

# Apoteichisis

## Heavenly Communion

The Church, the Communion of the Saints, and the Preservation  
of Communion with God in a Time of Heresy

In the spirit of the Holy Fathers, the Sacred Canons, and the confessing Saints

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We who have written this book are laymen of the Orthodox Church. We hold no episcopal office, and nothing in these pages speaks with an authority we do not possess. This book pronounces no deposition, no anathema, and no official judgment upon any person. It names no living person, and it adjudicates the case of no living hierarch, priest, or layman. It does not teach rebellion against the Church. It does not invent a private church. It does not usurp the authority that belongs to the bishops and to the councils. Its single aim is fidelity to Christ within His one Church; and wherever it treats of matters genuinely disputed among the Orthodox, it says so plainly.

*To the confessors of the Orthodox Faith in every generation, who loved the truth more than their own safety, who would not exchange the Faith of the Fathers for the peace of the world, and who proved that the narrow way is the way of life. And to those who stand today between fear and presumption, asking how to remain faithful without becoming proud, that they may find the sober path of the Saints.*

May the prayers of Saint Athanasius the Great, Saint Maximus the Confessor, Saint Theodore the Studite, and Saint Mark of Ephesus accompany every reader.

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# Preface

This book answers one question: how does a Christian keep his communion with God when the shepherds themselves begin to preach against the Faith?

The question is old. It was asked under the Arians, under the iconoclasts, and at Florence. It is asked again in our own day. And the Church has an answer, written in her canons and lived out in her saints. The answer is called in Greek *apoteichisis*, which means walling off. This book exists to explain that answer whole, exactly, and plainly; for the charge laid upon every generation is the Apostle's own: *earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints* (Jude 3).

We have tried to write so that two readers can walk together through these pages. The first reader wants every canon weighed and every Father cited. For him, the sources stand in the footnotes and the quotations stand in the text, so that nothing rests on our own authority. The second reader wants, before anything else, simply to understand. For him, the whole teaching is given in plain words immediately after the Introduction, and every chapter closes with a few plain sentences marked *In plain words*, which gather up the chapter so simply that a child could carry them. Nothing in the plain sentences differs from the body of the book. They are the same teaching, in the same faith, said in a smaller cup. And because this is the Comprehension Edition, a figure stands beside each major teaching, gathering it into a single image; the reader who forgets a chapter may often recover it by remembering its picture.

Above all, we have tried to be honest. A book on this subject that hides the difficulties flatters its reader, and then abandons him in the first real storm. So we have set down not only the saints who

walled off and were crowned, but also the men who separated wrongly and were condemned; not only the failures of hierarchs, but the sins of zealots; not only what the canon protects, but where its protection stops. Where a matter is genuinely disputed among the Orthodox, we say so. Where a source is uncertain, we mark it. The truth has never needed our exaggerations, and the reader deserves none.

Read slowly, and read to the end, for the parts guard each other. The chapters on the Church guard the chapters on the wall from pride; the chapters on the wall guard the chapters on the Church from cowardice; and the last chapter, which is about a banquet, is the reason for all the others. May the Lord, whose Body the Church is, keep every reader in the one Faith, at the one altar, unto the day when every wall comes down because every wound is healed.

# Why Apoteichisis Is Heavenly Communion

Begin with the word that this whole book serves: *communion*. It is the most beautiful word in the vocabulary of the Church, and it carries two meanings that belong together.

Communion means, first, union with God. It is the life of the Holy Trinity given to man: sealed in Baptism, fed at the chalice, perfected in the age to come. And communion means, second, union with one another in the Church: one faith, one baptism, one altar, one visible fellowship of believers under their shepherds. In the healthy life of the Church these two are one thing, as a branch's union with the vine and its union with the other branches are one life. The second exists for the sake of the first, and the first flows through the second.

But what happens when a shepherd begins to preach, openly, a teaching the Church has already condemned as false? Then the two meanings of communion, which God joined, are forced apart by men, and the Christian is placed before a terrible choice. If he keeps the second communion, the visible fellowship, by naming and following the false teacher as his own in the Faith, he begins to lose the first; for no man is united to the Truth while confessing a lie at the altar. If, to keep the first, he simply flees the Church altogether, he loses both; for there is no communion with the Head apart from the Body.

The saints found the narrow way between. They kept the Faith *and* they kept the Church. They ceased to commemorate the false teacher, while remaining, in faith and love and Mysteries, exactly where they had always been. That narrow way is apoteichisis. It is not a departure from communion. It is the guarding of heavenly

communion when earthly shepherds betray it. And that is why this book bears the name it bears.

The word itself teaches the manner. *Teichos* is a city wall; *apoteichisis* is the raising of a wall against a besieger. Consider what a wall is, and what it is not. A wall is not a sword: it attacks no one. A wall is not a road out of the city: the man who builds it stays inside. The wall is raised against the heresy, never against the Church. The builder remains a citizen, keeps the city's law, and waits upon the city's courts, which in the Church are her councils. Whoever turns the wall into a sword, or into a road out, has left the teaching of this book on one side or the other; and half our labour in these pages is to show, from the history of the saints and of the schisms, exactly where each side lies.

The book walks in five stages. First, the Church: what she is, how the one Eucharist makes her one Body at one altar, what heresy and schism each break, and why love is the foundation of everything. Second, the canon: the Scriptures' command to come out from false teaching, the fifteenth canon of the First and Second Council which gives that command its churchly form, and the meaning of the name spoken in the Liturgy. Third, the two walls: the saints whose walling off the Church has crowned, and the counterfeit separations, ancient and modern, that she has condemned, with the marks that tell them apart. Fourth, the life behind the wall: the Mysteries, the questions of conscience, and the hidden faithful. And fifth, the return and the banquet: how walls come down, and what all of this was for. Over the whole journey stands one proverb, the motto of every confessor: *Buy the truth, and sell it not* (Proverbs 23:23).

## **In plain words**

Communion means being one with God, and being one with His Church. A false teacher tries to make you choose between them. The saints refused to choose: they stopped saying the false teacher's name in church, but they stayed inside the Church, kept the true faith, and waited for her councils. That careful staying and refusing is called walling off, and this book explains how the saints did it, and how to do it without falling into the opposite sin of tearing the Church.

# The Whole Teaching in Plain Words

Some readers will walk the long road of this book chapter by chapter, weighing every canon and every Father. Others need the whole teaching in a handful of plain words before the road begins, or a place to return to when the argument grows heavy. This page is for them. Everything said here briefly is said again in the book at length, with its proofs; and nothing is said here that the book does not prove.

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The Church is not a building, an organization, or a club of the like minded. She is the Body of Christ, joined to Him as a body to its head, so truly that the Lord could say to a man persecuting Christians, *why persecutest thou Me*. There is one Church, as there is one Christ. To belong to her is to hold her faith, to receive her Mysteries, and to live her life; and to be cut off from her is to be cut off from life itself. That is why every question in this book matters so much.

## WHAT IS THE ONE ALTAR?

Saint Paul teaches that the cup of blessing is the communion of the blood of Christ, and the broken bread the communion of His body: *for we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread*. The Church, then, is not a club that also has sacraments; she is the one Body which the one Eucharist creates. And because the whole Christ, not a portion of Him, lies on every true holy table, the thousands of Orthodox altars across the earth are in reality one altar, joined visibly to one another through the bishops who are named at each and through the one faith they all confess, and joined to the altar of heaven itself. To commune at an altar is to be made one body with all that it confesses. That is why commemoration matters so much, why the cup can never be allowed to seal a false confession, and why this book is called Heavenly Communion.

## WHAT IS HERESY?

Heresy is a false teaching about the faith itself: about God, about Christ, about the Church, about salvation. It is not bad behaviour but a poisoned confession. The Church forgives every sin that is repented, no matter how dark; she cannot make room within herself for a false confession, because the true confession is the one treasure she was created to guard. Sin is a wound in a member; heresy is poison in the blood. The Church endures the first with patience, and cannot endure the second at all.

## WHAT IS SCHISM?

Schism is dividing the Church over something that is not the faith: a quarrel, a rite, a personal accusation, a custom, an ambition, a nation. The Fathers call it a grave sin even when the separators believe all the right things, because it tears the one Body of Christ over what was never worth a tear. And Saint Basil warned that a schism persisted in hardens, with time, into something like a heresy.

## **WHAT IS WALLING OFF?**

Walling off, in Greek, apoteichisis, is this: when a bishop begins to preach, openly and publicly, a heresy that the Church has already condemned, the faithful stop commemorating his name in the services and stop being in communion with him, before any council has judged him. The fifteenth canon of the First and Second Council of Constantinople, held in the year 861, says that those who do this are not schismatics and deserve the honour due to the Orthodox; for they have not torn the Church, they have laboured to rescue her from the tearing.

## **WHY IS COMMEMORATION SO SERIOUS?**

Because naming a bishop in the Divine Liturgy is a public declaration before God: I believe what this man believes; I stand where he stands. When he holds the true faith, that declaration is a joy. When he openly preaches condemned heresy, the declaration becomes a lie told at the altar; and Saint Theodore the Studite taught that it stains even the Orthodox man who makes it. The wall exists so that the faithful do not have to tell that lie.

## **WHAT IS WALLING OFF NOT?**

It is not leaving the Church; it is refusing to leave her when a false shepherd walks out of the faith. It is not the founding of a new church: the walled off may not consecrate bishops of their own, set up a rival hierarchy, declare other people's Mysteries empty, or pass sentence on anyone's soul, for all judgment of persons belongs to God and to the Church in council. And it is never for personal grievances, moral scandals, calendars, rites, nationalities, or suspicions. It is for one cause only: open, already condemned heresy.

## **WHEN IS SEPARATION WRONG?**

Whenever the cause is anything less than that. History is full of the wrong kind, and this book tells its story honestly. The Novatians separated over strictness toward repentant sinners; the Donatists over a personal accusation that proved false; the Old Believers over the correction of rites; and in our own age the Old Calendarist synods of Greece, the self named Genuine Orthodox, over the reckoning of the feasts. Each of them raised a rival altar, and each was condemned, even though each believed itself the faithful remnant. In every crisis both kinds of separation appear side by side, the lawful and the unlawful, and they can look alike at first. The difference is the cause, the manner, and the spirit; and the book teaches the reader to test all three.

## **MUST EVERYONE WALL OFF AT ONCE?**

The refusal to make open, condemned heresy one's own confession binds every Orthodox conscience, for the defence of the faith is not optional. But the moment and the manner of each soul's step call for guidance, sobriety, and love, not haste. The timid and the confused are to be strengthened, not cursed. Those who in good conscience still stand within, grieving and protesting, are not thereby heretics. And the man who runs ahead of the canon, separating over suspicions and raising altars, falls off the other side of the same narrow road.

## **WHAT IS THE SPIRIT OF THE WHOLE MATTER?**

Love. The wall is raised weeping, or it should not be raised at all. Hate the heresy and love the man caught in it. Refuse the false communion and pray for those you must stand apart from. Keep the heart humble, for a correct confession in a proud heart saves no one. And wait, in patience, for the Church to gather in council and set all things right, as she has done after every storm in her history.

## **WHERE DOES IT ALL END?**

At the marriage supper of the Lamb. The wall is not the goal; the goal is the unbroken communion of the soul with Christ, kept safe through the storm until the truth is vindicated, as it always has been, and the faithful come home to the banquet that has no end. Everything in this book exists for that, and for nothing else.

# The Pillar and Ground of the Truth

Every teaching in this book stands or falls with one question: what is the Church? Answer it wrongly, and everything that follows will be wrong with it. Answer it as the Apostles answered it, and the rest unfolds like a road.

So we begin where Saint Paul begins, with a picture. The Church, he says, is *the pillar and ground of the truth*. A pillar holds something up, so that all may see it. A ground holds something firm, so that nothing can shake it. The Church exists to hold the truth of God up before the world, and to hold it steady through the ages. The truth is her treasure, her charge, and her very reason for being. Take the truth out of the picture, and the pillar stands holding up nothing.

## THE BODY AND ITS HEAD

But the Church is more than a keeper of truth. She is a living Body, and the truth runs in her like blood. When the risen Lord stopped Saul on the Damascus road, He did not ask, why persecutest thou My followers. He asked, *why persecutest thou Me*. Saul was striking Christians; Christ said the blows fell on Himself.

Here is the deepest fact about the Church, and a child can hold it: the Church is the Body of Christ, joined to Him as a body is joined to its head. She is not a club of people who admire Jesus. She is the continuation of His life in the world. Whoever touches her touches Him. Whoever is cut off from her is cut off from Him, for a hand severed from the body does not live on its own.

A New Martyr of our own century, Saint Hilarion of Verey, who died for this confession in the Soviet camps, restated the ancient fact in three sentences:

*There is no salvation outside the Church, and there are no Sacraments outside the Church. Outside the Church and without the Church, Christian life is impossible. Without the Church, the Christian teaching alone remains as an empty sound, for Christian life is Church life.*

Saint Hilarion (Troitsky), New Martyr<sup>6</sup>

Christian life is Church life: the teaching alone, cut loose from the Body, is a sound and not a salvation. Hold this fast, for everything in the coming chapters, the wall included, exists to keep a soul inside this Body, and never to invent a way of being Christian apart from her.

## THE FOUR MARKS

Because she is His Body, the Church bears the marks of her Head, and the Creed names four of them: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

*One*, because Christ is one and a body has one head; there cannot be two Churches any more than two Christs. *Holy*, not because her members are sinless, they are not, but because her Head is holy and her life is His life. *Catholic*, which means whole and universal: she holds the whole faith, for the whole man, in the whole world. *Apostolic*, because she is built on the foundation the Apostles laid, and has never left it.

These four marks are a test as well as a confession. A teaching that would make the Church many instead of one, or would trade her apostolic faith for a newer one, breaks the Creed at the root. Remember this, for the book will return to it when it weighs the errors of our own age.

## THE HANDS AND THE FAITH

How was this Body built? Not from an idea, but from an event; and the event has a shape that still governs everything. The Lord chose Apostles, breathed on them, and gave them the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost the Spirit descended, and the Church stood in the world. The Apostles then did what builders do: they laid hands on faithful men, ordaining bishops; those bishops laid hands on others; and so the grace of the priesthood has been handed on, hand to hand, in one unbroken chain from that upper room to the altar of your own parish. Over the whole chain stands the Lord's promise: *lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*. The Fathers call this the apostolic succession, and it is one of the golden threads of the Church's life.

But mark carefully *what* is handed on, for here many go astray. What passes from hand to hand is not bare authority, as an office passes in a kingdom. It is authority together with the faith. The hands and the confession go together. A bishop stands in the succession of the Apostles only while he stands in the faith of the Apostles. The chain is a chain of true confession sealed by true ordination; and a link that abandons the confession has, by that abandonment, begun to break itself, whatever certificates it holds. Hold this double thread, hands and faith together, for it will explain, when we come to it, how the saints could honour the episcopate with their whole hearts and yet refuse a particular bishop who betrayed the faith.

## THE HOUSE UPON THE ROCK

The Scriptures give one more picture, and it completes the first. The Church is a house built upon rock: Christ Himself is the cornerstone, the Apostles and prophets are the foundation, and the faithful are the living stones built into its walls. The roof that shelters the household is the grace of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church into all truth. The doors and windows are the holy Mysteries: by Baptism we enter, by the Eucharist we are fed, by repentance we are restored when we fall.

A house is a single structure. One cannot live in the roof without the walls, or claim the cornerstone while quitting the building. And a house has an Architect. No man may build a house of his own beside it and call his the house of God, for whatever is raised outside the Architect's design must crumble. Hold that sentence too, for the schisms this book describes are all, in the end, houses built beside the House.

*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house... to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

First Peter 2:5<sup>7</sup>

Saint Cyprian, the martyr bishop of Carthage, gathered all these pictures into images the Church has never forgotten. The Church is one as the sun is one, though its rays are many; as a tree is one, though its branches are many; as a spring is one, though many streams flow from it. Break a ray from the sun, and it is darkness. Break a branch from the tree, and it withers. And then Cyprian said the terrible, tender sentence that stands over this whole book:

*He can no longer have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother.... Whosoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress, is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ.*

Let no reader hurry past that. Everything this book will say about heresy, about walling off, about the narrow way between cowardice and schism, is said because of that sentence. If the Church were a human society, a man might leave one and join another as he changes cities. Because she is the Body of Christ and the mother of the living, to be truly cut off from her is to be cut off from life. Therefore the two great sins this book warns against, the sin of poisoning her faith, and the sin of tearing her body, are both, in their different ways, sins against life itself. The whole art of the confessor, which the saints will teach us chapter by chapter, is to resist the first sin without committing the second.

## **THE BRIDE ADORNING HERSELF**

One last picture, the tenderest, answers a question that troubles some readers before they open a book like this. The Church we see today, with her icons and feasts, her vestments and chants and the intercession of the saints, looks so much richer than the bare assemblies of the first days. Has she not changed?

She has adorned herself, which is a different thing. The Church is the Bride of Christ, and across the centuries the Bride has been dressing for the marriage: the confession of the Trinity and of Christ's two natures, defined by the councils; the holy icons, which witness that God truly became man; the veneration of the Theotokos and the saints, who are alive in Christ; the feasts, the fasts, the sign of the Cross; and above all the Eucharist, the very Body and Blood of the Lord. These are not additions against the Apostles. They are the unfolding of what the Apostles planted, jewels given by the Bridegroom Himself. To strip them away is not to find a purer Church but to undress the Bride; and to keep her garment unspotted until the marriage is exactly what the confessors of every age, and this book after them, are labouring to do.

*That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Ephesians 5:27<sup>9</sup>

## In plain words

The Church is the Body of Christ: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. She holds up God's truth like a pillar, hands it down from bishop to bishop like a torch, shelters us like a house, and is being dressed like a bride for a wedding. To be cut off from her is to be cut off from Christ. So this book will teach two things at once: never let her faith be poisoned, and never tear her body, because both would strike the same beloved Church.

## Notes and sources

6. Saint Hilarion (Troitsky), Archbishop of Verey (1886 to 1929), New Martyr, glorified in 2000; from his writings *Christianity or the Church?* and *The Sin Against the Church*, the maxim being recorded by his biographers as his continual reminder. He died a confessor of the Solovki camps, restating for the twentieth century the teaching of Saint Cyprian, that he cannot have God for his Father who will not have the Church for his mother, quoted in the chapter on the counterfeit wall.

7. 1 Peter 2:5 (KJV). Cf. Ephesians 2:20 to 22, where the household of God is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

8. Saint Cyprian of Carthage, *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate* 6 (c. 251). The celebrated images, the one sun with many rays, the one tree with many branches, the one spring with many streams, express that the Church's unity is organic and not federative; the maxim on God as Father and the Church as mother stands in the same chapter.

9. Ephesians 5:27 (KJV), of Christ and the Church; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:2, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

# One Bread, One Cup, One Altar

## *The Church Is in the One Eucharist*

The first chapter answered what the Church is. Now we must ask what holds this Body together, and the answer decides everything else in this book.

## THE APOSTLE POINTS AT THE CHALICE

Men speak of communion as though it named a mood of goodwill, a general friendliness among believers. The Apostle will not allow it. When Paul wished to say what communion is, he did not reach for a theory. He pointed at the chalice.

*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.*

First Corinthians 10:16 to 17

Read the sentence until its order sinks in, for the whole doctrine of the Church is in the order. Paul does not say that we, being already one body by agreement, therefore share a meal as its symbol. He says the reverse: we are one body *because* we all partake of the one bread. The cup is not a picture of a communion that exists somewhere else. The cup *is* the communion. The one loaf makes the one Body.

The Church, then, is not first an organization which happens also to have sacraments. She is the communion which the one Eucharist creates, the Body of Christ gathered into being around

the Body of Christ. Saint John Chrysostom pressed the verse to its limit: what is the bread? the Body of Christ; and what do they become who partake of it? the Body of Christ, not many bodies, but one body. And the Church prayed this before she defined it, in her most ancient eucharistic prayer: as this bread was scattered upon the mountains and, being gathered together, became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom. Grain by grain into one loaf; soul by soul into one Body. The loaf is not a metaphor the Church chose. It is the mechanism God chose.<sup>10</sup>

In the same breath the Apostle teaches what an altar is, and what it does to those who eat from it. *Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?* To eat from an altar is to be made a partaker of that altar, bound into the fellowship of everything the altar stands for and confesses. From this, a few lines later, Paul draws a terrible conclusion which the next chapter will set out in full. Hold, for now, the truth our private minded age most needs: communion is never a private act. No one ever receives the chalice alone, however alone he kneels. In receiving it he is joined, whether he thinks of it or not, to every soul who partakes of that altar, to the confession that altar proclaims, and to the bishop whose name that altar bears. The cup is a covenant with everything it belongs to. That is its glory, and that is its danger.

## ONE ALTAR, AS THERE IS ONE BISHOP

From this the first generations after the Apostles drew the teaching that stands at the heart of Orthodox ecclesiology, and they compressed it into three words: there is one altar. Saint Ignatius the God-bearer, writing on the road to his martyrdom while men who had seen the Apostles still lived, gave it as the rule of the Church's being:

*Take ye heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup unto the unity*

*of His blood; one altar, as there is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons.*

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, To the Philadelphians, 4<sup>11</sup>

One flesh, one cup, one altar: the martyr simply repeats the Apostle's arithmetic. Saint Cyprian, in the century that followed, drew the boundary that guards it: God is one, and Christ is one, and His Church is one; another altar cannot be set up, nor a new priesthood made, besides the one altar and the one priesthood. Mark how exactly this defines the sin of schism. The schismatic is precisely the man who raises a second altar against the one; and the ancient canons condemn him in those very words. The one altar is not a poetic flourish. It is the given form of the Church's existence, and the whole canonical tradition is a fence built around it.

## **TEN THOUSAND TABLES, ONE ALTAR**

But now the question that unlocks the mystery: how can the altar be one, when the altars are ten thousand? There is a holy table in every Orthodox church from the rising of the sun to its setting. In what sense are they one?

The Liturgy itself answers, at the fraction, when the priest divides the Lamb: *Broken and distributed is the Lamb of God: broken, yet not divided; ever eaten, yet never consumed*. Christ is not parcelled out among the churches, a portion here and a portion there. Upon every true altar lies the whole Christ, the same, entire, undivided. Therefore the ten thousand tables are not ten thousand altars, but one altar standing in ten thousand places, as the one sun stands whole in ten thousand windows. Geography multiplies the tables; it cannot multiply the Body. The village chapel and the patriarchal cathedral hold one and the same Lamb, and the child who communes in the one communes at the very altar of the other.

And the one altar is one across time as well as space. It is the altar of the Apostles and the martyrs and all the ages, the same Mystical Supper, from the night in which He was betrayed until He comes. It is one across the last frontier also: *we have an altar*, says the Scripture, and the Church has always known her table below and the altar above to be one worship, one offering, one communion of angels and men. This, and nothing less, is what the title of this book means by Heavenly Communion.<sup>12</sup>

## THE VISIBLE NETWORK

This oneness is not invisible. The Church wears it openly, in the fabric of her order, so that it can be seen and tested.

