POWER AND AUTHORITY

in

EASTERN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

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Edited by

Fevronia K. Soumakis
Editorial Board:
J.A. McGuckin
F.K. Soumakis

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Edited by Fevronia K. Soumakis
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Contents

President’s Preface 10-11
Editor’s Preface 12-15

PART I: POWER AND AUTHORITY IN ANCIENT TEXTS AND TRADITION

Authority, Obedience, and the Holiness of God: The New Testament Sense of the Kingdom 18-33
John A. McGuckin

Literacy, Orality, and the Brokerage of Power and Authority in Late Antique Egyptian Christianity 34-60
Stamenka Antonova

‘I Must Decrease’: Spiritual Direction and Power in the Orthodox Tradition 61-69
Alexis Torrance

“The Limits Now Fixed”: Appealing to Authority in the Trullan Canons 70-82
Seraphim Danckaert

The Relationship between Bishops, Synods, and the Metropolitan-Bishop in the Orthodox Canonical Tradition 83-90
Alexander Rentel

The Theology of St. Cyprian of Carthage: The Unity of the Church and the Role of the Bishop 91-102
Theodor Damian

An Exploration of Hierarchy as Fractal in the Theology of Dionysios the Areopagite 103-118
Georgia Williams
PART II: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

Gregory the Great and a Post-Imperial Discourse
George Demacopoulos 120-137

Holy Disobedience: Resistance to Secular and Ecclesiastical Authority in Orthodox Christian History 138-162
A. Edward Siecienski

Church-State Right-Ordering: St. Columba’s Early Medieval Example in the Insular Isles 163-170
Kim McCann

The New Emperors? Post-Soviet Presidents and Church-State Relations in Ukraine and Russia 171-192
Nikolas Gvosdev

PART III: THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CHURCH, SOCIETY, AND CULTURE

Phoebe as an Example of Female Authority Exercised in the Early Church 194-208
V.K. McCarty

Symphonia in the Secular or How to Be Orthodox When You Lose Your Empire 209-218
David James Dunn

Training the “Community Servant”: The Greek Orthodox Church in America and the Teachers College of St. Basil’s Academy, 1959-1973 219-232
Fevronia K. Soumakis

Authority in the Church: Confronting Contemporary Challenges 233-240
Frank Dobbs

The Synod Guiding the Church: A Patristic and Theoethical Perspective 241-247
Eftychios Phil Eftychiadis
By William Gall

Hieromonk Silouan, *Wisdom Songs: A Book of Wisdom Chapters in Five Centuries*  
By Paul F. Knitter

Chryssavgis, J., *In the Heart of the Desert: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers*  
By Vicki Petrakis

Cleenwerck, L., *His Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches*  
By Sergey Trostyanskiy

By Sergey Trostyanskiy

Fanous, D., *Taught by God: Making Sense of the Difficult Sayings of Jesus*  
By Sergey Trostyanskiy

Kärkkäinen, V., *Holy Spirit and Salvation: The Sources of Christian Theology*  
By Sergey Trostyanskiy

Biographical Notes on Contributors
President’s Preface

John A. McGuckin

It is a pleasure to be able to offer the third volume of Sophia - Studies in Orthodox Theology, this time on the theme of how Power and Authority play themselves out as organizing forces across Church History. The scholars in this present study show how both things are integral aspects of the Church; charisms of the Lord himself passed on to his resurrectional community. Orthodox ecclesiology in both theory and practice has traditionally laid great stress on the virtues of obedience and conformity to authoritative charism that flow, as corollaries, from the exercise of these valid charisms of the Lord’s continuing dominion, or basileia, over his Church which is his Mystical body. In many instances, however, that great Mystery of the faith has been over-narrowly channeled, in late-modern Orthodox writing, to being a commentary on how a section of the Church (especially its clerical leadership) exercises the Lord’s exousia. But an overly clerical understanding of Christian authority distorts the picture considerably. We also know from even a cursory glance at the history of the Church, that one of the concomitant problems associated with the exercise of valid authority, is the imposition of authority inappropriately, and we may say, invalidly. Christ’s own exercise of exousia was accompanied by his “extreme humility”; and often Christians have exercised sway over others, without regard for this balancing and liberative aspect of authority as service for the community. This has happened times innumerable, despite the Lord’s own explicit warning that it must never become institutionalized as part and parcel of Christian culture (Mk. 10. 42-45). The use of power on the wider horizon has also impacted the Church from without: from pagan Emperors persecuting the faithful in ancient times, to modern autocrats suffocating Orthodox experience in more recent history. Both power and authority, therefore, are so potent, and so multi-faceted as ideas that it is important to examine them carefully from the perspectives of an Orthodox consciousness. Today we live in a world where traditional authorities are often disregarded. Those claiming to speak authoritatively to the wider culture now have the difficult charge of being seen to be worthy of being heard, not merely having the right to be listened to (and
obeyed) by virtue of the office they hold. All of these things make the theme of our third annual Sophia conference a suitable and important notion for contemporary Orthodox scholars to review and gloss. This book, ably edited by Fevronia Soumakis, performs that task impressively.

John A. McGuckin.

President of the Sophia Institute.

The essays in this volume were delivered at the Third Annual Conference of the Sophia Institute in December 2010 at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. The theme of that conference, “Power and Authority in Eastern Christian Experience,” brought forth a diverse group of scholars who contributed their perspectives on the ways the Eastern Orthodox Church, in its broadest sense, has negotiated the notions of power, authority, (dis)obedience, and resistance over time and space. These insightful essays promise to draw the Orthodox world into a dynamic and productive discourse.

This volume then can be seen as evidence of the conference’s scholarly merits and of the creative energy exerted by Orthodox thinkers in generating the momentum to educate, debate, and further an understanding of our faith on important issues. Some of the authors hold positions in academia, while others are graduate students or independent scholars. All are exceptionally qualified to contribute their intellectual understanding of the Eastern Orthodox experience.

The essays are grouped together under three broadly conceived themes. The first group deals in whole or in part with power and authority in ancient texts and tradition. In his essay, John A. McGuckin, president of the Sophia Institute, offers a sophisticated and nuanced analysis of the New Testament sense of the Kingdom. He elaborates upon the covenant relationship of divine Εξουσία as authority as it is intricately connected to the nature of the Kingdom or Βασιλεία του Θεου. Drawing upon the works of Plato, Socrates, and Jacques Derrida in her analysis of the development of emerging literary genres in late antiquity, Stamenka Antonova demonstrates the ways in which the ‘sub-culture’ of the Egyptian-Christian desert movement negotiated religious power and authority. Alexis Torrance addresses issues of power and authority by providing scriptural examples of how the Eastern Christian tradition has promoted and protected the concept of spiritual direction from spiritual abuse of power throughout its history. In his essay, he analyzes the spiritual director’s practice of “self-abasement, humility, and love” as the foundation for safeguarding spiritual direction. The next three essays in this group offer a critical assessment of ethics and canon law. Seraphim Danckaert examines the canons promulgated at the Council in Trullo to...
illustrate the growth of Christian theologians’ dependence on patristic texts and Scripture as a source of authority. Like Danckaert, Alexander Rentel grounds his research in the *corpus canonum* as an authoritative source to examine the question of primacy in the Church. Rentel discusses the nature of the relationship between bishops, synods, and their metropolitans and how that relationship is defined within the intertextual “dialogue” that exists in canon law as well as with direct engagement within the life of the Church. In a similar fashion, Theodor Damian examines the life of St. Cyprian of Carthage and his treatise, *De unitate ecclesiae*, which grounds its authority in foundational biblical texts. In his essay, he expounds on Cyprian’s approach to the problem of the unity of the Church and how it is intricately related to the role and position of the bishop within a historical context. Georgia Williams’ exploration of hierarchy as fractal in the theology of Dionysios the Areopagite rounds out this first group of essays. The author attends to our “natural suspicion of hierarchy” and develops a compelling argument for understanding Dionysian fractal hierarchy as “radically dynamic and therefore…constitutive of personal freedom and personal empowerment.” Like the other authors in this group, Williams turns the rigid, oppressive assumptions of hierarchy, power, and authority, on their head to position them within the Orthodox experience immanent in God’s love and creative energy.

The second group of essays considers the relationship between church and state. In his careful analysis of St. Gregory the Great’s correspondence with the Byzantine emperor Maurice, George Demacopoulos, Co-Founding Director of the Orthodox Christian Studies Program at Fordham University, compellingly demonstrates how Gregory appropriated the language of empire to subvert imperial authority in order to claim and assert the Church’s authority in late antiquity. Likewise, A. Edward Siecienski, professor of Byzantine studies, traces examples of ‘holy disobedience’ to secular and ecclesiastical authorities throughout Orthodox Christian history. He concludes by offering that resistance in our present time to secular and/or religious authorities is not only legitimate but even necessary if either or both violate the teachings of the Church. Kim McCann establishes the far-reaching influence of the teachings of the Desert Fathers on the Insular Isles, an area that today comprises Ireland, England, Wales, and Scotland. McCann shows how the Irish legal framework of *sóerad*, the ‘right-ordering’ in the relationship between the Church and State, was manifested in the Columban tradition. Nikolas Gvosdev, a leading expert in national security affairs at the US Naval War College, brings us into twenty-first century Russia and Ukraine, where political leaders draw
from “usable pasts,” including an embracing of Orthodox traditions and symbols, to forge support for a new political culture.

The third group of essays explores power and authority through the interaction between church, society, and culture over time. V.K. McCarty reveals the ministry of the Deacon Phoebe as representative of authority exercised in the early history of the Church. McCarty rightly concludes that in our time “restoring the female diaconate would reflect a truer understanding of the charism of the New Testament era Deacon.” In his essay, David J. Dunn draws upon Sergei Bulgakov’s work to offer a new framework for understanding the concept of symphonia in a secular context. Dunn demonstrates that symphonia must function as an ecclesiology in which the Church is bound to engage and embrace modern secular culture. Fevronia K. Soumakis offers an historical analysis of the role of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in shaping the trajectory of the teacher training institute at St. Basil’s Academy, in Garrison, NY during the period 1959-1973. She demonstrates how the church hierarchy defined the physical and ideological space for Greek American women within the limits of the community parish. Frank Dobbs boldly articulates the contemporary challenges facing the Orthodox Church, and like McCarty, argues, among other things, for the full inclusion of women in the life of the Church. Advocating for the inclusion of women in the female diaconate, Eftychios Phil Eftychiadis constructs his argument around the principles of Orthodox contextual theoethical thought, and an understanding of new contexts or praxes that have the potential to re-energize the Church’s ministry according to the needs of modern society.

The final section is composed of analyses of ‘received books’ by our Sophia reviewers: William Ephrem Gall, Paul Knitter, Vicki Petrakis, and Sergey Trostyanskiy. I am most grateful to the authors of this volume and especially to the Very Reverend Professor John A. McGuckin for entrusting me with the task of organizing the essays in this collection. My own understanding of the many complex layers of the Eastern Orthodox experience and its relation to the concepts of power and authority has been greatly enlarged and deepened. I do not believe this volume necessarily constitutes the final word on the subject addressed. The emergence of a reflective scholarship through the Sophia Institute’s Studies in Orthodox Theology continues to show great promise. The work presented here is significant because it is a serious reflection of the Orthodox Christian experience by a dynamic group of Orthodox scholars, leading experts in their fields as well as practitioners. Orthodox experience finds its essence in the power and authority immanent in the Holiness of God. This work is one example of what is
demanded of us in consequence, the creative expression of that restless divine energy.

Fevronia K. Soumakis
Editor

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PART I

POWER AND AUTHORITY IN TEXT AND TRADITION
Exousia, which is the [delete] Greek scriptural word for ‘Authority’ illustrates for us the remarkable range of paradoxes contained in this Greek semantical term, for it was also the customary word in Hellenistic texts for legal permission, and thus freedom from constraint. ¹ The ancient Greeks used the word Exousía to connote the freedom to do a thing, as distinct from the issue of the ability or capacity (dynamis) to do it. Exousía is thus the authority needful to do a thing. Dynamis is the power or skill to be able to do it. In classical literature referring to the acts of kings or gods the two things were often presumed to be one; but not so in ordinary civic life. In Late Antiquity the Roman law codes deduced from this an important cultural distinction that still massively impinges our Christian legal and civic construct: that between auctoritas and potestas; which we today might translate as the difference between executive power (such as that exercised by the Emperor) and moral authority (such as that claimed by the senate). There is here a sense growing, and it comes more to the fore in Late Antiquity as a result of the widespread dissemination of Stoic ethical reflections on human culture, that ‘might is not always right.’

Nevertheless, besides freedom, or permissibility under term of law, the word also connoted in common Greek discourse in Antiquity, what we today would call ‘The Government’ understood as a system of ordering and commanding; power that is expressed in the Realpolitik. ²

This sense is wholly absent from the Hebrew scriptures, though it reappears in the later epistolary literature of the New Testament. In this

² Plato, Alcibiades 1.135B.
sense of Government Plato defined *Exousía* as the *epitrope nomou*, or the ‘Guardian of Law’.\(^3\) Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* describes the ruling body of his day in the very modern sense of ‘Those in Authority’ (*oi en tais exousiais*), which we find exactly paralleled in the New Testament at Mt. 20.25,\(^4\) though here used with very heavy irony indeed, to correct this notion’s presumption of equating governmental powers with true and rightful authority. The term of *Exousia* in this instance of Matthew’s Gospel is so much in the manner of a severe brake on the Hellenistic political thought of the day that we shall return to see its place in a nexus of other New Testament teachings on the nature of authority, which present it with a decidedly subversive context. Here, in abundance, a biblical sense of *Politeia* clashes prophetically with the *Realpolitik* of occupied Palestine in the time of Jesus; and on that fracture line, we see flashes of a revelation of what it was that Jesus evoked by his prophetic preaching of the advent of the Kingdom of God (*Basileia tou Theou*); and his personal evocation of what that would look like, performatively displayed in his own life as *Tzadiq*, or Holy One, of God; as well as in the demands he made of his disciples in the same cause. To this we shall return shortly.

The Christian Testament is, of course, rooted in the Jewish scriptures most profoundly. The Old Testament saw the issue of ‘Law’ in a distinctly different way to their more civic-minded Hellenist neighbors. For the Jews, Law was the voice of God, the commandment that established the holy covenant between the divine and Israel. Law was the conscience of Israel, its consciousness of God’s overarching judgment on his people as part of the core of what covenant relationship meant: the justice of God’s dominion over the world, and the obedience called for as Israel’s response to that summoning to righteousness as the supreme covenant virtue. As Jesus himself prophetically summed that theology up: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great: this is the first commandment.”\(^5\) This is why so much New Testament theology,

\(^3\) Cremer, 236; see Plato.

\(^4\) But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers (*archontes*) of the Gentiles lord it over them (*katakyrieuousin*), and their great men (*megalo* i*) exercise authority over them (*katexousiazousin*). It shall not be like this among you.” See also: Mark 10: 42 & Lk. 22.

\(^5\) Mt. 22 37-38.
especially that of the great evangelist John, turns on the notion of Judgment (*Krisis*) in the here and now of the dawning Kingdom.  

*The Authority of the Unutterable Name*

For Jesus, the command of the Law is not something to demonstrate God as one of the mighty of this world, a *Megalos* who makes others cower into obedience. On the contrary, the fulfilling of the will of God for the world is the source of the joy of Israel: its prayer and its glory. In this sense God’s *Exousía* is manifested in the world in a brilliantly clear fashion by those who render obedience doxologically to God as a response to their apprehension of his *Exousía* impinging on the world order. Angels do this completely and instinctively in heaven, the Eighth Aeon or the Age of the Kingdom. Meanwhile the *Tzaddiqim*, or saints, try to represent it on earth. It may well be a reason (among others) why Jesus insisted on celibacy and dispossession for his travelling apostles (the *Shaliachim*) who were sent to declare the imminence of the *Exousía* of God’s Kingdom in Israel; and this on the grounds of angelic mimesis, namely that they would be ‘as the angels are in heaven’ who ‘neither marry nor are given in marriage.’

This mirroring of the holiness of the divine *Exousía* through obedience is the fundamental intellectual and literary structure of that prayer which so quintessentially sums up the doctrine of Jesus on the Kingdom: ‘Our Father in heaven, may your Name be hallowed, may your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’

This is the hallowing of the Name (the *Shem Qadosh*): not merely our ‘giving glory’ to God, but more fundamentally Israel’s entering into the Glory of God, the *Shekinah* presence, or as it was known in the Greek,

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6 *Krisis* - as the New Testament renders that idea: a fundamental term to connote covenant theology, as both eschatologically and Christologically charged, throughout John’s Gospel.

7 Mk.12.25. The theme of cultic celibacy (temporary or permanent – the former being the case for several of the original apostles) is reflected also in the angelic doctrine found at Qumran – where community members evoke the eschatological tension of the final confrontation with evil by means of cultic celibacy in direct mimesis of the warrior angels of God sensed by the community to be rousing themselves for cultic battle with the forces of the Beast (Imperial Rome).

8 See Mt.6.9-13.

9 The *Kabod* or overarching sense of God’s ‘weighty’ glory had, by the Late Antique period, been more commonly rendered in Jewish mystical thought by the notion of the *Shekinah* presence: that immanence of God among Israel which dwelt in the Temple, and in the saints, and was present ‘wherever two or three were gathered in his Name.’ In the *Shekinah* theology of the time of Christ ‘Sophianic’ themes gathered from Sirach 24 (as witnessed in the Prologue to the Gospel of John which essentially rewrites ch. 24 around
the Doxa Theou. Each part of this tripartite doxology of the Lord’s Prayer becomes a declaration of ‘The Glory’ precisely because it is an admission of the Fatherhood of God, and the attestation that this Fatherly providence is the source of his Exousia over the world. In other words the prayer’s opening redefines the dominion of the Kingdom (its Krateia), precisely as the Fatherhood of the Holy One over Israel; the sensing of his providence through the action of his Holy Name. The impact of the holiness of the Shem’s startling revelation, is that which moves Israel towards heartfelt obedience. The order of this movement of revelation and apprehension is not incidental it is critical; an axiom, and three consequences:

Aboun de bashmayore: Nethqadash shemork,
Tithe malkuthork,
Nehwe tsebyonork.

Each one of these tripartite invocations following the recitation of the Name: (may your heavenly name - that is as our Father - be hallowed on earth; may your type of heavenly basileia arrive on this earth, may your holy will which is performed exactly in heaven be done here on earth) – each of these three clauses, is not a new thought, but a reiteration of the selfsame concept of Doxa, divine glorification, where the hallowing of the Shem (a task done supremely by the angels in the Eighth age) is, in the present Seventh age of obedient discipleship, capable of being done by mortals on earth, who even with tongues of clay mimic the angels, the ‘Watchers’ as they were known, by giving Doxa and trying to fulfill the Name on earth – since naming God as Father immediately affirms those around you to be brother and sister.

The second, equally tripartite, but mirroring stanza of the Lord’s prayer, of course, demonstrates how those tongues of clay shall actually demonstrate the Doxa that they sing: namely, by allowing God to provide enough bread for the day only and, from that consequent sense of sufficiency, thus to be enabled to share bread with those around (a merciful provision to others which arises from the abandonment of the

the Incarnation narrative) and ‘Temple-holiness’ themes (again as exemplified throughout the Johannine Jesus-Temple Christological theme) have coalesced to make a dynamic basis of the doctrine of God’s presence and his revelation in Israel. For the New Testament Shekinah theology is a profound, and very early, manner of articulating Jesus’ unique relationship with the Holy Name.
need for stockpiling against an uncertain future\(^{10}\). In other words the 
name encourages an abandonment to the provident dominion of God 
himself, which (as the prayer teaches) becomes the remission of sins in 
the community and the dawning of reconciliation and justice. The prayer, 
of course, says this more elegantly and simply: ‘Give us our sufficient 
bread for this day (\textit{epiousios}), and forgive us our offenses as we forgive, 
and do not put us to the test but save us from the evil one.’ We lose 
much of the sense and impact of the latter when we translate generically 
and say: ‘deliver us from evil,’ whereas the text means precisely: ‘save 
us from the evil one’; the \textit{Gbr}, or Strong One (as in that ‘strong one’ who 
gives superhuman power to the demoniacs in the New Testament 
narratives \(^{11}\)) whose forced dominion on this earth stands in direct 
opposition to the fatherly \textit{Basileia} of the Holy One. The dominion of the 
\textit{Gbr}, whom the New Testament calls the ‘Prince of this world,’ is truly a 
\textit{Krateria} or oppressive domination, and its brutality forces men and 
women to its will in disfiguring and demeaning ways. This way of 
creating a kingdom matches the powers of the great ones, the \textit{Megáloi} of 
this world, who through all the ages have laughed at the thought of a 
fatherly providence being possible in this world’s \textit{Realpolitik}. 

Even so, ‘it shall not be so among you.’ For it must be different 
among those who have heard and seen the mystery of the revelation of 
the Name, and thus sensed what is the Kingdom of God in the Holy One 
Jesus. Here, the New Testament teaches, the might of God is manifested 
in the Holy One’s inability to be conquered by opposition; and his own 
chosen Holy One’s inability to be crushed by brutality. The Glory is not 
separate from the Cross, does not come in spite of the Cross, as the 
apostles John and Paul so eloquently taught, following Jesus himself; 
rather the Glory of God shines out from the Cross: a theme the Orthodox 
iconographers have long remembered, so frequently inscribing the \textit{titulus} 
of the painted Orthodox Cross not with \textit{Isous Nazarenos Basileus ton Ioudaion}, but rather with the simpler statement of truth: \textit{Basileus Doxes}, 
the King of Glory.

Such is the complex sense of that simplest of all prayers given to 
the Church as its heritage of the Kingdom. This is the deeper sense of 
covenantal obedience that underlies Jesus’ own understanding of what 
\textit{Exousiа} signifies: the nearness of God as provident Lord, who calls out 
to his faithful to trust in that providence wholly, and from that freedom to

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\(^{10}\) An evocation of the trust the Israelites ‘ought to have had’ in the desert for the God 
who provided them with manna enough for their pilgrimage. See Exod. 16.35; Deut. 8. 
16-17; Ps.78.24; Jn.6.49.

\(^{11}\) See Mk. 3.27; and Mk. 5. 1-4.
share resources in a New Age, the ever-fresh eschatological Aion, where Justice and Mercy shall meet in the drawing close of the ethos of the Next Age, and this conflicted present age: where angels and mortals can nevertheless sing the same song of merciful Doxa of the Lord who commands compassionate Hesed to Israel as the essence of his Dominion, and the core manifestation of his Exousía: ‘On earth as it is in heaven.’ It has been a considerable mistake, I think, that so much of twentieth-century biblical theology divorced the consideration of Jesus’ message of the Kingdom from the concept of the manifesting of the holiness of the Name (Shem Qadosh) which is apparent in the concept of the Exousía, often thereby failing to see how profoundly Jesus was discoursing about the nature of Providence in his Kingdom utterance,12 because it was so often led aside by speculations on cosmological metaphysics.

When the Christians of the late first generation theologized about the nature of God’s Authority, they almost entirely referenced the Jewish scriptural heritage through the medium of the Greek, Septuagintal, translation of the Scriptures; not the Hebrew text. In the Septuagint, the Hebraic term for Authority, Mem’sholoh, is rendered consistently as Exousía, especially signifying the rightful dominion of God: the Kingdom where his authority holds sway. The concept of the Exousía cannot be separated from that of the Kingdom. At its heart is the notion of the true Israel, on whose praises the Almighty is enthroned, as the Psalmist has it in that very prayer which was on the lips of the dying Jesus.13 God’s glorious Exousía may be an authority flouted by men, but

12 It would be a long task, but easily done if we had the time here, to demonstrate the fundamental way the Parables of the Kingdom almost all rest upon the issue of God’s fatherly providence to Israel, which once seen and accepted, results in the mutual gift within Israel of forgiveness, and sharing of goods. To take only a few examples: the Parable of the Sower is really a story of how God makes the fields give forth such a vast harvest that we should not be parsimonious (in sowing, or reaping, or distributing). The vastness of His providence startles the recipient into doxology of his goodness and into a trust that a generous response to God will not go amiss. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is really more rightly conceived as a Parable of the Prodigal Father, whose overflowing love and generosity startles the sons into a new realization that compassion is the only foundation for true existence, and the proper hallowing of the name of God; the Parable of the Lost Coin, is again fundamentally a tale about the illogical but wonderful surprise of how God so values forgiveness and reconciliation (‘finding the lost and small’) that its joy initiates the Kingdom celebrations, and canonizes reconciliation as a dominant kingdom ethic.

13 Ps. 21 2-4 (LXX): ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? You are far from my plea and the cry of my distress. O my God, I call by day and you give no reply; I call by night and I find no peace. Yet you, O God, are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.’
in the Kingdom it is honored: performed exactly by the angels, and with heartfelt obedience by his saints. *Exousía* stimulates *halakha* – how to walk aright; this in turn defines who can or cannot venerate the Name, confess God as Father and Lord. The Septuagint, therefore, gives the word the burden of signifying how the authority of God connects with his right as King over his dominion.

In the Septuagint *Exousía* is also a word that has a profoundly legal usage, heavily colored by the identification of Law as Torah, and chiefly connoting the sense of having the right from God to do something; or having the legal right under the terms of the Jewish Law for a certain conduct 14 which prescribes what are the boundaries of the true Israel – moral not merely geographic. It is chiefly in this sense too that we find the word associated with Jesus’ ministry of preaching and exorcism in the Gospels. In its precise reference to the Torah, *Exousía* signifies God’s rights over the chosen people who signal their allegiance by the observance of his Law and by their veneration of the Name. On other occasions, however, especially in the Psalms, the word refers to God’s supreme rights as Lord (*Basileus*) not simply over Israel, but over the entire Universe, even though many a lesser power (*Dynamis, Ischys, Kratos*) might contest or stand against the *Pantokrator* in the short term. When the entire Cosmos is in ‘right order’ it naturally sings out the glory of the Name: a theme that underlies much of the beautiful nature poetry of the Psalms and Wisdom literature. Late prophetic literature expresses this idea classically in the following terms taken from Daniel 4.27: ‘The Lord lives in heaven and his authority (*Exousía*) holds sway over all the earth.’ It is in Daniel too that we first see clearly how the term *Basileia* (or Kingdom of God), can effectively stand in for the notion of *Exousía*: God’s moral right to have the obedience and glorification of the whole world, but above all that of Israel. We should note here, however, that *Exousía* is the term that carries *Basileia tou Theou*; it is not the other way round. We cannot understand the *halakhic* implications of the idea if we have not understood the theological premise behind the axiom; we cannot initiate the *politeia* of the Kingdom if we have not first glimpsed the *doxa* of the holiness. We have no hope of understanding Jesus as social reformer if we have not first gained a glimmering of what he was as *Tzaddiq* (or Holy One) of God, preeminent among the *Baal Shem*, lordly masters of the Holy Name. In its own use of *Exousía*, therefore, the New Testament, with no small degree of conscious subtlety, makes the distinction between what underlies the true dominion of the world,

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14 See Tobias 2.13; see also this typical usage applied in Halakhic disputation by Jesus in Mk.2.24-26; 3.4; 6.18; 10.2.
and that which is apparent to observers looking at mere current political conditions. The Lord of Israel has *Basileia* and *Exousia* (the right of dominion rooted in creation ordinances), whereas kings and nations have *Dynamis* and *Krateia* (the right of present might).

**The Power of the Name to Command and Bring Into Being**

I would like now to look a little more closely at some New Testament instances of the teaching on Authority, and will do so briefly with predominant reference to the exorcism material. The same attention, for completeness’ sake, ought to be given in reference to the parabolic material, to the Johannine theology of Jesus’ *Exousia* as *Krites*, or judgement-initiator, and not least to the Sophianic material of the Lord’s Discourses. But to do this would amount to a hefty book not a keynote address; and so one small excavation trench will have to suffice as an indication of the need for a larger consideration. Moreover, the nexus of related issues – the *Exousia* of God manifested in the Church, the Johannine eschatology in larger scope, and the role the overlapping of the eschatological *Aeons* plays – all deserve a profounder consideration. For what is at stake here is a much more diverse understanding of the issues surrounding the *Exousia* of the Kingdom for Orthodox ecclesial understanding than often emerges from the reading of other exegetical sources and traditions. I would like to position my own trajectory, if we continue the analogy of setting off with a scholarly ‘research-trench’ on this topic, by naming my course as the ‘Performativte Significance of the Holy Name.’ If I were to say at the outset, according to rabbinic tradition, one ought not to be on the ground while reciting even the *Qadosh* (the holy) part, let alone the Name itself, (in other words the early rabbis used to jump in the air while reciting Isaiah 6.1 so as to mimic the angels) we might get a sense of how to approach the issue of the holiness of the Name as a fundamental aspect of the Kingdom theology; and one I feel that has suffered some neglect. Our present scope, following the lead of the evangelical narratives, will focus more nearly on the demonological aspects involved in the power of the Name, though I trust we will immediately recognize the mirror aspect of how this doctrine somehow begins and ends in the Eschatological Eighth Age of the bodiless powers – be they good or evil. The insight of ‘the powers’ is meant to instruct us: we cannot ignore them by ‘demythologically’ excising them from our discourse.
The sharpest of what we might call the New Testament Christological passages relating this idea of the *Exousía* is found in Mt. 7. 28-29: 15 “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.” The juxtaposition here of the dramatically powerful word ‘astounded’ (*expléssonto*) with the notion of *Exousía*, is quite deliberate. This is not simply polite astonishment at how able he is as a teacher, or how bold as a reformer, it is something far more: a coded reference in the apocalyptic literature of the era to the state of existential awe, akin to panic almost, that falls upon a mortal who witnesses the passing of the seventh age into the eighth age (or in other words a mortal who witnesses a mighty act of God that is invested with the charism of God’s own holiness). The awesome fear that arises in mortals witnessing immortal phenomena (divine teaching in this instance, but usually powerful acts such as the exorcisms or healings) is due to the strong possibility that their life force will be extinguished in the act of observing what transpires, the ‘passing by’ of the Name. The boundary between the ages has been breached. The veil has been lifted: there is danger of the *Shekinah* light being seen by eyes that are perhaps not necessarily pure enough 16 to be able to see it safely. In this awesome moment, the next age has rushed into this one: those who are not possessed of divine *dynamis* stand literally in mortal danger.

This important apocalyptic theological theme goes back to the archetype of the Sinai epiphany where Moses begs to be able to see God but receives the definitive answer: “No mortal shall see the face of God and live.” 17 It is taken up, after the account of the epiphany to Manoah in Judges 13.20-22, to be the root of the more widely known archetype of the vision of the angelic being in Daniel 10, which stresses the prophet’s loss of the vital force 18 as he sees the epiphany of a Son of God, and thus enters into the interstices between the seventh and eighth ages. Then, the angel has to touch the failing mortal and encourage him with what soon

15 Parallels in Mk. 1.22; Lk. 4.32; see also Mk. 1.27.
16 See Mt. 5.8 in the context of what we have suggested above, regarding Jesus’ meaning behind Mt. 22. 37.
17 See Ex. 33.18-20; Ex. 3.6; also Deut. 5. 24. The notion of not being able to ‘see and live’ is also strongly present in the Jacob epiphany at Peniel (Gen. 16.13; Gen. 32. 30), which John’s Gospel uses in a striking *midrash* in Jn. 1.18, & 1. 51 (the latter instance plays on the underlying Hebraic metathesis between Jesus as the ‘Son of Man’ (*Ben Adam*) and the ‘Stone of Blood’ (*Ebn Dam*) (c.f. ‘Stone of anointment’ Gen. 28. 11-18 & 35.14.) or Holy Place of the Temple where God’s *shekinah* dwells: the sacrificial rock that typologically conjoins Bethel and the Jerusalem Temple in one place of focused Shekinah presence in the holy of holies).
18 Dan. 10.17-19.
became formulaic words: ‘Do not be afraid. Peace be with you,’ which we recognize, of course, from the Resurrection narratives where they serve the same purpose: averting the mortality that follows on divine epiphany, and starts with the feeling of awe and trembling. This state of awed bewilderment (the exélessonto of the Gospel (Mk. 1.22), is the evangelical manner of referring to the ethos of epiphany; as too as the many references to thauma (Mk. 1.27), awe or wonderment, or even fear (phobos; Mk. 4.41) that falls upon the beholders when they witness the powerful deeds of Jesus, and with growing awe sense, often unwittingly and incomprehendingly, the divine Exousía that informs them. It is their encounter with the Exousía of the Eighth Age, God’s own dominion, that enfolds the mortals in awe that they have entered into the domain of the bodiless powers.

Marks’s account of this in 1.21f. gives it a revealing context in the form of the exorcism of a demoniac in Capernaum. Mk 1.21-22 more or less reiterates Matthew’s situation: the teaching (didache) is what causes astonishment (exélessonto) in the hearers. But then he introduces a dittography of the same idea at 1. 27-28, and in between (a classic if simplistic Markan editorial structure) inserts an intervening episode to illustrate dynamically and graphically the import of what the manifestation of the Exousía implies. Here in the casting out of the demon in the Synagogue (the very place where the name must be hallowed above all) the Servant of the Prince of the World is forced to confess Jesus as the Holy One of God. We thus have the hallowing of the Name given us as a mystical demonstration of what the Kingdom is that is ushered in by the Shem Qadosh. We note, at least we do if we pay attention, that the crowd attendant in the Synagogue sees all this transpire, but as mortals they are simply not able to register it. Mark has the crowd emerge from the Synagogue as if the exorcismic manifestation of the Holy Name had ‘passed them by’ (‘to pass by’ is an important New Testament pun with the double meaning of parallel movement, and also of epiphanic revelation). They do not seem fully to see or hear it, and emerge saying to one another: ‘Here is a teaching that is new. He gives orders even to unclean spirits who obey him.’ The reason for this un-hearing of the Holy Name, of course, is the fact that the Tzaddiq of God commanded the Demon not to manifest the Name to the mortals in the room: a device that so many scholars after Wilhelm Wrede have been led down the road to call the ‘Messianic Secret’, when it should rather, I think, have been located in the domain of the Baal Shem a key device of

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19 Dan 10.18.
20 See, Jn 20.19, 21, 26 for instance.
the theology of the Kingdom not a later Christological redaction. Here, in
the exchange between those who live in the ambit of another age, with
other discourses invisible and inaudible to ‘those who are on the
outside’\textsuperscript{21} the force of the eschatological \emph{Exousía} is manifested in a way
more profound than the audience imagines: the complete casting down of
evil. The Power of the Name has the energy to bring into being and to
cast out. It not only expels evil, and darkness, but in the act initiates the
creation afresh in primeval light: ‘Let there be Light’ – is the initiating
command of the \textit{Basileia tou Ëtheou}.

A similar theological play on the force of the \emph{Exousía} hidden in
plain sight is apparent in the subtle irony of Matt 8:5-13, the healing of
the Centurion’s slave, where the Roman Commander (the symbolic
outsider \textit{par excellence}), glimpses the power of the Name and reacts to it
with the words: ‘I too am a man under authority. I have soldiers under
me and I say to one: Go! and he goes.’\textsuperscript{22} His faith, or rather we should
say his startling capacity to recognize the power of the Name\textsuperscript{23}, puts
Jesus himself into astonishment (\textit{thauma}). This time Jesus has received
the force of the Name returned on him in all its surprising holiness, and it
causes his ecstatic utterance: ‘Amín, I say to you, I have not found faith
as great as this in anyone in Israel.’ The manifestation of the Name in
this instance prefigures the inclusion of the world into the holiness:
‘Many will come from East and West to sit down with Abraham, Isaac
and Jacob, at the feast in the Kingdom.’\textsuperscript{24} This act of power manifested
in the Name’s healing and reclaiming to Israel of the dying slave of the
Commander (an invocation of the Name issued by Jesus out of his
ecstatic reaction to the faith of the Centurion) is clearly in the same
category of thought as the demonic exorcisms. Both things: healings and
exorcisms, have the same signification in the New Testament world,
though we moderns have often separated them. Both sickness and
demonic oppression\textsuperscript{25} belong to the \textit{Krāteia} of the ‘Prince of this
World.’ Release and Glory belong to the Kingdom where God’s Holy
Name is present, uniting men with angels and driving out the forces and
traces of the \textit{Krāteia} of the present age. This is why, for example, so

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Mk.4.11.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Mt. 8.9 ; see Lk. 7.8;
\item \textsuperscript{23} Because the evangelist’s own redactive interests have turned this episode for the reader
into an issue of faith initiating the gentile mission.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Mt. 8.12.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Sickness being one form of demonic oppression over mortality, since death was
brought into this world as part of the ‘envy’ of the Evil One. Heb. 2.14.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
many of the evangelical instances of the use of the word *Exousía* belong to the instructions Jesus gave about exorcisms to his disciples.  

In the epistolary New Testament literature this theme is strongly evident also. It may well be the case that the earliest missionary evangelists structured the delivery of the kerygmatic preaching in the Agoras of the ancient cities by first preceding it with demonstrations of their exorcistic ability. This would explain why so much of the canonical Gospels grows out of a veritable instruction pamphlet lying underneath it as a literary substructure on how to complete ‘difficult’ exorcisms (such as that of the deaf, or the dumb), where this important material remained more than anything else in the original Aramaic, resisting translation to the Greek. *Exousía* among the Apostolic generation is the authority which the knowledge of the Name confers to accomplish the evangelization by demonstrating the liberty of the New Dominion in symbols of healing.

Now, of course, the Name that pronounces the unutterable Name is that of the Risen Jesus, the name which is ‘exalted over all other names.’ In this exaltation of the name Jesus, the final doxology Paul presents in his Philippians hymn (and does so circa the 50’s of the first century in quoting a hymn which he already knows is more ancient than his own mission to Philippi) shows us how the Name Jesus has merged in the glory of the *Shekinah* with that of the Lord, for: ‘At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus the Christ is Lord, into the glory (*Doxa*) of God the Father.’ In the first generation of the Church, using the Name graphically demonstrated the dispelling of evil forces and served as the first act (a preliminary *Didache* as it were) to the kerygmatic preaching of the Apostolic generation. The Kingdom’s power is manifested in healing, before it was explained in its greater import.

Similar context is shown in that extraordinary hymn to the Glory of the Name in Ephesians 1.18-23, which sets out for us a considered New Testament doctrine of how Christ’s victory was manifested by God giving to him the *Exousía* of the universal Kingdom beginning with the conquest of the evil powers but running out to the Church as the vindicated place on earth where the Two Ages collide in a permanent capacity for offering glory:

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26 See: Matt 10: 1; Mk. 3.15; Mk. 6. 7; Lk. 4. 36; Lk. 9. 1.
27 Phil. 2.5-11. See ibid. 2.9.
28 Phil. 2.10-11.
May he enlighten the eyes of your mind, that you may know the richness of the glory (doxa) of your inheritance. . . and the immeasurable greatness of his power (dynamis) in us who believe, according to the force (kratos) of his great might (ischyos) which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule (arche) and authority (exousia) and power (dynamis) and dominion (kyriotes), and above every name that is named, not only in this age (Aion) but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, his body.’

Here we see the emergence of Exousiai (Authorities) along with Rulers, Powers, Thrones, and Dominions, as actual titles for categories of (evil) spirits in the nascent New Testament demonology 29. All the titles denote Krateia, oppressive domination. The Name of God alone has the force of true Basileia and it is manifested cosmically in the Risen Christ among his Church in the world, which now occupies an interstitial condition held in both sites, through the act of Doxa which constitutes its being ‘In Christ’.

Colossians 1.11-20 expresses the same dynamic sense of the Kingdom when it effectively renders the above in credal form, turning it more specifically as a doxology of the Name and saying:

May you be strengthened with all power (dynamis), according to the power (kratos) of his Glory (doxa), for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the governance (exousia) of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom (basileia) of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities (exousiai) - all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead,

29 Exousia (an ‘Authority’) actually seems to have been a term invented at this time by Christian exorcists developing the theology of the Kingdom through exercising the power of the Name in their ministry of didache. See 1 Cor. 15. 24; Eph.1.21; Eph. 3.10; Eph. 6.12; Col.1.16; Col. 2.10.15; 1 Pet.3.22.
that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

This remarkable proto-creed of Christendom demonstrates to us how the Kingdom has been given to the Son. It is his Name that now commands, and in commanding reveals the light of the glory of the revelation of the New Age. His name is caught up in the glorious light of the praise of God the Father or, in other words, is in the Shekinah light itself, becomes the holy place of the Shekinah, and thus serves as the mediator of all other cosmic praise of God. His name thus shares the attributes of the Unutterable Name of the Father: it is Creator (Ktitor), Beginner before all things (Arche), Icon of the Invisible, First-Born (Prototokos), Head of the Body (Kephale). It is this selfsame doctrine that the evangelist John never tires of repeating: every instance of the appearance of the word ‘authority’ in his Gospel, returning to the same doctrine that there is but one Exousía of Father and Son. In a very short space, both chronologically and intellectually, the doctrine of the Name that was first expressed as an aspect of the early demonology that itself served to illustrate the manner in which the Kingdom’s Exousia was manifested among mortals, has risen up to the full heights of a cosmic Christology of Glory.

Conclusions

What can we deduce from this relatively short survey of the meaning of Authority in the foundational texts of our Orthodox Church? It is not easy to synopsise such profundity of revelatory insight in a short space, but it seems to me first and foremost that when the New Testament, following Jesus, discourses on the nature of the Kingdom, it begins in this psychic sensing of the Authority or Exousia of God among mortals, and demonstrated in the bodiless powers alongside mortals. The two aspects are important and cannot be dissolved. One: that the doctrine of the Kingdom flows out of the sensing of the Exousia, not the other way round: and this because the Kingdom itself is a manifestation of the Power of the Name, an aspect of Kingdom theology that has not been

30 See Mt. 28.18.
31 See also Jn. 1.1.
sufficiently studied in many modern approaches to the signification of *Basileia* in the time of Jesus, but which, for the Orthodox is at the heart and soul of what its meaning is: fundamentally an epiphany of the *Doxa* of the Living God. Two: because the juxtaposition of the reaction of the bodiless powers (angels and demons) to the Power of the Name, alongside that of mere mortals is the primary device with which the New Testament explains the significance of the Kingdom. If we insist on demythologizing the bodiless powers out of the equation, we cannot understand that by this means the ancient theologians are trying to explain to us that the Name, and its Kingdom, cannot be seen by everyone. It is not a construct given to all: it is rather a mystery of the unpronounceable *Shem* that is only given to the saints, those *Baal Shem* who are led into the capacity of that mystery by their Lord Jesus, master of the name, who entered into the Name as the essential part of that victory which constituted the Kingdom’s manifestation on earth. The Church is clearly presented, therefore, as the abiding *locus* of that tension where the Seventh Age co-exists with the Eighth. This is not to say that the Church is the Kingdom pure and simple. But it is Church precisely because it is caught up into the Eighth Age even while chanting the Glory of the Name with tongues of clay, in the company of those who sing without bodies. This, for me, indicates that the Church begins its confession of the Kingdom out of the proclamation of the Name; centers it in its Doxology. The Kingdom cannot be separated from the Church; it comes into being as the Church itself comes into being: namely, when the Glory is actually proclaimed. Finally, to me it signifies loud and clear, in the teaching of Jesus himself (in his re-shaping of the prayer we now call by his name), that the mystical seeing and uttering of the Name is the comprehension that the Fatherhood of God is arrived at through the mercy of philanthropic commitment to our brothers and sisters ‘in the Name’. The Church’s capacity for the recital of the name is thus intimately tied to its capacity to be the place of reconciliation, atonement, and mercy which the Lord modeled when he told his disciples what the secret name was, and how its power changed the vision and reality of the world.

It is, then, not a simple doctrine of ecclesial authorizations (or how authority should be exercised in the Church through history) more a mystical doctrine of the fundamental shape of the Kingdom of God among us. But it does suggest that the root of all legitimate authority in Christ’s Church is dependent on conformity to the glory of God, by assuming ‘the mindset (*phronema*) that was in Christ’.\textsuperscript{33} That is to end by

\textsuperscript{33} Phil.2.5.
stating an obvious point: nevertheless one that should never be forgotten: because to forget it means that we might conceivably elevate in Christ’s Church models of authoritative governance that assume Krateia is the standard norm for godly governance, and forget the Lord’s own warning: ‘But it must never be like this among you.’ I end with another reminder which this doctrine of Exousía gives to the Church: that those of us who represent Christ’s authority today, and have thus been given the apostolic task in our own generation of proclaiming the Kingdom, and explaining its import, must of necessity know the mystery of the Name which we assume, in whose Name we act. It is not enough, if it ever was, simply to repeat the tales of the Kingdom, or stories of the presence of God. What is being offered to us in our foundational scriptures is that those who stand with Christ, in that trembling eschatological interstices we call the Church, need to leave the ground while shouting out the threefold Qadosh of the angels. For the Name of God demands that we enter into it in awe to experience its dynamis, not stand on the sidelines of commentary like some post-modern paralytic, waiting for someone to carry our pallet into the water.

34 For Jesus gives his authority as a charism to his Church (Luke 4:6; Luke 4:32; Lk. 10:19) but will not share it with those who claim authority yet cannot demonstrate true knowledge of the Name from their lives (Matt 9:6-8; Mk. 2.10; Lk. 5.24; See also: Mt. 21.23-27; Mk. 11.28-33; Lk. 20. 2-8.)
Literacy, Orality, and the Brokerage of Power and Authority in Late Antique Egyptian Christianity

Stamenka E. Antonova

Introduction

The question of literary genre is closely connected with the line of development of Christianity in general, and of the Egyptian desert movement of the late antique period in particular. From different Christian practices and experimentations with asceticism in the third and fourth centuries of the common era emerge differing forms of expression and articulation. In Egypt, for instance, there evolve at least three distinct genres that take different forms and yet are spurred by the very same phenomenon of the practice of *askesis* and/or the encounter with men and women who endeavor to coin and to improve on such ascetic practices. One literary genre is the emerging elaboration of rules and manuals regulating and governing the daily monastic activities; this genre, albeit a later development in the Egyptian desert tradition, comes to be very influential with the passage of time, particularly in the western and the eastern churches. In this vein is the activity of Basil of Caesarea, when he attempts to write the Shorter and the Longer Rules, and of many others. The production of rules is furthermore strictly associated with the construction of one particular – perhaps totalitarian in its character – model of ascetic life, namely cenobism. This is the kind of genre which will not be treated here but it will remain in the background as a reminder of other possible developments articulating divergent forms of not only literature, but also of actual ascetic practices.

Another example of an emergent literary genre from the desert tradition is the life (Greek: *bios*; Latin: *vita*). This is most certainly not a brand new genre in the late antique period for it draws heavily and is largely conditioned by long-established ways of creating a narrative out of peoples’ lives and thereby preserving them for posterity. The genre of *vita* in the Christian context nonetheless reveals certain aspects of the Egyptian desert sub-culture that need to be explored. The writers of *lives* are themselves representatives of the dominant (secular) culture that infiltrates itself and bursts into the desert holy (wo)men by trying to
appropriate and claim them for itself. These lives are the artifact of spectators and on-lookers who have been profoundly impressed and influenced by the desert’s inhabitants. Despite the fact that the creation of verbalized lives is a result of personal observation and contact with the holy (wo)men, they remain portraits seen and drawn from one particular angle and, moreover, with a particular bent toward the readers in the center or the midst of late antique society, rather than for the ones located at its fringes and on the borderlines of the desert frontier. A life is a deliberate attempt to capture the spirit of the desert in words, to encapsulate and transport it back into the main body of society (in physical and cultural terms); yet, it presents itself to people who are unacquainted with it and wish to emulate it. A vita both brings with it the familiarity with the life in the Egyptian wilderness and at the same time insinuates and presumes its own distance from it. Such a fundamental contradiction is transparent for example when the authors of lives tend to valorize the denigration of culture by desert ascetics, while, at the same time, they themselves are resorting to and making full-blown use of the heights of ancient culture.¹ For the purpose of illustrating this specific genre and its significance in the formation of the ‘Egyptian desert’ both as an actual and as a literary reality in the period of late antiquity, and undeniably much beyond it, I will analyze some relevant aspects from Athanasius’s Vita Antonii and will try to contrast and compare it to other lives available from that place and period.

Lastly, the third genre emerging from the unquenchable spirit of the Egyptian desert – which perhaps of the three genres comes most closely to the actual living persons that had engendered them all – is the sayings of the desert fathers and mothers, known as Apophthegmata Patrum. Although the composition and the constitution of these sayings has been controverted and questioned, I will look at the genre as such, rather than enter into a debate about different sayings and their reputed veracity or lack thereof, and, besides, at the importance of this kind of genre in the context of Egyptian society and of the desert movement. For this purpose, I assume that the oral tradition – in contradistinction to the written traditions, such as literary lives and rules, – arises strictly from within the ascetic movement and fulfills certain roles that cannot be completed by the presence of other literary forms. Furthermore, I also assume that the oral tradition is not only primary, coming before the articulation of alternative ways of inscription which avail with memory and prefer the written letter, but also the dominant one within the sub-culture of the Egyptian desert.

¹ Such is Anthony’s dilemma in Vita Antonii. See below.
So far, I have deliberately referred to the sub-culture of the desert, for my argument follows the lines of proving the legitimacy and the integrity of the Egyptian-Christian desert movement and addresses the question of power and authority in the late antique period. Its representatives and upholders, who are different in origin and background, bring forth a new kind of culture, which is opposed to the dominant one of secular society, as well as physically separate from it. This alternative culture – which I have chosen to designate as ‘sub-culture’ so as to distinguish it from the mainstream of the dominant culture – has not only a new provenance and perimeter (i.e. the physical boundaries of the desert) but also its own ways of articulation or non-articulation that make it distinct and separate. The designation ‘sub-culture’ should not however suggest that the culture of the desert is somehow below the standards of the high secular culture. Quite on the contrary, my attempt is to demonstrate that it epitomizes the very apex of this (secular) culture, in whose periphery and in whose opposition it is forming itself. In order to illustrate this, I shall make use of Plato’s *Phaedrus* and, more specifically, Socrates’ critique of writing as it is relevant to the issues raised about genre and oral vs. written tradition centered around the phenomenon of the Egyptian desert asceticism and its forms of verbal expression in relation to the brokerage of religious power and authority. Furthermore, Jacques Derrida and his particular critique of totalistic linguistic models and frames of thinking and expression will be referred to in order to cast a new light upon the problematic of genre as it pertains to the society(ies) of Egypt in late antiquity.

*The Written Tradition: “Vita Antonii” or “Vita Athanasii”*

*Vita Antonii* is a full-fledged narrative of Antony’s life, or his narrated *bios*, starting with his birth and childhood and ending with his death; it is also prefaced by a self-referential explanation of the occasion and the purpose of the *vita* and appended with an address to the prospective readers. Athanasius makes an attempt to render Antony’s life within the framework of a narrative for he is aware of the impact that Antony’s (lived) life has had and projects a similar possibility of Athanasius’ (written) *vita* of Antony. The author is increasingly conscious of the divergence occurring between the two – Antony’s actual life and Athanasius’ pale and incomplete verbal rendition of it – and thus frames his account within given self-acknowledged limits. Thus, he starts *Vita Antonii* with a bashful excuse for the multiple imperfections of his text largely to be blamed upon external and accidental contingencies:
Well, when I received your letter I wanted to send for some of the monks, especially those who used to associate with him most closely. Thus I might have learned additional details and sent you a fuller account. But the sailing season is about over and the postman is growing impatient; therefore, I make haste to write to Your Reverence what I myself know – for I have seen him often – and whatever I was able to learn from him who was his companion over a long period and poured water on his hands.²

Athanasius attributes the hastiness and the incompleteness of his work to the fact that he is subject to a time constraint on the one hand and to the pressure of the inquisitive brethren on the other. Perhaps he implies that a perfect account, his being far from such, is possible, albeit it is not the case in this particular instant because of trivialities and externalities, such as time and season. At the very end of the narrative, Athanasius is reminding the reader once again that “although this be but a meager account as compared with the virtue of the man, yet do take this [narrated vita] and reflect what manner of man Antony, the man of God, was.”³ In spite of these express qualifications in the very beginning and end of Athanasius’ vita, the author also states that a fuller and more accurate picture of Antony’s life can be derived from other supplemental sources, such as people who come from the Egyptian desert and have extra-information to share. Only when Athanasius’ own inadequate and insufficient by itself narrative is complemented by others’ testimonies could an account “be had that does approximate justice to him.”⁴ For the time being, that which can be communicated “by letter”⁵ and is supplied by “only a few of the recollections I [Athanasius] have of him”⁶ is presented before the reader to digest.

With a similar gesture, the author of The Lives of the Desert Fathers⁷ prefaces the alphabetical collection of the vitae and is even more explicit than Athanasius about his anxieties as an author. His explanation and self-exculpation deserve an extensive quotation:

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³ Vita Antonii 93; The Life of Saint Antony, 96.
⁴ Vita Antonii, Prologue; The Life of Saint Antony, 18.
⁵ Vita Antonii, Prologue; The Life of Saint Antony, 17.
⁶ Vita Antonii, Prologue; The Life of Saint Antony, 18.
I myself am not worthy to undertake such an exposition, because it is not appropriate for humble men to treat of great themes. Their powers are not equal to the task of explaining the truth in a fitting manner, particularly when they presume to commit themselves to writing and give inadequate expression to difficult matters. Since we are of no account, it is too presumptuous and dangerous for us to proceed to write on this most sublime theme. Nevertheless, the pious community that lives on the holy Mount of Olives has asked me repeatedly to write them an account of the practices of the Egyptian monks which I have witnessed, their fervent love and great ascetic discipline. (emphasis added)

The author-compiler of the alphabetical lives of the Egyptian desert ascetics is a more self-conscious composer who hints at the problematic lying in the background of Athanasius’ own text but never explicitly stated by himself. This author de facto is disclaiming any accurate truth which might pertain to a written text, as such, not only a text laid out in some constraint of time or any circumstantial pressures. What he expresses in this paragraph is not only his own essential incapacity to render into words the “sublime theme” but also his concession to fundamentally question the capacity of narrative and “writing,” as such, to correctly and accurately present the “truth.” Not only does he acknowledge the fact that the verbal creation of vitae – as a representation of a living reality – is a hubristic act on his part, but also a danger. This danger resides precisely in his awareness of the many shortcomings of verbal rendition with respect to its model, the real lives of actual people. In spite of this intensified awareness, the author claims exculpation through the mere benefit of such a text allowing for imitation.

Athenasius, although never admitting this readily of his own accord but merely hinting at it, exemplifies in his text the gradual transformation and appropriation of his hero, whom he professes to narrate. The real Antony and Athanasius’ narrated hero in Vita Antonii come into an extremely complex relationship to each other and form an amalgam which is sometimes impossible to decipher. The character ‘Antony’ changes significantly from the beginning of the narration till its end and it is precisely the aspect of acculturation or Antony’s attitude toward ‘letters’ as part of culture that would be the focus of our interest.

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8 The Life of Saint Antony, 49.
9 In the Prologue, he states: “derive some profit from the edifying lives of these monks through the imitation of their way of life” See The Life of Saint Antony, 49.
As Jacques Derrida notes the irreverent act on Plato’s part with respect to Socrates, whom he honors as his spiritual guide but nonetheless betrays by writing “from out his [Socrates’] death,” so too it is perhaps legitimate to accuse Athanasius, the descriptor of Antony’s life, of committing a patricidal act with respect to the latter. Indeed, Antony – the very opponent of literary inscribing and even of speech itself – becomes firmly inscribed and fixed in a text that has pinned Antony’s vita in the most rigid and letter-bound frame. From the upper left corner of the painting (or the page) to its lower right corner Athanasius has filled with utmost care and fore-thought all the contours and the colors so as not to be able to recognize Antony himself but instead to discern an entirely new inscription, the artifact of Athanasius’ hand rather than Antony’s doings.

Antony is noted and (in)famous for his lack of formal education for he has shunned the company of his peers from his early days and has preferred to stay at home instead of attending school (kata to gegrannmenon). The very identification of Antony as an “Egyptian by birth” functions as a prelude to the institution of two textual categories that operate in opposition to one another – Greek/pagan vs. Egyptian/Christian. These two categories permeate the narrative and provide a backdrop against which the evolution of Antony’s life is drawn. However, as ‘Antony’ himself evolves throughout the narrative, so too these initially fixed categories shift. Athanasius’ Antony starts off as one who is thoroughly opposed to the Greek lettered and philosophically-bent tradition. All he strives from the inception of his conscious life is to lead a “simple life” (hos aplastos oikein en te oikia autou) and, as it were, to revert back to a sort of primal natural state of both soul and body. He goes to secluded places in order to sever himself from the normal run of life and be at one with nature; even wild animals obey his command and are tamed by him. In consecutive steps, he withdraws farther and farther from home-town and blood relations for the sake of achieving full detachment from them altogether. At the heart

11 *Vita Antonii* 1; *The Life of Saint Antony*, 18.
12 *Vita Antonii* 1; *The Life of Saint Antony*, 18.
13 *Vita Antonii* 1; *The Life of Saint Antony*, 18.
14 *Vita Antonii* 1. Note the curious and surely non-accidental use of “aplastos” meaning ‘natural,’ ‘unaffected,’ ‘lacking molding’ to designate the fact that Antony was untouched and unspoiled by the surrounding culture. In a sense, he is born unto his age and society, but remains outside of its scope of influence from his very early days.
15 *Vita Antonii* 50; *The Life of Saint Antony*, 63.
of the desert and on the fringes of civilized society, he defies the limits of humanity and of culture. He does not need any of the appurtenances of culture, such as books for “he retained everything and so his memory served him in place of books.”  

In one polemical statement against the ‘Greeks’ who have to “go abroad and cross the sea to study letters” (perosin, hina grammata mathosin), Antony states that the (Egyptian) Christian possesses a virtue inside the self (en hemin esti kai ex hemon synistatai). Moreover, this state of virtue is associated with a primary state of the soul, referred to in the text as its “natural state” or “natural state as it was created” (kata physin...hos ektiste). Antony continues by asserting that the “task is not difficult: If we remain as we were made, we are in the state of virtue” (ean gar meinomen hos gegonamen, en te arete esmen).

