on the other hand, let none dare foolishly to offend the Holy Virgin” [St. Epiphonios, “Against the Antidikomarionites”]. (pp. 40-41)

Faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, St. Epiphonios of Cyprus comments: “Certain senseless ones in their opinion about the Holy Ever-Virgin have striven and are striving to put Her in place of God” [St. Epiphonios, “Against the Antidikomarionites”] (Maximovich, 1987, pp 46-47). These words from St. Epiphonios of Cyprus, as well as other things which have been said by this saint and by others in our discussion, are a well said warning to Orthodox Christians to make sure that their veneration of the Mother of God, the Theotokos, is consistent with, and does not exceed, the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church.
APPENDIX D:
CAPITA 96 AND 97 FROM ST. GREGORY PALAMAS, ANOTHER TRANSLATION

Fr. George Florovsky’s use of this particular translation, of chapters 96 and 97
from St. Gregory Palamas’ work *Topics of Natural and Theological Science*, found in *The Philokalia*, is relatively strong. And, most significantly, this translation is fully consistent
with, and faithful to, the great defense of Orthodox theology conducted by St. Gregory
Palamas. This having been said, one should note that when consideration is given to the
original Greek text it would seem that a more accurate word-for-word translation of these
chapters from the original Greek is to be found in the translation of *The Philokalia* by G.
E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware and others. So with that in mind, their
translation is provided here for future reference:

If, according to the absurdities of Akindynos and those who share his views, the
divine energy does not in any respect differ from the divine essence, then the act
of creating, which is something that pertains to the energy, will not in any respect
differ from the act of begetting and the act of procession, which are things that
pertain to the essence. But if the act of creating is not distinct from that of
begetting and of procession, then created things in no way differ from Him who is
begotten and Him who is sent forth. But if this is the case—as according to these
men it is—then both the Son of God and the Holy Spirit will in no way differ from
creatures: all created things will be begotten and sent forth by God the Father,
creation will be deified, and God will share His rank with creatures. For this
reason St. Cyril, affirming the distinction between God’s essence and energy,
says, “The act of generation pertains to the divine nature, whereas the act of
creating pertains to His divine energy.” Then he clearly underscores what he has affirmed by saying, “Nature and energy are not identical.” (Palamas, 1995c, pp. 391-392, ch. 96)

If the divine essence does not in any respect differ from the divine energy, then the act of generation and of procession will in no respect differ from the act of creating. But God the Father creates through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Thus, in the view of Akindynos and his adherents, He also begets and sends forth through the Son in the Holy Spirit. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 392, ch. 97)
APPENDIX E:

THE ORTHODOX VENERATION OF THE SAINTS AND THEIR ICONS

There is tremendous confusion and misunderstanding among Protestant religious groups, and others, regarding the Orthodox veneration of the saints and the Orthodox veneration of the holy cross and the icons. Orthodox Christians venerate the saints in order to honor them and to remind themselves of the great miracle which God, the Holy Trinity, has worked in the lives of these people (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 800). For through the saints--who heroically struggled to do the will of God--God has educated and enlightened the whole world throughout history. Throughout history, the Orthodox saints have remained faithful to the one true Faith, the Orthodox Faith, devising nothing outside of what Christ has revealed to His Holy Orthodox Church through the Holy Apostles and all the other saints. God, in His unfathomable mercy, has granted this incomparable and eternal consistency that is Orthodox Christianity seen throughout the ages and which is forever confessed without alteration by the Orthodox saints. The Orthodox saints are thus rightly honored and venerated by the Orthodox faithful. The Orthodox saints are venerated and honored but they are not in any way worshipped, for worship is due to God, the Holy Trinity, and to no one else (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 800).

Likewise, the holy cross and the icons of the Lord and of His saints are meant to educate the faithful and inspire them; they are used by the faithful to draw their attention from things earthly to things heavenly. The holy cross and the holy icons are “windows” into things heavenly; they are thus rightly venerated with reference to what or whom they depict; they are not in any way worshipped, for that would be idolatry. God, the Holy
Trinity, alone is worshipped in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, and no one else. All these things which are confessed by Orthodox Christianity are wonderfully taught to us by the Orthodox saints. In fact, to conclude this part of the discussion we see St. Gregory Palamas making reference to the Holy Scriptures as he beautifully and concisely teaches us the significance of the Orthodox veneration of the saints and the significance of the Orthodox veneration of the holy cross and icons, in the following passages:

“You shall not make an image of anything in the heavens above, or in the earth below, or in the sea” (cf. Exod. 20 : 4), in such a way that you worship these things and glorify them as gods. … In like manner you should also make ikons of the saints and venerate them, not as gods--for this is forbidden--but because of the attachment, inner affection and sense of surpassing honour that you feel for the saints when by means of their ikons the intellect is raised up to them. It was in this spirit that Moses made ikons of the Cherubim within the Holy of Holies (cf. Exod. 25 : 18). The Holy of Holies itself was an image of things supracelestial (cf. Exod. 25 : 40; Heb. 8 : 5), while the Holy Place was an image of the entire world. Moses called these things holy, not glorifying what is created, but through it glorifying God the Creator of the world. You must not, then, deify the ikons of Christ and of the saints, but through them you should venerate Him who originally created us in His own image, and who subsequently consented in His ineffable compassion to assume the human image and to be circumscribed by it. (Palamas, 1995b, pp. 324-325)

For the cross is Christ’s great sign and trophy of victory over the devil and all his hostile hosts; for this reason they tremble and flee when they see the figuration of the cross. This figure, even prior to the crucifixion, was greatly
glorified by the prophets and wrought great wonders; and when He who was hung upon it, our Lord Jesus Christ, comes again to judge the living and the dead, this His great and terrible sign will precede Him, full of power and glory (cf. Matt. 24:30). So glorify the cross now, so that you may boldly look upon it then and be glorified with it. And you should venerate ikons of the saints, for the saints have been crucified with the Lord; and you should make the sign of the cross upon your person before doing so, bringing to mind their communion in the sufferings of Christ. …By doing this and by glorifying those who glorify God--for through their actions they showed themselves to be perfect in their love for God--you too will be glorified together with them by God and with David you will chant: “I have held Thy friends in high honour, O Lord” (Ps. 139 : 17. LXX). (Palamas, 1995b, p. 325)
APPENDIX F:
THE INCARNATION OF GOD THE WORD

Let us see some of what the Holy Orthodox Church teaches about the Incarnation of the Son of God, God the Word:

At the Third Ecumenical Synod, Saint Cyril and the Fathers of the Synod condemned Nestorios, who divided the Person of Christ into two hypostases: one of God the Word and the other of the man Jesus, and they gave Synodal expression to the confession of the Church, that the very Hypostasis of God the Word became incarnate and that this Hypostasis constitutes the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way, they safeguarded the Orthodox teaching concerning the unity of the Person of Christ, which is essential for the salvation of human nature by means of its actual union with the Divinity in the Hypostasis of God the Word. (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 9-10)

In the above quotation, it can be seen that the fathers--from the Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, on Mount Athos--concisely and beautifully present Orthodox doctrine concerning the Person of Christ. They continue, again with reference to the Third Ecumenical Synod, as they speak of Saint Cyril and his Orthodox teaching pertaining to the Person of Christ--which was consistent not only with the defense of Orthodoxy against Nestorianism, conducted in the Third Ecumenical Synod, but was also consistent with the Orthodox confession of the distinction of the two Natures, Divine and Human, in the one pre-eternal Hypostasis (Person) of God the Word, which was later to be formally proclaimed as Orthodox doctrine in the subsequent history of the Church.

64 This is the heresy that was taught by Nestorios (and which bears his name). In the first quotation of this Appendix, we see that “At the Third Ecumenical Synod, Saint Cyril and the Fathers of the Synod condemned Nestorios, who divided the Person of Christ into two hypostases: one of God the Word and the other of the man Jesus (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 9-10).
Regarding this, the following is observed from the same Athonite fathers:

Although the struggle of Saint Cyril, as an opponent of heresy, was directed against the division of the one Person, nevertheless, an actual distinction between the Natures and an Orthodox understanding of their hypostatic union in one and the same Hypostasis of God the Word, and the actual exchange of attributes of the Natures [communicatio idiomatum], by reason of the hypostatic union, are elements that appear clearly in the doctrine of this ecumenical teacher of the Church, when one reads him and interprets him in an Orthodox way.

“Thusly, we affirm that He both suffered and rose again, not that God the Word suffered in His Own Nature, ...but since that which became His Own Body suffered these things, again the Same is said to have suffered on our behalf” (Epistle II, to Nestorios). (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 9-10)

The Athonite fathers continue, drawing from the wisdom of the great Orthodox Father, St. John of Damascus:

It is taken for granted that nature understood “in mere thought” is something abstract. God the Word, according to Saint John of Damascus, assumed not the nature, understood in this way, nor that which is observed in the species, that is, all men together, but that which is observed in the individual, which is itself observed in the species, but which does not have an hypostatic character, but is observed as a whole in every hypostasis of the same species. The Saint, therefore, writes:

“For the flesh of God the Word did not subsist in its own right, nor did another hypostasis come into being besides the Hypostasis of God the Word, but rather, the flesh subsisted in It enhypostatically and did not become a self-existing
St. Maximos the Confessor teaches us the same Orthodox confession of the Incarnation in agreement with St. John of Damascus, and in agreement with all the Orthodox saints in general, when he says:

With regard to Christ, we do not speak of a distinction of persons, because the Trinity remained a Trinity after the incarnation of the Logos. A fourth person was not added to the Holy Trinity as a result of the incarnation. We speak of a distinction of natures to avoid asserting that the flesh is coessential in its nature with the Logos. (1990g, p. 250, ch. 57)