No priest may celebrate except upon the antimension, the consecrated cloth signed by the hand of his bishop and laid upon the holy table. The altar itself, in its material form, bears the name of the hierarch who binds it into the episcopate. At every Liturgy the bishop is named aloud; and the bishops name one another in the diptychs, church answering to church across the earth. And the condition of all this naming is the one shared confession of the one faith. The Liturgy binds the two together in a single petition, asking *the unity of the faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit* in one breath, because the second does not exist without the first.

So the one altar is joined, link by link, name by name, confession by confession, into a single visible communion embracing every true confessing Orthodox soul on earth. This network of the one altar is the Church's visible unity, and there is no other: not an administration, not a headquarters, but the one Eucharist, guarded by the one faith, on the one altar in all its ten thousand places.

The Apostle gathered the whole chapter, before it was written, into one ladder of unities. Let it stand as the seal of everything said here:

*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

Ephesians 4:4 to 6

## **WHAT THE ONE ALTAR ASKS OF US**

Let the weight of this settle, and every question in this book stands in its true proportions. If the Church is in the one Eucharist, then whom I commune with, whose name my priest proclaims, and whose confession my amen seals at the chalice are not details at the edge of the spiritual life. They are the very place where my membership in the Body of Christ is enacted.

This is the unspeakable joy of Orthodoxy: in one spoonful the believer is united to Christ whole and entire, and in Him to the whole Church of every land and age, and to the altar of heaven itself. And it is, at the same time, the exact measure of what is at stake when the confession at an altar is falsified. The cup that unites me to all the altar confesses cannot unite me to truth and to its denial at once. The wall, when this book comes to it, will be seen for what it is: not a departure from the one altar, but a refusal to let the one altar be exchanged, before our eyes, for another.

### **In plain words**

When you receive Holy Communion, the one bread makes all who share it into one Body, the Church. Every true Orthodox altar holds the whole Christ, so all the altars in the world are really one altar, connected through the bishops who are named at each and the one faith they all confess. Communion is never just "me and God": the cup joins you to everything the altar believes. That is why it matters so much whose name is said there, and why the cup must never be used to agree to a lie.

## Notes and sources

10. Saint John Chrysostom, Homily 24 on First Corinthians, on 10:16 to 17: "For what is the bread? The Body of Christ. And what do they become who partake of it? The Body of Christ: not many bodies, but one body." The prayer over the broken bread is from the Didache (the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles), 9.

11. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Philadelphians, 4; cf. Epistle to the Magnesians, 7, "all of you together, as to one temple of God, as to one altar, unto one Jesus Christ." Saint Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle 43 (in some editions 39/40), §5: "God is one, and Christ is one, and His Church is one... another altar cannot be set up, nor a new priesthood made, besides the one altar and the one priesthood." Cf. Apostolic Canon 31 and Canon 5 of Antioch, which condemn the raising of "another altar."

12. The words at the fraction, "Broken and distributed is the Lamb of God...", and the petition "the unity of the faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit," are from the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. "We have an altar": Hebrews 13:10.

# True Communion and False

*Heresy, Schism, and False Obedience*

## THE TWO COMMUNIONS

Because unity is good, men are tempted to call every unity good, and to treat the mere absence of separation as though it were the presence of love. But the Church has always known that there is a true communion and a false, and that the difference between them is the truth.

True communion is union in the one Faith, sealed in the one chalice, expressed in the one confession: the agreement of those who believe the same Christ and hold the same Faith handed down from the Apostles. It is a living thing, and like every living thing it has a definite shape; it cannot contain its own contradiction. Two who confess opposite things about Christ are not in communion merely because they stand in the same building. They are already divided in the only place where unity finally matters. The prophet asked the whole question in seven words:

*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

Amos 3:3

False communion is the outward appearance of unity stretched over an inward division of faith: the handshake offered across the chasm of a contradiction, the common cup raised between those who do not share a common confession, the peace declared where there is no peace. The prophets knew this counterfeit. *They have healed the hurt of My people slightly*, said the Lord through Jeremiah, *saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.*

A false peace does not heal the wound; it seals the infection within. And the Apostle Paul drew the line with his own hand, at the chalice itself, completing the teaching of the last chapter with its dread reverse side:

*Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.*

First Corinthians 10:21

There is no neutral ground, because each cup incorporates the drinker into its own communion. To attempt unity while embracing contradiction is not charity but deception, the more dangerous because it wears the face of love. The men who promote it in every age call themselves the friends of peace, and call their opponents hard and quarrelsome. But the Apostle was neither hard nor cold when he commanded the Corinthians to choose one table. He was telling them the truth, which is the only real kindness. And the same Apostle gave the rule for daily walking: *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*

Saint Gregory the Theologian, who bore the wounds of the Arian peace in his own flesh, left the maxim by which the Church has weighed every peace offered to her since:

*It is better to choose a commendable war than a peace which separates from God. The faith which I was taught by the Holy Fathers, which I taught at all times without adjusting it according to the times, this faith I will never cease teaching.*

Saint Gregory the Theologian<sup>13</sup>

A commendable war: the words are hard, and they come from the gentlest of the Fathers, the very man who resigned a throne rather than be the occasion of a quarrel. He is not blessing strife; he is pricing peace. A peace purchased by the surrender of the faith is not peace with one another but war against God; and

between those two wars, the saint chose the one that heaven commends.

## WHO DIVIDES THE CHURCH?

Here a confusion must be removed that has misled many, and it can be removed in three sentences. It is commonly supposed that separation always tears the Body, so that whoever separates is guilty of dividing the Church. But it is not separation from falsehood that fractures the Body; it is the communion of falsehood *within* the Body that is the fracture. The poison in the blood is the division, not the surgery that would remove it.

Our Lord Himself gave the hard image: if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. This is not cruelty, but decisive separation from what destroys; for a limb given over to gangrene no longer belongs to the life of the body, even while it hangs attached. Therefore the rule may be stated simply, and the reader should learn it by heart, for it is the hinge of the whole book: **there is no schism where the one Faith is preserved, even if separation appears outwardly; there is schism wherever the confession is divided, even if outward peace is maintained.**

## THE THREE WOUNDS

To use that rule, one must be able to tell the wounds of the Church apart. Saint Basil the Great, physician of the Church if ever there was one, named them exactly:

*By heresies they meant men who were altogether broken off and alienated in matters relating to the actual faith; by schisms men who had separated for some ecclesiastical reasons and questions capable of mutual solution; by unlawful congregations gatherings held by disorderly presbyters or bishops or by uninstructed laymen.*

Saint Basil the Great, First Canonical Epistle, Canon 1<sup>14</sup>

Mark the difference exactly, for confusing these three wounds is the source of nearly every error this book will meet.

*Heresy* is a breaking in the matter of the faith itself: a false confession of God, of Christ, of the Church, of salvation. It is not bad behaviour but poisoned doctrine. The Church forgives every repented sin, however dark; she can never make room for a false confession, because the true confession is the one treasure she exists to guard. Sin is a wound in a member; heresy is poison in the blood. The Church endures the first with endless patience, and cannot endure the second at all.

A bishop of the last century, Saint Ignatius Brianchaninov, weighed that poison on the scales of eternity:

*Heresy is a sin of the mind; it is more a diabolic than a human sin. It is the devil's offspring, his invention; it is an impiety that is near to idol-worship. Every heresy contains in itself blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.*

Saint Ignatius Brianchaninov<sup>15</sup>

A sin of the mind: which is why no holiness of life in the teacher, and no warmth of feeling in the taught, can render it safe. The other wounds injure the Body; this one blasphemes the Physician.

*Schism* is division over what is not the faith: a quarrel, a rite, a personal charge, an ambition. It is grave sin even when the separators believe all the right things, because it tears the one Body over what was never worth a tear. And Basil adds a warning this book will watch come true more than once: a schism persisted in hardens, with time, into something like a heresy.

The *parasynagogue*, the unlawful assembly gathered by the disorderly, without any difference of faith, is the mildest wound, healed by repentance and return to order.

Three wounds, three medicines; and the beginning of wisdom is never to treat the one as if it were the other.

## FALSE OBEDIENCE

One more counterfeit must be named before this chapter closes, because it is the respectable one: false obedience.

Obedience is a great virtue, and the Church is built on order. But obedience is owed to shepherds *in the truth*, as soldiers owe obedience to officers under the king, not against him. When a command contradicts the faith, obedience to the man becomes disobedience to God; and the Apostles themselves set the rule for all time: *we ought to obey God rather than men*. The man who follows his bishop into a false confession has not practised humility. He has practised idolatry of office, and made the vestment greater than the faith the vestment exists to serve. The Fathers, as we shall hear from Chrysostom's own mouth, drew the line in one sentence: if the ruler errs in life, be not curious; if he errs in the faith, flee him though he were an angel. Everything the coming chapters teach about the wall is only that sentence, worked out with the Church's own exactness.

## A CLOSING PICTURE FROM THE FIELD

Because a single word of the faith can seem a small thing to fight over, take two pictures before this chapter closes, one from history and one from the field, and let each explain the other.

First, history. At Nicaea the whole quarrel came down, famously, to a single letter. The Church confessed the Son to be *homoousios*, of one essence with the Father. The compromising party offered *homoiousios*, of like essence. One iota divides the two words, and the whole Gospel divides the two meanings: for a Son who is only *like* God is not God, and a Christ who is not God cannot make men partakers of God. The smallest visible difference carried the greatest possible difference, and the Fathers who refused the iota were not quibbling over spelling; they were guarding the divinity of Christ, and with it the reality of

our salvation. Let no one say again that a word is a small thing. A word can be small the way a keystone is small.<sup>16</sup>

Second, the field, for nature is the work of the same God who orders the Church, and He has hidden the same lesson in it. Consider the bee. Of all the creatures of a farm it is nearly the least: small, unregarded, easily driven away. Remove it, and at first nothing seems to happen. The fields are still green; the orchards stand; the man who warns is mocked for making much of a small thing. But the blossoms are no longer visited, so the fruit is no longer set; the seed grows scarce; and within a few seasons a silence spreads across a whole countryside that looks, to a careless eye, exactly as it always did. The life of the field had depended on a lowly thing that seemed removable, until it was removed.

So it is with the truth in the Church. A single article of the faith, one word of the Creed, one "small" teaching surrendered for the sake of peace, can look, to the impatient, like a bee among cathedrals. But the whole harvest of the Church's life is quietly fertilized by the whole truth; and a corruption tolerated in one word will, in time, bring down everything that rested upon it. Truth does not defend itself with noise. When it is removed, all that stood upon it quietly begins to fall, and by the time the failure is visible to everyone, the season for preventing it has passed. That is why the Fathers fought over an iota, and why this book will not apologize for weighing words.

## In plain words

Real unity means believing the same true faith and sealing it in the same cup. Fake unity is smiling and sharing the cup while believing opposite things, the Bible calls that saying "peace, peace" when there is no peace. The Church has three different wounds: heresy (false teaching, poison), schism (splitting over something that isn't the faith, tearing), and disorder. The one who separates from poison is not the one dividing the Church; the poison is. And obeying a shepherd who teaches falsely is not humility, God comes first.

## Notes and sources

13. Saint Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzus, c. 329 to 390). The saying circulates in this compressed, traditional form; its substance is securely his, see Oration 6, *On Peace*, and Oration 32, where he distinguishes the severing that is praiseworthy from the deplorable kind, and prefers a war for the truth to a peace that separates from God. After the rule of this book, we give the traditional form and flag its transmission plainly.

14. Saint Basil the Great, Letter 188 to Amphilochius (the First Canonical Epistle), Canon 1 (c. 374; PG 32). Basil distinguishes heresies, schisms, and parasynagogues; those who differ in the faith itself are "heresies," whose baptism the Church does not receive. He adds the warning that schism, obstinately persisted in, hardens with time into something near heresy.

15. Saint Ignatius (Brianchaninov), Bishop of the Caucasus (1807 to 1867), *Letters*, no. 283; the passage is translated in 'Concerning the Impossibility of Salvation for the Heterodox and Heretics,' *The Orthodox Word* (1965). The saint defines the gravity of heresy as such; toward persons he was, like the Fathers, pastorally measured, the definition condemns the teaching and leaves every soul to God.

16. The Creed of Nicaea (325) confessed the Son to be *homoousios*, "of one essence," with the Father; the parties of compromise in the following decades proposed *homoiousios*, "of like essence." On why the Church could not accept the softer word, see Saint Athanasius the Great, *De Synodis (On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia)*, and the history of the Arian controversy in the chapter "The Fathers Who Resisted."

## Love, the Foundation of All

Before this book takes up the canon and the wall, one thing must be set beneath everything else, because without it everything else turns to poison. That thing is love.

It is possible to be right about the Church, right about communion, right about heresy and schism and the fifteenth canon, and to be lost. Right in every fact, and ruined in the soul. The only thing that keeps the confession of the truth from curdling into the pride of the Pharisee is the love of God poured into the heart; and the Apostle said it once for all, of the very gifts this book most concerns:

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge... and have not charity, I am nothing.*

First Corinthians 13:1 to 2

### THE WARNING TO THE ZEALOUS

Read the words slowly, for they are aimed at the confessor more sharply than at any other man. To understand all mysteries and all knowledge: this is the very thing the zealous soul prizes, the knowledge of the canons, the councils, the Fathers, the precise anatomy of every heresy. And the Apostle says that a man may have all of it and be nothing. Not deficient. Nothing.

Truth held without love does not merely lose its savour. It changes sides. It becomes a weapon in the hands of pride; and the man who wields it becomes hard, contemptuous, quick to

condemn, delighted to be right, a noise of brass in the ears of God. The devil, the Fathers observed, has perfect theology and no love; and a confessor without love has begun, in that one respect, to resemble the enemy of the confession.

## THE WARNING TO THE TENDER

But the sword cuts the other way with equal force, and our age must feel that edge especially. Love and truth are not rivals, and a love that abandons the truth is no longer love.

What shall we say of a physician who, from tenderness, tells the dying man he is well? Of a mother who, to keep peace at the table, lets her child drink what she knows is poison? Their gentleness is a form of cruelty. Love wills the true good of the beloved; and the truth is the good of the mind, as health is the good of the body. Therefore to confirm a man in a false confession, to tell him, for peace's sake, that his error does not matter, is not charity but betrayal with a kiss. The false teachers of every age have always preached love against truth, as though the two could be enemies, when in God they are one.

The same hymn of charity sings that love *rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth*. And the Apostle joined what men keep tearing apart: *speaking the truth in love*. Four words, and the whole balance of the Christian life is in them. Truth without love wounds. Love without truth kills softly. Truth in love heals.

## THE HEART THAT KEEPS THE BALANCE

The desert kept the two edges of this chapter in a single story. Visitors once came to Abba Agathon to test his humility. They called him a fornicator: he accepted it. Proud: he accepted it. A slanderer: he accepted it. Then they called him a heretic, and the old man answered, I am not a heretic. Asked why he had borne every insult but that one, he said:

*The first accusations I accepted, for it is beneficial to my soul; but the accusation of heresy I did not accept, because heresy is separation from God, and I have no wish to be separated from God.*

Abba Agathon, in the Sayings of the Desert Fathers<sup>17</sup>

There is the whole balance, kept by a man who could not have recited a canon. Humility bows to every charge against the self, however unjust; it cannot bow to the one charge that would consent to separation from God. And Saint Theophan the Recluse, asked whether the heterodox would be saved, held the same two edges in a single sentence, refusing to judge, and refusing to move:

*I do not know whether Catholics will be saved; I only know that I will not be saved without Orthodoxy.*

Saint Theophan the Recluse<sup>18</sup>

Learn both refusals together. The saint will not sit on God's judgment seat over another soul; and he will not step one pace off the rock on which his own soul stands. Everything this book asks of the reader lives between those two refusals.

Hear how a saint of our own days held the balance, a man who never wrote a canon, and kept the whole law of this chapter:

*The Lord is such love that no mind can comprehend it... When the soul knows the Lord by the Holy Spirit, she pities those who do not know God, and weeps and prays for the whole world.*

Saint Silouan the Athonite<sup>19</sup>

Weeps and prays for the whole world: that is the heart in which alone the teaching of this book is safe. Hate the heresy with a perfect hatred, and love the heretic. Refuse the false communion, and pray with tears for those you must stand apart from. Guard

the confession like a fortress, and keep the gate of the fortress open toward every repentance.

If, in reading the chapters ahead, the reader ever feels the pleasure of condemnation warming in him, let him close the book, and return to this page, and not go on until the warmth has turned back to grief. The wall this book describes is raised weeping, or it must not be raised at all; for a wall built without love is built of pride, and saves no one, least of all its builder.

## In plain words

Being right is not enough. Saint Paul says that a person who knows everything but has no love is nothing. But love that lets someone believe a lie is not real love either, like a mother letting her child drink poison to avoid a quarrel. Real love tells the truth gently and never stops praying for the person in error. Everything else in this book must be done with a soft heart and wet eyes, or not done at all.

## Notes and sources

17. *Apophthegmata Patrum* (the Sayings of the Desert Fathers), Alphabetical Collection, Agathon 5; cf. *The Evergetinos*, Book I. Abba Agathon (fourth century) was among the most revered of the Egyptian fathers; the story is a classic of the tradition precisely because it joins bottomless humility to an absolute refusal of heresy.

18. Saint Theophan the Recluse (1815 to 1894), among his recorded sayings, widely attested in the Russian tradition. Asked to pronounce upon the salvation of the heterodox, the saint declined the judgment that belongs to God while anchoring his own salvation in Orthodoxy, the exact disposition this chapter commends.

19. Saint Silouan the Athonite (1866 to 1938), as recorded by his disciple Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) in *Saint Silouan the Athonite* (Essex, 1991; first published in Russian, 1948). Silouan's counsel is set here as the balance of compassion against false zeal, lest confession harden into pride.

## Where Is the Church?

Sooner or later, in every storm, the frightened heart asks with the Psalmist: *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?* Which is to say, it asks the oldest question: where is the Church? When hierarchs err and councils quarrel, when the buildings are held by one party and the truth seems to lodge with another, where shall I find her, to whom the promises were made?

The question is not new, and the Fathers answered it in days darker than ours. Their answer has two halves, and both must be held; for each, without the other, becomes an error.

### THE FIRST HALF: WHERE THE TRUE FAITH IS

The Church is found where the true faith is. She is not located by grand buildings, by great numbers, by ancient addresses, or by the presence of important men. All of these she may have, and all of these have, at one hour or another, been in the hands of heretics. Saint Jerome, remembering the Arian noon within living memory, said it without softening:

*The Church does not consist in walls, but in the truths of her teachings. The Church is there where there is true faith. Fifteen and twenty years ago, all the church buildings belonged to heretics, for heretics were then in possession of them; but the true Church was there where the true faith was.*

Saint Jerome, Homily on Psalm 46<sup>20</sup>

And Saint Maximus the Confessor, standing almost alone against the thrones of his day, gave the same answer as a definition:

*Christ the Lord called that Church the Catholic Church which maintains the true and saving confession of the Faith.*

Saint Maximus the Confessor<sup>21</sup>

And behind them both stands one of the most ancient voices of the Church, Saint Irenaeus, the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of John, binding the Church, the Spirit, and the truth into one knot that no age can untie:

*For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth.*

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies<sup>22</sup>

But the Spirit is truth: that final clause carries all the weight. If the Spirit is truth, then a body departed from the truth has, in the departure itself, lost its claim upon the Spirit's presence, whatever buildings and titles it retains. The Fathers never separated the three things this sentence joins; neither may we.

## **THE SECOND HALF: THE VISIBLE BODY**

The Church is a visible Body with visible marks, and the true faith does not float free of her order. She is found where the true faith is confessed, *and* the true Mysteries are celebrated, *and* the apostolic succession of ordination in the confession is kept: the pillar and the ground together, the hands and the faith together, as the first chapter taught.

Whoever seizes the first half alone concludes that the Church is wherever he and his opinions happen to be, and becomes his own pope in a congregation of one. Whoever seizes the second half alone concludes that the Church is wherever the certificates and the buildings are, whatever is preached in them, and follows the vestments into the pit. The saints held both. They sought the true confession, and they sought it embodied: in real bishops, real altars, real Mysteries, even when these were hidden in the

wilderness. And God never left them without it, for He has promised that the Church shall endure to the end.

## THE PROMISE RIGHTLY READ

That promise must now be weighed exactly, because it is misused in two opposite ways. The Lord said: *upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

From this, some conclude that nothing need ever be done, since the outcome is guaranteed. The promise becomes a pillow. Others, seeing hierarchs fall, conclude that the promise has failed and the Church has perished from the earth. The promise becomes a tombstone. Both have misread what was promised.

The Lord promised that the Church *as a whole* shall never fail from the earth. He nowhere promised that any particular see, hierarchy, majority, or generation cannot fall. History is the commentary. The world groaned to find itself Arian. The thrones served iconoclasm for a century. Every patriarch but one subscribed at Florence. And of the seven churches of Asia, to whom the Lord Himself wrote, He warned that the candlestick of any might be removed out of its place, and the traveller may see today where they stood.

The manner of the promise is as important as its scope. God kept the faith through the Arian noon not by suspending it in the air, but through Athanasius, through the confessors, through the faithful who would not commune with the lie. The promise is fulfilled precisely in such people, and by means of them. The certainty of the harvest has never excused the sower; the guarantee of the city has never discharged the watchman. *The gates of hell shall not prevail*: this is a charter for courage, not a licence for sleep, and still less a warrant for despair.<sup>23</sup>

And beneath every shaken hour stands the Apostle's bedrock, on which the confessors of every age have set their feet:

*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

Second Timothy 2:19

## **TWO OBJECTIONS ANSWERED**

Two objections must be answered before we go further, for they are heard everywhere.

The first says: if nearly the whole visible hierarchy can be captured by error for a generation, then Orthodoxy's claims collapse, for she staked everything on her bishops. But this refutes a claim the Orthodox Church never made. It is the Roman confession, not ours, that staked the faith on the guaranteed reliability of a living hierarchy. Orthodoxy has never taught that any bishop, patriarch, majority, or assembly calling itself a council is immune from error. She teaches that the Church as a whole, across the ages, cannot fail; and that her final judgment is the council received by the whole Body. As the Eastern Patriarchs confessed in 1848, among us the guardian of religion is the very body of the Church, the people itself. Precisely because she never deified the hierarchy, she has survived, again and again, the hour in which hierarchs fell. If the objection were sound, Orthodoxy was refuted by the year 360 and has not existed since. Instead, out of each collapse she rose, gathered her councils, condemned the error, and glorified the confessors through whom the promise had been kept.<sup>24</sup>

The second objection is the whisper of despair, and it will meet us again in this book, for it is the special temptation of the zealous. It says: the apostasy has now become total; the grace has departed from all but a remnant; the Church survives only in this or that little party which alone has kept the faith. To this the whole of Church history answers with one voice: it has never once been true, and to believe it is to call the Lord's promise broken. In the

darkest hours the Church was smaller than men thought, and greater than the remnant thought. She was in Athanasius, and also in millions of simple faithful whose names God alone knows. And every party that ever declared her perished outside itself ended, as we shall see in the chapter on the counterfeit wall, by withering into a sect. The confessor seeks the Church where the true faith is; he never pronounces her dead where his eyes cannot see her. Between those two sentences runs the whole difference between confession and despair.