Therefore, it seems, this virtue is not only a part of the self, its core, but also a fact of nature as opposed to the humanly constructed and sustained culture together with all of its superfluities. The primal state is only perverted by the intrusion of civilization and initial innocence is thereby destroyed. Thus, in a dispute with ‘Greek philosophers,’ the “unlettered” Antony (grammata me mathon) teaches the lettered Greeks and forces them to concede that “mind” (nous) is of primary importance for it is the inventor of “letters” (ton grammaton heureten), which are only secondary and supplementary. Antony concludes that “one who has a sound mind has no need of letters” (ho toinun ho nous hygiainei, touto ouk anagkaia ta grammata); the latter in his view present only a superfluity and a redundancy that have to be done away with.

In another encounter with the imaginary opponent, Athanasius’ Antony unmasks the Greek penchant for logical proof and argumentation as external and non-related to the essence of true faith. In a series of rhetorical questions, he asks: “How does precise knowledge [gnosis] of things come about, especially knowledge of God? Is it by verbal proof [apodeixeos logon] or by an act of faith [energeias pisteos]? And which comes first, an active faith [energeias pistis] or verbal proof [logon

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16 Vita Antonii 3; The Life of Saint Antony, 21.
17 Vita Antonii 20; The Life of Saint Antony, 37.
18 Vita Antonii 20; The Life of Saint Antony, 37.
19 Vita Antonii 20; The Life of Saint Antony, 37.
20 Vita Antonii 20; The Life of Saint Antony, 37.
21 Vita Antonii 72; The Life of Saint Antony, 80
22 Vita Antonii 73; The Life of Saint Antony, 80.
These serious questions raised by Antony concerning the accuracy of knowledge, as well as the aforementioned question concerning letters and verbal reasoning (grammata and logoi) and their relation to nous, once again point out the redundant and extraneous role of logos both as word/discourse and as logical proof or verbalized argumentation. Furthermore, Antony asserts that although faith has its origin in the “soul” (psyche) and hence possesses some inherent authenticity and genuineness for it is being in immediate proximity with one’s own center of being, dialectic is merely a technique, a “skill of those who devise it” (dialektike apo technes ton suntithenton estin) and just an art that can be mastered. The verdict of logos is undeniable:

Accordingly, those who are equipped with an active faith [pisteos energeia] have no need of verbal argument, and probably find it even superfluous [tacha kai peritte he dia logon apodeixis]. For what we apprehend by faith, that you attempt to construct by arguments [dia logon]; and often you cannot even express what we perceive. The conclusion is that an active faith is better and stronger than your sophistic arguments [ton sophistikon humon sullogismon].

Reason and verbal rationalization are downplayed for the sake of underscoring “faith” which is based upon some alleged genealogy whereby it “tangibly precedes any constructive reasoning of arguments (ek ton logon kataskeuen).” Faith, understood in this manner, best approaches and partakes of true knowledge, including knowledge about God, whereas reason and verbal argumentation are secondary and perhaps incidental to truth. The techne of the letter, as well as the artifice of logos, is a masquerade that presents itself for a presumed reality and truthfulness, yet, falls short of them. It is a skill, that properly belongs to the body, to an external and superficial surface, whereas truth, faith, virtue, divine presence belong to the soul, to the inner side of the person and possess an integrity and inviolability denied to the ‘letter’ per se. Hence, when Antony departs from this earthly life, it becomes self-evident that his fame was not due to “his writings” (suggramaton), nor “worldly wisdom” (exothen sophian), nor “any art” (tina technen) – but

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23 Vita Antonii 77; The Life of Saint Antony, 83.
24 Vita Antonii 77. The Life of Saint Antony, 83.
25 Vita Antonii, 78; The Life of Saint Antony, 84.
26 Vita Antonii 80; The Life of Saint Antony, 85.
instead “solely for his service to God” (thoesebeian).\textsuperscript{27} Ultimately, it is his proximity and intimacy with God (theophilous autou psyches esti),\textsuperscript{28} as well as acts, rather than words, that matter and persist even after his death. It is the lived life and not the inscribed vita that is the cherished heritage for posterity.

In spite of presenting Antony as an adamant opponent of literary inscription and the philosophical moorings of sophistry as aspects of culture and as extraneous, if not noxious, to knowledge and truth, Athanasius also molds ‘Antony’ to fit into the discourse of this very culture that he [Antony] was trying to expose and unmask. Thus, when at first Antony is portrayed as someone who shuns and flees more and more his social milieu by going away from the inhabited regions inward into the desert, then suddenly a drastic and unforeseen change occurs: Antony seems to run away from society with all of its cultural trappings, so as to become deeply entangled with it. The juncture at which this significant transformation occurs is when Antony decides to leave his solitude and to embrace the position of a teacher and ‘father’ of monks.\textsuperscript{29} This reversal in his personality and vocation designates an important shift that might indicate the place of Antony’s re-claiming and appropriation by Athanasius for the sake of the same culture and civilization – with literacy at its height – that Antony abhorred and avoided. Interestingly enough, this shift in Antony’s career happens after he has spent some time living in a “tomb” (mnema)\textsuperscript{30} and in almost absolute solitude in the desert of Pispir.\textsuperscript{31} Antony is literally forced to come out by people who break down the door of his abode and compel him to come out and be seen.\textsuperscript{32} At this point, Athanasius attributes to Antony a new “charm in speaking” (charin de en to lalein)\textsuperscript{33} that greatly aids the needful for the impact (as well as the length) of his discourses is impressive. The power of his speech extends to all kinds of people, both learned and simple, and it meets all kinds of bodily and spiritual needs. His words are indeed said to be “cures” (hos therapeian edechonto kai tous logous tou gerontos)\textsuperscript{34} in themselves as they have the healing capacity to help and to console.

\textsuperscript{27} Vita Antonii 93; The Life of Saint Antony, 97. \\
\textsuperscript{28} Vita Antonii 93. The Life of Saint Antony, 97. \\
\textsuperscript{29} Vita Antonii 14, 15. \\
\textsuperscript{30} Vita Antonii 8. \\
\textsuperscript{31} Vita Antonii 11. \\
\textsuperscript{32} Vita Antonii 14. \\
\textsuperscript{33} Vita Antonii 14; The Life of Saint Antony, 32. \\
\textsuperscript{34} Vita Antonii, 56; The Life of Saint Antony, 68.
Most importantly, the radical shift of Antony in *Vita Antonii* that is followed by a number of prolonged and complex discourses signifies the act of patricide on the part of Athanasius for it gives him an occasion to re-paint his hero and to incorporate him back into the very fold that he had already willingly left. This act allows Athanasius to state that, albeit illiterate, Antony “wrote back” (*antegrapsen*) to emperor Constantine in return to his letter, or, to have the right to encourage his monks to “note and write down” (*semeiometha kai grapso men*) every movement of the soul and the body, so as to expose one’s failings and be ashamed of them. It should, however, be noted that Antony does not respond to the emperor without reserve. He remarks the insignificance of the letter by a worldly monarch, and contrasts it to the fact that God “has written the Law” (*ton nomon anthropois egrapse*) and, furthermore, “has spoken to us through His own Son” (*dia tou idiou huiou lelaleken hemin*). Thus, precedence is once again given to speech, albeit a concession to writing is being made too.

Gradually but surely, the rustic and the unlettered Antony is replaced and effaced by the new ‘Antony’ deeply immersed in theological speculations, such as what is primary and secondary, and entrenched in the traps of literariness. Athanasius depicts *vita Antonii* and in this way decapitates Antony by transforming his life in conformity with his own interests and purposes. Thus the inscription of Antony’s *vita* represents the decapitation of Antony and the betrayal of his [Antony’s] own personality. The narrative subsumes him under its cover and transforms him into something utterly different, fixes him in a frame and gives him a definite shape and contours via the strikes of the letters – these same letters (or, shall we say fetters) that Antony so desperately and arduously tried to resist and to flee.

The narrative tradition, and hence Athanasius’ *Vita Antonii* as a representative of this literary genre, demonstrates an act of embezzlement of the desert ascetics by the highly lettered mainstream culture. These radical figures, most of whom chose to remain orally-inclined and minded, are re-incorporated in the folds of society by the

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35 *Vita Antonii*, 81; *The Life of Saint Antony*, 87.
36 *Vita Antonii*, 55; *The Life of Saint Antony*, 67.
37 *Vita Antonii*, 81; *The Life of Saint Antony*, 87.
38 I do not mean to overlook the fact that some of desert ascetics had a positive attitude toward books and writing. There are accounts of books stolen from the habitat of the desert ascetics, thus indicating that the possession of books was an actuality (*Theodore of Pherme*, 29). Furthermore, there is a strain of positive valuation of books as a source of knowledge for the sake of conducting a godly life (*Epiphanius*, 8). Also, there is evidence for exchange and production of letters (*Poemen*, 90). However, these instances
fact of narration, by the verbal and literary inscription on paper and by the truncation of their lives into literary *vitae*. This act of violence via engraving in letters committed against Antony and his like in the Egyptian desert betrays not only a claim of the charisma and power generated by the acts of heroic lives of the holy (wo)men but also an act of their willful transformation in the texture of the narration. These narrated *vitae* not only purported to describe the lives of dead people (both literally and metaphorically understood).\(^{39}\) Indeed, they executed an act of decapitation of (the already dead) men and women inhabiting the Egyptian desert and thereby appropriated them for the interests and needs of the larger society. The means of this decapitation is the letter and the form, or the memorial, represented by the literary *vita*. It was an infiltration of dominant culture into the enclave of the desert that also marked the decline and unfolding death of the ascetic endeavor *per se* and a compensation for the living tradition that was far from satisfactory.

*The Oral Tradition: “Apophthegmata Patrum”*\(^{40}\)

The sayings of the desert fathers and mothers consist of the words of different people with diverse backgrounds and, yet, with similar experiences and aspirations for the attainment of a perfect state in compliance with the divine ordinances. All of them embarked on an exodus in the desert of their own accord in order to seek self-transcendence and to challenge themselves to overreach not only the limits of their humanity but also these of their own culture. This attempt for self-perfection and self-transcendence found an appropriate remain the overwhelming minority. The prevailing attitude toward books and writing is best illustrated by *abba* Arsenius, one of the most educated men of the Egyptian desert, who upon a request as to why he visits an Egyptian peasant and consults him concerning his own thoughts replies: “I have indeed been taught Latin and Greek, but I do not know even the alphabet of this peasant” (Arsenius, 6). Similarly, when *abba* Antony is asked to appraise the three answers given by three different disciples on a verse from Scripture, he acclaims the one who has said: “I do not know” (Anthony, 17). It is thus the apprehensiveness and reluctance to use books, as well as the Bible itself, that characterizes the mood of the desert ascetics, rather than willingness to indulge in reading and/or writing.

\(^{39}\) In *Vita Antonii*, Antony enjoins his followers to die daily, “to live as if we were to die each day” (*Vita Antonii*, 19; *The Life of Saint Antony*, 36). The ideal is to die completely, both to the world and to the (old) self.

expression in one literary genre, most typical of the authentic desert tradition— the oral sayings.

Despite the fact that we avail ourselves with the written version of the actual sayings of the desert abbas and ammas, it must be noted that the attitude of the desert practitioners (even) toward oral articulation is especially ambiguous. On the one hand, speech is considered to be a salutary means and, on the other hand, it is regarded as a baneful artifact. For instance, letting out one’s bothersome thoughts and problems can function as a healing and a relief from an intense internal struggle. Also, the gift of speech may have the capacity of instituting a young ascetic as an abba in the sight of his companions. It is noteworthy that the uttered sayings of the desert ascetics are usually not general recipes or panaceas for perfection and salvation of the human race. Instead, they are concrete directions and pieces of advice meant for one particular situation and a particular person, with a specific problem. The sayings are tailored according to the needs and the stages of development that a given person is currently undergoing. Although some of them have been preserved without any detailed explanatory framework, they arise from and remain deeply entrenched in given situational circumstances that both bind them and give them effective power.

Nonetheless, the desert ascetics are most poignantly aware of and careful about the multiple traps of human speech, precisely because of its ambiguity and the usual proclivity to slip from other-worldly talk to this-worldly babble, as well as the capacity of speech to enter straight into the inner parts of the speaker and/or hearer. Words are perceived as something external and, very often, noxious that sneaks into the inner courts of the human being and has an injurious effect upon it. Thus, when one brother is grieved by his fellow, he realizes the fatal result of its entry: “I prayed God to rid me of this word. So it became like blood in my mouth and I have it spat out. Now I am in peace, have forgotten the matter.” Elsewhere in Apophthegmata Patrum, abba Tithoes responds to the question “How should I guard my heart?” with another question “How can we guard our hearts when our mouths and our stomachs are open?” The orifices of the human being, such as the mouth, the ear or

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41 Poemen, 93; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 180.
42 Poemen, 60; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 175.
43 For instance, see the different instructions an abba gives to two different people in accordance with their abilities and his perspicuous discernment of these. (Poemen, 22; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 170).
44 Ammoes, 1; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 30).
45 Achilles, 4; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 29.
46 Tithoes, 3; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 236.
the stomach, present a difficulty for they allow externalities, such as words or food, to enter inside and sow their kind. The heart, or the center of the human self, is vulnerable to any external and extraneous stuff penetrating into the inside and thus directly impacting it.

In addition, calumny and any evil speech are likened to the serpent’s poison that “corrupts the soul of him who listens to him and he does not save his own soul.” Abba Hyperechius substantiates this claim for the lethal effect of malevolent speech by the fact of the original fall since “[i]t was through whispering that the serpent drove Eve out of Paradise.” Hence, it was speech and not anything else that caused the fall of humanity. Speech is not merely assigned the blame for the loss of paradisical state; what is more, it breeds sins of its own: “No passion is worse than an uncontrolled tongue, because it is the mother of all the passions.” Speech in its uncontrollability and unpredictability is an obstacle to the attainment of perfection and to the acquisition of virtuous life. Indeed, it is a villain that not only allows for the corruption of the soul and the loss of the possibility for salvation, but also permits cannibalism: “It is better to eat meat and drink wine and not to eat the flesh of one’s brethren through slander.”

The only exit from the slipperiness of human speech that can both uplift to heavenly heights and bring down to the abyss of the netherworld is silence. In fact, exodus for some of the desert inhabitants does stand for silence, and not merely for the physical severing from civilization. The presence of people and the nuisance of noise are in direct correlation and, hence, it is not surprising that the exiles construe solitude and exodus as silence. Whereas one who “mixes with the crowds constantly receives blows” in terms of disquieting the internal peace and tranquility, one who isolates and withdraws into the perimeter of the desert is able to achieve inner stability and calm. As one of the abbas rightfully states that the via and modus vivendi of the holy men are a constant and incessant journey – “For always I must wander, in order to finish my course” – so too another concedes that the true exodus is the constraint of speech: “If you cannot control your tongue, you will not be an exile anywhere. Therefore control your tongue here,
and you will be an exile.” Macarius the Great, when questioned by one of his brothers “Where could we flee beyond the desert?” puts his finger on his lips and says: “Flee that,” goes to his cell and shuts himself inside it. The only possible pilgrimage through the desert and through the world altogether is control of speech, best exemplified by the maintenance of silence.

Silence is not only a preventive and a cathartic measure for the attainment of inner peace and, ultimately, for ensuring salvation. More importantly, it signifies the divine presence and the human communion with the deity in an unmediated and direct fashion. Whereas words in their dangerous ambiguity and fluidity might “justify” or might “condemn,” silence is the guarantor of divine presence within the self and, therefore, of its salvation. The solitary cell of the ascetic has a special significance for it is the place where silence is made possible; indeed, it is the teacher of silence. Abba Moses pronounces to someone seeking his word: “Go, sit in your cell and it will teach you everything.” By far, silence is the best instructor. The most important aspect of this enclosed solitude is the resultant communion with the Creator and the privileged position of the human beneficiary. One is granted an intimacy and a close proximity to the divine, so that the abba or the amma can converse with God, rather than with humans. Thus, when one person praises abba John for his excellent work, the latter keeps quiet after the first two compliments and after the third utters: “Since you came here, you have driven God away from me.” Once again, speech in this instance designates the distance from God, whereas silence implies an intimate communion and immediate presence of the divine. Abba Poemen confirms the realization of abba John in stating:

If the soul keeps far away from all discourse in word, from all disorder and human disturbance, the Spirit of God will come in to her and she who was barren will be fruitful.

Consequently, silence is to be treasured and pursued not only as a detachment from the harangue of mankind but also as a personal

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54 Longinus, 1; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 122.
55 Macarius the Great, 16; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 18.
56 Cf. “Pilgrimage means that a man should control his own tongue” (Tithoes, 2; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 236).
57 Poemen, 42; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 173.
58 Moses, 6; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 139.
59 John the Dwarf, 32; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 92.
60 Poemen, 205; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 195.
attachment to God and as a blessed state in the divine presence. Instead of debasing themselves in speaking to (wo)men, the angelic ascetics elevate themselves and converse with God.\textsuperscript{61}

In spite of the preferred communion with God to communication with other human beings and, perhaps, due to this direct contact with the divine, the holy inhabitants of the desert are constantly asked to dispense ‘a word/saying’ for the sake of fellow Christians. There is some urgency and pressing necessity in the usual address to the \textit{abba} or \textit{amma} ‘Give me a word! What should I do to be saved?’ One of the supplicants even states: “Speak a word to me for I am perishing.”\textsuperscript{62} In such an emergency situation, when one is struggling for the certainty of salvation and the evasion of death, any ‘word’ or ‘saying’ \textit{per se} would be inadequate and insufficient in itself. The answer to this plea, thus, is: “I myself am in danger, so what can I say to you?”\textsuperscript{63} Albeit asking for ‘a word’ on part of their spiritual superiors, the questioners are essentially asking for an indication of what \textit{to do} in order to obtain the much desired salvation. Instruction in words, however, is only an attribute to those who have achieved an advancement in their perfection and can offer the fruit of practical experience rather than mere theoretical knowledge.

Instructing one’s neighbor is for the man who is whole and without passions; for what is the use of building the house of another, while destroying one’s own?\textsuperscript{64}

In order to teach, one has to possess an integrity and to be able to edify through words, as well as through acts. Hence, when asked for ‘a word’ \textit{abba} \textit{Or} answers: “Go, and what you have seen me do, do also.”\textsuperscript{65} Then, silence ensues.

What is striking about this persistent request for ‘a word/saying’ is that it is not only intricately connected to the question of salvation and to concrete directions for \textit{modus vivendi}, but it is furthermore always distinguished from the plural ‘words’ understood as human discourse and distraction from God as well as dissipation of the soul. Request for a word and the factuality of worldly words differ significantly and in this difference resides the key to unlock the complex attitude of the desert fathers and mothers to verbal articulation and speech. As silence is

\textsuperscript{61} Pambo, 7; \textit{The Sayings of the Desert Fathers}, 197.
\textsuperscript{62} Theodore of Pherme, 20; \textit{The Sayings of the Desert Fathers}, 76.
\textsuperscript{63} Theodore of Pherme, 20; \textit{The Sayings of the Desert Fathers}, 76.
\textsuperscript{64} Poemen, 127; \textit{The Sayings of the Desert Fathers}, 185.
\textsuperscript{65} Or, 7; \textit{The Sayings of the Desert Fathers}, 247.
integ rall y related to the divine presence, so the singularity of word – as opposed to words – is associated with being, with acts of life rather than with any abstraction. The decomposition and dispersal of word into words in this case designates the disintegration of the direct link to God and the denial of human perfectability derived from it. The main concern of the desert ascetics however is not to ‘word’ but to ‘be’ or, more precisely, to ‘become.’

The prohibition of teaching in words without exemplifying in acts is due to the perception of a necessary harmony between and coincidence of ‘word’ and ‘being,’ or acts of life. Therefore, the best way to teach is through demonstration and personal example, instead of reading books or listening to discourses. Accumulation of books in the desert is branded not only as superfluous but also as sinful as it is a worldly possession that can potentially generate income for the needful. Commentary on the Scriptures is sometimes undertaken, but is preferably not to be expounded upon. One is praised highly when restraining from pronouncement on Scripture for such an endeavor forebodes a potential danger. When asked whether to comment on “Scripture” or on the “sayings of the Fathers,” abba Amoun responds that “you had better talk about the sayings of the Fathers than about the Scriptures; it is not so dangerous.”

Speech and any verbal utterance, as much as they cannot be avoided, must be in compliance with one’s via, or manner of life. Indeed, the ‘word’ and the whole being and life-style of the ascetic must coincide and form one integral whole. The desert ascetic must become a word, must become a sign to be read and to be studied by the rest so as to be copied and imitated. What the holy (wo)man strives for is to become a lucid sign sufficient in itself to be recognized and to be legible for others. Any other articulation of their lives is a compromise and a fall from the lofty height s/he aspires to. Thus, it is not solely the

66 In connecting ‘word’ and ‘being,’ rather than ‘word’ and ‘event,’ as does Douglas Burton-Christie, The Word in the Desert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 18-19, 77. I would like to distinguish my approach from his. Burton-Christie borrows this idea from the two meanings of the Hebrew word ‘dabar’ as expounded by Walter Ong in Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London: Methuen), 1985, 31. The close association of ‘word’ and ‘event’ betrays a latent Hebraism, which I consider inappropriate in the context of the Egyptian desert tradition and would like to avoid for reasons that will become obvious in the course of this paper.

67 Serapion, 2; Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 227.

68 Poemen, 8; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 167.

69 Amoun of Nitria, 2; The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 32.

avoidance of the multiplicity of words – understood as the worldly noise – that the desert ascetics are after but, more importantly, the avoidance of any verbal articulation of ‘a word’ to a seeking soul. The ideal is to do away with the superfluity of word(s) and to become one instead. This new (wo)man-become-word or (wo)man-become-sign will be as a signpost designating and embodying the proper way of being-in-this-world, as well as edifying. Quite understandably, abba Poemen enjoins a younger companion: “be their example, not their legislator.”\(^{71}\) The goal is not as much to realize a given text in life,\(^{72}\) as much as it is to become an autonomous text perfectly legible and transparent to the rest; to be a text that does not need any explanation or any supplemental texts or words in order to communicate itself in a coherent and intelligible manner and to instruct most successfully and fruitfully.

\textit{Plato: “Phaedrus” and the Critique of Writing}

Plato’s \textit{Phaedrus}, and in particular its second part, provides a critique of writing unfolded throughout the dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus. It has many points of commonality with the critique of textual and verbal inscription launched by the desert holy (wo)men and thus is especially pertinent for an examination of the problematic of literary production in both oral and written forms. In it Socrates is lured by Phaedrus to go out of the city of Athens in order to be able to hear a written speech that Phaedrus holds in his hands. Socrates admits the unusual temporary ‘exodus’ from the city that he explains in the following way:

I am devoted to learning; landscapes and trees have nothing to teach me – only the people in the city can do that. But you, I think, have found a potion to charm me into leaving \cite{Phaedrus:230D}.\(^{73}\)

The word used here for “potion” is \textit{pharmakon}, which in the Greek might have a range of meanings, such as “medical drug, a poison, or a magical potion.”\(^{74}\) This term is important for, later in the text, it comes to designate writing and its dubious effect on people. The written speech

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{71} Poemen, 174; Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 191.  
\textsuperscript{72} Burton-Christie refers to an “appropriation” of text, more specifically of the Scriptures. See The Word in the Desert, 153-4.  
\textsuperscript{74} See \textit{Phaedrus}, 79; footnote 181.}
of Lysias, being held in the hands of Phaedrus, thus engenders a conversation on the aptness and ineptitude of human discourse in general, both in its oral and written form.

The critique of human discourse is twofold – first it is exercised on rhetoric as the art of oral persuasion, and only then on verbal inscription of spoken discourse. The engagement with rhetoric is to determine whether and when it is an “art” (techne) and an “artless practice” (atechnos tribe).\textsuperscript{75} Socrates, the mouthpiece of Plato, claims that rhetorical art is first and foremost psychagogia, or guiding of the soul, via the means of speech.\textsuperscript{76} The distinction between artful and artless rhetoric resides in the discernment of truth and the possession of genuine knowledge. The art of one who has no grasp of truth is no art whatsoever but a “ridiculous thing.”\textsuperscript{77} The true rhetorician is a dialectician indeed and any other version of the art of persuasion is a parody and a sham.\textsuperscript{78}

Socrates charges alleged rhetoricians with twisting and misrepresenting truth, if they ever happen to be conscious of it, for they not only attempt to please the base tastes of the crowd, but also stick pathetically to the principle of eikos, the ‘likely,’ as opposed to aletheia, or truth itself. Such dilettantes are capable of making “small things appear great and great appear small.”\textsuperscript{79} Their art, or pretense thereof, is not invested in the pursuit of truth: “They only care about what is convincing. This is called ‘the likely’ [eikos]… Whatever you say, you should pursue what is likely and leave the truth aside,” especially when reality does not ‘seem’ to approximate what is ‘likely,’ or eikos.\textsuperscript{80} In Socrates’ view, similar practitioners of rhetoric, which is usually acquired through “courses and handbooks,”\textsuperscript{81} cannot be regarded as serious for they know the “preliminaries” of the art but not the art itself.\textsuperscript{82} On account of their dilettantism and artlessness they are blameworthy and well deserving of poignant critique.\textsuperscript{83}

The alternative proposed by Socrates is that of dialectics. In order to be an authentic rhetorician, one needs to be an experienced

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reader of souls and knower of speeches. He parallels the method of rhetoric with that of medicine for the former is concerned with impacting the soul in a salutary way, whereas the latter with the body. The orator/diagnostician has to determine the nature of the object he is intending to treat so as to prescribe the correct dosage and ingredients of the speech/\textit{pharmakon}. Not only is it necessary to investigate the power, nature, forms and effects of a discourse upon the human soul, but it is also important to study the nature of soul, its kinds and characteristics, in order to be able to match the appropriate speech for a given soul so as to be efficacious. A system of classification of souls and speeches is needed in order to develop an explanatory apparatus for the complex workings of speech upon the human soul, to understand the interaction between the speech and the soul and to account for any successes or failures of the art of persuasion. It is a scientification of rhetorical art and its subordination to a rationale. Most importantly, the practitioner of this art must know the precise \textit{kairos} for both speaking and being silent. Only then is one a true master of the art.

Socrates concludes that the practice of the rhetorical art is an arduous business that involves lengthy and troublesome studies before one could fully understand and be able to coordinate speeches and human souls in the correct manner. He states that the pursuit of this difficult art is never done for the sake of fellow humans but instead “to be able to speak and act in a way that pleases the gods as much as possible.” The question of the possibility of achieving such level of proficiency, however, remains open.

The second part of Socrates’ twofold critique involves writing \textit{per se}. The starting point for his launching of an attack on writing is a purportedly ancient myth of the origination of the art of writing. Socrates relates that the father of writing is an Egyptian god by the name of Theuth, who also invented the numbers, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and others. The correct appraisal of this new skill, however, comes not from the father of writing himself, who like all

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\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Phaedrus} 270.

\textsuperscript{85} Please note that \textit{pharmakon} is not a word that Plato uses in reference to spoken discourse but only to written speech or to writing. However, from his analogy between medicine and rhetoric, this can be easily inferred to refer to oral discourse too. Hence, my liberty to make use of it in this context.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Phaedrus} 271. It is noteworthy that Athanasius also likens Antony to a “physician” of the soul. See \textit{Vita Antonii} 83-88.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Phaedrus} 272A.

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Phaedrus} 273E.

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Phaedrus} 274D.
parents is partial and deluded about the actual significance of his offspring, but instead from the king-god Thamus, or Ammon. Whereas the former declares: “O, King, here is something that, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a potion [pharmakon] for memory [mneme] and wisdom [sophia],” the latter responds harshly, as follows:

And now, since you are the father of writing [pater on grammaton], your affection for it has made you describe its effects as opposite [tounantion] of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others [dia pistin graphes exothen hup’ allotrian tupon], instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own [ouk endothen autous hup’ hauton anamimneskomenous]. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding [oukoun mnemes, alla hupomneseos, pharmakon heures]; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom [doxan], not with its reality [aletheian].

This statement is very telling for the critique of writing is directed precisely against what it presumes or claims to be. Writing is unmasked by the king-god as a pretense and a sham art presenting itself for the sake of accumulation of knowledge and, yet, working against human memory and wisdom. It is precisely the opposite of what it presents itself to be. The king-god perceives danger of such an invention and plainly states that,

[Writing] will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing. And they will be difficult to get along with, since they will merely appear to be wise [doxosophoi] instead of really being so [anti sophon].

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90 Phaedrus 274E.
91 Phaedrus 275A.
92 Phaedrus 275B.
Thus, the two major attacks launched against writing are firstly its externality to the human being and, thus, its ineffectiveness as a tool for *mneme*, and secondly its subversion. As the king asserts, writing is a system of signification that can only serve as an ‘aide-memoire,’ as a *hypomnèse* or a reminding, an anterior propping to lean on. Its function as *hypomnèse* rather than *mneme*, which is an internal working of the mind, is in accordance with its being external sign or memorial. Not only is writing blameworthy for its radically estranged position from the movements of the human soul, but it is furthermore charged with appearance rather than truthfulness. Its re-presentation is its misrepresentation. This charge against literary inscription parallels Plato’s critique of the poets in the *Republic* where he decides to exclude the poets from the mental construction of the perfect city because of their being thrice-distanced from the truth, i.e. because their work mimics and represents inaccurately the original whose copy it is.\(^{93}\) An inherent extraneousness, a superfluity and, even, a danger are that which characterizes the art of writing, being jettisoned uncompromisingly as merely a *hypomnèse*, as outward “reminders to those who already know.”\(^{94}\)

Furthermore, Socrates remarks that any piece of writing, when left to itself, is insufficient for it always needs the defense and the support of its “father”;\(^ {95}\) alone, it is entirely helpless and fully dependent. Lastly, any written words possess no control over their fate for they wander far away in their promiscuity and without regard of whether the reader has an understanding or not.\(^ {96}\) Ultimately, a written discourse, as well as a painting, “remains solemnly silent” and needs the living voice of its composer in order to arrive at lucid comprehension and eventual effectiveness.\(^ {97}\)

The alternative to writing in letters proposed by Socrates is a writing “in the soul” of a person.\(^ {98}\) Thus, the ideal is explicated, as follows:

*Socrates:* It is a discourse that is written down, with knowledge, in the soul of the listener; it can defend itself, and it knows for whom it should speak and for whom it should remain silent.

\(^{93}\) *Republic* X, 596a ff.
\(^{94}\) *Phaedrus* 278A.
\(^{95}\) *Phaedrus* 275E.
\(^{96}\) *Phaedrus* 275E.
\(^{97}\) *Phaedrus* 275D.
\(^{98}\) *Phaedrus* 276A.
Phaedrus: You mean the living, breathing discourse of the man who knows, of which the written one can be fairly called an image [eidolon].

Socrates: Absolutely right.99

The inscription in the soul is living and real, whereas the inscription in letters is a demarcation of death and perversion of human discourse. While the former preserves the integrity and the wholeness of the speaker, the latter turns against its own father, or mother, and against its recipient in that it is a monstrous weakling – or, more strongly put, an illegitimate child. Socrates states explicitly that writing as an act of sowing a seed (the seed of discourse)100 is fruitful only when it is inscribed in the soul of a person, for only in this case can it be “clear, perfect, and worth serious attention.”101 Thus, the legitimate offspring of a rhetor is the soul’s inscription with words that, on their part, breed their own offspring or siblings:

Such discourses should be called his own legitimate children, first the discourse he may have discovered within himself and then its sons and brothers who may have grown naturally in other souls insofar as these are worthy…102

It must be noted, however, that psychic writing remains a metaphor used by Socrates to put forth his point rather than re-institute and rehabilitate writing as such. He does not propose two kinds of writing, one bad and one good, but rather contrasts logos which is internal, alive and authentic to its material and outward inscription, which is frozen and petrified on the page. Hence, it is once again the phone or the spoken logos which takes precedence over deaf and the numb engraving in grammata.

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99 Phaedrus 276A.
100 Phaedrus 276C.
101 Phaedrus 278A.
102 Phaedrus 278A.
Jacques Derrida in his essay “Plato’s Pharmacy” provides an alternative and insightful reading to the classical reading of Plato’s critique of writing and thus goes against the grain of the text in order to dismantle and debunk a whole system of construing writing. Derrida uses Plato’s text against Platonism, interrogates Plato before his own tribunal, and unveils the different strata of inherent metaphysics underlying his system of writing and his framework of thought. In so doing, he unmasksthe tyranny of a metaphysics concerned with logocentrism, which Derrida understands strictly as phonocentrism, with presence (to on), with being (ousia) and with truth (aletheia). This edifice of western metaphysical undertakings that holds a sway since Plato is a cultural dictum that Derrida wants to surpass and to supplant. In so doing, he strives to go beyond the simple binary oppositions of the decadence and fall of writing over against a spontaneity and splendor of living speech, the sham of re-presentation as an absence over against an irreplaceable presence, the multiplicity of copies over against an irreducible truth. These are namely the cultural imperatives of the west deeply entrenched in a pervasive binarism of opposites that Derrida revolts against and investigates ‘Plato’s pharmacy’ for a resolution. Indeed, this deconstructive reading is not merely an interrogation but a rending of the facade of dialectics or rhetoric and, thereby, exposing the (otherwise hidden and hiding) construction of ontology or theology – the shameless and merciless undressing of Platonism to its very nakedness.

In commenting on Plato’s myth on the origin of writing, Derrida notes the fact that although the father of this new techne is Theuth, he remains in the background of the story as merely a “technocrat without the power of decision, an engineer, a clever, ingenious servant” in contrast to the supreme king-god, who is the other father-figure, this time of logos or living speech. The king-father is the blinding and dazzling sun, the origin of all being (ta onta) and of the logos. The father of the

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104 Derrida is interested not as much in the borrowed myth of origins for writing, as much as in the underlying structure: “Plato had to make his tale conform to structural laws. The most general of these, those that govern and articulate the oppositions speech/writing, life/death, father/son, master/servant, first/second, legitimate son/orphan-bastard, soul/body, inside/outside, good/evil, seriousness/play, day/night, sun/moon, etc.” Dissemination, 85.

105 Derrida, Dissemination, 86.
logos is thus in no need of writing and condemns it for its essential uselessness and menace.

God the king does not know how to write, but that ignorance or incapacity only testifies to his sovereign independence. He has no need to write. He speaks, he says, he dictates, and his word suffices.\textsuperscript{106}

The logos, whose origin is the father, implies the presence of its own progenitor. It cannot exist independently and of itself for it needs the father to be what it is, a living discourse. When the father is no longer present, logos degenerates into writing and, furthermore, becomes a criminal for it commits a patricidal act. Therefore, “[t]he specificity of writing would thus be intimately bound to the absence of the father.”\textsuperscript{107}

Derrida does not look at the status of writing in a simplistic and straightforward way, for he affirms the ambiguity of a pitiable orphan-son and a guilty parricidal son that constitutes the concept of writing. As a result of his hubris, the son turns into a kind of a bastard-child that forgets its origin and strays away wandering indiscriminately in all directions. The miserable orphan, as well as writing of which it is a symbol,

being nobody’s son at the instant it reaches inscription, scarcely remains a son at all and no longer recognizes its origins, whether legally or morally. In contrast to writing, living logos is alive in that it has a father (whereas the orphan is already half dead), a father that is present, standing near it, behind it, within it, sustaining it with his rectitude, attending it in person in his own name.\textsuperscript{108}

The key phrase in this comparison of the legitimate and illegitimate sons, of speech and writing, is the fact that literary inscription is “half dead,” that it is not a corpse but something between a living and a dead body. This position on the borderline of two opposing categories is best captured by the duplicity and fluidity of a term that Plato himself uses to refer to writing – pharmakon.

The case of writing is a grave one, but not a simple one. The verdict of the father-god-king hints at its complexity and multi-

\textsuperscript{106} Derrida, \textit{Dissemination}, 76.
\textsuperscript{107} Derrida, \textit{Dissemination}, 77.
\textsuperscript{108} Derrida, \textit{Dissemination}, 77.
facetedness. Pharmakon as writing, or writing as pharmakon, cannot be classified in one category only, such as bad or good, noxious or innocuous, baneful or salutary, external or internal. It encompasses all of these opposites and is these opposite categories at the same time. In its ambiguous and changeable nature, the drug, albeit originally coming from without, can penetrate the inner of the human body and act as a cure as well as a poison. It can both vivify and mortify. It can have these opposite effects on the body depending on its measure and its manner of application. Thus, writing, albeit a degenerate art, can have unpredictable and harmful effects upon the human soul by penetrating it and making it forgetful (lethen) rather than endowing it with superior memory and wisdom. The antidote to it is knowledge (episteme) for only the one who knows its ambivalence and danger is able to handle it correctly.

Most importantly, Derrida demonstrates that Plato presents writing not as pertaining to a series of binary opposites but rather as constituting itself a contradictory and complex phenomenon which cannot be easily regarded under the rubric of oppositions (the latter being an instance of Platonism’s totalitarian grip over western philosophical tradition). The power, or the malice, of this magic ‘potion’ of writing is that it is neither one opposite of the spectrum, nor the other, but both at the same time. It is neither, nor; both, and. It possesses the powers of good and evil, and it changes poles in the moment of a blink. To reduce it to any single thing will be a grave mistake and unpardonable ignorance. Notwithstanding, the condemnation of writing as pharmakon is not that it is maleficent or fraught with mutability and ambivalence. Rather, the charge is that the living “logos is a more effective pharmakon” that immediately penetrates and impacts the inner courts of the soul. It thus does not have the differance of the writing, as coined by Derrida to capture both the difference and the distance (derived from ‘differ’ and ‘defer’) involved in its operation. Of course, by the dint of some divine irony, logos is both pharmakon but

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109 In commenting on the effects of writing on memory, Derrida writes: “Letting itself [memory] be stoned [medusee] by its own signs, its own guardians, by the types committed to the keeping and surveillance of knowledge, it will sink into lethe, overcome by non-knowledge, and forgetfulness. Memory and truth cannot be separated. The movement of aletheia is a deployment of mneme through and through.” (Dissemination, 105)

110 See Derrida’s critique of the reduction of pharmakon, or writing, to only one signification, namely negative or positive alone, as mistaken. Cf. Dissemination, 99, especially 103-4.

111 Derrida, Dissemination, 115.
also the antidote, *alexipharmakon*; it is that which opposes its own opposite.\textsuperscript{112} It both infects and then offers catharsis. All of this is possible because of the duplicity of *pharmakon* and its lack of essence or stability:

If the *pharmakon* is ‘ambivalent,’ it is because it constitutes a medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.). It is on the basis of this play or movement that the opposites or differences are stopped by Plato. The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference.\textsuperscript{113}

At this juncture Derrida surpasses classical understanding of Platonism and offers an alternative to it. This alternative overcomes the imposition of binary oppositions, of the tyranny of ontology\textsuperscript{114} in the history of western metaphysics that has so unjustly relegated writing to a secondary, derivative, and inferior position to that of living discourse. The secrets of Plato’s pharmacy are divulged by the gracious skill and the careful anatomy of the *pharmakeus* Derrida so as to demonstrate the emancipation from the chains of ‘Platonism’ and the overcoming of binarism. Derrida speaks best for himself:

\[T\]he disappearance of the god-father-capital-sun is thus the precondition for discourse, taken this time as a moment and not as a principle of *generalized* writing. That writing (is) *epekeina tes ousias* [beyond beingness or presence]. The disappearance of truth as presence, the withdrawal of the present origin of presence, is the condition of all (manifestations of) truth. Nontruth is the truth. Nonpresence is the presence. Differance, the disappearance of any originary presence, is *at once* the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of truth.\textsuperscript{115} (emphasis original)

\textsuperscript{112} Derrida, *Dissemination*, 124.
\textsuperscript{113} Derrida, *Dissemination*, 127.
\textsuperscript{114} By the principle of ontology pervading any discipline in the west, Derrida means the dictate of truth, presence, and being. See Derrida, *Dissemination*, 166.
\textsuperscript{115} Derrida, *Dissemination*, 168.
Conclusion

The ascetics inhabiting the Egyptian desert may have never read Plato.\textsuperscript{116} Certainly, they could not have read Derrida either or even anticipated his onslaught on Platonism. However, they embodied and lived to a large extent what both Plato and Derrida write about. The holy (wo)men experienced most profoundly and categorically the ambiguity of logos, both in its written and oral forms, as pharmakon or as a potentially salutary and dangerous medium whose ambivalence had to be circumvented at all cost. Furthermore, in transcending their own selves – by becoming an angelic other – and their respective culture via the coinage of an alternative one, the desert ascetics overturned the existing metaphysical and physical propping of their own society. In their deeds and being, they overcame the dominion of cultural oppositions, such as matter/spirit, body/soul, terrestrial/celestial, speech/writing, and towered high above these. They incorporated in themselves and in their lives these contradictory extremes and, somehow, managed to reconcile them by making it possible for them to cohabit. Hence, it is not in the least surprising that amma Sarah captures this metamorphosis in the following way:

She also said to the brothers, ‘It is I who am a man, you who are women.’\textsuperscript{117}

Or, that the black abba Moses is qualified in this manner:

‘Moses, now you are entirely white.’\textsuperscript{118}

This subversion which, at the same time, is a coincidence of opposites via their transcendence is precisely what the desert ascetics achieved de jure and de facto. An overcoming of binarism whereby the two (otherwise mutually exclusive) opposites come to coexist in intimate proximity and, indeed, become non-distinguishable from each other. A mark, and its effacement.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{116} It should be remarked that some of the desert ascetics are indicated to be highly literate people and, thus, it would come as no surprise if they were acquainted with Plato’s works.
\textsuperscript{117} Sarah 9; Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 230.
\textsuperscript{118} Moses 4; Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 139.
\end{footnotesize}
‘I Must Decrease’: Spiritual Direction and Power in the Orthodox Tradition

Alexis Torrance

I was prompted to present on the topic of power and spiritual direction by some words of Fr. Alexander Schmemann. They struck me, and have remained etched in my mind ever since: “there is nothing more frightening than the thirst for power over souls. It is the thirst of the anti-christ.”¹ Schmemann knew first-hand the kinds of distortions taking place under the name of Orthodoxy which this line evokes. Distortions, perhaps, should not be surprising. After all, if Lord Acton was right when he declared that “power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,”² then the potential risks inherent in the ministry of spiritual direction in the Orthodox Church become clear. But this paper is not about the frequent and tragic abuse of spiritual authority and power in the history of Orthodoxy. I want rather to focus on one of the chief ways in which the Orthodox tradition has attempted to promote and protect the Christian integrity of the ministry of the spiritual father (and the spiritual mother), namely through the tactics of the director’s self-abasement, humility, and love. These tactics, I submit, are an attempt at the subversion of models of power as they generally obtain in this world, after the example of, and for the sake of, Christ.

Since I am offering a bird’s-eye view of a specific facet of the concept of spiritual direction, I should mention some of the places where a fuller view of spiritual direction in Eastern Christianity and the early church can be found. There are several important works which deal with the theme, including, for instance: I. Hausherr’s *Spiritual Direction in the Early Christian East* (with the article prefacing the English edition by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware), John Chryssavgis’ *Soul Mending: The Art of Spiritual Direction*, and more recently George Demacopoulos’ *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church*.³ These are good

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places to start to get a handle on the variety, depth, and breadth of the topic. The most concentrated and summative appraisals of the spiritual father’s ministry in the source texts are St. John Climacus’ *To the Shepherd* (7th century) and St. Symeon the New Theologian’s *Epistle 1* (11th century).

St. Paul, it is well-known, gave license to the language of spiritual paternity in Christ: “For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ,” he wrote to the Corinthians, “yet you have not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be followers of me” (1 Cor 4:15-16). Paul’s boldness here gives rise to an obvious risk, namely of justifying a cult of personality among spiritual leaders, leading in turn to an authoritarian, even tyrannical, relationship between spiritual father and child. But to read the passage in this way is to dangerously ignore the context. What prompts Paul’s words here is the following:

Now you are full, now you are rich, you have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God you did reign, that we also might reign with you. For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honorable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day” (1 Cor 4:8-13).

Thus Paul, in setting himself up as a father to be followed, is doing so on the basis of a radical self-abasement, in which true discipleship and spiritual paternity in Christ are accomplished. St. John Climacus, seeing in Paul the model of discerning spiritual fatherhood, upholds his double

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4 *The Shepherd* can be found in PG 88.1166-1209; there is an English translation in L. Moore, and Holy Transfiguration Monastery (trans.), *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Brookline, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1979), 231-50 (citations here will follow the numbering in the latter); an edition and translation of St. Symeon’s *Epistle 1* can be found in H.J.M. Turner, ed. and trans., *The Epistles of St Symeon the New Theologian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26-69.
emphasis on self-abasement together with the dignity of the ministry seen here, when he writes: “The superior ought not always to humiliate himself unreasonably, nor should he always exalt himself senselessly, but he should take example from Paul in both instances.”

The quest by Eastern Christian monasticism to ensure that spiritual directors conformed to an arduous Gospel and Pauline ideal of self-sacrificial love often comes across as one of its most urgent tasks. There is a continual warning, from the fourth to the present century, regarding self-proclaimed elders who have no grounding in ascetic Christian life. St. Nilus, for instance, writes the following,

Someone utterly unlearned in the work of God will dare to teach it, as if it were easier than the rest; and the thing most difficult to handle is viewed by many as being a snap. Saint Paul says that he by no means understands it, but they declare that they know all about it, who do not even know that they do not know. The monastic life has therefore fallen into contempt, and those who undertake it are ridiculed by everyone. Certainly, who would not ridicule someone who yesterday carried water in a tavern, but is viewed today as a master of virtue surrounded by a retinue of disciples? Or someone who has returned from villainy in the morning, proudly advancing toward the market place at night with a crowd of disciples? If they were truly convinced that leading others to piety is difficult work and that such toil entails danger, they would decline this occupation as being too much for them. But since indeed they do not know this, they believe that it is glorious to rule over somebody, and they easily fall into the deep pit. They are of the opinion that leaping into this furnace is easy. They arouse laughter in those who know the life they led yesterday, and the indignation of God, at such temerity.

If there is any trace of a desire to “rule over somebody,” as St. Nilus puts it, then the ministry is endangered. And in order to be rid of any such desire, extreme humility is necessary. For a sense of what this might mean in practice, we need only look to Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, two elders in the sixth century who lived in utter solitude, communicating with their interlocutors only by letter (of which,

5 To the Shepherd 38.
6 St. Nilus, Liber de monastica exercitacione, 23 PG 79.749C-52A.
thankfully, around 850 survive). In a very real way, they cut themselves off from many of the temptations to lord it over their disciples: they never saw their disciples face to face. They had no access at all, moreover, to some of the most basic relational components that most spiritual directors, priests, ministers, psychologists and so on take for granted, and which can contribute for good or ill to the dynamic of a relationship: the sound of the voice, pitch, the movement of the eyes, body language, clothing, demeanor, and so on. Perhaps in part due to this lack of direct physical contact with their disciples, Barsanuphius and John were resistant to any idea of control over them. Their letters display a general aversion to giving precise prescriptions to their interlocutors concerning progress in the spiritual life.

To one brother who seeks for a strict rule as to how he should order his life, Barsanuphius responds that seeking for such rules is like embarking on a path of ever-expanding circles, when the route is narrow and concisely laid out: “let go of the rules of men,” he orders, “and listen to Christ who says, ‘he who endures to the end will be saved’ (Mt 10:22).” This principle recurs throughout the correspondence, whereby the inquirer ought not to feel bound by rules, but be carefree, even when a specific recommendation is given (Letters 51, 56, 85, 87, etc.). John gives the reasoning behind such a policy: “we do not give any commandments in order not to afflict anyone.” What they were aiming for in their disciples was not a slavish and minute adherence to an intricate code of conduct, but an ever-growing association with the virtues (most especially humility, patience, obedience, mourning, and thanksgiving), and so with Christ. The solitude of the two old men was precisely a tactic to “decrease” themselves, and “increase” Christ in their disciples.

Of course, such a tactic cannot be applied universally and most spiritual directors in Eastern Christianity have not gone to such an extreme. However, there is a truth about the self-negating approach of Barsanuphius and John which applies to the wider tradition of spiritual direction in the East. In his treatise on the pastor, St. John Climacus mentions the element of self-effacement as follows: “It belongs particularly to the man who has obtained mercy from God to be able to

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9 Letter 743.8-9 (SC 468.186).
benefit the sick in a manner that is unobserved and hidden from them; by this he accomplishes two most excellent things: he preserves himself from the glory of men (rust, as it is called), and he incites those who have received mercy to give thanks to God alone.”\(^{10}\) Again, the concern is to deflect attention from oneself, shunning vainglory (even if this means being completely unobserved and unnoticed by the disciple), in order to bring souls closer to God.

This humble attitude carries over in discussions of a disciple’s disobedience or sin. Rather than rebuke the disciple with anger or harshness when he repents, the texts mostly propose grieving over the fall and compassionately restoring him. Thus Climacus can say, “a fox found in the company of hens is an unseemly sight, but nothing is more unseemly than an enraged shepherd.”\(^{11}\) Similarly, one of the sayings from the desert fathers relates how Abba Apollo teaches a spiritual director who is harsh with his repentant disciple that he must be gentle and compassionate. He does this by praying for the temptations assaulting the disciple to be redirected towards the director, which teaches the latter a lesson (this re-direction of temptations from disciple to director is a common trope, incidentally, but it normally does not take place at the instigation of a third party).\(^{12}\) Again, St. Maximus the Confessor explains that the spiritual father who sees a disciple fall into self-esteem at having attained some spiritual knowledge should “grieve compassionately on seeing him die,” with the aim of leading him to repentance.\(^{13}\) This notion of grief for one’s disciple lies at the heart of concepts of sponsorship (anadoche) in spiritual direction, developed by ascetics such as St. Mark the Monk, St. John Climacus, and St. Symeon the New Theologian.\(^{14}\) Without dwelling on the notion in detail, it is clear that by proposing a radical self-sacrifice of the spiritual director on behalf of his disciples (where he “stands surety” for his disciples in all things), the concept of the director decreasing himself for the sake of others is again brought to the fore. It amounts to another attempt at

\(^{10}\) To the Shepherd 53.

\(^{11}\) To the Shepherd 48.


\(^{14}\) On this issue, see in particular K.T. Ware’s article, ‘The Spiritual Father in Saint John Climacus and Saint Symeon the New Theologian,’ which serves as the foreword to Hausherr, Spiritual Direction, vii-xxxiii.
safeguarding the ministry from distortions (though even here, St. John Climacus warns of the danger of trying to stand surety on behalf of others in a proud way, which only leads to the censure, “Physician, heal yourself” [cf. Lk. 4:23]).

The concern to safeguard the ministry of spiritual direction from the trappings of power is shot through discussions and definitions of the spiritual father in ascetic literature. We have mentioned general aspects of self-negation and humble self-sacrifice as being the surest safeguards, but more specifically, this humility should manifest itself through the director’s (often silent) self-condemnation as a greater sinner than his disciple. Consider St. Symeon the New Theologian’s definition of the spiritual father: he is “someone who examines himself diligently, and discovers that he is free of all desire for glory, without any trace of pleasure or of cupidity pertaining to the body, free of avarice and resentment, perfectly meek, unaware of anger; someone who is kindled by love and desire, even to tears, at the mere mention of the name of Christ, and who is, moreover, in mourning instead of his brothers and weighs the sins of others as his own, while he reckons himself whole-heartedly as the greater sinner.” Here we have an emphasis on the prerequisite of a pure life, but this is crowned by the director’s sense of personal repentance as a “greater sinner” than the disciple. Similarly, St Theodore the Studite insists on considering himself the least of men while hearing confessions, “not because of humility,” he says, “but because it is true.” By truthfully and whole-heartedly putting himself below the disciple, the director is effectively destroying the temptations of power with one blow.

In these last few pages, let me turn to the discussion of the spiritual father by St. Peter of Damascus (12th century) in his rich Treasury of Divine Knowledge. As with the other texts cited, he is concerned to underline the need for the director to deflect any sense of personal authority and power over others. In this context he mentions the importance of the spiritual father having once been in obedience himself: “those who, after being subject to a spiritual father, were then appointed by him to take charge of other brethren, carried out their task as if they were themselves still under obedience, keeping the traditions of their

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15 The Shepherd 73.
17 St. Theodore the Studite, Epistles, cited in Hausherr, Spiritual Direction, 68.
18 A translation may be found in G. Palmer, P. Sherrard, and K.T. Ware, trans., The Philokalia: The Complete Text, vol. 3 (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 74-210 (page numbers below refer to this translation).
own spiritual fathers.” This sense of simply continuing another’s work is again an attempt to decrease the spiritual father’s ego and safeguard the ministry. Moreover, this kind of spiritual father “is in a position to advise, not everyone, but at least those who seek him out voluntarily and who question him by their own choice; for he has learned things in their true order. It is because of his humility, and because his questioners seek him out voluntarily, that what he says is stamped on the soul of his listeners.” This insistence on only advising those who explicitly and honestly ask for guidance is important. It reflects, St. Peter explains, the humility of Christ, who “does not constrain anyone.” This is the same point made by Sts. Barsanuphius and John.

St. Peter of Damascus goes on to warn against directors who try to elicit conversation from their disciples: “the disciple, forced by his supposed teacher to speak against his will, feels ashamed and tells lies, pretending that he wants to do good; and the teacher also acts deceitfully, flattering his disciple in order to discover what is hidden in his mind, and in general employing every kind of trick and speaking at length.” The desire to initiate or take the first step in the process of spiritual guidance, and to speak verbosely about spiritual matters is a dangerous step according to St. Peter, and puts spiritual guidance on a track alien to the Christian tradition:

We should not, out of self-esteem, presumptuously teach those who do not express the wish to hear us either through their actions or through their fervent faith. While we are still subject to the passions we should not do this even if we feel we have the authority to do so. Rather, as the fathers have said, unless questioned by the brethren we should not say anything by way of giving help, so that any benefit is a consequence of their own free choice. Both St. Paul and St. Peter followed this principle (cf. Philem. 14; 1 Pet 5:2); and St. Peter adds that we should not lord it over the members of our flock but be an example to them...Similarly, it is said in the Gerontikon that unless questioned by the brethren the fathers said nothing that might contribute to the soul’s salvation; they regarded unsolicited advice as vain chatter. This is quite right; for it is because we

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20 A Treasury of Divine Knowledge: On Building Up the Soul Through the Virtues, 183.
21 A Treasury of Divine Knowledge: On Building Up the Soul Through the Virtues, 183.
22 A Treasury of Divine Knowledge: The Great Value of Love and of Advice Given With Humility, 185.
think that we know more than others that we speak unbidden. And the more we are guilty of this, the greater the freedom before God we assume we possess, although the closer the saints draw to God, the more they regard themselves as sinners, as St. Dorotheos says; they [the saints] are astounded by the knowledge of God that they have been granted and are reduced to helplessness.”

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We have seen in a broad way that the Eastern Christian tradition has attempted over the course of its history to promote safeguards against the temptations of power inherent in the ministry of spiritual direction. These safeguards include some or all of physical isolation, a spirit of self-sacrifice, meekness rather than anger, compassion rather than harshness, the need for the director’s own experience of obedience, and the director’s placing himself below the disciple. These are all instances, in the end, of humility, which serves as the guiding virtue for the protection of this inspired ministry.

This ministry continues, by the grace of God, to this day, despite the atrocities of some who usurp it for their own ends. Such usurpation sadly continues as well, as Fr. Alexander Schmemann knew only too well. But to dwell on the miracle of its continuing presence in our broken world, and to fight for the preservation of this miracle, seems a better task to undertake than to be preoccupied with the ugliness that can occur. At the same time, a warning must remain against the gravity of abusing this ministry, an abuse rightly equated by Fr. Alexander with the power of the antichrist. Let me end, then, with a word from St. Peter of Damascus on this matter:

St. John of Damascus says that he who brazenly tries to assume this status [of spiritual father] of his own accord is condemned. For if those who shamelessly assume high office without royal authorization are severely punished, how much more so are those who audaciously take charge of what is God’s without receiving His call? This is especially so if out of ignorance or pride they think that such an awesome task involves no danger of condemnation, imagining that it will bring them honor or ease, and not realizing that they will rather be required, when the moment comes, to enter into an abyss of humility and death for the sake of their spiritual children and their enemies. For this is

23 A Treasury of Divine Knowledge: The Great Value of Love and of Advice Given With Humility, 186.
what was done by the holy apostles—who were to the highest degree compassionate and wise—when they taught others.\textsuperscript{24}

Spiritual direction, in order to be Christian, must pre-eminently reflect the humility and self-giving love of the Master, Christ himself. This is the simple lesson against the temptations of power that the Church has bequeathed, and must continue to bequeath, to her spiritual directors.

\textsuperscript{24} A Treasury of Divine Knowledge: Spurious Knowledge, 196.
“The Limits Now Fixed”: Appealing to Authority in the Trullan Canons

Seraphim F. Danckaert

The Council in Trullo has shaped the canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church in powerful ways. It was summoned to bring discipline to many aspects of church life, and its canons therefore address liturgical, pastoral, administrative, and ethical issues. Perhaps even more significantly, its second canon confirmed the corpus canonum that we have come to know as authoritative in the Orthodox tradition.¹

For these and other reasons, a number of recent publications have focused on Trullo.² Few, however, have examined a particularly unusual characteristic of the Trullan canons: Unlike the majority of earlier canonical legislation, the canons promulgated at Trullo are full of quotations from Scripture, the Fathers, and previous canonical sources. This noticeable departure from previous models of canonical composition reflects a larger trend in theological writing and discourse—a trend with significant implications for the Orthodox understanding of authority.

For several generations, especially after the dominant example of St. Cyril of Alexandria, Christian theologians had noticeably increased their dependence upon and quotation from patristic authorities in addition to Scripture itself. Charismatic authority or ecclesiastical office alone were not enough to establish orthodoxy. One also had to justify theological claims by appeal to a panoply of recognized authorities, specifically by direct quotation from well-known Church Fathers.