The last part of the above quotation, from St. Maximos the Confessor, “We speak of a distinction of natures to avoid asserting that the flesh is coessential in its nature with the Logos” (1990g, p. 250, ch. 57), is of great significance. The “distinction of natures” refers of course to the distinction between the two Natures in God the Word, Divine Nature and Human Nature, united in His Divine Person after He condescended to accomplish the Incarnation. The two Natures, Divine and Human, are united by God the Word in His pre-eternal Hypostasis; this was not necessitated by anything in the very Nature (Divine Nature) of God, but instead was accomplished as an absolutely free act of will by God in His condescension--for the salvation and sanctification of humanity. Human Nature was never eternally present in the Divine Nature of God, nor is it in any way present in the Divine Nature. For God the Word (the Logos) did not need to create Human Nature or anything else, nor did He need to become Incarnate, voluntarily uniting Human Nature to His pre-eternal Hypostasis (Person)--with His Divine Nature, shared in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, remaining unaffected. With what was just said being kept in
mind--this Orthodox Teaching found in Holy Tradition pertaining to the Incarnation--the following from St. Maximos the Confessor is more easily understood:

He who does not distinguish the two natures in Christ has no basis for affirming that the Logos became flesh without change. He does not acknowledge that after the union that which assumed and that which was assumed are preserved according to their nature in the single person of the one Christ, our God and Saviour. (St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990g, p. 250, ch. 58)

*The Incarnation of God “As He Himself Saw Fit”*

Consistent with Orthodox Tradition pertaining to the Incarnation, St. John of Damascus says the following: “We affirm that the whole and perfect Nature of the Godhead was united in one of His Hypostases to the whole of human nature and a part to a part” [Saint John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book III, chapter 6 [50]](Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 40). In His Hypostasis (Person), God the Word united His Divine Nature, which He shares in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to Human Nature for the salvation of humanity. This union of the Divine Nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with that of Human Nature in the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word, was accomplished by God the Word “as He Himself saw fit” [St. John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, op. cit.*, pp. 310-312.] (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 24). The Son of God, God the Word, eternally willed to accomplish the Incarnation for the salvation of humanity; the eternal will of God the Word is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for God, the Holy Trinity, is “undivided in nature, will, glory, power, energy, and all the characteristics of divinity” (Palamas, 1995b, p. 323, ch. 1). This union of the Divine Nature and Human Nature in the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word brought about no
change in the Holy Trinity, as we have stated. The Suprasubstantial Trinity is absolutely transcendent in regard to creation, which the Holy Trinity has brought into being out of absolutely nothing, for the Holy Orthodox Tradition teaches us that “The Holy Trinity creates the creatures by will out of naught and relates to them by will” (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 13, 1). The Divine will for the Incarnation is accomplished for humanity by God. God had no need, for Himself, to accomplish the Incarnation, He was under no necessity of Nature of any kind whatsoever in order that the Incarnation would have been necessary to Him in any way. Rather, God freely and eternally willed to accomplish the Incarnation and this Divine will of the Holy Trinity for the Incarnation is not to be identified in any way with the absolutely unknowable, transcendent, and unapproachable Divine Nature or Essence of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. God, the Holy Trinity, eternally willed for the Incarnation to be accomplished by God the Word, but was not necessitated to will this nor to accomplish this by anything in the Divine Nature or Essence of the Holy Trinity. For the Divine will of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is “eminently free” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 9), and is among the eternal Divine Energies of the Holy Trinity but, as with all the Divine Energies, it is in no way to be identified with, nor introduced into, the absolutely unknowable, unapproachable, and infinitely transcendent Divine Nature or Essence of the Holy Trinity.

The significance of the Essence-Energies distinction as it points to, and safeguards, the absolute transcendence of the very Nature of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity can be seen, once again, this time in relation to the eternal Divine will for the Incarnation and its accomplishment in time. The Incarnation, which was eternally willed by the Holy Trinity to one day be accomplished (after the creation of the universe) for
humanity in the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word, introduces no change into the very Essence or Nature of the Holy Trinity; this is so because the eternal Divine will for the Incarnation is not found in, nor does it in any way belong to, the Divine Essence or Nature of the Holy Trinity (Lossky, 1976, pp. 137-138). The Divine will, and that of course includes God’s eternal will for the Incarnation, belongs to the Divine Energies of the Holy Trinity (Palamas, 1995c, p. 392-393, ch. 100) which, though proceeding from the very Essence or Nature of the Triune God, are nevertheless exterior to, and do not in any way determine, that very Essence or Nature of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity.

Orthodox Christianity confesses that God the Word united Human Nature to His Divine Hypostasis: “The term ‘hypostatic union’ was used by Saint Cyril in the sense of a real union of the two Natures in the one Hypostasis of God the Word” (Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 22). St. John of Damascus confesses this truth of Orthodox theology beautifully when he teaches us:

We affirm that the Divine Hypostasis of God the Word pre-existed timelessly and eternally, simple and incompotse, uncreated, incorporeal, invisible, impalpable, uncircumscribable,… and in the last days, without departing from the bosom of the Father, the Word uncircumscribably dwelt in the womb of the Holy Virgin seedlessly and incomprehensibly, as He Himself saw fit, and subjected the flesh from the Holy Virgin to Himself in this pre-eternal Hypostasis of His…He became flesh from her, therefore, assuming the firstfruits of our compound make-up, flesh animated by a rational and spiritual soul, so that the Hypostasis of God the Word became an Hypostasis for the flesh, and that what had previously been the simple Hypostasis of the Word became composite--a composite of two perfect Natures, Divinity and Humanity. [St. John of Damaskos, Exact Exposition
The Orthodox Defense Against Monophysitism, A Defense Against Pantheism

Consistent with what St. John of Damascus just told us, he also tells us: “Since, therefore, there are two Natures of Christ, we affirm that His natural wills and His natural energies are two. Since there is one Hypostasis of His Natures, we affirm that One and the Same both wills and acts naturally in both the Natures” [Saint John of Damascus, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, op. cit., p. 340.](Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 26). For when the Monophysite heretics (Non-Chalcedonian heretics), and others, make erroneous affirmations, such as the following--which blur the distinction between God and creation, and which essentially introduce creation into the Divine Nature, in effect making creation and the Incarnation itself necessary to God: “‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ In the same way, we can say that the flesh also became Divine. Thus, the properties of the flesh can be ascribed to God the Word [in the Divine Nature] and vice versa’” [Habte Mariam Worquineh, “The Mystery of the Incarnation”, Greek Orthodox Theological Review, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1964-1965), p.158](Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 31), the Orthodox response to such heresy is clear as the Fathers on the Holy Mountain of Athos tell us:

This is unacceptable from an Orthodox point of view. Saint John of Damascus says: ‘In speaking of the Divinity [of Christ]65, we do not predicate of It the attributes of the Humanity [of Christ]66; for we do not say that the Divinity is passable or created. Nor do we predicate of the flesh, that is, of the Humanity,

65 Bracketed entry made by the Athonite monks who obtained the quotation, which they used in their work.
66 Once again, the bracketed entry apparently was made by the Athonite monks who obtained the quotation, which they used in their work.
the properties of the Divinity; for we do not say that the flesh or the Humanity is uncreated.’ [Saint John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, op. cit., p. 300.](Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 31)

We also say with St. John of Damascus:

“And just as the three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity are both unconfusedly united and indivisibly divided and enumerated, and the number does not create division, or separation, or alienation and disseverance, in the same way the Natures of Christ, although they are united, are yet unconfusedly united. Hence, they are enumerated, and the number does not introduce division” [Saint John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, op. cit., p. 304.](Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 42)

The two Natures, Divine and Human, are united by God the Word in His Divine Hypostasis without the Divine and Human Natures mixing in any way whatsoever--without the Divine Nature becoming Human Nature in any way, and without the Human Nature becoming Divine Nature in any way. God the Word unites Divine Nature and Human Nature in His Divine Hypostasis as He Himself willed to do so, and the Divine and Human Natures co-exist in the one Divine Person or Hypostasis of God the Word “without being mingled, without change, indivisibly, inseparably, in such a way that the union does not destroy the difference of the two natures, but on the contrary the properties of each nature only remain the more firm since they are found united in one person or hypostasis which is neither separated nor divided into two persons, being the one and the same person of the Son, only-Begotten, God and Word, Lord Jesus Christ” (Lossky, 1976, p. 143).

The absolutely incommunicable and transcendent Divine Nature of the Father,
Son, and Holy Spirit never changes nor does It become anything other than what It eternally is—the absolutely transcendent Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. And Human Nature, which God the Word willed to unite to His Divine Person or Hypostasis, forever remains what God, the Holy Trinity, created it to be—Human Nature. The two Natures, the Divine Nature and Human Nature, are united by God the Word in His Divine Hypostasis, but they are not united to one another so that they would be one Nature formed from the union of the two Natures (Percival, 1899, p. 314).

According to the heresy of Monophysitism, after the Incarnation, the two Natures, the Divine Nature and the Human Nature, are united in one Nature, the Divine Nature of God the Word (Azkoul, 1986, p. 180-181). What follows from the heresy of Monophysitism, is that the Incarnation accomplished by God as He Himself willed to accomplish it is not real, or else the Incarnation of God is something necessitated by the Divine Nature or Essence, making Human Nature something necessary to the Divine Nature—making Human Nature something to be found within the Divine Nature or Essence of the Suprasubstantial Trinity. Such thinking would lead to the introduction of necessity into God, the Holy Trinity, and the consequent embrace of pantheism (Gabriel, 2000, p. 100). According to the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church, that would be heresy, plain and simple. To further discuss this matter we refer to some of the brilliant work, which is faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, of Fr. Michael Azkoul, in which the inherent pantheistic tendencies of Monophysitism are clearly exposed:

The Monophysites conceded that Christ had two natures and two “natural wills” (i.e., one for each nature) before the Incarnation, but not after. The Fathers recognized at once the falsehood of this distinction. The Monophysites could not escape the conclusion that the humanity was absorbed by the Divinity in Christ.
If, as St. Maximos the Confessor said, that Christ is a model and analogy not only for the Church but the universe (i.e., the union of the visible and invisible, time and eternity), then, to insist that Christ has only one nature is to strip the Church of Her humanity and also to propound a theory of pantheism (see glossary).