## THE TEST OF THE AGES

One test remains to be given, for the reader will need it when we come to the crisis of our own age: how does a Christian recognize that a teaching is false, without setting himself up as a judge over the Church? Saint Vincent of Lérins gave the golden rule:

*In the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.... This rule we shall truly follow if we follow universality, antiquity, consent.*

Saint Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*<sup>25</sup>

Everywhere, always, and by all: the faith of the ages is the measure, and the individual believer's task is not to invent a judgment but to recognize one. When a new teaching contradicts what the Church has confessed in every land and every century, the believer who says so is not judging. He is remembering. The beloved disciple commands the very act: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

And Vincent himself pressed his rule into the darkest case, the case this book must also face. What if the novelty should infect not a corner of the Church but, to every visible eye, the whole? He answered without flinching:

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

Saint Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*<sup>26</sup>

Cleave to antiquity: the faith already delivered cannot be corrupted by tomorrow's fashion, for it is finished, and it is on record. Vincent wrote with the Arian noon in living memory, when the contagion had in fact reached nearly the whole visible body; and his counsel then is the Church's counsel now, not a new judgment, but a tighter grip on the old one.

This distinction, between the private opinion that condemns and the common memory that recognizes, is the key that will unlock the fifteenth canon two chapters from now. Carry it with you.

## **In plain words**

The Church is found where the true faith is, not where the biggest buildings or the most important people are, but she is always a real, visible Church with real Mysteries and real shepherds, never just an idea. Jesus promised she can never disappear from the earth; He did not promise that this or that bishop, or even most bishops for a while, cannot go wrong. When they do, God keeps His promise through the faithful who refuse the lie. So never despair that the Church is gone, and never sleep as if nothing could go wrong: both break the same promise.

## **Notes and sources**

20. Saint Jerome (Hieronymus), from the *Tractatus on the Psalms* (Homily on Psalm 46/45; CCSL 78). This securely attested passage is used here in place of the spurious "buildings versus faith" line long misattributed to Saint Athanasius, which this book excludes as inauthentic.

21. Saint Maximus the Confessor, from the records of his trial (the *Relatio Motionis* and associated acta; cf. PG 90). The saint answers those who urged the consensus of the patriarchates against him.

22. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130 to 202), *Against Heresies*, Book III, 24.1. Irenaeus received the faith from Saint Polycarp of Smyrna, the disciple of the Apostle John; his testimony therefore stands two steps from the apostles themselves, and the chapter on the scriptural commands hears him again.
23. Matthew 16:18; Revelation 2:5 on the removal of the candlestick. Cf. Saint John Chrysostom, *Homily Before His Exile* (PG 52): nothing is stronger than the Church; he who wars against her cannot prevail, for the Lord has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.
24. Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848, in reply to Pope Pius IX, §17: among the Orthodox neither patriarchs nor councils could ever introduce new teachings, "for the guardian of religion is the very body of the Church, that is, the people itself."
25. Saint Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium* 2 (434): quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus. The canon of catholicity supplies the test by which the faithful recognize that an ancient condemnation already reaches a present novelty, so that they apply a judgment rather than invent one.
26. Saint Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*, ch. 3 (434). The passage continues the golden rule quoted above and applies it to the extreme case; Vincent's own example is the Arian crisis, in which, as he says, the poison had infected not some certain portion only, but almost the whole world.

# Come Out of Her, My People

## THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN

Before the Church ever wrote a canon about separation from false teaching, God had written the command in the Scriptures; and the canon we are approaching is only the Church's careful application of it. Hear the command first in its most solemn form, from the last book of the Bible, where a voice from heaven speaks over the great harlot city, the very image of glittering, established falsehood:

*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

Revelation 18:4

Come out, *that ye be not partakers*. The reason given is the whole theology of the last chapters in one clause: to remain in communion with organized falsehood is to partake of it. The sin becomes shared by the staying.

The Fathers read this voice as a type, a pattern. It is not a command to abandon the Church, God forbid, for the Church is the Bride and not the harlot. It is the pattern of the soul stepping out of every fellowship of falsehood, wherever it appears and whatever holy names it has captured, precisely so as to remain in the true fellowship of God.

So Saint Bede, expounding the verse, heard in the voice from heaven the whole prophetic chorus of separation gathered into one command:

*So also Isaiah says, Come out of the midst of them, and touch no unclean thing; be ye clean, who bear the vessels of the Lord. When the fall of Babylon is foretold, he brings in the departure of the people of God; for when Lot has departed from Sodom, it will be utterly destroyed.*

Saint Bede, Explanation of the Apocalypse<sup>27</sup>

When Lot has departed, it will be destroyed: the going out of the faithful is not the abandonment of a post but the completion of a testimony, God removes His own before the judgment falls, and their departure is itself the last warning given to the city. And Isaiah's clause seals the priestly logic of the whole matter: be clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord; for hands that carry the holy things must not be joined to what God has judged.

## THE COMMANDS OF THE APOSTLES

The same command runs like a golden thread through the whole New Testament, in the plainest words. Set them in order, and watch how consistent the pattern is.

*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing,* writes Paul to the Corinthians. *A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject,* he commands Titus, first patience, admonition, labour for the man's soul; then, if he will not be healed, rejection. *Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them,* he tells the Romans. And notice with care who is called the divider: not the one who avoids, but the one whose contrary doctrine caused the division.

The Apostle John, the very apostle of love, goes furthest of all. The bringer of another doctrine is not to be received into the house, nor given a greeting: *for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.* Even a greeting, says love himself, makes partnership with the lie. And the Lord's own procedure of

correction ends at the same threshold: *if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*<sup>28</sup>

And the apostles lived what they wrote. Saint Irenaeus, who learned the faith from Saint Polycarp, who learned it from John himself, recorded how that first generation treated the corrupters of the truth. When the heresiarch Marcion met Polycarp and asked, Do you know me?, the disciple of John answered: I do know you, the firstborn of Satan. And of John himself, Irenaeus tells that the apostle, entering the bathhouse at Ephesus and finding the heretic Cerinthus within, fled without bathing, crying:

*Let us fly, lest even the bathhouse fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within.*

the Apostle John, as recorded by Saint Irenaeus<sup>29</sup>

Such was the horror, Irenaeus concludes, which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth. And mark who is fleeing: the apostle of love, the same John who wrote the epistle of the greeting withheld. His flight is not the failure of his love but its instinct; for the man who had leaned upon the breast of Truth Himself could not stand under one roof with truth's enemy and call the standing charity.

## THE VOICE OF THE SHEPHERD

The Lord Himself set this discernment into the very nature of His flock, in the parable of the sheepfold; and no passage of the Gospels teaches the wall more tenderly, for here the separation is not an achievement of learning but the instinct of belonging:

*And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

John 10:4 to 5, 27

The sheep flee the stranger's voice, not because they have examined his credentials, but because they know the Shepherd's. Here is the whole teaching of this book in a pasture. The fleeing is not rebellion; it is fidelity. The sheep that follows every voice wearing the shepherd's cloak is not humble but lost. And the Lord adds the mark by which the hireling is known: that he careth not for the sheep.

When, therefore, the faithful of every age drew back from a strange voice at the altar, they were not judging above their station. They were being sheep, exactly as the Shepherd made them. And to the flock's instinct the Apostle adds the flock's command, in the plainest withdrawal text of the Scriptures:

*If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness... from such withdraw thyself.*

First Timothy 6:3, 5

## **WHAT THE SCRIPTURES NEVER COMMAND**

Set beside these the anathema of Galatians with which this book opened, binding even an angel from heaven, and the witness is complete: separation from open false teaching is not a permission the Scriptures grudgingly allow. It is a command they repeatedly give.

But mark, with equal care, what the Scriptures never command. They never command the faithful to leave the Church because false teachers have arisen within her; the same apostles who wrote these words remained in the one Church, contending inside her against the false brethren. They never authorize the faithful to erect a rival church, to seize the judgment seat, or to pronounce damnation: *avoid them* is the constant word, not

*depose them.* And they never permit hatred of the erring man. The heretic is rejected *after* admonitions, which means after labour and hope and prayer, and the door of repentance stands open behind every one of these commands.

Withdrawal from the falsehood, within the fellowship of the truth, in patience and without usurpation: that is the scriptural shape. And the reader will recognize it, in the next chapter, drawn to the millimetre in the Church's canon.

## In plain words

Long before any church rule existed, God Himself commanded: come out from false teaching, so that you do not share in its sins, even a friendly "God speed" to a false teacher makes you a partner, says Saint John. But the Bible never says to leave the Church, start a new one, or hate anybody. The pattern is: warn the person patiently, then step away from the falsehood while staying in God's true family and praying for the one who fell.

## Notes and sources

27. Saint Bede the Venerable (673 to 735), *The Explanation of the Apocalypse*, on chapter 18 (PL 93), fusing Revelation 18:4 with Isaiah 52:11 and Genesis 19. Bede reads Babylon as the city of the devil, the world order of sin, and the departure as the soul's separation from it; the verse is thus a type of separation, applied to the wall of this book by analogy and not as a proof text for schism, exactly as this chapter reads it.

28. 2 Corinthians 6:17; Titus 3:10; Romans 16:17; 2 John 10 to 11; Matthew 18:17 (KJV). Cf. Galatians 1:8 to 9, the epigraph of this book, where even an angel from heaven preaching another gospel falls under anathema.

29. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, Book III, 3.4, on the testimony of those who heard Polycarp; cf. Eusebius, *Church History* III.28 and IV.14. Irenaeus grounds the standard in the Apostle's own command: 'A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject' (Titus 3:10). Marcion and Cerinthus were open, self condemned heresiarchs; the apostolic horror concerns fellowship with manifest corruption of the faith, and the Church's canon would later give the same instinct its exact measure.

# Apoteichisis and the Fifteenth Canon

## THE STAIRCASE OF 861

In the year 861 a great council gathered in Constantinople, in the church of the Holy Apostles, under Saint Photios the Great: the First and Second Council, as it came to be called. Its canons deal with the order of the Church; and three of them, the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth, form a single staircase, built to guard one treasure from two thieves.

The thirteenth and fourteenth forbid a deacon, priest, or bishop to break communion with his own head, before a synodal verdict, on the pretext of the head's *crimes*. Whoever separates over accusations, however grave, judging his superior privately before the Church has judged him, is deposed; for he has usurped the tribunal and torn the order of the Body. The first half of the fifteenth canon climbs the same rule to the top of the ladder, applying it to patriarchs.

And then, at the summit, the canon turns, and cuts in the other direction, and gives the Church's charter for everything this book teaches. It must be read whole, and slowly:

*But as for those who, on account of some heresy condemned by holy Synods or Fathers, withdraw themselves from communion with their president, who, that is to say, is preaching the heresy publicly, and teaching it bareheaded in church, such persons not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from communion with the so called bishop before any synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be*

*deemed worthy to enjoy the honour which befits them among Orthodox Christians. For they have defied, not bishops, but pseudo bishops and pseudo teachers; and they have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions.*

Canon 15 of the First and Second Council, 861<sup>30</sup>

## THE TWO HALVES

See first the two halves together, for the canon is a coin and both faces are law. The same council that deposes the man who separates over a *personal charge* honours the man who separates over *condemned heresy*. The act looks identical from the outside, the ceasing of commemoration, the standing apart. The cause makes one act a schism and the other a rescue.

Whoever quotes the second half without the first turns the canon into a licence for every grievance. Whoever quotes the first without the second turns it into a muzzle for every conscience. The Church wrote them together, and this book will always read them together.

## THE THREE CONDITIONS

Now weigh the conditions of the second half one by one, for they are a lock with three tumblers, and all three must turn.

First, the cause must be *heresy*: not sin, not scandal, not mismanagement, not a rite or a calendar or a quarrel, but false teaching concerning the faith itself, as the third chapter defined it.

Second, the heresy must be *already condemned by holy Synods or Fathers*. The separating believer applies a judgment the Church has already given; he invents nothing. This is why, as the fifth chapter showed from Saint Vincent, his act is recognition and not

private judgment. The everywhere-always-and-by-all of the ages has spoken, and he is only refusing to contradict it, keeping the proverb of the fathers: *Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.*

Saint John of Damascus, resisting the first iconoclast emperor from beyond his reach, turned that very proverb into the Church's standing answer to every innovating power:

*It is not for kings to legislate for the Church. Political welfare is the business of kings; the condition of the Church is the concern of pastors and teachers. We will not endure a change in the boundaries which our Fathers have set, but we keep the Tradition we have received.*

Saint John of Damascus, in defence of the holy images<sup>31</sup>

Third, the preaching must be *public and bareheaded*, that is, openly and without concealment, in the church itself. Not a rumour. Not a suspicion. Not a private slip once repented. Not an ambiguous phrase capable of an Orthodox reading. The false doctrine must be proclaimed without covering.

Where any tumbler fails to turn, the lock stays shut; and the man who forces it stands in the canon's first half, not its second.

## **BEFORE ANY SYNODAL VERDICT**

Weigh next the canon's boldest provision: the words *before any synodal verdict*. The Church knew that heresy on a throne does not wait politely for a council. It uses the throne, ordains its own, and poisons the flock daily through the very channels of communion. So she armed the faithful for the interval: the moment the poison is public, the faithful may stop drinking it, without waiting for the physicians to assemble.

But the same words measure the provision's limits. Before the verdict, the wall; the verdict itself belongs to the synod alone. The one who walls off does not depose the pseudo teacher. He does

not strip him of office. He does not declare his Mysteries void. He does not pronounce his damnation. All of that is the council's, and God's.

The canon's own careful word is *pseudo bishop*: a man still holding the office and the name, whose teaching has falsified his claim on the flock's obedience, but whose formal judgment awaits the Church. The walled off believer treats him as one treats a doctor caught prescribing poison. He stops taking the prescriptions at once; he testifies; and he waits for the medical court. He does not seize the man's licence with his own hands, for it was never his to give or take.

And lest anyone suspect that this restraint is a modern softening of the canons, let him hear the keeper of the canons himself. Saint Nicodemos the Hagiorite, in the Pedalion, the very book from which this treatise cites them, set near the head of the sacred canons a famous note explaining why they say let him be deposed, and never he is deposed:

*The penalties provided by the Canons, such as deposition, excommunication, and anathematization, are imposed in the third person. The Canons command the synod of living bishops to depose the priests, or to excommunicate them, or to anathematize laymen who violate the canons. Yet, if the synod does not actually effect the deposition of the priests, or the excommunication or anathematization of the laymen, these priests and laymen are neither actually deposed, nor excommunicated, nor anathematized. They are liable to stand trial, however, here, judicially; and there, with regard to divine judgment.*

Saint Nicodemos the Hagiorite, Pedalion, note to the third Apostolic Canon<sup>32</sup>

Let him be deposed: a command addressed to the synod, and not a sentence that executes itself. The saint even supplies the parable: a king commands his servant to whip an offender; until the servant strikes, the man stands unwhipped, though the guilt,

and the trial to come, remain. And Nicodemos presses the point against the zealots of his own day without mercy: those men commit a great error, he writes, who say that clergy in violation of the canons are already actually deposed; it is a priest accusing tongue that speaks so, not understanding that the command of the canons, without the practical activity of the second person, that is, of the synod, remains without any effect.

Here, from the very hand that gave the Church her book of canons, is the whole grammar of the wall. The believer who walls off treats the guilt as public, for the heresy is preached bareheaded, and leaves the sentence to the tribunal, exactly as the canon's own verbs require. Whoever goes further, and declares from a private mouth that the pseudo teacher is already deposed and stripped of grace, is not applying the Pedalion but contradicting its opening pages.

## THE PRECEDENT OF THE SAINTS

The Church did not wait until 861 to act this way. The canon wrote down what the saints had always done, and had been praised for doing. Thirty years before the Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius, when the archbishop of the capital was preaching against the title Theotokos, many of his clergy and people had already withdrawn from his communion. And Saint Cyril of Alexandria, the pillar of that whole struggle, wrote to them not to rebuke but to strengthen them:

*Keep yourselves untainted and blameless, neither communing with the aforementioned, nor paying any heed to him as a teacher, should he persist in being a wolf instead of a shepherd.*

Saint Cyril of Alexandria, to the clergy and people of Constantinople<sup>33</sup>

## COMMAND OR PERMISSION?

One honest question remains, and because learned and even confessing men have pressed it, it must be met here and not hidden: does the canon *command* the wall, or only *permit* it? Its grammar, as anyone can see, protects and honours; it does not say, in so many words, thou shalt withdraw.

We concede the grammar freely, and we concede more. This book anathematizes no one for hesitating. The timid, the confused, the priest bound by a hundred dependents, the layman who cannot yet see, these are to be strengthened, not cursed; and those who in good conscience still stand within, grieving and protesting, are not thereby heretics. The moment and manner of each soul's step call for counsel, not for a stopwatch held by zealots.

But when all that is conceded, the merely permissive reading still fails as a rule of life, for two reasons the reader now possesses.

First, the canon does not stand alone. It presupposes the standing law of Scripture which the last chapter set out; and that law, reject, avoid, receive not, come out, is not permissive. What the canon adds is not the duty, which already existed, but the shield: it strips the name of schismatic from those who do the duty before the verdict. And a shield is forged for men who must go where blows fall, not as proof that no one need go.

Second, follow the permissive reading to its end, and it devours itself. If the faithful may always simply wait for the synod, then when the synod comes and is a robber council that approves the heresy, as synods did at Ariminum, at Hiereia, at Florence, the faithful must submit, for the verdict they were told to await has been given. A reading that delivers the flock to the wolf at the wolf's strongest hour cannot be the mind of the Church, whose saints in every such hour did the opposite.

Therefore the sober conclusion is this: the defence of the faith binds every Orthodox conscience; only the hour and manner of each one's part in it admit of counsel.

So the canon stands, the Church's own charter of the wall: heresy, condemned, preached bareheaded; then withdrawal without usurpation, honour without penalty, waiting without despair. A word attributed to Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem, the great confessor against the Monothelites, has been handed down as its summary; and though its exact source cannot now be verified, and we say so plainly, it says nothing the canon does not say:

*If any should separate themselves from such, not on the pretext of an offence, but on account of a heresy that has been condemned by a Synod or by the Holy Fathers, they are worthy of honour and approbation, as being truly Orthodox.*

attributed to Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem<sup>34</sup>

## **In plain words**

In 861 the Church made a rule with two sides. Side one: if you break away from your bishop over accusations or quarrels, anything that is not the faith, you are the one splitting the Church. Side two: if a bishop openly preaches a false teaching the Church already condemned, you may stop saying his name and step back even before a council judges him, and far from being punished, you deserve honour, because you defied a fake teacher, not a real bishop. Three keys must all turn: real heresy, already condemned, preached openly. And the wall has limits: you may stop following him, but only a council can remove him, you never start your own church.

## Notes and sources

30. Canon 15 of the First and Second (Protodeutera) Synod of Constantinople, 861, in the rendering of the Pedalion of Saint Nicodemos the Hagiorite (first published Leipzig, 1800). The decisive clauses distinguish withdrawal from a president "preaching the heresy publicly" and "bareheaded" (gymnēi tēi kephalēi), "before any synodal verdict," from separation over personal charges, which canons 13 to 14 and the canon's own first half condemn. The full text is given again in the Appendix.

31. Saint John of Damascus (c. 675 to 749), *Apologetic Treatises Against Those Who Decry the Holy Images*, Treatise II (c. 730), written against the iconoclast edicts of Leo III from Palestine, beyond the emperor's power; trans. after M. H. Allies (1898). The boundaries of the Fathers are the canon's condemned-by-Synods-or-Fathers: the believer who refuses the innovation is keeping a landmark, not drawing one.

32. Saint Nicodemos the Hagiorite, *Pedalion* (The Rudder; first published Leipzig, 1800), the celebrated footnote to Apostolic Canon 3. The saint there distinguishes actual penalty, imposed only by 'the synod of living bishops', from liability to it; illustrates with the king and the servant; and rebukes as 'a priest accusing tongue' those who hold canon-violating clergy to be self deposed. He confirms the reading from Apostolic Canon 46 itself, which does not say that the offender is deposed, but 'we command that he be stripped of Holy Orders by your decision.' Elsewhere in the same spirit he distinguishes what a man is virtually, as a matter of guilt, from what he becomes actually, as a matter of penalty, only when the synod acts. This footnote is the canonical backbone of the distinction, kept throughout this book, between walling off and deposing.

33. Saint Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444), Letter to the clergy, laity, and monks of Constantinople, written during the Nestorian controversy, before the Council of Ephesus (431) had judged Nestorius (cf. the Cyrilline correspondence in the *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, ed. Schwartz). An instance, praised by a pillar of Orthodoxy, of the very withdrawal the fifteenth canon would later honour.

34. Traditionally attributed to Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem (c. 560 to 638), defender of the two wills of Christ. The greater part of his writings is lost, and this sentence cannot at present be located in his surviving works; it is given as a traditional attribution, not a verified citation, in keeping with this book's rule of marking uncertain sources.

# The Name in the Liturgy

*Commemoration, Chrism, and Partaking*

## WHAT THE NAME DECLARES

The canon speaks of walling off from communion. But what, concretely, is walled off? Everything now depends on understanding one small moment in the services, so small that many stand through it without noticing.

At every Divine Liturgy, the celebrant names, aloud and before God, the bishop of the place. The bishop, when he serves, names his patriarch and his fellow bishops. And in the ancient diptychs, the folded tablets of names, church answered to church across the whole earth.

What is this naming? Not a courtesy. Not an announcement. Not merely a prayer that God help the man, though prayer for him is included. It is a declaration of identity in the faith: this is my shepherd; where he stands, I stand; what he confesses at his altar, I confess at mine. The names in the diptychs trace out, name by name, the visible network of the one altar which the second chapter described. To be in the diptychs is to be in that communion; to be struck from them has always meant to be out of it. The commemoration is the confession of the Church, spoken at her most solemn hour, in the middle of the Mystery itself.

Once this is seen, the whole logic of walling off follows as day follows dawn. If naming the bishop declared nothing, ceasing to name him would mean nothing, and the fifteenth canon would be a rule about trivia. But because the name is a confession, the name binds. To commemorate an Orthodox bishop is a joy, the

sealing of a true unity. To commemorate, knowingly and at the altar, a man who is publicly preaching condemned heresy is to declare before God a unity of faith with the heresy. It is to tell a lie in the holiest place a lie can be told.