This paper traces the growth of that trend and its influence on Trullo’s canons, and it will examine some of the larger theological issues implicit therein. The Trullan fathers believed their canonical decisions were dependent upon a clearly defined, even “fixed,” body of textual

¹ For more on this see D. F. Wagschal, The Nature of Law and Legality in the Byzantine Canonical Collections 381-883. (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 2010), 68-70. Also P. Menevisoglou, Historike Eisagogi eis tous Kanonas tes Orthodoxou Ekklesias. (Stockholm, 1990), 73-83.
authorities, which should be the source of adjudicating theological, ecclesiastical, and even pastoral matters. This understanding would have long-lasting influence on the Orthodox Church.

The Background

Texts play an important role in Christian theology and practice. The earliest Christians composed theological works, sent each other letters, compiled those letters into collections, and disseminated those collections throughout the known world. They read, copied, quoted, and shared these texts with a dedication quite unlike most other religious groups of the time. They were, in the words of Jan Bremmer, “a textual community.”

It might be even better to say that they were an *intertextual* community. That is, early Christians continued to write new theological texts that were shaped by Scripture, littered with allusions to it, and filled with quotations from it—and, in the process, brought shape to the canon of Scripture itself. The New Testament quotes the Old with regularity, the author of Second Peter is a reader of Paul, and the Church Fathers of the first centuries rely heavily on Scripture from both Testaments throughout their works. Just a few examples from the second century: Polycarp’s *To the Philippians* is a veritable treasure trove of Scriptural quotation, especially from parts of the Pauline corpus; the *Epistle of Barnabas* with its focus on the Old Testament; and the works of Irenaeus of Lyons with their careful and Christocentric reading of both Old and New Testaments. It is impossible to list all in the space of this paper, but the trend continues throughout the patristic period.

In the initial centuries this intertextual practice focused almost exclusively on what we now call Scripture. The earliest Christian writers make no mention of “Fathers” in the sense that we now employ the term and have no need to quote them. But with such a strong intertextual impulse engrained in Christian experience, this could not stand for long. In the fourth century, we find the Philokalia of Origen and, in the wake of the Nicene controversy, a growing use of the term “Fathers” for those

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4 See 2 Peter 3:16.
bishops who had promulgated the *homoousion* or were otherwise properly orthodox in their teaching and writing. St Basil the Great, for example, appeals to the “tradition of the Fathers” in defending the *homoousion* as well as the divinity of the Spirit.7 In *De Spiritu Sancto*, Basil castigates those who seek written proof of the “unwritten tradition of the Fathers.”8 The Fathers follow “the sense of Scripture,” and thus they are in agreement with his own understanding.9 Despite this protestation, Basil concludes his argument with a brief analysis of the specific patristic authorities who agree with his position, and even quotes their “very words.”10

This strategy reached new heights when St. Cyril of Alexandria, during his polemic against Nestorius, realized that he could very easily undermine Nestorius’ credibility through a little textual data mining. Many respected Fathers had used the term “theotokos” in preceding generations, so Nestorius’ refusal to do so was a demonstrable violation of tradition. All Cyril had to do was produce some quotations from the holy Fathers—an easy task since his great predecessor, Athanasius, used the term “theotokos” in *Contra Arianos*.11 This simple act (a father quoting the Fathers to win a theological argument) started a pervasive practice with long-standing implications.12 Eventually, bishops, theologians, and ecclesiastical partisans would compile numerous *florilegia*, special collections of quotes from various Scriptural and patristic sources, often focused on a particular subject. These documents became essential ammunition in all doctrinal disputes.13 They would be circulated, collated, referenced, and even, in some case, promulgated by Ecumenical Synods as part of their *Acta*.14 In fact, it seems there could

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7 For an example of appealing to the authority of the Nicene Fathers in defense of the *homoousion*, see *Epistle* 52.1.
8 *De Spiritu Sancto* 10.25.
9 *De Spiritu Sancto* 7.16.
10 *De Spiritu Sancto* 29.72.
11 See P.G. Migne, 77, 13b for Cyril’s of the term “holy Fathers” and his appeal to Athanasius.
14 For a detailed study of the relevant *florilegia* in this period see A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, vol. II, 1 (Herder: Freiburg, 2004), 58-88. For their use in Ecumenical Synods see Alex Alexakis, *Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115 and Its*
hardly be a synod of bishops convened *without* a scroll or codex of patristic and biblical quotes near at hand.

Clearly, the nature of theological discourse had entered a new phase. By the time of Ephesus and Chalcedon, one could no longer merely quote Scripture. Nor was it sufficient to speak in abstract terms of a “canon of truth,” or appeal to the authority of apostolic tradition, the holy Fathers, or any other kind of tradition, be that oral or liturgical. Such things were necessary but not sufficient. One also had to go to the written patristic sources—at least those contained as excerpts and snippets in *florilegia*, *catenae*, or even *epitomai*.  

*The Case of the Canons*

Such is the context. Despite the development described above, one thing is constant: The intertextual impulse. Theological writing and even spoken theological dialogue (e.g. in conciliar debates) had to demonstrate its continuity with the received textual authorities of the past. This meant quotation and plenty of it. And, yet, when we look at the texts of the early canons, we find a startlingly different picture. In contrast to the other Christian literature produced before or during the fourth and fifth centuries, there are relatively few Scriptural quotations in the synodal canons—in many, none.  

There are even fewer quotes from the holy Fathers.

There are, however, signs of intertextuality within the nascent canonical corpus. Among the canons of Nicaea, for example, there are several that appeal to “the ecclesiastical canon,” sometimes considered to be an oblique reference to earlier disciplinary legislation. Whether or

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17 Nicaea 2 refers to practices that “have been done contrary to the ecclesiastical canon;” Nicaea 9 speaks of a person “acting contrary to the canon;” Nicaea 10 speaks of lapsed or immoral clergy who will not “be admitted under the ecclesiastical canon.” It is not entirely clear that these are actually references to specific canons, as the later Byzantine commentators assume. See D. Salachas, *Il Diritto Canonico delle Chiese orientali nel primo millennio* (Rome: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1997), 27. The word “canon” did not
not these references invoke specific texts is a matter of some debate, but the Nicene canons’ comparative lack of quotation in general is still intriguing. Did the Nicene fathers feel there was no need in most cases to specify their source or quote its words because the texts in question were known and accessible to all? Or does “canon” mean something entirely different to the Nicene fathers than it does to us today?18 Answering these questions is beyond the scope of this paper, but one thing is clear: The Nicene fathers understood their present-day authority as something called to reconfirm and uphold that which had been received, not a license for arbitrary innovation.

This was the basic understanding of teaching authority in the Church, which meant that calling an assembly of Bishops an “Ecumenical Synod” did not always convince everyone that the assembly in question was, in fact, representative of the tradition. More effort had to be expended on proving legitimacy and demonstrating continuity with the past, and, sometimes, more emphasis had to be placed on the authority of the duly constituted synod. By the fifth century, for example, the fathers at Ephesus were so emphatically convinced of their own synodal authority that Ephesus 6 condemns “any person who should wish to alter in any way whatsoever anything that has been enacted.”19 It is hard to be more emphatic that that!

In the context of the exegetical and textual arguments between Cyril and Nestorius, this indicates an important realization. The fathers at Ephesus are not only concerned about their synodal authority in the present; they are equally concerned about their textually-represented authority in the future. They want obedience now and continued deference in the years to come. This desire reflects what was by that time an obvious reality: Canonical and synodal texts themselves, just like Scripture and the Fathers, were authorities worthy of quotation and necessary for determining truth. Tampering with statements of faith from Ecumenical Synods would be tantamount to tampering with Scripture. We see evidence of this growing awareness in other Ephesian canons:


18 For a masterful examination of this see H. Ohme, Kanon ekklesiastikos: Die Bedeutung des Altkirchlichen Kanonbegriffs (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1998). Ohme says the Nicene fathers use “canon” to mean the “embodiment of all that is authoritative and normative in the Church,” (576).

19 D. Cummings, tr., The Rudder (Chicago: The Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957), 229.
Ephesus 7 forbids anyone to “write” a faith other than the Nicene one, and Ephesus 8 includes a procedure for how its own text should be promulgated and used: Copies of the canon will be issued to the bishops that need textual assistance in securing their rights at home.

All of the above are examples of the in-breaking power of text, allusion, and quotation in the canons, as well as the growing emphasis on the authority of the Ecumenical Synod, but, in general, it is striking how little the canons from the early Ecumenical Synods reflect the larger literary trends of their time. The Trullan canons, however, are filled with appeals to textually received authorities: quotes from Scripture, from the Fathers, and quite a few quotes from other canonical sources. This latter feature is particularly striking. Some canons have three or four quotes, and some seem to be intentionally structured to include at least one quotation from both scriptural and patristic sources (and, occasionally, also a canonical text for good measure).

Based on what came before Trullo, this seems to be an innovation. Why the change? Several reasons: The general explosion of florilegia and catenae in popular use and theological debate; the intentional manufacture and use of these documents in synodal settings, including during the monothelete debates at Constantinople III just a few years prior; and, as far as the quotation of canonical sources, documents like the Syntagma of St John Scholastikos, which made canonical texts more readily available for several generations leading up to Trullo, and also created a greater sense of an identifiable canonical corpus that was not limited to only those Ecumenical Synods approved by Justinian I. Some of these ingredients were present already at Ephesus and Chalcedon, but the intervening centuries had allowed the spices to penetrate to the bone, and we cannot overestimate the influence of canonical syntagma in advancing that process. The Trullan fathers had never known a Church that met regularly in synod and then issued canons. They knew a Church in which clergy consulted collections of canons, many of which contained a variety of sources, including secular laws and letters written by Church Fathers. In short, they experienced

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20 This implies that the canons are, indeed, a distinct genre (or set of genres).
canons as texts of varying genres from the distant past, promulgated by ancient authorities, and the documents that contained those authorities’ texts could sometimes blur the distinction between synodal canon and patristic writing.\textsuperscript{22}

One further reason deserves mention: The Fathers at Trullo had no opportunity to speak on dogmatic matters. Bishops had used \textit{florilegia} at all the most recent Ecumenical Synods, so the bishops at Trullo must have brought along the tools of the trade. Once there, however, canonical matters were all there was to discuss, so with the debate engaged and the texts ready at hand, a modified kind of canonical composition was born, one just as rife with quotation and just as concerned with the textual reception of recognized authorities as all other Christian genres had been for some time.

\textit{Some Trullan Examples}

Turning to Trullo’s canons, we can see the results of this approach. Trullo 16, 29, and 32 all examine actual, specific disputes over the interpretation of recognized textual authorities. In other words, they exist solely because of a dispute over a text. Trullo 16 addresses why there is an apparent contradiction between words in the Acts of the Apostles and a canonical text from the synod of Neocaesarea. The Trullan Fathers’ solution is to quote the entire relevant passage in Acts, and then to append an interpretative paragraph by St John Chrysostom. Quotation solves the matter. Trullo 32 responds to the Armenians, who had put forward a passage from St John Chrysostom as justification for their using wine only in the chalice, not wine mixed with water. The canon quotes this supposed Chrysostomic prooftext in full, then puts forth an alternative interpretation, then reinforces its argument by referencing the teachings of St James and St Basil, who “delivered to us directions for the mystical sacrifice \textit{in writing}” in the received text of the Liturgy, and, finally, just in case that is not enough, Trullo 32 ends with a relevant quote from the canons of Carthage.\textsuperscript{23} The problem begins in textual quotation and ends there as well, having examined and appealed to several different types of textual authorities. This emphasis on both Scripture and patristic writings continues in Trullo 68, which forbids the


vandalism of books containing either Scripture or “holy and approved preachers and teachers.”24 And Trullo 66 makes it clear that all, not just the elite or clergy, should read the Scriptures. These are the decrees of a Christian culture steeped in sacred texts and writings.

For our purposes, however, Trullo 19 is one of the most important. It reveals that attention to the recognized corpus of orthodox texts is not a matter merely for gatherings of bishops; it is to be the focus of all in positions of authority.

It behooves those who preside over the churches, every day but especially on Lord’s days, to teach all the clergy and people words of piety and of right religion, gathering out of holy Scripture meditations and determinations of the truth, and not going beyond the limits (horous) now fixed, nor varying from the tradition of the God-bearing fathers. And if any controversy in regard to Scripture shall have been raised, let them not interpret it otherwise than as the lights and doctors of the church in their writings have expounded it, and in those let them glory rather than in composing things out of their own heads, lest through their lack of skill they may have departed from what was fitting.25

This is the heart of the matter, clearly and explicitly stated: All those with authority in the Church must interpret Scripture from within the tradition of the holy Fathers, a tradition whose “limits” are now fixed. Of course, this assumes that the canon of Scripture is determined, the “limits” of orthodoxy are clearly known, and the means of explaining any theological or moral quandary is to be readily found in the received authorities from the past. Practically speaking, this also assumes that an average bishop or priest will have access to a Bible and at least some kind of collection of recognizably authoritative patristic texts, perhaps in the form of a florilegium.

In spirit, this is quite similar to the previous sources we have examined, from Nicaea to Basil to Ephesus. But Trullo 19 is a fuller expression of the principle, founded upon a stronger sense of the limits of the received corpus that constitutes the tradition. In fact, Trullo 19’s language is rich with meaning. Its wonderful phrase, “not going beyond the limits now fixed” (me parek Bainontas tous ede tethenous horous), conjures up several images. Originally, an horos was a kind of boundary.

24 Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils, 396.
25 Percival, The Seven Ecumenical Councils, 374.
stone, a marker that a land owner would place at the edge of his property. Taken this way, Trullo 19’s imagery is quite clear: Those in authority should not travel into the land of foreign doctrine. They must stay within the sheepfold of the Church, not straying beyond its fence, a fence that is clear for all to see. Horos also has many other meanings, all pregnant with implications. It could mean a rule, standard, or even a canon. This might suggest a very indirect appeal to the canonical tradition itself. Most significantly, an horos could refer to a definition or statement of faith issued by a council. Of all the more inventive options, this seems the most likely, although the multiplicity of meanings adds to the power of the phrase: Those in authority should not transgress any of these signposts. Taken this way, Trullo 19 calls for a unity of Scripture, tradition, patristic writings, canonical discipline, and dogma as promulgated by Ecumenical Synods. All of these elements, received from the past, have the ability to answer the questions of the present. All of these elements constitute the one tradition. And all in authority today should be steeped in and appeal to this one corpus of authorities instead of “composing things out of their own head.”

That which Trullo preached, it had practiced. Trullo 1 and 2 both seek to establish the legitimacy of the Trullan fathers themselves as true inheritors of the tradition. Trullo 1 is a magisterial summary and impassioned affirmation of the doctrinal decisions of the previous six Ecumenical Synods. It is no accident that this canon is first. Likewise, it is no accident that the Trullan fathers use a particularly strong verb in their affirmation of the tradition. Having offered the doctrinal summaries, Trullo 1 reaches the moment of legislative action:

In a word, we decree (thespizomen) that the faith of all the men who have distinguished themselves in the Church, having become shining lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, should firmly prevail and remain unshaken until the end of time, together with their God-imparted writings and teachings.26

As D. Wagschal observes, the verb thespizomen is “the most common legislative term in the Justinianic material, and not uncommon in Leo” and, yet, it only appears in the canonical corpus four times.27 This is a

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27 Wagschal, *The Nature of Law*, 157. One of the other four times occurs in Trullo 8, but here it is a passive participle whose agent is the holy fathers themselves. In other words, in Trullo 8 the Trullan fathers ascribe supreme legislative authority to the holy fathers of
verb that carries with it an implicit sense of unshakeable authority. It is the verb of imperial decree. Of course, the Trullan fathers may have used *thespizomen* because they had already cycled through all of the more typical options. But the decision to place so powerful a verb in this location, at the point of their own decree, is significant. Their sweeping summary reaches a point of crescendo, and, having recapitulated the breadth of the dogmatic tradition, they are inspired to proclaim—or perhaps witness to—the indisputable authority of that which they have received. But what they have received is not actually limited to the Ecumenical Synods previously described and upheld. Trullo 1 goes a step further and decrees that the teachings and writings of *all* who have shown forth in the Church should remain unshaken. The Trullan fathers receive the tradition, but they do not believe its boundaries are limited to the Ecumenical Synods alone. The ecclesiastical heritage is more than *horoi* and conciliar decrees. It is composed of all of the orthodox teachings and all of the writings in the Trullan fathers’ possession, including the various writings of the Church Fathers, and they feel this expansive understanding of tradition is so important that it should be decreed as binding in the strongest terms possible. The dogmatic teaching of the Church, especially but not exclusively as promulgated by the Ecumenical Synods, is paramount and permanent. It is, in the language of Trullo 19, a limit now fixed.

Having established this, Trullo 2, on the other hand, allows for some tension between continuity and change in the canonical tradition itself. Writings and teachings of patristic luminaries are “decreed” in no uncertain terms, but the canonical corpus is merely given a seal of confirmation, using the verb *episphragizomen*. This is most appropriate. Although many interpreters have assumed that Trullo 2 created or substantially reshaped the canonical corpus, in reality it confirms a list of sources found in canonical collections for some time.\(^{28}\) So, Trullo 2’s main purpose is to demonstrate continuity in canonical matters, as a parallel to the dogmatic faithfulness emphasized in Trullo 1.\(^ {29}\) And, yet, we see that this continuity is not absolute. Several later Trullan canons modify the rulings of the very canonical legislation they had previously received. How is this possible? How can something be sealed and confirmed and then seemingly contradicted? The answer provides

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the past, not themselves. This is also true of Serdica 11, leaving only one other instance, Hagia Sophia 3, to join Trullo 1 in this particular use of *thespizo*.


\(^{29}\) In particular, Trullo 2 strives to exclude the Apostolic Constitutions, a forgery it emphasizes is not part of the traditional corpus.
profound insight into the late antique understanding of tradition and authority.

Let us consider Trullo’s prologue and its first two canons. Upon close examination, it is clear that they are an extended and unified apology, demonstrating intense awareness of the received textual authorities of the past. Many of the manuscripts treat the prologue and first two canons as a distinct section by separating them from canons 3-39 with a rubric. As Wagschal explains:

This gap breaks the introductory complex off from the main body of canons, and reveals the true structure of Trullo as a whole: a century of “proper” canons (3-102) prefaced by the *logos* and two introductory canons.30

Thus, the three parts of the introductory complex are one interrelated apology for the Trullan fathers’ orthodoxy, as well as a demonstration of their legitimacy through comprehensive appeal to the received textual authorities of the past. The prologue itself is uncharacteristically full of quotations from Scripture, underlining the fathers adherence to holy writ; Trullo 1 leaves no doubt that they stand in the line of the Ecumenical Synods and are the inheritors of all orthodox teachers and writings on dogmatic matters; and then Trullo 2 confirms their acceptance of the established canonical corpus. Taken as a whole, then, the introductory complex allows us to reconstruct the Trullan fathers understanding of tradition: Scripture, the Ecumenical Synods, the writings of the Church Fathers, and the canonical tradition. All of these they receive, and they dare not overrule or do away with any of these elements of divine tradition. In fact, they wholeheartedly reaffirm them. Why? So that they may then dare to add to this deposit, having subtracted nothing, even if what they do add (certain canons) may seem to modify that which they had received. In short, the tradition itself is immutable in their mind. Even the canonical tradition, which is not decreed in the same emphatic terms as the dogmatic, cannot be codified or harmonized by an editor’s hand. The tradition can only be confirmed and then added to.

Having established this, the Trullan fathers may then legislate anew, offering the Church one hundred canons (3-102). And, yes, some of these canons may seem to modify the rulings contained in Trullo 2’s corpus, but the Trullan fathers intentionally allow the received legislation to stand side by side with their modifications. Mere consistency is unimportant, especially since actual authority over the tradition itself is

too much for anyone to claim—even an Ecumenical Synod! Thus, the Trullan fathers cannot and will not do away with, harmonize, or amend anything from the tradition, even if the modern situation calls for a different approach.

The most famous examples of this are Trullo 12, which requires bishops to put away their wives, despite the admonition of both Scripture and Apostolic 5, and Trullo 13, which insists that married men may be ordained to the other ranks of the clergy, contrary to the Carthaginian legislation accepted as binding by Trullo 2. While it is certainly possible to explain how Trullo 12 is actually a proper use of economy, the modern person might still ask about these and other examples in the Trullan legislation: If something is outdated or contradictory, why not omit it from the corpus? Why accept Carthage only to overrule it? Shouldn’t law reflect the reality of the present time and only that? What is the value of preserving vestigial or contradictory parts? This sort of thinking is simply foreign to the sensibilities of the Trullan fathers. As J. Haldon has observed about the generations before Trullo, even secular legal activity was “not directed at emending laws to conform to reality, but rather at emending reality to conform to the inherited legal-moral apparatus.”

The textual authorities of the past reign supreme.

**Conclusion**

The Trullan canons have much to tell us about the patristic understanding of text, authority, and tradition. They receive, enact, and, in some cases, modify many aspects of Christian culture in late antiquity. As texts, they are the product of a centuries-long impulse to demonstrate orthodoxy and justify legitimacy through direct quotation of a full range of recognized authorities: Scripture, the Church Fathers, the Ecumenical Synods, and, ultimately, the canons themselves. In general, the Trullan fathers are concerned with the unflinching recapitulation of tradition. And, yet, while the boundaries are fixed, there is room for growth. Trullo is beholden to the past, not bound by it. But being “beholden” entails a scribal-like impulse to preserve, a reverence for past authorities that values compilation over codification, and a deep-seated conviction that one should seek to conform the present to the standards of the past before allowing new approaches in a changed context.

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In many ways, this understanding has been the dominant Orthodox approach even up to the present day. No medieval or modern effort in the Orthodox world has successfully codified the canonical tradition, and, in general, Orthodox today often judge the present-day exercise of ecclesiastical authority against a textualized past. We look to the same set of sources, even though our collections are expanded by time and greater access. When in need of guidance, we often search out ancient authorities: Nicaea or even Trullo itself. But the living pastoral authority is not, in fact, fully circumscribed by these texts. Said another way: Every text requires interpretation and application to the present day, lest we fall into disorderliness “through ignorance and neglect.”33 The process of interpretation and application, guided by the Holy Spirit, is the present and tangible locus of authority. Nevertheless, it is indeed an authority that, like Trullo’s, is fundamentally beholden to confirm the tradition it has received.

33 From Trullo’s prologue, addressed to the Emperor, which explains why the bishops have been gathered to issue new legislation.
The Relationship between Bishops, Synods, and the Metropolitan-Bishop in the Orthodox Canonical Tradition

Alexander Rentel

Beginning with St. Basil the Great, Orthodox canonists maintain an eye both on the canons themselves and the practice of the Church. St. Basil said towards the end of his Third Canon that it is necessary “to know those things according to the strict rule and those things that are customary.” This two-fold task of a canonist reflects the nature of the canons themselves, which are literary expressions of what the Church considers to be normative. Various Church councils and fathers drafted the canons, which now form the corpus canonum, during the first millennium. The canons however are theological responses to particular problems and in no way comprehensively describe all aspects of Church life. The life of the Church was and is much more extensive. Consequently the vast reservoir of experience that the Church has needs to factor into any canonical activity.

Since the canons are fixed points of reference through their acceptance, they provide the starting point for canonical work. And, as with any text of late antiquity, they require careful reading and explanation. Additionally, because they emerge from within the Church (fathers, councils, etc.), they take their full meaning for the Church only when considered in a broad ecclesial context. All of the tools, the material, and the methods a canonist has at hand are formed and forged by the Church. In this way, the canons are understood as theological formulations and the canonist finds his work as a theologian.

This essay has as its subject the age-old question of primacy in the Church. I examine the relation between the metropolitan-bishop and bishops and the local synod. From the outset, I further admit that I am only looking at this question purely from the perspective of the canons. A broader treatment of this subject is intended and hinted at in various remarks throughout the paper. Such a treatment, I believe, needs to take into account not only the canons, but the liturgical life of the Church, as well as an exploration of the history of the Church in order to see how exactly primacy has been exercised over the centuries and in the diverse settings that the Orthodox Church has found itself sojourning.
Within the Orthodox Canonical tradition, two canons in particular delineate the fundamental tasks incumbent upon all Orthodox bishops and their relationships one to another, Apostolic Canon 34 and Antioch 9:

**Apostolic 34**

The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is first among them and account him as their head, and do nothing of consequence without his consent; but each may do those things only which concern his own parish and the country places which belong to it. But neither let him [who is the first] do anything without the consent of all. For thus there will be unity and God will be glorified through the Lord, in the Holy Spirit.¹

**Antioch 9**

The bishops in every province must acknowledge the bishop who presides in the metropolis, and who has to show concern for the whole province; because all men of business come together from every quarter to the metropolis. Wherefore it is decreed that he have precedence in honor, and that the other bishops do nothing extraordinary without him, (according to the ancient canon which prevailed from [the times of] our Fathers) or such things only as pertain to their own particular parishes and the districts subject to them. For each bishop has authority over his own parish, to manage it with the piety which is incumbent on every one, and to make provision for the whole district which is dependent on his city; to ordain presbyters and deacons; and to settle everything with judgment. But let him undertake nothing further without the bishop of the metropolis; neither the latter without the consent of the others.²

¹ For the sake of simplicity, canon texts will be taken or adapted exclusively from Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Vol. XIV: “The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church. Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees, together with the Canons of all the Local Synods which have Received Ecumenical Acceptance,” ed. Henry R. Percival (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 596. Hereafter referred to as NPNF XIV.

² NPNF XIV, 112-113.
The text of these canons describes the authority of the bishop within his own district, which these canons call parishes (in the modern era alternately called dioceses, eparchies, districts, etc.), their synodal ministry, and their relationship with the first bishop of their local synod. Apostolic 34 frames the question in theological language, and, in relation to the duties of a bishop within his parish, says that a bishop may only do “those things which concern his own parish and the country places which belong to it.” This broad description implies wide latitude to a bishop in the exercise of his ministry within his diocese.

In language more akin to statutory, legal language, Antioch 9 elaborates this definition saying that each bishop has authority in his own district:

1. to manage it with the piety incumbent on everyone,
2. to make provision for the whole district which is dependent on his city;
3. to ordain presbyters and deacons;
4. to settle everything with judgment

A bishop, therefore, according to these canons, fulfills his episcopal ministry within his district by: living a life of piety; doing all things in accordance with the Gospel teaching, the Orthodox faith, and Orthodox Tradition; undertaking the necessary measures, financial, administrative, educational, etc., to assure the functioning of the Church within his diocese; ordaining clergy; and maintaining canonical order, reconciling disputes, considering marriage questions, receiving converts, among other things. While not mentioned explicitly in these canons, it is presumed in the canons that the bishop will also celebrate the divine services. Other canons of the Church speak about the exclusive ministry of bishops to find Churches, Chapels, monastic houses and, by logical extension, other ecclesiastical institutions within the diocese.

The famous canon, I Nicea 8, restates the principle of episcopal authority within his diocese when, in the last line, the canon insists that

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3 1, see also II Nicea 2, 4.
4 1, but see also especially the words of II Nicea 2.
5 1, 2, 4, but see also Apostolic 40, 41; Antioch 24, 25; Chalcedon 26, II Nicea 11; Theophilus 10.
6 3.
7 4, but see also especially II Nicea 1.
8 See especially Apostolic 3, 7, 8 and passim the corpus canonum.
9 Chalcedon 4, 24; Trullo 49.
there should not be two bishops in one city. But the larger context that this canon provides reveals the reason why this is to be so. The chief subject of the canon in fact is not the number of bishops that can or cannot be in a city, but the reconciliation of the Cathars to the Church. The canon directs how they are to be received into “the Catholic and Apostolic Church” and what should be done with regard to fitting their clergy into the local hierarchy once they are received. First the bishop must be sure that the former Cathars will “accept and follow the dogmas of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, in particular that they will communicate with persons who have been twice married, and with those who having lapsed in persecution have had a period [of penance] laid upon them.” The bishop is to receive this assurance in writing. Then the Cathars can be received into the Church, though the canon is not clear on exactly how this happens.

The canon goes on to deal with the thorny issue of how to reconcile the former clergy of the Cathars to local ecclesiastical settings. Presbyters, and presumably deacons and lower clergy, pose no real problem, though they require a laying on of hands by the Orthodox bishop before they can assume their position. Formerly Cathar bishops, though, present a more difficult problem. The fathers of the council were eminently wise and pastoral in their solution and allowed the local bishop a number of options. The formerly Cathar bishop could be given the rank of a presbyter, “unless it shall seem fit to the Bishop to admit him to partake in the honour of the title. Or, if this should not be satisfactory, then shall the bishop provide for him a place as Chorepiscopus, or presbyter.” Finally the canon says that this accommodation is done so as to prevent there being two bishops in the city.

In other words, the canon makes this most basic ecclesiological point in the context of the reconciliation of those outside the Church. This is not by accident, nor a mere afterthought as is often thought. Rather the principle of the one bishop in the one city exactly emerges out of his role as the one who maintains the one true faith. This principle, while not expressed in the canon, can only be culled out of it when considering this canon within the context of the Church’s teaching on the role of the episcopacy. From the earliest days of its existence, the Church has emphasized (and expressed it in diverse ways) the role of the bishop as one who is “rightly teaching the word of truth.” The pastoral epistles insist that the bishop be an “apt teacher” (I Tim 3.2) and that he “must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give

10 Here and throughout the paragraph, NPNF XIV 19-20.
instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it.” (Tit 1.9) Out of this, his role as the one who maintains the true faith, springs everything else that the bishop must do, i.e., preaching, teaching, the administration of his diocese, ordinations, celebrating the services, finding Churches, monasteries, etc. To be sure, throughout the history of the Church, the exact contours of how the bishop has exercised his ministry has changed and developed. Nevertheless, his essential task remains the same.

The canons so far adduced are clear that episcopal authority is exercised within and only within the bishop’s own district. Outside his district, the canons forbid the bishop from acting. In this regard, note that the canons go so far as to insist that a bishop cannot even preach in another district, decreeing the penalty of deposition if this takes place (Trullo 20). Obviously in the modern era this canon is not necessarily followed to the letter, but that does not meant that the spirit of the canon is not worth insisting on, namely, that a bishop cannot pass over to another’s territory and begin exercising pastoral ministry and that each bishop cannot also abdicate his responsibilities. Furthermore, in the exercise of this authority, his actions cannot be challenged as long as they are canonical, which here means not only in accordance to the text of the corpus canonum, but in accordance with the entire life of the Church. The bishop has no right to do as he pleases, but can only act from within the life, the teaching, and the revelation of the Church. Nothing in the canonical tradition exists to promote, encourage or protect behavior recognized by all as immodest, immoral, imprudent, or contrary to the scandalous word of the Cross, because all that the Church is, and consequently, the ecclesiastical good order that the canons protect, centers on fostering the “scandalous” behavior of the Cross, on the acquisition of this wisdom of God. And so in all situations, the Church must look not towards legal satisfaction measured by worldly legal principles, but must remember first and foremost the mission of the Church, to bring all to salvation in Christ. In the words of the canons themselves:

For the whole account is between God and him to whom the pastoral rule has been delivered, to lead back the wandering sheep and to cure that which is wounded by the serpent; and that he may neither cast them down into the precipices of despair, nor loosen the bridle towards dissolution or contempt of life; but in

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11 Cf. Apostolic 14, 35; Ancyra 18, Antioch 13, 16, 21, 22; Sardica 1, 2, 3, 11, 12.
some way or other, either by means of sternness and astringency, or by greater softness and mild medicines, to resist this sickness and exert himself for the healing of the ulcer, now examining the fruits of his repentance and wisely managing the man who is called to higher illumination.\textsuperscript{12}

Furthermore, this episcopal ministry is not absolute even within his diocese. It is conditioned by the Orthodox Christian faith and the Church’s Tradition, and the synodal and hierarchical character of the Church. Hence, the bishop exercises his ministry “with the piety incumbent on everyone” within his diocese but no farther. As stated, he cannot exercise this ministry outside of his diocese, but he must even consider his actions \textit{within} his diocese and be sure not to “do [anything] of consequence” or anything “extraordinary.” These charges of Apostolic 34 and Antioch 9 point to the synodal and hierarchical nature of the Church and insist that anything of consequence, anything extraordinary, anything that impacts the life of the entire local Church, even if it is done by a bishop within his diocese and with the intent that the action is only for the diocese, is to be done only with the consent of the bishop who is first among the bishops of a nation (Apostolic 34).

Thus the principle of the hierarchical Church emerges. The bishop of the principal city of a given territory, the metropolitan-bishop, according to the canons, has as his ministry to show concern for the “whole province,” which would have within it any number of bishops’ districts. This concern that he must show as “first among them” has as its chief character the maintenance of unity of all of these bishops. Anything that would upset this unity falls under the ministry of concern that is to be exercised by the metropolitan. The canons direct the metropolitan to maintain the unity of these bishops two ways: overseeing the election and ordination of bishops, and presiding at meetings of the local synod. The first bishop presides at these meetings and is also charged by the canons with determining the place and time of the meeting and its agenda. Without his presence, synods cannot happen, episcopal elections may not take place; without his consent and confirmation, decisions cannot be taken, elections are null and void.\textsuperscript{13}

In addition to these fundamental tasks assigned to the primate, the canons also enumerate further responsibilities. For example, the primate has the unique responsibility for initiating all investigations of

\textsuperscript{12} Trullo 102; NPNF XIV, 408. 
\textsuperscript{13} See I Nicea 4, 6; Antioch 16, 19, 20; Chalcedon 19; Carthage 13, 73, 76, 77, II Nicea 6.
charges against a bishop. The canons also grant the primate the right of pastoral intervention in the life of a diocese, if the diocesan bishop is involved in canonical irregularity. The canons require that bishops travelling outside of their diocese must first seek approval from the primate. While not fully described in the canons, but emerging out of the basic principle of maintaining the unity of the local Church, the primate further has the task of representing the local Church and the local synod to other local Churches, their primates and synods.

The responsibility laid out in these canons does not however grant a metropolitan bishop absolute power over the local Church. Instead, the canons carefully balance his ministry of concern with the activity of the synod, which is the gathering of bishops of the same given territory in which the metropolitan presides. The canons insist that a bishop do nothing of consequence without the consent of the metropolitan, but he alone may not do anything of consequence without the knowledge of the synod. Thus, the principle of Church synodal becomes clearer. But note that the careful balance the canons establish is between the metropolitan and the synod. With regard to a bishop and the metropolitan, the canons tilt towards the metropolitan/primate. He has the ability to initiate and see things through their process, which is done in coordination with the synod. The synod has no authority to act on its own independent of its metropolitan. In case of a disagreement between a metropolitan and synod, a synod cannot initiate new action to circumvent the metropolitan, but it can introduce a stalemate wherein no activity occurs.

The regular meeting of the bishops of a local Church has a long tradition in the history of the Orthodox Church, having emerged out of occasional and extraordinary meetings of bishops. A biannual meeting is already spoken of in the earliest canonical texts of the fourth century; this principle was regularly reiterated and insisted on by later councils. Canon 8 of the Council in Trullo allows for a slight relaxation of this rule by admitting the possibility of only an annual synod meeting, but only for the extreme reason of “barbarian incursions or other intervening causes.” The holy fathers of these councils thought the necessity of regular synods so great that they considered a bishop’s unexcused

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14 I Constantinople 6; Chalcedon 9; Carthage 19.
15 II Nicea 11.
16 Carthage 23.
17 I Nicea 5, Apostolic 37, Antioch 20.
18 Chalcedon 19, Trullo 8, II Nicea 6.
absence from one grounds for a fraternal rebuke from the other bishops.\(^\text{19}\) And, if a primate fails to summon a synod at the prescribed times, he is liable to canonical sanction.\(^\text{20}\)

The purpose of these synods are manifold, but generally can be summed up with the prudent pastoral management of the local Church. The canons specifically mention that the synods are to concern themselves with the examination of “decrees concerning religion and settl[ing] the ecclesiastical controversies”\(^\text{21}\) or with the possibility that “an inquiry be held to ascertain whether anyone has been expelled from the community because of pettiness or quarrelsomeness.”\(^\text{22}\) The nineteenth canon of Chalcedon puts it quite simply: the synods gather so that ecclesiastical matters can be put right. Within the scope of this oversight, the canonical tradition places the disciplining of bishops squarely within the activity of the synod.\(^\text{23}\)

A dialogue exists in canon law not only between text and practice, but also between the different canonical texts. Engaging with this dialogue requires knowledge of the Church and knowledge of the texts themselves. This reading further prevents a fundamentalist approach that arrives at a canonical answer only through the text or phrase of a canon in isolation. The dialogue is livelier and the task of a canonist requires a more robust engagement with the tradition. Truly, the activity begins with a canon, but moves quickly on to other canons, passing even more quickly on to the life of the Church. The answer arrived at cannot narrowly be construed of as purely legal literature at this point, but rather a theological response to the question at hand.

The relationship between bishops, synods, and their metropolitans could easily devolve into discussions of power, authority, submission, penalty, or sanction if the discussion were left exclusively to a canon or even a group of canons. The life of the Church, the place where God meets man through the revelation of his mysteries, does not allow this. The concepts of episcopacy, synodality, and primacy are all to be worked out with the full engagement of the life of the Church where these words resonate with ministry, unity, and service. The communication here is merely a first step in this engagement, but certainly not the last.

\(^{19}\) Chalcedon 19.
\(^{20}\) II Nicea 6.
\(^{21}\) Apostolic 37.
\(^{22}\) I Nicea 5.
\(^{23}\) Apostolic 74, Antioch 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 22; I Constantinople 6, Carthage 12, 19.
The Theology of St. Cyprian of Carthage: The Unity of the Church and the Role of the Bishop

Theodor Damian

Preliminaries

“I believe in One God…and in One Lord Jesus Christ… and in One…Church, I confess One baptism…”

This is the essence of the Christian faith based on the Gospel's revelation, identical with what Paul said in Ephesians 4: 5-6: “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all of us,” developed and taught faithfully in the whole Christian tradition until today. This specific kind of faith is the solid spiritual framework of the Christian Church and it gives to the Church one of its main characteristics, unity and unicity.

It is appropriate to say here that the problem of the unity of the Church was a main preoccupation for its theologians especially in times when the Church passed through difficult crises threatening its very existence with annihilation, distortion, or corruption. This was the case in the time of Cyprian when the Church had to face heresies, schisms, and persecutions that threatened both the being and the visible unity of the Christian community. That is why, according to the specific circumstances in which he wrote, Cyprian had his own approach to the problem of the unity of the Church, which proves the validity of one important principle in the life of this institution, enduring throughout the whole of Church history and through all generations: unitas in diversitas, its character of unity in diversity.

St. Cyprian of Carthage

St. Cyprian was born in approximately 200 A.D. There is little extant information about his early life. It is known that he was baptized in 246, that he was an admirer and reader of Tertullian, that he was educated to be a rhetorician and that in 248 he became bishop of Carthage.

During his time the Roman emperors intensively and extensively persecuted the Christian people so that Cyprian himself went into hiding
on several occasions and conducted his pastoral activity through letters from a distance. Numerous heresies, schisms, and persecutions were a direct attack on the unity of the Church. This is the reason why this topic is present in most of his letters. Considered a pioneer of the unity of the Church, Cyprian wrote his treatise, *De unitate ecclesiae*, in the context of Novatian’s schism and of other troubles related to the exercise of authority in the Church. The treatise was read at one of the Councils held in Carthage which contributed to the rising of Cyprian’s reputation among contemporary Christians in particular in the context of the persecution of 258 A.D. As it was rightly said, “Cyprian was a leader with evident influence on the other bishops around his jurisdiction, in particular in doctrinal matters.”

In the time of the dramatic tension of this persecution Cyprian wrote: “O, blessed Church of ours, which the honor of the divine condescension illuminates, which in our own times the glorious blood of martyrs renders illustrious! She was white before in the work of the brethren, now she has become purple in the blood of the martyrs.”

The tragedy of the persecution was magnified by intra-church disputes related to authority and its nature in the Church, as well as organizational problems in provincial Christian life. For this reason, Cyprian in his writings insisted greatly on the visible aspect of the unity of the Church, starting with the congregation or, more specifically, the diocese. He insisted also, for the same reason, on the nature of the bishop's authority, his role and place in the Church, and on the importance of discipline in the Christian community in order to maintain the unity of the Church, which, at that time, was a vital issue.

Against this backdrop, Cyprian developed his powerful doctrine of the organic relationship between Church and bishop, which was well expressed in his famous axiom: *Ecclesia in Episcopo, Episcopus in Ecclesia*, or *Ubi Ecclesia ibi Episcopus, Ubi Episcopus ibi Ecclesia*. He also developed doctrine regarding the salvific role of the visible unity of the Church against schismatic tendencies, a concept expressed in the equally famous axiom: *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*. This teaching was not new in the theology of the Church, because Irenaeus, for instance,

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3 “Outside the church there is no salvation/safety.”
wrote along similar lines, but it was Cyprian who developed and consecrated the expression as such.

*De unitate Ecclesiae* is the most important of Cyprian’s works. The same vision of the unity of the Church and divine solidarity in the Church expressed here appears in most of his other treatises and letters, applied to different contexts and situations. In his argumentation Cyprian is very biblical, drawing from significant texts from the Old and New Testaments: Exodus 12:46; Joshua 2:19; Jeremiah 2:13; 23:16-21; Psalm 118:6; Matthew 18:29; John 2:19; I Corinthians 1:10; I Corinthians 11:19; and Ephesians 4:3, among others. He also uses and interprets significant images, like the ark of Noah, the Paschal lamb from Exodus, Rahab, and the dove as symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Although the treatise exists in different versions, with and without specific interpolations, some scholars believe that Cyprian wanted to support the idea of Rome’s international primacy over other Churches. In fact, Cyprian speaks about Peter’s primacy, but not about that of Rome as an episcopal See with jurisdiction over other episcopates. On the contrary, Cyprian insists extensively on the equality, unity, and collegiality of the whole body of bishops in the Church. As Allen Brent wrote, the bishop of Carthage actually stressed the need for unity through the doctrinal and disciplinary consensus of all bishops of the Church. Richard Seagraves observes that because of his strong belief in the equality of all bishops, Cyprian applies the terms *collegia, coepiscopus, and consacerdos*, to all of them.

*The Church and its Unity*

St. Cyprian is not philosophical in his definitions or descriptions of the Church. He speaks from the heart to people who know that they may pay with their lives for their faith. Whereas Irenaeus of Lyon applied the image of Paradise to the Church by saying that the Church is Paradise on earth, Cyprian applied the image of the Mother in his description of the Church. He became well known for the expression: “Whoever does not have the Church as a Mother cannot have God for

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The image is extensively used and at times it alternates with that of Matrix. The image of the Mother used by Cyprian for the Church helps the bishop of Carthage emphasize the risk assumed by those leaving the Church. They die spiritually. Anyone who separates from the maternal womb will not be able to breathe and live. The nourishment of salvation is lost, he writes. The Church, Cyprian says, is the Mother of the people who live in agreement, it is a divine institution, it is essentially a fraternity living in peace and charity, in unity. The unity of the Church is a sacrament.

The unity of the Church comes from the divine strength and coheres in celestial sacraments, that is why, whoever does not hold this unity, does not hold God's law, does not hold the faith of the Father and of the Son, does not hold life and salvation.

That is why, he says, “to break the peace and the concord of Christ (in the Church) is to try to break the unity of the divine Trinity itself.” The Church is dispersed all over the world, but this dispersion does not affect its unity because it is like members living in the unity of one body. The bishops live in many dioceses, but constitute one and the same episcopate. And again, the Church is one, even if it has many communities spread in the world, like the sun which has many rays but one light, like a tree with many branches but one strong and tenacious root, like a spring with many streams but one source. “Separate a ray of the sun from its body of light: its unity does not allow a division of light; cut off the stream from its source and that which is cut off dries up.” The Church shines forth the light of the Son of God and this light is the

8 St. Cyprian, ANF V., 423,-6.
10 ANF V., 322.
12 ANF V., 428, 23.
15 ANF V.,423,7.
16 ANF V.,423,6.
17 A. d’ Alès. La Théologie de St. Cyprien (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1922), 100.
18 ANF V., 333, 24.
19 ANF V., 423, 5.
same anywhere on the earth, because the Lord is one for the whole Church. “The Church broadly expands her rivers, yet her head is one, her source, one; she is one mother, from her womb we are born, by her milk we are nourished.”

20 Even in tribulations and persecution, by the grace of God, the universal Church has proved “to be one and to be able neither to be cut nor divided.”

In order to underline the concept of the unity of the Church, Cyprian relates this unity to that of God, of the Lord, of baptism. He quotes Paul's text in Ephesians 4:4 and says that “there is one body, one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God.”

22 And again: “Since baptism is one, and Holy Spirit is one, the Church founded by Christ upon Peter, by a source and principle of unity, is one also.”

23 Jesus Christ, the Lord, is the bridegroom of the Church and there is only one bridegroom of the Church like the one from the Song of Solomon (Song VI, 8).

24 The Catholic Church is not divided in any way, it is connected and bound together by the cement of bishops and priests who cohere with one another.

25 Harmony is a fundamental characteristic of the Church. This is harmony, concord, and simplicity between flock and shepherd, and also between the people of God, who dwell in one mind and one heart in the house of God.

26 One of the important means of the unity of the Church is charity. Charity, according to St. Cyprian, is solidarity and recapitulation of the divine mystery of the Holy Trinity.

One Church of God in Jesus Christ

The real basis of the Church's unity, in St. Cyprian's thought, is the unity and oneness of God revealed and culminating in His unique Son who founded one Church in the One Holy Spirit. God, Christ, Church, faith—each of them is one. This is the paradigm he uses to understand the people of God joined into a substantial unity of Body through the link, the bond of mutual concord.
also one episcopal chair, originally founded by Jesus' authority on Peter's witness and confession of faith. “There cannot be erected another altar or another priesthood constituted besides this one altar and one priesthood already constituted and erected.”

The Church is profoundly Christological: one Christ, one Church, one divine unity under the authority of the One Lord. Nobody and nothing can separate the Church, the people who faithfully believed in what they received from Christ. If the unity of the Church is the unity of Christ, to break the Church's unity is to violate Christ's love for His Church. Jesus is bound with indestructible links to His Church, therefore, because of the mystery of the relationship Christ-Church, one cannot be in Christ if one is not in the Church. The unity of the Church is symbolized by the coat of Jesus which at the time of the crucifixion was not divided but taken in its entirety. This is a sign in which Jesus declared the sacramental unity of the Church.

Cyprian says that in the Church we need to hear the commandment of Christ, “to stand fast on His words, to learn and to do whatever He taught and did.” To obey the great commandment of Jesus, the love for God and for neighbor, means to be in the unity of the body of Christ. There is no unity without mutual obedience in love. The love of neighbor commended to us by Jesus is a basis for the unity of the Church. Division in the Church comes when people do not seek the source of truth, the Head, the Christ, the Heavenly Master. Even when someone departs from the Church, the Church does not depart from Christ, and it is not going to be diminished for as long as the bishop is there. And not only if one person leaves the Church, but even in the case when “a whole host of proud and presumptuous people may refuse to listen and go away, the Church herself does not go away from Christ.” Cyprian writes in his letter to Puppianus:

30 Selected Epistles, 27.
31 ANF V., 382.
32 ANF V., 422, 4.
33 ANF V., 362.
34 ANF V., 426, 14.
35 ANF V., 325.
36 ANF V., 423, 7.
37 ANF V., 422, 2.
38 ANF V., 427, 15.
39 ANF V., 422, 3.
40 ANF V., 374.
41 Seagraves, Pascentes cum Disciplina, 48.
42 Seagraves, Pascentes cum Disciplina, 48.
Christ founded the fellowship and the unity of the apostles and on that unity and unanimity the Church develops its whole life. The bishop in the Church stands also on the harmony of the apostolic unity. The bishop emphasizes the apostolic character of the Church, but he governs the Church in subordination to Christ, his Master.

Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus

As mentioned above, St. Irenaeus of Lyon wrote that outside the Church there is no salvation/safety, and used this teaching against gnostic heresies: He said that Christ judges all those who are outside the truth, by which he means those who are outside the Church. However, it is Cyprian who constructed a developed doctrine out of this idea. Cyprian is very clear and categorical concerning the vital importance and necessity for the people of God to stay in the traditional apostolic Church. He quotes Matthew 12:30 where Jesus said: “Whoever is not with Me is against Me and whoever does not gather with Me, scatters.” In order to emphasize the duty of people to work for unity, Cyprian also paraphrases Matthew: “He who gathers elsewhere than in the Church of Christ, scatters the Church of Christ.”

Having in mind those who live in fear of persecution and with tendencies for schism and division, Cyprian says that those who depart from the Church rebel against the peace of Jesus and against the appointment and the unity of God. “Can anyone draw water from the Church's fountains who is not within the Church?” Cyprian asks, as if he wanted to indicate that he who would do so would be just a thief.

He speaks syllogistically that the Church has its foundation on its beginning which is God. Therefore whoever does not remain in the unity of the Church cannot pretend to hold the right faith in God. Consequently, only one who is not planted in the commandments of God and His warning can depart from the Church. But to be out of the

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43 ANF V., 429, 25.
44 Selected Epistles, 89, 109.
45 Judicabit autem et omnes eos qui sunt extra veritatem, hoc est qui sunt extra ecclesiam. Irénée de Lyon. Contre les Hérésies IV, 2, Ch. 33, 7.
46 ANF V., 384.
47 ANF V., 423, 6.
48 ANF V., 366.
49 ANF V., 382.
50 ANF V., 422-4.
51 ANF V., 326.
Church is to be dead because only in the Church does Jesus Christ give the grace of eternal life\(^{52}\) and because outside of the Church there is no remission of sins.\(^{53}\)

Therefore, salvation is only in the Church. She is life in Christ, the wisdom and the truth. To be in the unity of the Church is to be in the divine unity. He says that nothing is lawful which is outside the Church and the one who is baptized in the Church maintains in one’s life this truth of the divine unity.\(^{54}\) Cyprian encourages his people: “We who are true to our principle and foundation of one Church (\textit{Ecclesiae unius caput et radicem tenemus}), know and are assured that nothing is lawful out of it.”\(^{55}\) Cyprian does not speak only for the people as a flock, but for bishops, too. He warns that there is no bishop who is not in the Church\(^{56}\) and no episcopate outside of the unity of the body of Christ.\(^{57}\) For Cyprian rank, dignity, or social position do not matter. The word “Christian” cannot be applied to anyone who is not in the Church.\(^{58}\) He specifies that the prayers and sacrifice, even a martyrdom which is not made in the unity of the Church are of no use.\(^{59}\) The quality of the Christian is given by the communion with the whole body of Christ, it is not given by the personal qualities outside of this communion.\(^{60}\)

\textit{Ubi Episcopus ibi Ecclesia}

This is another famous Cyprianic axiom. For him it seems that bishop and Church are two interchangeable realities: the bishop is in the Church and the Church is in the bishop:\(^{61}\) \textit{Ecclesia in episcopo, episcopus in Ecclesia}. The bishops are bishops of God,\(^{62}\) the guardians of the unity of the Church as they are one in a single undivided episcopate.\(^{63}\) That is why those devoid of bishops are not in the Church.\(^{64}\)

However, in the particular situation of the Church in his time,
confronted with heresies, schism and persecutions, as mentioned above, it is obvious that here, even if Cyprian refers also to the sacramental position of the bishop in the Church and to the apostolic and Christological dimension of the episcopacy, he surely refers more particularly to the visible role of the bishop in his Church as a diocese, at the jurisdictional level. The bishop is a source of unity for his diocese and through that and actively preserving the unity with all the body of bishops, he is a factor of unity for the universal Church.

Addressing the lapsed who had abandoned their faith for fear of persecution, Cyprian stresses the unity between bishop and his people who encourage and help each other to stand right in the apostolic faith. He says that “the Church is made up of a people united to their bishop, a flock adhering to their shepherd.” Because the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop, those who want to come to the Church must come to and be with the bishop. The bishop is the link of the unity and the harmony of the heart of God's people and in this sense, Cyprian says, the Church is founded upon the bishop and established upon the clergy and all those who stand fast in the faith. In his attempt to strengthen the position of the bishops in the Church as a factor of unity, Cyprian will relate the presence of the Holy Spirit even to the organizational level of the Church life, saying that this is the Church of the Holy Spirit in which the bishop presides and ministers to his people. Even as the communion of the bishops makes the unity of the universal Church, so also the bishop is in the Church and vice-versa, until the point that even the glory of the Church is the glory of the bishop!

However, the power and authority of the bishop derives not only from God but from the people too. The people have a chief part in the election of the bishops and this is another way in which the unity of the people is expressed in the bishop and the concordia between bishops comprises the real unity of Ecclesia catholica.

Cyprian strongly promotes parity between the bishops found in

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67 *Selected Epistles*, 109.
70 ANF V., 305.
71 Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 102-103.
72 *Select Epistles*, 109.
73 ANF V., 284.
74 *Selected Epistles*, 114.
75 *Selected Epistles*, 114.
agreement and communion with each other. This parity strengthens international Christian unity and does not exclude diversity. Rome, he pleads, as chair of St. Peter, is a Church of principal account and a factor of unity but not of supremacy. Since the episcopate is one and each bishop participates in it indivisibly, being in an equal fellowship, the whole body of bishops are in communion when they teach and initiate actions in the Church of Christ and this is the way in which they remain firmly in “the unity and charity of the Catholic Church.” The bishops are so strongly cemented together in the same life and teaching that if one of them would be inclined to heretical teaching or to do whatever would divide the flock of Christ, all other bishops would step in to help him to stay in the communion of the Church.

It is evident from the presentation of the role and the position of the bishop in the Church, how important the discipline of the Church is in the view of St. Cyprian. This discipline is not only for the people but for bishops and all clergy too. It is another factor of unity and the bishop guard it. Again, unequivocally, Cyprian states that those who do not respect the divine and ecclesiastical discipline cannot abide in the Church. However, discipline does not annihilate personal freedom. Both of them go together harmoniously and the people of God, because of the discipline, are not prevented from having a major role and bringing their essential contribution to the life of the Church.

As Joseph T. Lienhard writes, real authority is not an arbitrary exercise of power since it is generated by truth; that is why it is not an end in itself but a means to achieve freedom. The primal truth in the Christian Church is Jesus Christ who brings about liberation and who is the source of all ecclesial authority. This doctrine is at the center of Cyprian’s understanding of discipline and of the bishop’s role in relation to it in the Church.

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76 ANF V., 263.
77 Selected Epistles, 89.
78 Selected Epistles, 88.
79 Cyprien de Carthage. Unité de l’Église, 185.
80 Select Epistles, 38.
81 Selected Épîstles, 122.
82 Colson, L’Évêque, 14.
83 ANF I., 325.
84 ANF V., 424,10.
85 Joseph T. Lienhard. The Bible, the Church, and Authority. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 75.
Conclusions

It is true that St. Cyprian insists on the bishop’s particular role in the life of the Church, but this is not to say that he had clericalistic and legalistic tendencies, because all his teaching about the importance and role of the bishops in the Church is not to its detriment. Rather Cyprian's teaching in this matter must be seen, as I argued above, in the special context of tensions in which the Church lived; at that time the Church was still growing and spreading among the nations and among non-Christian people and in that situation, for a successful mission, the unity of the Church was a major issue, and even more so as heretical doctrines were still threatening the Church seriously. That is why, for Cyprian, the problem of the Church’s unity was a responsibility and a duty for everybody, shepherds and flock.

As has been rightly said, “Of all the Christian Fathers, Cyprian is the most clear and comprehensive in his conception of the body of Christ as an organic whole.”86 In other words, with a Pauline view regarding the nature of the Church and consequently believing that it is the corporate body of Christ, Cyprian expects that all its members be organically connected to each other, each submitting to the whole and each contributing to it.87

In his doctrine of the relationship between bishop and the Church, Cyprian does not ignore the sacramental dimension of the episcopacy and does not place in lesser importance the position of Christ in the Church. He does give a Christological foundation to his ecclesiology and emphasizes the apostolic character of the Church.

Cyprian’s theology on the Church is also extensively established on biblical foundations. The quotation and interpretation of biblical texts and images abounds concerning his definition of the being of the Church, its source, and the reason for its unity. Cyprian is theocentric and definitely Christocentric in the elaboration of his doctrine on this important topic. The pattern of One God, One Lord Jesus Christ, One Holy Spirit, One baptism, one work of reconciliation appears again and again in his writings. He stresses in different ways the theandric nature of the Church and develops extensively its anthropological aspect, especially when he deals with the problem and crises the Church has to face in the world generally, or in his time and situation specifically.

As a solution to overcome divisions which might appear in the Church of Christ at different levels and in different ways, St. Cyprian

86 ANF V., 263.
87 St. Cyprian of Carthage, On the Church: Select Treatises, 29.

101
proposes and insists on the mutual recognition of any one local community in the other local communities without any exclusive, intolerant, claim that one local Church would be the only, true Church. The idea of collegiality and unanimity of bishops and the rejection by Cyprian of any tendency towards jurisdictional supremacy or ecclesiastical hegemony in the relationship between the communities of faith is consistent with his teaching on mutual tolerance and with his idea that only Christ can claim the exclusivity of oneness and unity as He is the center and the source of the unity of the whole Church.

Cyprian became famous for the accent he put on salvation received within the Church and on the necessity of remaining in the Church and of working in love and obedience for its unity. From all his teaching and activity, Cyprian has been recognized as an outstanding personality who led, taught and influenced the people of his time as well as posterity. Through the courage of his Christian witness until martyrdom and through the dedication of his entire life to the service of the people of God, Cyprian gained a place of great and lasting honor in the life and tradition of the Christian Church.
An Exploration of Hierarchy as Fractal in the Theology of Dionysios the Areopagite

Georgia J. Williams

Eric Perl, in his provocatively titled book, *Theophany: The Neo-Platonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite*, argues not only that Dionysios’ thought is thoroughly Neo-Platonic and fully compatible with Christianity, but that “the Dionysian doctrine of cosmic and ecclesiastical hierarchy is not only consistent with but essential to holy tradition” and that “Dionysius represents precisely those doctrines which are most typical of [Eastern] Orthodoxy in distinction from the west.”