Unthinkable, too, is the notion that, since Christ has only one nature, God suffered on the Cross (theopaschism). How absurd, said St. Vigilius, Pope of Rome, to believe that God suffered through the flesh and that “one of the Trinity hung on the Cross.” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 180-181)

To not misunderstand what St. Vigilius, Pope of Rome, said, we must clarify a few things. Certainly, the Only-Begotten Son of God suffered in His voluntarily assumed humanity, and this must be properly understood. The Only-Begotten Son of God voluntarily assumed what He did not have before, Human Nature—by His voluntarily uniting Human Nature to His Divine Hypostasis—and He voluntarily accepted all that came with His condescending to become Man, even bodily suffering and death. But His Divine Nature, which He eternally possesses in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, never in any way possessed a Human Nature, nor was it, in any way, united to Human Nature in the Incarnation. The Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity never possessed a Human Nature, nor will it ever. Therefore, the Divine Nature of the Only-Begotten Son of God never possessed a Human Nature, nor will it ever—though the Only-Begotten Son of God nonetheless truly condescended to become fully Man in His choosing to unite Human Nature to His Divine Hypostasis. The Divine Nature of the Only-Begotten Son of God remained impassible and absolutely transcendent during the

67 Fr. Azkoul is referring to the glossary of his book, this same book which we are using for this quotation. In the definitions in the glossary of this particular thesis, Fr. Azkoul’s brief definition of “Pantheism”, to which he refers us in the above discussion, is indeed utilized and provided for future reference.
Passion, for the Divine Nature of the Only-Begotten Son of God is eternally impassible and absolutely transcendent, and the Human Nature voluntarily assumed by the Son of God is in no way whatsoever present in this Divine Nature which is fully possessed by each of Three Divine Persons of Suprasubstantial Trinity. So with this in mind, we say that according to His voluntarily assumed humanity--according to His Human Nature--Christ suffered; but in His divinity, in His Divine Nature which is absolutely and eternally foreign to the Human Nature voluntarily assumed by Him, Christ is absolutely impassible and does not suffer change. For the eternal Divine Nature of the Son of God, which the Son of God fully possesses and shares in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is in no way associated with the Human Nature that the Son of God voluntarily, in His condescension, united to His pre-eternal Divine Hypostasis to save the human race. This Orthodox distinction of the Divine and Human Natures voluntarily united by the Son of God in His Divine Person (Hypostasis) is how we should understand what St. Vigilius, Pope of Rome, had to say. The Monophysite heretics deny this Orthodox distinction, and instead make the two Natures, the Divine Nature and the Human Nature, into one Nature after the Incarnation. Again, this implies some form of pantheism, as does what follows from it: one Nature implies one will, the divine Will (Azkoul, 1986, p. 180-181). Regarding such matters, Azkoul is once again brilliant in his analysis:

The heretics did not grasp another consequence of their folly: if Christ has only one will, the divine Will, then, the creature has no freedom. Where there is no freedom, there is no choice between good and evil, blame and praise may not be ascribed to human actions. What, then, is morality? How is growth in the Spirit possible? Are not all things predetermined? Is not everyone and everything
identified with God? How, then, do we understand the role of the Church and Her Mysteries? (Azkoul, 1986, p. 180-181)

The Divine Nature and Human Nature united by God the Word in His Hypostasis do not in any way whatsoever mix with one another, nor do they change at all; they remain distinct and absolutely unaffected by one another though united in the one Divine Hypostasis of God the Word. It is in this sense that we can better understand the Fathers on Mount Athos as they confess Orthodox theology when they tell us: ... “the Hypostasis of God the Word is also the Hypostasis of the assumed flesh, and that the exchange of the attributes of the Natures takes place in the Hypostasis of God the Word and not between the Natures” (Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 35).

For indeed, God the Word voluntarily united Human Nature to His Divine Person or Hypostasis but He did not in any way unite His absolutely transcendent Divine Nature, which He shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to Human Nature, in such a way so that there would be a union of Natures in their Natures--instead the Divine Nature and Human Nature are, nonetheless, united indivisibly and inseparably but without being mingled and without change in the one Divine Person or Hypostasis of God the Word (Lossky, 1976, p. 143).

It is with this in mind that we can better understand Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus as he confesses the completely voluntary nature of the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ, God the Word; and as he confesses the fact that Human Nature never becomes Divine Nature, and Divine Nature never becomes Human Nature, though the two Natures are both united in the Hypostasis of God the Word:

He Who in truth endured the Passion on our behalf in the flesh and in a perfect Incarnation truly suffered on the Cross; His Divinity was with Him, but was not
changed to suffering, since it is impassible and unchangeable. ...[T]he two consequences are clearly grasped, that Christ suffered on our behalf in the flesh, while remaining impassible in His Divinity. The Humanity and the Divinity did not exist on their own, but the Divinity co-existed, only not suffering on account of the purity and incomparability of the Essence [Patrologia Graeca, Vol. XLII, Col. 813 C]. (Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 39)

For as the Fathers on Mount Athos brilliantly explain to us:

If the Divinity of Christ is possible by reason of the union, then Christ is not co-essential with the Father, because impassibility is an essential definition of Divinity. If, again, the Humanity of Christ is uncreated by reason of the union, then Christ is not co-essential with His Mother and with us, because being created is an essential definition of human nature. (Holy Monestery of Saint Gregory, 1996, p. 42)

*The Eternal Divine Will for the Incarnation, Seen Within the Context of the Essence-Energies Distinction*

It is clear from much of what we just saw that the Incarnation of the Logos, God the Word, was in no way necessary to God the Word. The Incarnation and the Passion were in no way necessary to the divine Nature (divine essence) which is common to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In short, the Incarnation and the Passion were in no way necessary to God, the Holy Trinity. Certainly consistent with the fact that the Incarnation and the Passion were in no way necessary to God, is the fact that--as Fr. Azkoul explained earlier--Orthodox Christianity rejects any form of pantheism, and, following from that, rejects any notion of predestination which would rob humanity of its freedom, with which it was created by God, to choose between good and evil (Azkoul,
We also know this to be true by looking further at the eternal Holy Orthodox Tradition which the Holy Fathers of the Church have always confessed. Having said this, we consider that same Holy Tradition which teaches us that God did not foreordain nor did He predetermine the fall of Adam and Eve, but God, in His infinite power and wisdom, did have foreknowledge from all eternity that Adam and Eve after their creation would choose to disobey Him and of their own free choice they would fall and bring all their descendants (the entire human race) with them. God, the Holy Trinity, did not predestine the fall of Adam and Eve, God simply eternally foreknew that His creation, man, would fall through disregard for His commandment, voluntarily misusing the freedom, wisdom and power which was given to him by his Creator. Let us look at Orthodox Tradition regarding these things as researched by brilliant Orthodox scholars who quote and make use of the wisdom of the Holy Fathers:

God has foreseen the fall of Adam and the Son of God was “the Lamb slain before the ages” in the pre-existent will of the Trinity. That is why we cannot expect to understand anything whatsoever apart from the cross of Christ. “The mystery of the incarnation of the Word--said St. Maximus--contains in itself the meaning of all the symbols and all the enigmas of Scripture, as well as the hidden meaning of all sensible and intelligible creation. But he who knows the mystery of the Cross and the Tomb, knows also the essential principles of all things. Finally, he who penetrates yet further and finds himself initiated into the mystery of the Resurrection, apprehends the end for which God created all things from the beginning.” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 137-138)

Again, the complete freedom with which the absolutely transcendent Triune God
accomplishes all things “for us men and for our salvation”68 seen in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Word, is discussed by Lossky as he draws from the God-inspired wisdom of St. Paul and St. John of Damascus:

The work of Christ is a “dispensation of the mystery, which from all ages has been hidden in God”, as St. Paul said, an “eternal purpose which was realized in Jesus Christ”. However, there is no necessity of nature in the incarnation and the passion. “It is not a work of nature, but a mode of economic condescension,” according to St. John the Damascene; it is the work of the will, the mystery of divine love. We have seen (Chapter V) that “purposes”, “ideas” do not for the Greek Fathers belong to the essence, but to the will common to the Trinity. That is why the incarnation of the Son, which is a manifestation of love, does not introduce any change or new reality into the internal being of the Trinity. (Lossky, 1976, p. 138)

Confirming much of what is said in these last two passages found in Vladimir Lossky’s work--work which itself is grounded in, and is fully consistent with, the Holy Tradition and Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church--we will clearly in two more quotations from one of the Holy Fathers, St. Maximos the Confessor, that the Incarnation of the Logos, God the Word, was indeed an act of free will accomplished by God with no necessity whatsoever for Himself to have done so. Indeed there was no necessity of nature in the absolutely transcendent divine essence common to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit which would have necessitated the Incarnation and the Passion of the Son of God, God Himself. Looking at what Lossky says above is very significant: “God has foreseen the fall of Adam and the Son of God was ‘the Lamb slain before the ages’ in the

68 This quotation is from the Symbol of Faith of the Orthodox Church, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.
pre-existent will of the Trinity” (Lossky, 1976, pp. 137-138). We see that God, the Holy Trinity, eternally willed for the Incarnation and the Passion to be accomplished in order to save fallen humanity and provide humankind with the opportunity for theosis (which means, while we forever remain creatures, we are given the opportunity through grace to have union with God in His energies, but not in His absolutely transcendent, unapproachable, and incommunicable essence), this was accomplished in the Person of the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity Whose will is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. To avoid any confusion (and this is similar to what was mentioned earlier), we note that God, the Holy Trinity, eternally foreknew that the Jews and others would reject God the Word after He had chosen to become Incarnate and dwell among men, and then would murder Him by crucifixion. God certainly did not will this misuse of the freedom with which He had created and empowered humanity, but He did eternally foreknow that this great evil would be plotted against Him; and He allowed it to happen showing forth, all the more, His unfathomable love, compassion and mercy towards mankind. For through the Incarnation, the Passion, and the glorious Resurrection on the third day, Jesus Christ--the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God--gives humanity the opportunity and only true path for salvation and sanctification, as God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, has eternally willed. The Son of God, God the Word, accomplished the will common to the Holy Trinity regarding the Incarnation and the Passion, and this He did out of love for man, and so He accomplished what He eternally willed to accomplish, without having been compelled or necessitated to do so, in any way whatsoever. For as we saw mentioned earlier regarding these matters, St. John of Damascus teaches us: ‘It is not a work of nature, but a mode of economic condescension’.

As Lossky (1976) correctly and beautifully interprets this: “it is the work of the will, the
mystery of divine love” (p. 138).