Saint Theodore the Studite, the great confessor of the iconoclast age whom we shall meet again, taught without softening that such commemoration defiles: the poison of the false confession touches even the Orthodox man who, knowing, seals it with the name. And the Fathers of the Holy Mountain, in the letter this book will quote among the confessors, drew the argument from the Apostle John himself: if a mere greeting on the road makes a man partaker of the false teacher's evil works, what shall be said of the solemn proclamation of his name at the dread Mysteries? The wall of the fifteenth canon is, at its core, simply this: the refusal to go on telling that lie.<sup>35</sup>

## WHERE THE BISHOP IS

Here someone will raise the word of Saint Ignatius, and it must be given its full force, for it is the foundation of Orthodox order:

*Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude of the people also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate the love-feast.*

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, To the Smyrnaeans, 8<sup>36</sup>

Where the bishop is, there is the Church: yes, and this book bows to the word. The walled off soul who comes to despise the episcopate as such has fallen into the pit on the far side of the road.

But the objector quotes the martyr against the martyr. The same Ignatius, in the same journey to the beasts, commanded the faithful to abstain from heresy as from deadly poison mixed in sweet wine, and to flee the false teachers as wild beasts in the

form of men. He bound the people to the bishop as the bishop stands in the faith of Jesus Christ; for it is that faith, and not the bare title, that makes his parallel true. Where the bishop is, there is the Church, *because* where the true confession is, there is Christ. A bishop preaching against the confession has broken the very bond in which the maxim lives. To follow him then is not to be where Ignatius said the Church is; it is to be led away from her by a man still wearing her vestments.

And remember who wrote the fifteenth canon: a great synod of bishops, under one of the greatest of patriarchs. The provision for walling off is the episcopate's own law, given to protect the flock from the false brother within its ranks. The man who uses it rightly does not defy the episcopate but obeys it. He honours the office precisely by refusing its counterfeiter; and he remains what he was, a man under the Orthodox bishops of all the world, awaiting the synod to which his whole posture is an appeal.

Nor is the flock's watchfulness an insolence invented by the zealous; it is the standing charge of the hierarchs themselves. The first patriarch of Constantinople after the fall of the City, Saint Gennadios Scholarios, the heir of Saint Mark in the resistance to the false union, instructed the faithful in so many words:

*Keep an eye on your bishops as far as their Orthodoxy is concerned, lest they go so far as to teach doctrines against the true Faith, or celebrate with heretics and schismatics.*

Saint Gennadios Scholarios, Patriarch of Constantinople<sup>37</sup>

Keep an eye on your bishops: a patriarch says it, and says it of patriarchs. The watching is not suspicion but stewardship, the same guardianship of religion that the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848 located in the very body of the Church, the people itself; and the two marks he names, false doctrine and concelebration with the heterodox, are precisely the marks this book has been teaching the reader to weigh.

## THE SEAL OF THE CHRISM

A second seal must be understood beside the name: the Holy Chrism. When a Christian is baptized, he is anointed with the sacred Myron, consecrated by the chief hierarchs of the Church, and the priest says at each anointing: the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem taught the catechumens what that ointment is:

*See that thou suppose not this to be plain ointment. For as the Bread of the Eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Ghost, is no longer common bread, so this holy ointment is no longer simple ointment after the invocation, but a gift of Christ and of the Holy Ghost.*

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogical Catechesis III<sup>38</sup>

The Chrism is the seal of belonging. By it the baptized is marked as Christ's and enrolled in the one Body; and by it, as we shall see in the chapter on return, the Church has often received back those coming home from schism and from certain heresies, renewing the seal where the confession had been broken. Hold the two seals together, the Chrism on the body and the name at the altar, and the shape of membership becomes visible. A Christian belongs to the Church by the Mysteries that seal him and by the confession that at the altar he partakes of proclaims. Neither seal is private property; both bind him into the whole.

## WHAT PARTAKING CONFESSES

Which brings us to the last and most searching question of this chapter: what does my own partaking confess, and where are its limits?

The Apostle answered the first half at the chalice, as we heard: the partaker of the altar is bound into all the altar confesses. And the Church answered after him, in her own liturgical voice. Every

year, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, she reads the Synodikon aloud in her churches, and among its sentences stands this one:

*To those who knowingly have communion with those who insult and dishonour the venerable icons: Anathema. To the champions of Orthodoxy: Eternal memory.*

The Synodikon of Orthodoxy<sup>39</sup>

*Knowingly*: the Church's own word, and it measures everything. The simple soul who partakes in ignorance is not under this sentence; God judges what a man knows. But the believer who knows that open, condemned heresy is being proclaimed at an altar, and who nevertheless seals it there with his amen and his communion, has made the confession his own. There is a ladder that runs from the public violation of the faith, down through knowing communion with it, to the final judgment; and the canon of the wall exists precisely so that the faithful may step off that ladder at its first rung. The Psalmist sang the same refusal long before: *I have not sat with vain persons... I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.*

And the limits are as fixed as the duty. The believer's weapons are refusal, absence, and testimony: to withhold the amen, to withdraw from the communion, and to say why, with grief. His weapons are never the altar and the sentence. He raises no rival table, ordains no clergy, declares no Mystery void, pronounces no anathema, for those belong to the synod and to God. The layman and the monk guard the faith with their feet and their voice and their tears. The guarding of it with thrones belongs to the Church gathered, and to her alone.

## In plain words

Saying the bishop's name in the Liturgy is a solemn promise: "I believe what this man believes." That is why the faithful stop saying the name of a bishop who openly teaches condemned falsehood, otherwise they would be telling a lie to God at the altar. "Where the bishop is, there is the Church" is true of a bishop who keeps the true faith; a false teacher in vestments is exactly what that saying does not cover. The Chrism seals you into the Church; your communion confesses the altar's faith; and your only weapons are to step back, speak the truth, and weep, never to judge souls or build a rival altar.

## Notes and sources

35. Saint Theodore the Studite (759 to 826), *Epistles* (Book I, Letter 39, to Theophilus the Abbot, in the numbering of the critical edition of G. Fatouros, CFHB 31, Berlin 1992), on the defilement contracted by the knowing commemoration of heresy; the book follows the Fatouros numbering throughout. For the Hagiorite Fathers' argument from 2 John 10 to 11, see the chapter "The Fathers Who Resisted."

36. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 8 (c. 107). Ignatius binds the Church to the bishop precisely as the bishop stands in the true faith; cf. *Smyrnaeans* 6 and *Trallians* 6, where the same Ignatius commands the faithful to abstain from heresy as from deadly poison and to flee false teachers as beasts in human form.

37. Saint Gennadios II Scholarios (c. 1400, c. 1473), first Patriarch of Constantinople after 1453 and the chief continuator of Saint Mark of Ephesus against the Florentine union; the charge is preserved in the compilations of his counsels (*Works*, ed. Petit, Sidéridès, Jugie). Cf. the Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848, cited in the fifth chapter, which lodges the guardianship of religion in the whole body of the Church.

38. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313 to 386), *Mystagogical Catechesis* III, on the Holy Chrism (PG 33). The authorship of the *Mystagogical Catecheses* is sometimes assigned to his successor John of Jerusalem; the attribution is noted honestly here, and the substance is undisputed.

39. The *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, proclaimed at the restoration of the holy icons in 843 and read on the First Sunday of Great Lent ever since. The book cites it as the Church's own liturgical act of confession and discernment: knowing

communion with condemned heresy falls under her anathema; the champions of Orthodoxy receive her eternal memory.

# The Fathers Who Resisted

## THE PATTERN OF THE STORMS

The canon of 861 did not invent the wall. It wrote down what the saints had already done in every great storm, and what the Church, storm after storm, had crowned. This chapter walks through those storms in order; and the reader should watch for the pattern, for it repeats with the fidelity of a law.

A condemned error captures thrones. The majority bends. A few withdraw from the false communion without leaving the Church. They are called dividers, punished, exiled. And the council that at last condemns the heresy vindicates them, not as rebels forgiven, but as confessors honoured. The council does not create the true confession out of nothing; it ratifies the confession that the walled off kept alive through the interval. That is the whole shape of Church history in a time of heresy, and each story below is one turn of the same wheel.

The Apostles themselves foretold the pattern, and foretold, with terrible precision, where the wolves would come from:

*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

Acts 20:29 to 30, Saint Paul to the elders of the Church

Of your own selves: not from outside, but from among the shepherds themselves. Every history in this chapter is that prophecy keeping its appointment. And the same Scriptures that foretold the wolves fixed the flock's anchor against them: *Jesus*

*Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.*<sup>40</sup>

## THE ARIAN NOON

Begin at the darkest noon. After Nicaea had confessed the Son of God to be of one essence with the Father, the Arian party captured the emperors and, through them, the thrones. Councils multiplied against the faith. Bishops subscribed by the hundreds. In Jerome's undying phrase, the whole world groaned and marvelled to find itself Arian.

Saint Athanasius, patriarch of Alexandria, stood against it and was driven into exile five times. The faithful of whole cities, refusing the Arian assemblies, worshipped in the open country, in rain and snow, their churches occupied, their shepherds banished. Saint Basil the Great, writing to the West for help, did not say that these scattered flocks had left the Church. He said they *were* the Church, suffering. And of the hierarchy of that hour, Saint Gregory the Theologian, who bore its wounds himself, left a sigh that has been handed down the centuries: that he feared no one so much as the bishops, except a few. The word is bitter, and we give it as tradition gives it; but the history it summarizes is beyond dispute. The buildings were with the heresy, and the Church was with Athanasius.<sup>41</sup>

Hear the voices of that noon themselves, for they have been preserved. Saint Hilary of Poitiers, exiled again and again in the West for the same confession, blessed the homelessness of the faithful in words that still burn:

*We do wrong in venerating the Church of God in roofs and edifices. Safer to me are mountains, and woods, and lakes, and dungeons, and whirlpools; for in these, either hidden or immersed, did the prophets prophesy.*

Saint Hilary of Poitiers, Against Auxentius<sup>42</sup>

And Athanasius, writing to the monks who held the wilderness with him, compressed the discipline of the age into one line:

*We are bound to refrain from communing with those whose opinions we abhor.*

Saint Athanasius the Great, to the monks<sup>43</sup>

Saint Basil kept the same measure from the other side, defending the communions he maintained: *I should certainly not have admitted them to communion even for a moment, if I had found them a stumbling block to the Faith.*<sup>44</sup>

One rule, facing both ways: communion follows the confession, extended wherever the faith is whole, withheld wherever it is not. The Arian noon did not invent the wall; it uncovered the masonry that had lain in the Church's foundations from the beginning.

## THE RULE OF THE GOLDEN MOUTH

From the next generation the Church received not only an example but a rule, from the golden mouth itself. Saint John Chrysostom, preaching on obedience to rulers, asked the question every troubled conscience asks, and answered it for all time:

*What then, when the ruler is wicked, should we not obey? Wicked, how do you mean? If it be on account of the Faith, flee him and forsake him, not only if he be a man, but even if he be an angel come down from heaven. But if it be on account of his life, do not be overcurious.*

Saint John Chrysostom, Homily 34 on Hebrews<sup>45</sup>

Hold that distinction like a lamp, for it lights every page that follows. The *life* of the shepherd, however faulty, is no ground for separation; the man who pries into it and departs over it stands condemned by the canon's first half. The *faith* is the one ground; and when the faith is betrayed, flight is commanded, though the betrayer were an angel. Everything the counterfeits of the next

chapter got wrong, and everything the confessors of this one got right, is already sorted by that one sentence.

## MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

Two centuries later the storm was Monothelitism, the teaching that Christ has no human will, and it held every throne of the East. The patriarchs subscribed; the emperor enforced; and one monk stood.

Saint Maximus the Confessor was pressed with the argument of numbers: all the Churches had communed, and he alone refused. He gave the answer this book set on its opening page: if the whole universe should begin to commune with the Patriarch, I will not commune with him. For the Apostle's anathema falls even on an angel preaching another gospel, and numbers do not amend it.

And when they pressed the argument to its cruellest point, then you alone will be saved, and all the rest will perish?, the confessor answered with a meekness that has never been improved upon:

*When all the people in Babylon were worshipping the golden idol, the Three Holy Children did not condemn anyone to perdition. They did not concern themselves with the doings of others, but took care only for themselves, lest they should fall away from true piety. In precisely the same way, when Daniel was cast into the lions' den, he did not condemn any of those who, fulfilling the law of Darius, did not wish to pray to God; but he kept in mind his own duty, and desired rather to die than to sin against his conscience by transgressing the Law of God.*

Saint Maximus the Confessor, at his trial<sup>46</sup>

Mark the shape of the answer, for it is the shape of every true wall. He condemns no soul to perdition; he minds his own fidelity; and he prefers death to the transgression of conscience. The

confessor's refusal faces inward before it faces outward, a guard set upon his own faith, not a sentence passed upon his neighbour's, and by that mark the reader may forever tell the confessor from the zealot.

They cut out his tongue that had confessed, and cut off his hand that had written, and sent him to die in exile. And the Sixth Ecumenical Council, gathering after his death, confessed the two wills of Christ exactly as the mutilated monk had confessed them; and the Church numbers him among her greatest saints. Whoever asks where the Church was in the year 655 must answer: visibly, in a prisoner without tongue or hand. And the thrones that condemned him were, in the canon's exact word, pseudo teachers, whatever their titles.<sup>47</sup>

## THEODORE THE STUDITE

Then came the century of the broken icons, and with it the teacher this book has quoted so often: Saint Theodore the Studite. When iconoclasm sat on the throne and in the patriarchate, Theodore led his monks in refusing the communion of the innovators. He was scourged, imprisoned, and exiled; and from prison he wrote the letters that remain the confessor's handbook.

Hear two of them. To the abbot Theophilos, when the error of the hour had been decreed synodally, he wrote:

*Neither commune with these individuals, nor commemorate them at the Divine Liturgy; for very grave are the threats voiced by the Saints against those who compromise with it, since the divine Chrysostom has declared loudly and clearly that not only heretics, but also those who commune with such people, are enemies of God.*

Saint Theodore the Studite, to Theophilos the Abbot<sup>48</sup>

And to the monk Methodios, defending the makeshift arrangements of the resistance, he wrote the sentence that keeps every wall honest:

*In times of heresy, owing to pressing needs, things do not always proceed flawlessly, in accordance with what has been prescribed in times of peace; this seems to have been the case with the most blessed Athanasios and the most holy Eusebios, who both performed ordinations outside their respective dioceses, and now, the same thing is evidently being done while the present heresy persists.*

Saint Theodore the Studite, to Methodios the Monk<sup>49</sup>

Owing to pressing needs: the resistance is an economy of the storm, provisional, half-apologizing for its own irregularities, and awaiting the council that will end them. It is a field-hospital, not a rival city; and the Studite, its very general, refuses to call its expedients a new normal.

Their teaching, gathered, is this: that the commemoration of heresy defiles even the Orthodox man who, knowing, pronounces it; that the faithful must neither commune with the false teachers nor receive their blessing, while judging no man's soul and awaiting the council; and that economy may bend many things, but never the confession itself. And when the icons were restored, the Church wrote the vindication into her yearly Synodikon, as the last chapter heard: anathema on knowing communion with the condemned error; eternal memory to the champions of Orthodoxy. The wall of the Studite became the confession of the Church.

## ATHOS, AND LYONS

The pattern held when the pressure came from the West. After the false union of Lyons in 1274, the emperor Michael and his patriarch pressed the empire to commemorate the pope, and the pressure fell hardest on the Holy Mountain. The Athonite fathers answered with a letter that is a whole theology of commemoration in one argument, reasoning from the Apostle John exactly as this book has reasoned:

*For if simply saying 'fare-thee-well' makes us communicants of another's evil works, how much more is this the case with the official commemoration of one during the celebration of the divine and fearful Mysteries?*

The Hagiorite Fathers to the Emperor Michael VIII, 1274<sup>50</sup>

The same letter presses the warning of the Fathers that not only heretics, but those who knowingly commune with them, are enemies of God; and the fathers paid for their words. At the monastery of Zographou, monks and laymen who refused the union were burned alive in their tower rather than commemorate the pope, and the Mountain honours these martyrs to this day. Among them were laymen, a witness that the defence of the Faith belongs to the whole people of God, and not to the clergy alone. The union of Lyons collapsed; the emperor died outside the Church he had betrayed; and the confessors' refusal became the Church's memory.

## THE LIGHT DEFENDED

In the century that followed, the storm turned upon the very heart of the faith: whether man can truly be united to God. Saint Gregory Palamas, defending the hesychast monks, taught what the Church had always lived, that God is truly partaken in His uncreated grace and light, so that salvation is real union with the living God and not a mere improvement of the mind. For this he was opposed by learned men; and when the throne of Constantinople itself turned against him, Patriarch John Kalekas held him imprisoned and under censure. The councils of Constantinople then vindicated his teaching, above all the great council of 1351; the Synodikon of Orthodoxy proclaims that vindication every year; and within a decade of his death the Church glorified him among her saints. Once again the wheel had turned: the confessor censured by a patriarch, and the confession written into the Church's yearly memory.<sup>51</sup>

And the saint himself left the flock the counsel of that whole struggle, in the image the confessors after him would take up:

*Let us flee from those who reject the patristic interpretations and attempt by themselves to deduce the complete opposite. We should run away from them more than we would from a snake; for when a snake bites, it kills the body for a time, separating it from the immortal soul, but when these men get their teeth into a soul, they separate it from God, which is eternal death. Let us escape as far as we can from such people, and take refuge with those who teach piety and salvation in accordance with the traditions of the Fathers.*

Saint Gregory Palamas, Homily on the Transfiguration<sup>52</sup>

More than from a snake: the serpent kills for a time; the false teacher, for ever. The proportion of the flight is set by the proportion of the venom, and it is love itself that does the arithmetic, for it is precisely the man who believes that souls can die eternally who runs, and who carries with him whom he can.

## MARK AT FLORENCE

Last, Florence. In 1439, worn down by fear and need, the emperor, the patriarch, and nearly all the Orthodox bishops subscribed the decree of union with Rome. Every throne yielded; one bishop would not. Saint Mark of Ephesus held that the Latin teachings were real corruptions of the Faith, and set his stand in words that have become the conscience of the Church:

*The further I stay from this man and from those like him, the nearer I come to God and to the faithful and the holy Fathers.*

Saint Mark of Ephesus<sup>53</sup>

He stood almost alone, as Maximus had stood; and he was not alone, for he stood with the Fathers of all the ages. When Pope Eugenius the Fourth learned that Mark had not signed, he understood that his victory was empty:

*Therefore we have accomplished nothing.*

Pope Eugenius IV, on learning that Mark alone had refused<sup>54</sup>

And when the unionists came home with their decree, Mark's encyclical to the faithful took up the very image of Palamas, and pressed it with the Apostle's own question:

*One must flee from them as one flees from a snake, as from the Latins themselves, or, it may be, from those who are even worse than they: from the buyers and sellers of Christ. For what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?*

Saint Mark of Ephesus, Encyclical against the unionists<sup>55</sup>

By every outward measure, the union of Florence was the act of the Church, ratified by her highest authorities in a great council. And it was false; and the one bishop who stood against them all was right; and the Church glorifies him as a pillar of Orthodoxy, while the decree he refused is dust. The throne is not the Faith. The majority is not the Church. The signatures of frightened

hierarchs do not bind the conscience of the faithful when the signatures betray the truth.

And in every one of these histories, mark what the vindicated did and did not do. They withdrew from the false communion, and they raised no altar. They refused the pseudo teachers, and they deposed no one. They suffered, and they waited; and the Church came, as she always comes, and crowned them. That, and nothing else, is the inheritance this book is trying to hand on.

## In plain words

Again and again in history the same thing happened: a false teaching captured the important thrones, almost everyone went along, and a few, Athanasius, Maximus, Theodore, the monks of Athos, Gregory Palamas, Mark of Ephesus, refused to share communion with the lie. They were called troublemakers, hurt, and exiled. Later the Church always came back, condemned the false teaching, and honoured these people as her greatest saints. Notice what they never did: they never started a new church. They stepped back, suffered, and waited, and they were right.

## Notes and sources

40. Acts 20:29 to 30; Hebrews 13:8 to 9 (KJV).

41. On the Arian ascendancy and the open air worship of the faithful, see Saint Basil the Great, Epistles 242 to 243, to the bishops of the West. The saying on the bishops is traditionally received from Saint Gregory the Theologian's corpus of letters and orations, born of his own experience of the hierarchy of that age; its precise locus is not fixed here, and the wording is to be confirmed against a critical edition, a warning this book attaches to every citation it cannot verify.

42. Saint Hilary of Poitiers (c. 310 to 367), *Contra Auxentium* (Against Auxentius, the Arian bishop of Milan), c. 365; PL 10, col. 616. Hilary, called the Athanasius of the West, warns the faithful against an ill-begun love of walls, *male parietum amor*, when the buildings are held by heresy; Saint Jerome's word in the fifth chapter remembers the same years.

43. Saint Athanasius the Great, *To Those Who Practice the Solitary Life and Are Established in Faith in God* (PG 26, col. 1188B), written to the monks amid the Arian ascendancy.

44. Saint Basil the Great, Letter 266, to Peter of Alexandria (PG 32). Basil is defending his communion with Meletios of Antioch and Eusebios of Samosata against suspicion; the sentence states the absolute precondition upon which every communion he kept was kept.

45. Saint John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Homily 34, on Hebrews 13:17. If the ruler holds a perverted doctrine, even were he an angel, flee him; but if he errs in life, be not curious, for his teaching may still be sound. Saint Theodore the Studite repeats and applies the same rule in his Epistles.

46. From the records of the trial of Saint Maximus (the *Relatio Motionis* and associated acta, 655), as transmitted in his Life. The exchange answers the officials' taunt that his solitary stand unchurched the world; the saint replies from Daniel 3 and 6. The substance stands in the contemporary trial documents; the fuller wording follows the hagiographic tradition, and we flag the transmission plainly.

47. Saint Maximus the Confessor (c. 580 to 662), from the surviving Greek acta of his trial (*Relatio Motionis*; cf. PG 90). Pressed that all the Churches had communed, the saint answered that even were the whole world to commune, he would not, citing Galatians 1:8; the wording renders the sense of the acta. He died in exile in 662, and the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680 to 681) vindicated his confession.

48. Saint Theodore the Studite, Epistle I.39, to Theophilos the Abbot (PG 99, cols. 1048CD, 1049A); trans. after *Orthodox Tradition* XVII (2000). Written after the Moechian error had been given synodal sanction (809); the appeal is to Saint John Chrysostom's dictum that communicants with heretics share their enmity with God, the same warning the Hagiorite fathers repeat to Michael VIII below.

49. Saint Theodore the Studite, Epistle II.215, to Methodios the Monk (PG 99, col. 1645D). Theodore defends ordinations performed across diocesan lines during the persecution by the precedent of Athanasius and Eusebios of Samosata, expressly as an economy of necessity, pending a council: the charter of the wall's provisional character, to be quoted against every settlement behind it.

50. The Letter of the Hagiorite (Athonite) Fathers to the Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, opposing the Union of Lyons (1274), arguing from 2 John 10 to 11. The text is transmitted in the Historical Essay of the monk Kallistos Vlastos (Athens, 1896), pp. 97 to 107, the form in which it has reached the modern confessing tradition; as a document preserved through a later compilation, its

precise wording warrants confirmation against the manuscript tradition, which is here stated plainly, after this book's rule.