Like it or not, it is not that easy to ignore hierarchy in the sense the Areopagite had in mind in the *Corpus Dionysiacum* (CD). It is Dionysios who is credited with the first use of the word “hierarchy” as an abstract noun and the influence of this abstract notion of hierarchy has been far-reaching and is ubiquitous within society, not only within the Christian churches.

Two related ideas continue to trouble me in the aftermath of reading Perl on Dionysios. The first is the thought that in our natural suspicion of hierarchy we may be sowing the very seeds that will keep us from ever being able to tap the wisdom of the CD. The second, is that if Perl – whose arguments are thorough, persuasive, and beautiful – is correct in both his understanding of neo-Platonic hierarchy and in his assertion that this is the thoroughgoing philosophical backdrop for the Areopagite, then hierarchy isn’t just a convenient construct dreamed up by churchmen that helps us get closer to God if we follow the rules of order, nor is it just a description of the functional workings of the

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1 Eric Perl, “Symbol, Sacrament, and Hierarchy in Saint Dionysios the Areopagite,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39, no. 3-4 (1994): 355-56. Perl goes on to list those doctrines which he believes are most typical of Orthodoxy in distinction from the west: “creation as theophany, grace as continuous with nature; knowledge as union of knower and known; Incarnation and sacrament as fulfillment, not exception or addition; liturgy as the realization of the cosmos; mysticism as ontological union rather than psychological condition; sin as corruption and loss of being, not legalistic transgression; atonement as physical-ontological assumption, not justification or juridical satisfaction; hierarchy as service and love, not oppression and envy.”

2 Abbreviations of Dionysian works used in this paper include: DN- *The Divine Names*; CH- *The Celestial Hierarchy* (Heavenly Hierarchy); EH- *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*; MT- *The Mystic Theology.*
mystical and sacramental life as understood within the Eastern ascetic tradition; though neither of those understandings would be wrong per se, both would be deficient. If Perl is right, Dionysios understood all creation to be Theophany, and hierarchy as the very structure of the entire created order, which reflects the life of God in existence.\(^3\) This hierarchy is not an “optional extra,” and opting out of participation – in so far as this is even possible – is, quite literally, to use the words of St. Paul (Rom 1:25), “exchanging the truth for a lie” and straightforwardly spells physical and spiritual death.

For those of us with anarchist (or at least rebellious) tendencies – for those who have a developed sense of justice and despise hierarchical abuses – the news seems bad. If Perl is right, running away from Church structures won’t solve this problem because you can’t run away from the structure of existence itself. What exactly are we supposed to do? St. Symeon the New Theologian’s solution was to argue that the true bishop is the person with a pure heart (he had monastics in mind)\(^4\); but Dionysios’s fiery 8th Epistle to the monk Demophilos makes it more than clear that he does not see this as a possible solution for the very reason that hierarchical order is violated. Abolish the structure of reality we cannot. Nihilism doesn’t seem a very attractive option, so what are we left with?

As the title of this paper suggests, I believe (with Perl) that despite hierarchy’s bad reputation, a close look at the Dionysian version proves that it is anything but rigid. It appears that both Perl and Yannaras associate rigid, power-abusive hierarchy with a God who is conceptualized as Supreme Being, for in the wake of such a conception we will also always assign higher values to higher ranks within a hierarchy.\(^5\) The alternative, which both Perl and Yannaras are insisting is found in Dionysios, is a conceptual position that God “does not exist” in the sense that the category of existence is not at all applicable to God.\(^6\)

\(^3\) Perl more or less states just this on p.65 of his book: “the concept of hierarchy is at work throughout [Dionysios’s] understanding of reality.”


\(^6\) Is this just fancy wording behind which an even more powerful Supreme Being is actually hiding, as Derrida famously thought? Perl’s detailed description of the Neo-Platonic philosophy underlying Dionysius’s thought shows over and over how important it is to be sure that God does not exist. One succinct example which helps us neatly
In the rest of this paper I want to do two main things. First, I want to lead a whirlwind tour of Perl’s philosophical outline of Dionysios, which is necessary for further discussion of his hierarchy. Second, I want to look at the building blocks of the Dionysian hierarchy, that is – what we are letting ourselves in for by participation, to the degree that we choose to accept the mission. I hope to show that Dionysian hierarchy, although challenging and risky, is also radically dynamic and, therefore, may be constitutive of personal freedom and personal empowerment. As Perl says, “hierarchy as service and love, not oppression and envy.”

I’d like also to suggest that embracing this particular understanding – arguably the original understanding of hierarchy – we may be as well positioned as we possibly could be to escape the grammar of repetitious power abuse in a fallen world.

The Neo-Platonic Philosophy of Dionysios as a Background to Understanding his Hierarchy

Perl spends more than one hundred pages developing a nuanced argument which thoroughly supports much conceptual consistency between Plotinus, Proclus, and Dionysios; for the fine details that prove that picture his book is the place to go. Here my concern is to succinctly highlight elements of that picture which are vital for a discussion of hierarchy.

We have already seen Dionysios’s God cannot be considered to be a being of any sort; in the first section of the first chapter of Divine Names, he tells us that God is “Cause of being to all, but Itself not being, and beyond every essence” (DN 1.1). God is “Nameless” (DN 1.7), and “super-unknown” (DN 1.4). Like Plotinus, Dionysius considers God to answer Derrida comes in the form of Perl’s observation that for classic neo-Platonism (including Dionysius) non-being is said to participate in the Good and that this is another way of saying that the very receptivity of beings, which constitutes them as beings rather than as God, is itself a pure gift of God (Perl, Theophany, 68). This statement would be nonsensical if God were a Supreme Being (equivalent to saying that Being causes non-beings). For Dionysius the Good is a procession of God and the causal determination of all beings as well as non-beings (DN V.1). Without maintaining that God does not exist, we have no way of speaking of God as gift, as overflowing self-sufficient love and therefore no way of talking about him as creator. Far from “beyond being” meaning some sort of super-being, the assertion that “God does not exist” is of foundational importance to Dionysius and the very assertion which makes any meaningful theology possible.

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be beyond being and intelligibility and beyond non-being. It is key, that having posited a God who does not exist, Dionysios is now free not to reject Platonic emanation in favor of a Supreme Being whose goodness lights up his creation. Perl seems to think that emanation (or procession), at least in its neo-Platonic version, has been very often misunderstood, and that it is various inaccurate understandings of Platonic emanation/procession that would create the need for a Christian to reject Platonic procession out of hand.

Contrast the following pictures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect Understandings of Procession</th>
<th>Correct Neo-Platonic Understanding of Procession⁹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Horizontal causation” = cause producing effect within same ontological order (one being producing another being)</td>
<td>“Vertical causation” = eminent cause or determination which is itself the productive activity of the thing it determines¹⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lower level comes to be in the sense of having an origin.</td>
<td>The lower level is dependent upon the higher level for its identity and therefore for its existence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The production of the lower level by the higher level is an event or process.</td>
<td>The higher level itself is the productive activity of the lower level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The demiurge shapes matter into things we can know and sense.</td>
<td>The lower level is an appearance of the higher level (like a man standing before a mirror, provided we understand that in this analogy the mirror image is not an illusion).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different levels are understood only as objects of one and the same mode of a subject’s cognition.</td>
<td>Different levels are understood as different modes in which the same content may be given to cognition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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⁸ “For if all knowledges are beings and have their limits in beings, that which is beyond all being also transcends all knowledge.” (DN 1.4). To be is to be derivative. That which is, is that which can be apprehended by the intellect (Parmenides’s insight). As eminent cause or determination, Good is prior to being and intelligibility (which taken together are ousia); relative non-being (or difference), therefore, is included in the altogether real. Perl discusses these things in detail in chapter 1 of his book Theophany.

⁹ As found not only in Dionysius, but also in Plotinus and Proclus (according to Perl, Theophany, Chap.2).

¹⁰ If, here, there is an accusation of creation by necessity, then it might easily be countered that this necessity could just as easily be called freedom since it is by reason of the One himself that there is no possible alternative. The conventional antithesis between “Neoplatonic necessary procession” and “Christian free creation” makes God himself subject to the categories of Aristotelian logic (so Lossky) (so also Perl, Theophany, 51). God transcends both choice and necessitation and the opposition between them. Perl writes that God himself is the principle of non-contradiction (50).
Image is something that only reminds of us of the archetype. Image participates in archetype and presents it to a lesser form of cognition.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effects are produced by the cause. The cause first exists as itself and then unfolds itself to produce effects.</th>
<th>Effects are contained in the cause. The cause is the enfolded effects and the effects are the unfolded cause. Effects are the differentiated appearance of the unitary determination.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The higher level is a dominant power.</td>
<td>The higher level is eminent and inclusive of the lower level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lower level is submissive and passive.</td>
<td>The lower level is a manifestation and is possessive of the higher level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this presentation it becomes clear why Perl titles his book *Theophany*, even as we are able to understand the way in which Dionysios insists that God is both subject to no names and to all names. Throughout the CD and especially in the *Divine Names* we find statements like these: “the being of all things is in the divinity beyond being” (*CH* 1.4); God is “all things in all things and nothing in any” (*DN* 7.3); God is “the Different” in that he distributes all distinction (*DN* 9.5). For Dionysius, it is the unparticipated God himself in whom all things participate. Dionysios describes the divine processions as “unparticipatedly participated” (in *DN* 2.5, the Greek is *amethektos metexomena*). So the whole of reality is a manifestation of God, or, Theophany, so that at the same time as he maintains that God is beyond being, he also maintains that of God, there is sense perception! In short, as Perl writes, Dionysios negotiates a way between monism (pantheism) and dualism (God over against his cosmos) which is participatory and personal. Yannaras stresses this, too, claiming that true apophaticism engenders this personal and participatory knowledge by making use of both affirmations and negations “in most sweet conjunction” in order to transform conceptual opposition into depiction in images (which are available for participation).  

11 Stated another way using Procline language, “the participated term is the differentiated presence of the unparticipated”, where the unparticipated is the universal determination considered as one and the same and the participated terms are the same universal determination considered as differentiated.  
12 In the sense that: cause = *complicatio* of the effects or “all effects without distinction,” effects = *explicatio* of cause.  
13 Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability*. This particular statement appears on p.69, though this argument is developed for several pages. For Yannaras, it is the infinite depth of the person, and thus of personal relationship that provokes the silence of apophaticism. He contrasts this with the scholastic via negativa, which Yannaras sees as part of the analogical way of knowing God (61). This scholastic via negativa, when compared with what Yannaras calls apophaticism, seems to be the engendering, by means
The table also begins to show how differing understandings of procession radically change the meaning, purpose, functioning, and effect of hierarchy. If we understand procession after the manner of the right hand column of our table, the levels do not make much sense other than with reference to each other. Objectification of any one level is impossible since the levels are defined – quite literally created – by each other. We would also have to say both that God stands outside the hierarchy and that the whole hierarchy of being participates in God. God’s immanence and transcendence are both maintained and even coincide in that God is “not any thing but the power in all things.”

We need also to mention remaining and reversion, as well as procession. The three go together for Dionysios, as for Plotinus and Proclus. While procession is the differentiation or unfolding of effects as different from each other and from their cause, reversion is the relation of an effect to its goal or end (telos). Remaining is undifferentiated containment of effects by a cause. On Perl’s reading, reversion is “not temporally or ontologically subsequent to procession.” “Both [procession and reversion] at once and equally are the establishment of effect as a being.” Essentially, any thing’s way of being itself is reversion to its cause. This picture, too, emphasizes that beings are not passive recipients, and Perl goes so far as to say that “God cannot make beings without their active cooperation...there is something analogous to freedom and personhood at every level of being.” Incidentally, with regard to passivity, for Dionysios evil appears to be equivalent to passivity which again, is a thing’s failure to revert to God or failure to “be” itself. In his discussion of demons Dionysios writes, “in what...do we say they are evil, except in the cessation of the possession and activity of divine good things?” (DN 4.23) And in his discussion of the fall in EH 3.3.11, which is very reminiscent of the final section of Romans 1, man falls “thoughtlessly,” “pitiably exchanges the eternal for the mortal,” and is generally portrayed as being moved by the passions due to his failure to actively participate in his “life-giving yoke.”

of abstractions and denials, of a certain psychological state in which the subject revels in awe of God’s Complete Otherness.

14 Perl, Theophany, 45.
15 Being directed toward its arche (which also makes that arche the thing’s telos!) is what gives a thing its unity, identity, and intelligibility. The beginning of Perl’s chapter 3 handles this point in detail.
17 Perl, Theophany, 42.
18 Perl’s Theophany chapter 4 deals with the question of evil in the CD.
Perl believes that the “cycle” of procession, remaining and reversion particularly underlies chapter 4 of the *Divine Names*, which deals with the names Good, Light, Beauty, and Love (Eros). Here we learn that eminent levels proceed providentially (doing what is good for their consequents) and that manifesting levels’ reversion is their reverential desire and possession of this good. Beauty is “the participation of the beautifying Cause” by beautiful things but “the beautiful and Beauty are not to be divided,” says Dionysios (*DN* 4.7). This is significant because, as Yannaras notes, beauty is “a presence of personal otherness that cannot be objectified” – beauty in each being is God in that being.

Finally the divine name Love (Eros) is where we see most vividly the unity of procession and reversion. Perl says, a “single metaphysical motion, by which all things are, is the full meaning of the divine name Love.”

Fascinatingly, Perl also maintains here that the reason that Dionysios has no use for any distinction between Agape and Eros (*DN* 4.11-12) is that such a distinction depends upon a dualistic vision of God as a being set over against creation, so that there is an opposition between selfish desire for the other and selfless giving to the other. Such an opposition is not possible given the true and creative union between procession and reversion, neither of which (again) can actually exist or be conceived of independently of one another.

It is this particular picture of neo-Platonic procession, as well as remaining and reversion, that forms the backdrop for my thought that Dionysian hierarchy may actually be nothing more than a fractal.

**Hierarchy as Fractal**

So what do I mean by “fractal?” I am not a mathematician, so please forgive this rather poetic definition: I mean a shape that we see repeated in many different instances – a shape that seems to occur over and over and which itself appears to be infinitely irreducible, recurring at each successive level of its existence. These fractal levels, therefore, are

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20 Perl, *Theophany*, 47.
21 Benoît B. Mandelbrot, who coined the term “fractal,” defines a fractal in the following way: A geometric figure or natural object is said to be fractal if it combines the following characteristics: (a) its parts have the same form or structure as the whole, except that they are at a different scale and may be slightly deformed; (b) its form is extremely irregular, or extremely interrupted or fragmented, and remains so, whatever the scale of examination; (c) it contains “distinct elements” whose scales are very varied and cover a large range.” (*Les Objets Fractales*, 1989, 154).
obviously interrelated and participate in the same sort of “grammar” vis-à-vis each other in such a sense as to literally be in some way constitutive of each other, both downwards and upwards within the fractal – the latter could be described as feedback, and truly does affect the fractal as a whole. The algorithm that explains the interrelation between different levels is complex and non-linear with a certain degree of freedom built in; therefore growth and development are not entirely predictable – it seems scientists actually think of fractals as sort of a mid-point between randomness and predictability. So there are obvious affinities with our right-hand-column hierarchy, above. In fact, you could precisely say that higher fractal levels are eminent and inclusive of lower fractal levels and lower fractal levels are manifesting and possessive of higher fractal levels, which is the language Perl uses to describe Dionysian hierarchy.

Now because fractals are mid-points between randomness and predictability, because they incorporate a degree of freedom, and because of the intense and dynamic interrelationships between fractal levels, fractal becomes an appealing word to use to refer to Dionysian hierarchy, which seems to have all these elements and to be “built” of moments of relationship that constitute instances of creative power being released. There is a recurring image used by Dionysius, that of the mirror.22 Creatures assimilated to the life of God – who are living according the shape of the life of God – are “spotless mirrors.” Light reflected in one mirror is immediately magnified in a host of other mirrors throughout the multi-dimensional, vital organism that is reality, and in this way we truly create and are truly co-workers (synergoi) with God himself.

By this description it begins to look as if participation in hierarchy is the beginning of empowerment for anything and everything, independent of level. I am struck by the fashion in which such a picture could explain the effectiveness of prayer, or the effect of mitzvah – of doing the commandment of God.23 Perl says, for instance, that in

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22 E.g. at CH 3.2, CH 9.3, DN 4.22.
23 For this latter insight on doing the command of God I am indebted to the brilliant Jewish scholar, Dr. Jon Levenson, who writes in his book Creation and the Persistence of Evil (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988), 46, “...divine and human integrity are neither identical nor separable. Both are ultimately real, but proximately frustrated. It is in moments of obedience to God’s commandments that the ultimately real becomes available in the present order. It is in those elusive but ever available moments that the deeply flawed present is forced to yield to the perfect future. And it is in this idea of a multileveled act of unification – unification in God, in creation, and in the human self – that we find the deep root of the profound theology of the mitzvah as a theurgic act...it is the mitzvah that effects integrity throughout all tiers of reality and enables the life-enhancing divine energy to flow freely and without inhibition.”
hierarchy as conceived of by Dionysius “every being has an active role not only in its own production, but in the production of all things.”

Fr. Alexander Golitzin, who has written eloquently and extensively on the Areopagite, agrees with Fr. Georges Florovsky’s assessment that Dionysios is “a contemplative and a liturgist.” I believe that the shapes which are recurrent as the “building blocks” of Dionysian fractal-hierarchy support the assumption that he was a “liturgist.” I say this after reflecting on a recent and brilliant doctoral dissertation which analyzes Great Week and Bright Week – the heart of Orthodox liturgy.

In his dissertation, Timothy Patitsas, now the professor of Ethics at Hellenic College Holy Cross, uses the tools of complexity theory to analyse the heart of Eastern Orthodox liturgy. This groundbreaking approach allows him to capture much “relational truth” inherent in liturgy that usually goes entirely unnoticed by us moderns and post-moderns. Patitsas discerns a small number of recurring shapes that underpin Orthodox liturgy – all of them resident within one simplex shape – the anointing of Christ in dual aspect as king and sacrifice. It seems to me that these are the same shapes we find in the Dionysian structure of reality – his hierarchy, his fractal – which must also have been liturgically discerned. As Patitsas says when referencing the origin of these shapes in basic Trinitarian theology, the presence of these shapes “needn’t have been planned, but is the work of the Holy Spirit...if Great Week looks the way I surmise it does, it must be because the God it glorifies looks the same way and wills the Week to reveal him.”

The same argument could be made of the entire created order.

Christ’s Anointing, and Christ’s Anointing Shared with Us

I think it is ironic that Luther (and more recently others, like Rorem and Wesche) have maintained that the cross is not very visible in Dionysios, because the basic “shape” that is his hierarchical building block – the power of the hierarchy (which is, in fact, identical with the

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26 The full title of the dissertation, which is available from UMI, is *The King Returns to His City: An Interpretation of the Great Week and Bright Week Cycles of the Orthodox Church*.
27 Much more detailed evidence for the shapes is available, especially in chapters 1 and 6 of Patitsas’s dissertation, *The King Returns to his City*.
28 Patitsas, *The King Returns to his City*, 81.
hierarchy itself) – is *what Christ does*, given that, as Dionysios says, he is the “source and perfecting of all hierarchies.” (*EH* 1.2) And the way Dionysios describes *what Christ does* is to depict Christ sharing his own power or energy – his own anointing – with creation, through the Church.

First we need to look at what Dionysius himself says about hierarchy. He calls it “a sacred order and science and operation, assimilated, as far as attainable, to the likeness of God...with a view to the Divine imitation.” (*CH* 3.1) He tells us its purpose is “the assimilation and union with God” and that Divine hierarchy “perfects its own followers as Divine images, mirrors most luminous and without flaw...devoutly filled with entrusted radiance.” (*CH* 3.2) The hierarchical vocation, he says is “what is more Divine than all, [to become] a fellow-worker with God.” (*CH* 3.2) We know there are multiple hierarchies, for “every Hierarchy is an unswerving devotion to the divine imitation of the Divine Likeness” (*CH* 7.2) and that the head of all hierarchies (or one might say the enfolding of all these hierarchies into one) is Christ whom Dionysios calls “the source and perfecting of all hierarchies,” (*EH* 1.2) as we have already said.

Interestingly, in the explicit definitions of hierarchy given by Dionysios there is actually no mention of rank at all. Hierarchy does appear to be a “power structure” of sorts, but much more a living organism that we tap into rather than a system of ranks.

**(Simplex) Shape No.1 – Christ’s Unique Anointing in the Holy Spirit**

There is another incredibly curious thing about “our Hierarchy” as Dionysius calls it. Just as in the case of the celestial hierarchy, our hierarchy is made up of three groups of three – three triads. The curious thing is that while roles/vocations/people do in fact make up the elements of the two lower triads of our hierarchy, the three elements in the top triad are liturgical rites: the rite of illumination (baptism and chrismation), our direct participation in Christ’s anointed life (Eucharist/synaxis), and the rite of preparation of Myron for all sorts of anointing.

I think the surprise appearance of an entire chapter (chapter 4) of *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* dedicated to the preparation, properties and use of Myron/chrism can be explained quite simply. Especially in chapters 9-11 of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysios indicates that often the third element is the “revealing” element within a triad and the one that

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29 “Our hierarchy” is the subject of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy.*
corresponds to processional energy that passes on in a revealed way what is possessed and manifested within that triad, to whatever is subsequent. I would argue, then, that the positioning of Myron as the third element of the first triad of our hierarchy directly associates us with Christ’s own anointing in the sacrificial as well as the victorious aspects. This last point is driven home by the positioning of a large section about the consecration of the altar with Myron at the end of chapter 4.

Quite aside from this, there is no doubt that anointing plays a crucial role in the contents and structure of The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. Dionysios explicitly says that a man’s life is bracketed by the oil of chrism after baptism at the beginning of life and the anointing of the body after death with chrism at the end. (EH 7.2.8) Major excurses within the structure focus on ordinations using chrism, monastic consecration (no chrism here but multiple mentions of the sign of the cross as well as the Eucharist). Dionysios repeatedly stresses that one anointed with Myron is “of good odour,” a clear allusion to a well ordered life as “the sweet savoured and hidden beauty will confer the unerring and most Godlike appearance.” (EH 4.3.1)

There are also a couple of passages in which Dionysios writes explicitly about what Christ does. In one of these passages, in The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy chapter 3 on the Eucharist, he suddenly retells the whole of salvation history beginning with the fall, describing the incarnation as Christ “having truly participated sinlessly in all things belonging to us and having been made one with our lowliness” and then – just as we would expect the story to reach climax with the crucifixion and resurrection – Dionysios writes that Christ as the presence of the whole Godhead “bequeaths to us...communion with Itself (the Godhead) and proclaims us partakers of Its own beautiful things; having...loosed the power of the rebellious multiplicity, which was against us; not by force as having the upper hand, but according to the Logion, mystically transmitted to us, ‘in judgment and in righteousness.’”

This little phrase, “according to the Logion,” only appears five times in the CD, and clearly has very specific significance and meaning.30 31 In every case it is clearly the theme of anointing, or the

30 Here are the other four instances: 1) at EH 3.3.12: “Wherefore the Divine Hierarch, standing before the Divine Altar, extols the aforesaid holy works of God, which proceed from the most divine forethought of Jesus on our behalf, which He accomplished for preservation of our race, by the good pleasure of the most Holy Father in the Holy Spirit, according to the Logion.” 2) at EH 4.3.10: “Thus the most Divine Order of supercelestial Beings did not fail to recognize the most supremely Divine Jesus, when He descended for the purpose of being sanctified; but recognizes, reverently, Him lowering Himself in our belongings, through Divine and inexpressible goodness; and when viewing Him
character and aspects of Christ’s anointing in dual aspect as both king/victor and sacrifice which is at stake, and which in turn unites the five instances of the phrase. In the first instance, just quoted, we have the straight-forward assertion that salvation (victory) is accomplished (and mystically transmitted to us) not by force but by self-sacrifice. In the second instance (at *EH* 3.3.12) we have the bishop standing at the altar (stressing sacrifice) and proclaiming Christ’s victory for us by the action of the whole Trinity. In the third instance (at *EH* 4.3.10) we see that when Christ “descended for the purpose of being sanctified” the order of angels “recognized its own Supreme Head as being essentially unchanged in whatever He may do as supreme God.” Here it is quite clear that Christ acts eternally “according to the Logion” and, as such, is called “Sanctified Sanctifying.” In this sense, the victory of the cross is even eternal and pre-existent! It appears that Luther was wrong about the cross having little place in Dionysios. It isn’t that the cross plays no part in the CD. It is that the cross is so big and so inclusive of all of reality that one might easily miss it while searching for familiar expressions on a smaller scale.

Having noted the eternal element of Christ’s anointing, we are now in a position to describe the simplex fractal unit as the *unique* procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father to rest and remain in the Son, anointing him eternally as son of the Living God and in time as

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31 Even the word “logion” (“to logion”) is not one found elsewhere in the CD; it is used only on two other occasions in the entire CD, in both of these clearly meaning a quote from the Bible.
Christ, the bridegroom of the Church, and through her, of all creation. \footnote{This is a slight adaptation (to match Dionysian themes and theology) of a Patitsas’s suggested alternate creedal statement. In his suggested reformulation, Patitsas uses the Palamite understanding of Trinitarian dogma (Father as unique Source or Spirit, Son as destination and Spirit as the person in whom the Son turns and offers himself to the Father) to attempt a statement which would be acceptable both to those who include and to those who don’t include the Filioque in their recitation of the creed. Patitsas, T. The King Returns to his City, p.88.} And getting back to our neo-Platonic, philosophical language, Dionysian “procession,” broadly speaking, lines up with Christ’s anointing.

The fourth instance of “according to the logion” (\textit{EH} 5.1.2) states simply that we are also sons of God, “according to the Logion.” And here we move to the second iteration and complication of the first simplex shape – what happens when Christ shares his anointing with us.

\textit{Shape No.2 – Christ’s Anointing Shared with Us}

As is manifestly evident in that the oil of Christ’s anointing drips down from the top of our hierarchy, Christ has every intention of sharing his anointing with us. Therefore Dionysios writes of God “impacting himself with an unbending power for deification of those turned to Him” (\textit{DN} 9.5), that “although his essential nature is similar to none; he bequeaths a Divine similarity to those who turn to Him” (\textit{DN} 9.6), and that Christ “stamped those who live [God-imitating lives] with the cruciform image of His own sinlessness.” (\textit{EH} 5.3.4)

It is only natural, that as the more eminent fractal level, Christ’s anointing would include within itself the shape that describes his sharing of this anointing with us. Patitsas calls this second shape a chiasm, and we can also find much direct evidence for this same chiasm within the CD. Mapping Patitsas’s description of the chiastic shape into the language of this paper we might define the chiasm as a relationship between two beings in which each being accepts its (priestly/sonly) anointing in relation to God by means of sacrificially embracing its relative hierarchical position to the other in a specific relational instance. This mutual embrace causes the release of a wave of God’s creative power which has effects both external to and internal to the beings in the pair. With many specific examples from the center of Orthodox liturgy and dogma, Patitsas has shown that what happens through this wave of creativity – again translating into the language of this paper – is that the being functioning on the eminent fractal level becomes inclusive of the manifesting level and the being functioning on the manifesting fractal level becomes possessed of the eminent level. In this sense, it can be said...
that each level becomes the truest symbol of the other level. This external “chiastic reversal” between the beings also simultaneously effects an internal reversal within each of the beings, which mirrors the external reversal and constitutes the transformation of the being itself.

A specific example of this chiastic reversal affecting the theology of hierarchy in the CD is when Dionysius says that the Divine rank of Bishops is “at the same time the highest and the lowest [rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy] in as much as every order of our hierarchy is summed up and fulfilled in it” and that one and the same power of the bishop “permeates the whole sacred body.” (EH 5.1.5)

It is the Divine Names, however, which is positively permeated with the chiastic shape. Recall that neo-Platonic procession and reversion don’t actually make sense except in relation to each other, and the discussion above of Divine Names, chapter 4. The chiasm is present ubiquitously in Divine Names, even at the cognitive fractal level. Recall Yannaras’s assertion that true apophaticism engenders personal and participatory knowledge by making use of both affirmations and negations “in most sweet conjunction” in order to transform conceptual opposition into depiction in images (which are available for participation). This is the very method of the Divine Names. In addition, we have some Dionysian descriptions of the actions proper to eminent and manifesting fractal levels involved in chiastic relationship, and these also echo Patitsas’s. Dionysios writes that the activity proper to a being functioning on an eminent fractal level is providential “vigorous assimilation and elevation of the subordinate” through “ungrudging communication to those next to them by the stream of given wisdom” (CH 7.1). By contrast, the activity proper to beings functioning on the manifesting/possessive level is reverential agnosia or unwillingness to objectify the relational partner, as seen specifically in the section on Beauty and Eros in Divine Names chapter 4 and in the Mystic Theology, and poignantly in the fact that even the very receptivity of beings – their capacity for reversion which constitutes them as beings rather than as God – is itself a gift!

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33 This explains, for instance, why a priest does all he does by the power/authority of the bishop. It is in this same sense that Perl says that for Dionysios every level of being has cognition “in manner proper to itself”: cognitive beings intellectually, living beings vitally, and mere beings ontically. Perl, Theophany, 71.
Conclusion

Perl has a term he uses for the sort of theophany via fractal-hierarchy that we see in Dionysios. He calls it “immediate mediation”\(^{34}\). This term covers the common objection that hierarchy necessarily entails ranks of beings standing between me and God – another relic of onto-theological thought. Fractal-hierarchy necessarily implies that there is “no contradiction between a hierarchical structure of reality and the immediate constitutive presence of God to all things”\(^{35}\) and is therefore more able to accurately describe the complex, organic, personal, relational structure of reality. As we have just seen in examples using more traditional theological language, it is only inside the simplex fractal shape of Christ’s unique anointing by the Holy Spirit that we, too, can be polished and reflective mirrors and therefore take part in the divine, creative life.

So can we say anything meaningful about power and freedom for participants of fractal-hierarchy? I think we can. First of all, as Perl notes, it is precisely egalitarian leveling which closes off access to power if the structure of reality is hierarchical. Secondly, power is certainly available for all within this sort of hierarchy; though, on the other hand, on this account of the fractal building blocks, power is only accessible if we exhibit priestly – or cruciform, as Dionysios puts it – behavior. It appears that this entails selfless, sacrificial providential giving of the very contents of oneself for any being functioning on an eminent fractal level, and sacrificial willingness to forego objective knowledge in favor of unifying personal knowledge for any being functioning on a manifesting, possessive level. And, of course, the fractal nature of reality will mean that all beings will always be functioning on both these levels in different aspects of their infinitely complex internal and external relationships with other beings. Only Christ, who in his anointing shows us the revealed simplex version of our fractal, manifests the pure gift of the entire Trinitarian life which is “intrinsically ecstatic”, which is to say that fully being in himself consists of fully being out of himself and that his pure interiority corresponds with his pure exteriority, as in the 4th chapter of Divine Names.\(^{36}\)

There is certainly freedom within a fractal-hierarchy, if freedom is understood as freedom to participate in God’s creative activity. One freedom we do not have, however, is the freedom to obtain real creative

\(^{34}\) Perl, Theophany, 79.
\(^{35}\) Perl, Theophany, 72.
\(^{36}\) See Perl, Theophany, 46.
power by some means other than participation in the fractal-hierarchy itself, the grammar of which is the grammar of God himself. Ultimately, then, our struggle is much less a matter of getting the perfect understanding or definition of hierarchy and much more a matter of being perfect as Christ is perfect. We may – and probably do – feel that this is a very risky business due to the perceived dangers of pursuing self-sacrifice if those around us do not do the same. On the other hand, even when those around us do not do the same, within a fractal-hierarchy the energies of God themselves are actually accessible to us, particularly through our power to initiate “feedback loops” by refusing to objectify (all sorts of beings from people to mental objects) and by relentlessly pursuing sacrificial personal relationship with other creatures. This final point may be a sort of proof that, somewhat unsurprisingly, risky sacrificial action is the only true key to escaping the irrational, even nonsensical, non-grammar of repeated power abuse.  

37 Risky sacrificial action stands in sharp contrast to passivity, which, as non-reversion, or lack of response to God’s call to fulfill one’s vocation, actually constitutes evil for Dionysius.
PART II

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE
Gregory the Great and a Post-Imperial Discourse

George Demacopoulos

Last Spring, quite out of the blue, I stumbled upon an essay by Catherine Keller that was so provocative that I am no longer able to think about the relationship between Christianity and Empire as I once did. It is not that I found her conclusions to be especially persuasive but rather I was transfixed by the profound insight with which she begins. Her first sentence reads: “Christianity suffers from an imperial condition.” A paragraph or so later she observes, “When [Christianity] opened its young mouth to speak, it spoke in the many tongues of empire—nations and languages colonized by Rome, and before that Greece, and before that Babylon, which had first dispersed the Jews into an imperial space.” Keller rightly identifies Christianity’s transitions from its subaltern position, to its adoption of imperial symbols, and then its ascendance to an imperial status of its own. The bulk of her essay is devoted to an argument for the compatibility of postcolonial critique and the Christian theology of love.

I must confess that prior to reading this essay it had never occurred to me just how much Christianity in general, and Orthodox Christianity specifically, has always been entangled with empire. This is such an obvious truth, and yet it is something that I had never considered in any deliberate way. And perhaps it is because it is such an obvious truth that we, as Orthodox, have so failed to engage its implications, let alone attempted to chart any “postcolonial” or better yet “post-imperial” theological vision. When we aren’t calling outright for a return to Byzantine or Tsarist society, we argue about what elements of those imperial societies are essential to Orthodoxy or what aspects of Byzantine theology are intrinsic to Orthodox thought, but in the process we almost never acknowledge the fact that Orthodox theology has always been articulated in reference to, and in dialogue with, its many

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imperial pasts and presents. And while it makes perfect sense that the Christians of the late ancient, medieval, or early modern worlds would have done so (for empire was the context in which they narrated Christian belief), it is no longer the case that an imperialized Christian discourse fully speaks to our particular presents. A convocation such as this one, which pursues a self-conscious and self-critical analysis of the twin forces of power and authority within our tradition cannot come at a better time. We simply must confront, whatever the outcome, the reality that Orthodox Christianity has, from the Gospels to the near present, been intrinsically linked to an imperial context and, as a consequence, now suffers a form of post-imperial identity trauma. And it is only after we acknowledge this historical and contextual reality that we can respond to the radically “new” situation in which Orthodox Christianity must now speak to its world.

*Christianity’s Imperial Condition*

While the greater share of my comments today will focus directly on a rereading of the correspondence between St. Gregory the Great and the Byzantine emperor Maurice, I would like to begin by situating that correspondence not just within its late sixth-century Mediterranean milieu but, more broadly, within the interstitial complexity of Christianity’s imperial identity.

There has been no shortage of scholars eager to consider the imperial context of the biblical texts in recent years. Stephen Moore, perhaps most provocatively, offers a prime example of the varying ways that New Testament texts mimic and replicate fundamental facets of Roman imperial ideology for the purpose of resisting that very ideology. Indeed, whether we look at Mark’s naming of the Gerasene demoniac as “Legion,” or see Christ’s entry into Jerusalem on a donkey as a parody of an imperial triumphal procession, the Biblical texts are infused with imperial symbols and responses. Of course, not all New Testaments authors were critical of Roman colonization. Some (Luke foremost among them) appropriated imperial concepts for the purpose of smoothing the passage of the Christian mission into the Roman world. As far as I’m concerned, it does not matter if the New Testament authors provide a consistent response to empire, my point is simply that the

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4 Note, of course that only the Gospels of Matthew and John identify a donkey; Mark and Luke describe a colt.
Roman colonization of the Near East provided such an important and contested reality for the earliest Christian communities that all Christian texts of the New Testament era respond, in one way or another, to their colonial and imperial reality. Put more succinctly, the New Testament authors narrated and re-narrated the Christ event within and against empire.

The same, of course, was true for Christian authors of succeeding generations. St. Ignatius of Antioch, for example, was a political prisoner and however much we might cull from his theological insights, our appraisal of his letters should never lose sight of the colonial and imperial reality that conditioned his forced march to execution. Moving beyond the Apostolic Fathers like Ignatius, it would seem that the writings of the Apologists were more self-conscious of Christianity’s subaltern identity. So much so, that one might argue that the actual purpose of their apologies was to defend against the charge that Christianity was a subversive political movement. It was for this reason that Justin, Athenagoras, and others stressed the compatibility of Christianity and empire, arguing that Christians were better citizens than pagans because of their particular faith commitment. Perhaps more significantly, it was in and through this process that the Apologists, and thereby the Christian tradition as a whole, appropriated the symbols of imperial ideology as their own. While it is certainly true that the Constantinian moment was a watershed in the imperial/Christian relationship, it was not nearly as unprecedented as most scholars (especially of the Hauerwas school) would have us believe. Christianity and empire had been intertwined in one way or another from the outset—the legalization of Christianity and its eventual privileged position within the empire was a transition, not a break, from its earliest days.

And I can continue. Shall we look at the Ecumenical Councils? There is simply no way to narrate the circumstances of the councils or the manner in which their verdicts were enforced without the acknowledgement of Christianity’s imperial condition. The schism between East and West: should we talk about the Acacian schism, the so-called Photian Schism, the papacy’s rebuffing of Byzantium and its turn to the Carolingians? What about 1054, the Second Council of Lyon, or the Council of Florence? I am not arguing that theological concern was irrelevant, but any objective interpreter of these events must acknowledge that these historical moments always occurred within (often against) an imperial context.

Orthodox Christianity’s imperial Sitz im Leben, of course, did not end with the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Under the Ottomans,
Greek, Bulgarian, and Romanian Christians may have transitioned to a new imperial reality, but they remained within an imperial reality. The Russian church of the early modern period, with its “Third Rome,” not only retained but deliberately advanced the links between Russian Christianity and its idiosyncratic idealization of imperial Rome (let us not forget that the word Tsar, derives from Caesar). In short, the majority of Orthodox Christians until the twentieth century had always found themselves, in one way or another, imagining, adopting, negotiating, mimicking, and/or resisting empire.

With this brief jaunt through our history, I have not even engaged the imperial symbols that crowd our hymns and icons, the imperial prototypes for our earliest church structures, or the imitation of imperial procession that dominates our liturgical movement. Empire is such an intrinsic part of our past, an inescapable referent for our texts, liturgies, fathers, and imagination that it seems inconceivable to think of historic Orthodox Christianity without reference to empire. Indeed, what would our tradition be if we stripped all reference to Rome—whether Old, New, or Third? But in the twenty-first century, we no longer have empire (at least not real empire). So what are the implications of this? What relevance can texts steeped in the image and ideology of empire have for today?

My purpose is not to argue that we need to renounce our imperial origins or to argue that everything the Church did during the Roman, Byzantine or Tsarists periods is contaminated by its association with empire and colonialism. I simply believe that we need to think in a far more sophisticated way than we have about what impact empire and imperial ideology have had on our tradition, on the narration of our tradition, on the extent to which the conditions of empire underlie the theological arguments of our fathers, and the extent to which empire continues to dominate our own theological presuppositions. I believe that it is only after this kind of examination that we can aptly employ the resources of the past for the context of the present.

There are, of course, many ways that we might pursue that kind of theological project. As a historian, my own approach is to revisit moments in our collective past and to examine the extent to which the

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5 The Ottoman experience was, in fact, quite different than the pre-Constantinian Roman one. Not only was Christianity an international religion of far greater political and intellectual power than it had been in Roman times, there remained among the Ottoman Christian’s the memory of a Christian imperial past. The legacy of that memory and the many different ways in which it has been pursued by the successor Orthodox nation-states, is an element crucially related to the complexities of Orthodoxy’s relationship to empire.
considerations of empire and the subversion of empire either directly or indirectly informed the strategies of persuasion embedded in theological discourse and ecclesial correspondence. I am not simply talking about doing the historical work of situating Christianity within its imperial context—such as examining its social and institutional conditions. That project has been done and redone. I am, instead, proposing an examination of the ways in which Christian leaders co-opted the imperial “discourse” and made it their own. In other words, I am interested in the appropriation, transformation, and subversion of imperial signs and symbols that came to exist within Christian discourse as dynamic factors in and of themselves. A reassessment of this kind will provide, I hope, a greater sense of the way that the sophisticated writers of pre-modern Christianity, especially those of late antiquity, engaged certain elements of their imperial condition while resisting or transforming others in order to achieve specific theological goals. Such insight provides, I believe, one of the only ways in which we can untangle the threads of Christian thought and imperial ideology that are so clearly interwoven into the tapestry of our religious heritage.

My task in the present essay, therefore, is to reconsider the ways in which St. Gregory the Great, the bishop of Rome from 590-604, employed the language of empire, imperial privilege, and imperial obligation, in his correspondence with the Byzantine emperor Maurice. It is my contention that Gregory leaned on and gestured toward imperial sensibilities for the very purpose of undermining imperial sovereignty in ecclesiastical matters so as to re-inscribe the Church (and its leaders) as the “imperial,” that is the “authoritative,” voice in all important matters. By paying closer attention to the specific ways in which Gregory maneuvers within an imperial discourse (through mimicry, appropriation, resistance, and subversion), we gain a fuller appreciation for the intricate dynamics of power and authority that characterize episcopal letter writing at the close of late antiquity.

Gregory’s Correspondence

St. Gregory the Great, often known to Eastern Christians as St. Gregory the Dialogist, is one of the very few Latin saints to have been well respected in the East in the middle ages. He was, I believe, the only late-ancient Latin author to be translated into Greek during his lifetime.

6 In part, I have been inspired in this approach by Averil Cameron’s *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of a Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).
In part, this is a testament to the extent to which his pastoral and hagiographic treatises resonated with early Byzantine Christians. Perhaps equally as important, however, is the extent to which the pontiff was well-connected in the Christian East. Gregory, in fact, had spent several years in Constantinople in the early 580s as *apocrisiarius*—that is, papal ambassador to the Eastern emperor. As a consequence, Gregory had many contacts in the Eastern capital, both ecclesiastic and political. In fact, his relationships were so well-placed that Gregory became the godfather for the emperor’s eldest son, Theodosius, when the child was baptized in 584, six years prior to Gregory’s election as pope.

Gregory’s correspondence is the largest surviving collection from the ancient world. More than eight hundred letters have survived from an estimated eight thousand that were produced during his pontificate. 7 Among his religious correspondents were Leander of Seville, Augustine of Canterbury, John the “Faster” of Constantinople, and John Climacus of Mt. Sinai. His political correspondents included Aethelbert (the Saxon king of Kent), Brunhilde (the Queen of the Franks), Reccared (the Visogothic king of Spain), as well as, of course, Maurice and Phocas, the two Roman (Byzantine) emperors whose reigns overlapped with his own tenure as Pope. In addition to these sovereigns, Gregory wrote to dozens of leading military and political officials in East and West. He also maintained a regular correspondence with the sisters, wives, and children of the various secular rulers of his era. And while I believe that Gregory’s correspondence with each of these figures would be illuminative, I will concentrate my energies today on the eight surviving letters that Gregory wrote to Maurice. 8

The Byzantine emperor, Maurice, who was born in Cappadocia during the reign of Justinian, began his career in the military and quickly rose through its ranks. He became emperor in 582, succeeding Tiberius II, his father-in-law, and ruled the Christian East for twenty years. What is generally regarded as a successful reign, was brought to an abrupt end in 602, when one of his own generals, Phocas, usurped the throne by murdering Maurice and each of his six sons (including Theodosius, Gregory’s godson). A military man until his end, Maurice successfully negotiated a peace with the Persians, drove the Avars north of the

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7 This number was proposed by Conrad Leyser at the 2007 meeting of the Oxford Patristics Conference.
8 Gregory, Ep. 3.61, 5.30, 5.36, 5.37, 6.16, 6.64, 7.6, and 7.30. All Latin selections are taken from CCL 140-140a. An English translation of Gregory’s letters, based upon this critical edition was completed by John Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004). For simplicity, I have relied primarily on Martyn’s translations for all quoted material.
Danube, and established the exarchate of Ravenna in an attempt to halt the advance of the Lombards. In religious matters, Maurice is generally thought to have been tolerant of the Monophysites, despite his support for Chalcedon. It may, in fact, be the case that Gregory’s diplomatic strategy for engaging Maurice on ecclesiastical matters was informed by a conviction in Rome that Maurice’s interests were never especially theological. Indeed, unlike Justinian who had taken such an active hand in setting imperial theological policy, Maurice seems to have simply wanted the various theological players to get along with one another.

Let’s begin with a quick overview of the eight surviving letters Gregory sent to Maurice (none of Maurice’s letters to Gregory survive) before moving on to a critical analysis of Gregory’s methods. The letters span roughly four years (August of 593 to June of 597) and cover a range of topics.

- Ep. 3.61, Gregory offers an impassioned defense of the monastic life, hoping to convince the emperor that he should rescind a new law forbidding soldiers from leaving the army for monasticism.

- Ep. 5.30, written in March of 595, records the arrival in Rome of money sent by the emperor to offset the spiraling costs of poor relief, brought on by the number of refugees fleeing Lombard invasion.

- Ep. 5.36, dated to June of the same year, is the most critical and defensive of the collection. Gregory had recently negotiated a peace settlement with the Lombards only to have been criticized by the exarch in Ravenna for having done so. Moreover, the pope’s actions had recently been characterized by Maurice as teetering between the naïve and the treasonous. In this letter, Gregory defends his actions, his patriotism, and the dignity of the priesthood (which is his way of saying that the emperor should never have questioned his motives).  

- Ep. 5.37, which was delivered by the same courier as Ep. 5.36, is one of Gregory’s most pronounced critiques of the “Ecumenical” title then being employed by John, patriarch of Constantinople. Gregory’s diplomatic efforts in this regard were wide-ranging.

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but his arguments in this letter to the emperor were unique and, as we will see, leaned heavily on imperial expectations and responsibilities.\textsuperscript{10}

- Ep. 6.16, dated to September of the same year, is ostensibly nothing more than a notification that an Eastern priest has been exonerated of the charges of heresy. Upon further investigation, however, we learn that the case is actually directly related to the controversy between Gregory and John of Constantinople over the former’s jurisdictional claims and the latter’s use of the ecumenical title.\textsuperscript{11}

- Ep. 6.64, dated nearly a year later, records Gregory’s concern for the re-emergence of Donatism in North Africa.

- Ep. 7.6, from October of 596, congratulates the emperor for the selection of Cyriacus as the man to replace the recently reposed John of Constantinople.

- Ep. 7.30, registers Gregory’s disappointment that Cyriacus has, like his predecessor, taken to using the Ecumenical title.

\textit{Christianizing the Imperial Discourse}

Focusing on empire and imperial identity as hermeneutical keys to understanding Gregory’s rhetorical strategy in these letters, we find the pontiff making a series of sophisticated moves. Let’s begin with the way in which Gregory recasts what we might anachronistically call the “divine right of kings” and how he employs the features of imperial election as a means to dictate imperial action. In two of these letters (Ep. 3.61 and 7.6), Gregory asserts the divine authorization of Maurice’s rule but does so for the explicit purpose of identifying Maurice’s responsibilities (responsibilities, of course, that reflect Gregory’s own theological concerns). So, for example, in Gregory’s first letter to the emperor, the pontiff notes: “The power over all men has been given by Heaven to my Lordship’s piety for this reason, that those who seek good


\textsuperscript{11} Demacopoulos, “Sixth-Century Dispute.”
things are given help, that the path to heaven is opened more widely and that an earthly kingdom is in service to the heavenly kingdom." While it is true that God has placed Maurice in the position of supreme leadership, he has done so for the explicit purpose that Maurice use his authority for heavenly service. Maurice, to live up to his responsibilities, must “open the path more widely” for salvation. What Gregory has in mind, of course, is the law forbidding soldiers from leaving the army for monasticism. A law, in Gregory’s reckoning, that closes the path to salvation.  

I would argue that there are at least two levels of re-inscribing imperial authority in this passage. The first, which we can pass over rather quickly, is the subtle elision (perhaps even subversion) of the earthly and heavenly kingdoms. By linking one to the other, Gregory gestures toward Maurice’s authority but simultaneously, and not so subtly, asserts that there is both a more exalted kingdom and a more exalted ruler (i.e., God). Maurice might be the rightful ruler of the earthly kingdom, but his authority here has been established there. And, as a consequence, not only must he rule the “here” in a manner that leads his subjects “there” but he is also under the constant inspection of the supreme ruler, who can revoke Maurice’s earthly rule.  

The second level of critique concerns Gregory’s reformulation of imperial obligation. To be sure, the Greco-Roman tradition had a series of sophisticated and ancient traditions of linking responsibility to leadership—these tradition were literary (e.g. Homer), philosophical (e.g. Aristotle), political (e.g. Augustus’ *Res Gestae*), and legal (e.g. *pater familias*). But Gregory shrewdly supplements (one might even say subverts) the traditional concepts of imperial obligation by inserting himself into the decoding of where and how that obligation should be employed. In other words, Maurice is not left to his own devices to interpret the obligations and responsibilities of imperial leadership, nor is he instructed by tradition or Roman law alone, but rather Gregory implies, as an ambassador of God (in other words as the ambassador of the heavenly king), that he is more qualified than Maurice to identify and interpret imperial obligations. Even more to the point, as priest and servant of the heavenly kingdom, Gregory has not only the right but the responsibility to critique a lapse in imperial obligation. The pre-Constantinian Roman tradition had no such framework for imperial critique. In other words, this is a decidedly Christian usurpation of

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12 Ep. 3.61.
imperial privilege. Looking, again, at this first letter we see precisely how Gregory justifies such a transformation of imperial authority. Concerning the question of whether soldiers should have the right to avail themselves of the monastic life, he writes:

Behold, Christ answers through me, the lowest of his servants and yours, saying: “from notary I made you commander of the imperial guard, from commander of the guard I made you crown-prince, from crown prince I made you emperor, and not just this, but even I made you the father of emperors. I have entrusted my priests to your hand, and you withdraw your soldiers from my service.”

There are multiple plays on imperial right and obligation in this single passage. For example, at issue is an imperial edict banning soldiers from deserting their posts in favor of monasticism. Rather than acknowledge the emperor’s right to legislate policies concerning the military, Gregory not only scrutinizes the theological implications of Maurice’s law but implies that he, Gregory, alone speaks for Christ, the ultimate sovereign, in the matter. That Christ, rather than Maurice, is the ultimate sovereign, the ultimate patron, is dramatically narrated by Gregory through the listing of imperial privileges that Maurice holds in fief to God (i.e. Maurice’s promotions from notary to general, from general to emperor, and from emperor to the father of emperors). But Maurice has not, in turn, sufficiently honored the heavenly king who granted these privileges to him. In other words, Maurice has breeched his contract with God, raising the possibility that the continuation of his rule is in jeopardy.

Note, also, the reverse play on the concept of military service. Maurice has forbidden soldiers from entering monasticism because he fears it will deplete the size of his army at a time of military need. But Gregory metaphorically transforms the concept of “service” from a soldier who defends the empire to a monk who is a soldier of God—i.e., a spiritual warrior rather than an imperial one. He later adds, “For it should certainly be considered that every soldier is being prohibited from leaving the secular world now, just at the time when the end of the world is at hand. For behold, there will be no delay, and as the Heavens blaze, the earth blazes and the elements flash and the terrifying judge will appear with angels and archangels.”

14 Ep. 3.61.
Taken as a whole, we might say that Gregory’s Ep. 3.61, engages imperial authority in three distinct ways: (1) it affirms the divine sanction of Maurice’s imperial authority; (2) through various means, it subtly undermines and qualifies the extent of Maurice’s authority; and (3) it identifies specific legal policies that Maurice must enact if he wishes to remain faithful to God and rule the empire properly. That Gregory is able to interweave such distinct reflections of imperial authority, and do so without ever appearing treasonous, is a testament to the sophistication of his thought and the rhetorical force of his letters. The same three elements are at work, of course, in each of the eight letters.

Building on his subtle redirection of Maurice’s imperial authority for ecclesiastical purpose, Gregory also holds out specific warnings and rewards in writing to the emperor, all of which were designed to appeal to and, in a sense, shape his imperial concerns. For example, in at least five of these letters, Gregory, in one way or another, links the emperor’s temporal success, and the success of his armies, to his piety or lack thereof. Thus, in Epistle. 5.30, in which Gregory thanks Maurice for his donations to the poor of Rome, the pontiff uses the occasion to assert that the emperor’s piety presages a long and prosperous rule. But even in the act of thanking the emperor, Gregory subtly undermines Maurice’s temporal and spiritual self-determination by ascribing a personal role in Maurice’s future success. In appreciation for Maurice’s gift, Gregory notes that: “… all of us with tearful prayers ask that almighty God, who has stung the heart of your Clemency so that you would [send these gifts], should preserve the empire of our Lordship safely, in the constancy of His love and extend your victories in all nations with the help of His majesty.” The emperor’s temporal successes, the successes of his armies, in Gregory’s account, will be successful through a combination of divine grace, imperial piety, and priestly prayer. Imperial success is thus doubly dependent upon pious action and the support of faithful priests.

In most cases, however, the rhetorical structure of the relationship between imperial action and temporal prosperity is inverted. Indeed, of the eight letters, only Ep. 5.30 anticipates future success as a consequence of past imperial piety. In all other cases, Gregory’s future expectations are more guarded, more dependent upon future action. Ep. 5.37, the letter in which Gregory beseeches Maurice to intervene in the controversy over the ecumenical title, might be the most illuminative in this regard. Among all of the arguments that Gregory musters to condemn John’s supposed arrogance, perhaps the most provocative is the evaluation that imperial armies are failing to halt the barbarian incursions
(coupled with a prediction that they will continue do so), for no other reason than because the Patriarch of Constantinople has insisted on calling himself “Ecumenical Patriarch.” Contained within the letter are the following three excerpts:

For what human virtue, most serene Lordship, what strength of arms would presume to raise its irreligious hands against the glory of your most Christian rule, if the minds of priests burned to beseech their Redeemer as one, on your behalf, and as was proper of your merits? Or what sword of a most ferocious race would proceed violently and so cruelly to destroy the faithful, if the lives of us who are called priests, and are not priests, were not weighed down by most wicked deeds? But while we leave what is appropriate for us and consider what is inappropriate for us, we associate our sins with barbarian forces. Our sin has sharpened the enemy’s swords, which burdens the strength of the republic.

For when you press down [the arrogance of priests] you raise up the republic and when you cut away [arrogant presumption] you drag it from the width and breadth of your kingdom.

I am compelled to exclaim and say: “What Times, What Immorality!” Look, in parts of Europe everything has been handed over to the control of the barbarians, and cities have been destroyed, army camps overwhelmed, provinces depopulated, and no farmer inhabits the land. Worshipers of idols run riot and daily oversee the deaths of the faithful. And, yet, priests, who should have lain on the pavement and in the ashes with tears in their eyes, seek out names for themselves full of vanity, and boast of new and profane titles.

Such direct statements, of course, hardly require a complex analysis. Gregory boldly connects John’s arrogance to recent military defeats. The implication is that the emperor has only himself to blame for his military losses. Also implicit in Gregory’s critique is the promise that Maurice’s military fortunes will change as soon as the emperor takes a stronger hand with the patriarch John.

15 A reference to Cicero that is an exceptionally rare example of Gregory using a direct quote from a pre-Christian author.
A more complete examination would be able to show that Gregory’s political theology is not nearly as Eusebian as it might appear from these few excerpts. Taken as whole, Gregory’s corpus generally resists the temptation to link secular fortune to divine favor. This is especially true of his more theoretical and theological writings. But it is certainly a hallmark of Gregory’s pastoral technique to appeal to the temporal desires of his political correspondents, whenever he seeks to persuade them to adopt a specific policy. Indeed, when he writes to Aethelbert, King of Kent, Gregory holds out the possibility that the Saxon king will be like a new Constantine and that his armies will always be successful, so long as he hastens to convert his subjects to Christianity.  

One final observation about the links between imperial action and imperial fortune in Gregory’s letters to Maurice is that they, of course, do not focus entirely on temporal or secular fortune. The pontiff also frequently extols the eternal benefits of adjusting imperial policies to reflect theological concerns. Writing in August of 596 about his concern for the reemergence of Donatism in North Africa, Gregory notes: “For that reason, I beseech the Christianity of your Lordship that, for the sake of the salvation of your soul and for the life of your most pious son, you issue a strict order, commanding that those whom you find out to be of this sort should be punished.” Here, Gregory is making the case that the emperor must execute his office in a certain way and that if he does not do so according to the precepts of the Church (and those precepts are, of course, here outlined by Gregory himself) not only will the guilty go unpunished but the emperor will put his soul, and the soul of his son (Gregory’s godson) in jeopardy.

While there are additional ways that Gregory transforms imperial discourse for ecclesiastical purposes, my final example will concern the ways in which he appropriates the symbols and ideology of imperial stature in order to assert Petrine authority. Although it has long been a historiographic commonplace to speak of the papacy from the fifth-century onward as a synthesis, or balance, between Christianitas and Romanitas—in other words, a relationship or fusion between Christian and Roman identity, which marks papal rhetoric and self-promotion—I believe that scholars have not yet sufficiently understood the extent to which the “imperial discourse,” the discourse of imperial rights and  

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17 Gregory, Ep. 6.64.
obligations, was appropriated and transformed by the bishops of Rome. And while I have argued in a number of places that Gregory’s own use of Petrine privilege and his promotion of papal authority were more nuanced, more sophisticated, and more collegial than most other late-ancient popes, there is no doubt that he too re-inscribed the Petrine narrative through the media of imperial signs and symbols.