At this point, here are the two quotations about which we spoke earlier from St. Maximos the Confessor that will give us further insight into our discussion and indeed they are consistent with the above statements:

The great mystery of the incarnation remains a mystery eternally… For God is beyond being and transcends all beyond-beingness: and so, when He wished to come
down to the level of being, He became being in a manner which transcends being. Thus,
too, although transcending man, yet out of love for man He truly became man by taking
on the substance of men; but the manner in which He became man always remains
unrevealed…(St. Maximos the Confessor, 1990f, p. 167)

Continuing, we look at George S. Gabriel’s research as he also quotes from the God-
inspired wisdom of St. Maximos the Confessor:

The eternal mystery of the Incarnation, then, was not only present before the fall;
it was independent of the fall and events in time. In the words of St. Maximus the
Confessor, the Incarnation is the “ineffable and incomprehensible hypostatic
union of the Divine and humanity. This is the great and hidden mystery. This is
the blessed destiny for which all things have been constituted. This is the
premeditated divine plan in which all things have their beginning and which we
speak of as the prescient purpose. It is the cause of all things and caused by none
of them. With this purpose in view, God brought into being the substances of all
things. This is the primary object of the prescience and forethoughts according to
which all things made by God are recapitulated in Him. This mystery encloses all
the ages, showing forth the infinite great counsel of God that surpasses infinity
and preexists the ages eternally. The great counsel’s Angel, the Word
consubstantial with the Father, became a man. And He made the innermost depths of the Father’s goodness apparent and showed in Himself the purpose for which indeed all creatures received their existence. Therefore, for Christ and in the mystery of Christ, all the ages and all things in them received their being and purpose. The union of limitation and limitlessness, of measure and measurelessness, of finiteness and infinity, of the Creator and creation, of stillness and motion was deliberated prior to the ages. And in the last days, this [union] was revealed in Christ, in itself giving fulfillment to the foreknowledge of God.” (Gabriel, 2000, p. 99-100)

In this last passage from St. Maximos the Confessor⁶⁹, found in George S. Gabriel’s research, we see words such as: “the premeditated divine plan”, “the prescient purpose”, “prescience and forethoughts”, “the infinite great counsel of God”, “the innermost depths of the Father’s goodness” and “foreknowledge of God”. All these things mentioned are eternal, uncreated energies of God, which are all common to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. These are energies of God, the Holy Trinity, but they are not, in any way, the absolutely transcendent essence of God, the Holy Trinity--which is absolutely beyond any kind of participation or description. In fact, interestingly, as Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church and Orthodox theologians will point out to us, the very term “God” in the Greek language “comes from a verb meaning ‘run’, ‘see’ or ‘burn’” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). In the beautiful and immensely powerful Greek language, even the word for “God” (Theos) conveys the reality of the Essence-Energies distinction in the absolutely transcendent Triune God. To help us see this, we observe the following:

⁶⁹ His name is oftentimes spelled: St. Maximus the Confessor.
St. John of Damascus, writing in the eighth century, makes a remarkable observation. The word “God” in the Scriptures refers not to the divine nature or essence, for that is unknowable. “God” refers rather to the divine energies—the power and grace of God which we can perceive in this world. The Greek word for God, *theos*, comes from a verb meaning “run”, “see”, or “burn”. These are energy words, so to speak, not essence words. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 561)

Indeed, the words “run”, “see”, or “burn”—associated in meaning with the Greek verb from which the word for “God” in the Greek language, *Theos*, comes—are, as we have seen, action words; they are energy words if you will; these words are verbs not nouns, these words describe activity, action, energy, but not essence (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 561).

St. Gregory Palamas teaches us this as well, as he quotes from the ancient Orthodox Father, St. Gregory of Nyssa, who tells us:

…Likewise the term God (*Theos*) we have taken from His providential and overseeing activity. In this manner, then, by the term God we have been taught about a certain partial activity of the divine nature, but we have not attained an understanding of God’s essence by means of this word. (Palamas, 1995c, pp. 385-386)

In these last few quotations and statements we again encounter some of the profound uniqueness of Orthodox Trinitarian Theology wherein these instances, as in countless others, the Essence-Energies distinction is once again affirmed. For as Orthodoxy confesses: “purposes”, “ideas” belong to the energies common to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but they do not belong to the absolutely unapproachable essence of God,
the Holy Trinity. Regarding these matters, we continue to learn from some of the brilliant exposition of Orthodox theology by Vladimir Lossky (1976), as it is insightful to our discussion:

And if the divine ideas are not the essence of God itself, if they are thus as it were separated from the essence by the will, then it follows that not only the act of creation but also the very thoughts of God Himself can no longer be considered as a necessary determination of His nature and part of the intelligible content of the divine Being. (p. 95)

Faithful to Orthodox theology, George S. Gabriel beautifully confesses the same truth found in the above discussion, as he contradicts the error of Latin theology (Roman Catholic theology) and the error of all other theological traditions, which are foreign to Orthodox Christianity. With this in mind, we observe the following brilliant presentation of Orthodox theology pertaining to the distinction that exists in God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, between the divine essence and the divine will--and that in a more general sense is, of course, a confession of the Essence-Energies distinction in God, the Holy Trinity:

There is an infinite difference between God’s eternal will for the Incarnation and the Neo-Platonic notion of the Incarnation as an eternal idea or archetype in the essence of God. The Church condemned the notion of eternal archetypes in God because it leads to pantheism, introduces necessity into God, and He becomes a man because it is dictated by an eternal archetype in His essence. This means that, in the eternal and immutable divine essence, an immortal, beginningless, and uncreated human nature always had some kind of existence, and that God was always a latent man, and man in His eternal idea was always God. Latin theology holds that the eternal archetypes of things in the divine essence had some kind of
real existence in God from eternity. (Gabriel, 2000, p. 100)

Orthodox Christianity, in its worship of God, the Holy Trinity, has always confessed what the Seventh Ecumenical Council proclaims in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*:

“To those who teach that the ideas are co-beginningless with the Creator and God, and that creatures are eternal and beginningless: *anathema, anathema, anathema*!”

(Triodion, Edition, Athens, 1958, p.159) The *Synodikon* condemns the notion of the uncreated eternal ideas in the essence of God and of comparing God with anything. (Gabriel, 2000, p. 85)

Let us look at what is meant by many of the things that have just been mentioned. The ideas belong to the energies of God, not to the essence of God. As such the ideas, as energies of God, are uncreated and eternal. The divine ideas, and in fact all the divine energies, are eternal, uncreated, and without beginning. At first glance, this seems to contradict the Orthodox confession, which was just mentioned above, found in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*; but, in actuality, that is certainly not the case. Here is the significance of the above quotation from the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*: The divine energies (whether we speak of any one of them or all of them together) in no way whatsoever determine or define God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity. Vladimir Lossky (1976) gives us some background knowledge to help us understand this when he says:

One may say, to use a common expression, that the energies are attributes of God; provided that is, that one remembers that these dynamic and concrete attributes have nothing in common with the concept-attributes with which God is credited in the abstract and sterile theology of the manuals. The energies manifest the innumerable names of God, according to the teaching of the Areopagite: Wisdom, Life, Power, Justice, Love, Being, God--and an infinity of other names which are
unknown to us, for the world can no more contain the fullness of the divine
manifestation which is revealed in the energies, than, as St. John says, it can
contain the books which would be needed to describe all Jesus did. Like the
energies, the divine names are innumerable, so likewise the nature which they
reveal remains nameless and unknowable--darkness hidden by the abundance of
light. (p. 80)

This statement is certainly consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition, and it bears striking
similarity to the following, which was written by, one of the great defenders of
Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas:

… none of God’s attributes constitutes the essence. …If to the divine attributes
described apophatically are added those that the theologians ascribe to God
cataphatically, it is evident that none of them can be shown to disclose God’s
essence, even though when necessary we apply all the names of these attributes to
the supra-essential Being that is absolutely nameless. (Palamas, 1995c, p. 401)

The previous two quotations give us some background that helps us to understand
what Vladimir Lossky (1976) is saying, when he tells us, powerfully and clearly, the
following, which is also in full conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition:

For Orthodox thought, the energies signify an exterior manifestation of the Trinity
which cannot be interiorized, introduced, as it were, within the divine being, as its
natural determination. This was the basis of the theological development of Fr.
Bulgakov, and also his fundamental error; for he sought to see in the energy of
Wisdom (Sophia), which he identified with the essence, the very principle of the
Godhead. In fact, God is not determined by any of His attributes; all
determinations are inferior to Him, logically posterior to His being in itself, in its
essence. When we say that God is Wisdom, Life, Truth, Love--we understand the energies, which are subsequent to the essence and are its natural manifestations, but are external to the very being of the Trinity. That is why, in contrast to western theology, the tradition of the Eastern Church never designates the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity by the name of attributes. We never say, for example, that the Son proceeds by the mode of the intelligence and the Holy Spirit by the mode of the will. The Spirit can never be assimilated to the mutual love of the Father and the Son. ...St. Maximus refused to admit in the Trinity qualifications of a psychological order in connection with the notion of the will; he saw in such qualifications that which is posterior to the nature of God, in other words, His exterior determinations, His manifestations. To say: “God is love”, “the divine Persons are united by mutual love”, is to think of a common manifestation, the “love energy” possessed by the three hypostases, for the union of the Three is higher even than love. (p. 80-81)

In this last quotation, which is immensely useful and important, Lossky’s exposition of Orthodox theology, pertaining to the Essence-Energies distinction, is outstandingly brilliant and, as was said, is entirely consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition. The Triune God is absolutely transcendent over all that is, over His divine uncreated energies, which are His exterior manifestations, and over all creation as well. God, the Suprasubstantial Holy Trinity, Who is infinitely beyond being and beyond essence, Who in His unapproachable essence is infinitely transcendent over His divine, eternal, timeless, and uncreated energies--which proceed from His very essence and of which He is the “unique author” of their being, without being defined or in any way determined by these divine energies--is also infinitely transcendent over all that He has created (Palamas,
The Great Holy Synods of St. Gregory Palamas’ Time

This Holy Orthodox Tradition is expressed beautifully by the great saint and defender of the Holy Orthodox Faith, St. Gregory Palamas, whose great defense and confession of the Essence-Energies distinction in God was formally accepted by Holy Synods which were held in Constantinople in 1341, 1347 and 1351. These Holy Synods, which we have just mentioned, though not formally called “Ecumenical”, as the ancient Holy Seven Ecumenical Councils are called “Ecumenical”, nonetheless, professed the eternal Orthodox doctrine of the Essence-Energies distinction which is universally accepted in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ. There are prominent Orthodox theologians who regard for example the Holy Synod of Constantinople in 1351 as having all the characteristics which would constitute it as a Holy Ecumenical Council, and so they feel that it should be formally regarded as such. (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d.). Regardless of anyone’s opinion pertaining to any formal naming of these Holy Synods of this time period, their doctrinal decisions and proclamations culminating with the Holy Synod of 1351 are nonetheless universally accepted in Orthodoxy as confessing the truth of the real, and not just conceptual, Essence-Energies distinction in the absolutely transcendent Triune God.