51. Saint Gregory Palamas (1296 to 1359), Archbishop of Thessalonica. During the hesychast controversy he was held and placed under censure by Patriarch John XIV Kalekas; the councils of Constantinople of 1341, 1347, and above all 1351 vindicated his teaching on the uncreated energies, whose confession the Synodikon of Orthodoxy proclaims each year; he was glorified in 1368 by Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos. The episode is given here in outline only, as a further instance of the pattern this chapter traces.

52. Saint Gregory Palamas (1296 to 1359), Homily 34, *On the Holy Transfiguration of the Lord* (PG 151). A century later Saint Mark of Ephesus takes up the same image against the unionists, flee as from a snake, quoted below at Florence.

53. Saint Mark Eugenikos, Metropolitan of Ephesus (c. 1392 to 1444/45), the sole Orthodox bishop who refused to subscribe at Ferrara-Florence (1439); the sentiment is gathered from his confession and encyclical letters (cf. L. Petit, *Patrologia Orientalis* 15 and 17), and the wording renders his sense as transmitted in the Orthodox tradition.

54. The exclamation is attributed to Pope Eugenius IV upon learning that Mark of Ephesus alone had withheld his signature; reported in the historians of the council (cf. Sylvester Syropoulos, *Memoirs*) and given here as traditionally received, a historical report, not a documentary citation.

55. Saint Mark of Ephesus (1392 to 1444), *Encyclical Letter Against the Greco Latins* (c. 1440), in *Patrologia Orientalis* 17; the citation is 2 Corinthians 6:14 to 15. The 'moderate Greco Latins' of the encyclical are the unionist party who kept an Orthodox appearance while communing with the decree of Florence, the middle position which the saint elsewhere declares to be no position at all, as the twelfth chapter records.

# The Counterfeit Wall

*Separations the Church Condemned*

## THE TWO TEMPTATIONS OF EVERY STORM

Honesty has a debt to pay before this part can close. Everything the last chapter said of the confessors is true, and it is not the whole record. The same centuries produced the counterfeits: men and movements who separated from the Church, believed themselves the faithful remnant, wore nearly every outward mark the confessors wore, and were condemned.

For every storm carries two temptations, not one, and they drown men on opposite shores. The first temptation says: *separation is always betrayal*, whoever stands apart from his bishop, for any cause, has torn the Body; therefore keep communion at any price. The last chapter answered that temptation with the confessors, whom the Church crowned for standing apart. The second temptation says the reverse: *separation is always heroism*, whoever stands apart has, by that very act, proved himself the faithful remnant; therefore honour every wall. This chapter answers the second temptation, and must answer it with equal force; for a book that showed only the saints would teach its reader to think every separation holy, and in a time of zeal that is as fatal as thinking every separation damned. The Apostle's cry, *Is Christ divided?*, falls upon the schismatic no less than upon the heresiarch.

The Fathers spent their sternest words on this second shore, and they must be heard at full weight. Saint John Chrysostom, preaching on the unity of the Body, went as far as human words can go:

*Nothing so provokes God's anger as the division of the Church. A certain holy man said what might seem a daring thing, yet he said it: that not even the blood of martyrdom can wash out this sin; for to make a schism in the Church is no less an evil than to fall into heresy.*

Saint John Chrysostom, Homily on Ephesians<sup>56</sup>

Not even the blood of martyrdom: there is no heavier sentence in the Fathers. And yet the same homily carries, within its own reasoning, the distinction this book has kept from its first chapters; for Chrysostom is condemning those who divide while holding the same faith, whose disease, he says in the same breath, is the lust of authority, and of teachers with doctrines contrary to ours he says plainly that one must not mix with them. Even the thunder against schism keeps the exception for heresy inside its own sentence.

And Saint Cyprian, writing against the first great counterfeit this chapter will meet, set the seal upon the matter for all time:

*He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his Mother. If anyone could escape who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape who shall be outside of the Church.*

Saint Cyprian of Carthage, On the Unity of the Church<sup>57</sup>

Outside the ark is the flood: which is why everything turns on identifying the ark, and why the canon's whole labour is to establish that, in a time of open heresy, it is the resister who remains within her, and the pseudo teacher who has stepped over her side. Both edges of Cyprian's sentence cut. The counterfeits of this chapter fell upon the one; the false peacemakers of the next fall upon the other.

The counterfeit does not disprove the true coin; it proves the coin worth counterfeiting, and lays on every man who handles coin the duty of telling them apart. The way to learn is to lay the false

beside the true and turn both in the light. That is this chapter's work; and at its end, four plain questions will hold everything the light shows.

## THE NOVATIANS

The Novatians first. When the persecution of Decius (250) had passed, multitudes who had lapsed under torture stood weeping at the church doors; and the Church answered as the father answered the prodigal: there is a way home, the hard, honest way of penance and restoration. Against this rose Novatian, a learned presbyter of Rome, teaching that the Church has no power to restore those who denied Christ. And when Cornelius was lawfully elected bishop of Rome in 251, Novatian had himself consecrated as a rival bishop of the same city. His followers called themselves the *katharoi*, the pure.

Weigh the cause on this book's scales: not one article of the faith was at issue. Saint Basil, as we heard, ranks the Novatians among the schismatics, not the heretics, separated over a question capable of solution. Here already is the anatomy that will repeat in every schism below: a real problem, for some hierarchs truly were lax; a zeal that begins by loving purity; a discipline hardened into a dogma; and then the fatal step, the rival altar.

And mark the Church's medicine, for it reveals her diagnosis. The First Ecumenical Council received the returning Novatian clergy gently, in their orders, on one written condition: that they communicate with the lapsed who had repented. The one thing they had to renounce was precisely their refusal of mercy. Basil adds the grave sequel: their schism, persisted in, hardened at last into false doctrine about the Church's very power to loose. For the road of schism runs downhill. The separation demands a justification; the justification grows into a doctrine; and the doctrine, in the end, is an error in the confession itself.<sup>58</sup>

## THE MELETIANS

The Meletians of Egypt, from the same persecutions, teach the second lesson in a single line. Meletius of Lycopolis, while the lawful archbishop was in hiding, ordained clergy in dioceses not his own and stood for the harsher line against the lapsed. A parallel clergy grew up, calling itself the church of the martyrs, as though rigour were the proof of faithfulness. Nicaea healed the fracture like a physician, allowing the Meletian clergy a shadow of rank in strict subordination, while Meletius kept a bare title without the power to ordain.

The sequel is the warning. Within a generation, to spite the lawful successors, the Meletians made common cause with the Arians against Saint Athanasius. The schism that began by being stricter than the Church ended by leaguering with the deniers of the Son of God. For he who separates over less than the faith will find, soon enough, that his allies are those who left over the faith itself, since resentment, not confession, has become the bond of his party.<sup>59</sup>

## THE DONATISTS

The greatest counterfeit, from which the Church learned the most, was the Donatist schism of Africa. When Caecilian was consecrated bishop of Carthage about 311, the rigorist party rejected him on the ground that one of his consecrators, Felix of Aptunga, had surrendered the Scriptures in the last persecution. Therefore, they reasoned, the grace had not passed, and the man was no bishop. They consecrated Majorinus against him, and after him Donatus; and Africa woke to two hierarchies and two altars in every town.

Weigh the cause: not one article of the Creed was at issue. The whole ground was a charge against a person, the alleged sin of one consecrator, which is precisely the case the fifteenth canon's first half would later name and condemn. And the charge itself

did not stand. The Council of Rome in 313 acquitted Caecilian; the great Council of Arles in 314 confirmed it; and the inquiry cleared Felix. The schism stood, at its foundation, on a personal accusation, disproven and persisted in. Every element of the canon's portrait of the schismatic is present: the personal charge in place of the faith, the refusal of the verdict, the rival altar.<sup>60</sup>

What happened next must be studied by every generation, for it shows how schism manufactures its own theology: the act came first, and the doctrine was invented afterward to justify it. To defend their rejection of Caecilian, the Donatists taught that the Mysteries of unworthy ministers are void; they rebaptized those who came to them; and they confined the true Church of Christ to their own party in Africa. With this the schism, exactly as Basil warned of the Novatians, hardened into heresy. For to hang the grace of God on the hidden worthiness of the minister is to make God's gift the hostage of men; and to shut the catholic Church inside one province is to deny the Creed in deed.

Against this the Church gave the answer the reader must hold forever, because it divides the whole teaching of the confessors from the whole error of the Donatists: **grace is Christ's, and not the minister's**. Saint Gregory the Theologian forbade the faithful to weigh the baptizer: as two seals engraved with the same royal image stamp the one likeness, though one seal be of gold and the other of iron, so the priest's worthiness adds nothing to the gift, and his unworthiness takes nothing away. The canonical tradition teaches the same on every page: the unworthily ordained remain true priests until the Church herself deposes them, and the faithful are never to shun the Mysteries for the minister's sins. And the Seventh Ecumenical Council sealed it in practice, receiving in their orders the repentant bishops who had been ordained within the iconoclast heresy.

Whoever is tempted, in any age, to pronounce the Mysteries of others void by his own reckoning is tempted by the ghost of Donatus, and must answer him with Gregory's seals. Note well

how this acquits the confessors of the last chapter from the charge, often heard, that they were Donatists reborn. The Donatists fled bishops on account of alleged *life*, and pronounced upon grace. The confessors fled bishops on account of public *faith*, and pronounced upon no one. Chrysostom's lamp divides them at a stroke; and the Church condemned the one and crowned the other by that very light.<sup>61</sup>

## THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

Here also belongs the parable that both sides carried into that battle, the wheat and the tares, and it must be set in its place once, exactly. The Lord commanded that the tares be left to grow with the wheat until the harvest, lest the wheat be rooted up with them; and He Himself interpreted it: *the field is the world*. The Fathers drew from it, against the Donatists, the very lesson the Donatists refused: that sinners within the Church are borne with in patience unto the harvest, and that he who quits the threshing floor because of the chaff quits the grain also.

All this the confessor affirms with his whole heart. It is the distinction of the third chapter: sin endured, poison refused. But mark what the parable does not say. It nowhere bids the field call the darnel wheat. It commands patience with persons; it commands nowhere peace with poison. And the same Lord who forbade the uprooting said also, *Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*, speaking of teachings and their planters. The Donatist erred by refusing to tolerate sinners. The ecumenist errs by consenting to falsehood. The confessor is neither: bearing with every sinner, and refusing only the false confession, exactly as the parable, read whole, requires.<sup>62</sup>

## TWO FOOTNOTES OF HISTORY

Two footnotes of history complete the Donatist lesson.

First, God so ordered it that the Donatists refuted themselves. When their own party split, and a Donatist council condemned the Maximianists with fearful words, they afterward received the condemned bishops back in their orders, together with the baptisms performed in separation. By their own practice they confessed that separation does not void the Mysteries, excusing in themselves what they damned in the whole world; and the canons of Carthage wrote it down, so that no age could plead ignorance.

Second, from that long contest comes Augustine's proverb, the strongest weapon that can be aimed at this book, and it must be faced: *the whole world judges securely*, he wrote, meaning that the party which must unchurch the earth to remain the Church has answered its own question. The word is true, and it justly condemned the Donatists. But attend to what kind of cause it judges. Where the cause is a personal charge, a rite, a discipline, the consent of the whole Church rightly ends the matter, for such things are hers to order; the man against the world over them is convicted by his solitude. Where the cause is the faith once delivered, the judge was never the counting of heads in one hour, as the Arian decades proved, when the world groaned to find itself Arian, and one exiled bishop was right against it. There the judge is the confession of all the ages, Vincent's everywhere and always and by all, before which a momentary majority is only a moment.

Donatus was wrong against the world, because his cause was not the faith. Athanasius, in the same century, was right against the world, because his cause was nothing else. The same posture, the opposite verdicts; the cause decided everything, which is the entire teaching of the fifteenth canon, lived out five hundred years before it was written.<sup>63</sup>

## THE OLD BELIEVERS

Twelve centuries after the Donatists, the tragedy was played again, this time in Russia, and it is the fullest lesson history gives on defending tradition rightly and wrongly. It will be told in plain order: what happened, what they believed, how protest became schism, what the Church has judged. And with double honesty, for the guilt did not lie on one side.

First, what happened. By the middle of the seventeenth century, centuries of hand-copying had let the Russian service books drift, in small ways, from the Greek. In 1653 Patriarch Nikon of Moscow, a forceful man with the Tsar behind him, set out to correct the books and customs of Russia to the Greek models of his own day, so that the strongest Orthodox realm on earth might stand in visible uniformity with the whole Orthodox world.<sup>64</sup>

What, exactly, was changed? The sign of the Cross was to be made with three fingers, confessing the Trinity, instead of the old Russian two, which had confessed the two natures of Christ. The spelling of the Saviour's name: *Iisus* for *Isus*. The Alleluia sung three times, not two. Processions moved against the sun instead of with it. And a word, *true*, was removed from the Slavonic Creed's article on the Holy Spirit, to match the Greek original, which had never contained it.<sup>65</sup> Mark the two facts on which the whole tragedy hangs. Every item on that list is rite and translation, not doctrine: both two fingers and three confess Orthodox dogma, and nothing was in truth being taken from the faith. And every item touched the daily, bodily piety of an entire people, the way a man had crossed himself since childhood. Doctrinally small; humanly enormous. Almost no one in power paused over the second fact.

The manner made everything worse, and must be judged as honestly as the matter. The corrections were pressed with speed, harshness, and open contempt for the old ways; the one bishop who defended them, Paul of Kolomna, was deposed at the outset,

leaving the resistance without a single hierarch. Then, in 1666 and 1667, a great council in Moscow, with the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch presiding beside the Russians, confirmed the new books, laid the old rites and those who clung to them under anathema, and handed the resisters to the state for punishment. The leader of the resistance, the Archpriest Avvakum, was burned at the stake in 1682; the great monastery of Solovki, refusing the new books, was besieged for eight years and taken with slaughter.<sup>66</sup> The new books were fastened upon Russia by force: a lawful correction enforced by unlawful cruelty, a council making a dogma of what was not a dogma. Hold that sentence; the whole lesson grows from it.

## **WHAT THE OLD BELIEVERS BELIEVED**

Now the other side, stated plainly, as they themselves would state it, for no schism can be guarded against until its inner logic has been honestly heard. Those who refused the reforms, the Old Believers, held four convictions, and each looked like piety itself. They believed that rite and faith are one seamless garment: the two fingered Cross was a confession of Christ's two natures, made upon the body ten thousand times in a lifetime. They believed that the old books could not be corrupt, for the saints of Russia had prayed in them and been made holy by them. They believed that keeping the old ways was obedience to the Church, for a Russian council, the Stoglav of 1551, had bound those very usages under sanction. And they believed the correctors' modern Greek books, some printed in Latin Venice, from a Greece that had signed the false union of Florence and then fallen to the Turks, carried infection, not purity.

Follow that logic one step further and the abyss opens. If the old ways are holy, what does it mean that the hierarchy now anathematizes them, and us, and our fathers, and our saints with us? Many drew the terrified conclusion: the reform is not a correction but a change of faith; the hierarchy is apostate;

Antichrist reigns; the official church is no church at all; and we, the persecuted keepers of the old ways, are the last Christians on earth.<sup>67</sup> Some sealed that despair by giving themselves, with their children, to the flames rather than be touched by the new books, a horror that shows, once for all, where the sentence *the Church has perished* finally leads those who pronounce it.

Now weigh both sides on the canon's scales, and hold both verdicts at once. The reformers were right about the rites: nothing of the faith was touched, and the Greek usages were as Orthodox as the Russian. The Old Believers were right about the manner: the reform was needless in its haste, brutal in its enforcement, and gravely wrong to anathematize venerable rites as though they were heresies. But being right about the manner did not make the separators right about the matter. Two fingers or three touch no article of the Creed; and a Christian may not unchurch the Church over the garments of the faith, however roughly the garments have been handled.

## **FROM RESISTANCE TO SECT**

What, then, was the lawful path for those whose consciences were bound to the old ways? Exactly the path this whole book describes. Grieve. Protest. Keep the old rites where conscience required, as the Church herself, in the end, agreed they lawfully could. Refuse every demand to call the old ways heretical. Bear the unjust penalties as confessors bear them. And through all of it, remain within the one Church, awaiting the council that would set right what a council had set wrong. Those who suffered within those bounds stand outside every censure this chapter pronounces.

Many chose otherwise, and their road is the road of every schism in this chapter. They made the garment into the body, declaring the rite itself the faith. They answered the false anathema with a false verdict of their own: the reformed Church graceless, her Mysteries void, the sentence of Donatus, passed this time over

the number of a man's fingers. Then the logic of separation ran its course. They had no bishop, and their own premise split them at once over the question it created: where shall we find priests? One wing, the priested, lived for two centuries on a contradiction, drawing its clergy from the very church it called graceless. The other, the priestless, followed the premise to its end: if grace had departed, the priesthood had ceased, and they organized a Christianity without the Mysteries, generations born, married, and buried without the chalice.<sup>68</sup> Mark the sectarian's exact reward: the men who separated to keep the fullness of the old piety bequeathed their children a piety without priesthood and without Eucharist.

Then came the sequel, which proves what the quarrel had truly been about. In 1800 the Church established parishes celebrating the old rites in full within her own communion, a standing confession that the rites had never been the disease. And in 1971 the Local Council of the Russian Church did solemnly what should have been done three centuries earlier: it lifted the anathemas of 1667 and declared the old rites Orthodox and salvific. The cause of the schism was demolished by the very Church against which the schism had been made, and the schism did not end.<sup>69</sup> The wall stood after its foundation was removed, and it stands to this day; for separation had become the identity, dearer than the cause that once excused it. Here is the precise reason the canon guards its gate so narrowly, admitting no cause but open, condemned heresy: heresy, once repented, releases its captives, but a schism that has become an identity does not let go.

The lesson cuts with two edges, and both cut today. To the mighty: never make a dogma of what is not a dogma, and never enforce even a right correction with contempt, authority that does so begets the very schism it punishes, and the council of 1971 is the Church's own confession of that guilt. To the zealous: never make the garment into the body; never answer an unjust anathema with a private one; and never pronounce the Church graceless, that sentence imprisons the speaker, and his children,

long after every cause is healed. And let the modern reader look in this mirror without flinching, for the same tragedy was replayed in our own age over a calendar, as the next chapter shows: order handled harshly, protest hardened into rival altars, gracelessness pronounced by private mouths. The rule, once seen here, is seen everywhere. A righteous protest against real error suffers, testifies, and *stays*, it appeals to the Church and waits for her. A protest that hardens into identity *leaves*, and calls the leaving faithfulness. The first is the way of the confessors; the second, whatever its courage, is the counterfeit.

## THE COUNTERFEIT OF BLOOD

One counterfeit remains, and it is the subtlest of all; for it imitates neither the Church's strictness, like the Novatians, nor her purity, like the Donatists, but her very warmth. It is the counterfeit of blood.

First the true blood, in plain words. *The life of the flesh is in the blood*, says the Law:<sup>70</sup> blood is life itself, and to share blood is to share life, which is why kinship is called blood, and why the Gospel gathers our whole salvation into it. The Church is the flock *purchased with His own blood*; the cup of the Supper is *the new testament in My blood*.<sup>71</sup> The true blood of the Church, then, is the life of Christ Himself, and her members are kin by one Father, one Baptism, and one cup, *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God*. The Lord set the two kinships in their order when His mother and brethren stood outside the door: *whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother*.<sup>72</sup> Natural blood is honoured in the Church, the commandment to honour father and mother stands forever, but it is not her bond. Faith is; and her brotherhood is the kinship of the font, wider than every nation and older than every family, in which *there is neither Greek nor Jew \... but Christ is all, and in all*.<sup>73</sup>

Now the counterfeit, as plainly. Counterfeit blood is any natural bond, family, tribe, nation, race, party, faction, the loyalty of a group that has suffered together, put in the place of the blood of Christ as what binds a "church" together and marks who truly belongs. The bonds themselves are good: family and homeland are gifts of God. The counterfeit begins at the *exchange*, when the natural bond quietly takes the seat of the supernatural one, and the faith becomes the badge of the group instead of its foundation. From that moment, every sacred thing acquires a double; and the doubles feel identical from inside.

Watch the doubles. The warmth of the tribe feels like the communion of the saints, but the bond is sameness, not truth. Persecution feels like proof, but suffering, by itself, proves only that one suffers: *it is the cause, not the punishment, that makes the martyr*, says Saint Augustine; and of him who dies confessing the Name outside the Church's unity, Saint Cyprian wrote: such a one *may be killed; crowned he cannot be*.<sup>74</sup> Group loyalty feels like holy obedience, *stand by your own; do not break your mother's heart*, the very accent of conscience, able to bind a man to a heresy more tightly than any argument. The Lord's hard sayings were given for exactly these hours: *he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me*; and, *a man's foes shall be they of his own household*.<sup>75</sup> Not because family is evil, but because family, nation, and brotherhood are precisely the loves strong enough to be laid, by the enemy, across the narrow road.

The Church met this counterfeit in its most organized form and gave it a name. When rival national hierarchies were being erected in one and the same city, altar answering to bloodline, a council at Constantinople in 1872 condemned the error as *phyletism*: the organizing and dividing of Christ's Church according to race and nation.<sup>76</sup> And the condemnation reaches every later form of the same exchange, for the tribe does not have to be a nation. Test the forms of our own day against it. The parish that is in truth an ethnic club, where a convert of another

blood remains a permanent guest. The jurisdiction that is a nation abroad at prayer, its real communion its homeland. The circle of the like minded, not least the zealot brotherhood of the internet age, whose real bond is shared anger, and whose real communion is the enemy it opposes. A faction, even a persecuted remnant that has come to love its own persecution, can become a bloodline as surely as a race can.

## TELLING THE TWO BLOODS APART

How, then, does a man test his own bonds, since the counterfeit is warm, and feels from inside exactly like devotion? Saint Isidore of Pelusium laid bare the mechanism fifteen centuries ago:

*Just as the fishermen hide the hook with bait and covertly hook the fish, similarly the crafty allies of the heresies cover their evil teachings and corrupt understanding with pietism, and hook the more simple, bringing them to spiritual death.*

Saint Isidore of Pelusium<sup>77</sup>

Cover them with pietism: the bait is warmth, reverence, the very feel of holiness. So the tests that follow examine the hook and never the bait, what the fellowship is actually fastened to, not how devout the swallowing feels. Four questions, put honestly before God.

Of any *unity*: does the truth confessed at the altar hold us together, or our sameness, our grievance, our fear of the outside? Would this brotherhood survive one of us being shown wrong and repenting publicly, or does belonging here depend on never admitting error? Of any *suffering*: is it borne for the true faith, in love, without hatred of the persecutor, or has being opposed become our credential for being right? Of any *obedience*: do I follow the shepherd because, and only so far as, he stands in the faith, or because he is *ours*? And of any *kinship*: could a stranger of another blood, holding the true faith, enter this fellowship tomorrow as a full brother, and could a kinsman of my own blood,

denying the faith, be refused its communion? If the stranger could not enter, and the apostate kinsman could not be refused, then the bond of that fellowship is not the blood of Christ, whatever is painted upon its walls.