The most explicit examples of this in the correspondence with Maurice stem from a single letter, Ep. 5.37, the letter containing his critique of Patriarch John. Two examples from this letter should suffice:

It is clear therefore, to all who know the gospel, that the Lord’s voice committed the care of the whole Church to the apostle, St. Peter, the prince of the apostles \([\textit{apostolorum principi}]\). Because it was to him that it was said “Peter do you love me . . .” To him it was said “. . . I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.” Behold, he accepts the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, to him the power of binding and of loosing is attributed, to him the care of the whole Church and of the empire is committed \([\textit{cura ei totius ecclesiae et principatus committitur}]\), and yet he is not called the “universal” apostle \([\textit{universalis apostolus}]\). It was certainly due to the eminence of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, that \([\textit{the ecumenical title}]\) was offered to the Roman pontiff \([\textit{Romano pontifici}]\) through the venerable synod of Chalcedon. But none of \([\textit{the popes}]\) ever consented to use this title of singularity, in case, while a personal honor was given to one person, universal priests might be deprived of their due honor.

For our purpose, there are at least four things to note about these twin passages. First, whatever Jesus’ listeners might have imagined when they heard him use the phrase “kingdom of heaven,” it is extremely unlikely that a sixth-century inhabitant of the Roman empire could have conceived of the “kingdom of heaven” without mental recourse to the

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19 See, especially, Demacopoulos, “Petrine Privilege.”
imperial signs and symbols of the empire. However transcendent and ethereal the heavenly kingdom might be in comparison to the earthly one, in the late sixth-century the earthly empire was the only real referent for which Peter received the keys. Second, Gregory’s marking of Peter as prince, the Prince of the Apostles, certainly reinforced (rather than distanced) the connection between a heavenly and an earthly kingdom. To be sure, Gregory was not the first pope to advance Peter’s status as a princeps, but there is absolutely no reason to believe that the significance of the term was lost on him. Indeed, apostolorum principi simultaneously provided a subtle but authoritative imperial purchase for papal privilege and transferred a key imperial term, princeps, to the Church.

Third, the first passage, in particular, offers a sophisticated play on the words oikoumenikos, universalis, and totus. The Greek word oikoumenikos is the adjectival form of the noun oikoumenē, meaning the “the inhabited earth.” The Byzantines, drawing from their Roman predecessors, understood the borders of the empire to constitute the entire inhabited earth. As I’ve argued at great length elsewhere, there are a myriad of ways to interpret the specific jurisdictional claims embedded in the assertion of the ecumenical title. And, as is well known, Gregory rather famously took the Greek word oikoumenikos to be the equivalent of the Latin word universalis when he publicly challenged John’s use of the title in 595. What is significant here, is that in addition to making a series of comparisons between the “universal” Church, Peter’s “total” authority, and John’s “ecumenical” title, Gregory is also, doubly, asserting the “totality” of Peter’s jurisdictional authority throughout the oikoumeni—in other words, the empire. Indeed, the passage concludes: “to him the care of the whole Church and of the empire is committed and, yet, he is not called the ‘universal’ apostle.” Thus, we see, once again, how the language and symbols of empire are appropriated and put in the service of a specifically Christian discourse—in this case, it is a

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20 The Latin word princeps conveys both a princely referent (in a dynastic or imperial sense) and an authoritative referent (as in the source of something). In theological language, princeps is often used as the Latin translation of the Greek arche.


22 Demacopoulos, “Sixth-Century Dispute.”
discourse of Petrine authority, which Gregory obviously develops to protect what he believes to be traditional papal prerogatives vis-à-vis the Patriarch of Constantinople.

My fourth observation concerns the convenient elision between imperial and papal symbols contained in the simple Latin word pontifex, pontiff. In the second excerpt from Ep. 5.37, Gregory asserts that the ecumenical title had once been offered to Pope Leo, the “Roman pontiff,” Romano pontifici, because of the “eminence of Peter, prince of the apostles.” In pagan Rome, the pontifex maximus was the high priest of the college of pontiffs, the most important person in ancient Roman religion. Beginning with emperor Augustus (d. 14 CE), the office was usurped by the emperor himself—the title was famously included among the imperial privileges in Augustus’ Res gestae, and remained among the list of imperial titles, even for Christian emperors, throughout the fourth century. Thus, just as was the case with his assigning the term princeps to Peter, Gregory’s ascribing the title Romano pontifici to the bishop of Rome rather than the Roman emperor, may have been a contested claim. And while I would argue it would be out of character for Gregory to insult the emperor directly, this choice of words in Gregory’s letter, once again, demonstrates the pope’s nimble use of linguistic subtlety to make the power of the imperial discourse his own.

Conclusion

Let me begin my concluding remarks by noting that my goal in the preceding analysis was not to discern, in any comprehensive way, Gregory’s understanding of empire or his understanding of the relationship between empire and Church. Either of those analyses would require a different method and would require a much wider reading in Gregory’s corpus than his correspondence alone. Rather, I have sought to expose and examine the “discourse of empire” employed

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23 It is important to note that for as much as Gregory wants to inject his own influence into imperial decision making, especially as it relates to the political situation in Italy, he is no way suggesting that the church (whether generally, or his office specifically) is the supreme secular authority. We should not read into Gregory’s statements an anachronistic Papal government model that would develop in the later middle ages. Indeed, Gregory wants and expects the court to be the dominant secular authority. But he hopes that the court will act in a certain way and he dangles the possibility of secular success as a prize for specific model of deference to the church and its leaders. Even the relations with the Lombards should not be interpreted as Gregory rebuffing the emperor with a “this is my sandbox” attitude but was instead implying “you should have respected my objectivity and motivations because I am a priest of God and therefore I have no personal investment other than the salvation of my flock.”
by Gregory as he sought to achieve specific theological, pastoral, and diplomatic goals in his correspondence with Maurice. As we have seen, Gregory carefully supplemented and transformed traditional Roman understandings of imperial rights and obligations in order to advance his concerns. In doing so, he exploited imperial ambition by modeling righteous imperial behavior as the gateway to political and military success. And he appropriated and transformed the signs and symbols of imperial authority to re-inscribe St. Peter as the supreme Christian authority.

In his authoritative biography of Gregory, written ten years ago, Robert Markus insisted that the pontiff viewed himself as a loyal subject of the empire—patriotic, submissive, and thoroughly Roman. While I have always been sympathetic to that position, I am now increasingly convinced that Gregory’s actual statements of loyalty, patriotism, and submission require a more careful analysis than Markus affords them. That Gregory availed himself of the rhetoric of empire, in all of its manifestations, should not be misinterpreted as an uncritical endorsement of a Constantinian or Justinianic political order. Nor, more generally, is Gregory’s an innocent submission to the concepts of empire or the imperial structures. On the contrary, I hope that the preceding analysis has shown that Gregory may have employed imperial signs and symbols, but in doing so he actually exploited them for alternative purposes. At the same time, this does not mean that Gregory was decidedly anti-empire or un-patriotic; it simply means that his loyalties and statements of loyalty are far more complex than most interpreters have acknowledged.

So where does this leave us? I began this essay by submitting that those of us who are accustomed to prescribing for the present by trolling the past have failed to acknowledge the extent to which early Christian authors did what they did, wrote what they wrote, and thought what they thought, through an imperial register that no longer exists and no longer defines the Christian present. The dramatic change in context does not, I believe, render the insights of the past irrelevant for the present but the change in context does require a more sophisticated engagement with the authorities of the past then we generally render.

I actually think that the fathers were far more alert to their imperial condition than we are aware of its embedded legacy in us. Gregory is a prime example of this. He was ever conscious of his imperial condition, of the reality of empire, and of the distinction between the earthly and the heavenly kingdoms. It was for this reason that he was able to mimic imperial discourse for the purpose of resisting imperial hegemony in religious matters. He was able to operate (and
operate well) within a political system but he never sacrificed his prophetic critique of the political order. I’m not so sure that we, so distanced from empire, retain the ability to critique our political past or present.

For example, far too many of us idealize the Byzantine and Tsarist periods, naively, perhaps blindly, assuming that the political structures of those societies were somehow decidedly more conducive to Orthodox culture than our modern options. That, of course, is rubbish. One could argue that the Church suffered more at the hands of the Byzantine emperors than at any other point in history. Athanasius, Basil, John Chrysostom, Maximus the Confessor, John Damascene, Theodore the Studite, Gregory Palamas, and many others all knew just how evil the empire could be. Gregory the Great, of course, also knew it. So, before we go seeking a recreation of some mythical golden-age of Christian politics, I recommend that we pay closer attention to the ways in which the Church fathers actually condemned the imperial authorities and political structures of their day.

A careful reading of Gregory’s correspondence with Maurice does not endorse empire for empire’s sake, nor does it suggest that political action will enable a temporal fusion of the secular and heavenly kingdoms. And yet, it is critical to remember that Gregory’s correspondence also demonstrates that a saintly Christian leader never loses sight of his responsibility to minister to those in political power and to do so in a language that they can understand.

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24 The possible exception being that no record survives to indicate that Gregory chastened Phocas for his bloody usurpation of the throne.
Holy Disobedience: Resistance to Secular and Ecclesiastical Authority in Orthodox Christian History

A. Edward Siecienski

Introduction

As one begins a study of Christian history, and in particular the patristic period, what becomes immediately apparent is how often figures regarded as “heroes” of the Christian narrative found themselves at odds with both secular and ecclesiastical authority. These heroes and saints were the ones who, to protect the orthodox faith, disobeyed the biblical injunction to “submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men” (1 Peter 2:13). They were the ones who ignored Ignatius of Antioch’s plea to be obedient to the bishop, respecting him “as you respect the authority of God the Father.”

Of course, this dynamic is not exclusive to the patristic period. For example, during the thirteenth and fifteenth century debates over union with the Roman Catholic Church, once again we find the saints actively struggling against both ecclesiastical and secular authority in order to preserve the Orthodox faith.

Now as an historical phenomenon this is, to say the least, intriguing. However, for Orthodox Christians this reality presents a rather troubling precedent-- can an individual simply ignore secular and ecclesiastical authority whenever s/he thinks it right? What would then prevent Christians from challenging Church or State at every turn, claiming that they are simply following the examples of Saints Athanasius, Ambrose, Maximus the Confessor, and Mark of Ephesus? Already there are many within the Orthodox Church who challenge elements of the hierarchy using the “holy disobedience” of the fathers to justify their position. In the ongoing “culture war” in American society

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2 A recent example of this can be found in the 2006 Kelliotes Letter to the Sacred Twenty Athonite Monasteries, in which leading monks decried “the anti-Orthodox and blasphemous actions, declarations, and decisions of the Oecumenical Patriarch, and of the other Primates and Bishops who vociferously and visibly advocate--bare-headed--the acceptance and teaching of the chief heresy of Ecumenism. . . For this reason we believe
Christians on both sides of the left-right divide have declared their intention to disobey unjust government laws when they believed them at odds with Christian moral principles.\(^3\) Paul had written that “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1) and Ignatius of Antioch had once claimed “that we should regard the bishop as the Lord Himself,” and yet for centuries disobedience, rather than obedience, has been the way of the Orthodox.\(^4\)

This paper is an attempt to examine the historical phenomenon of “holy disobedience” in the Orthodox tradition, perhaps as a way of discovering what wisdom history offers Christians today as they face the challenge of dealing with authority, both secular and ecclesiastical. In doing so, it is important to make a few clarifications. The first concerns the difference between legitimate and illegitimate authority. Throughout the centuries Christians have disobeyed individuals because they believed them to be, for one reason or another, illegitimate authorities--e.g., popes whose claims to universal jurisdiction were never recognized, bishops who were uncanonically elected, emperors who illegally seized the throne. There are too many such cases and they only complicate the matter. Instead, what will be discussed here is disobedience to those recognized, even by the disobedient themselves, as the legitimate secular or ecclesiastical authority that would, under normal conditions, require obedience.

Second, the paper will restrict itself to Orthodox Christian history. Certainly “holy disobedience” is not something particular to Orthodoxy. For example, Protestant Christians for centuries have seen the Reformation as an act of “holy disobedience” necessary to protect the

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that . . . the only thing that will gladden the Orthodox and shame the kakodox is to cease commemoration of the patriarch and of all the bishops agreeing with him.”


\(^3\) On one side there was the 2006 statement of the Roman Catholic Cardinal of Los Angeles, Roger Mahoney, who instructed his priests to disobey any law that required Catholic agencies to report illegal immigrants. On the other was the 2009 Manhattan Statement signed by representatives of the Evangelical, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Churches. While recognizing “the duty to comply with laws whether we happen to like them or not,” the signatories stated that “we will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, or any other anti-life act; nor will we bend to any rule purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family.”

gospel from the corruptions of the Roman Church of the sixteenth century. Martin Luther’s famous “Here I stand, I can do no other” in many ways echoes the cry of the saints of old as they stood against Church or State to protect the faith. However, it would take us too far afield if we were to judge the truth of Luther’s claims (and thus the validity of the Reformation itself), which is why we will only discuss events in the Christian East. Besides, as the history makes clear, there are more than enough disobedient Orthodox Christians to go around.

The Scriptures

Any discussion of holy disobedience must begin with the Scriptures and the precedent set by the apostles themselves as the early Church began to preach Jesus as the crucified and risen one. According to Acts 4, “the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees” brought Peter and John before the “rulers of the people and elders” who commanded them to cease their ministry and desist from speaking in Jesus’ name. Their answer was, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). When the apostles continued to preach and heal in Jesus’ name they were again arrested and reminded that they had been given “strict orders not to teach in this name.” Peter, speaking for the group, simply replied “We must obey God rather than human beings” (Acts 5:29) establishing a principle for dealing with authorities, both secular and religious, that would be invoked throughout the centuries.

5 I am going to sidestep the question of Jesus’ own relationship to the secular (i.e., Roman) authorities and the challenge he seems to present to the religious leaders of his day. The fact that Christ’s death was brought about by these two groups working in collusion would indicate that the relationship was, to say the least, problematic. The gospels speak of Jesus teaching “as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Mark 1:22, Matthew 7:29), which seemingly contrasts the God-given authority wielded by Christ with the pretended power of the Jewish teachers. Concerning the Romans, for centuries Christians have tried to understand the teaching that one should “give to Caesar what is Caesar’s but give to God what is God’s” (Mark 12:17, Matthew 22:21, Luke 20:25). While often taken as a call for obedience to the state, Jesus’ execution on the charge of claiming kingship (witnessed by the titulus placed on the cross) points to the perception, but not necessarily the reality, that Jesus was a political problem. For a discussion of the issue see Raymond Brown, The Death of the Messiah (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 679-93, 962-68.
Paul, of course, the very man who enjoined Christians to obedience in Romans 13:1-7,\(^6\) seems to have had a very prickly relationship with those in authority in the Church, particularly with the “so-called pillars” James, John, and Peter.\(^7\) Without doubting their legitimacy as “apostles and elders,” Paul never gives them unquestioned obedience, and famously rebukes Peter in Antioch when he believes him to have violated the principles established at the Council of Jerusalem.\(^8\) Paul grounds his own apostolic authority in the call he received from Christ on the road to Damascus, believing this pedigree equal to (or beyond) anything claimed by the others.\(^9\) Therefore even if one claiming to be among the “super apostles”... “comes... and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached” (2 Corinthians 11:4-5) Paul is clear he must be rejected.\(^10\)

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\(^6\) “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor” (Romans 13:1-7).

\(^7\) According to many scholars Paul’s deliberate use of the phrase *hoi dokoutes einai ti* (“those who seem to be”) is intended to be derogatory, “perhaps confirming some marginal reservations he had about the way in which some members of their church extolled them.” James Louis Martyn, *The Anchor Bible: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, Volume 33A: Galatians* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 204-05.

\(^8\) “When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong” (Galatians 2:11).

\(^9\) According to F.F. Bruce, in Paul’s mind “it was the personal call of the risen Christ that made him an apostle” F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 145.

\(^10\) Whether this is a reference to James and the Twelve or simply to opponents in Corinth who claimed apostolic authority remains open to debate. See Frank Matera, *II Corinthians*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 244-54.
Disobedience to the State

Despite Paul’s clear call for obedience, the Church’s relation to the state during the apostolic period remained a complicated affair. Beginning in 64 AD, during the reign of the Emperor Nero, Christians in Rome found themselves persecuted for their beliefs and blamed for the great fire that had consumed the city. For the next 250 years sporadic and localized persecution of Christians occurred throughout the empire, culminating in the great imperial persecutions of Decius (249-251) and Diocletian (303-305). Having long been accused of disloyalty to the state (a charge which apologists like Justin had tried their best to answer) Christians were now asked to prove their allegiance by offering sacrifices for the safety of the empire. Obedience to imperial authority was one thing, and in most cases Christians were quite happy to oblige. However in demanding that believers offer sacrifices to the gods, the state had gone beyond what could legitimately be expected and Christians now found themselves duty bound to resist. According to

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11 According to the Roman historian Tacitus, Nero shifted blame onto the Christians as a way of answering those who were prepared to point the finger of guilt at him. He wrote: “As a consequence, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians [or Chrestians] by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but, even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. In accordance, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not as much of the crime of firing the city as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.” Tacitus, Annals 15:44.

12 According to Justin, Christians are “more than all other people . . your [i.e., the emperor’s] helpers and allies in the cause of peace” who “try to pay to those appointed by you, more readily than all people, the taxes and assessments, as we have been taught by Him [i.e., Jesus].” Justin, First Apology 12, 17 (Eng. trans: Justin Martyr, The First and Second Apologies, trans. Leslie William Barnard, ACW 56 [New York: Paulist Press, 1997], 29, 34-35).


14 Cyprian of Carthage was among the most vocal critics of those (especially priests) who lapsed during the persecution, writing, “He [i.e., the Lord] says He that sacrifices to the gods, unless it is to the Lord only, will be totally destroyed (Ex 22:20). Moreover, the Lord speaks again in these words: They have worshipped those whom their own fingers have made, and the lowly man bows down, and the great man does obeisance. And I shall not relent towards them (Is 2:8-9). And in the Apocalypse also we read of the wrath of
Hugo Rahner, this refusal “had its roots in the Christian’s response to the invitation to the kingdom where the messiah would reign in peace and justice, making it impossible to fall under the total control of a despotic state.” Simply put, Christians were first and foremost citizens of the Kingdom of God, and it was to this kingdom that their primary allegiance belonged. Because citizenship here was both “temporary and secondary,” all of its demands had to be weighed against the chief obligation of Christian discipleship. Provided that the state did not attempt to overstep its proper bounds—e.g., by asking Christians to betray their true king—the Church could give it everything it wanted. For example, the emperor was owed prayers and was deserving of the greatest respect, for according to Tertullian, “as a man he is second only to God, protected by God, and therefore inferior only to God.”

—the Lord who utters these menacing words, *If a man worships the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his brow and on his hand, he too shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God mixed in the cup of His wrath; and he shall be punished with fire and brimstone in the sight of the holy angels, and in the sight of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torments will ascend for ever and ever. And they shall have no rest, neither day nor night, they who worship the beast and his image* (Rev 14:9-11). Such, therefore, are the torments and punishments with which on the day of judgment the Lord menaces those who obey Satan and sacrifices to idols. How does he imagine he can act as a priest of God seeing he has obeyed and served the priests of Satan? How does he suppose that his hand can now be turned to the sacrifice of God and the solemn prayer of the Lord seeing it has been in bondage to sacrilege and sin?” Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistle 65* (Eng. trans: Cyprian of Carthage, *The Letters of St. Cyprian*, vol. 3, trans. G. W. Clarke, ACW 46 [New York: Paulist Press, 1986], 113).

16 Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity*, 4.
17 “For we offer prayer for the safety of our princes to the eternal, the true, the living God, whose favour, beyond all others, they must themselves desire. . . . Without ceasing, for all our emperors we offer prayer. We pray for life prolonged; for security to the empire; for protection to the imperial house; for brave armies, a faithful senate, a virtuous people, the world at rest, whatever, as man or Cæsar, an emperor would wish. . . . I do more than you for his welfare, not merely because I ask it of Him who can give it . . . but because, in keeping the majesty of Cæsar within due limits, and putting it under the Most High, and making it less than divine, I commend him the more to the favour of Deity, to whom I make him alone inferior. . . . Never will I call the emperor God . . . [for] it is his interest as man to give God His higher place. Let him think it enough to bear the name of emperor. That, too, is a great name of God’s giving. To call him God, is to rob him of his title. If he is not a man, emperor he cannot be. Even when, amid the honours of a triumph, he sits on that lofty chariot, he is reminded that he is only human. A voice at his back keeps whispering in his ear, ‘Look behind thee; remember thou art but a man.’ And it only adds to his exultation, that he shines with a glory so surpassing as to require an admonitory reference to his condition. It adds to his greatness that he needs such a reminiscence, lest he should think himself divine.” Tertullian, *Apologeticus pro Christianis* 30, 32 (Eng. trans: ANF 3:42-43).
However, according to Hippolytus, when the emperor claims a level of authority that belongs to God alone, the Christian must imitate the example of Daniel and follow the decrees of God rather than those of the king, even if, like Daniel, it may literally put him in the lion’s den.\textsuperscript{18}

But things changed following the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312, when the Empire itself ceased persecuting the Church and began instead to patronize it. Constantine the Great, who presumed the traditional right of the emperor to regulate religious matters, not only granted Christians freedom to worship within the empire, but quickly made them the preferred sect. As \textit{pontifex maximus} Constantine was seen by Christians not only as the divinely appointed patron and protector of the Church, but as its visible head whose commands echoed the will of God himself.\textsuperscript{19} For the most part the Church embraced this new state of affairs and the \textit{symphonia} established between the empire and the Church.\textsuperscript{20} However, following the Council of Nicea in 325, certain figures began to reassess this relationship as Constantine and his heirs.

\textsuperscript{18} “The fidelity of Daniel is worthy of admiration . . . One who has faith in God ought not dissemble or fear the powerful, especially those who use power for evil. If they are compelled to do something opposed to their belief, their better choice is death rather than submission. . . . the apostles, forbidden by the rulers and scribes from preaching the word, did not cease to ‘obey God rather than man’ . . . So Daniel too, forbidden to pray, did not bow down before the royal decree, lest he show less respect for God’s law than for that of mere men. . . If anyone is hindered in the worship of God or in prayer because he is threatened with death, he ought to prefer death to submission to the will of another . . . Therefore imitate Daniel without fear of the satraps and without bowing to the decrees of men, so that when thrown into the lions’ den you may be protected by an angel, may tame the beasts and force them to fear you as a servant of God. No wound will you suffer, but when taken unharmed from the den you will be recognized as a sharer in the resurrection and will become master of your enemies and give thanks to the ever-living God.” Hippolytus, \textit{Commentary on Daniel} (Eng. trans: Hugo Rahner, \textit{Church and State in Early Christianity}, 30-31).

\textsuperscript{19} Constantine himself had claimed: “I myself, then, was the instrument whose services God chose, and esteemed suited for the accomplishment of his will. Accordingly, beginning at the remote Britannic ocean, and the regions where, according to the law of nature, the sun sinks beneath the horizon, through the aid of divine power I banished and utterly removed every form of evil which prevailed, in the hope that the human race, enlightened through my instrumentality, might be recalled to a due observance of the holy laws of God, and at the same time our most blessed faith might prosper under the guidance of his almighty hand.” Eusebius, \textit{Life of Constantine} 1.28 (Eng. trans: NPNF 2.1.507).

\textsuperscript{20} Dominic Janes, describing the attitude of Christians who were now on the receiving end of imperial favor and largesse, writes that their view was simple: “If this be the Lord’s will then God be praised!” Dominic Janes, \textit{God and Gold in Late Antiquity} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 52.
began diluting Nicene orthodoxy in the name of religious harmony. This was certainly the view of Athanasius of Alexandria, whose staunch defense of the council led him to reject all compromise with those he deemed Arian. For Constantine religious peace was a good in itself, which is why the emperor made it clear to Athanasius and the Nicene hardliners what they had to do—re-admit Arius and his followers to communion. When Athanasius refused, Constantine issued instructions that were incapable of misinterpretation:

Meantime should any one, though I deem it most improbable, venture on this occasion to violate my command, and refuse his attendance, a messenger shall be dispatched forthwith to banish that person in virtue of an imperial edict, and to teach him that it does not become him to resist an emperor’s decrees when issued in defense of truth.

And yet despite all of the honorifics he heaped upon Constantine and his children (e.g., “most religious,” “most blessed”) Athanasius would not obey them, believing not only in the truth of the Nicene position, but also in the right of the bishops who spoke the truth to minister free of imperial interference. He wrote to the clergy, instructing them that if “you are quite unexpectedly replaced by order of the civil authorities as you presided blamelessly in your churches in union with your people . . . justice demands that you show your disapproval, for if you remain silent in a short time this evil will spread to all the churches.”

Of course Athanasius was not alone in condemning imperial religious policy, or in urging others to resist it. Pope Julius in the West also bemoaned the fact that “the decisions of the Church are no longer according to the gospels but tend only to banishment and death.”

21 In 328 Constantine wrote to Athanasius demanding that he re-admit Arius and others to communion. He stated: “Having therefore knowledge of my will, grant free admission to all who wish to enter into the Church. For if I learn that you have hindered or excluded anyone who claims to be admitted into communion with the Church, I will immediately send one who shall depose you by my command and shall remove you from your place” Athanasius, Apologia Contra Arianos, 59 (Eng. trans: NPNF 2.4.132).
22 Eusebius, Vita Constantini 4.42 (Eng. trans: NPNF 2.1.551).
23 Athanasius, Epistula Encyclica 6 (Eng. trans: Hugo Rahner, Church and State in Early Christianity, 50)
24 Athanasius, Apologia Contra Arianos 35 (Eng. trans: NPNF 2.4.118).
longer be afflicted thus, nor any bishop or presbyter be treated with insult, nor anyone be compelled to act contrary to his judgment. . . lest we become a laughing stock among the heathen and, above all, excite the wrath of God.”

When, in 353, Pope Liberius was asked to support the condemnation of Athanasius at the Synod of Arles, he refused, claiming that “I would prefer death for God’s sake rather than appear a traitor and give my consent to a judgment contrary to the Gospel.”

Once again the choice appeared to be obedience to the emperor or obedience to the gospel, just as it been for the apologists. And, once again, the Church was forced to define for the emperor the limits of his authority and the Christian’s ultimate allegiance. Athanasius’s supporters “used great boldness of speech against him [i.e., Constantius], teaching him that the kingdom was not his, but God’s . . . and they threatened him with the day of judgment and warned him against infringing Ecclesiastical order and mingling Roman sovereignty with the Constitution of the Church.”

Constantius, meanwhile, took the traditional Roman view that the emperor had both the power and duty to regulate religious matters, maintaining that the imperial will effectively ruled the Church.” Yet not everyone was convinced by his arguments. Bishop Lucifer of Cagliari wrote to the emperor to remind him that ultimately, “despite all your cruelty you lie helpless under the feet of God’s servants, and all your imperial pomp is for us nothing. For us, you are, with all your authority, only a passing breeze.”

This same line of thinking is evident in writings of Ambrose of Milan, whose challenge to the Emperor Theodosius following the massacre at Thessalonica has become the stuff of ecclesial legend.

28 “The Emperor summoned [the bishops] before him, and commanded them to subscribe against Athanasius, and to hold communion with the heretics; and when they were astonished at this novel procedure, and said that there was no Ecclesiastical canon to this effect, he immediately said, ‘Whatever I will, be that esteemed a canon; the Bishops of Syria let me thus speak. Either then obey, or go into banishment.’” Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 33 (Eng. trans: NPNF 2.4.281).
30 “When Ambrose heard of this deplorable catastrophe [i.e., the massacre at Thessalonica], he went out to meet the Emperor, who . . . desired as usual to enter the holy church, but Ambrose prohibited his entrance, saying . . . ‘You must not be dazzled by the splendor of the purple you wear, and be led to forget the weakness of the body which it clothes. Your subjects, O Emperor, are of the same nature as yourself, and not only so, but are likewise your fellow servants; for there is one Lord and Ruler of all, and
this was neither the first not the last time Ambrose found himself at odds with the emperor. In 388 a mob rioted and destroyed a synagogue in Callinicum at the instigation of the local bishop, leading Theodosius to order its rebuilding at the Christians’ expense.\(^{31}\) Ambrose was clear that as a subject he owed Theodosius obedience, yet he was bound to speak out, “in obedience to God . . . and the desire to preserve your well-being . . . for who will dare tell the truth if the bishop does not?”\(^{32}\) He reminded Theodosius of the dilemma now facing the bishop-- that he could comply with the law and become an apostate, or resist and become a martyr.\(^{33}\) The preferred choice for Ambrose was clear, “for God is more feared than men, for he is rightly preferred even to emperors. If someone considers it proper to show deference to a friend, or parents, or a relative, I think it should rightly be shown to God and that he should be preferred to all.”\(^{34}\) As he put it plainly elsewhere:

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31 Ambrose expressed his astonishment that the “spoils of the Church” should be provided “for the disbelief of the Jews” and that the “patrimony given to Christians by Christ [would] be transferred to the treasuries of unbelievers.” This “triumph” over the Church, he writes, will be ranked by the Jews alongside the victories over Pharaoh and the people of Canaan, and celebrated in perpetuity as a victory over Christ himself. Besides, Ambrose believed that all this “commotion” over the burning of a building to be excessive, especially since “it was an abode of unbelief, a house of impiety, a shelter of madness under the damnation of God Himself.” Ambrose of Milan, Epistula 40 (Eng. trans: Ambrose, Saint Ambrose Letters 1-91, trans. FC 26 [Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1954], 10-14).


We pay to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. Tribute is due to Caesar, we do not deny it. The Church belongs to God, therefore it ought not to be assigned to Caesar. For the temple of God cannot be Caesar's by right. That this is said with respectful feeling for the Emperor, no one can deny. For what is more full of respect than that the Emperor should be called the son of the Church. As it is said, it is said without sin, since it is said with the divine favour. For the Emperor is within the Church, not above it. For a good emperor seeks the aid of the Church and does not refuse it.  

During the monothelite crisis of the sixth and seventh centuries, with Christianity still divided over reception of Chalcedon, the imperial desire for religious peace once again brought the saints into conflict with the emperors. Pope Martin I of Rome and Maximus the Confessor joined forces to battle both the *Ekthesis* of Heraclius (638) and the *Typos* of Constans II (648) which to them represented a form of “creeping monophysitism” that diluted the truth of the Council. Pope Martin was later arrested and taken to Constantinople, where after being defrocked and humiliated he was sent into exile, dying shortly thereafter in 655. Maximus the Confessor was also brought East and put on trial, where he

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36 Monothelitism (i.e., the belief that Christ had only one operative will) although not explicitly formulated until 634, had its roots in the lengthy, and somewhat complicated, debates surrounding the Council of Chalcedon and the orthodoxy of the Tome of Pope Leo to Flavian. It had stated: “So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ . . . acknowledged in two natures, which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ.” Norman Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 86.
37 Both documents were read out and condemned at the Lateran Council convened by Pope Martin in 649. For Maximus the debate was simple: “If he [i.e., Christ] has two natures, then he surely must have two natural wills, the wills and essential operations being equal in number to the natures.” *Diputatio cum Pyrrho* (Eng. trans: Joseph Farrell, *The Disputation with Pyrrhus of our Father among the Saints Maximus the Confessor* [South Canaan: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 1990], 4). For more on Maximus’s role at the Synod see Rudolf Riedinger, “Die Lateransynode von 649 und Maximos der Bekenner,” in Felix Heinzer and Christoph Schönborn, eds., *Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2–5 Septembre 1980* (Fribourg-en-Suisse: Editions Universitaires, 1982), 111–21.
maintained not only his orthodoxy, but the proper place of the emperor vis-à-vis the Church. He said:

No emperor was able to persuade the fathers who speak of God to be reconciled with the heretics of their times by means of equivocal expressions . . . [You ask] “Is the Christian emperor also a priest?” [I say] no, he isn’t, because he neither stands beside the altar . . . nor does he baptize, nor perform the rite of anointing, nor does he ordain and make bishops . . . nor does he wear the symbols of priesthood, the pallium and the gospel book . . . During the anaphora at the holy table . . . the emperors are remembered with the laity . . . after all the clergy.\textsuperscript{38}

Centuries later the Church was again confronted with imperial intervention in Church matters, as the Emperors Leo IV and Constantine V began their campaign against the icons. This time it was John of Damascus who came to the Church’s defense, claiming that there had been a “piratical attack” on the Church, with bishops being exiled or killed and replaced with imperial lackeys.\textsuperscript{39} Once again, as with Constantius, Theodosius, and Constans II, the emperors had forgotten their place and failed to remember that:

It is not for emperors to legislate for the Church . . . for emperors did not speak the word to us, but apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers . . . Political good order is the concern of emperors, the ecclesiastical constitution that of pastors and teachers . . . We submit to you, O Emperor, in the matters of this life, taxes, revenues, commercial dues, in which our concerns are entrusted to you. For the ecclesiastical constitution we have pastors who speak to us the word and represent ecclesiastical ordinance.\textsuperscript{40}


Disobedience to Ecclesiastical Authority

As problematic as the Church-State relationship has been for Christians, the question of (dis)obedience to ecclesiastical authority is more complicated, and thus far more vexing. Certainly there are more than a few examples, especially in the writings of the desert fathers and early monastics, of the need for obedience to one’s spiritual superiors. The Rule of Benedict clearly states that “obedience given to superiors is given to God,” and according to John Cassian:

The monks rank obedience not only above manual labor, but over reading, silence, the peace of the cell, even before all virtues; they consider all things to take second place to this, and are happy to undergo any inconvenience if only they can show they have in no way infringed this one good thing.

Given this stress on monastic obedience, one might then find it puzzling that historically monks have been at odds with ecclesiastical authorities in so many different times and places. For example, Maximus the Confessor refused during his trial to commune with the hierarchy in Constantinople, believing them to be heretics condemned by the Romans and the Lateran Synod. His accusers then asked him: “But what if the Romans should come to terms with the Byzantines, what will you do?” He answered: “The Holy Spirit, through the apostle, condemns even angels who innovate in some way contrary to what is preached.” Simply put, Maximus knew that in the matter of Christ’s wills he was right and the hierarchy was wrong, and he would rather die “than have on

42 To emphasize the importance of obedience Cassian related the story of a man who entered the monastery, bringing with him his eight year old son. The abbot wished to test the commitment and obedience of this novice, and so he had the son subjected to mistreatment and beatings while his father watched on in silence. The abbot then ordered the father to take his son and throw him into the Nile, which he did “as if the command had been given him by the Lord.” John Cassian, The Monastic Institutes 4.27 (Eng. trans: John Cassian, The Monastic Institutes, trans. Jerome Bertram [London: St. Anselm Press, 199], 55-56).
43 Relatio Motionis, 7 (Eng. trans: Bronwen and Allen, Life of Maximus the Confessor, 63).
my conscience the worry that in some way or other I have suffered a lapse with regard to belief in God.”

In the eighth century, during the iconoclastic controversy, imperial pressure on the iconodules was supplemented by the decrees of the iconoclast hierarchy, who gathered in (an alleged) ecumenical council at Hierea in 754, and formally ruled against the icons. Despite the absence of all five patriarchs, 338 bishops, led by Theodosius of Ephesus, participated in the synod, anathematizing all who attempted “to represent the divine image of the Word after the Incarnation . . . [or] the forms of the Saints in lifeless pictures with material colors.” Having now been endorsed by an ecumenical council, the teachings of the iconoclast bishops became the teaching of the Church, to which religious obedience must be given. And while the emperor could (and did) employ the secular arm against the iconodules, the iconoclasts could now also demand submission to the decisions of an ecumenical council. For this reason monastic communities were told “to subscribe to the definition of our orthodox synod” for it was not right that “idolaters and worshippers of shadows” should prefer their own view to that of the Church. Simply put, the Church has spoken and its children must obey.

Of course the absence of all five patriarchs made impugning the conciliar legitimacy of Hierea easy for the iconodules, but very often opposition to the iconoclast councils-- both at Hierea in 754 and a similar council in 815-- took a different tactic. Theodore the Studite, for example, called on the monks to engage in “God-pleasing resistance” to the decisions of these synods (as well as the Moechian synod of 809) because despite the veneer of legitimacy, these gatherings lacked an

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44 Relatio Motionis, 7 (Eng. trans: Bronwen and Allen, Life of Maximus the Confessor, 63).
45 Interestingly, unlike John of Damascus who saw the whole controversy as a piratical takeover of the Church by the emperor, the Synod of Hierea likened him to the apostles, for just as “Christ armed his Apostles against the ancient idolatry with the power of the Holy Spirit, and sent them out into all the world, so has he awakened against the new idolatry his servants our faithful Emperors, and endowed them with the same wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Impelled by the Holy Spirit they could no longer be witnesses of the Church being laid waste by the deception of demons, and summoned the sanctified assembly of the God-beloved bishops . . . that they, under divine guidance, might express their view on the subject” Horos of the Synod of Hierea (Eng. trans: NPNF 2.14.543).
essential component required of all true Church councils—adherence to the canons and to the truth.  

He wrote:

[The Church of God] has not permitted anything to be done or said against the established decrees and laws, although many shepherds have in many ways railed against them when they have called great and very numerous councils, and given themselves to put on a show of concern for the canons, while in truth acting against them . . . a council does not consist simply in the gathering of bishops and priests, no matter how many there are . . . A council occurs when, in the Lord's name, the canons are thoroughly searched out and maintained . . . [for] no authority whatever has been given to bishops for any transgression of a canon. They are simply to follow what has been decreed, and to adhere to those who have gone before.

Thus for Theodore disobedience to the hierarchy was sometimes necessary if one was to be obedient to the canon of truth received from the Fathers, “for we have an injunction from the Apostle himself: If anyone preaches a doctrine, or urges you to do something, against what you have received, against what is prescribed by the canons of the catholic and local synods held at various times, he is not to be received, or to be reckoned among the number of the faithful.”

Addressing the charge that he was introducing schism, Theodore was adamant that in so much as he had remained a child of the Church and its canons (unlike the false teachers who now claimed authority) it was not he who was the

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48 The Moechian (“adulterer”) controversy arose when Theodore and others objected to the marriage of Constantine VI to the lady-in-waiting (and Theodore’s cousin) Theodote, claiming that lacking proof of adultery he should never have left his first wife, Maria of Amnia (who had been forced to become a nun). The marriage was eventually performed, not by the Patriarch, but a priest of Hagia Sophia named Joseph. Theodore demanded that Joseph be excommunicated along with all who communed with him, which presumably would have included both the emperor and the patriarch. Although tensions ended during the reign of Irene, in 806 a synod was convened that re-admitted Joseph to the priesthood, which once again brought the issue forward. Theodore then found himself anathematized as a schismatic in 809 because of his refusal to acknowledge the authority of the conciliar rehabilitation.


As with Maximus before him, Theodore knew in this matter he was right and the hierarchy was wrong.

Following the disastrous Battle of Manzikert in 1071 the Byzantine Empire increasingly found itself threatened by Seljuk advances in the East, losing most of its territory in Asia Minor by the end of the century. Despite the hope entertained by some (e.g., Pope Urban II) that a joint crusade would unite the two halves of Christendom, relations between Latins and Greeks deteriorated throughout the twelfth century as increased contact brought little but enmity between the two sides. By the Fourth Crusade the mutual hatred boiled over, leading to the vicious sack of Constantinople by the Latins in April of 1204 and the establishment of the Latin Empire under Baldwin of Flanders. And yet, within months of Michael VIII Palaeologus’s re-capture of Constantinople in 1261, Michael and many of his heirs were willing to negotiate Church union with Rome in exchange for aid against the Turks. As Manuel Palaeologus later told his son John:

Our last resource against the Turks is their fear of our union with the Latins . . . As often as you are threatened by the miscreants, present this danger before their eyes. Propose a council; consult on the means; but ever delay and avoid the convocation of the assembly . . . The Latins are proud; the Greeks are obstinate;

53 Violating their crusader oaths, drunken soldiers raped “pious matron, girls of marriageable age…and maidens, who, having chosen a life of chastity, were consecrated to God.” Others, “breathing murder…pilaged the holy places, trampled upon divine things, ran riot and cast down holy images of Christ and his holy mother.” To the occupants of Constantinople the Latins had become “forerunners of the Anti-Christ, the agents and harbingers of his anticipated ungodliness.” Nicetas Choniates, The Sack of Constantinople, trans. D. C. Munro, Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, Series 1, 3.1 (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1912), 15-16. For more on the Fourth Crusade see Geoffrey de Villehardouin, “Chronicles of the Fourth Crusade and the Conquest of Constantinople,” in Chronicles of the Crusades, ed. and trans. Margaret Shaw (New York: Penguin, 1972), 29-162; Alfred Andrea, Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade, Medieval Mediterranean 29 (London: Brill, 2000).
neither party will recede or retract; and the attempts at perfect union will confirm the schism and alienate the churches.\textsuperscript{54}

Now more often than not these negotiations came to nothing, but on two separate occasions Church union was, in fact, briefly achieved — at the Council of Lyon in 1274 and the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439. These were thought to be “ecumenical councils” and are still regarded as such by the Roman Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{55} And yet we know today that both Lyons and Florence ultimately failed in their attempts at union and are not considered ecumenical councils by the Orthodox Church. The reason for this, it has been often been suggested, is “holy disobedience.”

In fact, Roman Catholic historian Joseph Gill, in his monumental history of the Council of Florence, maintained that the sole stumbling block to Florentine union was the stubbornness and disobedience of one man— Mark of Ephesus—and that had Mark been silenced, or punished by the emperor for refusing to accept the decisions of this ecumenical council, the history of Christendom might well have been different.\textsuperscript{56} Gill, most would argue today, appears to overstate the council’s chances for success, and fails to recognize that Florence, like Lyons, had deeper systemic problems that explain its failure.\textsuperscript{57} Yet, there is something to be said for the fact that with both the Council of Lyons and the Council of Florence disobedience to secular and ecclesial authority goes a long way in explaining the failure of these two (so-called) ecumenical gatherings.

From the Orthodox perspective, the Council of Lyons can hardly be called either an ecumenical council (since four of the five patriarchs were absent) or a reunion council (since there was never any discussion

\textsuperscript{54} Quoted in Edward Gibbon, \textit{The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire}, vol. 6 (New York: Bigelow, Brown & Co., 1845), 422.

\textsuperscript{55} In 1974 Pope Paul VI caused a stir when he referred to Lyons as “sixth general council of the West” rather than ecumenical, although Catholic listings of the ecumenical councils since the time of Robert Bellarmine’s \textit{De Controversiis} have included both Lyons and Florence.


\textsuperscript{57} Orthodox theologian and historian John Meyendorff asked whether or not a genuine “ecumenical encounter” was even possible at Ferrara-Florence. Lacking a shared \textit{sensus ecclesiae}, he argued that it was not surprising that the Council spent days quibbling over the authenticity of texts and repeating the same old arguments that had marked the \textit{filioque} debate since the time of Photius. John Meyendorff, “Was There an Encounter between East and West at Florence?” in \textit{Rome, Constantinople, and Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies} (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 87–111.
of the theological issues dividing East and West). Indeed, Lyons is better understood as Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus’s personal submission to Rome, the resulting “union” being little more than his attempt to bring the Eastern Church along with him. Michael was keenly aware that union with the Latins had little support among the Byzantines and promised the Orthodox that any deal would leave the Church “untouched by innovation,” the only exception being the inclusion of the pope’s name in the dyptichs. Still the anti-unionists refused to go along, openly proclaiming that the Latins were heretics who must be avoided like mad dogs. Patriarch Joseph refused to participate in the upcoming council, and most of the clergy followed suit, signing an anti-unionist oath that pledged to “keep inviolate the teachings of the Savior” regardless of what might be decided at Lyons. In the end, Michael could only convince one-third of the clergy to pledge themselves to the union, as they obediently attested that “in this matter . . . we have come to the same conclusion as our God-crowned and mighty holy and Lord Emperor.” As for the disobedient majority, for the moment they could take solace in the fact that while they were at odds with God’s anointed, they were still in union with the Patriarch. However this changed immediately following the council, when Joseph resigned and John XI Beccus was elected patriarch.

John Beccus had originally been a vocal opponent of Michael’s unionist agenda, and had earlier referred to the “Italians” as heretics.
For this he was imprisoned, where he underwent a conversion of sorts while reading the works of Nicephorus Blemmydes and Nicetas of Maroneia. For eight years as patriarch John XI tried to win the clergy over by the force of his arguments, and yet despite all his efforts, both administrative and theological, he was never able to overcome their hostility to the Latin Church. When the union was formally proclaimed in Constantinople it was celebrated rather quietly in the imperial chapel at Blachernae rather than Hagia Sophia, where the anti-unionists refused to commune with the patriarch. In February of 1277 Beccus presided over a synod that hurled excommunications and anathemas against those who would not submit, defrocking any cleric who refused communion from a unionist priest. Among those excommunicated by Beccus were both Nicephorus I, Despot of Epirus, and John I Ducas of Thessaly, who later gathered their own synod at Neopatras (comprised mostly of anti-unionists who had fled Constantinople) to excommunicate Michael VIII and his followers. For his part the emperor kept busy imprisoning leading anti-unionists, even showing them off to the pope’s representatives as proof of his sincerity. But, as J.M. Hussey noted, “while Michael could compel, it was not within his power to convince.”

What is interesting about the opposition to Michael and his patriarch is the diversity and size of the group that constituted it. This was disobedience on a mass scale, comprising members of the emperor’s own family (e.g. his sister Eulogia), generals, senators, church officials, lay people, and (it was noted at the time) a great number of women. Both anti-Latin and unwilling to compromise in matters of the faith, the anti-unionists saw in the policies of Michael and Beccus everything they despised--compromise with and capitulation to Rome and its various

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62 Although his motives have been questioned by some, the evidence suggests that Beccus’s conversion was the result of a sincere search for truth. Papadakis agrees, arguing “it is useless to deny (as is often done) either the sincerity or the reality of this moment in Beccus’s religious evolution” Aristeides Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus 1283–1289* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Press, 1996), 23.


64 J. M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, 226.

errors. For example, despite the emperor’s earlier promises, the pope was now demanding that the Byzantines alter the Nicene Creed in order to profess the *filioque*. Believing this to be a heresy long ago condemned by the Church, despite all the threats from both Church and State, the anti-unionists held firm.

In the end, of course, despite the efforts of Michael and Beccus, the Union of Lyons never succeeded. By the time Michael died in 1282 Pope Martin IV had excommunicated him as a “supporter of heretics,” and his own son Andronicus II denied him the usual imperial funerary rites for his betrayal of the Orthodox faith. In quick succession Andronicus II repudiated the unionist policies of his father, forced Beccus to resign, and restored Joseph to the patriarchate. The disobedient masses had won.

The Council of Ferrara-Florence was, in many ways, far different than the Council of Lyons. Unlike Lyons it could genuinely claim to be ecumenical, in so much as the five patriarchs (or their representatives) were present and there was full and free discussion of all the contested issues. For months the two sides went back and forth on

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68 Martin’s motives were largely political. Three months before the emperor’s excommunication the pope had accepted Charles of Anjou’s plan for the restoration of a Latin Empire in Constantinople.

69 One can contrast here the opinion of Roman Catholic scholar Joseph Gill with the traditional Orthodox view of the council as found in the *Memoirs* of Sylvester Syropoulos. According to the account of Syropoulos, the Greeks werestarved into submission and only signed the union decree under a combination of imperial, financial, and psychological pressure. Although recent scholarship has been more favorable to the historicity of the *Memoirs*, there is certainly reason to question the overall objectivity of the account since Syropoulos had himself been a signatory to the union and may have written them as an apology for his own actions. See V. Laurent, ed., *Les “Mémoires” du Grand Ecclésiarque de l’Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438-1439)*, CF 9 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1971). Gill’s work emphasized that the anti-unionists enjoyed full freedom of speech throughout the council (witnessed by the fact that Mark of Ephesus remained the Greeks’
purgatory and the *filioque*—each side only becoming more frustrated by the seeming impasse that had been reached. However, increasingly members of the Byzantine delegation, men like Isidore of Kiev, Bessarion of Nicea, and George Scholarius, were swayed by the Latins’ arguments. They came to believe that the Latin teaching on the procession of the Holy Spirit was genuinely orthodox, and clearly supported by the fathers, both East and West.\(^70\)

Emperor John VIII Palaeologus, under tremendous pressure from both the pope and the unionists within his own ranks, pressed the issue. Increasingly the leading anti-unionists, men such as Mark Eugenicus of Ephesus and Anthony of Heraclea, were labeled as “traitors and Judases” who were preventing both the unity of Christ’s Church and the salvation of the Great City.\(^71\) Mark, however, remained unmoved, believing that the Latins’ texts were corrupted and their arguments contrary to the teaching of the fathers.\(^72\)

When a vote on the orthodoxy of the *filioque* was taken on May 30\(^{th}\) the Latin teaching was rejected by a 17-10 majority— the anti-unionists were still in control. However, it was at this point that holy

spokesman until the very end) and that the privations endured by the Greeks (which were genuine) were not part of a plot to extort them, but rather caused by the pope’s inability to meet the ever-increasing costs of indefinitely maintaining a large Byzantine delegation. See Joseph Gill, “The Council of Florence: A Success that Failed,” in *Personalities of the Council of Florence* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964),1–14; Joseph Gill, “The Freedom of the Greeks in the Council of Florence,” in *Church Union: Rome and Byzantium 1204-1453* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979).

\(^70\) According to Bessarion, “It was not the syllogisms . . . or the force of arguments that lead me to believe this (i.e., the Latin position), but the plain words of the doctors. For when I saw and heard them, straightway I put aside all contention and controversy and yielded to the authority of those whose words they were. . . . For I judged that the holy fathers, speaking as they did in the Holy Spirit, could not have departed from the truth and I was grieved that I had not heard their words before.” Emmanuel Candal, ed., CF 7.2 : Bessarion Nicaenus, S.R.E. Cardinalis, De Spiritus Sancti processione ad Alexium Lascarin Philanthropinum (Rome: Pontificio Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1961), 40–41.

\(^71\) The unionists argued that if the only defense left to the anti-unionists was to say that the Latins’ quotations were false (which George Scholarius called “the height of stupidity”), or to reply with lies (which was unbefitting), the union must be consummated.

\(^72\) It should be noted that modern scholarship has found many (but certainly not all) of the Latins’ texts to have been, in some way, corrupted. According to John Erickson, while “Mark’s theory of wholesale fabrication is rather farfetched . . . spurious texts did play a certain role in the ‘success’ of the council, particularly in the way in which the crucial problem of the procession of the Holy Spirit was addressed” John Erickson, “*Filioque* and the Fathers at the Council of Florence,” *The Challenge of Our Past* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991), 160.
obedience was invoked. Patriarch Joseph II, now close to death but convinced of the Latins’ orthodoxy, invited members of the delegation for private meetings, reminding them both of their collective theological ignorance and of their debt to him personally:

Why do you not listen to me? Was it not from my cell that you came out? Was it not I who raised you to the rank of bishop? Why then do you betray me? Why did you not second my opinion? Think you, then, that you can judge better than others about dogmas? I know as well as anybody else what the Fathers taught.\textsuperscript{73}

How successful was appeal to obedience by the Patriarch? Three days later, when a second vote was taken on the orthodoxy of the \textit{filioque}, the entire delegation (except Mark of Ephesus, Anthony of Heraclea, Dositheus of Monemvasia, and Sophronius of Anchialus) embraced the Latin teaching. As for Patriarch Joseph, when he died days later the Latins were convinced enough of his commitment to union to permit him burial (with honors) in the Church of Santa Maria Novella where he remains to this day.\textsuperscript{74}

When the union was finally proclaimed on July 6\textsuperscript{th} amid great pomp and pageantry, the one notable absence from the proceedings was Mark of Ephesus, who had refused to sign. In an interview with Pope Eugene shortly afterward he explained his justification for denying obedience to, what was now considered by all parties to be, an ecumenical gathering:

The councils sentenced those who would not obey the Church and kept opinions contrary to her doctrine. I express not my own opinions, I introduce nothing new into the Church, neither do I defend any errors. But I steadfastly preserve the doctrine which


\textsuperscript{74} Patriarch Joseph had told the Byzantines shortly before his death: “I will never change or vary the doctrine handed down from our fathers but will abide in it till my last breath. But since the Latins, not of themselves but from the Holy Scriptures, explain the procession of the Holy Spirit as being from the Son, I agree with them and I give my judgment that this ‘through’ gives to the Son to be cause of the Holy Spirit. I both unite with them and am in communion with them.” Syropoulus, \textit{Memoirs}, 9.19; Laurent 452–54 (Eng. trans: Gill, \textit{The Council of Florence}, 260). The patriarch had also (allegedly) left a will detailing his commitment to the union, but its authenticity remains a matter for debate.
the Church, having received from Christ the Savior, has ever kept and keeps.\textsuperscript{75}

The pope, after having failed to convince Mark to obey, demanded that he be punished, likening him to those (like Arius) who had refused to acknowledge the Council of Nicea.\textsuperscript{76} The emperor claimed that he had already guaranteed Mark safe passage back to Constantinople, but assured the pope that appropriate steps would be taken to silence Mark unless he subscribed to the union at some point after his return East.\textsuperscript{77}

Within days the Byzantine delegation began their journey back home, where Mark’s brother had already been stoking the fires of anti-unionism. By the time the Byzantines finally arrived back in Constantinople in February of 1440, the signatories had come to reject the union, wishing they too had been disobedient to pope, emperor, patriarch, and council. They cried out:

\begin{quote}
We have betrayed our faith. We have exchanged piety for impiety. We have renounced the pure sacrifice and become azymites. Let our hands, which signed such an unjust decree, be cut off! Let our tongues, which consented to the Latin faith, be plucked out! \textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

When the emperor tried to compel the clergy to commune with the unionist Patriarch Metrophanes, the leading anti-unionists left the city to lead the resistance from afar. Mark of Ephesus spent his remaining years writing against the council, urging Orthodox Christians to run from


\textsuperscript{76} Pope Eugene would later refer to “that wretched Ephesian, spewing out his poisonous thought everywhere. If only the emperor had consented to his being punished as he deserved, in the same way that Constantine permitted the punishment of Arius-- that poison of the Church-- both time and money would not have been wasted.” George Hoffman, ed., CF 1.3: \textit{Epistolae Pontificiae ad Concilium Florentinum spectantes cum indicibus ad partes 1–3} (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1946), 17–18 (Eng. trans: Nicholas Constat, “Mark Eugenicus,” in Carmelo Conticello and Vassa Conticello eds., \textit{La théologie Byzantine et sa tradition}, vol. 2 [Turnhout: Brepols, 2002], 420).

\textsuperscript{77} Andrew of Rhodes records that Mark of Ephesus had promised to accept the decrees of Florence once a new patriarch was elected in Constantinople. See Gill, \textit{The Council of Florence}, 297.

the unionists “as one runs from snakes . . . as from those who have sold and bought Christ.”

Isidore of Kiev tried to introduce the union in Moscow, entering the city behind a Latin cross with the anti-unionist monk Symeon in chains before him. Within days of including the pope’s name in the dyptichs, Isidore was in prison on charges of heresy. By the time the union was publically proclaimed in Constantinople in December of 1452, it had already been rejected by the patriarchs of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. George Gennadius Scholarius, who had urged the Greeks to union at Florence, now became the leading anti-unionist and first patriarch of Constantinople following the fall of the city to the Turks. The union was at an end, and as with Lyons, the Orthodox “heroes” of the council were those who would not subscribe to it — disobeying both Emperor and Patriarch in the name of the orthodox faith.

Conclusion

Having examined the phenomenon of resistance to secular and ecclesiastical authority in the Orthodox tradition, one would think that we should be able to construct clear and concise guidelines for when “holy disobedience” is appropriate. Unfortunately, we cannot. In the end it is a matter of conscience whether one obeys or disobeys his/her secular and religious superiors, hoping in either case that ultimately one is doing the will of God. That being said, I do believe there are at least two important principles that emerge from our study which can be used as Orthodox Christians wrestle with issues of obedience/disobedience in the Church today.

First, that there exists a primary allegiance of the Christian to the Kingdom of God that relativizes his/her allegiance to the powers of this world. This loyalty to God over all others forces Christians to recognize that occasionally secular authorities make claims upon the


80 The former unionist now wrote: “Wretched Romans, how you have gone astray! You have rejected the hope of God trusted in the strength of the Franks; you have lost your piety along with your city which is about to be destroyed. Lord have mercy on me. I testify before you that I am innocent of such transgression. Know, wretched citizens, what you are doing. Along with your impending captivity you have forsaken the faith handed down from your fathers and assented to impiety. Woe unto you when you are judged!” Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina of Doukas*, crit. ed. Vasile Grecu (Bucharest, 1958), 317 (Eng. trans: Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society and Civilization*, 388).
conscience that are far beyond their competence. This is particularly the case when secular authority claims for itself the right to rule over properly religious matters, to usurp or “pirate” the power of the Church, or to compel Christians to act in a manner contrary to the gospel of Christ.

Second, that despite the importance of ecclesiastical obedience as a religious good, Orthodox history also teaches us that resistance to religious authorities, be they patriarchs, bishops, or councils, may be necessary to protect the faith. This is especially the case when ecclesiastical authorities have been co-opted by the state or when they clearly teach contrary to the ancient faith of the Church. Obedience to the truth of the gospel is the first requirement of the Christian. When, either by their teachings or their actions, Church authorities betray that truth for personal gain or political expediency, “holy disobedience” is entirely appropriate.

These principles, important as they are, are not always easy to apply. In the Church today it is sometimes hard to separate prophetic practitioners of “holy disobedience” from quarrelsome troublemakers who are simply bloody-minded for the sake of it. For centuries individuals have invoked the examples of Saints Athanasius, Ambrose, Maximus, and Mark of Ephesus to justify their resistance to authority, and not all have been right. And yet, history also teaches that those who are today condemned for their disobedience may, in fact, be the ones remembered as “heroes” in the years to come. The principles gleaned from the history may assist us as we try to discern the truth, and as we continue wrestling with issues of power and authority, obedience and disobedience, in the Orthodox Church and the world at large.
Church–State Right-Ordering: St. Columba’s Early Medieval Example in the Insular Isles

Kim McCann

Introduction

The Eastern Christian teachings of the Desert Fathers heavily influenced the development of the pre-schismatic Church of the Insular Isles, an area that today comprises Ireland, England, Wales, and Scotland. The relationship between Church and State was influenced as well by principles rooted in the early Irish legal concept of sóerad, the freeing and ennobling of the Church by State powers. Unlike much of the early Christian world, over which Rome had imperial sovereignty, Ireland – where the initial Christianization of the Insular Isles took root – was never invaded or governed by Roman forces. As a result, the dark and medieval ages in Ireland saw a melding of pre-Christian Irish legal precepts with an acceptance of Christianity by the ruling powers, which were dynastic clans more akin to tribal governance than the Roman political system.