Consistent with what Orthodox Christianity has always confessed and taught throughout the ages, these Holy Synods of this time period are of profound and universal significance to Orthodox Christianity and vital to the truthful expression of its unchanging and eternal Theology. The great Orthodox theologian, Fr. George Florovsky, tells us this when speaking about the real, and not just conceptual, Essence-Energies distinction which was confessed by these Holy Synods: “This basic distinction was formally accepted and
elaborated at the Great Councils in Constantinople, 1341 and 1351. Those who would deny this distinction were anathematized and excommunicated. The anathematisms of the council of 651[sic., 651 is probably a misprint, the year which should have likely been printed is 1351] were included in the right for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, in the Triodion. Orthodox theologians are bound by this decision.” (Florovsky, 1987, p. 8).

So, as we look at the Orthodox doctrine of the Essence-Energies distinction in God, we clarify certain terminology to facilitate our understanding. Drawing from the commentary of Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and others, which is in full conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition, we see the following: Orthodox Christianity confesses that goodness, immortality, life, simplicity, immutability, infinity, being itself, love, mercy and an infinity of other attributes of God are the uncreated energies of the Triune God. These uncreated divine energies do not define or determine God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, in any way whatsoever. This is what Vladimir Lossky (1976) was confessing, as we saw earlier, consistent with Orthodox doctrine, when he said:

For Orthodox thought, the energies signify an exterior manifestation of the Trinity which cannot be interiorized, introduced, as it were, within the divine being, as its natural determination.... In fact, God is not determined by any of His attributes; all determinations are inferior to Him, logically posterior to His being in itself, in its essence. When we say that God is Wisdom, Life, Truth, Love--we understand the energies, which are subsequent to the essence and are its natural manifestations, but are external to the very being of the Trinity. (p. 80-81)

These uncreated divine energies are not the very essence of the Triune God, nor do they in any way determine or define that very essence, nonetheless these uncreated divine energies eternally proceed from that very same essence of the Triune God. St. Gregory
Palamas (drawing from St. Maximos the Confessor) refers to these uncreated divine energies as “beings” which are “participable” and “without beginning” in which creation (which does have a beginning in time) participates. Consistent with all that was mentioned earlier, we must not misunderstand the word “beings” or “being” in this context, when it refers to the uncreated energies of the Triune God. The uncreated energies—as eternal processions of God, the Holy Trinity—are not to be identified with any, nor with all, of the Three Divine Hypostases of the Holy Trinity nor are they to be identified with the essence of the Holy Trinity. Additionally, they are not essences nor hypostases, nor are they beings which have any individual existence by themselves; they exist only because they are eternal processions of God, the Holy Trinity. The divine energies exist only because God, the Supra-essential Trinity, communicates them; they have no hypostasis or essence themselves, they have no individual existence by themselves (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 10, 3a). In this context, we see on the one hand, the uncreated divine energies of God, which are without beginning, being referred to as “participable beings” and, on the other hand, we see all of creation and created beings—all of which have a beginning in time, for creation is not without beginning—-being referred to as “participant beings” having been created by God, the Holy Trinity, with the capacity to participate in the uncreated divine energies of their Creator, the Triune God. So in this context we see how St. Gregory Palamas, faithful to Holy Orthodox Tradition, differentiates between the eternal, uncreated, divine energies and creation. St. Gregory Palamas says (drawing from St. Maximos the Confessor):

... listen to St. Maximos, who says: “All immortal things and immortality itself, all living things and life itself, all holy things and holiness itself, all good things and goodness itself, all blessings and blessedness itself, all beings and being itself are
manifestly works of God. Some began to be in time, for they have not always existed. Others did not begin to be in time, for goodness, blessedness, holiness and immortality have always existed.” (Palamas, 1995a, p. 422)

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, in conformity with Holy Orthodox Tradition, explains, related to this last quotation, that “All immortal things”, “all living things”, “all holy things”, “all good things”, “all blessings”, “all beings” mean things which are created, things which have a beginning in time--this is what is meant by “participant beings”. “Participant beings” are things which are created, in other words creation, “for they have not always existed”. Now, we look at what is meant by the other terms which were mentioned alongside the previous terms (these previous terms dealt with creation, as we said, i.e. “participant beings”). Now, these other terms such as, “immortality itself”, “life itself”, “holiness itself”, “goodness itself”, “blessedness itself”, “being itself” mean (in this context) the uncreated, timeless, eternal energies of God which are to be contrasted from all that is created, in other words to be contrasted from “participant beings”. The uncreated, eternal, divine energies are what St. Gregory Palamas refers to as “participable beings”, contrasting them from what is created, “participant beings” (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, n.d., ch. 10, 3a).

With all of this background knowledge we can more adequately approach the God-inspired wisdom of St. Maximos the Confessor and St. Gregory Palamas who, in full conformity with all the other Holy Fathers and as faithful witnesses to the common experience of all the Orthodox saints throughout history, can inspire us and teach us so much. With this in mind, the following is from the great defender of Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas (1995a):

If anyone maintains that only God’s essence is uncreated, while His eternal
energies are not uncreated, and that as what energizes transcends all it activates, so God transcends all His energies, let him listen to St. Maximos, who says: “All immortal things and immortality itself, all living things and life itself, all holy things and holiness itself, all good things and goodness itself, all blessings and blessedness itself, all beings and being itself are manifestly works of God. Some began to be in time, for they have not always existed. Others did not begin to be in time, for goodness, blessedness, holiness and immortality have always existed.” And again he says: “Goodness, and all that is included in the principle of goodness, and--to be brief--all life, immortality, simplicity, immutability and infinity, and all the other qualities that contemplative vision perceives as substantively appertaining to God, are realities of God which did not begin to be in time. For non-existence is never prior to goodness, nor to any of the other things we have listed, even if those things which participate in them do in themselves have a beginning in time. All goodness is without beginning because there is no time prior to it: God is eternally the unique author of its being, and God is infinitely above all beings, whether participant or participable.” It is clear, therefore, from what has been said that not everything which issues from God is subject to time. For there are some things issuing from God that are without beginning, without this in the least impairing the principle of the Triadic Unity, that alone is intrinsically without beginning, or God’s supraessential simplicity.

(pp. 422-423)

In this last quotation, St. Gregory Palamas, who makes reference to St. Maximos the Confessor, teaches us some very important things pertaining to the Essence-Energies distinction. In fact, the entire quotation is absolutely in full conformity with the entire
Holy Orthodox Tradition confessed throughout the ages. Indeed we see that this confession of the Essence-Energies distinction in God, the Holy Trinity, was confirmed as Orthodox doctrine by the Great Holy Synods of St. Gregory Palamas’ time.
GLOSSARY

The following definitions should be useful in making much of the subject matter of this thesis more accessible. Many of the topics brought forward in these definitions are to be seen in the body of the thesis and appendices where they are often further elaborated upon.

ANGELS  Bodiless powers created before the creation of the physical universe. The English word “angel” comes from the Greek word for “messenger”.

Throughout the Scripture, angels are messengers who carry the Word of God to earth (e.g. Gabriel’s visit to Mary, Luke 1:26-38). The Orthodox Church teaches that there are nine “choirs” or groups of angels: Angels, Archangels, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Dominions, Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim (see Gen. 3:24; Is. 6:2; Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16; 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:22). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, pp. 793-794)

ANTICHRIST  Literally, “against Christ” or “instead of Christ”. Antichrist is used by John to refer to (a) the opponent of Christ who will arise at the end of this age, and (b) the “many antichrists” who stand against the Son of God (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 794)

ASCETICISM  (from Gr. askesis, “athlete”57) A life of struggle—the crucifixion of the desires of the flesh, through a life of prayer, fasting, and self-denial. Through asceticism the Christian fights temptation to sin and thereby grows in spiritual strength. Such spiritual classics as The Philokalia and The Ladder of

57 The definition of the word “asceticism” offered in The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms is actually quite good, but for the sake of accuracy we must note that it is erroneous to define askesis to mean “athlete”. Actually the Greek word askesis means “exercise” or athletic task, whereas asketis is the person performing the exercise or task.

**CREATION** (Gr. *ktisis*) Everything made by God. The term *creation* is applied to the cosmos in general and to mankind in particular. Our regeneration in Christ and the resurrection of the dead are both often called the “new creation”. Creation has no existence apart from God, but is nevertheless distinct from God. (That which is not created, such as divine grace, the divine energies, belongs to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.) (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 796)

The following paragraphs and quotations further discuss the Orthodox Teaching pertaining to creation and the Creator:

The countless Orthodox saints and martyrs throughout history have all confessed the fact that “God is absolutely transcendent” (Ware, 1997, p. 208). Orthodox Christianity confesses the absolute transcendence of God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, in relation to all creation (which this same God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, has created from absolutely nothing, with God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, having been under absolutely no necessity to create anything or anyone). Orthodox Christianity—the one True Faith, and as such, the only Faith free of all heresy—certainly rejects the heresy of pantheism, in all its forms. We see an example of Orthodox Christianity’s rejection of any form of, or tendency towards, pantheism, in the Orthodox Church’s condemnation of Origenism, which spoke of creation proceeding “eternally from God” (Meyendorff, 1974, p. 129), and therefore, according to this heresy, creation has always existed (Meyendorff, 1974, p. 129). According to Origenism, creation, has eternally existed, in one form or another, and is seen as “a necessary expression of God’s goodness identified with divine
nature itself” (Meyendorff, 1974, p. 130). Regarding mankind, for example, according to Origenism, human souls eternally pre-existed, in some form, only later being condemned to abide in bodies (Percival, 1899, pp. 318-320). Contrary to such heresy, Orthodox Christianity teaches that all creation, including mankind, was created by the Suprasubstantial Trinity from absolute nothingness, by a completely free act of will, without any necessity to the Divine Nature of the Suprasubstantial Trinity (Lossky, 1976, pp. 92-94). God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, created all things from “absolute nothingness” (Lossky, 1976, p. 92), not necessitated to have done so in any way. For creation is in no way found in, or necessitated by, the very Essence or Nature of the absolutely transcendent Triune God, nor does creation in any way express that very Nature of the Triune God.