In plain words, then. True blood is the life of Christ: received in the cup, confessed in the truth, proved in repentance and love, binding the baptized of every nation into one kindred. Counterfeit blood is any other bond the moment it is set in the true blood's place; and it betrays itself by its instruments, emotion instead of truth, pressure instead of persuasion, fear instead of faith, the closed circle instead of the open gate. The one is given from the altar; the other is manufactured by the group. And so the rule of this whole chapter stands complete: neither the rigour of the pure, nor the charge against a person, nor the rite, nor the blood, is the faith; and a separation, or a communion, whose true cause is any of these wears the confession as a costume.

## THE FOUR QUESTIONS

Now gather the chapter into the discipline it was written to teach. Of any separation, in any age, ask four questions in order.

First, over *what*? A heresy already condemned by the Synods or the Fathers, openly preached, or a person, a charge, a rite, a discipline, a nation, a suspicion?

Second, by *what standard*? The recorded judgment of the Church of the ages, merely recognized and obeyed, or a private certainty enthroned in the Church's place?

Third, in *what manner*? Withdrawal of commemoration in patience, awaiting the council, or the rival altar, the rival hierarchy, the repeated baptisms, the anathemas from private mouths?

Fourth, in *what spirit, and unto what end?* Grief, fear, and love, unto the healing of the Church, or pride, contempt, and haste, unto the founding of a party?

Every counterfeit in this chapter fails the first question before the others are reached; and nearly every one fails the third also, for the mark of them all is the second altar. The confessors of the last chapter pass all four. The two kinds of separation resemble each other as a surgeon's incision resembles a wound, which is to say, only until one asks why it was made, by what rule, with what instrument, and to what end. And the abuse of the knife does not abolish surgery; but it does mean the knife is never taken up lightly, and that the man most eager to wield it is commonly the man least fit to hold it.

*In plain words.* Not everyone who breaks away is a hero. The Novatians split because the Church forgave repentant sinners; the Donatists split over an accusation against one man that turned out to be false, then invented a false teaching to excuse the split. The Old Believers of Russia split over rites and old books, holy things, handled cruelly by the authorities, but still not the faith, and then declared the whole Church graceless, which was the real fall; and when the Church later lifted the old anathemas and blessed the old rites, the schism still did not come home, because separation had become its identity. Others made race or nation the bond of the church, which the Church condemned as phyletism. And beware the counterfeit of blood in every form: the warmth of family, nation, party, or a suffering group can feel exactly like the communion of the Church, but not every bond that feels sacred is from God, not every suffering is martyrdom, and not every loyal group is the Church. Every one of these separators believed they were the faithful few, and every one was condemned, because their cause was not the faith, and because they built rival altars. Four questions expose any separation: over what? by what standard? in what manner? in what spirit? The saints pass all four; the counterfeits fail the very first.

## Notes and sources

56. Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Homily 11, on the Meletian division at Antioch. In the same homily the saint distinguishes: where the separators 'have doctrines also contrary to ours, on that account further it is not right to mix with them'; where they hold the same faith and yet divide, 'the disease is from lust of authority.' The thunder is against the second case; the concession is the first, the exact line of the canon.

57. Saint Cyprian of Carthage, *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate* (On the Unity of the Catholic Church), 6 (c. 251), against the Novatianist schism; cf. the images of the one sun, the one tree, and the one spring cited in the first chapter's notes.

58. Canon 8 of the First Ecumenical Council (Nicaea, 325), on the reception of those calling themselves Cathari: their clergy remain in the clergy upon professing in writing to adhere to the teachings of the catholic Church, communicating with the twice married and with the lapsed who have repented; see the canon with the interpretation of Saint Nicodemos in the Pedalion.

59. The Meletian settlement is given in the synodal letter of the Council of Nicaea to the Church of Alexandria (Socrates, Ecclesiastical History I.9; Theodoret I.9): the Meletian clergy retain rank in subordination to the lawful clergy, while Meletius keeps the bare name of his dignity without the power to ordain.

60. The Council of Rome under Miltiades (313) and the Council of Arles (314) upheld Caecilian, and the official inquiry cleared Felix of Aptunga. The origins are recounted by Saint Optatus of Milevis, *Against the Donatists*, Book I, and summarized by Saint Augustine (e.g., *Epistles* 43 and 88).

61. Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oration* 40, *On Holy Baptism*, 26 (the two seals). Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787), Session One, receiving in their orders the repentant bishops ordained in the iconoclast heresy. The Pedalion's constant teaching, that grace functions even through unworthy ministers until the Church deposes them, is gathered in Saint Nicodemos's interpretations throughout.

62. Matthew 13:24 to 30 and 13:38, "the field is the world"; Matthew 15:13. The Fathers' use of the parable against the Donatists concerns persons within the Church, not doctrines.

63. On the Maximianist schism and its readmission, see Augustine, *Answer to Cresconius*, Books III, IV, and the canons of Carthage on the Donatists in the Pedalion (canon 78 in that numbering and those adjoining), received back "by *economia*." The maxim *securus judicat orbis terrarum* stands in Augustine, *Answer to the Letter of Parmenian*, III.4.24; cf. *On Baptism*, against the Donatists.

64. The correction of the Russian books and rites began under Patriarch Nikon (patriarch 1652 to 1658, deposed 1666) from 1653, with the support of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, taking the Greek practice of the day as its standard. The Stoglav ("Hundred Chapters") Council of Moscow, 1551, had earlier confirmed the distinctively Russian usages, including the two fingered sign of the Cross and the double Alleluia.

65. The principal changes: the three fingered sign of the Cross in place of the two fingered; the corrected spelling of the Saviour's name (*Iisus* for *Isus*); the triple Alleluia in place of the double; processions moving against the sun; five loaves instead of seven at the Proskomedia; revised prostrations at the Prayer of Saint Ephraim in Lent; and the removal, after the Greek text, of the word "true" (*istinnago*) from the Slavonic Creed's article on the Holy Spirit, a word the Greek original never contained.

66. The Great Council of Moscow of 1666 to 1667, with Patriarchs Paisius of Alexandria and Macarius of Antioch participating, confirmed the corrected books, anathematized the old rites and their adherents, delivered resisters to the civil power, and deposed Patriarch Nikon for his conduct toward his see and the Tsar. Bishop Paul of Kolomna, the one hierarch who had defended the old rites, was deposed in 1654 and died soon after. The Archpriest Avvakum (Petrov), leader of the resistance, was burned at Pustozersk in 1682; the Solovetsky monastery, refusing the new books, was besieged from 1668 and taken in 1676.

67. On the apocalyptic reading of the reform, the "Nikonian heresy," the reckonings surrounding the year 1666, the proclamation of the reign of Antichrist, and the self immolations among the radical priestless communities of the late seventeenth century, see the standard histories of the Raskol (schism). The despairing logic, not the sincerity of the sufferers, is what this book holds up for judgment.

68. The priested (*popovtsy*) received fugitive clergy ordained in the official Church until 1846, when Ambrose, former Metropolitan of Bosnia, joined them at Belaya Krinitza and founded a hierarchy of their own; the priestless (*bespopovtsy*), holding that the priesthood had ceased, retained baptism and such rites as a layman may perform, and divided repeatedly into rival "concorde" (*soglasiya*).

69. The "united faith" (*edinoverie*) parishes, celebrating the old rite within the Russian Orthodox Church, were established in 1800. The Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of 1917 lifted the oaths and anathemas of 1667, declaring the old rites salvific and the condemnations "as if they had not been," confirming the like decision of the Patriarchal Synod of 1929.

70. Leviticus 17:11 (KJV): "For the life of the flesh is in the blood."

71. Acts 20:28; Luke 22:20; 1 Peter 1:18 to 19 (KJV).

72. John 1:12 to 13; Matthew 12:46 to 50 (KJV). Cf. Luke 11:27 to 28, where the Lord answers the blessing of His Mother's womb: "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it", the saying that crowns, and does not diminish, the Theotokos, who heard and kept it above all.

73. Colossians 3:11; cf. Galatians 3:27 to 28 (KJV).

74. Saint Augustine: "Martyrem non facit poena sed causa", it is not the punishment but the cause that makes the martyr; see his Exposition on Psalm 34 (Enarratio in Psalmum 34, serm. 2), and Letter 89. Saint Cyprian of Carthage, On the Unity of the Church 14, of those who die confessing the Name outside her unity: such a one may be killed, crowned he cannot be; "he cannot be a martyr who is not in the Church." Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:3.

75. Matthew 10:36 to 37 (KJV); cf. Exodus 20:12 on the honour due to parents, which the Gospel presupposes and does not abolish.

76. The Council of Constantinople of 1872, convened over the Bulgarian question, condemned phyletism, the arrangement and division of the Church by races and nations, with rival hierarchies of rival bloodlines in the same place, as foreign to the tradition of the Church. Cf. Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11.

77. Saint Isidore of Pelusium (c. 360, c. 450), Letter to Timothy the Reader (PG 78); the great ascetic letter-writer of the Nile delta, formed in the school of Chrysostom.

# Ecumenism, the Panheresy of Our Age

## WHAT ECUMENISM IS

Every age has its storm, and the reader has now been armed in the histories of all the others so that he may see this one clearly. The storm of our age is called ecumenism, and it must first be defined honestly, for the word is used loosely on every side.

Ecumenism, as this book uses the word, is not politeness toward the heterodox. It is not honest dialogue that calls them home. It is not cooperation in feeding the poor. None of these touches the faith, and the Church has never forbidden mercy or truth telling to anyone.

Ecumenism is a teaching about the Church: that the one Church of Christ is presently divided into many "churches," Orthodox and heterodox branches of one tree; that the confessions possess the grace of the Mysteries in their measure; and that unity is to be manufactured among them by mutual recognition, common prayer, and doctrinal minimalism, rather than by the return of the separated to the one Church that never ceased to exist. It is, in other words, a revision of the Creed's article on the Church. And because it gathers into itself the relativizing of dogma, the equalizing of truth and error, and the practical denial of the Church's unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity at once, Saint Justin of Ćelije gave it the name this chapter bears:

*Ecumenism is the common name for the pseudo christianities and the pseudo churches of Western Europe; their common name is the panheresy.*

Saint Justin Popović<sup>78</sup>

The saints of the North had condemned the disposition centuries before it organized itself and took a name. Saint Theodosius of the Kiev Caves, a founding father of Russian monasticism, warned his prince nine hundred years ago:

*If someone praises his own faith and the other faith as well, he is a duplicitous believer, and near to heresy.*

Saint Theodosius of the Kiev Caves<sup>79</sup>

And in the very years the movement was gathering its councils, Saint John Maximovitch, the wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco, read its spirit as a prophet reads weather:

*A search for compromise will be the characteristic disposition of men. Straightforwardness of confession will vanish. Men will cleverly justify their fall, and an endearing evil will support such a general disposition. Men will grow accustomed to apostasy from the truth and to the sweetness of compromise and sin.*

Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, 1948<sup>80</sup>

The sweetness of compromise, upheld by an endearing evil: no phrase in this chapter names the air of our age more exactly. The panheresy does not announce itself with horns; it arrives as niceness. And the saint marks the first casualty with precision, straightforwardness of confession, the plain, bareheaded Yes and No upon which the canon, and the Gospel before it, depend.

## THE UNITY CHRIST PRAYED FOR

The movement's favourite text must be reclaimed before anything else, for no verse is more often quoted at the Orthodox, and none more carefully cut. On the night He was betrayed, the Lord prayed for His disciples and for all who would believe:

*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.... Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

John 17:17, 20 to 21

That they all may be one: the ecumenist stops there, and builds upon the fragment a mandate for union without truth. But the prayer does not begin there. It begins: *sanctify them through thy truth*. The oneness prayed for is the oneness of those sanctified in the truth, as the Father and the Son are one, a unity of being, not of negotiation. And it was answered, not deferred, at Pentecost, in the one Church whose unity this book has described from its second chapter. To read the twenty-first verse without the seventeenth is to pray for the wedding while deleting the bride's fidelity. The Lord's prayer is the charter of unity in the truth, and therefore the standing judgment upon every unity manufactured beside it.

## **ITS CHARTER AND ITS ACTS**

Its history in the Orthodox world can be told in a page. In 1920 an encyclical of the patriarchate of Constantinople, addressed "unto the Churches of Christ everywhere," called the heterodox bodies churches, and proposed a fellowship among them on the model of the League of Nations. It is commonly regarded, by friends and critics alike, as the charter of Orthodox participation in the movement; and its first practical proposal, a common calendar, will concern us in the next chapter.

There followed decades of membership in the councils of the movement; common prayers repeated and defended; the lifting in 1965 of the excommunications of 1054 between Rome and Constantinople, an act performed with no repentance asked or given on either side, and so treating the schism as if it had been a

quarrel of persons rather than a division in the faith; agreed statements that spoke of "sister churches"; and at last, in 2016, a council in Crete, styled the Holy and Great Council, whose documents used the name "churches" of the heterodox confessions, and were signed amid protest, several local Churches abstaining, and hierarchs refusing their signatures.

This book, after its own rule, distinguishes. Some acts and documents in this history are open and bareheaded. Others are ambiguous, capable of a better construction; and over the ambiguous the canon gives no warrant, as the next chapter will insist. But that the teaching itself, where it is openly preached, is the teaching described above, its own founding texts declare. And the Apostle saw the season coming: *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.*<sup>81</sup>

## OLD ERRORS UNDER A NEW NAME

Now comes the question on which the whole application of this book to our age turns, and it deserves its full strength: has ecumenism ever been *condemned*? For the fifteenth canon protects separation only over a heresy already condemned by Synods or Fathers; and no Ecumenical Council has yet gathered to condemn ecumenism by that name. If the condition fails, every walling off over ecumenism is separation over an uncondemned matter, the very thing the canon's first half punishes.

We answer first from the canon's own words, which the objection quietly narrows: condemned by holy Synods *or Fathers*. And the Church has never taught that an error escapes its ancient condemnation by changing its name. The test, as Saint Vincent gave it, is whether the old judgment already reaches the new thing. A new label is not a new faith.

Then let the components be weighed one by one against the record. The ecclesiology of the divided Church stands against the

Creed itself, *one* holy catholic and apostolic Church, defined by the Second Ecumenical Council. The practice of common prayer with the heterodox stands condemned by name in the canons of the Apostles and of Laodicea, which suspend and depose for that very act. The recognition of the mysteries of the heterodox stands against the forty-sixth Apostolic canon. And the movement's founding gesture toward the Latin West stands against the whole line of councils that judged the Latin innovations: the council of 879 to 880 under Saint Photios, which forbade every addition to the Creed; Blachernae in 1285; the Palamite councils, whose judgments the Synodikon proclaims every year; the Church's rejection of Florence; and the Encyclicals of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848 and 1895, which call the papal novelties heresies in the plainest words.

And Saint Photios himself, whose council would forbid every addition to the Creed, had already weighed the chief of those additions in his encyclical to the East:

*The mere citing of their addition to the Creed would be enough to subject them to a thousand anathemas; for this innovation blasphemes the Holy Spirit, or, more correctly, the entire Holy Trinity.*

Saint Photios the Great, Encyclical to the Eastern Patriarchs, 867<sup>82</sup>

The bricks of ecumenism are old, condemned bricks. The building is new only in its arrangement. And the man who withdraws from its open preaching applies judgments the Church has already given, which is all the canon ever asked of him.<sup>83</sup>

## THE HONEST CONCESSIONS

And we concede, gladly, what is honestly to be conceded, for the concession is itself part of the confessing tradition. No Ecumenical Council has yet spoken. The faithful rightly long for one. A synodal act of that weight, when God grants it, will do what no book can do; and the confessors themselves have always awaited exactly this, the awaiting being half their posture. A synod of Russian bishops abroad did, in 1983, append an anathema against ecumenism to the Rite of Orthodoxy; and though its scope is debated among the Orthodox, and we flag the dispute plainly, it stands at the least as the witness of a synod of Orthodox bishops naming the error.

Meanwhile the line for the faithful is the canon's own line. Where the teaching is open, where the heterodox bodies are named churches in official texts against the protest of the Orthodox, where common prayer is public, repeated, and defended, there the elements condemned of old are being preached bareheaded under a new name, and the condition of the canon is met. Where the act is ambiguous, capable of an Orthodox reading, the canon gives no warrant; and the zealot who treats suspicion as proof has left the canon on its other side.

The confessor keeps both halves of that sentence, and keeps them with grief. For the panheresy is not an enemy outside the walls, but a sickness among our own fathers and brothers; and the only victory worth praying for is not their defeat, but their healing.<sup>84</sup>

## In plain words

Ecumenism is the modern teaching that Christ's one Church is really many divided "churches" that should merge by treating their differences as unimportant. That contradicts the Creed, "one holy catholic and apostolic Church", and its pieces (praying together with false confessions, recognizing their mysteries, accepting the old Latin errors) were each condemned by councils and Fathers long ago. So it is not a new, unjudged idea; it is old, judged errors wearing a new name, which is why the saints call it the panheresy, the heresy made of many. Where it is preached openly, the canon's condition is met; where words are merely unclear, no one may treat suspicion as proof.

## Notes and sources

78. Saint Justin Popović of Čelije (1894 to 1979), *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism* (Thessalonica, 1974). Saint Justin named ecumenism the "panheresy," the gathering of many earlier errors into one; the book uses the term in his sense.

79. Saint Theodosius of the Kiev Caves (d. 1074), from his epistle to Prince Izyaslav concerning the faith; among the earliest counsels of the Russian Church against doctrinal indifference.

80. Saint John (Maximovitch) of Shanghai and San Francisco (1896 to 1966), from a sermon of 1948, reproduced in the collections of his words (*Man of God: Saint John of Shanghai*). Glorified in 1994; a hierarch of unquestioned sanctity, whose warning precedes the milestone acts recounted below.

81. The Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of 1920, "Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere," addressed the heterodox bodies as "churches" and proposed their fellowship after the model of the League of Nations; it is commonly regarded as the founding charter of Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement. On the lifting of the anathemas (7 December 1965) and the Council of Crete (2016), see the official acts; the ambiguities of the latter are noted honestly in the text.

82. Saint Photios the Great, Encyclical to the Eastern Patriarchs (867), PG 102, against the Frankish missionaries teaching the Filioque among the newly baptized Bulgarians; the council of 879 to 880 under the same saint then prohibited every addition to the Creed. The judgment concerns the doctrinal

innovation itself, weighed as blasphemy against the Spirit, the ancient condemnation which, as this section argues, no later arrangement can annul.

83. Apostolic Canons 10, 45, 46, and 65, and Laodicea 6 and 33, on prayer and communion with heretics; the Council of Constantinople under Saint Photios (879 to 880) forbidding every addition to the Creed; the Council of Blachernae (1285); the Palamite councils of 1341 to 1351, proclaimed in the Synodikon; the Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848 (§5 and passim) and the Reply of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to Pope Leo XIII (1895), which enumerate the papal innovations as heresies.

84. The anathema against ecumenism appended to the Rite of Orthodoxy by the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (1983); its synodal scope is debated among the Orthodox, which this book states plainly while citing it as the witness of a synod of Orthodox bishops naming the error.

# Walling Off Without Becoming Schismatic

## THE BOUNDARY STONES

The road this book commends is narrow, and it runs between two ditches, each of which borrows the name of a virtue. On the one side lies the ditch of false peace, where the faith is surrendered a phrase at a time for the sake of quiet, and the surrender is called love. On the other lies the ditch of false zeal, where the Church is torn over less than the faith, or torn rightly begun and wrongly finished, and the tearing is called confession. The last chapters have mapped the first ditch. This chapter must map the second with equal severity, for it is the special danger of exactly the reader who has agreed with everything so far.

Begin, then, with the boundary stones, what walling off is *not*, and let them be planted deep.

It is not leaving the Church, but refusing to leave her when a false shepherd walks out of the faith.

It is not the founding of anything. The walled off consecrate no bishops, erect no rival synod, take no new name; for the canon that shields them is a shield, and not a throne.

It is not a judgment upon grace. They declare no Mystery void and pronounce upon no man's soul; for that belonged to the Donatists, and belongs to them still.

And it is not a court. Deposition and anathema are the synod's, and God's.

Whoever crosses any of these stones has not walled off more thoroughly. He has changed sides in the canon, from its second half to its first.

## **THE CALENDAR OF 1924**

These stones are not planted against imaginary dangers; and here this book must set down plainly the clearest warning of our age, naming it, as truth and love together require: the history of the calendar, and of the movement that calls itself the Genuine Orthodox Christians.

In 1924 the Church of Greece, following the congress held the year before at Constantinople, exchanged the old calendar for a revised one, moving the fixed feasts thirteen days. Some Churches followed, while Russia, Serbia, Jerusalem, and the Holy Mountain kept the ancient count. The change was made by parts of the Church, not the whole; and its warrant lay in that same encyclical of 1920 whose programme the last chapter weighed. The grief of the pious was not foolish.

But the calendar, whatever else be said of it, was not a heresy; and the reason is the only reason that ever decides such a question: it touched no article of the Faith, neither Creed, nor Mysteries, nor even the reckoning of Pascha, which kept the rule of Nicaea. As for the appeal to the councils of 1583, 1587, and 1593, which the separated make their foundation: those councils confronted the Gregorian reform as Rome pressed it on the East, papal in authority, and a change of the Paschalion, and what they defended beyond dispute was that Paschalion and the Church's freedom from the pope's decree. The change of 1924 was made by Orthodox synods, however unwisely; it was submitted to no pope; and it left the Paschalion untouched. And the famous Sigillion of 1583, a document circulated among the zealots as a patriarchal decree laying all who follow the new calendar under anathema, is, in the form they circulate, of contested authenticity, and a dogma cannot hang on a disputed paper.

Yet the other half of the honesty must be paid at once. To alter the common rhythm of the Church's feasts by parts and in haste, under the shadow of 1920, was a real sin against unity and love, tearing the one festal voice of Orthodoxy in two to this day, under the prophet's standing woe: *Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep*. An ordinance wrongly changed is a wound. It is not a heresy. And the whole tragedy flowed from men on both sides who would not hold those two sentences together.<sup>85</sup>

## HOW A RIGHT PROTEST GOES WRONG

The grief of 1924 did not have to end in schism; for some it did, and for some it did not. Before that sequel is told, the inner mechanism must be laid bare; for schism is not an accident that befalls a man all at once, like a falling stone. It is a road, walked step by step. Each step feels small; several of the early steps are not sins at all, but duties; and that is exactly what makes the road so dangerous, it begins on holy ground. Walk the steps in order, then, and mark precisely where the ground changes.

First, a man sees an error, real, or suspected. Nothing wrong has happened yet. The seeing may be the very beginning of confession, for the watchman who sees nothing guards nothing.