Sóerad Defined

Under sóerad, there was conceived to be a ‘right-ordering’ in the relationship between the Church and State, in which the latter promoted the freeing and ennobling of the Church, such that it was not subordinate to or in tension with other sources of governance in the society. This principle had been codified in the legal system of pre-Christian Ireland in the relationship between the Druidic priesthood and tribal chieftains. With the introduction of Christianity, the holy men and women of Christ were afforded the same kinds of privileges and protections sóerad had ensured for their predecessors. The Church was to be accorded freedom from the following: collection of fees by secular authorities,¹ interference on the part of secular powers in either the spiritual or earthly concerns of the monastery, compulsion to provide monks as conscripts for military

undertakings (including both fighting and military building projects conducted under rulers’ authority), and compulsion to host secular powers’ delegations in the monasteries (at great expense). Monasteries in lands over which Rome had sovereignty after the Freedom of the Church in 313 AD were not protected against these encroachments on their freedom.²

The Church was also afforded the right to be granted land by secular leaders, to receive monetary support from the authorities, and to collect tithes from the public so as not to be financially reliant exclusively on secular powers.³ The State was to respect and uphold the religious tradition of the Church, and its rulers were to turn for counsel to Church leaders to obtain insight prior to important decision-making in the secular realm.⁴

Sóerad was rooted in doctrine that framed a good ruler as a secular leader who was deserving of blessings from the divine realm. In the Christian era, a worthy king would seek to do God’s will, under guidance from holy men and women while adhering to the teachings of the Church. The underlying premise of this precept was that royal authority came from God; a priest or abbot/abbess was therefore the appropriate arbiter of who should be deemed fit to serve as ruler.⁵ The Irish legal principle was evocative of Old Testament texts such as Samuel I in which a good King’s reign produces bounty, not war and deprivation, while a bad King’s rule results in hardships.⁶ God was believed to be the source of benefits flowing from a good King’s reign, hence, only a pious King could achieve such fruits for his kingdom.⁷

The advantages to a King of forging a positive relationship with the spiritual leaders in his realm were clear within the framework of sóerad. In an era of great religious devotion, a King would be viewed as strengthening his rule if his people believed his dominion was in keeping with God’s will.⁸ Enemies would be deterred from regicidal attempts because the King had divine protection. In battle, such a King would be

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² Veitch, “The Alliance between Church and State,” 204.
⁴ Veitch, “The Alliance between Church and State,” 213.
⁵ Veitch, “The Alliance between Church and State,” 218.
⁷ Veitch, “The Alliance between Church and State,” 211–212.
⁸ Veitch, “The Alliance between Church and State,” 208.
seen to have Divine intercession at his disposal to defeat his enemies. Furthermore, he would be conjoined with Christ by receiving anointment at the hands of holy men or women. This, in turn, would solidify his standing on an eternal plane, beyond his time on the throne- a form of immortality could be conferred upon him.

**St. Columba’s Background**

The right-ordering principle was robustly manifest in the nature of the relationship between secular powers and St. Columba of Iona’s monastic paruchía, a family of monasteries, and its comarbai, a network of successor abbots-monasteries throughout the Insular Isles developed under the spiritual direction of the Columban federation. St. Columba was born in Donegal, Ireland in roughly 521 AD. He is believed to have been given his early spiritual training under the direction of St. Finian (or Ninian) of Moville in County Down. Columba’s work as a spiritual leader took place predominantly in Alban Dalriada, an area of present-day western Scotland that encompasses the Inner Hebrides. It is here that the island of Iona became the site of his original monastic establishment. At the height of the influence exerted by the Columban comarbai, the imprint of sóerad disseminated widely beyond this tiny isle. Evidence of sóerad stretched east from Iona to Lindisfarne (eastern coast of Yorkshire, England), to the Pictish region of Dunkeld and Kinrimont (now St. Andrews in Scotland, on the North Sea coast) and on to Gaul and the Frankish Carolingian court. It also shaped Church–State relations to the west of Iona, in the Irish Dalriadan sections of Ireland, heavily influencing the early Irish Christian Church. Columba anointed kings and rulers in his day. His blessing was held to confer Divine sanctioning of these leaders. He infused the values of the Church into the society at large, to the benefit of both.

**The Backdrop to Columba’s Spirituality**

Before detailing specific examples of how the principle of sóerad was manifest in the Columban tradition, it is important to frame the nature of his spiritual orientation. Although traces of the Desert

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9 Veitch, “The Alliance between Church and State,” 208.
10 Veitch, “The Alliance between Church and State,” 218.
12 Hudson, “Kings and Church,” 153.
tradition in the Insular Isles faded with the eventual transition of the Church to a more episcopal Rome-based model, and suffered erosion with dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, it is helpful to fill in the backdrop against which St. Columba’s spiritual tradition was set. In the past, scholars were not convinced that the teachings of the early monastic Fathers and Mothers of the Church from the Egyptian desert and monasteries reached as far as the Insular Isles. Research undertaken in recent years has shed much light on the sources of the early Christian world of the Insular Isles, establishing beyond question how seminal an impact the Desert tradition had.

*St. John Cassian as a Principal Link from the Desert to the Insular Isles*

A pivotal figure in this transmission was St. John Cassian. He was likely born around 360 AD in the Dobrogea, a section of Scythia Minor in which current-day Constanta, Romania is located on the Black Sea Coast. From his youth, he was fluent both in Greek and Latin. In 390 AD, he journeyed to Scetis with companion Germanus, to seek the wisdom of the Desert Fathers. Cassian wrote the teachings to which he gained access in two books called the *Institutiones* (*Institutions*) and the *Collationes* (*Conferences*). Importantly, he was received by the Desert Fathers as one of their own, and selections from his writings were incorporated into the Greek canon of Desert teachings, an indication of the esteem in which he was held. He was one of the very few Desert Fathers known to have been fluent in Latin as well as Greek, which afforded his works great receptivity in the Insular Isles where knowledge of Greek was rare. Cassian’s spirituality was influenced not only by the Desert hermits but by Evagrius of Pontus and Origen, both of whom had deep grounding in the neo-Platonic tradition. After spending a decade in the Desert, he set out for Constantinople, where St. John Chrysostom ordained him a deacon in 403 AD. Upon Chrysostom’s illegal expulsion from Constantinople, Cassian was sent as an envoy to Pope Innocent I in Rome to plead Chrysostom’s case. In about 415 AD, Cassian established two monasteries in Gaul, near Marseilles, one for nuns and the other for monks; he served the latter, St. Victor, as Abbot until his death in 432 AD.

*Cassian’s Influence on Insular Christianity*

When Cassian was at St. Victor, many sought his wisdom, including important figures in the episcopal ranks in Gaul. One such noteworthy Bishop was Eucherius of Lyons, co-founder of the Lérins...
monastery. He was inspired by Cassian’s teachings to write a letter titled *De Laude Eremi* (*In Praise of the Desert*), which encapsulated many aspects of Cassian’s work, especially from the *Conferences*, which set out “the training of the inner man and the perfection of the heart.”

An analysis of source materials found in the library of Iona in the seventh century reveals that *In Praise of the Desert*, as well as a Latin translation of Athanasius’ *Life of St. Anthony* and other patristic sources, were brought (perhaps by monks on pilgrimage to and from the Holy Land) from Gaul to the Columban monasteries on the Insular Isles. An elegiac poem commemorating Columba’s work, “Amra Choluimb Chille,” (“In Honor of Columba”) likely written shortly after Columba’s death on Iona in 597 AD, refers to the importance to the saint of both Cassian’s and St. Basil’s teachings. Likewise, a collection of teachings, the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* (*Collection of the Laws of the Irish*), promulgated in the eighth century by Insular monks, provides evidence of Columba’s reliance on Cassian’s *Conference 19* stressing the desirability of cenobitic foundations as pioneered by St. Basil in Egypt. “Altus Prosatur” (“High Creator”), a powerful poem very likely to have been written by Columba himself, reflects an eschatological framework bearing strong resemblance to Cassian’s teachings in the *Conferences*, which are rooted in Cassian’s spiritual forebears, Evagrius, Origen and the neo-Platonic tradition. Passages from the Hebraic Book of Enoch, included in Origen’s corpus, are cited in “High Creator” as well. The Columban monastic family and its spiritual descendants were deeply faithful to the sources of the Christian teachings as shaped by the early patristic teachers of the East.

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Examples of Sóerad in the Columban Tradition

One of the most dramatic manifestations of sóerad in Columba’s work stemmed from his consecration of Aidan mac Gabrain as the ruler of Alban Dalriada. The degree to which secular powers relied on their spiritual leader to define who was most worthy to serve as King was a direct function of sóerad governing the relationship between the State and the Church. Columba’s role in the selection and anointing of Aidan is strongly evocative of Samuel, Judah and other Old Testament figures who ordained kings. By virtue of having such a holy man confer blessing on him at Iona, Aidan was understood to be God’s choice as ruler.

As a consequence of this, Alban Dalriada was elevated from a relatively subordinate province of Irish Dalriada to a position of primacy in Irish Christianity, a position that gave it far greater power vis-a-vis both the Irish Church and Ireland’s governing authorities. It also established a base of secular power for Alban Dalriada that spread across the Insular Isles, to Pictland and Northumbria. The symbiotic interplay between sóerad as a defining paradigm and Columba’s deep spiritual leadership of numerous monastic communities was potent: his federations were uniquely protected in their surrounding secular societies so as to be able to survive and thrive for generations. The designation of Aidan by Columba as the God-chosen ruler, whose descendants were destined to rule in perpetuity, has echoed down to the present day. The current monarchy in Britain, the House of Windsor, is said to have descended from Aidan’s bloodline.

Columba’s holiness as a spiritual leader rendered him prophetic, enabling him to play a role in shaping other changes in ruling dynasties. He prophesied that Eochaid Buide mac Áedáin would succeed to the throne of Pictland, followed by his sons. This occurred, followed by a vastly more receptive Pictavian relationship to the Columban federation. He also prophesied that Aed mac Ainmirech’s son, Domnall mac Áedo, would succeed to the Úi Néill throne in Ireland, which likewise took place. This helped to strengthen the Alban Dalriadan model Columba exemplified in his native land.

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22 Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry*, 35.
The imprint of Columba’s sóerad-based Church-State relationship remained in evidence for centuries following his death. The 8th Century Collection of the Laws of the Irish details Gaelic Church reform texts of the Culdees or Céli Dé (members of monastic communities), working under authority of the Columban comarbai through Abbot Diarmait. It stresses the necessity of sóerad in the Church–State relationship, including the necessity of freedom of the Church from interference by the laity and their secular rulers.24

The work of the ninth century Irish Leinsterman, Sedulius Scottus, also embodied Columba’s sóerad teachings. Sedulius spent most of his adult life on the Continent, in Francia. He wrote a seminal tract for the Carolingian court on the proper relationship between the ruler and the Church, called Liber de Rectoribus Christianis (Book of the Right Christian Leader). Iona monks before Sedulius, such as Fergil (or Vergil) in Salzburg and Dicuil at the Carolingian court, had sown the seeds of Columba’s teachings and had tilled the soil of the Frankish leaders so that Sedulius’ message was welcomed.25 He counseled the monarchs to protect the privileges of the Church and to spread the Christian faith.26 He cautioned them to refrain from making important decisions regarding ecclesiastical matters without full consultation with spiritual elders.27 He also stressed that kings should be instrumental in the convening of holy synods and to assist the Church in its role in society.28

By the end of the ninth century, when the direct influence of Columba’s king-making had begun to fade in Pictland, the Columban comarbai gathered force once again and assisted King Giric in his efforts to re-establish sóerad after dismantling the prior regime’s Rome-based model of State supremacy over the Church.29 Not long after this, in what is now Perthshire in Scotland, at the start of the tenth century, King Constantine and Columban Bishop Cellach agreed near the royal monastery of Scone to re-implement sóerad as the proper relationship between Church and State according to the Irish teaching.30

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26 Veitch, “Church and State,” 203.
27 Veitch, “Church and State,” 114.
Conclusion

The wisdom of Columba’s teachings on sóerad and its role in facilitating a potent synergy between secular and spiritual leadership left a lasting imprint on the Church-State relationship beyond the ninth century. The question of whether any contemporary system of similarly symbiotic Church–State relations could be forged is beyond the scope of this paper: however, it is an important query for us to consider.
The New Emperors? Post-Soviet Presidents and Church-State Relations in Ukraine and Russia

Nikolas K. Gvosdev

Twenty years ago, the theme of this conference, “Power and Authority in Eastern Christian Experience” would have been considered by many to be of interest primarily to historians and theologians, but not particularly relevant to the political discourse underway in many of the countries which traditionally formed part of the Eastern Christian world. As the Soviet Union began to collapse, its own constituent republics and the countries of the Eastern Bloc, comprising the historic core of the Eastern Christian world, began looking to the West, and particularly the United States, for their political models.¹ The last Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the first Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, attempted to emulate Western “economic and political practices”² rather than turning to pre-Communist traditions and models.

However, it was highly unrealistic that the majority-Orthodox nations of the formerly Communist world would automatically “meekly restructure their culture, society, politics and economy along the norms provided to them from the West.”³ Almost immediately there began the search for what S. Frederick Starr has labeled the “usable past”⁴ —those traditions and elements rooted in the past that could help buttress new political and economic structures. In his study of how reform efforts were successful in Novgorod and other Russian regions, Nicolai N. Petro has concluded that it was when elites embraced a “positive political myth rooted in [the] past” that they successfully “eased the shock of cultural discontinuity, broadened the social constituency in favor of reforms, and

contributed to dramatically higher levels of confidence in local
government.”

In the two largest Orthodox countries of the post-Soviet states—
Ukraine and the Russian Federation—there has been an ongoing search
for inspiration from the past. Post-Soviet Russian leaders, particularly
over the last ten years, have been interested in finding and applying
useful precedents from their history and culture, holding conferences and
workshops designed to plumb the past for useful insights. Vladislav
Surkov, the deputy chief of staff to president Dmitry Medvedev, and one
of the articulators of the ideology of United Russia, the ruling party, told
United Russian party activists at a 2006 congress: "If a people cannot
develop their own images and thoughts ... then they will have, in general,
no political or cultural thought of their own ... We should have our own
voice... We should have our own version of political language.” To
some extent, this search for roots in Russia is to help differentiate the
Russian experience from that of Western Europe and North America; as
Surkov observed, the “new democratic order arises from European
civilization. But within this there is a specifically Russian version.”

Former president (and current prime minister) Vladimir Putin
himself draws inspiration from the past as he charts policy; “the Russia
he repeatedly invokes is a great, powerful, divinely ordained state that
stretches back a thousand years.” Moreover, Russian elites acknowledge
that part of that Russian inheritance is the East Roman (Byzantine)
legacy—and the Byzantine experience is no longer seen as part of
Russia’s curse (separating it from the Western world) but contains within
it the seeds of Russia’s regeneration as a global power in the twenty-first
century. As Nina Khrushcheva observed: “Under Boris Yeltsin, the
double eagle got little play, but in the Putin years its significance has
come to equal that of the Communist red star. Byzantium and its symbols
are discussed on talk shows, their imperial grandeur cited as an example
for Russia’s own future glory; Orthodox priests with distinguished beards

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5 Petro, 44.
6 For instance, in the area of foreign policy, the former foreign minister Igor S. Ivanov
makes the case that post-Soviet Russia can and should learn from its past experiences,
and cited some of the work being done by the ministry to examine the Russian past for
Institution Press, 2002), 4, 26-29.
8 Vladislav Surkov, “Russian Political Culture: A View from Utopia,” in Russian
Political Culture: A View from Utopia, ed. Konstantin Remchukov (Moscow:
Nezavisimaia Gazeta, 2007), 7.
read sermons on how Russia, if it is to achieve greatness, must look into its Christian predecessor's past.” In 2008 the documentary, “The Destruction of the Empire: a Byzantine Lesson,” authored and produced by Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov), a conservative cleric with close ties to the Kremlin, aired on Russian state television—and proved to be so popular that an encore was scheduled, along with an additional discussion—and provoked discussion and debate as to the appropriate uses (or misuses) of the Byzantine tradition. Yet among supporters and critics alike, what was striking about the film and the subsequent conversations it engendered was its attempt to make the historical past relevant to current conditions—especially in the way in which Emperor Basil II (reigned 976-1025) was held up as a model of leadership to be studied and emulated.11

While Russia’s post-Soviet leadership has turned to imperial pasts—both Byzantine and Russian—for inspiration, in Ukraine, it is the legacy of the Cossack hetmanate (particularly the seventeenth-century hetmans like Petro Konashevych-Sahaidachny, Bogdan Khmelnitsky and Ivan Mazepa)—which for centuries fought for autonomy and freedom for the Orthodox Church—which contemporary Ukrainian politicians cite as their inspiration.12 When he was inaugurated as president of Ukraine in January 2005, Viktor Yushchenko “also took the symbolic oath of hetman, or leader of Cossacks - the historic defenders of Ukraine against foreign oppression.” 13 In contrast to the anti-Western tinge that is associated with current Russian interest in the Byzantine

11 “A Byzantine sermon,” The Economist, February 14, 2008, at http://www.economist.com/node/10701960?story_id=10701960 [accessed December 26, 2010]. Basil II is praised for having created a “stabilization fund” to cushion the economy against shocks, for campaigning against “oligarchs” who sought to concentrate power at the expense of both the state and ordinary people, and struggling against “separatists” who sought to divide the empire. This led The Economist to note, “The film's usage of modern words and imagery is so conspicuous that the moral cannot escape a Russian viewer.” The film can be watched via this link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VP9pMVAeULF [accessed December 27, 2010]. A copy of the script is available (in Russian) at http://www.taganrog.orthodoxy.ru/index.php?id=5229 [accessed December 27, 2010].
Empire, embracing the Cossack brotherhood (*sich*) is seen as a way for Ukraine to demonstrate its membership in the European and Western community of nations—but on its own terms.\(^\text{14}\) To the extent that the hetmanate viewed itself as an Orthodox Christian commonwealth, an appeal to its traditions is also part of the process of reclaiming the Eastern Christian experience as something relevant to twenty-first century life and politics.

One of the areas where the influence of the past can be observed is in relations between the Orthodox Church and the executive branch in both Russia and Ukraine. In the traditional conception of the relationship between Church and state in the East, the holder of the supreme executive power—the emperor, the prince, the tsar—enjoyed a privileged position within the Church; he (or in some cases, she\(^\text{15}\)) was not simply an ordinary member of the laity. In the twelfth century, the canonist Theodore Balsamon, patriarch of Antioch, asserted that “Orthodox emperors have the right to teach Christian people and like priests burn incense as an act of worship to God.”\(^\text{16}\) Russian emperors, at the time of their coronation, entered the sanctuary to take communion, and explicitly claimed temporal headship over the affairs of the Orthodox Church within the boundaries of the empire (as per the decree issued by Emperor Paul I on April 5, 1797).\(^\text{17}\) Eusebius, in his *Life of Constantine*, set the pattern for considering the emperor as a quasi-hierarch of the Church, as its protector and benefactor, noting: “He exercised a peculiar care over the church of God: and whereas, in the several provinces there were some who differed from each other in judgment, he, like some general bishop constituted by God, convened synods of his ministers.”\(^\text{18}\)

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\(^{15}\) Empress Catherine the Great of Russia, for instance, was addressed by Georgian Orthodox bishops as the “Mother of all Orthodox Christians”, the protector and benefactor of the Church. Cf. Nikolas K. Gvosdev, *Imperial Policies and Perspectives Toward Georgia, 1763-1819* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 28.


\(^{18}\) Chapter XLIV. A copy of Eusebius’ *The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine* is archived by Paul Halsall of the Fordham University Medieval Studies Center as part of the online *Medieval Sourcebook*, at [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/vita-constantine.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/vita-constantine.html) [accessed December 23, 2010].
secular ruler was also expected to use the power of his office to turn people to the “true faith” and to mediate to solve schisms when the hierarchs themselves were unable to bring about unity. The Russian Church reiterated this “special role” played by the Emperor; even as late as 1906, the Pre-Sobor consultation, in its “12th point”, declared: “The Emperor, being of the Orthodox faith, is the supreme patron of the Orthodox Church and the guardian of her well-being.”

While Cossack hetmans were not consecrated to their position, as heads of the Cossack brotherhood, they nevertheless also considered themselves to be protectors and benefactors of the Orthodox Church, and could influence the selection of hierarchs and the outcome of church councils. But perhaps the most important precedent for contemporary Ukraine was the role of the “chief executive” of the Cossack host in restoring an independent Orthodox hierarchy in Ukraine, after the existing bishops had agreed to the terms of the union with the Catholic Church in Brest in 1596. It was the hetman, Petro Konashevych-Sahaidachny, who negotiated with Patriarch Theophanes of Jerusalem (and who threatened to deprive the patriarch of Cossack protection when traveling from Moscow back to the Ottoman Empire should he refuse the hetman’s request) who succeeded in getting Iov Boretsky consecrated as Metropolitan of Kyiv (Kiev) in 1620, as well as filling other vacant sees with Orthodox bishops. In addition, when dealing with competing ecclesiastical hierarchies (those who supported the Union of 1596 and those who were against it), the Cossack leaders could use their temporal authority to hand over parishes and monasteries to the control of the faction they supported—another precedent that has echoes in current developments in Ukraine. Having restored an Orthodox hierarchy in the ancient lands of Rus’, the Cossack hetmans did not then stand aside to let the Church run its own affairs but considered themselves the “lay protectors” of the Orthodox Church within their territories.

Twenty years ago, the prevailing assumption was that the largest components of the traditionally Eastern Christian heartland had definitively entered into a post-Constantinian age and that political leaders would not seek to restore this earlier model of Church-state relations. The regime would no longer be the protector and sponsor of

19 Quoted in Dimitry Pospielovsky, The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 196.
21 Plokhy, 134-35.
22 The Church-state status quo that had evolved in the East Roman/Byzantine realm in the fourth century, to some extent, set the “Orthodox norm” through to the modern age. As
the Church—as in the tsarist period—nor would it be the Church’s active opponent—as during Soviet times. From henceforth, Church and state would go their separate ways. The 1990 “Law on Freedom of Conscience” 23 envisioned a Church-state relationship based on absolute separation; there was no sense of Church and state forming a single, united commonwealth. Article 5, for instance, proclaimed that “all religions and denominations are equal under the law” and forbade “the establishment of any advantages of restrictions with respect to one religion or denomination over others.” In that same article, the Church was banned from participating “in the activity of political parties.” Article 17 permitted local councils to return property to the Church (or to set up long-term leasing arrangements) but did not mandate that the government had to provide restitution for real estate that had been seized from the Church after the Revolution. Article 29 was to transform the Council for Religious Affairs (at both the union and republican levels) from an instrument of control over the Church into an “informational, consultative and expert center.” The legislation adopted by the Russian Federation in that same year went even further, disbanding the Council for Religious Affairs and signaling the “complete nonintervention by the state in religious affairs.”24

After the dissolution of the USSR, both Ukraine and Russia set themselves up, in constitutional terms, as secular republics, with the separation of church and state written into law, and no special status for the Orthodox Church. Article 35 of the Ukrainian Constitution proclaims: “The Church and religious organizations in Ukraine are separated from the State, and the school — from the Church. No religion shall be recognized by the State as mandatory.” Nothing in Chapter V—which outlines the duties of the presidency—contains any reference to involvement in religious affairs, and while there is the requirement that the president have a command of the state language (Article 103), there is no religious test for holding office. Similarly, the Russian Constitution

Alexander Schmemann observes, “The conversion of the Emperor Constantine resulted in the greatest change that the Church had ever undergone. Its significance was by no means limited to the altered relations between Church and state—the external conditions of Church life. Far more important were the developments in the mind of Christianity itself, the profound internal transformation that took place gradually in the Church community.” Alexander Schmemann, The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy, trans. Lydia W. Kesich (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 62. 23 The text of the law was published in Pravda, October 9, 1990, 1. 24 Mikhail Zherebyatev, “Revising Russian Religious Legislation,” Prism 8:4 (April 30, 2002), at http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=20287&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=224 [accessed January 2, 2011].
proclaims: “Everyone shall be guaranteed the right to freedom of conscience, to freedom of religious worship, including the right to profess, individually or jointly with others, any religion, or to profess no religion, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious or other beliefs, and to act in conformity with them.” (Article 28) As in Ukraine, there is no reference to any religious duties in the section on the presidency (Chapter IV). [In contrast, the Constitution of Greece (the Hellenic Republic) explicitly opens “In the name of the Holy and Cons substantial and Indivisible Trinity” and proclaims (Article 3): “The prevailing religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ.”] So, in constitutional terms, Russian and Ukrainian presidents have no formal rights or obligations vis-à-vis the Orthodox Church.

In a post-Constantinian environment, the Church would be left to its own resources, and it would conduct its affairs without reference to or the involvement of the civil power. To paraphrase U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, under such conditions the government (and its officials) should not attempt to set up a church; to pass laws which aid one religion or prefer one religion over another; or to “openly or secretly participate in the affairs of any religious organization or groups.”

Yet the older notion, set forth by the Emperor Justinian in his famous Sixth Novella (535), that church and state should cooperate to establish harmony (symphonia) for the good of the commonwealth, continues to exert an influence on thinking among the hierarchs, some of the clergy and some political leaders in both Ukrainian and Russian society. Church and state are not seen as separate institutions, but two types of authority—spiritual and secular—both charged with promoting the welfare of society. The classic ideal of ”symphony,” therefore, encourages the government to take a very close interest in the well-being of the national church, which in turn works for the benefit of the nation. It also means that the president is expected to take up some of the functions that, in the past, were exercised by Orthodox emperors, monarchs and other leaders.

However, none of this is mandated by law. The extent to which Russian and Ukrainian presidents have assumed quasi-imperial/quasi-hetmanal roles vis-à-vis the Church has depended on a number of factors: the president’s own personal faith and sense of commitment to the Church; his conception of the presidential role; and his assessment as to whether being seen as a protector and defender of the Church resonates with his political supporters and with the voters in general. Boris Yeltsin was respectful of the Church but not particularly pious.

While the Orthodox Church did succeed in gaining privileges and successfully lobbied his administration on a number of policy issues, Yeltsin accommodated the Church because he felt it helped him politically, not because he saw himself as continuing in the historic roles of the emperors and tsars.\(^{26}\)

In contrast, Vladimir Putin viewed himself as an active member of the Church but also saw the Church as part and parcel of the Russian system\(^{27}\)--an attitude shared to some extent by his successor Dmitry Medvedev. Indeed, as Irina Papkova has concluded, “Medvedev is, by all accounts, an active parishioner in the Orthodox church to a higher degree than his predecessor V. Putin, inspired perhaps by Russia’s religiously activist first lady Svetlana Medvedev.”\(^{28}\)

Both Putin and Medvedev have used quasi-symphonic language to describe the relationship between Church and state, even when acknowledging the post-Constantinian outlook of the constitution. For instance, after the enthronement of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow in 2009, Medvedev proclaimed that the event “creates new conditions for a fully-fledged … dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state.”\(^{29}\) In February 2010, Putin addressed the patriarch as follows: “Under your leadership, the dialogue of the Church with state and public organizations in the resolution of important social problems is notably expanding and is being filled with new content. The influence of the Russian Church and Moscow Patriarchate is growing not only in Russia but also abroad.”\(^{30}\) The moves towards a greater establishment of the Orthodox Church in Russia led one observer of the church-state relationship to conclude that both Putin and Medvedev have “willfully undermine[d] the constitutional principles of secularism,

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\(^{27}\) Zoe Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia After Communism* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 128, 130.


nondiscrimination and equality through a variety of special privileges, cooperation agreements and legislative initiatives.”

The first president of post-Soviet Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, was a former member of the Politburo of the Ukrainian Communist Party who after Ukraine gained its independence threw his support behind the project of creating a distinct Ukrainian autocephalous Church independent of the Moscow Patriarchate, seeing this as part and parcel of the Ukrainian state- and nation-building project. His successor Leonid Kuchma, on taking office, distanced himself from this effort and issued a statement (July 29, 1994) pledging to uphold the separation of church and state and the strict neutrality of the Ukrainian state towards religious questions. The next two presidents of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovych, have both presented themselves as faithful sons of the Orthodox Church, but with very different jurisdictional allegiances; Yushchenko to the Orthodox groups which have separated themselves from Moscow, and Yanukovych to the jurisdiction of the Moscow patriarchate—and both have used their position as president to extend favor and support to their preferred choice.

The Case of Russia

While post-Soviet Russian presidents are often compared to the tsars of old, particularly given the vast panoply of powers that they wield, for the most part, they have not claimed the symbolic and liturgical roles of the former emperors. When Boris Yeltsin, the first president of post-Soviet Russia died, he was buried using the office prescribed for any ordinary member of the laity. Andrei Zolotov observed that “the Book of Psalms was read overnight, as befits laymen, over Yeltsin’s coffin by Moscow seminarians – and not the Gospels, as tradition prescribes for priests and the emperor.” However, in a conscious echo of past practice, Yeltsin was identified by his title (president) and his name and patronymic, instead of the formula “the

servant of God Boris”, which, as Zolotov also noted, “used to be reserved solely for royalty. That’s how the emperor and his immediate family were commemorated in the liturgy before the revolution – by their name and patronymic. It has never been done since then.”

Neither Putin nor Medvedev has asked for or been extended the privileges of being able to enter the sanctuary area to make their offerings, which Canon LXIX of the Sixth Ecumenical Council “in Trullo” (691) permits to the emperor, nor have either played any liturgical function such as censing the icons, bestowing blessings or preaching to congregations—with one notable exception; President Putin did speak at the ceremony in Christ the Savior Cathedral, at the church service, which proclaimed the reunion of the Moscow Patriarchate with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in 2007, declaring: “Unity of the Orthodox Church is the necessary precondition for unity across the entire Russian world.”

Neither president has ever been escorted inside the altar area to observe services. For Christmas services in January 2011, prime minister Putin, attending the small village church of the Intercession of the Mother of God in the village of Turginovo in the Tver region, simply stood in the midst of the congregation. President Medvedev and his wife, First Lady Svetlana Medvedev, stood on the right side of the ambo in Christ the Savior Cathedral, but outside the iconostasis, in the spot that is usually reserved for dignitaries.

Yet, in other areas, the imperial legacy is being imitated. One of the roles of the emperor was to mend schisms within the Church. As president, Yeltsin played no role in facilitating talks between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, which had split in the 1920s over disagreements as to how to deal

36 These were functions that Byzantine emperors did exercise; cf. Deno J. Geanakoplos, “Church and State in the Byzantine Empire: A Reconsideration of the Problem of Caesaropapism,” Church History 34:4 (December 1965): 390-391.
with the reality of Soviet control of Russia. Nor was ending the schism a priority for his administration, and the talks dragged on for years.

In contrast, Putin took an interest in this question, and appears to have played a pivotal role in helping to end this division. While talks between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia had been reaching accord on many issues, and the decisions by the Moscow Patriarchate to canonize the imperial family as “passion bearers” and to recognize more of the “new martyrs” lost during Soviet times met key demands of the exile Russian church, most observers credited Putin with playing “a key role in facilitating reunification.”

In particular, the event that many believe broke the logjam was the 2003 meeting between Putin and the hierarchs of the exile jurisdiction. The Russian president told the assembled hierarchs and senior clergy: “I want to assure all of you that this godless regime is no longer there. You are sitting with a believing president.”

One is left with the impression that the event which cemented the reunion was the declaration of faith made by the Russian president. Certainly Patriarch Aleksii II gave credit to the Russian president, noting that “President Vladimir Putin's meeting with Metropolitan Laurus in New York in 2003 greatly contributed to the reunification efforts, showing to ROCOR that ‘not a fighter against God, but an Orthodox Christian is at the country's helm.’”

In a post-Constantinian world, the faith preferences of the chief executive of a secular republic shouldn’t matter to hierarchs working to solve an internal Church schism. Putin’s declaration of faith in New York, however, hearkened back to the decree issued by the Moscow Council of the Russian Orthodox Church on December 2/15, 1917, “On the Legal Status of the Russian Orthodox Church”, which declared that the “head of the Russian state … must belong to the Orthodox Church.”

Another imperial role that Putin and Medvedev have seemed to adopt is that of patron and benefactor of the Church. Again, the contrast with Yeltsin is indicative. Yeltsin certainly extended a number of favors and benefits (such as the return of some property and tax concessions) to

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39 See, for instance, press coverage, such as David Holley, “Russian Orthodox Church Ends 80-Year Split,” Houston Chronicle, May 18, 2007, A19.
the Orthodox Church, but did so from his sense that aiding the Orthodox Church was part and parcel of rebuilding the country’s moral and ethical framework so as to sustain liberal-democratic principles, that support for Orthodoxy helped to advance the repudiation of the Soviet past, or out of political calculations. The latter was the driving force behind Yeltsin’s ultimate acceptance of the 1997 “Law on Religious Freedom” which modified the 1990 legislation by creating a two-tiered system of faith communities in Russia, with “traditional” communities like the Orthodox Church enjoying more benefits and privileges and “new faiths” facing a series of restrictions on their activities; Yeltsin fought this legislation for years and even vetoed it when it first passed the Russian Duma in 1997 but ultimately concluded that it was politically safer to sign it into law, which he did in September 1997.43

His successor, Vladimir Putin, both as president and as prime minister, has been a more enthusiastic proponent of church-state cooperation in advancing the common interests of the Russian commonwealth. Addressing Church leaders during a reception to celebrate the 1020th anniversary of the baptism of Rus’, Putin declared: “The state will continue to support the initiatives of the church aimed at strengthening civil and interregional accord, its social, cultural, educational and charitable mission. . . . It was the position of the Russian Orthodox Church that contributed to the creation of the Russian state both as a multinational and a multi-confessional one.”44 This has continued during the Medvedev administration. During his 2010 visit to Russia, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople commented on this shift, telling Medvedev, “We are happy for the flourishing, very successful cooperation of the Russian Orthodox church and the state. The Russian leadership and the leadership of the Russian Orthodox church have written a new page in history.”45

In three areas, Putin and Medvedev have given the Church far more than it received during the Yeltsin period. During the Yeltsin administration, the school system remained resolutely secular; now, a “religious culture and secular ethics” course, which highlights the role Orthodoxy has played in the formation of Russian society, has been

43 See the discussion of the Yeltsin period in Wallace L. Daniel, The Orthodox Church and Civil Society in Russia (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2006), 54-70.
introduced “in an experimental fashion” in nineteen regions of Russia as part of the federal curriculum, and Medvedev has signaled he supports the addition of a voluntary “Orthodox component in the federal public school curriculum.” While this is not a return to the mandatory Orthodox catechism classes that existed in Russian schools in pre-revolutionary times, the Church, after years of lobbying, has managed to gain a foothold in the public school system.

Under the Yeltsin administration, clergymen were permitted to minister to the armed forces or to state institutions, but did so at their own resources. The Church requested that formal chaplains—paid as government officials—be reinstated, and in July 2009 a presidential decree issued by Medvedev authorized “providing priests already ministering to the armed forces state salaries, effectively opening the door for the introduction of the military Chaplaincy.” In March 2010, responding to direction from both the president and the prime minister, the Ministry of Defense began to define the legal status of chaplains; chaplains are to be assigned to units based on the “preferences of individual army units”, which in essence will favor the Orthodox Church, since most Russians, whether practicing or not, claim an affiliation to it.

But the most significant and wide reaching “gift” has had to do with property. The 2010 Russian Federal Law “On the Restitution of Religious Property” (signed into law by President Dmitry Medvedev on November 30, 2010) provides for both real estate and movable property that had once belonged to the Church which is now in public ownership to be either transferred back to the Church’s ownership or for the Church to have “free use” of it. This is not merely a symbolic gesture. As one news report concluded, “Real estate analysts have said that given the value of land in Moscow and other cities, the law could put the Church in the league of the gas and railroad monopolies, Gazprom and Russian Railways.” Prime Minister Vladimir Putin made the decisive push to get the Economics Ministry—which had been drafting legislation since 2007—to complete its work, and has also tasked the Culture Ministry to begin work on related legislation that would allocate state funds to

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46 Papkova, 24.
47 Papkova, 26.
parishes and monasteries to rebuild or repair derelict churches and buildings.\(^{49}\)

While these steps do not amount to establishment of the Orthodox Church as the state church—and in theory other religious groups (such as Jews or Muslims) can avail themselves of these provisions, they do reflect a major shift in the position of the Church in Russian society. What is interesting, however, is that these steps—on education, on restoring chaplains, and on the return of property—did not arise from “pressure from below”, that is, from demands being articulated by a broad base of society. Instead, they were initiatives taken by state leaders who wished to bestow these benefits on the Church. Patriarch Kirill himself noted, one day after the bill on restoring Church property was signed into law, that the measure did not have grass-roots support.

Speaking with members of the Synodal Department for Relations between State and Society in Moscow, the Patriarch expressed disappointment at the reaction of society to the new course of relations between the Church and the Kremlin. "In the field of relations between church and state there are no longer any questions of principle that remain to be resolved . . . All three outstanding issues - the presence of religion in schools, the clergy in the army and the return of property illegally confiscated from the Church – have been resolved. " Yet something is still missing: the broad support of society for those goals. Kirill denounced a "hostile reaction from the majority of public opinion."\(^{50}\)

Some have raised the point that a Church that is dependent on the executive power for its privileges and position will be overly supportive of whatever initiatives the secular power puts forward. The Russian Orthodox Church certainly does not find itself supporting the political opposition to the Putin-Medvedev tandem and, citing non-interference in secular political matters, does not challenge the swath of domestic and foreign policies implemented by the government. But there are limits to what the presidency can demand of the Church when it comes to matters that are deemed as touching directly on the Church’s competencies. One question—again with echoes from Byzantine history—has been relations with the Church of Rome.


Although Putin has always considered himself a faithful Orthodox Christian, he was also in favor of improved relations with the Vatican, as part of an overall strategy of improving Russia’s relations with Europe. His outreach to the Pope of Rome—Putin visited Pope John Paul II in 2000 and 2003 and Pope Benedict XVI in 2007—did strain his relationship with the Moscow Patriarchate.51 In his meetings with the Catholic pontiff, the Russian president did not limit the discussions to “secular” matters but did raise the subject of the relationship between the Churches; his foreign policy aide Sergei Prikhodko noted after the 2007 Putin-Benedict meeting, “The president favours improving relations between the two Churches.”52 In 2009, Medvedev also met with Benedict, and upgraded Russia’s relations with the Vatican, permitting the Catholic Church to have an apostolic nuncio in Moscow.53

But there are also limits to what the president could do. Neither Putin nor Medvedev have been able to compel the Russian Orthodox Church to issue a formal invitation to the Pope to visit Russia, a sine qua non for any papal visit, nor could they force the pace of Orthodox-Catholic dialogue. While the Russian president was willing to start a process, the presidential administration made it clear that he would not involve himself as a “middleman” in intra-Church dialogue.54 This also points to other areas where the Russian president, although assuming some “imperial” functions, falls short of taking up the full mantle of the tsars vis-à-vis the Church. In the post-Soviet period, the Russian Orthodox Church does not turn to the president for permission to convene councils or confirm their actions (a routine practice in Byzantine and tsarist practice).55 The Moscow Patriarchate has made it clear it

51 Anderson, 193.
55 See, for instance, the letter addressed to Emperor Theodosius by the hierarchs of the Second Ecumenical Council (381), thanking him for permission both to assemble and also for the ratification of the Council’s decisions. The Orthodox Church of Estonia has published this letter, taking the 1899 translation made by Henry R. Percival, as part of its collection of “Documents of the Second Ecumenical Council (The First Council of Constantinople), at http://www.orthodoxa.org/GB/orthodoxy/canonlaw/canons2econcileGB.htm [accessed...
absolutely opposes the restoration of any sort of State Council for Religious Affairs or tsarist-style ministry for church matters to supervise the Church. Most significantly, neither Putin nor Medvedev has the ability to appoint the patriarch or otherwise “steer” the election. Indeed, in 2009, after the death of Patriarch Aleksii, there were clear signals that the Kremlin wanted to see Metropolitan Kliment of Kaluga, a leader of the traditionalist camp and someone considered to be “more ‘willing to be subservient’ to the government’s interests”, become the new patriarch, instead of Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and the head of the Department of External Church Affairs, who ultimately was elected. Moreover, president, Putin had appointed Kliment, rather than Kirill, to be the Church’s representative to the “Public Chamber”, an advisory body to the president.

So the Russian president has only partially imitated his imperial predecessors, and what has emerged today is an odd hybrid of expectations drawn from the past of how a Russian leader ought to relate to the Orthodox Church combined with the continued legal supremacy of the notion of the secular state.

The Case of Ukraine

After Ukraine achieved independence in 1991, the Orthodox Church on its territory splintered into competing jurisdictions. The bulk of parishes and priests remain part of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), the only jurisdiction recognized as canonical by the established patriarchates; returning émigrés repatriated the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) to Ukrainian soil; with the backing of Ukraine’s first post-Soviet president, Leonid Kravchuk, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyivan Patriarchate (UOC-KP) was set up, combining some of the UAOC communities with ex-Moscow-Patriarchal communities; and there are some smaller splinter jurisdictions which also claim to be the authentic Ukrainian Orthodox Church. While most parishes and priests remain affiliated with the UOC-MP, the allegiances of Ukrainians are much more fluid. While each jurisdiction has its core membership (polling data indicates that 15.4 percent of Ukrainians identify as members of the UOC-MP, 11.7 percent

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January 6, 2011]. Tsar Nicholas II refused to give his permission for a Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church to convene; this permission was only granted by the Provisional Government, which had inherited imperial authority, in 1917.

Papkova, 6.

Blitt, 1342.
as members of the UOC-KP, and 0.7 percent as members of the UAOC), more than half of Ukrainian Orthodox decline to specify “which” Ukrainian Orthodox Church they are members of.\textsuperscript{58}

The fluidity of the situation of the Church in Ukraine has created conditions which make it difficult for presidents to assume a post-Constantinian stance and in fact invite imitation of imperial and hetmanal precedents. Frank E. Sysyn asserts: “Neutrality in Orthodox affairs is, in fact, an impossible goal for the Ukrainian central or regional governments . . .”\textsuperscript{59} Not surprisingly, therefore, despite the formal constitutional proclamations of the separation of church and state, Ukrainian presidents have often become directly involved in Church affairs.

Given the divisions in Ukraine among the Orthodox—meaning that no hierarch commands the allegiance of all the faithful—the president has, at times, assumed a quasi-liturgical role in “national” celebrations, such as Ukrainian independence day. For instance, President Yushchenko dispatched his brother, Pyotr Yushchenko, to Jerusalem to obtain the “Holy Fire” at Pascha; the holy light was then brought to St. Sophia Cathedral to be given to the president, who then passed it to the representatives of the different jurisdictions. The president would also deliver a Paschal address to the nation at St. Sophia’s.\textsuperscript{60}

The first president of post-Soviet Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, having been the Ukrainian Communist Party’s secretary of ideology during the Soviet period, was well aware of the importance of having a national, autocephalous Orthodox Church as part of his state-building project (as well as the historical precedents set by the Cossack hetmans), but distrusted the émigré Ukrainian Orthodox who were already attempting to set up a separate Ukrainian jurisdiction. He was already close to the exarch of Ukraine for the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko), who had, in 1990, become the head of the UOC-MP, the autonomous Orthodox Church in Ukraine affiliated to Moscow. Kravchuk appealed to Patriarch Aleksii of Moscow to grant full autocephaly to the UOC-MP in March 1992, but this request was denied

\textsuperscript{59} Sysyn, 17.
and Filaret was ordered removed from his position.\footnote{John B. Dunlop, “The Russian Orthodox Church as an ‘Empire-Saving’ Institution,” *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 23.} Faced with these setbacks, Kravchuk then encouraged Filaret to reach out to the Ukrainian Autocephalists and brokered an uneasy union between bishops, clergy, and communities leaving the Moscow Patriarchate and the UAOC to create the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) on June 25-26, 1992. Using his position as president, Kravchuk was able to favor the UOC-KP in terms of encouraging members of the UOC-MP and UAOC to join the new jurisdiction, returning property (such as the historic St. Vladimir’s/Volodymyr’s Cathedral and St. Michael’s Monastery in Kyiv) and treating the UOC-KP as the de facto “national” church of Ukraine.\footnote{Ramet, 255-257.}

Having been stymied by Moscow, Kravchuk then focused on lobbying Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in 1993 to recognize the legitimacy, canonicity and autocephaly of the UOC-KP. The Ukrainian Council for Religious Affairs, under Arsen Zinchenko, a presidential appointee, also worked to lobby for the interests of the UOC-KP.\footnote{Dunlop, 23, 25.}

Kravchuk, however, ran into some limitations. He could use the power of the presidency to engineer a union of the UAOC with Filaret and his defectors and to influence the selection of Filaret as the deputy to Patriarch Mstyslav (Skrypnyk), an émigré hierarch who had been enthroned in 1990 as the head of the UAOC and who then became the first head of the UOC-KP. But Kravchuk did not succeed in getting Filaret elected as patriarch in 1993 when Mstyslav died nor could he prevent part of the UAOC from repudiating the union and recreating their separate jurisdiction. Most importantly, given that most priests and parishes remained part of the Moscow Patriarchate, Kravchuk could not simply proscribe the UOC-MP. Indeed, growing hostility to his presidency from the Russophile southern and eastern parts of Ukraine were a contributing factor to the defeat of his 1994 bid for re-election.\footnote{Sysyn, 12.}

His successor, Leonid Kuchma, seemed to adhere to a much more post-Constantinian view of his role as president. In 1995 he expressed his opinion that “as an individual”, he would “be happy if the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were united. But as President, he opposes attempts to create a "state church" (he was referring to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate). The President also said he had no authority to intervene and would not intervene in conflicts...
between the different branches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church …”

Significantly, he took the decision to preserve the “neutral” status of the historic eleventh century St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, claimed by all Orthodox jurisdictions (as well as the Eastern-rite Catholics) by confirming its status as a museum.

In his second term, however, in order to consolidate his position and gain maneuvering room vis-à-vis Russia, he began to play the Church card. At times he spoke about the importance of having a united Ukrainian autocephalous Church as part of state-building, linking this back to the hetmans and the project of Bogdan Khmelnitsky. At other times, he seemed to endorse a formal “split” in Ukrainian Orthodoxy, creating two churches—the UOC-MP and uniting the UOC-KP and the UAOC under the Patriarch of Constantinople. Rather than leaving negotiations “up to the Church,” Kuchma involved the Council for Religious Affairs, sending its chairman, Viktor Bondarenko, to visit Moscow and Istanbul and to hold talks in Zurich. Filaret, who had succeeded in being elected as patriarch in 1995, complained, “We do not know what was discussed at those talks, but the fact that they were held behind our back testifies that some murky business is being done.”

The 2004 presidential race further politicized the Church situation, because the UOC-MP came out very strongly in favor of Viktor Yanukovych. It meant that the ultimate winner of the elections, Viktor Yushchenko, who had attended a UOC-KP parish during the 1990s, was less likely to assume Kuchma’s earlier stance of neutrality. As Frank Sysyn concluded, “Although Yushchenko consistently declared after the elections that the state should not determine religious issues, the new Ukrainian government has to face the reality that a major Orthodox church tied to a center in Russia had campaigned against it.” Moreover, Patriarch Filaret was actively lobbying for direct state involvement, for the president not to assume a post-Constantinian role. He declared,

68 Sysyn, 14-15.
70 Sysyn, 17.
“[T]he important positive factor is that the president really wishes to have a single Local Ukrainian Orthodox Church… This problem can and must be resolved by a Unifying Church Council involving all Ukrainian supporters of the Local Church, including patriotically— minded Orthodox believers who are now members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate. I think that such people exist, and that they will attend this council, but only if the state facilitates the project.”\(^{71}\) At the beginning of his term, Yushchenko pledged to church leaders that he would commit the government to efforts to resolve the issues dividing Ukraine’s Orthodox faithful. The head of the presidential administration, Oleksandr Zinchenko, held meetings with Bartholomew in Istanbul in 2005.\(^{72}\) During his term, Yushchenko continued his efforts to negotiate with both the Ecumenical Patriarch as well as with the Russian Orthodox Church to facilitate creation of a separate, autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church around the UOC-KP.\(^{73}\) When Bartholomew visited Kyiv in 2008, the president openly appealed to him: “I believe that a national self-governing church will emerge in Ukraine, and I ask your holiness for your blessing for our dreams, for truth, for hope, for our country.”\(^{74}\)

Yushchenko’s advocacy for an autocephalous Church and his patronage of UOC-KP and UAOC churches (although he would also attend UOC-MP churches as well) led the UOC-MP to assign blame on the president for the continuation of the schism. The president’s choice of church was not considered to be a private matter, and, as a spokesman for the UOC-MP noted, “A leader who accepts sacraments with schismatics isn’t only a participant in the schism, but also a teacher of schisms.”\(^{75}\)

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Yushchenko, however, could not force a definitive resolution of the church question, in part because after 2005, Ukraine’s political system was in turmoil. Political forces supportive of the UOC-MP, notably the Ukrainian Party of Regions, became the majority in the Ukrainian Rada (parliament). Compounding this problem was the falling out between Yushchenko and his former prime minister, Yuliya Tymoshenko, fracturing the so-called “Orange bloc” which had tended to support the question of Ukrainian autocephaly.

In 2010, Yushchenko was defeated in his attempt to win a second term; Tymoshenko then lost the second round of the presidential race to Yanukovych, and Yanukovych’s forces also secured a narrow majority in the Rada. The shift in Ukrainian politics has also affected the churches, with the Kyiv Patriarchate, which formerly enjoyed the patronage of the “Orange coalition”, because President Yanukovych has made no secret of his preference for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, to the extent of excluding rival Orthodox jurisdictions from official events, such as his inauguration or the prayer service on Independence day.76 When he was inaugurated, Yanukovych invited only Kirill of Moscow to preside at the service of blessing, sending no invitations to the heads of other Ukrainian Orthodox jurisdictions.77 In summer 2010, the government also allowed Kirill to hold an exclusive service at St. Sophia’s, retreating from the “neutrality” which permitted only “ecumenical” services at which all Ukrainian jurisdictions would be represented. Yanukovych, who received the highest decoration of the Moscow Patriarchate (the order of St. Vladimir), has made it clear that he would not offer government support for the project of setting up an autocephalous Ukrainian church and would not seek to negotiate with Moscow or other Orthodox patriarchates on the UOC-KP’s and UAOC’s behalf.78

Before leaving Ukraine, Kirill and the UOC-MP noted that nothing should stand in the way of other Ukrainian Orthodox groups from seeking reconciliation with the Moscow Patriarchate. This

apparently has been interpreted by some to mean that the policy of the Yanukovych administration is to encourage reunification under the UOC-MP. More recently, the Kyiv Patriarchate, has accused regional leaders, taking their cues from President Yanukovych, of encouraging clergy affiliated to the Kyiv Patriarchate to join the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (using police raids to pressure the recalcitrant) and denying Kyiv Patriarchate clergy access to public facilities—echoing the charges made by the UOC-MP against the Kravchuk government in 1992-1993.79

The campaign by Kravchuk to create the Kyiv Patriarchate (in 1992-93) and the alleged efforts by Yanukovych to seek its dissolution today have precedents in Cossack history. In 1625, Cossacks used force to ensure the “undivided possession of Kyiv for the Orthodox” and to drive out clergy who favored the Union.80 But it also reflects that hierarchs of both the UOC-KP and the UOC-MP have not embraced a post-Constantinian separation of church and state for Ukraine, and expect state support against their rivals for their respective visions for Ukrainian Orthodoxy.81

Conclusion

In both Russia and Ukraine, the older patterns have re-emerged, but there is also no attempt to slavishly imitate the past. John Anderson labeled the church-state relationship in post-Soviet Russia as “asymmetric symphonia”—and the extent to which Ukrainian and Russian presidents choose to emulate past emperors, hetmans or tsars in how they relate to the Orthodox Church is very dependent on whether the president is sympathetic to the Church82—and there is no guarantee that in the future, new chief executives could come to power determined to implement a post-Constantinian system. But at present, the symphonic model continues to exert its influence.

80 Plokhy, 134.
81 Sysyn, 17.
82 Anderson, 198.
PART III

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CHURCH, SOCIETY, AND CULTURE
Phoebe as an Example of Female Authority Exercised in the Early Church

V.K. McCarty

“There is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.” --Rom. 13:1

“Many women have been enabled by the grace of God to perform deeds worthy of heroic men.” --First Letter of Clement 55:3

The Apostle Paul’s glowing witness to the Deacon Phoebe in Rom.16:1-2 reflects a hard-working church leader who might have been surprised to discover that she is the first person in the history of the church, male or female, to be formally designated “deacon” by name in scripture. The example of Phoebe represents one of the ways authority was exercised in the life of the Church during the earliest generations of believers confessing that Christ, the source of authority, is Lord. In the collaborative ministry of Paul and Phoebe, we see an example of “the Lord himself working through the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church.” Like many of the earliest Christians, Phoebe may have been a far-flung traveler and it is likely that she was Paul’s chosen courier for his Letter to the Romans; his gratitude expressed for Phoebe’s generosity, to himself and many others, rings true in the witness of scripture. In a

3 “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church of Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.” The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version: with the Apocrypha, 4th edition, Michael D. Coogan, ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
4 James D.G. Dunn, Beginning from Jerusalem (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009), 635. Even the seven in Acts 6 are elected to serve (diakonein) at table but not specifically designated as deacons. This does assume that Philippians was written after Romans, although the “deacons” in Phil. 1 are not actually named.
patriarchal culture, where it was often assumed that women were properly to be considered an invisible component of society and justifiably under-reported, Paul acknowledges a “genuine pneumatic endowment” in the women co-workers he singles out for praise. Phoebe is remembered by Paul—and in the canon of scripture—as a sister, as a benefactor, and as a deacon. She is a useful New Testament figure to study since the witness of her authority is attested so early in the history of the Church that it transcends the differences between Eastern and Western traditions.

Depictions of Phoebe cross a broad range from those that affirm, or acknowledge the possibility of, some sort of authoritative status in interpreting diakonos and prostatis, to those commentators who oppose it in varying degrees. It appears that Phoebe was a local church leader at a time when the gifts of the Holy Spirit were experienced, thus empowering the formation of the early Church. As Albrecht Oepke wisely observes about the authority she exercised, “The description of Phoebe as the diakonos of the church at Cenchreae indicates the point where the original charisma is becoming an office.”

The terms which Paul used to describe Phoebe—both diakonos and prostatis—have been at times misunderstood and mistranslated. This has been compounded by the tendency to understand early Christian women as only marginal figures or to regard them in subordinate “feminine” roles. Yet Phoebe’s faith inspired her to embark on a mission as Paul’s ambassador to the earliest communities of believers in Rome, at a time when faith in Jesus Christ was a dangerous and costly enterprise. Thus, the example of Phoebe’s life “testifies that early Christian women leaders officially represented early Christian communities.” The possible meanings of diakonos and prostatis are of considerable interest in determining “the internal governance of the early Christian groups and for questions about the role of women.”

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7 Albrecht Oepke, *ThDNT*, v.1, 787.
10 Schüssler Fiorenza points out that commentators attempt to downplay the importance of both titles in their exegesis of the verses describing Phoebe because they refer to a woman. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 170.
Phoebe’s background as a Gentile Christian may be inferred from her name, which means “radiant,” or “bright,” or “pure.” Although it may sound ironic considering her probable wealth and high social status, the mythological antecedents of Phoebe’s name indicating pagan background also suggest that Phoebe might have been a freed slave.

Given its proximity to Corinth, Paul probably visited Cenchreae on several occasions and was quite familiar with Phoebe and the Jesus group in that town. In fact, scholars conjecture that the church in Cenchreae must have originated from the evangelization work of Paul’s missionary band, even Paul himself, with 50 CE as the probable date of his arrival in the area.

Romans 16, which opens with the recommendation of Phoebe, gives us a glimpse of the rich social mix of early Christian communities, as well as picturing the authority women exercised in early Christian life and mission. Much can be learned from this chapter about the social realities of early Christian communities and the cultural and religious

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13 If she came from a Jewish background, it is highly unlikely that her name would have been chosen from pagan cultural traditions. “The mythical Phoebe was the daughter of Heaven and Earth, the wife of Koios, and the grandmother of Apollo and Artemis.” It is unusual as well that the name “Phoebe” has no patronymic component, and like Lydia’s name, is not labeled in association with the names of her father, or sons, in the same way that Prisca is identified as the wife of Aquila. Jewett, Romans: A Commentary, 943.

14 Of the half dozen towns named Cenchreae upon the map of antiquity, the eastern seaport located seven miles southeast of Corinth is the most probable home town of Phoebe. Cenchreae, with its remains lying partly under water today, was named after a son of Poseidon, a god whose gigantic statue was thought to have graced the south breakwater horn of the harbor. The two port towns, Cenchreae to the southeast and Lechaemum to the northwest, served not only Corinth but most of the Peloponnesian Peninsula; Cenchreae facilitated trade with the Eastern Mediterranean, especially Asia Minor and Egypt. While today a canal has been dug across the Isthmus of Corinth, in Phoebe’s day the two Corinthian port cites were unique for the “Diolkos” running between them; this was an ingenious paved roadway built to drag ships overland upon an enormous movable platform across the ten-mile length of the Isthmus, thus avoiding the dangerous sailing around the southern tip of the Peloponnesian Peninsula. Phoebe probably saw a variety of exotic goods from the eastern world beyond the Roman Empire being off-loaded from ships so they could be hauled across the Diolkos. Joan Cecelia Campbell, Phoebe: Patron and Emissary (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 41-43.