God, the Holy Trinity, created freely, with no necessity to the Holy Trinity Itself. Creation was, and is, in no way necessary to God, nor is it in any way coeternal with Him. So referring to humanity: Orthodox Christianity teaches that mankind is not coeternal with God (for all of creation, including mankind, is not coeternal with God), but was created by God when God chose to create. Every human being is created by God, the Holy Trinity, with the body and soul being created “at one and the same time” (Patapios, 2000, p. 68). For as St. John of Damascus tells us: “[The] body and [the] soul were formed at one and the same time, not first the one and then the other, as Origen so senselessly supposes” (St. John of Damascus, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith).

51 “The Anathemas Against Origen” and “The Anathematisms of the Emperor Justinian against Origen” of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (A.D. 553) are, like all the proclamations of the Ecumenical Councils, very profound and edifying.

52 In this thesis, consistent with the expression of Orthodox theologians to be found in various writings and translations, the expressions “Divine Nature”, “Divine Essence”, or when written in all lower case letters, “divine nature”, “divine essence”, all mean the same thing, regardless if the letters are upper case or lower case. The expressions “Divine Nature”, “Divine Essence”, “divine nature”, “divine essence”, “Essence of God”, “Nature of God”, “essence of God”, “nature of God”, etc. are all synonymous.

53 Hieromonk Patapios apparently has inserted this bracketed entry.

54 Hieromonk Patapios apparently has inserted this bracketed entry.
Certainly what St. John of Damascus (ca. 675-749) tells us is consistent with the God-inspired wisdom of the Fifth Ecumenical Synod (A.D. 553), which proceeded him in history. The Fifth Ecumenical Synod in its First Anathema against the heretic Origen and those who agree with him says the following: ‘If anyone asserts the fabulous pre-existence of souls, and shall assert the monstrous restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] which follows from it: let him be anathema’ (Patapios, 2000, p. 68). Nothing pertaining to the human being is coeternal with or necessary to God, not the soul nor the body, nor anything else. This of course is consistent with the fact that all of creation, including humanity, is in no way coeternal with God, and in no way is it found in the very Essence or Nature of God (Gabriel, 2000, pp. 85, 100).

Many of these matters that we have just discussed are found in Fr. John Meyendorff’s brilliant research and presentation of Orthodox theology, pertaining to creation and its relationship to the Triune God. We see Fr. Meyendorff concisely contrasting the Orthodox Teaching pertaining to God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, with that of the teachings of some of the ancient heretics. With that in mind we observe the following:

Patristic thought on creation developed within the framework of age-long polemics against Origenism. The issue in the debate was the Greek concept of an eternal cosmos and the Biblical linear view of history, which began with the creative fiat. The starting point of Origen’s view on the origin of the world was that the act of creation was an expression of God’s nature and that, since this nature is changeless, there could never be a “time” when God would not be

53 These dates when St. John of Damascus lived are found in Hieromok Patapios’ book The Orthodox Church and The Orthodox way Reviewed on p. 68.
54 Hieromok Patapios has apparently inserted this bracketed entry, into the quotation he obtained, it is simply the Greek word for “restoration”.
creating. Consequently, the world has always existed, because God’s goodness has always needed an object [Origen, *De principiis*, I, 2, 10]. In Origenism, eternity of creation was, in fact, ontologically indistinguishable from the eternity of the Logos. Both proceeded eternally from God. This identification led Arius, after he had rejected the eternity of creation, to the concept that the Logos had also been generated in time. The anti-Arian theology of Athanasius of Alexandria defined the categories which became standard in later Byzantine authors: the distinction between generation and creation. (Meyendorff, 1974, p. 129)

Fr. Meyendorff goes on to tell us the following:

For Athanasius [St. Athanasios of Alexandria], creation is an act of the will of God, and will is ontologically distinct from nature. By nature, the Father generates the Son—and this generation is indeed beyond time—but creation occurs through the will of God, which means that God remains absolutely free to create or not to create, and remains transcendent to the world after creating it. The absence of a distinction between the nature of God and the will of God was common to Origen and to Arius. To establish this distinction constitutes the main argument of Athanasius.

It is totally impossible to consider the Father without the Son, because “the Son is not a creature which came into being by an act of will; by nature He is the proper Son of the essence [of the Father].” The Son, therefore, is God by nature, while “the nature of creatures which came in to being from nothing is fluid, impotent, mortal, and composite.”

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77 I have inserted this bracketed entry from information provided in the footnotes of the cited text.
78 I have inserted this bracketed entry.
79 This particular bracketed entry was made by Fr. Meyendorff, to help clarify to the reader what St. Athanasius [St. Athanasios of Alexandria] is saying.
80 This quotation is from St. Athanasios of Alexandria.
created in view of the world, Athanasius affirms that “it is not He who was
created for us, but we were created for Him.” In God the order of nature precedes
the order of volitive action, and is both superior to and independent of it. Because
God is what He is, He is not determined or in any way limited in what He does,
not even by His own essence and being.

Divine “nature” and created “nature” are, therefore, separate and totally
dissimilar modes of existence. The first is totally free from the second. Yet
creatures depend upon God; they exist “by His grace, His will, and His word...so
that they can even cease to exist, if the Creator so wishes.” 81 In Athanasius,
therefore, we have advanced quite far from Origen’s cosmos, which was
considered a necessary expression of God’s goodness identified with divine nature
itself. At this point one discovers that the notion of creation, as expressed by
Athanasius, leads to a distinction in God between His transcendent essence and
His properties, such as “power” or “goodness,” which express His existence and
action ad extra, not His essence.

The difference in nature between God and His creatures, as well as the
distinction between the “natural” generation of the Son by the Father, and creation
“by act of will,” is emphasized by both Cyril of Alexandria and John of
Damascus. The difference also represents the ontological raison d’etre of the
Chalcedonian definition on the “two natures” of Christ. The two natures can be
understood as being in “communion” with each other, as “hypostatically” united,
but they can never be “confused”--i.e., considered as “one nature”. (Meyendorff,
1974, pp. 129-130)

81 What is quoted is from St. Athanasios of Alexandria.
In the very last paragraph of the above quotation, seen within the light of Meyendorff’s earlier exposition of Orthodox theology pertaining to creation, we can see the dangers of the heresy of Monophysitism. Monophysitism makes the false claim that the Divine and Human Natures united by God the Word in His Divine Person or Hypostasis are really just one Nature. Indeed such erroneous affirmations, with their inherent pantheistic tendencies (Azkoul, 1986, pp. 180-181), deny the absolute transcendence of God in relation to all of what God has, without any necessity to Himself, freely created.

**DOCETISM** “From the Greek word *dokei* (it seems). One of the oldest heresies: the opinion that Christ’s body was unreal, a phantom” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 225). We will see, in the forthcoming discussion (in the thesis), how St. Justin Popovich points out the “docetic insensitivity” (Popovic, 2000, p. 155) of those willfully mired in the syncretistic practices of ecumenism. For indeed ecumenists by their very conduct, within their own man-made, relativistic philosophical system (known as ecumenism), look to essentially equate all the world’s religions and thereby, in the process, deny that the Holy Orthodox Church is uniquely the Body of Christ, with Christ our God as its Head. Ecumenism’s denial of Christ, through its denial of the uniqueness of the Holy Orthodox Church, as the one and only Body of Christ, established by Christ Himself, Who is its Head, is, in a sense, a form of docetism. Ecumenism denies the one absolute Truth, Christ. Ecumenism denies that Christ Himself is the one and only Truth, for it essentially looks to validate and unify all the heresies of the world, which are to be found throughout the world’s religions, into some sort of “syncretistic convergence” (The Holy Community of Mount Athos, 1999, part B, paragraph 30). But all these heresies, about which we speak, are of course completely foreign to Orthodox Christianity, which is uniquely the Church, which
is uniquely the Body of Christ, possessing the fulness of all truth by the unfathomable mercy of God. Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, condescended to become truly Incarnate, voluntarily suffered the passion, in His Humanity, and on the third day—for though He voluntarily became what He was not before, man, He remained what He was, God—He rose again and established the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church (the Holy Orthodox Church) on Himself to be His Body, to be forever present here on earth for all humanity. Ecumenism and all other humanistic philosophies, with their docetic tendencies, attempt to deny the unconquerable reality that the Holy Orthodox Church is uniquely the Church, the Body of Christ, with Christ our God as its Head.

**ECUMENISM** Within the context of our discussion, this term refers to the philosophical system, in which people promote the unification of the various religions under presuppositions, either explicitly or implicitly stated, which ignore or invalidate profound theological differences.