Second, he protests. Still nothing wrong: protest against real error is commanded by the Scriptures and honoured by the canon. Every confessor of the ninth chapter began exactly here, and some of them never needed to go a step further.

Third, and here the ground begins, invisibly, to change, he separates in his heart before anything requires it. Grief hardens into distance. He no longer laments the error of his fathers as a son; he catalogues it as a prosecutor. The Church begins to be "they."

Fourth, the distrust spreads. Having found one shepherd false, he now suspects all of them; having caught the institution failing once, he rereads its whole life as failure. Vigilance, which is a

virtue, quietly becomes suspicion, which is a state of soul; and he begins to feel that nothing can be trusted which he has not verified himself.

Fifth, he refuses correction. Counsel from anyone still "inside" is dismissed as compromise before it is heard; counsel from his own side is not sought. The advisers he keeps are the ones who agree with him. At this step, note it well, the question *who is right?* has silently been replaced by the question *who is loyal?*

Sixth, and this is the watershed of the whole road, he makes his own judgment the measure of the Church. Until now, at his best, he was applying the Church's recorded judgments to a present error, which is the confessor's whole office. Now he begins to issue judgments of his own: upon grace, upon Mysteries, upon the standing before God of millions he has never met. He does not notice the change, because the vocabulary is the same; but he has moved from beneath the canon to a seat above it. The confessor recognizes; this man now legislates.

Seventh, he gathers the like minded. Fellowship is human, and in hard times needful; but this gathering is built upon the sixth step, and so it selects for agreement and for heat. The circle confirms itself daily, and calls the confirmation discernment.

Eighth, the protest becomes an identity. He is no longer an Orthodox Christian who resists an error; he is a Resister, and the resisting is now who he is. Watch the language for the sign of this step: the healing of the error, which he once prayed for, has quietly become a threat, for what would he be, if the thing he defines himself against were cured?

Ninth, the identity becomes a faction: a name, a party line, a border patrolled, spokesmen, and enemies within, "the lukewarm", as well as without. The faction needs the wall to be permanent; soon it needs the crisis to be permanent too.

Tenth, the faction becomes a schism: the rival altar, the rival synod, the consecrations, the verdicts upon grace, the anathemas from private mouths. The tenth step only makes visible what the sixth step decided. And the man who takes it will describe the whole descent, in perfect sincerity, as faithfulness, for at no single step did he feel himself change.

Not every protest ends here; let that be said with equal force. The ninth chapter of this book is a procession of protests that did not, saints who resisted false teaching, corrupt hierarchs, unlawful councils, and open heresy with all their strength, and who walked the first two steps for years, some for a lifetime, and no further. What kept them was not mildness of temperament, for many of them were men of fire. It was four anchors. Sobriety, which weighs the cause on the Church's scales and not on the heart's. Humility, which suspects itself first, and stands under the Fathers rather than over them. Ecclesiality, which does everything as an appeal to the Church and nothing as a substitute for her. And obedience to the truth, which is ready to be corrected by it, and ready to stop the moment the truth stops walking. Holy resistance is protest that never leaves the second step, though it stand on that step, suffering, for forty years.

## **FROM PROTEST INTO SCHISM**

Now the history; and the reader will recognize every step as it passes. For some ten years after 1924, many who opposed the change did the very thing this book commends. They kept the old reckoning; they protested; some ceased to commemorate the bishops who had made the change; and they waited, raising no altar, still members of the one Church. A walling off and a waiting, within the bounds: the first and second steps, and no further.

But in 1935 the matter passed, for some, out of protest and into schism. Three metropolitans, Chrysostomos of Florina, Germanos of Demetrias, and Chrysostomos of Zakynthos, separated and did

not merely wall off. They consecrated new bishops, among them Matthew of Bresthena; they constituted a rival synod; and they established a parallel church, over a matter that was not a heresy, and that no council had judged. Here the sixth step and the tenth were taken together: the private judgment enthroned, and the rival altar raised upon it. The movement took the name it bears, the Genuine Orthodox; and the reader of this chapter hears the old echo at once, for every counterfeit has taken the true name, the *pure*, the *church of the martyrs*, the *old believers*, the *genuine*. It is always the claim, and never the proof. The canons of the rival altar, Apostolic 31 and Antioch 5, fell on the deed with their whole weight. One of the three founders repented within the year and returned; but the thing was founded.<sup>86</sup>

And then the inner logic of schism unfolded on schedule: act, then doctrine to justify the act, then broken canon to perpetuate it. Within two years the new synod split over the question every wrongly grounded separation is condemned to raise, the question of grace. Matthew of Bresthena taught that the official Church was graceless outright; Chrysostomos of Florina refused that sentence; and in 1937 the camps divided, the eighth and ninth steps in plain view, identity hardening into faction, and each faction requiring a stricter doctrine than the last to justify its own existence. The Matthewite party then followed its premise to the end. Having unchurched everyone outside itself, it found in 1948 that it had one bishop left and no lawful way to continue; and Matthew consecrated bishops alone, one man laying on hands by himself, against the first canon of the Apostles, which requires two or three. The wall in the wrong place had become a doctrine; the doctrine had become a solitude; and the solitude consecrated itself.

## THE LINE BETWEEN CONFESSION AND SELF-WILL

Set down now, in four sentences, the line this history draws, the line between the confession this book teaches and the self will it condemns, and let each sentence be weighed exactly, for each closes a door through which sincere men have walked to their ruin.

Holy resistance is not rebellion. The confessor refuses a false confession; he does not refuse the Church's order, her episcopate, her judgment-seat, or her right to judge even him. His whole posture is an appeal to the Church, made from inside her obedience, which is why he waits for her council instead of convening his own.

Apoteichisis is not self made authority. The canon shields the man who applies the Church's already-recorded judgment to an open, condemned heresy; it crowns no man's private certainty about anything else. The moment a man's warrant becomes *I see it, therefore it is so*, about grace, about Mysteries, about the standing of the whole visible Church, he has stopped citing the Fathers and started replacing them, whatever texts are on his lips.

Separation from heresy is not permission to invent a private church. The wall is a refusal, not a foundation. He who consecrates, constitutes, and names has not extended the wall but abandoned it; for the canon's protection covers those who rescue the Church *from* schism, not those who manufacture one in her name.

And refusing falsehood is not the same as refusing the Church. The confessor stands apart from a false shepherd precisely in order to stand with the Church of all places and all ages; the schismatic stands apart from the Church herself and calls the standing purity. The first is a separation for the Body's sake; the second is an amputation calling itself health.

The danger, then, has one name, and the Fathers gave it long ago: self will, the enthronement of one's own judgment in the seat that belongs to the Church. And the danger is subtle precisely because confession and self will can recite the same canons, quote the same Fathers, and grieve over the same real errors. The difference is not in the vocabulary; it is in the seat of judgment. The confessor's last word is always: *let the Church judge, and let her judge me also*. The self willed man's last word, however piously phrased, is: *I have judged*. Between those two sentences runs the whole difference between the wall and the pit that is dug beside it. And the man who cannot tell, in his own heart, which of the two sentences he is speaking should treat that very uncertainty as a command from the canon itself: to stop, to pray, and to ask, before he takes a step that his grandchildren may be unable to untake.

## THE FRUIT, AND THE SAINT'S SORROW

The fruit was what the canons threaten. The two synods became many; and the movement stands today broken into a score and more of rival jurisdictions, many refusing communion with one another, anathematizing and defrocking one another, some receiving Orthodox Christians as though the Church had given them nothing, repeating the Mysteries over them: the completed mark of the Donatist error.

And the second half of the honesty, as at the Raskol: the official church answered the zealots not only with arguments but with force. Chapels were sealed; priests were seized and stripped; the aged Chrysostomos of Florina was sent into exile. That persecution was a sin of the mighty. It made the schism dearer to its children, and it stands written against the innovators of 1924 beside their innovation. But one sin does not justify another; and the faith of Christ, which the calendar had never touched, was wounded by both.

A holy elder of our own time, now numbered among the saints, loved these zealous souls, testified to their piety and their fighting spirit, and grieved over them. Let his words stand here in his own voice:

*Even those few that have remained have become, I do not even know how many pieces! And they keep being cut into smaller pieces all the time, and they keep anathematizing one another, excommunicating one another, and defrocking one another. You do not know how much I have grieved and been saddened over this... It is important that we show love towards them and feel for them, and not condemn them; and more importantly, that we pray for them, that God may illumine them.*

Saint Paisios the Athonite<sup>87</sup>

## THE TRUE WALL OF THE SAME CENTURY

The saint's sorrow condemns the path and shelters the souls in one breath, and his double word governs this page. Among those folds are men and women of real piety, whose persons belong to God's mercy and to the love and prayer he commanded; and nothing here passes sentence on any soul. What is judged is the path, by the canon; and the path, so judged, is schism.

And that the fault lay in the path, and not in zeal itself, God demonstrated in the same century, on the same soil, when at last the cause was real. When Patriarch Athenagoras lifted the anathemas against Rome, declared that the age of dogma had passed, and proposed refounding one Church of East and West with the differences left standing, the condemned error was no longer suspicion but proclamation. And the Holy Mountain answered as the canon describes.

About half the monasteries of Athos, all the sketes, and most of the cells ceased to commemorate him. Metropolitans within the Church of Greece did likewise. And mark what these confessors

did not do: they consecrated no one, founded nothing, took no new name, declared no Mystery void, and joined none of the rival synods that stood ready to receive them. When the next patriarch demanded the commemoration back under threat, monasteries answered in writing that they would resume it when the heretical line was abandoned, which is the very grammar of the canon: resistance framed as an appeal, a wall with its gate standing open toward repentance.

Set the two responses of that one century side by side, and they teach the fifteenth canon better than any commentary. The one, over a rite, judged by a contested paper and a private certainty, raised altars and a succession, and has ended in fragments that curse one another. The other, over open heresy, judged by the recorded faith of the ages, raised nothing and no one, and remains within the Church it laboured to defend. Same storm, same zeal; the cause, the standard, the manner, and the spirit made all the difference, exactly as the four questions said they would.

Nor was the Greek soil the only witness of that century. In Russia, in 1922, when a Soviet-sponsored party of innovators, the self styled Living Church, seized the administration of the patriarchate, the confessor Mark Novoselov, whom the Church has since glorified among her New Martyrs, directed the faithful in the exact grammar of the canon:

*The Orthodox people must decisively reject the usurpers of Church authority, not entering into communion with them, and not allowing the prayerful commemoration of their names in the churches.*

New Hieromartyr Mark (Novoselov), 1922<sup>88</sup>

Not allowing the commemoration of their names: apoteichisis in so many words, from the mouth of a martyr of our own age. He deposed no one, consecrated no one, and founded nothing; he named the wall, and in due time sealed it with his blood; and the

Church that outlived the usurpers wrote his name in her calendar, while the Living Church, which had held the buildings and the certificates, is remembered only as the counterfeit it was.

Therefore let anyone who would raise a rival altar search the whole history of the Church, from the Novatians to the synods of 1935, and name the time when the saints consecrated bishops and set up a separate hierarchy over a thing that was not a heresy. There is no such time. It was never done. And this page is written, God is witness, not to wound the pious born within those folds, but so that no reader, fleeing the fire of ecumenism by the door the canon opens, should walk past it into the pit that was dug at its side.<sup>89</sup>

## **TRUE ZEAL AND FALSE**

Between the coward who will not confess and the schismatic who confesses falsely stands the true confessor; and since zeal is a fire that can warm a house or burn it down, learn to tell the true fire from the false.

True zeal is humble, knowing it stands under the judgment of the Fathers and not above them. It is sorrowful, grieving over the division it is forced to make. It is patient, willing to suffer and to wait. It is exact, separating only over what the Church has truly condemned. It is obedient to the canons, even in resisting the men who betrayed them. And it is joined to repentance, so that the confession is a trembling and never a boast.

False zeal wears the same words and bears the opposite marks: proud, harsh, delighting in condemnation, impatient, loose, separating over its own suspicions, lawless in the name of the law, loveless and unrepentant. The one weeps over the wall it must raise; the other rejoices to raise walls. The one waits for the Church; the other becomes its own church.

Exactness, moreover, cuts in both directions, and a saint of the eleventh century shows the reader its second edge. Blessed

Theophylact of Ohrid, the great commentator, pressed by his own disciple to multiply the charges against the Latins, refused to inflate the count:

*We have neither known the errors to be many, nor are they able to divide the churches; since none of the charges brought forth pertains to the very essence of our faith, we hesitate to oppose so many, and to disturb easily agitated souls, lest our love grow cold.*

Blessed Theophylact of Ohrid<sup>90</sup>

Lest our love grow cold: the scruple of a hierarch who did not deny the errors but weighed them, and who would not spend the dread word heresy on what did not touch the essence of the faith. His restraint is not the opposite of Mark's severity at Florence; it is the same exactness, applied to a different measure. True zeal counts neither too few errors nor too many, and the man who multiplies charges to thicken his wall has left exactness for appetite.

To the pastoral objection that even the true wall scandalizes the simple, this book answers with the Lord's own balance. The little ones are to be protected, never conscripted; and the confessor who frightens them, who makes the faith a quarrel before the children, has sinned against the love the truth exists to serve. But scandal cuts both ways. The Lord, told that the Pharisees were offended at His word, answered: *Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind*. And the deeper offence against the simple is the lie taught by silence, the generation catechized, by untroubled communion, into believing the faith negotiable. The truth is brought to the simple as medicine is brought to children: with gentleness, in small measures, by hands they trust. It is not withheld as though it were the disease.

And to the appeal that the Church heals by *economia*, the answer of the saints is the boundary of *economia* itself. Economy bends the application of a rule, for a season and for souls; it can never

extend to the betrayal of the faith. The things of the Church, said Saint Mark before the greatest economy ever demanded, are never set right by compromises; for between the truth and falsehood concerning the Faith there is no middle thing. Toward persons, economy without stint; toward the confession, exactness without exception. The confessor who keeps both is the physician; and his one strictness is itself a mercy, for it refuses to confirm the sick man in the sickness.<sup>91</sup>

*In plain words.* You can do the right thing in the wrong way and lose everything. Schism is a road of small steps: seeing an error and protesting can both be right, but then come distance of heart, distrust of everyone, refusal of advice, trusting your own judgment above the Church, gathering only the like minded, turning the protest into your identity, the identity into a party, and the party into a rival church. Walling off never means starting a new church, judging whether other people's sacraments are real, or cursing anyone, those who did that over the calendar in Greece (the self named "Genuine Orthodox") split over something that was not the faith, then split again and again, just as Saint Paisios wept to see. But when the cause was real, a patriarch openly preaching the panheresy, the monks of Athos simply stopped saying his name, started nothing, and stayed in the Church: that is the true wall. Resisting falsehood is right; appointing yourself the judge of the Church is the fall. True zeal weeps, waits, and loves; false zeal is proud and eager to divide. And love never means hiding the truth, it means giving it gently, like medicine to a child.

## Notes and sources

85. The revised calendar was approved at the Constantinople congress of 1923 under Patriarch Meletios IV (Metaxakis) and adopted by the Church of Greece in March 1924 under Archbishop Chrysostomos (Papadopoulos); Russia, Serbia, Jerusalem, and the Holy Mountain retained the old reckoning, all remaining in communion. A uniform calendar had been the first practical proposal of the 1920 encyclical. The councils of 1583, 1587, and 1593 under Jeremiah II rejected the Gregorian reform, the canon of 1593 confirming the Nicene Paschalion; the "Sigillion of 1583" as circulated is of contested authenticity, and the change of 1924 concerned the fixed feasts only.

86. The three metropolitans of 1935 were Chrysostomos (Kavourides) of Florina, Germanos of Demetrias, and Chrysostomos of Zakynthos, the last returning to the official Church within the year; among those they consecrated was Matthew (Karpathakis) of Bresthena. In 1937 Matthew separated from Chrysostomos of Florina over the latter's refusal to declare the New Calendar Church devoid of grace; in 1948, sole remaining bishop of his party, he consecrated new bishops alone, contrary to Apostolic Canon 1.

87. Saint Paisios the Athonite (†1994, glorified 2015), from his recorded counsels concerning the old calendar zealots, in which he also testified to their piety, exactness, and zeal while grieving their separation and fragmentation; given as received in the published collections of his sayings.

88. Bishop Mark (Mikhail Aleksandrovich Novoselov, 1864 to 1938), New Hieromartyr, from his statement against the Renovationist 'Living Church' (1922); shot in 1938, and glorified among the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia in 2000. The Renovationist usurpation joined schism to doctrinal and moral betrayal under state coercion; his direction, refusal of communion and of commemoration, without the erection of any rival structure, is the fifteenth canon lived under the harshest conditions of the twentieth century.

89. On the cessation of commemoration of Patriarch Athenagoras: the Sacred Community of Mount Athos, in its sessions of 17 November 1970 and 13 November 1971, left each monastery free to act according to conscience; about half the monasteries, all the sketes, and most cells ceased the commemoration, and under Patriarch Demetrios eight monasteries were still not commemorating in 1972 when the patriarchal exarch demanded its restoration, several answering in writing that they would resume when the ecumenist line was abandoned (minutes and letters reproduced in Hieromonk Euthymios Trikaminas, *Τό Ὑπόχρεωτικό τό ὅ 15οῦ Κανόνα τῆς ἈΒ΄ Συνόδου*, citing the periodical *Ἄγ. Σιμίων ὁ μυρόβλήτης*, 1972). In the Church of Greece, Metropolitans Augoustinos (Kantiotis) of Florina, Paul of Paramythia, and Ambrose of Eleutheroupolis suspended the commemoration of Athenagoras in 1970 without separating from the Church.

90. Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ohrid (c. 1055, c. 1108), *A Discourse to One of His Disciples Regarding the Charges Against the Latins* (PG 126).

Theophylact, writing after 1054, judged the gravity of certain Latin differences otherwise than Photios before him and Mark after him; the Church glorifies all three, and the tension belongs to the honest record. Common to them all is the rule this section teaches: separation is warranted by what touches the essence of the faith, and by nothing less.

91. Saint Mark Eugenikos of Ephesus, from his confession and letters against the union of Florence (cf. L. Petit, *Patrologia Orientalis* 15 and 17): the things of the Church are never set right by compromises, and between the truth and falsehood concerning the Faith there is no middle thing; the wording renders his sense. Cf. Saint Theodore the Studite on the limits of *economia*, *Epistles* (ed. Fatouros).

## Am I Still Orthodox?

*The Mysteries, and the Fear of the Chalice*

### STILL ORTHODOX

Now the book must come down from history into the trembling of a single soul, and answer the questions that are actually whispered at kitchen tables.

The first is the question of identity, and it is asked with real fear: if I cease to commemorate, if I wall off, am I still Orthodox? Have I not, whatever the canon says, stepped outside?

Answer it from everything this book has established, and answer it plainly: yes, you are still Orthodox. More than that: the walling off, rightly done, is precisely the act of remaining Orthodox when remaining has been made difficult. Nothing that makes a Christian has changed in you. Your Baptism stands. The seal of the Chrism stands. The Creed you confess is the Creed of the ages, unaltered by one word. The Mysteries you seek are the Mysteries of the one Church, from Orthodox hands. The bishops you honour are the Orthodox episcopate throughout the world, and the councils you await are the Church's own. What has changed is one thing only: you have declined to let your amen be attached to a public falsehood.

The canon's own words, remember, run the other way from the fear. Such persons are worthy of the honour which befits them *among Orthodox Christians*, not exiles readmitted, but Orthodox honoured. The identity to worry over belongs to the other side of the wall: to the teaching, in the canon's dread word, of the pseudo teachers.

One more fear hides beneath this question, and the desert named it seventeen centuries ago: the fear of being thought mad. The world will say so; the majority will say so; Saint Anthony the Great foresaw the day when they would:

*A time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him, saying: You are mad, you are not like us.*

Saint Anthony the Great<sup>92</sup>

The father of monasticism spoke it in the very century that watched the episcopate go Arian; and his word stands for every faithful soul since who has been called divisive, extreme, or unwell for declining a fashionable falsehood. The diagnosis of the majority is not the judgment of God. Sanity is measured against the truth, not against the crowd, and the reader who keeps the faith of the ages, with grief and without pride, may bear the world's verdict lightly.

## THE MYSTERIES CONTINUE

The second question follows at once, and it is the practical one: what of the Mysteries, for me and for my children? Shall my child be baptized, my son married, my mother buried?

Yes, from Orthodox hands, as always. The wall changes where you stand in the network of commemoration; it does not change what the Church gives her children. The faithful behind the wall seek out the priests who share the confession, as the faithful of Basil's day sought the open country liturgies, and as the faithful of the iconoclast decades were sustained by hunted priests. And where necessity presses, the Church's ancient economies stand. From the earliest times she has held that in danger of death any Christian may baptize, the Church supplying afterward what order could not supply in the hour; and no marriage, no burial, no soul is abandoned by God because the times are broken.

Two boundary stones, though, stand here as everywhere. The first: never despise the Mysteries, nor treat a season of deprivation as a virtue. The wall exists for the sake of the chalice; and a wall that ends by starving the soul of the chalice has been built in the wrong place. The second: never pronounce the Mysteries absent where you cannot see them, for that is the sectarian's despair which this book has condemned from its first pages. You are not the assessor of grace. The question you are answerable for is not what God does at other altars, but what you confess at the one you approach.

## NEITHER FAMINE NOR FALSE FEAST

And here the heaviest whisper of all must be heard out and answered gently, for it comes before all the others in the heart. If I wall off, shall I be left without the Mysteries altogether? The parishes near me commemorate the men I must refuse; the true hands may be a day's journey away, or hidden. Is a rigorous famine holier than a compromised feast?

We concede the anguish entirely, and refuse to cheapen it. But the question, in its final form, asks the believer to weigh the Mysteries against the confession, and that weighing the Fathers refused, because the two were never separable. The Eucharist is not a substance to be obtained wherever it can be had, like bread in a famine. It is the seal of a shared faith, received unto judgment or unto life according to the confession in which one approaches; and the Apostle's warning about eating and drinking unworthily, *not discerning the Lord's body*, falls with all its weight on the man who, knowing a confession to be false, seals it with his amen for convenience. What shall it profit to receive the medicine of immortality in the act of confessing what one knows to be a lie?

The saints answered with their lives: Basil's people under the rain, counting the wilderness with the truth better than the temples with the blasphemy; the faithful of the iconoclast years,

fed in secret; the confessors who went without for a season rather than receive upon a false confession, and whom God did not abandon, for He is not in the habit of abandoning those who choose Him over comfort.

The counsel is therefore neither famine nor false feast. Seek, and seek far if need be, the true hands, for they exist, and to deny it is despair. Endure, if God allows a season of lack, without panic and without despising what you lack. And trust the Lord of the Mysteries to feed those who would not lie to Him, as He has done in every generation.<sup>93</sup>

*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

First Corinthians 11:28 to 29

## THE FEAR OF THE CHALICE

One more fear belongs to this chapter, because our own generation lived through it and the wound is fresh: the fear of the chalice itself. In the days of the pestilence, voices were raised, some outside the Church and some, more grievously, within her, suggesting that the common spoon and the common cup might be a danger, that the Holy Gifts might carry disease, that the manner of communion should be altered for safety.