15 “We must assume that it was a church in Phoebe’s residence that had been founded by Paul or his colleagues operating out of Corinth some time between Paul’s arrival at the center in 50 CE and the writing of Romans in 56-57.” Jewett, Romans, 944. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Romans (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 730.

world in which they lived. The link between leadership and household probably had a special significance for the roles of women and the authority they were able to exercise. The fact that the seminal groups of early Christians functioned in much the same way as an extended household, the domain traditionally associated with women, undoubtedly facilitated the leadership of women in Pauline Christianity. Of course, it goes without saying that the women explicitly singled out for acknowledgement in Rom. 16 were not the only women exercising authority in the communities of early Roman Christianity. While there are scholars who challenge the conclusion that the destination of the last chapter of Romans was actually Rome, most maintain that these arguments do not constitute a convincing case for an alternate destination.

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17 “Without this chapter, our knowledge of the ways in which women functioned in the early church would be rather minimal, at least as far as the biblical record is concerned.” Andreas J. Kostenberger, “Women in the Pauline Mission” in The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul’s Mission, ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson (Leicester: Apollos, 2000), 224.

18 Considering that Paul mentions believers in the context of the household five times, “he may or may not have wanted to mention all the individual Christians he knew in the city, but he was certainly keen to mention all the household churches he knew.” N.T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans,” in The New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. 10 (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 2010), 761.


20 It has been argued, especially by earlier commentators, such as C.H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), xvii-xxiv, that Romans 16 is not part of Paul’s original letter, and was perhaps intended for another destination, such as Ephesus. One reason for this is the discovery of the Chester Beatty “Papyrus 46” in which the Doxology is located between Rom. 15:33 and 16:1. “P46” is an important textual witness in this debate, being the oldest extant manuscript of Romans, dating to approximately 200 AD. Additionally, it appears that Marcion circulated a version of Romans without either Ch. 15 or 16 (Fitzmyer, Romans, 49.) It has been argued that the long greetings list supposes acquaintance with numerous people in a city Paul never visited and also that the epistolatory ending of 15:33 is repeated in 16:20. One commentator has even speculated a useful explanation for the text coming to be appended onto Romans, from having been copied into the same “letter book” of the amanuensis, Tertius. “How came this little letter to Ephesus to be united with the long letter?…letter books were in use in antiquity…[both] being of the same date would no doubt be written by the same Tertius and stand in his handwriting next to the Ephesian letter in the copy-book.” So, the Letter to the Romans section of Chester Beatty Papyrus 46, with nearly all of Ch.16 missing, might owe its existence “to a situation when a copyist of a longer manuscript did not have a long enough papyrus and therefore had to leave out the last chapter of the text.” Adolf Deissman, Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Greco-Roman World (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 1978), 236. See also Antii Marjanen, citing Ulrich Wilckens, Brief an die Romer in “Letter Courier,” 497.
of Romans 16,\footnote{Antii Marjanen, “Phoebe, a Letter Courier,” in \textit{Lux Humana, Lux Aeterna: Essays in Biblical and Related Themes in Honour of Lars Aemelaeus} (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2005), 496.} and defend the integrity of the Rom. 1-16 framework as a whole.\footnote{Jewett maintains the traditional view that Rom.16 is part of the original letter; Meeks supports “the integrity of the sixteen-chapter letter.” One of the strongest arguments supporting the continuity of Rom.16 with the rest of the letter is the presence of the Greek particle \textit{de} as the second word of the first verse, which clearly implies that the text is not an independent unit but is related to the material before it, as supported by Dunn. The transitional “now” (\textit{de}) after the first word in Rom. 16:1 relates these verses to the text that has gone before in a manner that precludes the possibility of the chapter existing as an independent composition. “The Textual evidence for ch. 16 as part of Romans is overwhelmingly strong…I am assuming that this chapter was authentically written by Paul as part of Romans.” Raymond E. Brown, \textit{An Introduction to the New Testament} (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 575; Robert Jewett, “Paul, Phoebe, and the Spanish Mission,” in \textit{The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: In Tribute to Howard Clark Kee} (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 147; Wayne Meeks, \textit{First Urban Christians}, pg. 201, n. 41; James D. G. Dunn, \textit{Romans} 9-16, (Dallas, TX: 1988), 884; Jewett, \textit{Romans}, 941-42.}

In view of the practice of Greco-Roman letter-writing, the first two verses of Rom.16 clearly serve as a letter of introduction from Paul recommending Phoebe and establishing her authority to his audience.\footnote{Fitzmyer, \textit{Romans}, pg. 728. A helpful parallel to Phoebe’s situation, both as a woman who was an ambitious traveler and a letter carrier, is offered by the example of two ancient papyri which have been published among the invaluable resources of the \textit{Oxyrhynchus Papyri Online} web-site; even though they are both from the fourth century, they provide a useful lens through which to regard Phoebe as she is introduced by Paul in Romans. Both are letters of introduction written on behalf of Christian women to distant clergy to be used as they travel. One of them, “P. Oxy. 2785,” recommends a woman named Taion leading a small band of travelers in Egypt, and another, “P. Oxy. 3857,” is for a woman named Germania, written by her father in order to secure nightly accommodation as she traveled. So, even if examples of women traveling independently and as letter carriers are rare, this evidence indicates that they do actually exist in the literature. \textit{Pace}, Marjanen, 504-505. For Taion: Stanley K. Stowers, \textit{Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity} (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 157-158; for Germania: G.H.R. Horsley, S.R. Llewelyn, eds., \textit{New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri} (North Ryde, N.S.W.: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1981-95), v. 4, No. 8, 69-70. Additionally, both “P. Oxy. 2785” and “P. Oxy. 3857” are available at \textit{Oxyrhynchus Papyri Online} accessed on 8/8/10 at http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk} This passage is significant for showing “how a letter of recommendation would have been written in the early church.”\footnote{Jewett, \textit{Romans}, 942. These two brief verses exhibit components typical of other “epistolary commendations” in the Pauline letters, including an introduction, an offer of credentials, and a recommended action; other examples include: Phil. 4:2-3, 1 Cor. 16:15-18, 1 Thess. 5:12-13, as well as Phlm. 10-17. In fact, the formulaic elements of the recommendation of Phoebe imply that she may likely be the bearer of the letter.} Paul personally

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commends Phoebe to the Romans, adding “as is befitting for the saints” which could be an indication to the recipients of Phoebe’s status and honor, but it may also be a complimentary descriptor of the believers meant to hear the letter. He may be diplomatically flattering his audience by associating them with those who were already called by the Spirit of the Lord and also with the earliest church in Jerusalem.25 There is such a strong calling-together of the Roman congregations that Jewett boasts that Paul desires “every believer in Rome to greet every other believer.”26

The numerous groups of people cited in the Romans 16 list may indicate several assemblies of believers that met as a house church,27 and in fact, the early church in Rome seems to have been organized by the house church model well into the third century.28 It is interesting to note as well that the mention of the church (ekklesia) in Cenchreae, of which Phoebe is acknowledged as deacon by the Apostle Paul, is the only reference in the whole of Romans to ekklesia.29 By contrast, it also points to Paul’s charge to Phoebe in her evangelizing work to the separate assemblies of believers organized into house churches in Rome. “The titles used to describe Phoebe offer evidence that the extension of her influence included the winning of new members.”30

It is plausible that Phoebe served as Paul’s personal representative in reading and expanding on his letter to the various

25 Fitzmyer, Romans, 731. “If there are Roman Christians who are suspicious of Paul; she as an intermediary can help, as can various people already in Rome who knew him.” Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament, 574.
26 This is to show that everyone in all the Christian groups in Rome is on an equal footing; but even more important, Paul is encouraging them to respect and honor each other “and thereby extend the principle of the imperial righteousness of God, which is the theme of the letter.” Jewett, Romans, 952.
27 Considering the references in Rom. 16:5, 10, 11, 14, 15. These include not only the church in the house of Prisca and Aquila, but also the group of slaves “who belong to the family of Aristobulus” (16:10), and “those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissos” (16:11); as well as “the brothers and sisters who are with” Asyncritos et al (16:14), and “all the saints who are with” Philologus et al (16:15). Thus, it is possible that as many as five house churches are attested.” Jewett, Romans, 953.
29 By contrast, the opening greeting in Rom.1 is addressed to “all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints.”
perhaps inter-quarreling groupings in Rome. Thirty-first, “Given the diversity of the several house churches alluded to in Rom.16, this would have required formidable political skills on Phoebe’s part. In view of the complexity of the argument of the letter, it would also have required interpretive skills.” Thirty-second, One scholar even goes so far as to conjecture that Phoebe “was the person who was asked to explain the possible obscure and controversial passages of the letter. If this is true, Phoebe may have been the first public commentator on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans.” Thirty-third, The fact that Paul mentions her first in the list of greetings points toward Phoebe as the intended bearer of the letter. Thirty-four, It is likely that Paul is stressing both her role as a go-between and her specific duty to carry Paul’s letter, with his apostolic authority. In this simple but heartfelt introduction of his female associate, Paul, like Luke in Acts, “gives us something of a survey of the different roles women played in the earliest days of Church history,” Thirty-fifth, in a familial context, and as a benefactor, and as a church leader.

In the two verses headlining Romans 16, Paul calls Phoebe three Greek nouns which the NRSV translates as “sister” (adelphen) and “deacon” (diakonon) and “benefactor” (prostatis). Here, it is informative to note how other Bible translations handle these terms; the earlier Revised Standard Edition (RSV) translates adelphen, diakonos and prostatis as “sister, deaconess, helper,” and the King James Version (KJV) as “sister, servant, succourer.” Thirty-six, Although earlier translators used more subordinate terms, such as “helper” and “servant,” more recent commentators interpret diakonos as “minister,” which is offered as the alternate translation in the NRSV.

In analyzing her exercise of authority, it now appears more likely that Phoebe served as the leader of her congregation and that diakonos,
although not yet an ordained order of the church, was an official title of leadership as indicated by the earlier usage of the term in Rom. 11:13 and 12:7. Thus, Robert Jewett maintains that “it is no longer plausible to limit her role to philanthropic activities.” Furthermore, the possessive qualifier, “deacon of the church in Cenchreae” makes it more likely that she was one of their group leaders rather than a traveling minister. So, by enjoining the hearers of the letter to receive her in a manner befitting the saints, “Phoebe should be welcomed with honors suitable to her position as a congregational leader.”

Of the three descriptors, Paul calls Phoebe first of all “our sister,” because she is a member of the Christian community which is familiar to Paul. She is “family” among believers and therefore has a unique relationship with all other Christians in the emerging church. Paul uses adelphe again in 1 Cor. 7:15, 9:5, and in Phlm. 2, so the term probably refers to full missionary partnership. She is called “our sister” in the same manner that Timothy, one of Paul’s closest co-workers, is often styled as “our brother” (2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Thess. 3:2; Phlm. 1).

The significance of Phoebe’s charism as a church leader is emphasized by the title prostatis. That she “could claim great authority within the early Christian missionary endeavor is underlined” by this term, which appears nowhere else in the New Testament. The usual meaning is “leader,” “president,” “superintendent,” or “patron,” a translation that is supported by the verb form proistemi which is found in 1 Thess. 5:12, 1 Tim. 3:4-5 and 5:17. Daniel Atichea from Bible Translator suggests that the term should be rendered as “a women set over others,” as well as “a female guardian.”

A lexical definition for prostatis is given as “patron” or “benefactor;” adding that it is “an important term in a society that

38 Jewett, Romans, 944. Schüssler-Fiorenza also defends the interpretation of diakonos as a missionary assigned to preaching and church leadership. “It can be concluded, therefore, that Phoebe is recommended as an official teacher and missionary in the church of Cenchreae.” Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 171.
39 Jewett, Romans, 945.
40 Her responsibilities to her church family might include exercising leadership, and contributing practically and financially to the good of the community. “As a sister of the household of God, Phoebe would be expected to use her resources to sustain and better the lives of her brothers and sisters.” Lynn Cohick, Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life (Grand Rapids. MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 304.
41 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory in Her, 172-173.
42 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 48.
attached a great deal of importance to benefaction and patronage;”\(^{44}\) and yet the RSV and KJV translate \textit{prostatis} with reference to a woman in the servile mode of “helper” or “succourer.”\(^{45}\) By calling Phoebe a “benefactor (\textit{prostatis}) of many and of myself as well” (Rom. 16:2), Paul could be indicating hospitality in the fullest sense, such as housing, and he may be acknowledging that she used her sphere of influence to help expand his mission,\(^{46}\) and perhaps run interference for any social or political trouble which was generated by Paul as he proclaimed the gospel. The term “benefactor” implies some wealth or influence, suggesting that she had sufficient means and a house large enough to care for guests.\(^{47}\) Paul confesses that he is indebted to Phoebe himself; she may have provided him hospitality or travel funds; she may even have championed his cause before the civil authorities when he encountered adversity, perhaps defusing turmoil “when he needed seclusion in a private home.”\(^{48}\)

Although the example of Phoebe runs counter to most traditional women in first-century Mediterranean society, inscription evidence shows that “women wrote poetry, gave lectures, financed fountains and colonnades; women used their numbers to affect change in government laws,”\(^{49}\) and serve as benefactors.\(^{50}\) So, Phoebe might have secured

\(^{44}\) \textit{BAGD}, 885.
\(^{45}\) Yet, lexical analysis offers four occurrences of the word in approximately contemporaneous sources in Lucian of Samosata, Cornutus, Dio Cassius, and the Greek Magical Papyri; “in none is ‘helper’ an appropriate rendering.” Caroline Whelan, “Amica Pauli: The Role of Phoebe in the Early Church,” \textit{Journal for the Study of the New Testament} 49 (1993), 68. And in fact, Jewett writes, “In light of this high social standing and Paul’s relatively subordinate social position as her client, it is preposterous that translations like the RSV render \textit{prostatis} as ‘helper’.” Robert Jewett, “Paul, Phoebe and the Spanish Mission,” 150.
\(^{47}\) It is likely, then, that Phoebe was a home-owner and, perhaps as a “wealthy influential person involved in commerce,” was in a position, as a benefactor of many, to give financial and networking assistance to missionaries and other believers journeying through the region of Corinth. Perhaps, she knew the governor, Gallio, or a member of his entourage, thereby smoothing out Paul’s stay. Cohick, \textit{Women in the World of the Earliest Christians}, 303. See also Fitzmyer, \textit{Romans}, 731.
\(^{49}\) Examples of women as legal guardians, benefactors, and as the patron of a synagogue, support the idea that the patronage role played by Phoebe was not unique. Indeed, “women with wealth contributed to the overall well-being of their cities, often in the same ways as did their elite male counterparts” Cohick, \textit{Women Earliest Christians}, 242. See also Jewett, \textit{Romans}, 947.
connections for Paul and the church which, in the status-conscious Roman world, where wealth and power went hand in hand, could only be beneficial. E.A. Judge recommends, then, “taking *prostatis* in the sense it often has where Roman influence is strong, as an equivalent of the Latin *patrona*.” Paul says that Phoebe has been a patron or protector of many believers, including himself, and “for that reason” (*gar*), he asks the hearers of his letter to provide her with whatever she needs.

One of the verbal references of *prostatis* which appears earlier in Romans offers a helpful way to view the spiritual origin of the vocation of leader and benefactor. In Rom. 12:8 *proistemi* is described as an authentic charism of the Spirit, along with ministry and the generosity of giving. Therefore, in the few verses which witness to the life of Phoebe, she is specifically praised for two of the gifts given by the grace of the Spirit of God.

It has been suggested that the primary reason for Phoebe’s journey carrying Paul’s letter to its intended Roman audience was that she was taking up the mantel as principle benefactor of Paul’s mission to Spain. It can be inferred from “help her in whatever she may require of you” that the Roman recipients of Paul’s letter “would understand her to be recommended as the patroness of the Spanish mission.” Her patronage might have involved creating a logistical base of mission operations in Rome by garnering the cooperation of the house churches there, many of whom Phoebe may have already been familiar with. It is interesting to observe that Phoebe is introduced at a moment of high tension for Paul, so Phoebe’s support may have been especially appreciated at this time. In any case, “it does provide a valuable model of

50 Cotter cites a study conducted in which among 147 inscriptions from professional *collegia* in Rome and Italy in general, seventeen cite a woman as benefactor. Wendy Cotter, “Women’s Authority Roles in Paul’s Churches: Countercultural or Conventional? *Novum Testamentum* 36:4 (1994), 364.

51 Meeks concludes that Phoebe is “an independent woman (she is probably traveling to Rome on business of her own, not solely to carry Paul’s letter) who has some wealth and is also one of the leaders of the Christian group in the harbor town of Cenchreae.” Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 60, citing Edwin A. Judge, “The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community,” *Journal of Religious History* (1960), 4-15, 125-137.

52 Robert Jewett postulates that she may have agreed to cooperate with Paul in negotiating and funding his Spanish mission. This theory is well outlined in “Paul, Phoebe, and the Spanish Mission,” 142-161.

53 Jewett, *Romans* 947.

54 In fact, Jewett interprets the personnel listed in Romans 16 as “comparable to a roster of potential campaign supporters that political operatives bring into a city as they begin to establish a campaign for their candidate. Since these persons are listed immediately after the reference to Phoebe’s ‘matter,’ the greetings constitute the first stage in the recruitment process.” Jewett, “Spanish Mission,” 153.
the relationship between Paul and Phoebe. . . He expected her to play some role in support of his efforts, and hence was an integral part of his proselytizing activity.”

Even in a study on the evidence of female authority attested in the ministry of Paul, it is remarkable to encounter Phoebe described by him as “a deacon in the church of Cenchreae.” As with many usages in early Christianity, this one may have had a fluid range of meanings. It is evident that the term *diakonos* was going through a transition of interpretation; a range of meaning appears to be indicated from the more generic (eg., 1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Cor. 3:6 and 11:23), to other references, such as Phil. 1:1, which begin to point toward an ordained group. Biblical scholars have contributed to a lively dialogue in their varying interpretations of the word.

Paul refers to Phoebe as a *diakonos*, using a term of masculine gender. While not yet an ordained order of the church, *diakonos* in this passage may have a technical sense designating a definite local office. Whatever his intention was, the expression “a deacon of the church of Cenchreae” certainly “has a legitimizing affect” in describing her authority. Throughout Paul’s writing, he makes use of words from the *diakon-* root and reflects the message of Jesus about service, which in turn grows out of the Old Testament command to love for one’s neighbor. In his teaching about *diakonia*, Jesus “takes and links it with the command of love for God to constitute the substance of the divinely willed ethical conduct of His followers.” Examples in the Corinthian correspondence show Paul connecting words from the *diakon-* root with preaching work. While there is no way of establishing with certainty whether the term refers at this time to the deaconate, an “order” which

55 Although he is satisfied with his mission in the East and knows that he has “fully proclaimed the good news of Christ” (Rom. 15:19), nevertheless, Paul may be experiencing doubt about his upcoming reception from “unbelievers in Judea” (15:31) and concerned about building missionary ground “on someone else’s foundation” (15:20). He is recorded elsewhere as encountering competition eating into the flock of his Ephesian missionary territory from “savage wolves” (Acts 20:29), and in Corinth criticism from “super-apostles” threatening to frustrate his effectiveness (2 Cor. 12:11). These were perhaps the disadvantages of Paul’s own particular style of front-runner ministry. Whelan, “*Amica Pauli,*” 73.

56 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 729.

57 Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 79. It is natural, “particularly in view of the way in which Paul formulates his thought, to understand it as referring to a definite office.”


60 Examples are: 1 Cor. 3:5, 2 Cor. 3:6-9, 4:1, 5:18, 11:23.
emerged in the church by the time of Ignatius of Antioch,\textsuperscript{61} it is possible to conjecture that Phoebe had an apostolic leadership role in a Christian church that qualified her to exercise spiritual authority over the souls in her care.\textsuperscript{62}

Notice that Paul identifies himself in a similar vein a few verses earlier than his recommendation of Phoebe (Rom. 15:25, 31), referring to his “ministry” or \textit{diakonia} to Jerusalem. Again, to the Corinthians, he notes that both he and Apollos are \textit{diakonoi}; they carry God’s message and mediate God’s word (1 Cor. 3:5).\textsuperscript{63} So, it is problematic that, whenever Paul calls himself, Apollos, or Timothy \textit{diakonos}, scholars translate the term as “deacon,” but because the term in Rom. 16:1 refers to a woman, some exegetes translate it as “servant.” Additionally, the RSV translates \textit{diakonos} as “deaconess;” this is done by analogy to the later institution of deaconesses which, in comparison to that of the deacons, had only a limited function in the church. “Exegetes tend to denigrate these titles, or to interpret them differently, because they are given to a woman.”\textsuperscript{64}

However, since as shown in 1 Cor. 3:5-9 Paul uses \textit{diakonos} in parallel with \textit{synergos} to characterize himself and Apollos as missionaries, the Romans 16:1-2 text simply does not permit such a feminine stereotyping of Phoebe.\textsuperscript{65} While it is reasonable to question the meaning of \textit{diakonos} in Rom.16:1, comparing it both to its usage describing the distinct church office that developed early in the second century and also to the female office of “deaconess” that developed considerably later, a natural tendency toward a pejorative quality can be seen with more clarity now in the earlier translations of \textit{diakonos} and \textit{prostatis} in Rom.16:1-2 which use feminine gender-specific terms like

\textsuperscript{61} Ignatius, Eph. 2:1; Magn. 6:1.
\textsuperscript{62} Marjanen, “Phoebe, a Letter Courier,” 503.
\textsuperscript{63} In both instances the term suggests a bearer of a message—in this case, the gospel. So, the \textit{diakonia} word group suggests a sense of representation or agency; that is, in calling Phoebe a deacon, Paul was identifying her as his agent or intermediary carrying his gospel message. Cohick, \textit{Women Earliest Christians}, 304.
\textsuperscript{64} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{In Memory of Her}, 170.
\textsuperscript{65} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{In Memory of Her}, 47. Furthermore, while language with masculine grammar describing the community of early believers is sometimes understood in an inclusive way, “the same grammatically masculine language is understood in gender-specific ways when referring to leadership functions, such as apostles, missionaries, ministers, overseers, or elders…Those passages that directly mention women cannot be taken as providing all the information about women in early Christianity.” Therefore, references to early Christian women should be read “as the tip of the iceberg.” Schüssler Fiorenza, “Missionaries,” 423.


“deaconess” and “patroness.” In light of the use of diakonon in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians to refer to missionaries including Paul himself, “it is no longer plausible to limit Phoebe’s role to philanthropic activities.”

While the term diakonos probably was not yet used by the Apostle Paul in any formal or titular way, Phoebe is being recommended by Paul “as an official teacher and missionary in the church of Cenchreae.” In fact, since Phoebe is given a letter of recommendation by Paul in the same manner as Timothy (1Cor. 16:10-11), it is likely that her significance for the development of the early church is generally under-acknowledged. “Although earlier commentaries interpret the term diakonos as signifying a subordinate role along the lines of the modern deaconess movement, it now appears more likely that Phoebe functioned as the leader of the congregation.”

While it is possible that Phoebe’s ministry included service to women believers and assistance at baptism for women, “she is not a deaconess of the women, but a minister of the whole church.” The very fact that Phoebe is introduced “with a clause in which the term diakonos is connected with a genitival construction (tes ekklesias tes en Kenkreais), instead of a relative clause (such as he diakonei te ekklesia te en Kenkreais), implies that diakonos in this context is not only to be understood as a general term referring to her willingness to serve but as a church office in the same sense as in Phil. 1:1.” Since diakonos and synergos are used as parallel terms in 1 Cor. 3:5-9 for a missionary entrusted with preaching and tending churches, “it seems clear that the diakonoi of the Pauline mission served in the recognized and official capacity of missionary preacher and teacher. There Phoebe is recorded as an official teacher and missionary in the church of Cenchreae.”

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66 The same sort of tendency toward assigning diminutive value to female identity is evident in the use of terms like “actress” over “actor,” “poetess” over “poet,” “jewess” over “jew,” and “priestess” over “priest.”
67 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 171.
68 Schüssler Fiorenza, “Missionaries,” 423.
69 Jewett, “Spanish Mission,” 149. Additionally, The New Documents resource provides examples from inscription evidence of the early Christian use of diakonos referring to a woman: one of a Cappadocian woman from a later time in the sixth century named Maria, and most intriguingly, an inscription from a Jerusalem archeological site of a deacon named Sophia who was described as “a second Phoebe.” New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity, v. 2, 109; v. 4, 122.
70 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 170.
72 Arichea, “Who Was Phoebe?” 408.
Interpreted in this way, “Phoebe was a deacon who just happened to be a woman, and therefore equal to deacons who just happened to be men.”

Thus, while not ordained, she is an important leader in the Cenchreae community, and “we see here the beginnings of the development of the office of the deacon.”

In this study of the brief text in which the Deacon Phoebe’s memory is preserved, close attention has been paid to the Apostle Paul’s description of her and the apostolic authority she exercised in her collaborative support of him. The witness of Phoebe in the New Testament suggests that the God-appointed authority of women was central to the early Christian missionary movement. While it is difficult to determine with certainty what the term *diakonos* signified in the first century, the combination of “deacon of the church of Cenchreae” and “sister” and “benefactor of many and of myself as well” denotes a woman whose evangelizing ministry was inspired and supported by the Holy Spirit at a foundational time in the development of ancient Christianity.

On balance, the fluid use of terminology in the early Church must not be allowed to cloud the significance of Paul witnessing to the genuine God-inspired authority he experienced at the hands of Phoebe and for which he expresses gratitude, introducing her as our sister and deacon and benefactor. Paul’s ministry is apostolic based on the evident zeal of his charism. And so it is with Phoebe as well; her zeal in the Lord, as deacon and patron, is remembered as well affecting the lives of those around her. Paul’s acknowledgement of Phoebe as deacon witnesses to the way authority was expressed in the early Church, and it is clear from Rom. 12:8 that Phoebe’s authority is given by the grace of God as a gift of the Spirit; her participation in the divine life as a deacon was a result of her faith in Jesus Christ. And in the same way that Paul experienced the authority of his own call as an apostle, scripture

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75 In his careful analysis, Daniel Arichea observes: “What we have discovered of Phoebe in these two verses would seem to suggest that *diakonos* should be understood not simply as a generic word describing Phoebe as a useful and active member of the church in Cenchreae, but as a word which somewhat depicts Phoebe’s role as a leader within the Christian community. And while we can grant that *diakonos* in Romans does not yet refer to an ecclesiastical office with a set place within the hierarchy of the church and with special qualifications for the office bearers; yet it does describe a person with special functions in the pastoral and administrative life of the church and such functions would most probably include pastoral care, teaching, and missionary work.” Arichea, “Who Was Phoebe?” 404.
indicates that he clearly recognized and validated the spiritual energy and status of Phoebe’s charism as well.

Phoebe is recorded in the memory of the church excelling in her God-given vocation just as Paul did and the ancient title Deacon he uses to describe her depicts a ministry which for Phoebe was lived out in a much fuller, more creative and energetic scope than the later liturgical office of deacons allowed early Christian males and females. Hers was a ministry much more open to the strength and inspiration of the Spirit. It is fortunate that women have risen once again in considerable numbers to the ranks of benefactors and, now possessed of extensive education and gifts, are making innovative use of great charisms in creative ways, avenues which were unavailable to them in many of the intervening centuries after the early Christian period, corralled as they were more exclusively within the domestic arena. Could the Eastern Church not benefit richly, then, at least from elevating to the status of officially recognized Deacon those women whose apostolic zeal clearly shows forth today their God-appointed charism, in the same way that Paul celebrated the same charism in Phoebe? As Paul exercised his apostolic discernment in affirming Phoebe’s vocational path, it now falls perhaps as a challenge to the episcopate to continue the apostolic charism by recognizing, and affirming, and by holding up the charismatically gifted Orthodox women ministers as *axios*—worthy of note in the liturgical assembly.

After so many centuries of obscuring and thwarting the apostolic energy of women, restoring the female diaconate would reflect a truer understanding of the charism of the New Testament era Deacon, one which lifts up the genuine spiritual authority of Phoebe and other apostolic figures like her. In this way the God-given charism of men and also women—that is, half of all the Orthodox faithful—may be validated and allowed to excel in its own creative and energetic ways in the service of the gospel. The New Testament witness is an exhortation that Phoebe be heard today in a broadening of the scope of ecclesial authority for others called like Phoebe. Her genuine charism lived out in service to the church in Cenchreae was an authentic witness to the life of the Holy Spirit and her example is as relevant to the new generation of the Orthodox Church today participating in the life of the Spirit as when she was praised by the Apostle Paul.
Symphonia in the Secular or How to Be Orthodox When You Lose Your Empire

David James Dunn

Vigen Guroian has observed that “diasporic” Orthodoxy struggles to know how to be church in a modern, secular, and democratic context. Thus, he calls for developing the richness of our past political philosophy into a modern social ethic, one that resists the dual temptations of accommodationism and sectarianism. This essay partly responds to that call by developing symphonia into an ecclesial ethic of provisional accommodationism and situational sectarianism. Under symphonia, the church related to the empire by sometimes supporting and sometimes opposing it. My thesis is that in a secular situation, symphonia must go from being a defunct political ideal to an ecclesiology of conditional engagement, not simply with the state, but, with secular society itself, on the basis of its proleptic realization of the kingdom of God.

I develop this thesis, first, by arguing that this political philosophy was a faithful, albeit imperfect, response to embody the kingdom of God in the world. In the course of this analysis, I criticize modern western and Orthodox scholars who have looked upon symphonia, either with hubristic derision or pious nostalgia, as suffering from a shared failure of imagination. In the second place, contrary to that trend, I argue that Fr. Sergei Bulgakov rightly tried to develop symphonia into a modern theory of culture (even if his sophiology suffers from a number of other conceptual problems). His sophiology amounts to an historicization of Athanasius’ Logos, which enabled him to conceive of a world that realizes its conformity to the kingdom of God over time, and thus proleptically manifests its eschatological destiny in the course of human events, with or without the direct involvement of the institutional church. Thus, in conclusion, if, as Fr. Schmemann said, the kingdom is the “content” of the church, then the church not only has permission but a mandate constructively to engage the secular, insofar as

77 Because this essay synopsizes my constructive theological dissertation, the following development of symphonia into such an ecclesial ethic will be in the form of a broad outline.
it conforms to the revealed content of that kingdom, and to resist the secular, withdrawing into its own ecclesial “otherness,” insofar as the secular rebels against the church’s own eschatological ideal.78

*Symphonia in a Secular Context?*

Historically speaking, we Orthodox like empires. Or, if we do not like them, at least we know what to do with them. In an imperial context, the church is supposed to be guided by the “symphonic” ideal. Though *symphonia* was one of many political theologies operative in Byzantium, it is the ideal of church-state relations. More like an ethos than a clearly defined doctrine, *symphonia* sought to balance civic and ecclesiastical affairs in a single Christian society. According to Emperor Justinian, who is most often credited with putting this ethos into words (in his *Sixth Novella*), the church and the empire are “two great gifts” from God that, when properly working together, promote a “general harmony…upon the human race.”79

The political ideal the Orthodox Church has inherited thus presumes both autocracy and “official” Christianity. Our “problem” is that, in the West, we live in societies that are formally democratic and secular. Under the “symphonic” ideal, as Fr. John McGuckin has indicated, the church was to the emperor as the prophet Nathan was to David.80 Sometimes it authorized him. At other times it rebuked him. But how can the church today rebuke an emperor who does not exist? How can we guide a state that does not have to listen to us?

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79 In John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church 450-680 A.D.* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 209. When most historians talk about *symphonia*, they almost invariably quote this *Novella*. Thus, I am following academic convention. However, this *Novella* is not necessarily the best resource for understanding Byzantine political theology. As Meyendorff points out elsewhere, the passage in question is actually part of a rather mundane preamble to a document dealing with priestly discipline, so Justinian is not so much addressing the entire church as the clerical part of it. The balance he specifically seeks in this document is between the imperium and the priesthood. The history of Byzantium itself is a better resource for seeing this “symphonic” balance at work, particularly in the iconoclastic and unionist controversies. See J. Meyendorff, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press: 1982), 48-49.
That could be why, when most scholars talk about *symphonia* in a modern western context, they tend to do one of two things. The first option is to dismiss it. The great Protestant historian, Philip Schaff, derided Byzantine political theology as *caesaropapist*, a term that gained wide currency.\(^81\) This term suggested that, as the Pope allegedly ruled the church in the West, the emperor ruled the church in the East (implying that true Christian freedom lay in Protestantism). Thankfully, modern scholars realize that to claim *caesaropapism* as the norm, rather than a corruption of the true “symphonic” norm, requires a highly prejudicial reading of the historic evidence. But that does not mean that a dismissive attitude toward *symphonia* is necessarily abandoned.

Modern reactions to *symphonia* usually fall somewhere along a conceptual range represented by Zoe Knox and Stanley Harakas. Knox writes about developing church-state relations in modern Russia. While the context of her study is different than ours, she does dismiss *symphonia* as being incompatible with western ideals. It is, it seems, nothing more than a pious but failed experiment.\(^82\) On the other side, Orthodox theologians often view *symphonia* more positively. Thus, Stanley Harakas says that it can be a guide for modern church-state relations, particularly among so-called “diasporic” Orthodoxy. He seems to look upon *symphonia* with a kind of pious nostalgia.\(^83\) Yet both perspectives—Knox and Harakas—are united in the way they confine *symphonia* to the political. Knox thinks it is incompatible with the modern state, whereas Harakas thinks it can help guide our political activism.

Both perspectives suffer from a similar failure of imagination. They do not go beyond seeing *symphonia* as a political doctrine in a formally Christian state when, in fact, *symphonia* was a broader ecclesial ethos deriving from the eschatological hope of the church. Both early resistance to the empire and the church’s later baptism of it were informed and motivated by eschatology. Prior to Constantine, the church thought of itself as the proleptic embodiment of the kingdom of God. It was not the kingdom itself but a “foretaste” of the life to come. The


\(^82\) Zoe Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia after Communism* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 105-7.

\(^83\) Harakas rightly appreciates the complex subtleties of the implementation of this ideal in the past, and, to his credit, he talks in a limited way about applying symphonia today. Stanley Harakas, *Living the Faith: The Praxis of Eastern Orthodox Ethics* (Minneapolis: Light and Life, 1993), 351-53.
church strove to be in the present what God would one day make it in the future. The increase of the influence of the church after Constantine did not alter this mission; it only expanded its scope. Now, so far as it was able, the church would make the world itself into a prolepsis of the kingdom as well.\(^8^4\) *Symphonia* was the name given to this eschatological mission. The “harmony” sought between the affairs of the church and the state was proof that both were properly working together to make contemporary social life a more perfect icon of the kingdom of God.

*Symphonia as a Modern Theory of Culture*

When it came to *symphonia*, Sergei Bulgakov did not suffer from the same imaginative limitations as many contemporary thinkers. He stands in a line of Russian intellectuals who tried to resurrect *symphonia* from its imperial and Byzantine past in order to develop it into a modern theory of culture for a reforming, and later diasporic, church. Living in Parisian exile, he realized that the absence of an empire did not impede the work of the church, for it also meant the absence of collusion between unscrupulous politicians and ecclesiastics. He thus suggested that, in a formally secular context, the church could still fulfill its “symphonic” mission, transforming society into an icon of the kingdom, not through the enforcement of the state but through “the interior energies of the Church,” not “outside, from above, but from within, from below, from the people and by the people.”\(^8^5\)

The theory of culture Bulgakov tried to develop goes by the name of sophiology – a highly speculative venture that tries to draw out the social and ecclesiological implications of a non-competitive relationship between God and the world. In many ways, this speculative exercise is just an attempt to adapt and expand Byzantine *symphonia*, particularly when it comes to its practical implications. Bulgakov seems to link sophiology and *symphonia* in an essay entitled, “Social Teaching in Modern Russian Orthodox Theology,” which was intended to present Orthodox Christian sociology to a non-Orthodox audience. That he identifies *symphonia* with sophiology becomes apparent when he juxtaposes “western” to Orthodox ways of relating church to culture. Western Christianity, he argued, tends to operate between two extremes. On one side, there is Protestantism, which privatizes religion, and effectively hands the public over to Gog and Magog. On the other side is


Catholicism, which tries to dominate and clericalize life. Neither is inherently wrong. The Protestant social ethic, he says, is a kind of sectarian embodiment of early Christian indifference toward the state to focus on one’s individual relationship with Christ, and Catholic triumphalism is an honest attempt to conform the public to the church’s vision of the kingdom. Though we might rightly take issue with the simplistic nature of these descriptions, they are important for the alternative Bulgakov next proposes. Not surprisingly, Bulgakov believes his own tradition combines the best of both extremes into an organic whole he calls “social Christianity.” Like symphonia, social Christianity also seems to be an ethos of provisionally constructive engagement with society, tempered by a situational sectarianism. “The Orthodox Church,” he says, “has preserved as an outstanding characteristic the asceticism of the primitive Church, supplemented by the conception of Holy Empire.”

Thus, as the “symphonic” ideal of Byzantium presumed conditional ecclesial support of the state insofar as the state conformed to the church’s own vision of the kingdom, Bulgakov’s “social Christianity” possesses a comparable vision of a church that tries to sanctify the world (like the Catholics) but is also willing to withdraw from it (like the Protestants). The balance this social teaching tries to achieve between the church and the world is the ecclesiological “upshot” of Bulgakov’s sophiology – its practical effects. Thus, he goes on explicitly to identify this updated symphonia with sophiology when he describes it as a theory about the “self–revelation of God” in God’s “Wisdom.”

Bulgakov’s entire theological project is too massive to be presented in the context of this essay, nor would it be entirely relevant. His sophiological doctrines of God, creation, etc., comprised the theoretical framework intended to perpetuate a viable, culturally engaged church in modern society. In noting that Bulgakov understood sophiology to stand within the symphonia tradition, my intent is not to recommend every aspect of his thought. I myself believe that Sophia is a superfluous theological category which in many ways works against Bulgakov’s stated intent to elaborate on divine-human unity, and that, more often than not, is conceptual spackling that he uses to fill holes in his thought. Nonetheless, within Sophia are some insights about the church-world limen from which we can learn. In particular, Bulgakov

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86 Bulgakov, “Social Teaching in Modern Russian Orthodox Theology,” in Sergei Bulgakov: Towards a Russian Political Theology, ed. Rowan Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 278.
87 Bulgakov, “Social Teaching,” 279.
rightly uses his Sophia metaphor to make God’s self-revelation a process that takes place in history and culminates in the eschaton – a process which legitimizes the world to the church by making it the site of God’s ongoing revelation. To see how this is the case, while avoiding some of Bulgakov’s esoterica, it is helpful to look at his understanding of history in light of the more accepted theology of Athanasius.

Essentially, Sophia is an historicization of Athanasius’ concept of the Logos. In *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius tried to develop a rationale not only for *why* but *how* God could become human, which he did by positing an original correspondence between the two on the basis of the presence of the Logos in creation. Thus, says Athanasius,

All things derive from the Word their light and movement and life, as the Gentile authors themselves say, “In Him we live and move and have our being.” Very well then. That being so, it is by no means unbecoming that the Word should dwell in man. So if, as we say, *the Word has used that in which He is* as the means of His self-manifestation, what is there ridiculous in that? *He could not have used it had He not been present in it;* but we have already admitted that He is present both in the whole and in the parts. What, then, is there incredible in His manifesting Himself through that in which He is? By His own power He enters completely into each and all, and orders them throughout ungrudgingly … Does not the mind of man pervade his entire being, and yet find expression through one part only, namely the tongue? Does anybody say on that account that Mind has degraded itself? Of course not. Very well, then, no more is it degrading for the Word, Who pervades all things, to have appeared in a human body. For, as I said before, if it were unfitting for Him thus to indwell the part, it would be equally so for Him to exist within the whole. 88

Both Bulgakov and Athanasius agree that God can enter creation because God is always already present in it, upholding it as its former and sustainer. 89 Yet, Bulgakov, possessing a greater historical consciousness

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89 Bulgakov saw himself continuing the insights of Athanasius, minus the identification of Wisdom with the Word, which he believed subordinated the Logos to the Father in the subordination of the world to God. S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 25 (note 21)ff. In my opinion, such subordinationism is
than Athanasius, realized that the Incarnation could not simply have happened once in the past, but must in some sense continue into the present. The Incarnation takes place in the perfect tense. This, because the world is not a basically unchanging deposit but a process. It is a story, and like any story, the meaning of the whole is not clear until the final period on the final page. Athanasius realized that the Incarnation had continuing effects on individuals, in particular the overcoming of the fear of death, but he did not account for its “cosmic significance,” insofar as he did not go beyond individual humans to see how the work of Christ in the crucifixion and resurrection redeems the systems of which humans are apart. Bulgakov rightly saw that Christ saves us not only from personal but corporate sin. Therefore, though the work of the Word is fulfilled in the crucifixion and resurrection, it is not yet completed until the whole world is divinized in the kingdom of God.

The world thus strives toward its eschatological perfection in two ways. First, it is being divinized unconsciously, outside the church, by the power of the Spirit. For Bulgakov, Lady Wisdom – I would say the Logos – is the ideal content of creation, unfolding itself in time, culminating in the kingdom of God. As the Word of God reveals aspects of itself in history, we glimpse prolepses of this world’s future perfection. Thus, as Miroslaw Tataryn has remarked, “history matters,” because in history we glimpse the continuation of the revelation of God in the Word. Relatedly, in the second place, the world is being divinized consciously by the power of the Spirit in the church itself. This conscious cosmic theosis is the church because both the church and the world are us. If we are being saved, then the world in us is being saved. Because the church is in the world and the world is in the church, the sanctification of the bride of Christ in its adoration of the Bridegroom is the sanctification of the world through it.

Symphonia as an Ecclesiology for the Narthex

The unfolding content of the Logos in history in the divinization of the cosmos can help us see how the “balance” of symphonia can operate not as a political doctrine, but an ecclesiology. Absent a formally

only inevitable if one opts not for Bulgakov’s panentheism but outright pantheism. The Word is only subordinate to the Father if the Word is circumscribed by the world.

90 Athanasius, Incarnation, §27-32.
Christian state, *symphonia* can only take place in the church. Fr. Alexander Schmemann rightly called the kingdom of God the “content” and “meaning” of the church.\(^{93}\) If that is true, then, insofar as the kingdom of God proleptically realizes itself in the world, the world becomes the content of the church, too. This gives the secular a certain provisional legitimacy like that which the church once bequeathed to the emperor, balancing the church between accommodationist and sectarian impulses. The church has a mandate to engage secular culture, in a constructive way, as an expression of its fundamental commitment to the kingdom of God.

It is becoming fashionable in some circles to counterpose the church to the secular as its alleged “enemy.” This is the “sectarian” temptation to which Guroian referred.\(^{94}\) Historically, Orthodoxy has rejected such perspectives because it has always granted a place to culture within itself. This is fortunate because, the fact is, we are formed by both. We, the people of God, are also secular, shaped by the shopping malls as well as Eucharist, baptized into Christ as well as nation. We pretend to be influenced only by the church to our own peril. Our challenge is not to cauterize the secular in ourselves or to separate ourselves from it but to be – as the early church was – a foretaste of the life to come within the secular. This requires accepting, embracing, and nurturing aspects of modern culture that approach the peace of the kingdom of God.\(^{95}\) Acting as midwife to a groaning creation (see Romans 8:22), our commitment to the kingdom of God places the center of the church outside itself, in a mandate – or a commission – to aid this world in its second birth.

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\(^{93}\) Schmemann, *Eucharist*, 40.

\(^{94}\) In referring to the sectarian temptation, I also have in mind an essay by James Gustafson, in which he warned against a false opposition between the resources of the church and the wisdom of the world, worked out ecclesiologically in people like Stanley Hauerwas. See J. Gustafson, “The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church and the University,” *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 40 (1985).

\(^{95}\) I am not suggesting that modern democracy – which in America is more like a plutocracy – or that a global economy is the kingdom of God. My point is that they may bear partial witness to it. The church must avoid naïve and paternalistic “knee-jerk” reactions to globalization (paternalistic in that they ignore the fact that many of the “oppressed” freely and even enthusiastically enter into the global market to improve their lives, and naïve in the belief that globalization can be stopped). The spread of the global economy is like nuclear energy, able to save lives (as in the case of cancer treatment) or destroy them. On the motives of those who enter the global economy, see E. F. Fischer, and P. Benson, *Broccoli and Desire: Global Connections and Maya Struggles in Postwar Guatemala* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).
This same commitment also requires bearing witness against a world that is, for many, anything but a prolepsis of the kingdom, but is, more often than not, a hellish nightmare. Both impulses – constructive embrace and critical witness – derive from the same eschatological impulse that motivated the early, as well as the Byzantine, church. It is this commitment to the kingdom of God that will also keep us from the sin of accommodationism, against which Guroian warned. Like the early Christian martyrs, or those who suffered at the hands of the iconoclasts, our partial embodiment of our eschatological hope enables a withdrawal into our own particularity to be a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,” (1 Peter 2:9). The kingdom of God is the content of the church as well as the world, but Jesus Christ is the content of the kingdom. Insofar as we are the body of Christ, we can have some measure of confidence in our capacity to know the difference between a world that is laboring to give birth to its own renewal, and a world that fights against its own future. The presence of Christ in our midsts reminds us that this world will one day be a place where the last are first, where the naked are clothed, where the poor are fed, and where tax collectors and prostitutes have their dignity. Anything else requires our resistance.

Like our Byzantine forebears, we stand between withdrawal, on the one hand, and embrace, on the other. Yet, unlike them, these scales cannot be balanced in any kind of “official” way. The balance of symphonia must happen within ourselves, in particular within the local church. I have said, symphonia today can only be an ecclesiology. Of course, I have not presented an entire ecclesiology, but a part of it, in outline. If we can liken a doctrine of the church to a temple, symphonia is an ecclesiology for the narthex. Like the narthex, symphonia is about being church in a limenal space. Only, in this case, the space is us. Like the narthex, we are both church and world at once. Attending to the presence of the kingdom of God in the world de-centers the church, emptying it kenotically into its mission. Departing from the narthex, we are sent – like the migrant workers (Matthew 9:37) – into the world to nurture the green shoots of the kingdom of God within it. Yet, it is precisely this eschatological priority that enables us to withdraw again into our own particularity, witnessing against a world (which may be to witness against ourselves) that is in many way still captive to the powers

96 I am indebted to many conversations with Nathan Kerr for this idea of ecclesial kenosis, though I do not entirely agree with what I take to be all of the implications he draws from identifying the church with its mission. See N. R. Kerr, Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009).
of sin and death. We are able to bear such witness because a church dis-
embodied into the world is yet the body of Christ and a foretaste of the
life to come.
Training the “Community Servant”: The Greek Orthodox Church of America and the Teachers College of St. Basil’s Academy, 1959-1973

Fevronia K. Soumakis

Introduction

The history of Greek educational institutions and Greek American women’s participation and experiences in their development in the United States remains largely absent from the scholarly literature.¹ Despite the emphasis of the vital importance of Hellenic-Christian paideia found in official church documents, the press, and other sources, the Greek Orthodox Church community’s expansive educational efforts, as well as the role of Greek American and Greek born women who staffed the expanding community day and afternoon schools throughout the twentieth century have yet to be the subjects of comprehensive studies.² As Greek women in America were actively supporting the expanding Greek Orthodox educational system as teachers, secretaries, choir directors, and fundraisers, it was the church hierarchy which articulated the needs of the Greek immigrant community and constructed a physical and ideological space for women to fulfill those needs. In


² Research on the women’s church philanthropic organization known as the Philoptochos Society (derived from the Greek meaning “love for the poor”) also needs to be done. Through their fundraising, the Philoptochos Society fulfilled the religious, philanthropic, and educational needs of the Orthodox faithful in America and abroad. Their efforts included raising funds to purchase the property that would house the orphanage and teacher training school at St. Basil’s Academy in Garrison, New York, raising funds for Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological Seminary in Brookline, Massachusetts, supporting the day and afternoon schools, establishing scholarships, and engaging in much needed social work.
doing so, the hierarchy ultimately directed their resources and efforts and defined their position within the community.

In this essay, I examine the role of the Greek Orthodox Church of America in shaping the trajectory of St. Basil’s Academy Teachers College during the period 1959-1973. Although the College was established in 1944, I focus on the time period when Archbishop Iakovos assumed his position and turned his attention towards expanding Greek education. This study ends in 1973 when the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America (hereafter Archdiocese) along with community leaders decided to merge the Teachers College with the newly established Hellenic College in Brookline, Massachusetts. To that end, three questions guide this paper: What was the purpose of the Teachers College and how did it change over time? Who defined this purpose and why? Who was the college designed for?

The establishment of St. Basil’s Academy Teachers College can best be understood within the context of immigration patterns and the broader efforts of the Archdiocese to build a comprehensive system of education that would accommodate the needs of the Greek immigrant community. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the arrival of Greeks primarily from southern Greece coincided with the industrialization and urbanization period of American cities. The first large wave of mostly unskilled and uneducated male Greek immigrants arrived in the United States as a result of Greece’s poor economic and agricultural conditions. They settled in large urban centers, such as New York and Chicago, New England mill towns, and in the western states. The new immigrants found employment in various industries such as food service, factories, railroads, mines, and textiles mills. Although the passage of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act severely restricted Greek immigration, the Greek immigrants who managed to settle established communities, churches, schools, Greek-language presses, and fraternal associations. The passage of the 1965 Immigration Act witnessed

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3 I use the term Teachers College throughout this paper to describe the post-secondary teacher training institution at Saint Basil’s Academy. Although it was not accredited as a college (offering a B.A. degree) by the New York State Education Department, this is the term that is most widely employed in the archives of the Archdiocese’s collection.

4 This essay is part of my ongoing research for my dissertation which examines how the Greek Orthodox Church shaped parochial school education in New York during the period 1950-1980.

5 During this time period, the official name for the Archdiocese was the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. Due to administrative reorganization in 1996, the name was changed to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Also, the terms Archdiocese and Greek Orthodox Church are synonymous and are used interchangeably throughout this paper.
approximately 15,000 Greek immigrants entering the United States per year during the period 1966-1971. This new generation of immigrants included just as many women as men, a number of whom came from an urban educated middle class. Unlike earlier immigrants, many Greek women entered the labor force and many students arrived seeking higher education. Thus, the Archdiocese, community parishes, and schools had to grapple with educating and ministering to first, second, and third generation children and their families.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the early church hierarchy consolidated the financial contributions of the community churches to oversee the development of numerous educational projects. The women’s church philanthropic organization, the Philoptochos Society (derived from the Greek meaning “love for the poor”) raised funds towards the establishment of Holy Cross Theological Seminary in 1937 for the purpose of training an American born clergy. While the churches served as “vehicles for the transmission of Greek national values,” it was the community day and afternoon schools that were responsible for educating Greek children in their Orthodox faith and Greek language. Each parish created an afternoon school to instruct students in the Greek language after attending a full day of public school. By 1970, there were 450 afternoon schools offering six to eight years of instruction. By 1973, there were also thirteen full-time day schools in operation. Hellenic College served the higher educational needs of the Greek community in America beginning in 1968. At the onset of the expanding afternoon and day schools, the church hierarchy recognized the need for a school to train teachers.

*Training the “Community Servant”*

In 1944, the Philoptochos Society purchased a large estate in Garrison, New York and helped to establish the Greek Archdiocese Institute of St. Basil. According to the charter, the purpose of the Institute was “to train young women of the Greek Orthodox faith to serve the educational, cultural, and philanthropic programs of the Greek Archdiocese and to offer instruction in the subjects of the elementary

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grades to pupils of the Greek Orthodox faith.9 The Institute was located on the grounds of St. Basil’s Academy, an orphanage that also included an elementary school and high school for destitute Greek Orthodox children. By 1959, when Archbishop Iakovos assumed his position, 118 women graduated from the Institute.10

Early in his tenure, Archbishop Iakovos expressed his wish to transform the Institute into an accredited three-year Junior College for Girls granting the Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree. In an effort to attract students, the purpose of expanding the Institute into a college was to offer training equal to that offered in American junior colleges. The Archdiocese hoped that women trained at the accredited Junior College would command salaries equivalent to those of their American counterparts. Artemis Emmanuel, whom the Archbishop appointed Dean of Studies in 1960, prepared a report that reflected efforts in this direction. Emmanuel designed a program that would provide students the necessary background for further studies toward a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree at another institution. She carefully articulated the new school as one which

…trains young women of Greek descent and of the Greek Orthodox faith to teach at the schools of the educational system of the Greek Archdiocese, and in a more general way, to take a leading role in the spiritual, educational, and cultural pursuits and endeavors of their community and church (emphasis added). The Institute offers a three-year program combining liberal arts and professional education. The students are equipped with an understanding of children. They are also acquainted with the educational problems of the Hellenic-American community as these problems are related to American education. Moreover, the students are given a foundation in the humanities and in the social and natural sciences, and they are guided to know and appreciate the spiritual, cultural, and aesthetic values of the Hellenic-Christian civilization and tradition as our cultural

9 Artemis Emmanuel, “Tentative Program of the Prospective Three-Year Junior College of the Greek Archdiocese Institute of Saint Basil,” 25 November 1962, Teachers College of Saint Basil’s Academy Collection, Archives Department, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, NY (hereafter cited as TC Collection of GOA).
10 “St. Basil’s Academy Teachers College Yearbook 1964,” 1964, Box B8, TC Collection of GOA.
heritage and as the foundation on which American institutions and ideals rely.  

While focusing on teaching in the community schools, Emmanuel’s plan offered women the option of pursuing further education. Significantly, Emmanuel pursued a doctoral degree in sociology at Columbia University at the same time.

Emmanuel held a different vision for students of the proposed Junior College. Her 31-page report was comprehensive; she based her research on the education laws of New York State, on recent books and scholarly studies on higher education, women’s education, teacher training, and other documents pertaining to American colleges. She prepared a course of studies that included 70 credits in liberal arts education, 25 credits in professional education or teacher training, and 15 credits in general electives. Her program included offering continuing education for teachers through Summer Seminars, which would “acquaint them with the current trends in American education.” In line with raising the standards towards accreditation, Emmanuel also made the Archdiocese aware of the need for increased funding to update buildings, purchase new furniture, and expand the library. She directed the church hierarchy’s attention to the matter of “preserving the right tone in student life.”

Advocating on behalf of the students, Emmanuel requested additional caretaking staff since students cleaned the main academic buildings themselves “at the expense of the time that should be given to study and regular student activities.” Clearly Emmanuel’s purpose for the proposed Junior College offered an expanded vision of educational opportunities for Greek women. The program Emmanuel proposed, however, was not the one the church hierarchy would follow.

Another vision for staffing the Greek community day and afternoon schools with women educated at the proposed Junior College was echoed in a report prepared in 1965 by Father Demetrios Frangos, who replaced Emmanuel as Dean of Studies in 1963. Frangos expanded upon the objectives of the school: not only would the students’ education be based on the foundations of a Christian and Hellenic tradition but such an education would “provide for the acquisition of those sciences and

11 Artemis Emmanuel, “Tentative Program of the Prospective Three-Year Junior College of the Greek Archdiocese Institute of Saint Basil,” 25 November 1962, TC Collection of GOA.
12 Artemis Emmanuel to Archbishop Iakovos, 12 September 1961, Box 5, Folder CC, TC Collection of GOA.
13 Artemis Emmanuel to Archbishop Iakovos, 12 September 1961, Box 5, Folder CC, TC Collection of GOA.
skills that will enable the student to enter the specific professions needed by the Greek-American community, i.e., teaching and supervising the Greek language schools, teaching and supervising the Sunday School, or conducting the business of the community office.”14 Greek women were sanctioned to serve as teachers because, according to Frangos, “the Church has entrusted the task of educating the child to young ladies; this, because women are by nature the bearers of tradition and have a greater affinity to the world of the child.”15 This argument, which rationalizes a woman’s “natural” role as teacher was not new. It was articulated by the church hierarchy as well as community lay leaders to justify the need for Greek American women to perform certain functions within the scope of the church.

In the same 1968 report, Frangos explained that since the Greek teacher had “free time at her disposal, the teacher could and did extend her services to the community office, the Sunday school, and the Church choir.”16 He viewed the teacher as a “‘community servant’ and the most important assistant of the priest in his manifold duties.”17 Unlike Emmanuel’s program of studies, which gave students the option of choosing classes in secretarial skills and typing through an electives system, Frangos incorporated it as part of the prescribed curriculum. Furthermore, when he replaced Emmanuel, he expanded the purpose of the proposed curriculum to explicitly emphasize the training of secretaries in addition to teachers. The “community servant” would be subordinate to the parish priest who would direct her in her duties. While Frangos and Emmanuel held competing visions regarding the purpose of education for Greek women, the question of what functions the college was supposed to fulfill was also tied into its name.

The “Conflicting Demands” of the Multipurpose School

One of the important issues that the Archdiocese needed to resolve was the name of the institution that trained teachers. The Archdiocese, church hierarchy, and faculty used different terms, interchangeably, throughout its existence: Institute, College, Junior

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14 Reverend Demetrios Frangos, “Objectives of Junior College,” January 1963, Box 5, Folder CC, TC Collection of GOA.
15 Reverend Demetrios Frangos, “Objectives of Junior College,” January 1963, Box 5, Folder CC, TC Collection of GOA.
16 Reverend Demetrios Frangos, “Objectives of Junior College,” January 1963, Box 5, Folder CC, TC Collection of GOA.
17 Reverend Demetrios Frangos, “Objectives of Junior College,” January 1963, Box 5, Folder CC, TC Collection of GOA.
College, Junior College for Women, Junior College for Girls, Teacher Training Department of St. Basil’s Academy, and Saint Basil’s Teachers College. These various forms represent different, and to some extent, conflicting notions of what purpose this post secondary institution was supposed to meet. Was it a school for women or girls? Was it a college that provided a liberal arts education? The New York State Education Department attempted to correct this confusion. In respond to Dean Emmanuel’s inquiries regarding accreditation, Frank Hobson, Jr., the Associate in Higher Education, replied, “the recent use of the word ‘college’ on your transcripts was in error, and that until such time as you attain official collegiate status, this term will not further be employed.” The law firm representing the Archdiocese also cautioned against using the terms “college,” “junior college,” and “higher education” as it violated state laws. Despite these warnings, the Archdiocese and faculty continued to utilize these different forms. They hoped to attract more students by changing the name first and instituting plans towards accreditation later.