**ENERGY** Used theologically, that which radiates from the hidden essence or nature of God. The energies of God, such as grace, are not created, and allow the believer to enter into a personal relationship with God while preserving the unique character of God, whose essence always remains hidden from humanity. Moses was permitted to see the glory of God, His energies, but was forbidden to gaze on the face of God, His hidden essence. *See Ex. 33:18-23; 2 Pet. 1:2-4.* (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 797)

**ESSENCE** (Gr. ousia) Also translated as substance, nature or being. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are “of one essence”. Jesus Christ is “of one essence” with God the Father and the Holy Spirit in His divinity, and “of one essence” with all human beings in His humanity. God’s essence is beyond the
understanding and comprehension of His creatures. God can be known by humans through the divine energies and operations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Ex. 33:18-23). *(The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 797)*

**FATHER** (1) God the Father is one of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. God the Son is eternally begotten of God the Father. God the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from God the Father (see Matt. 28:19; John 14:10; 15:26). (2) “Father” is a title given to one’s spiritual father based on the custom of the Jews, who spoke of their father Abraham or their father David, and on the words of Paul, who called himself the father of his flock. *See* Luke 1:73; Acts 4:25 with center-column note; 1 Cor. 4:15. *(The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 798)*

**HERESY** Following one’s own choice or opinion instead of divine truth preserved by the Church [the Holy Orthodox Church], so as to cause division among Christians. Heresy is a system of thought which contradicts true doctrine. It is false teaching, which all true Christians must reject (Matt. 7:15; 2 Pet. 2:1). *(The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 800)*

**HOLY** Literally, “set apart” or separated unto God; also, blessed, righteous, sinless. The word, therefore, refers to God as the source of holiness, to the Church and its sacraments, to worshipers of the true God, and to those of outstanding virtue. Those who are transformed by the Holy Spirit become holy as God is holy (Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 2:9). *(The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 800)*

**HYPOSTASIS** A technical theological term for “person” or something which has
an individual existence. The word is used to describe the three Persons of the Godhead: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *Hypostasis* is also used to describe the one Person of Christ, who is both truly divine and truly human. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 800*)

**ICON** Image. Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). Because Christ is God who became Man, He can Himself be pictured or imaged. Thus, icons of Christ— together with those of His saints—express the reality of the Incarnation. Orthodox Christians honor or venerate icons, but never worship them, for worship is due to God alone. The honor given to icons passes on to the one represented on the icon, as a means of thanksgiving for what God has done in that person’s life. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 800*)

**INCARNATE** From Latin, meaning “to become flesh”. Christ is God Incarnate: He became flesh—that is, human—thereby sanctifying human flesh and reuniting all humanity to God. According to Orthodox doctrine, Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect Man (Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1-14; Phil. 2:5-7). (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 801*)

**JEW** Originally one of God’s chosen people who followed the covenant given to Moses by God. In the Old Testament, the Jews are (1) citizens of Judah; (2) the postexilic people of Israel; or (3) the worshipers of Yahweh. God chose the Jews to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God. Through Christ the distinction between Jew and Gentile has been overcome, and all those who follow Him have become the true chosen people of God. *See* Acts 22:3; Rom. 1:16; 2:28, 29; Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 2:9. (*The
Indeed, in the strictest sense, all relationship of creature with the Creator, God, is established by God Himself Who created all things from absolute nothingness, without in any way having been necessitated to create anything or anyone. God did not need a chosen people, any more than He needed any people. No people were necessary to God, for creation itself was not necessary to God. God did not, nor does He, need anything or anyone, for God did not even need to create. Only by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God do we even exist; all of creation exists only because it was created by God from absolute nothingness. The creation of everything and everyone was freely accomplished by God without any necessity to God whatsoever. God created all things, including humanity, and God calls all people to righteously exercise their free will, with which they have been created, in order to pursue sanctification through the Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who, without any necessity to Himself whatsoever, condescended to become what He was not before, man--while remaining what He eternally is, God--for the salvation of the human race. Thus only by the unfathomable grace of the Triune God do we even exist and are given the opportunity to pursue sanctification through the Only-Begotten Son of God, Christ. Christ is the Only-Begotten Son of God, He is God Himself, Who, voluntarily (for the Incarnation, just like creation, was in no way necessary to God), became Incarnate to save us and sanctify us. So, regarding Christ our God, consistent with Holy Orthodox Tradition, it is true that “all those who follow Him have become the true chosen people of God” (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 801).

KENOSIS  Literally, “emptying”. The word is associated with humility or humiliation. God the Word humbled Himself by becoming man (with no change in
His divinity), suffering death on the Cross for the world and its salvation (Phil. 2:5-8). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 801)

**LITURGY**  The work or public service of the people of God, which is the worship of the one true God. The Divine Liturgy is the Eucharistic service of the Orthodox Church. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 802)

**MARTYR**  (Gr. martyria)  Literally, “a witness”. Normally, the term is used to describe those who give their lives for Christ. Martyria has two meanings: (1) witness or testimony, especially that which God bears to Christians, and which Christians bear to the world; and (2) martyrdom, especially Christ’s Passion, and the martyrdom of Christians for the faith (see John 1:6-15; Acts 6:8-7:60). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, pp. 802-803)

**MILLENNIUM**  A thousand years. The Orthodox Church has traditionally taught that the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth before the final defeat of Satan, as recorded in Rev. 20:1-3, is symbolic of the rule of Christ through the Church, which is a manifestation of the Kingdom of God (see 2 Pet. 3:8). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 803)

**MODERNISM**  The attempt to change the teachings and/or practices of the Orthodox Church in order to conform Her to the moral and intellectual climate of opinion. It also suggests that the special and exclusive claims of the Church be denied; Her worship altered. (Azkoul, 1986, p. 227)

**MONOPHYSITISM**  “The christological heresy that in Christ there is only one nature (physis) and one will or energy (Monotheletism)” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 227).

**MYSTERY**  The ways of God, especially God’s plan for salvation, which cannot
be known with the rational, finite human mind, but can be experienced only by the revelation of God. The Orthodox Church also uses the term *mystery* for the sacraments of the Church. *See* Mark 4:11; 1 Cor. 2:7, 8; Eph. 5:32. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 803)

**MYSTICISM** In the post-Orthodox Western sense, mysticism means a direct and super-intellectual knowledge of ultimate reality. In this sense, the life of the Church is not required; it may even be an obstacle to the mystic. Orthodox mysticism presupposes membership in the Church and participation in Her Mysteries. The purpose of mysticism is union with God; hence all members of the Church are mystics to some degree. (Azkoul, 1986, p. 227)


**THE ORTHODOX CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST** Orthodox Christianity never forgets its saints, for they are forever alive in the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, and this is so, only by the infinite mercy of the Triune God. For, when these saints contested against the enemies of Christ and against their own sinfulness, they were in the Church “Militant”, the Orthodox Church here on earth, striving for the heavenly reward, salvation and sanctification, eternal life, promised to them by Christ the Theanthropos. Having “fought the good fight”, these Orthodox saints “finished the race”; and, throughout their great martyric struggles, they “kept the faith”, teaching all of us to follow them and do the same (2 Tim 4:7).

Against tremendous oppression and hardship, the Orthodox saints, by the mercy of God, emerged victorious for all Orthodox Christians, and for the whole world. And
even after their deaths, these Orthodox saints (and countless of them have lived throughout history) are alive, in heaven, and, along with countless angels and archangels, they comprise the Church “Triumphant”, the Orthodox Church in heaven. All those in the Church “Triumphant” intercede before God for the salvation of all Orthodox Christians in the Church “Militant” (the Orthodox Church here on earth), and for all the rest of humanity, as well. Orthodox theologians rightfully confess that at every liturgical service of the Orthodox Church, it is always the Church “Triumphant” and the Church “Militant”, which are both present--together comprising the entire Holy Orthodox Church--worshipping the Triune God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The historical Person, Jesus Christ, is none other than the Pre-eternal Son of God, God Himself, Who voluntarily became what He was not before, a human being, while remaining what He eternally is, God. For this reason, in Orthodox Tradition, Christ is called the God-Man, the Theanthropos, for as the eternal God He did not need to become Incarnate and be seen to dwell among men, but for the salvation and sanctification of the world, which He created, He did just that; He humbled Himself by becoming man, He voluntarily became Incarnate and as the Theanthropos (the God-Man), He unites heaven and earth in His Body. Christ the Theanthropos does this, not just with His own physical Body--which He chose to create from the flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary, when He voluntarily became Incarnate--but also with His Holy Orthodox Church, which--after His glorious Resurrection on the third day and Ascension into heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of the Father--He uniquely established to be His Body, here on earth, and of which He is the Head. Christ established His Holy Orthodox Church on the day of Pentecost, where as the Body of Christ, it is His unconquerable presence here on earth. Just as the Incarnation of the Son of God was real, so the establishment, by the
Theanthropos, of the one and only Body of Christ, here on earth, which unites heaven and earth, is also real, and it is the Holy Orthodox Church.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY The Holy Orthodox Christian Faith is, for Orthodox Christians, the one and only True Faith. Orthodox Christianity is the living, unconquerable, and eternal Faith received on the day of Pentecost by the Holy Apostles. Orthodox Christianity, as the one and only True Faith, is uniquely found in, and is uniquely confessed by, the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, which is uniquely the Body of Christ, with Christ the Theanthropos (the God-Man) as its Head. The Holy Orthodox Church, fully and uniquely possessing the Orthodox (True) Faith, was established by Christ Himself, through the Holy Apostles, and it is uniquely the Church. In a sense, depending upon the context of a particular discussion and the semantics employed, Orthodox Christianity and the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ are one and the same. In short, depending upon the context, Orthodox Christianity can mean the Faith or the Church or both. This is what Orthodox Christians believe about their Faith and their Church:

For two thousand years the Orthodox Church has, by God’s mercy, kept the faith delivered to the saints. Within her walls is the fullness of the salvation which was realized when “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

(The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 792)

PANTHEISM “The philosophical opinion that God (theos) is everything (pan): all space and time is God; all reality is divine by nature” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 227).

PENTECOST Originally an OT [Old Testament] harvest festival celebrated

[126] The bracketed entry is mine. “OT” here is an abbreviation of Old Testament.
fifty days following Passover. In time, Pentecost became the commemoration of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Pentecost took on a new meaning with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost. Through the Sacrament of Chrismation, Orthodox Christians experience their own personal Pentecost. Every Divine Liturgy becomes a Pentecost through the descent of the Holy Spirit on the faithful and the gifts (the bread and wine), transforming them [the bread and wine]\(^{83}\) into the Body and Blood of Christ. See Ex. 23:14-17; Lev. 23:15-21; Acts 2:1-41. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 804)

RAPTURE The gathering of the Church on earth in the presence of Christ when He comes again to judge the living and the dead (1 Thess. 4:15-17). Orthodox theologians reject the recent minority view that the Church will be taken out the world before the time of trouble preceding the Second Coming. Christ specifically teaches the faithful will experience the trials of tribulation (Matt. 24:4-28). (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 805)

RATIONALISM “From the Latin word for reason (ratio). The attitude that reality can be understood by the human intellect; and sometimes it means that nothing is true unless it passes rational inspection” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 228).