Let the matter be said with both exactness and gentleness. The faith of the Church, confessed in her prayers and lived for twenty centuries, is that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of the Lord, of which He said, *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life*, and which Saint Ignatius called the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death, unto the healing of soul and body. Her people received from the one spoon and the one cup through ages that knew contagions deadlier than ours, plague years in which the clergy communed the dying by the

thousand; and the Church never taught, in any age, that death is in that Cup. To tremble before the chalice as before an infection is not medicine. It is, at the root, an error about what the chalice is, and so, at the root, an error about the Church; and the reader now knows the family such errors belong to.

But the frightened are not enemies. Fear is a suffering, not a heresy; and the shepherd's answer to the frightened sheep is not contempt, but the patient rebuilding of faith, and his own visible, joyful communion at the head of the flock. This book judges no trembling soul. It records the teaching, so that when fear returns, as fear does, the faithful may know what the Church has always known: that they approach the Cup of life; and that everything in these pages was written so that this Cup, and no other, should reach their lips.<sup>94</sup>

## In plain words

If you wall off rightly, you are not outside the Church, you are refusing to be pulled out of her. Your baptism, your Chrism, your Creed, all stand; the canon itself calls you an honoured Orthodox Christian. Your children can still be baptized and married, by Orthodox hands that keep the true faith, and you must never sneer at the Mysteries or declare them missing where you cannot see. If finding true hands takes effort, make the effort, and trust God through any hard season: never trade the true faith for convenience. And never be afraid of the chalice itself, it is the Cup of life, not of death; everything in this book exists so that this Cup can reach you.

## Notes and sources

92. Saint Anthony the Great (c. 251 to 356), *Apophthegmata Patrum* (the Sayings of the Desert Fathers), Alphabetical Collection, Anthony 25. A transmitted saying of the father of monasticism, whose lifetime spanned the Arian capture of the thrones; the tradition has always read it of the times when truth itself is treated as derangement.

93. 1 Corinthians 11:27 to 29. On Saint Basil's flocks worshipping in the open country under the Arian occupation of the churches, see his Epistles 242 to 243.

94. John 6:54 (KJV); Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Ephesians, 20: "breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote against death."

# Priests, Bishops, and the Hidden Faithful

## THE WEB OF COMMUNION

Communion in the Church runs through a web, and the crisis is best understood, and best survived, by seeing the web clearly.

The layman is joined to his priest at the altar. The priest is joined to his bishop, whose name he proclaims and whose antimimension lies beneath the Gifts. The bishop is joined to his synod, and, through the diptychs, to the episcopate of the world. A false confession entering at any knot travels along the threads; that is why the poison of one throne can sicken whole provinces. And it is also why the wall works. To cease the commemoration is to tie off the thread at your own knot, so that the poison stops there, while every other thread of the web, the whole Orthodox episcopate in the truth, the whole Church of the ages, remains yours. The wall is not an exit from the web. It is a tourniquet on one thread of it.

## THE PRIEST AT THE WALL

For the priest, the crisis is sharpest, for his knot is tied at the altar itself; and this book, written by laymen, speaks here with restraint and points to the practice of the confessors.

The priest who can no longer, in conscience, proclaim the name of a hierarch openly preaching the condemned error, ceases the proclamation, and does not replace it with a fiction. He commemorates, as the old formularies allow, every episcopate of the Orthodox, awaiting the restoration of order, that is, in place of the one name he can no longer say, he uses the Church's general

commemoration of all the Orthodox episcopate, so that his altar remains visibly joined to the whole Church while it refuses the single false confession. He does not submit himself to some rival synod, for then he has not walled off but emigrated. He does not conceal his step, for the wall is a testimony or it is nothing. And he prepares, with open eyes, to suffer for it, suspension and slander and the loss of his living, as the priests of every confessing generation suffered before him.

He remains a priest of the Orthodox Church, ordained by her, serving her Mysteries, awaiting her synod; and the faithful who gather to his altar remain what they were, the parish of the one Church in a hard hour. Let both priest and people hold the boundary stones of the twelfth chapter as their rule of life, and the wall will keep them. Let either begin to enjoy the wall, and it will bury them.

## THE SEVEN THOUSAND

And for all, priest and layman alike, the deepest sustenance in such an hour is to see who else stands behind the wall, for the company is greater than the eye reports. When Elijah cried that he alone was left, God answered that He had reserved to Himself seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. The prophet's arithmetic was wrong by seven thousand, because despair always counts only what it can see.

*Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.*

First Kings 19:18

So it has been in every crisis. Beside the famous confessors stood multitudes of hidden faithful: priests serving in barns, grandmothers teaching the Creed in kitchens, whole villages that quietly never accepted the innovation, souls whose names no

history records, and every one of whom is written in the Book of Life.

Saint Athanasius wrote it to the scattered of his own day, when the confessors were being torn from their churches one by one, and each feared that he now stood alone:

*However each one may remain apart from the rest, he has nevertheless with him that Lord whom they confessed in one body together, who will also provide, as He did in the case of the prophet Elisha, that more shall be with each of them than there are soldiers with Constantius.*

Saint Athanasius the Great, History of the Arians<sup>95</sup>

More with each of them than soldiers with the emperor: it is the arithmetic of Dothan, where the servant of Elisha saw only the besieging army until his eyes were opened, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about. The believer behind the wall counts his company with those eyes, or he counts it wrongly; for the emperor's soldiers can surround a city, but they cannot outnumber heaven.

The walled off believer who feels alone in his town is not alone even on earth; and he is never alone in the Church, for the Church is not shut up in the present tense. His communion, as the second chapter taught, is with the one altar of all places and all ages: with Athanasius and Maximus and Theodore and Mark, with the martyrs of Zographou, with the seven thousand of every century, with the Theotokos and all the saints, and with the angels who stand at the same dread table. This is no figure of speech. It is the literal confession of the Liturgy, which is celebrated, every time, by heaven and earth together.

The man who guards the true faith at a poor country altar, or who waits, for a season, with no altar within reach, stands in that communion whole and entire. And the man who keeps the gilded cathedral by confessing the lie has, in the one thing needful,

stepped out of it. Heavenly communion is not the consolation prize of the walled off; it is the treasure the wall was built to guard, and it is already theirs. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*

## In plain words

The Church is like a web: you are tied to your priest, he to his bishop, the bishops to each other. Stopping the commemoration just ties off the one poisoned thread, all the other threads, the whole true Church everywhere and in every age, are still yours. A priest behind the wall stays a real Orthodox priest: he stops saying the false teacher's name, joins no rival group, hides nothing, and accepts suffering. And nobody behind the wall is ever alone: like the seven thousand in Elijah's day whom God had kept hidden, countless faithful stand there too, along with all the saints and angels at the one altar of heaven.

## Notes and sources

95. Saint Athanasius the Great, *History of the Arians* (Historia Arianorum), Part V, written of the confessors exiled under the Arianizing emperor Constantius; the allusion is to 2 Kings 6:15 to 17, the opened eyes of Elisha's servant at Dothan.

# The Path of Return

## HOW WALLS COME DOWN

The wall was always temporary. Let that sentence govern this chapter, for it separates the confessor from the sectarian more surely than any other. The sectarian settles behind his wall and makes it a homeland. The confessor camps behind it and watches the road, because its whole purpose is the day it comes down.

Walls come down in the Church in one of two ways, and history shows both. Either the Church, gathered in council, condemns the error and deposes or receives the repentant teachers of it, as Nicaea and Ephesus and Chalcedon and the Seventh Council did, and then the walled off simply resume the commemoration of shepherds who now confess the truth, their whole posture vindicated as the canon promised. Or the erring hierarch himself repents, publicly, as the error was public; and the wall against him dissolves in the same hour, for it was never against the man, but against the confession he had made his own.

In either case the return costs the confessor nothing but joy. He has no institution to fold, no synod to negotiate, no pride of separate identity to bury, precisely because, if he kept the boundary stones, he never built any of these. Blessed is the wall that leaves nothing behind it but a healed Church.

For the longing behind the wall was never for separation but for the true union; and Saint John of Kronstadt, no friend of the Latin errors, and a severe judge of them, spoke that longing for every confessor:

*Who of the Orthodox would not wish to unite with Catholics or Lutherans, and to be one with them in Christ, one Church, one society of believers?*

Saint John of Kronstadt<sup>96</sup>

Who would not wish it: the wall is raised by men who ache for the day of its removal. But the union he longed for, the saint insisted in the same breath, must be union in the one true Faith, never by the abandonment of it; for a reunion purchased with the truth would heal nothing, being itself the deepest wound. That longing, purified of compromise, is the heartbeat of this whole chapter, and of the Lord's own prayer, that they all may be one as He and the Father are one: in the truth.

## RECEIVING THE RETURNING

The Church has likewise always known how to receive back those who come from the other side of every wall: from heresy, from schism, from the counterfeit separations. Her two hands in this work bear the names the reader has met, *akriveia*, exactness, and *economia*, discretion. By the one she receives with the fullness of the rule; by the other she bends the manner of reception, never the faith, to heal the person before her; and the seal of the Chrism, as the eighth chapter showed, has been her ordinary instrument for renewing the broken bond.

This book does not adjudicate the reception of any particular soul; that belongs to the bishops and the confessors of the returning. It insists only on the spirit the saints showed: no gloating, no long memory, no second class membership for the healed. The Nicene fathers received the Novatian clergy in their orders. The Seventh Council embraced the repentant iconoclast bishops. The Church after Florence received back the very signers of the decree, upon their confession. The confessor who has suffered for the truth and then makes the returning brother eat dust has undone at the door of the Church what he defended

at her wall. The Father of the parable runs to meet the returning son, and puts the ring on his hand; and the elder brother who sulks at the music has misread the whole household.

## THE CROSS AND THE HEART

And for the one returning, and for the one who never left but has watched and wept, the same inner path is prescribed; for confession without repentance is a shell.

The cost of confession is real, and this book has never hidden it: livings lost, friendships strained, the long loneliness of the interval, the slander of being called a divider by the dividers. To take up the truth is to take up a cross, and the saints who walled off carried it to prisons and to fires.

*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

Matthew 10:32

And the ledger of the Beatitudes stands open over every such cross: *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you... Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.*

But the cross is carried, not brandished. The inner discipline of the confessor is prayer that does not slacken; repentance that begins each morning with his own sins, and not his bishop's; forgiveness held ready in advance for every persecutor; and the guarding of the heart against the subtle pleasures of the fight, the relish of being right, the appetite for news of scandals, the secret disappointment when a rumoured enemy proves innocent. Whoever finds these pleasures growing in him is losing the war while winning the arguments.

The old counsel stands: keep the confession with the mind of the canon and the heart of Silouan, weeping and praying for the whole world, including, and especially, for the men whose names

you can no longer say at the altar. For the day you stop praying for them, your wall has changed owners.

### **In plain words**

A wall is like a cast on a broken arm, it was always meant to come off when the healing happens. It comes off when a council fixes the error, or when the erring shepherd repents; and because the faithful never built a rival church, coming back costs them nothing but happiness. Those returning from the wrong side are welcomed home, sealed and healed, never mocked. And the whole time, the person behind the wall must keep repenting of their own sins first, carrying the cross quietly, and praying for the very people whose names they cannot say, the day you stop praying for them, something has gone wrong in you.

### **Notes and sources**

96. Saint John of Kronstadt (1829 to 1908), from his counsels concerning the heterodox, recorded among his sayings in the Russian tradition. His admirers called him a severe critic of Latinism; the severity and the longing stood in him together, which is precisely the disposition of the true wall.

# The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Every book must end where its heart is, and the heart of this one is not a canon but a table. Saint John, in the Revelation, heard the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters:

*Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.... Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.*

Revelation 19:6 to 7, 9

Here is the end of the whole story the first chapter began: the Bride, adorned at last, without spot or wrinkle; the guests gathered from every nation and every century; the supper that has no end; and Heavenly Communion, of which every Liturgy on earth was the appearing and the foretaste, become the open, everlasting face-to-face.

Everything in this book was written for that table, and for nothing else. The wall was for the table. The refused commemoration was for the table. The loneliness, the patience, the exactness, the tears, all of it was so that the soul might come to that supper wearing the wedding garment of the true confession, having refused, through the whole length of the storm, to exchange it for another.

So let the last words be plain, and let them be the whole book in one breath.

Love the Church, for she is the Body of Christ and your mother, and there is no life outside her. Guard the faith, for it is her blood, and one drop of poison consented to is not a small thing. If the day comes, or has come, when a shepherd preaches openly what the Church has condemned, do not lie at the altar: cease the name, with grief, and stand where the saints stood, inside the Church, behind the wall, facing the road. Build nothing, judge no soul, curse no one. Pray for the men you refuse, protect the little ones, seek the true Mysteries, and wait for the Church, who has come at the end of every storm and will come at the end of this one. Keep the heart soft while the confession is hard; weep more than you argue; and let the wall make you not a warrior but a watchman, whose eyes are not on the enemy but on the east, keeping the Bridegroom's own charge, *hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

For the night is far spent; the Bridegroom is nearer than when we believed; and blessed, now and unto the ages, are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.<sup>97</sup>

*Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

Revelation 22:20

## **In plain words**

The whole point of everything in this book is a wedding feast, the endless banquet of heaven, where the Church, beautiful and spotless, sits with her Lord forever. The wall, the tears, the waiting, all of it was only to arrive at that table wearing the wedding garment of the true faith. So: love the Church, guard the faith, never lie at the altar, never curse anyone, pray for everyone, and watch for the Bridegroom. He is coming, and the supper is ready.

## Notes and sources

97. Revelation 19:6 to 9 (KJV). Cf. Matthew 22:11 to 12, the wedding garment; Romans 13:11 to 12.

## The Fifteenth Canon

For the reader's constant reference, the charter of this whole book is set down here once more, entire, in the rendering of the Pedalion of Saint Nicodemos the Hagiorite. Its first half, with canons 13 and 14 of the same council, condemns separation from one's head over personal charges before a synodal verdict. Its second half, given below, is the Church's shield over those who withdraw from the open preaching of condemned heresy. The two halves are one law, and are to be read together, as this book has read them.

*But as for those who, on account of some heresy condemned by holy Synods or Fathers, withdraw themselves from communion with their president, who, that is to say, is preaching the heresy publicly, and teaching it bareheaded in church, such persons not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from communion with the so called bishop before any synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honour which befits them among Orthodox Christians. For they have defied, not bishops, but pseudo bishops and pseudo teachers; and they have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions.*

Canon 15 of the First and Second Council, Constantinople, 861<sup>98</sup>

### Notes and sources

98. Canon 15 of the First and Second (Protodeutera) Synod of Constantinople, 861, second part, in the rendering of the Pedalion of Saint Nicodemos the Hagiorite; see the interpretation there, and the treatment in the chapter "Apoteichisis and the Fifteenth Canon."

## The Witness of the Scriptures

For the reader who would carry the Scriptures of this book in one hand, the principal texts are gathered here by theme, in the King James rendering used throughout. Each is quoted or treated in the chapters; this page is their muster.

### THE ONE CHURCH AND THE ONE ALTAR

First Timothy 3:15, the Church the pillar and ground of the truth; Acts 9:4, why persecutest thou Me; Ephesians 4:4 to 6, one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; First Corinthians 10:16 to 17, one bread, one body, partakers of that one bread; Ephesians 5:27, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle; Hebrews 13:10, we have an altar.

### THE COMMAND TO WITHDRAW

Galatians 1:8 to 9, the anathema on any other gospel, though an angel preach it; Revelation 18:4, come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers; Second Corinthians 6:14 to 17, what communion hath light with darkness? come out from among them; First Timothy 6:3 to 5, from such withdraw thyself; Titus 3:10, a heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Romans 16:17, mark them and avoid them; Second John 10 to 11, receive him not, neither bid him God speed; Ephesians 5:11, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; Matthew 18:17, let him be unto thee as an heathen; Second Thessalonians 3:6, withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.

## **THE FALSE SHEPHERDS FORETOLD**

Matthew 7:15 to 16, false prophets in sheep's clothing, known by their fruits; Acts 20:29 to 30, grievous wolves, and of your own selves shall men arise; Second Timothy 4:3 to 4, itching ears, turned unto fables; Matthew 24:24, false prophets deceiving, if it were possible, the very elect; Second Peter 2:1, false teachers privily bringing in damnable heresies; Jeremiah 23:1, woe unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep.

## **THE FLOCK'S DISCERNMENT**

John 10:4 to 5, 27, the sheep flee the stranger's voice, for they know the Shepherd's; First John 4:1, try the spirits whether they are of God; First Thessalonians 5:21, prove all things, hold fast that which is good; Matthew 15:13 to 14, every plant not planted shall be rooted up: let them alone, blind leaders of the blind; Revelation 2:2, thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not.

## **THE COMMUNICANT'S CONFESSION**

First Corinthians 10:18 to 21, partakers of the altar: ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; First Corinthians 11:28 to 29, let a man examine himself, not discerning the Lord's body; John 6:54, whoso eateth my flesh hath eternal life; John 17:17, 21, sanctify them through thy truth: that they all may be one.

## **THE PROMISE AND THE FOUNDATION**

Matthew 16:18, the gates of hell shall not prevail; Second Timothy 2:19, the foundation of God standeth sure; Psalm 11:3, if the foundations be destroyed; Hebrews 13:8 to 9, Jesus Christ the same for ever: be not carried about with strange doctrines; First Kings 19:18, the seven thousand who have not bowed to Baal; Proverbs 22:28, remove not the ancient landmark; Jude 3, earnestly contend for the faith once delivered.

## **THE COST AND THE CROWN**

Matthew 10:32, whosoever shall confess me before men; Matthew 5:11 to 12, blessed are ye when men revile you: great is your reward; Second Timothy 4:7 to 8, the good fight, the crown of righteousness; Revelation 3:11, hold that fast which thou hast; Revelation 19:9, blessed are they called unto the marriage supper; Revelation 22:20, even so, come, Lord Jesus.

# Glossary

## **Akriveia**

Exactness: the strict and full application of the sacred canons and the confession of the faith, without abridgement.

## **Antimension**

The consecrated cloth, signed by the bishop and containing relics of the martyrs, upon which alone the Divine Liturgy may be celebrated. It binds every altar visibly to the bishop whose name it bears, and through him into the one episcopate.

## **Apoteichisis (walling off)**

From *teichos*, a wall: the ceasing of commemoration of, and communion with, a bishop who openly preaches a heresy already condemned by Synods or Fathers, before any synodal verdict, while remaining within the one Church, raising no rival altar, judging no one's grace, and awaiting the council. Protected and honoured by the second half of Canon 15 of the First and Second Council (861).

## **Bareheaded (gymnē tē kephalē)**

The canon's expression for heresy preached openly and without concealment, "with bare head," in the assemblies of the Church, as distinct from a rumour, a suspicion, a private slip, or an ambiguous phrase capable of an Orthodox reading. Only such open preaching meets the canon's condition.

## **Commemoration**

The naming of the bishop aloud in the services, above all at the Divine Liturgy: a public declaration of identity in the faith with the one named. Its withdrawal is the substance of walling off.

## **Diptychs**

The tablets of names by which church answers to church: the visible register of the one communion of the one altar. To stand in the diptychs is to stand in that communion.

## **Economia**

The physician's discretion of the Church: the bending of the application of a rule, for a season and for the salvation of souls, never extending to the betrayal of the faith itself.

## **Ecumenism**

The modern teaching that the one Church of Christ is presently divided into many "churches" possessing grace in their measure, to be united by mutual recognition, common prayer, and doctrinal minimalism rather than by return to the one Church. Named the panheresy by Saint Justin Popović, since it gathers many anciently condemned errors under one new name.

## **Genuine Orthodox Christians (Old Calendarists)**

The movement which, after the calendar change of 1924 in Greece, passed from lawful protest into separation: in 1935 three metropolitans consecrated bishops and constituted a rival synod over a matter that was not a heresy, and the movement thereafter divided repeatedly, one party teaching the official Church graceless and perpetuating its hierarchy by single handed consecrations. Distinguished in this book, with sorrow and without judgment of souls, from the lawful walling off of the same century.

## **Heresy**

False teaching concerning the faith itself: a poisoned confession, as distinct from sin, which is a wound of life. The Church forgives all repented sin and can never make room for a false confession.

## **Holy Chrism (Myron)**

The consecrated ointment, the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which the baptized is sealed into the one Body, and by which the Church has often received back those returning from schism and certain heresies.

## **Old Believers (Old Ritualists)**

Those in Russia who refused the correction of the service books and rites begun under Patriarch Nikon in 1653 and confirmed by the Moscow council of 1666 to 1667, which anathematized the old rites and delivered resisters to the civil power. Holding rite and faith to be inseparable, many declared the reformed Church graceless and the reign of Antichrist begun, and separated, dividing thereafter into the priested and the priestless. The Russian Church lifted the anathemas in 1971, declaring the old rites salvific; the schism nevertheless continues. Treated in the chapter "The Counterfeit Wall" as the standing lesson on defending tradition rightly and wrongly.

## **One altar**

The teaching, from First Corinthians 10:16 to 17 and the first Fathers, that the Church is the one Body created by the one Eucharist: the whole Christ lies on every true holy table, so that all Orthodox altars are one altar, joined visibly through the commemorated bishops and the one confession, and joined to the heavenly altar itself. To raise a rival altar is the mark of schism.

## **Parasynagogue**

In Saint Basil's classification, the unlawful assembly: a gathering held by disorderly clergy or uninstructed laymen, without any difference of faith. The mildest of the Church's three wounds, healed by repentance and return to order.

## **Phyletism**

The organizing and dividing of the Church according to race or nation, rival hierarchies of rival bloodlines in one place, condemned by the Council of Constantinople of 1872. The clearest historical form of the counterfeit of blood: descent put in the place of the one faith as the bond of the Church.

## **Protodeutera (First and Second Council)**

The council held at Constantinople in 861 under Saint Photios the Great, in the church of the Holy Apostles, whose canons the Church received among her sacred canons. Its thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth canons govern separation from one's ecclesiastical head; the fifteenth contains the charter of walling off.

## **Pseudo-bishop**

The fifteenth canon's exact word for a hierarch openly preaching condemned heresy: a man still holding office and name, whose formal judgment awaits the synod, but whose teaching has forfeited his claim on the flock's obedience.

## **Schism**

Division of the Church over what is not the faith: a personal charge, a rite, a discipline, a nation, an ambition. Grave sin even among the sincere, marked above all by the rival altar; and, persisted in, it hardens toward heresy, as Saint Basil warned.

## **Synodikon of Orthodoxy**

The Church's liturgical proclamation, read each year on the first Sunday of Great Lent since 843: anathema upon the condemned errors and upon knowing communion with them; eternal memory to the champions of Orthodoxy.

## **Walling off**

See Apoteichisis.