RELATIVISM “In modern terms, PLURALISM; the notion that everyone is right in his moral and religious beliefs; the denial of absolute truth; values change from time to time and place to place” (Azkoul, 1986, p. 228).

REMEMBRANCE (Gr. anamnesis) Making present by means of recollection. The Eucharist is not merely a calling to mind but a remembrance of and mystical

\(^{83}\) The bracketed entry is mine.
participation in the very sacrifice of Christ, His Resurrection, His Ascension, and His coming again (1 Cor. 11:23-26). *(The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 805)

**REPENTANCE** Literally, “a change of mind” or attitude, and thus of behavior. God is the author of repentance, which is an integral part of baptism, confession, and ongoing spiritual life. Repentance is not simply sorrow for sins but a firm determination to turn away from sin to a new life of righteousness in Jesus Christ. *See Matt. 4:17; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 1:9. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 806)

**RESURRECTION** The reunion of the soul and body after death which will revitalize and transform the physical body into a spiritual body. Jesus Himself is the firstfruits of perfect resurrection; He will never again be subject to death. Because He conquered death by His Resurrection, all will rise again: the righteous to life with Christ, the wicked to judgment. *See John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:35-55. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 806)

**SACRAMENT** Literally, a “mystery”. A sacrament is a way in which God imparts grace to His people. Orthodox Christians frequently speak of seven sacraments, but God’s gift of grace is not limited only to these seven--the entire life of the Church is mystical and sacramental. The sacraments were instituted by Christ Himself (John 1:16, 17). The seven mysteries are baptism (Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27), chrismation (Acts 8:15-17; 1 John 2:27), the Holy Eucharist (Matt. 26:26-28; John 6:30-58; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-31), confession (John 20:22, 23; 1 John 1:8, 9), ordination (Mark 3:14; Acts 1:15-26; 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 4:14), marriage (Gen. 2:18-25; Eph. 5:22-23), and healing or unction.

**SACRIFICE** To offer something up to God. In the Old Covenant, God commanded His people to sacrifice animals, grain, or oil as an act of thanksgiving, praise, forgiveness, and cleansing. However, these sacrifices were only a foreshadowing of the one perfect sacrifice—Christ, the Word of God, who left the heavenly glory to humble Himself by becoming Man, giving His life as a sacrifice on the Cross to liberate humanity from the curse of sin and death. In the Eucharist, the faithful participate in the all-embracing, final and total sacrifice of Christ. See Lev. 1:1-7:38; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 9:1-10:18. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 806)

**SAINT** Literally, “a holy person”. With God as the source of true holiness, all Christians are called to be saints (see Rom. 16:2; 1 Cor. 1:1, 2). But from the earliest times, the Church has designated certain outstanding men and women who have departed this life and reached deification as worthy of veneration and canonization as saints or holy persons. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 807)

In Orthodox Christianity, all the holy persons of the Old and New Testaments, and all the holy persons who lived afterwards, throughout the unmatched history of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, are called saints. In Orthodox Christianity, all who have become holy persons throughout the ages, and this they were able to accomplish only by the unfathomable mercy and grace of the Triune God, are called saints. Many saints are known to the Holy Orthodox Church, and they are rightfully venerated and honored, there are also countless Orthodox saints and martyrs who have lived and died for Christ
and His Holy Orthodox Church throughout history, whom we do not know, but God knows who they are, and they also are great heroes and saints of Orthodox Christianity.

SALVATION  The fulfillment of humanity in Christ, through deliverance from the curse of sin and death, to union with God through Christ the Savior. Salvation includes a process of growth of the whole person whereby the sinner is changed into the image and likeness of God. One is saved by faith through grace. However, saving faith is more than mere belief. It must be a living faith manifested by works of righteousness, whereby we cooperate with God to do His will. We receive the grace of God for salvation through participation in the sacramental life of the Church.  See articles [In The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms], “the New Birth”, at John 3; “Justification by Faith”, at Rom. 5; and “Deification”, at 2 Pet. 1; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16; 5:17; Eph. 2:8, 9; Phil. 2:12, 13; James 2:14-26; 1 Pet. 2:2.  (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 807)

SCHOLASTICISM  A term commonly used to denote the most typical products of medieval philosophy and theology. Developed in the post-Orthodox Western universities and schools, the Scholastics hoped by uniting the Christian Faith with Greek philosophy and Roman law to prove that Christianity was wholly compatible with human reason. (Azkoul, 1986, p. 228)

SECOND COMING  At the end of the ages, Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. Following the judgment, a new heaven and new earth will take the place of the old earth, which has been scarred by sin. Because Christ is already present through the Church [The Holy Orthodox Church], Christians enter into the Kingdom through their participation in the sacramental life of the

**SIN** (Gr. *hamartia*) Literally, “missing the mark”. This word in ancient Greek could describe the action of an archer who failed to hit the target. All humans are sinners who miss the mark of perfection that God has set for His people, resulting in alienation from God, sinful actions that violate the law of God, and ultimately in death. See Matt. 5:48; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 1 John 1:8. (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 807)

**THE SUPRASUBSTANTIAL TRINITY** (In Greek, *Hyperousia Trias*) Refers to the Holy Trinity, which is absolutely above any “essence”, “nature”, or “substance”. For the very nature or essence of the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One True God, is itself--strictly speaking and paradoxically, according to Orthodox Tradition--infinitely beyond nature or essence. This is the meaning of the terminology, *Suprasubstantial* or *Supra-essential*, referring to the Holy Trinity, the One True God, and Its very essence or nature, which is absolutely transcendent--forever beyond any comprehension or any participation, whatsoever. The very nature or essence of God is infinitely beyond being itself, comprehensible only to God, Whose very nature or essence it is. God *is* the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; there is no other God. Only the Holy Trinity knows Its very essence or nature, and this very essence or nature is never, in any way, communicated outside of the Holy Trinity Itself, to anyone or anything. We know that God exists and is none other than the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but what the very essence or nature of God is, is known only by God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Whose very essence or nature it is.
SYNCRETISM  “a combination, reconciliation, or coalescence of varying, often mutually opposed beliefs, principles, or practices, esp. [especially] those of various religions, into a new conglomerate whole typically marked by internal inconsistencies” (Agnes, 1999, p. 1452).

SYNERGISM  (from Gr. *syn*: same, together; *ergos*: energy, work)  Working together, the act of cooperation. In referring to the New Testament, synergism is the idea of being “workers together with” God (2 Cor. 6:1), or of working “out your own salvation...for it is God who works in you” (Phil. 2:12, 13). This is not a cooperation between “equals”, but finite man working together with Almighty God. Nor does synergism suggest working for, or earning, salvation. God offers salvation by His grace, and man’s ability to cooperate also is a grace. Therefore, man responds to salvation through cooperation with God’s grace in living faith, righteous works and rejection of evil (James 2:14-26). (*The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, 1993, p. 808)

THEANTHROPOS  This word is from the Greek language, it means literally, God-Man, it refers to Christ the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, Who voluntarily became what He was not before, man, while remaining what He eternally is, God.

THEOSIS  The word is from the Greek language, and is understood in Orthodox theology as “deification”, or, sometimes referred to as, “sanctification”. The Suprasubstantial Trinity, under no necessity whatsoever, created humanity from absolute nothingness so that humanity could pursue union with God, in His energies, but not in His essence (for that would be impossible⁶⁴). God, the Suprasubstantial Trinity, under no necessity

⁶⁴ The Orthodox confession of the impossibility of union with God, in His essence, for any creature, is mentioned in *The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms*, p. 561. We note, of course, that this particular confession is to be seen throughout Holy Orthodox Tradition.
whatsoever, by His infinite grace created humanity and calls on each person to pursue “theosis” (“deification” or “sanctification”), which means that by the grace of the Triune God we become “more like God” (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). In *theosis*, we become “godlike”, while forever remaining created and human (both in this life and the next), and God forever remains what He eternally is, Uncreated and God (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 561). Thus there is no pantheism in this Orthodox affirmation, related to our God given existence and our calling from God to pursue that for which God created us. For God created all things and then offers to humanity the opportunity for theosis without, in any way, having been necessitated to do either (create or offer the opportunity for theosis).

For indeed creation, the Incarnation, and the opportunity for theosis, offered to humanity by God and made possible for humanity by the voluntary Incarnation of God the Word, are all in no way necessary to God. With these things in mind, we consider the following:

When the Son of God assumed our humanity in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the process of our being renewed in God’s image and likeness was begun. Thus, those who are joined to Christ through faith in Holy Baptism begin a re-creation process, being renewed in God’s image and likeness. We become, as St. Peter writes, “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4).

Because of the Incarnation of the Son of God, because the fullness of God has inhabited human flesh, being joined to Christ means that it is again possible to experience *deification*, the fulfillment of our human destiny. That is, through union with Christ, we become by grace what God is by nature— we “become children of God” (John 1:12). His deity interpenetrates our humanity.

Historically, deification has often been illustrated by the “sword and fire”
example. A steel sword is thrust into a hot fire until the sword takes on a red glow. The energy of the fire interpenetrates the sword. The sword never becomes fire, but it picks up the properties of fire.

By application, the divine energies interpenetrate the human nature of Christ. Being joined to Christ, our humanity is interpenetrated with the energies of God through Christ’s glorified flesh. Nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, we partake of the grace of God--His strength, His righteousness, His love--and are enabled to serve Him and glorify Him. Thus we, being human, are being deified.


TRADITION That which is handed down, transmitted. Tradition is the life of the Church in the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit leads the Church “into all truth” (John 16:13) and enables her to preserve the truth taught by Christ to His Apostles. The Holy Scriptures are the core of Holy Tradition, as interpreted through the writings of the Fathers, the Ecumenical Councils, and the worship of the Church [The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ]. Together, these traditions manifest the faith of the ancient undivided Church [The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ], inspired by the Holy Spirit to preserve the fullness of the gospel. See John 21:25; Acts 15:1-29; 2 Thess. 2:15. (The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 809)
Appendix and Glossary References


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