As soon as he assumed his new position in 1959, Archbishop Iakovos sought assistance for his new project from academic professionals. He wrote to Hollis Caswell, the President of Teachers College of Columbia University, requesting “one or two members of your staff who could make a study of the academic program and the administration of St. Basil’s Academy and submit a report to us, for which we are prepared to pay remuneration and expenses.” He contacted deans at the City University of New York, Mount St. Joseph Teachers College, and Marymount College, among others, to gain insight into curriculum and accreditation. The Archbishop hired Professor James Steve Counelis, Instructor in History and Social Science of the Chicago City Junior College, to submit a report on the Teachers College. His observations were highly critical of the institution, faculty, and curriculum.

In his 1959 report, Counelis recommended that the Archdiocese shut down the Teachers College and transfer the education department to Hellenic College, the new college that was in its initial stages of organization in Brookline, Massachusetts. His recommendation came to pass in 1973 when the Teachers College was merged with the newly

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18 Frank E. Hobson to Director of St. Basil’s Academy, 11 June 1962, Box B5, Folder CC, TC Collection of GOA.
19 Archbishop Iakovos to Hollis Caswell, 5 October 1961, Box 5, Folder CC, TC Collection of GOA.
established Hellenic College. Counelis identified and expanded upon several key issues that merit further exploration.

Counelis asked whether or not the educational task of the academy was clearly defined. Like Frangos, he identified the purpose of the Teachers College as one that trained Greek-American women to teach in the Greek schools and Sunday Schools, to direct choirs, and to serve as secretaries in the Greek parishes. He observed that the “threelfold goal of the Teachers College is not a unified one by its very nature.” In other words, training for secretarial work, music director, or elementary school teacher required a distinct set of skills, and hence, a different course of studies aimed at professional preparation. It was this “set of conflicting demands” that led to an inefficient curriculum where there was a preponderance of one and two credit courses. Counelis noted the absence of a professional library and an inadequate teaching staff. Adding that the program of studies is more “European in structure…one other reason for the lack of attractiveness for St. Basil Academy Teachers College is the curriculum; it is conceived in cultural terms foreign to American education.”

Counelis placed the blame, albeit directly, squarely on the Archdiocese. To a large extent, the multitude of names the school acquired reflected the multipurpose objectives of the church hierarchy. The Archdiocese’s efforts were haphazard and incomplete; they wished to educate Greek women on their terms, while limiting the positions they could occupy within the community. Greek Orthodox women could engage in teaching, secretarial, and social service work under the auspices of the parish priest. Yet, according to Counelis, the professional training they were receiving was so poor, he felt it was better to close down the school altogether.

Another critic of the Teachers College was Nicholas L. Zouras, a physician whom the Archdiocese hired to conduct a study on the Greek Orthodox population in the United States. In 1960, however, Zouras took it upon himself to report on the conditions of the orphanage and the Teachers College. Zouras called upon the Archdiocese to expand the Teachers College, to make it “more attractive to our Greek-American high school graduates, not to become just church secretaries, choirmasters, or Greek school teachers but to be able to earn degrees in

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the field of education just as in any other teachers’ college in America.”

Zouras offered a vision of education that expanded women’s opportunities beyond the sphere of the Greek community and the Orthodox Church. In another letter to the Archdiocese, he recommended that “serious consideration be given to the development of a co-educational Junior College…not only for the American-born girl or boy of Greek descent but also for the other Orthodox youth of Russian, Syrian, and Serbian descent…for a more broader perspective of Orthodoxy.”

He expanded the Orthodox sphere to include all Orthodox youth for a more inclusive vision of Orthodox education. Needless to say, the church hierarchy did not respond to Zouras’ suggestions about expanding the Teachers College.

**Who attended?**

Emmanuel, Counelis, and Zouras each identified a crucial issue that undermined the objectives of the Teachers College. The school did not attract a significant number of American born women of Greek descent. Rather, more Greek born women, having graduated from the gymnasia of Greece, chose to attend the Teachers College. In the 1959 graduating class, only one of seven girls was America born, while in 1967, six of the eighteen first year students were American born. This pattern was consistent throughout the 1960s and up until the 1973 merger. Emmanuel alerted the Archdiocese to the decreased enrollment among American born students. Counelis argued in his report that the Academy did not live up to its “real goal” of attracting Greek-American girls. He criticized the school for not trying to educate the Greek born students in American culture and values. Attributing the higher attrition rate among the few American born girls to the schools’ reproduction of a Greek cultural and educational environment, he further ascertained “the Greek-born girl found a familiar and loving atmosphere which cherished ‘Greekness’ and that did not require her to accommodate or acclimate herself to an ‘alien’ life.”

Zouras, too, cited this problem as a deficiency in the Archdiocese’s efforts. He denounced the Archdiocese’s “gross misrepresentation of the Junior College being for American-born youth

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22 Nicholas Zouras, “Our Indigent and Deficient St. Basil’s,” 1960, Box 5, Folder GZ, TC Collection of GOA.
23 Nicholas Zouras to Archbishop Iakovos and St. Basil’s Academy Board of Trustees, 10 January 1964, Box 5, Folder GZ, TC Collection of GOA.
of Greek descent as in practice it has been and remains predominantly an overseas school for girls from Greece (directly or via Canada).”

Emmanuel made concerted efforts to advertise the seemingly revamped Teachers College by sending brochures to parishes, placing advertisements and articles in newspapers, and making radio announcements. Archbishop Iakovos circulated recruitment letters to the parishes, conveying the advantages to parishioners of sending their daughters to the school. The advantages included free room, board, and tuition, including a $200 yearly stipend, as well as guaranteed employment in a school and parish. The Archdiocese advertised the Teachers College in Greece too. For Greek born women, especially those who might have had limited prospects for further education or employment in Greece, the Teachers College would have had great appeal. In addition to employment upon completion of a three-year curriculum, Greek women might also find a permanent home in the United States.

A perusal of the Teachers College 1964 Yearbook shows how campus life complemented the academic life. It offers a snapshot of the intersection of American and Greek cultural traditions and how they complicated the multipurpose objectives of the church hierarchy. True to their roots, the women chose to adorn the front cover of the yearbook with a photo of the Acropolis. They chose to dedicate the yearbook to an American woman, “Mrs. Jackie Kennedy for her interest in Hellenism.” Students created a page in memory of the deaths of President John F. Kennedy and King Paul of the Hellenes. Photos of the students highlighting their trips to New York City, visiting museums, putting on plays, celebrating Greek and American holidays, enjoying the outdoors on the Hudson, hiking, and horseback riding, reveal a rich extracurricular life. It is evident that for the predominantly Greek born student body, American cultural values and activities enriched their insular Greek Orthodox environment.

The Merger with Hellenic College

On May 31, 1967, the State Education Department denied the Archdiocese’s request for a provisional charter as a junior college based on deficiencies Chief Edward F. Carr found in the areas of faculty,

25 Nicholas Zouras, “Our Indigent and Deficient St. Basil’s,” 1960, Box 5, Folder GZ, TC Collection of GOA.
library, curriculum, and admissions.\textsuperscript{26} Echoing Counelis’ report eight years earlier, Carr observed that St. Basil’s teachers were not teaching in areas of their professional expertise, which was a requirement for accreditation. He noted the predominance of part-time faculty and low student enrollment as an impediment, as well. The understaffed library, with its 6,900 volumes, fell far short of the 20,000 volumes needed for a junior college library. Carr indirectly addressed the problems of the multipurpose nature of the school when he questioned the large number of courses scheduled per semester. Finally, he cautioned the administration against using the term “college” until accreditation was achieved.\textsuperscript{27}

Given the resources the Archdiocese needed to establish an accredited junior college, the church hierarchy, in conjunction with community leaders and faculty from Saint Basil’s and Hellenic College, decided to merge the Teachers College with Hellenic College.\textsuperscript{28} They did not base the merger on economy alone but as a way to upgrade the training of the teachers, according to a report prepared by Reverend Stanley H. Harakas, Dean of Hellenic College.\textsuperscript{29} He explained in detail how the course of studies would have to be expanded to accommodate the training of teachers, choir directors, and secretaries. The merger would affect housing facilities, classroom and dormitory space, library facilities, and the hiring of faculty. Harakas contemplated how the “ethos” of Hellenic College with its pervasive ecclesiastical “mood,” might be affected with the transfer of approximately forty-eight women students.\textsuperscript{30} He admitted that the “Halki tradition” would become obsolete, but was positive that a “new ethos” would be forged.

\textsuperscript{26} Edward F. Carr to Reverend Demetrios Frangos, 31 May 1967, Box 5, Folder ME, TC Collection of GOA.
\textsuperscript{27} Edward F. Carr to Reverend Demetrios Frangos, 31 May 1967, Box 5, Folder ME, TC Collection of GOA.
\textsuperscript{28} Hellenic College was made up of two institutions at that time: an undergraduate four year college and a three year professional school of theology (Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology). Hellenic College was a candidate for accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges in 1973, and as such, offered three specialized programs leading to the B.A. degree: Philosophy-Religion, Greek Studies, and Humanities. According to Stanley Harakas, the “major purpose” of Hellenic College was to “provide specialized undergraduate education for candidates for admission to the School of Theology.” Reverend Stanley Harakas, “Report on the Merger of Hellenic College and Saint Basil’s Academy,” 15 March 1973, Box 5, Folder ME, TC Collection of GOA.
\textsuperscript{29} Reverend Stanley Harakas, “Report on the Merger of Hellenic College and Saint Basil’s Academy,” 15 March 1973, Box 5, Folder ME, TC Collection of GOA.
Nonetheless, twenty-nine theology students expressed their dissatisfaction in a letter to Harakas. The seminarians disapproved of the merger because they felt the school lacked personnel and was insufficiently funded. Significantly, they opposed it because they believed there was too much transition occurring with their school, “which forces constant questioning and redefinition of the purpose of our school.” Yet, the purpose of the theological school (i.e., to train young men for the priesthood of the Greek Orthodox Church in America) had not changed since its inception in 1937. At the heart of the students’ dissatisfaction were the issues of tuition and expenses. Interestingly enough, Harakas reported that in the academic year 1972-3, the per student tuition cost for Hellenic College was $5,700, while it was less than half that amount, $2,500 per student, at the Teachers College. Hellenic College covered room and board for the theology students while the remainder of their expenses was covered through government loans, grants, or scholarships. The seminarians feared competition for limited financial resources with the Teachers College students, as well as the intrusion into their unique way of living.

The enormous disparity in per student tuition cost between Hellenic College and the Teachers College draws attention to notions of access and power within the Greek Orthodox Church in America and the Greek American community during this time period. The Archdiocese articulated an ambitious system of higher education to serve the needs of the Orthodox faithful. In doing so, the church hierarchy along with prominent men from the community, defined who was going to be educated, how they were going to be educated, and whom the resources would serve. Clearly, the Holy Cross Theological Seminary and the establishment of Hellenic College commanded a greater share of the resources. Prominent women educators or professionals were excluded from the efforts towards accreditation of the proposed Junior College. Artemis Emmanuel was one such individual who was fired from her position as Dean of the Teachers College. While the reasons for her dismissal are unclear, her exasperation at the “continuous harassment, intimidation, and humiliation,” which she was subjected to by empowered male colleagues, sheds light on how educated women were excluded.

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31 Hellenic College students to Reverend Stanley S. Harakas, March 1973, Box 5, Folder ME, TC Collection of GOA.
32 Artemis Emmanuel to Archbishop Iakovos, 12 September 1962, Box 6, Folder AM, TC Collection of GOA.
The church hierarchy defined the education of women within the limits of the community parish. This was rationalized in practical terms because the schools needed teachers, and the parishes needed secretaries and choir directors. Hence, the Teachers College could successfully train the flexible “community servant.” This myopic view of women’s education resulted in an incoherent course of studies that, in the end, failed to achieve accreditation. It did not attract the American born high school students of Greek descent because other, more lucrative options were available to them such as teaching in the public schools. It also did not appear to satisfy the educational aspirations of its graduates who wished to further their education. A letter to Archbishop Iakovos from Artemis Emmanuel speaks to this issue:

A number of our graduates of last year and of previous years applied, this last summer, for enrollment in various American colleges. This has required that we send these colleges transcripts of our students’ records and information as to the type of our school, its objectives, the courses offered, etc. In absolutely all the cases, the colleges with which we communicated acknowledged our program of study granting our graduates transfer credit and accepting them to advanced standing.33

The graduates clearly had educational aspirations beyond what was offered at the Teachers College. This letter is also a testament to the strength of the program of study at the school despite the deficiencies outlined by the education authorities. It is also something the church hierarchy could have and perhaps should have built upon.

Conclusion

The Greek Orthodox Church’s role in education during this time period requires more research as well as a critical perspective. The voices of the women who worked as teachers, choirmasters, and secretaries also need to be uncovered and brought to the fore. Their work was vitally important to the community and further studies should examine the teachers themselves for the ways they negotiated and interpreted their own agency within the parish sphere. Finally more research needs to be done on the schools for the value and meaning they held to their teachers,

33 Artemis Emmanuel to Archbishop Iakovos and Board of Trustees of St. Basil’s Academy, 12 September 1961, Box 6, Folder AM, TC Collection of GOA.
students, and respective communities. Despite Archbishop Iakovos’ call to the graduates of 1961 to approach their teaching as they would approach the “holy altar,” what the church hierarchy overlooked was that for some teachers, teaching was not centered on religious or ethnic loyalties, rather “it was the opportunity to give to a child the best that is in you, that he or she might become a better person tomorrow.”

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34 Archbishop Iakovos, Commencement Address, 18 June 1961, Box B7, Folder ME, TC Collection of GOA.
Authority in the Church: Confronting Contemporary Challenges

Frank Dobbs

Introduction

The consideration of authority in the Orthodox church leads us directly into the roots of the tradition and history of the Church. To understand the primary sources, we must acquire not just the words and forms that the fathers have bequeathed us; we must go further, and enter into the minds of the fathers; think as they did, and creatively marry the best that civilization has to offer with the deep mysteries of the Incarnation. To be considered faithful, one cannot simply follow the forms of the holy inspired masters, one must also reason as they did and thus conform to them with the mind and the heart.

The fathers seem to have chosen a system of practical authority and administration in the church that was quite untraditional and very modern for a religious movement. They copied the diocesan administrative system that Diocletian perfected for the Roman Empire. They chose well, for this system has survived for the best part of two millennia. The Diocletian system was comprehensive, had clear lines of authority and combined centrality with local responsibility and initiative. The organizational system survived the fall of both halves of the Roman Empire, the death of Latin, the expulsion of Greek speakers from Africa and Asia and many other evolutions. It adapted itself to the Age of Empires and the rise of Colonialism. These wise and learned men adapted for God the best that Caesar had to offer at the time. The diocesan system was part and parcel of Christianity’s absorbing and transforming classical culture to create Christian civilization.

Had they been more traditionalist, the holy fathers might have modeled their administration upon the Hebrew priesthood, or the Davidic kingship, or perhaps the charismatic stance of the prophets; they might have chosen models from the diverse cults of paganism, or the schools of the philosopher. Instead they chose the best organizational model that contemporary secular society had to offer, and it has endured for a long time. Few human institutions have lasted as long or have been handed down through society without interruption. I would argue that in this present age, Orthodox clergy should think to do likewise; namely to
show the same creative, adaptive, and spirit-filled mindset that the ancient fathers had. For today we face, in the light of God’s great gift of the Enlightenment and the advances of modern civilization, the same task that the fathers had in coming to terms with God’s great gift to them of Classical Civilization and winning it for Christ. In this essay, I will consider some ways that Orthodox clergy might re-express the exercise of authority in the church today.

Hierarchical Authority

No one starting out today would think the Diocletian system the best system of administration the world has to offer. As the great poet, Tennyson, wrote: “The old order changeth, yielding place to new, And God fulfils Himself in many ways, Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.” Yet no one who reverences the deep and holy history of the church would wish to abolish what tradition has so long sanctified and established. No one who has witnessed the collapse of the Greek presence in Constantinople over the last two generations, and the vacant corridors of the Phanar today, can be unaware of how much ‘the old order changeth.’ We are required to adapt to new realities. Orthodox clergy should seek to lead the church by aiming to perfect the achievement of the past by grafting onto it the insights that modernity and reason have taught mankind.

In this light, it follows that the Church’s system of authoritative governance ought to be the best available. It should maintain the old, yet at the same time borrow from proven systems of order and administration created by the secular world and tested by time in that context. Obviously, our hierarchy would not want to follow every clever experiment that will later be found wanting. But neither would they want authority to be expressed only in ways that represent a time that none of us today would choose to live in: a time of widespread illiteracy and superstition, of economic backwardness, of plagues, famines, and deadly sanitation, where sometimes the opportunity to get enough to eat was worth putting on the appearance of renouncing all the pitiful suffering the world had to offer, and the joy of having a family was all but a death sentence.

One of the things we should note in considering the place of clerical authority today is the relative decline in the real authority of all hierarchies in modern societies. This attenuation of hierarchical authority in modern liberal society results from the very nature of our societal values, where authority has been ‘disintermediated,’ and made more varied and diffuse. It cannot be otherwise where knowledge and learning,
freedom and autonomy, increased wealth and spontaneous forms of order through self-regulation define the nature of the society.

The ancient authority once wielded by the bishop, and reflected in the legal codes, is largely illusory today. If we consider what is the authority of a bishop in America, we will ask: Does he have the resources to build churches, found seminaries, establish hospitals, persuade talented people to become priests? If he excommunicates people, will they no longer commune in Christian society? If he asks for their substance, will they yield him their treasures? If he tries to lead, will many follow him just because of his hierarchical position? Today he must specifically persuade them. If he relies on the habit of blind obedience, he will be an archaic fish in a Republican sea. Which is all to the good. For the church is the body of Christ, not the administrative arm of his special service. Each branch of the vine encompasses the whole. Unity itself is of diminished value unless the unity reflects the eternal values of the church, to which all members, not only hierarchs will devote their service. Jesus himself defined authority as service in humility and submission. How splendid that we live in a time where the priesthood of all believers has become a little more actual, and a little less theoretical than in the past; and a time when authority needs to be expressed in love and persuasion rather than in administrative fiat.

When we look back over the arc of history, it is clear that the Late Roman imperial administrative system of authoritative leadership grew out of a cult of the Roman emperors as gods, and was negotiated onward by Christians towards a theory of the divine right of kings. But how distant is the spirit of those times from our own Republican age. In writings about kings and their legitimacy, three points are salient. One is that the monarch was a unifying principle for the state, one that was meant to prevent division and civil war. Another is that he was a unique point of connection between the secular order and the divine. The third that the monarch was a kind of perfect father to his people. The Episcopal role has also been written about in similar terms in the history of the Church.

Whatever its merits, the downside of this model is considerable. Many pagan Caesars were driven to madness by the need to separate themselves from humanity and literally to pose as gods on earth. The temptation for a leader to pose as a god was resisted by the early Church as idolatry. Anyone who mimics this role of leadership, taking it seriously, absent humility and grace, is in certain danger. There is also the problem of supervision and checks and balances to consider. In the West, the papacy could at least provide a supervisory function for local leadership at times. In the East, the theory of Symphonia gave to
Emperor then Czar a role in balancing and supervising the episcopate that today is lacking in democracies. I would argue that to be more faithful to the Byzantine past, a powerful and representative lay assembly should exercise a similar role today; at least if the traditional Orthodox episcopal economy is to function as it did under emperors and princes.

If we could ever find a perfect man to put in charge, who would not prefer a monarchy? Christ, the archetype for authority in the Church is King, not an elected representative. In the political world, however, democratic or representative government, as exists in the United States, is founded on the pre-supposition that people are imperfect, that their interests and desires do not accord perfectly with the common good, and that a means must therefore be found so that the authority of imperfect (though presumed to be virtue-seeking) individuals can be checked, but also coordinated with other imperfect (though equally virtue-seeking) individuals. This model would do much to invigorate the real exercise of authority in the church. A more democratic sense of authority, balanced and checked, with virtue and citizenship understood as accruing to all the faithful is simply more true to the facts of human existence in a democratic age, one of material plenty where knowledge and advanced education are widespread, and especially in a country like the United States where the burdens of citizenship are assumed by all from an early age.

*Heavenly Citizenship versus Blind Obedience*

America has been blessed by many enlightened and talented immigrants from the Old World. They, too, have benefited from the blessings of our wealth and freedom. But often there persists in our cultural imagination a short-sighted, un-Christlike, attitude that middle class American culture is without distinction and unworthy of consideration. A lifetime of reflection has taught me, on the contrary, that America is just as interesting as Periclean Athens, and just as remarkable a civilization. This prejudice is in part understandable, since life in America often seems such an extreme departure from the traditions of Christian Europe, which gave so much to this world. But America is equally Christian, having old traditions from England that descend from Augustine of Canterbury, but has now become an expression of Christian civilization that in many ways has brought mankind closer to the spirit of the gospel. Republican America can make a claim to be perhaps the most advanced Christian society in the contemporary world.
The American system is proven by time and many other measures to have virtues not common in any polity where Orthodoxy has been historically planted. To outsiders, the American system seems to be based on individual freedom, greed, and self-interest. A closer look would reveal that this is only one side of the coin of “citizenship,” namely freedom co-joined with responsibility. Judges have authority, but the jury of citizens determines guilt or innocence. Voters decide who will hold public office. The right to possess weapons is predicated on the citizen helping to maintain public order. Generals direct armies, but citizens fight the wars, and the elected President is commander in chief. When crises occur, one knows in this country that the person standing next to you is a fellow citizen and can be counted on to act for the common good. People of privilege actively help the less advantaged to join the elite for the sake of the nation. Even immigrants are habitually welcomed with open arms, and no one much minds if they are blind to our beauties and strengths should they choose to live in an intellectual and emotional ghetto.

In a nation of free citizens, authority comes from the consent of the citizens as expressed in republican institutions. This provides tremendous power, since every member of a republican body is capable of taking action for the interests of the whole. The result has been an explosion of abundance, freedom, creativity, learning, and human progress unique in the history of the world. In similar terms, the concept of citizenship in the Kingdom of God is foreshadowed by St. Paul’s words:

The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3.24-28)

Following the Apostle’s profound insight we need to realize that how to organize an empire of subjects and slaves is a very different question from envisaging, and organizing, a republic of free citizens of heaven. We may be tempted to think of the past as the ‘Golden Age’ of Orthodoxy. The Apostolic period is, of course, the touchstone of the formation of the kerygma of the Church. But when has the Kingdom of God actually been most apparent in post-apostolic Christianity? The good news is that the future could be, should be, and almost certainly
will be the true golden age of Christian authority. The Kingdom of Christ is not of this world. It is the realm of the Holy Spirit, who is present in all places, all things, and all human hearts. It is monarchical, because there is only one God and one Savior. It is aristocratic, because it claims for its own all things that are good, all that are profitable, and all that possess beauty in this world. And it is democratic, because he who is the least in this world is great there, and the last in the world shall be first there, and true authority will reside in the one who truly gives up his life for Christ.

The Full Inclusion of Women

Our clergy, to renew the vitality of their authoritative leadership, must also give serious thought to ending the exclusion of women from full participation in the church. This is something fully demanded by both the spirit of the times and by the mystery of the Gospel which the Apostle Paul adumbrated saying: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The culture of condescension to women has started to be as effectively abolished in most of society through the power of Christ’s revelation, as has human slavery before it, and the exclusion of the gentiles. It is up to the Church to acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit in revealing the complete humanity of females and their inalienable dignity of bearing the complete image and likeness. It is not the role of the church to try to fight against this revelation or to try to negotiate it away. We live in a world where nations are now judged by their treatment of women. Religions will soon be judged that way too. The current structures of our contemporary Orthodox church would crumble without the loyal support of its many women. But they chafe under the discrimination so often leveled against them, and often serve the Church despite this wounding burden. The same talents that have allowed women to lead successfully and authoritatively in politics, law, academia, the arts, business and basically every area of modern life would also allow them to be excellent leaders of the church.

The Celibate Episcopate

A related question is whether the effectiveness of hierarchs would be increased by relaxing the rules introduced in the Byzantine era that a bishop must be unmarried. On the one hand, in contemporary society, there is no longer a large celibate talent pool. Fewer wives die early from childbirth or other causes, so widowed priests are much rarer
than they used to be. The number of monks is now tiny. Moreover, the
prestige of the monastic vocation, while still considerable, is not as great
as it once was. People are more likely to feel alienated from leaders who
have never shared the responsibilities of family life and work life in the
world that defines their normal days. This is a question our Church
needs to re-examine seriously under the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Effective Bureaucracy

Even the most visionary and powerful leader is but one man,
whether he is Alexander the Great, or a simple parish priest. For his
authority to have any effect, whether that authority is military might or
the redeeming force of the gospel of peace, requires both motivated
followers and a competent like-minded bureaucracy. The study of
leadership in the modern world has shown that an outdated bureaucracy,
the fear of the initiative and talent of one’s colleagues and subordinates,
a failure to define clear goals, the exclusion of groups (ethnic, gender,
laiety), an underutilization of the gifts of technology and communication,
a lack of curiosity about the intellectual resources developed by others,
excessive isolation and levels of bureaucracy: all these things make a
position of authority (even of apparently great authority) into no
authority at all. In the modern world time has become generous, in that
the creation of value is soon recognized, and also pitiless, in that
institutions of great age and vast scope and significant prior success can
be superseded in the blinking of an eye.

At the same time, the hierarchy of today has available to it
resources that are unprecedented in the history of the Christian Church:
but only if it can learn how to deploy them. There is simply no previous
time in human history that can compare to the way the common people
can today command skilled resources. For the hierarch who takes this
for granted, yet still assumes blind obedience as a value, such skills will
merely limit his authority; because even the common people today will
no longer follow blindly. However, such skills could powerfully
multiply the effect of the authority of a deft and enlightened leader. The
old kinds of hierarchical tree that Diocletian used to hold the Roman
Empire together, will no longer suffice. Even large organizations today
have discovered that hierarchies have to remove layers, become flatter
and nimble with better communications and more initiative at all levels
in order to be effective.

The French aristocrat, Alexis de Tocqueville, noted 175 years
ago, that one of the defining characteristics of American culture is
volunteerism, more so than in any country in Europe. This means that Americans who join churches:

- Are very likely to belong to several other groups, and not make the church their sole group organization and identity.
- Expect to be involved, and show initiative in church, just as they do in other groups.
- Expect the leadership of groups to be collegial, not a benevolent dictatorship.

Naturally, Orthodox believers do not expect to modify the liturgical practice or the theology of the church. That would defeat the purpose of being Orthodox. Nevertheless, a hierarchical leader of the church who wished to expand his authority has a ready-made and eager crew of followers among American Christians, once he has come to understand the culture of volunteerism. The Lord has told us that every sparrow, every hair of our head is numbered. The same Lord has provided a universe of diverse talents to every parish in the land. An effective hierarch will number the gifts of his flock, and use these gifts to multiply his work. He will give the gift of encouraging and enabling each member of his flock to use their gifts. In this way, his authority, which is, after all the authority of doing Christ’s work, will be multiplied.

In short: the Orthodox Church must learn to avoid being a museum frozen in time, but become a place of life and community and growth, that is more deeply rooted in time than any other church. Just as he has done for two thousand years, Christ on the cross whispers to our hearts “I thirst,” and it is for souls that he thirsts. He thirsts for us to show to these souls in our modern world the depth of his love, all that has been done beautifully in his name for the past two thousand years, and also all that we can now do beautifully to satisfy his thirst and provide a home for his infinite love. And he tells us that ultimately change is not the enemy of tradition and not the enemy of depth, because only through change in time can the Church and each individual soul discover ever greater depths of holiness and love.
The Synod Guiding the Church: A Patristic and Theoethical Perspective

Eftychios Phil Eftychiadis

Introduction

The notion of the synod of hierarchs of the Orthodox Church, as a final authority for guiding the church derives from the biblical example of the first synod of the Apostles. This Synod in Jerusalem even included the Apostle Paul. In this paper, I will focus on the idea of the synod of the hierarchs of a national church which also accepts the principle of freedom of religion. The synod of hierarchs guides the church by defining praxes for the needs of others in its ministry. Our present discussion turns around principles of Orthodox contextual theoethical thought. To that end, I will argue that the hierarchs of the synod require additional input, apart from their own priestly insights, in order appropriately to fulfill their mission of guiding the church. One of the chief motives of this paper is to examine the reasons why Orthodox hierarchs in synod need ideas and creative input from the other ranks of clergy, including ordained deaconesses, as well the laity, both male and female; all with their own irreplaceable perspectives on truth gained from life-experiences.

Expanding the Synod’s Perspective

Currently, the perspective that dominates the typical Orthodox synod is that of an all-male, celibate clergy. The church hierarchy operates within a cultural context that does not permit a rich diversification of opinions or backgrounds. Differences in education, culture, gender, and age could and should enlarge the present limited hierarchical perspectives. Introducing ideas and opinions from wider representations of the clergy, deaconesses and the laity, would create for the hierarchs a new and fruitful ground for more energized and

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1 Acts. 15:1-41.
2 In this paper, terms such as theoethical perspective, theoethical education, theoethical values or objectives, mean that the perspective, education and values or objectives are in accord with theological truths and principles, based on the Scripture and Tradition.
appropriate ideas to surface during synodal deliberations.\textsuperscript{3} The personal experiences of such ‘new blood’ in addressing the real needs of the faithful would be invaluable for the hierarchs in their attempt to define relevant\textit{praxes} for the ministry of the church in the modern world. These ideas can be communicated by many various ways: such as appointing representatives through clergy and laity congresses, by holding large pre-synodical consultations, and through standing advisory committees. Through this diversification of ideas, taken from a genuine range of church life and life-condition, and listened to seriously, hierarchs could resolve serious issues in the life and ministry of the church in a more authentic way. In this way, diversification of opinion and background should be an important objective for the synod in its pre-deliberative discussions.

One of the more challenging issues in expanding the perspective of the hierarchy involves the inclusion of women into close clerical standing, through the ordained female diaconate. In our present context, the church does not ordain women presbyters and women bishops. However, the church can, and did, ordain women to the diaconate.\textsuperscript{4} Through such an ordination, once restored, women deacons could offer an invaluable input to the synod, for guiding the church in confronting needs in its ministry and, in particular, for addressing the unrecognized needs of Orthodox women and young girls. Such a renewed ministry would have untold benefits for the Church at large, and for Orthodox women in particular (among whom the deaconesses would primarily work). But more than this, the ordination of women to the diaconate would also renew the conscience of the church, and give a deeper more appropriate perspective to the formal reflections of the holy synod.


Orthodox Contextual/Pragmatic Theoethical Thought

This pressing issue of offering ‘new perspectives’ to the mind of the hierarchs of the synod derives from a relatively new aspect of Orthodox thinking which we can designate as pragmatically contextualized theoethical thought; but although ‘recent’ it is as old as the church, for it concerns the way the earliest apostles and fathers and other missionaries, determined how best to preach the Word in their surrounding context of need. For example, even in that first apostolic synod contextual thought was being applied decisively and innovatively. Because of needs of new Christians from the gentiles, it was decided that the Apostle Paul be specifically dedicated to confronting these needs of Christians who were not of Jewish descent. That contextual theoethical decision, led to one of the most important efforts in the ministry of the ancient church dedicated to the needs of Christians in every cultural context in the Tradition. Pragmatic Orthodox contextual theoethical approaches are also witnessed extensively in the ‘economy’ of the great Fathers in the Eastern Early Church, and can particularly be seen in Chrysostom’s contextually orientated theology. He was constantly relating his theological stance to new ‘situations’ or praxes that were offered to him by the needs of his flock: the poor, needy, and neglected. These occasional needs he also took to be far more than peripheral; rather they were the instances of the voice and will of God. In responding to these newly perceived needs, he extended the range of this thought as well as developing the real-world effectiveness of his church’s ministry. Most of the effective Orthodox missionaries, throughout the following centuries, also seriously considered the cultural context of those who were to become Christians. By considering the culture of these persons, the missionaries were able to reshape their messages in a way that the indigenous culture could understand. The missionaries once they had established the basics of the church went on also to use the roots of the indigenous cultures of the newly illuminated converts whom they were serving, in order to define new standards of contextually sensitive praxes for meeting the ongoing spiritual and material needs of their new flocks. They ensured that these very new cultures and praxes of Orthodoxy were authentically in accord with the Scripture and tradition;

6 J. Chrysostom, in Migne, Patrologia Graeca, Hom. in Mt (PG 58. 629-630); Hom in 1 Cor (PG 61. 179); Hom in Mt (PG 58.762-763). See also J. N. D. Kelly, Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom—Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1992).
yet resonated well with the indigenous traditions that they had ‘fulfilled,’ not destroyed. This is why in some cases some of the local traditions had to be substantially modified to bring them into line with biblical and ecclesial tradition. Even to this day, we can note, almost all the churches belonging to the contemporary World Council of Churches use important elements of contextual theoethical thought in their reflections.

So far I have spoken of four phases inherent in the process of this new tendency of Orthodox contextual and theoethical thought: (1) defining the contextual/pragmatic praxes in the ministry of the church; (2) defining theoethical objectives for the new contextual praxes; (3) defining relevant contextual theoethical praxes to meet new needs, in place of previous praxes that may have become irrelevant to the people’s real needs; and (4) using and building benevolent cultural institutions, guided by contextual approaches and theoethical objectives based on Scripture and Tradition.

In relation to the first phase, our objective ought to be for the new praxis to be highly contextual and aimed always at confronting immediate localized needs relevant to a particular cultural situation. The main motivation behind this would be to identify what these needs are and to confront their causes. This contextual praxis would be expected to be relevant to new needs. At the end of this first phase, however, we are still limited to cultural analysis: we still have only a contextual relevant praxis.

The second stage in our Orthodox reflection would be to include theoethical reflection aimed at defining this new contextual praxis so that it should be in accord with the values and principles inherent in Scripture and Tradition. To achieve this purpose, this new contextual praxis can be modified or redefined, in order to develop theoethical objectives. In this way, whatever new praxis we have identified would be in accord with these two fundamental compasses of our faith.


9 Chrysostom, Hom in Mt (PG 58. 629-630); Hom in 1 Cor (PG 61. 179); Hom in Mt (PG 58.762-763).

10 Chrysostom, Hom in Mt (PG 58. 629-630); Hom in 1 Cor (PG 61. 179); Hom in Mt (PG 58.762-763); T. G. Stylianopoulos, The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2002), 59-61, 116-119, 135-144.
Let us take, as an example, the case of the ministry of a church deciding to provide shelter and food to single mothers. Through theoethical reflection, it was determined that this *praxis* was in accord with objectives derived from the Scripture and Tradition. Moreover, it was decided that this *praxis* should be redefined so as to be progressively enriched with objectives that more forcibly responded to the real and present needs of single mothers. This happened by defining new *praxes* for supporting this particular instantiation of single mothers, related to the original *praxis*. At first it was decided that the church could assist these mothers to acquire appropriate educational training, in order to find a job. This *praxis* was of great significance to these mothers. The mothers felt confident in their abilities and gradually became able to support their families. Another related theoethical objective for the mothers was to help them join the ecclesial community and participate in its ministry and its worship. These additional theoethical objectives present to us a caring ecclesial community that was responding not only to material needs of persons in need, but also to these persons’ spiritual needs.

The third phase of a contextual theoethical process would include the church’s desire to define or accept new relevant *praxes*, in confronting new needs, in place of previous *praxes*, which may have become anachronistic or irrelevant in the face of new needs. Even a long accepted *praxis* in the life and ministry of the church could be substituted with a new relevant *praxis* addressing new needs, after the previous praxis had become irrelevant to the ongoing real needs of the people.\(^{11}\) This is also common sense in human beings, men and women. The new *praxis* should be contextual and pragmatic and always guided by theoethical objectives derived from Scripture and Tradition. Through this approach, which inevitably leads to dynamic and vital change, the church will show that it can adapt and develop its ancient ministry. This will prove to be very beneficial for the needs of the faithful as well as many other needy human beings in society.\(^{12}\)

The fourth phase of this contextual theoethical thought would include using and building cultural institutions, guided by theoethical objectives, aimed at confronting and developing needs in the ministry of

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11 Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 111-123, 198-205, 248-271; Chrysostom, Hom in Mt (PG 57. 60); Hom in 1 Mt (PG 57. 268); Hom in Mt (PG 58. 591); Hom in Mt (PG 58. 557-558).

the church. In reality, almost every aspect of the life and efforts of faithful persons and of cultural groups and communities, in confronting complicated needs, requires the use of pragmatically contextualized cultural institutions derived from Scripture and Tradition. Through this approach of using and enlivening cultural institutions, the church would maximize and strengthen its effectiveness, in confronting human needs in its ministry to the world. For example, as part of their ministry, certain local churches decided to cooperate in an ambitious effort to build affordable housing for low-income families. Many individual members of the church and other local cultural institutions contributed to this effort. The churches contacted a construction company for initial advice on various aspects of the project. Later, this company contributed a great deal to the construction of these houses. The churches also contacted a real estate company, which was managing land outside the town. This company proposed land, which could be purchased relatively inexpensively, and the proposal was accepted by the churches guiding the project. The local churches then applied for a loan. The application for this loan was directed to certain federal financial institutions, which offered loans at low interest rates. The churches’ application was approved as a reliable project. The financial institutions involved immediately assessed that the construction of these houses could contribute a great deal to the vital needs of individuals and families. As the project was developing, all the participants in this project (individuals and managers of cultural institutions) often met in the churches that had participated in the project. The purpose of these gatherings was for the faithful to participate in the worship of the various church communities. The experience of the liturgy further strengthened their spiritual life as well as their unity and dedication to the project. The statement of the need, arrived at from pragmatic reflection, brought many people together with cultural institutions in an initiative led by the Church, to alleviate real needs in a new way.

**Conclusion**

My point in all this, is that this process of reflection cannot be short-circuited. It has to be lived in, and lived through: it is the fabric of the faith as lived out in reality; and it culminates in a wisdom that contributes quintessentially to the missionary effort of the local church. It

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13 See Rasmussen, *Moral Fragments and Moral Community*; See also Mudge, *The Church as Moral Community*.
is precisely here, at the synodical level, that it needs to be recognized as such. And it is here that it has to be added to the formal reflections of the synodical hierarchs: not as an afterthought, or merely as the ‘opinions’ of outsiders to the synodical process of discernment: but rather as substantive witness to the faith, derived from the life-experience, the praxis, of the Orthodox people. From this input to the hierarchs of the synod, from other clergy, including deaconesses, lay men and women, the hierarchs who guide the church, could thereby define and propose new and authentically Orthodox praxes to the church at large, or indeed could recommend to the church that it now ought to set aside certain previous praxes, which have become irrelevant to our present needs. When truly related to the local community, by virtue of a deeply grounded contextual relationship through all the energies and experiences of its faithful people, the Hierarchical synod would be truly in a position to speak wisdom, and to lead in the effort to create a dynamic new missionary involvement with the presently existing benevolent cultural institutions.
PART IV

BOOK REVIEWS
Our Lord’s image is revealed in the Gospel of Mark with singular clarity and power, according to His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios Trakatellis in his 1987 book *Authority and Passion: Christological Aspects of the Gospel According to Mark*. This image is held forth as “the irreplaceable criterion of every Christology.”¹ This strong statement is supported by a complete exposition of the Gospel of Mark which brings forth key details and much reflection in regard to the two overarching Christological aspects, authority and passion. Authority is the divine Christological aspect, expressions of Christ’s power and glory; passion is the human aspect, the various forms of suffering Christ experienced. These two aspects are woven together in Mark’s narrative to enable the hearer to take both to heart together, avoiding both triumphalism and despair.

His Eminence cites many scholars in the notes of this exposition, yet lends to the study a decidedly worshipful tone. It is fitting that a scholarly bishop should bring forth a work with the many and various Markan expressions of authority that reveal the scope of this divine aspect and gift, exemplified in Christ, passed on to the Apostles and their successors, and also exercised by others (Mark 9:38-40) through Christ’s name. And the ever-present passion which accompanies this authority, the various sufferings which culminate in the Cross and death, is also delineated in terms of its implications for the disciples who would eventually become Apostles, and for all who follow Christ.

After a short introduction, four expository chapters follow. The first covers Mark 1:1–8:26, the beginning of Christ’s ministry, in which he is often found exercising his authority to heal, exorcise, and tame the elements, with great crowds following. As the religious leaders plot against him, his disciples are slow of heart causing him to suffer. Expressions of authority are the major focus, yet, here in Mark, the

passion is also present throughout. Evidence of Christ’s authority and passion receive equal attention in the second chapter, which covers Mark 8:27–10:52. In the third chapter, the passion predominates, but never without expressions of authority. Of course, death is not the final word. The account of the resurrection in Mark 16 contains sources of suffering for Christ, such as the unbelief of the disciples. His Eminence lists specific aspects of authority and passion in the fourth chapter, along with key examples and concluding delineation and analysis. With frequent expressions of reverential wonder in regard to these things, his Eminence Archbishop Demetrios touches on the implications of these revelations for Christ’s people.

Notable is the fact that the most striking revelations of authority and passion often come in the parts of the Gospel in which the other aspect predominates. At Jesus’ trial before the Sanhedrin, when asked if he is the Son of the Blessed, the divine words proceed out of silence, like lightning: “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven (14:62).” This, the Archbishop writes, is a declaration of “singular eminence.”

Individuals other than the disciples are found casting out demons in Christ’s name, and the Lord sanctions it. This reveals that the glory and power are located in his Name. Authority in Christ’s Kingdom and in the Church is emphatically tied, Christ declared to his disciples, to the motive of service to all- in Christ’s image, who gave “‘his life a ransom for many.’ (10:45)” In another exemplar, the poor widow, who in giving one coin, gave “everything she had . . . her whole living,” Jesus brought forth “a new criterion, a new canon for evaluating a close relationship with God . . . The offering of ‘whole living’ . . . can also mean sacrificing one’s own life for God’s sake,” according to his Eminence. These are passion motifs, which are aimed, in the narrative, toward authority figures, future apostles and the religious leaders of Israel. “Jesus’ declaration, ‘if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all’ (9:35) . . . shows that the Passion is not an isolated Christological event, but the perfect and absolute archetype of the zenith of human development.” Thus, for Christians, authority is never to be exercised without a cognizance of the standard of service shown forth in Christ’s Passion.

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2 Trakatellis, 100.
3 Trakatellis, 62.
4 Trakatellis, 82.
5 Trakatellis, 62.
The three-part movement of emphasis in the Gospel of Mark from authority to passion is based on the events of the narrative. One could argue that Mark 16 could stand alone as a fourth part, in that the resurrection of Christ is central; death is conquered. It is true, as His Eminence states, that there are passion elements in these pericopes-the intention of anointing the body, the hardness of heart displayed by the disciples. And the one pericope to which the most ancient manuscripts attest, the first one, in which this great victory, in comparison with the other Gospel accounts, is understated (by design, it would seem) in itself does not warrant this. Yet the very fact that death does not have the final word is a most powerful statement of authority. The resurrection is the climax of this Gospel, indeed, of all four Gospels. Life and victory is the final word!

The ancient Church hymn in St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians provides a contrasting trajectory. Christ is our example, the eternally begotten Son of the Father who humbles himself to become a man- a servant-and obediently makes the ultimate sacrifice, a shameful and agonizing death on the cross. And for this his name is exalted above all others, so that all should bow the knee before Jesus. Passion leads to authority; authority follows from this great sacrifice.

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, though, is faithfully rendering the Gospel of Mark as it is written. It is not a Church hymn, meant simply for the praise of God the Son; it is an image of Christ, indeed, the defining basis for our understanding of both him and the way of salvation in Him. Passion will attend the narrow and hard way of walking with Christ and in Christ to the very end. As St. Antony says, we are to expect temptation to the very end of our lives. And whether or not we are called to be martyrs, we are called to sacrificial living, and to pass through death to life, a death which will, for most, involve relinquishment, decrepitude, and pain. And our Lord Jesus Christ, depicted with great vividness in Mark’s Gospel, has shown us, through all these sacrifices and sufferings-through the Cross-the Way to joy. Glory be to Him!

WILLIAM EPHREM GALL

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6 Phil. 2.5-11

For anyone not familiar with the ancient patristic genre *Kephalaia*, hermit Priest-monk Silouan provides an inviting, tantalizing, and, in the end, captivating introduction. In five Chapters called *Centuries*, each consisting of a chain of 100 one-page reflections- all interdependent and yet independent- he offers his mystical reflections in the themes of: the Name, the Song of Songs, Wisdom, Glory, and Stillness. Drawing on the Bible, on Orthodox liturgy, even on the Gospel of Thomas, Fr. Silouan writes in beautiful and paradoxical images that captivate, but then liberate, the processes of the mind in order to make way for the reasons of the heart. His sentences become paintings that teach by their beauty. The effect of contemplating these “Wisdom Songs” was like a blending of *Lectio Divina* and Koan practice. In reading, one finds oneself being read. In contemplating Wisdom one is embraced by Wisdom. In the end, one knows (and knows deeply) without knowing just how. This book is most highly recommended.

PAUL F. KNITTER

This study explores the essence of the monastic desert movement from the third century to the end of the fourth century CE by men and women who fled the surrounding cities they lived in, and came into the arid sands of Egypt in order to continue the trajectory of life. The ancient texts that survive, mainly 1,202 *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* or *Apothegmata*, which Dr. Chryssavgis explores for the purpose of resurrecting the ancient spirit of the desert within a modern context, reveal that these men and women had been specific about their goal in coming to the desert: “We entreat you, make us truly alive.”¹ In seeking out these “…unconventional persons…[who] sought aggressively to understand the deeper meaning and the fuller measure of human existence…,”² the author breathes new life into their Sayings. He generously chooses and strategically dispenses the Sayings throughout the chapters of his book portraying the essence and the way of spiritual attunement to the things of God. Behind these powerful stories and messages “…is concealed the very face of God, Who speaks to each of us in the present and for all eternity.”³ The Sayings are meant to transform us rather than engage us in a dry and spiritless imitation of a behavior or a life that otherwise in a different context would belong to someone else. Thus, the aim of the book is to connect us in a common endeavor so that we may be challenged by our personal “profile of what it means to be human.”⁴

The book consists of eighteen chapters with an Introduction and a Conclusion. This volume includes a chronological table of the chief exponents of the desert movement, a detailed map, a generous bibliography, exquisite pictures, and an introduction to the tradition and the sources of the Sayings. Expanding upon an earlier volume, Chryssavgis has added several sections dealing with contemporary issues such as ecology and gender. In each meticulously arranged chapter, Chryssavgis explores the historical movement of the desert and the key figures. He then sets out the ascetic disciplines which characterized the movement and provides advice on living out these virtues. Finally,

² Chryssavgis, 1.
³ Chryssavgis, 4.
⁴ Chryssavgis, 5.
Chryssavgis brings the desert to the city. Specifically, he tests its application to modern issues and concerns in line with his recent work on the environment and shows us how the Fathers and Mothers, “enjoyed a new awareness of everything that is in the world- human, animal, and natural.”\(^5\) Not only did Anthony see the desert for the first time “and loved it,”\(^6\) but what constituted holiness was the sense of wholeness and connectedness to each other and the natural environment.

The essence of the work is found in Chapter 11 where Chryssavgis’ opening sentence underlines the Christian faith, “Giving and sharing are of the essence of the desert.”\(^7\) The chapter concludes with a contrast between the mind (\textit{nous}) and the heart where he captures the synthesizing and holistic message of the desert, “The two [i.e., heart and \textit{nous}] should be held together; and they should be brought together in the presence of God.”\(^8\) By identifying peripherally the role of the \textit{nous} in the Greek Fathers in contrast to the role of the heart in their Eastern counterparts,\(^9\) Chryssavgis alludes to the significant role that the desert held upon the Fathers of both traditions, the unified nature of the human condition, and the desert’s alchemy on lived existence.

Through the words of exceptional and exemplary elders, Chryssavgis demonstrates that the journey into the desert marked a profoundly humane approach to God, neighbor, and self. In the final chapter, he takes us back to the beginning of the book and reminds us that the purpose of reading the Desert Fathers and Mothers is so that we could catch a glimpse of their fire.\(^10\) It is not coincidental then that the author should conclude with the same message that he began with: “Then we can be grateful to God for ‘making us truly alive.’”\(^11\) Chryssavgis’ spiritual insights and meaningful contextualization and application of the desert movement to today contribute enormously to a renewed interest into a way of life in which God, and more specifically theandric Christ was at the center of one’s life.

VICKI PETRAKIS

\(^5\) Chryssavgis, 85.
\(^6\) Chryssavgis, 85.
\(^7\) Chryssavgis, 75.
\(^8\) Chryssavgis, 77.
\(^9\) Chryssavgis does not explore this point in depth in his work. It is, however, examined in J.A. McGuckin, \textit{Standing in God’s Holy Fire: The Byzantine Tradition} (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, Ltd., 2001).
\(^10\) Chryssavgis, 103.
\(^11\) Chryssavgis, 110.
Can Eucharistic ecclesiology introduced by twentieth century Russian exiles be traced to Patristic sources and considered a framework capable of resolving interfaith issues? Does Eucharistic ecclesiology address the problem of the communion between churches and the relations of primacy and supremacy? Can it offer a workable solution to the unification of the divided “body of Christ”? While Laurent Cleenewerck boldly attempts to answer these questions, his interpretations are not without their shortcomings.

The author renders Nicolai Afanasiev’s Eucharistic ecclesiology as a model for the ecumenical dialogue that aims to heal the schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. Yet, he does so without attributing this notion to Afanasiev. Nevertheless, Cleenewerck characterizes this model as “holographic,” following Michael Talbot’s definition of the nature of a hologram as “whole in every part.” Accordingly, the main thesis of Eucharistic ecclesiology-“where the Eucharist is, there is the Church” - locates the unity of the Church in the Eucharistic celebrations led by the bishop. Where the Eucharist is celebrated, the Church in its fullness (kat’holon) is manifested on earth. The Catholic Church, therefore, “is the local Eucharistic assembly gathered around its bishop.” Bishops are considered equal to one another as all inherit the chair of St. Peter. While this relation is ontological and pertaining to the very being of the Church, all superstructures are functional, and subject to change and development. The relationship of communion between local churches and various primacies of particular bishops are historically determined and subject to place, time, and context. The priority is thus given to Eucharist over the canon law. Under this model a “Universal church” is “not a Eucharistic assembly and therefore not ‘a Church’” but “a structure of communion among Churches.”

The author presents Eucharistic ecclesiology as authentic to Eastern Orthodoxy and juxtaposes it with the universal ecclesiology of the Latin Church. The latter defines the unity of the Church based on the universality of its historical manifestations sealed by the authority of the universal bishop, the one of Rome who is the only legitimate successor of St. Peter. The issue of ecclesiastical authority is thus a major point of disagreement between the churches.
In five sections Cleenewerck delineates the commonalities between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches as well the division lines that led them to the break of communion during the Great Schism of 1054 AD. The author analyzes the ecclesiological, historical, and theological traditions of the Churches, with ecclesiology being the main concern. Finally, the author puts forth a list of contentious issues as well as workable solutions to the reestablishment of the unity of the Church through the reestablishment of communion between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The key preliminary step seems to be the one associated with the possibility of adoption of Eucharistic ecclesiology by the Roman Catholic Church.

There are many unsubstantiated claims made by the author of this book. For instance, statements such as: “Eastern Orthodoxy is plagued by excessive nationalism, liturgical decay, and doctrinal fluctuations,” are negative stereotypes and offensive to the Orthodox mind. The quest for reestablishing communion between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches is included in the same discussion as the forthcoming break of communion between the patriarchates of Moscow and Constantinople. This section raises some questions about the author’s purpose in juxtaposing these events. Is Cleenewerck attempting to portray the Eastern Church in a negative, schismatic light? This book should be read with caution and its statements should not be taken for granted.

SERGEY TROSTYANSKIY

This anthology of the philosophy of religion represents a successful attempt to introduce the reader to key Western religious thinkers and their heritage. The author’s intention to create a “user-friendly and digestible” book finds its fulfillment in the well-structured and historically contextualized volume which elucidates all essential aspects of philosophy of religion. To the reader’s surprise, this volume, arranged by topic, extends its content beyond the narrow scope of traditional anthologies heavily geared toward a few key themes of philosophy of religion to the exclusion of many other relevant topics. Thus, beyond common themes associated with the attributes of God, the arguments for God’s existence, and the nature of evil, the author introduces philosophical works on miracles, religious language, and the diversity of world religions, among others. The most distinctive features of this book are its carefully crafted introductions to each chapter’s problems; biographical and philosophical summaries of each thinker; and the list of primary and secondary sources that will allow the reader to pursue the further studies on the subject.

Readers will not find a number of key philosophical texts in this anthology. For example, one will find neither Frege’s nor Godel’s elucidations of the ontological argument, nor Kant’s essays on moral religion. It seems that the choice of excluding many valuable texts due to their complexity was an uneasy one for the author. Moreover, a complete absence of Byzantine thinkers in the volume raises a question mark. Still, the absence of certain thinkers is compensated by the presence of other names that are not often heard. The range of texts extending from antiquity through the medieval and modern periods to the present establishes a historical continuity and should definitely be credited.

It should be noted nevertheless that it is sometimes unclear where a particular excerpt comes from. Some titles are taken after articles, books, dialogues; others designate the subject matter instead. For example, in Chapter 6, the author reviews issues of Life after Death and presents Plato’s theory of immortality. A small introductory section which includes philosophical and biographical summaries mentions different dialogues. The excerpt is entitled as “The Theory of Immortality.” One might assume that this title is the name of a dialogue not mentioned in the introductory section. This might not be the case and thus the reader seems to have no choice but to guess which dialogue he
or she is about to read. A way out of this difficulty might be sought in the “key texts” part of the section where one can expect to find the list of primary texts relevant to the chapter. However, this expectation might not be satisfied either. Finally, the references are found in the Notes section which some might find difficult to navigate. It appears that in some cases the text’s titles are broadly conceived and in other cases are drawn from the titles of books, articles, or dialogues. These inconsistencies, however, do not diminish the educational value of this superb book which should be read from cover to cover by all students interested in philosophy of religion.

SERGEY TROSTYANSKIY
Dr. Daniel Fanous, an Orthodox independent researcher with degrees in medicine and engineering, presents to the reader the most profound sayings of Jesus and attempts to decipher their meanings by contextualizing them within the framework of first-century Mediterranean culture. Taking into account that the sayings represent God’s speech and are “intrinsic manifestations of Jesus’ entire life and mission” the author empathetically insists on the necessity of placing the sayings into their proper historical and intellectual contexts to extract their significance. He does so because the un-contextualized reading of ancient sources leads to the fusion of ancient and modern horizons and results in misinterpretations at best and to significant doctrinal distortions of the original meaning at worst.

The volume references various canonical, deuterocanonical, patristic, and rabbinic sources representing the intellectual world of first-century Judea as well as the tradition of its interpretation, aiming at approximating the meanings of the sayings to contemporaries. What is the meaning of Jesus’ saying that “the kingdom of heaven suffers violence”? Can we intelligibly grasp its significance? The author makes a successful attempt to make this among many other sayings intelligible to the reader.

The book’s first part elucidates a set of sayings reflecting Jesus’ attitude to the law; the second part focuses on Jesus’ sayings relating to the others; the third part is dedicated to the sayings regarding the kingdom; and the fourth part “seeks to come close to what Jesus revealed of Himself in the sayings.” Its language and exposition of materials makes the book easily readable and enjoyable to all interested in Christianity.

SERGEY TROSTYANSKIY

This source book of pneumatology is a collection of excerpts from various Christian sources. Taking into account “an unprecedented interest in the Holy Spirit” in the past few decades and the correspondingly extensive amount of literature on this subject, Kärkkäinen gives to students of theology and church history a chance to get a good glimpse at the issues associated with the Holy Spirit and Its role in Trinitarian theology, ecclesiology, and soteriology. The ambitious task of introducing almost the entire content of Spirit theology to the reader is fulfilled through the careful choice of the most significant works on the subject, supplemented with introductory notes to each excerpt.

What is the Spirit and Its role in salvation and “deification” of humanity? What is the relationship between the hypostases of the Holy Trinity? How did the Trinitarian debates affect the relation between the East and the West? What is the role of the Spirit in the life of the Church and the role within religious communities? This volume is designed to present these and many other questions associated with the Holy Spirit in such a way that they are answered by the writings of various thinkers.

This volume begins with an exposition of pneumatologies of the Apostolic Fathers and early apologists and proceeds to the patristic texts of Eastern and Western origin. It then takes its route through medieval mysticism and the scholastic tradition followed by the Reformation. After addressing nineteenth century theologies of the Spirit, nearly 200 pages are devoted to contemporary theologies of the Spirit which include charismatic traditions and testimonies from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

There are limitations in aiming to present all information on the subject within the scope of 450 pages. For example, the reader has to be aware that five pages on Basil the Great and his arguments on defending the deity of the Spirit might not be enough to fully understand what was at stake at that time. Fortunately, the introductory notes contextualize the excerpts historically and facilitate understanding.

It should be noted, moreover, that one might not feel entirely comfortable with the choice of definitions and classifications presented in the volume. For example, so called “Spirit Christology” attributed to the early church fathers raises some questions. Is it a proper way of introducing the fathers who neither knew nor used the term? Is this term
well defined in the volume? Is it not just another attempt to find in patristic sources something alien to them to justify a contemporary debate? These questions are not insignificant. However, the issues of definition and classification do not diminish the educational value of this book and students of theology and church history will benefit from reading it.

SERGEY TROSTYANSKIY
Contributors

Stamenka Antonova holds a PhD in Early Christian History from Columbia University, where she has taught after receiving her doctorate in 2005. She has also taught at Union Theological Seminary, New York University, and Seton Hall University in addition to actively contributing and publishing in late antique history.

Very Rev. Dr. Theodor Damian is Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at Metropolitan College of New York and Professor of Philosophy and Literature at Spiru Haret University in Bucharest. He is President of The Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, New York; a well-known theological writer and poet; as well as parish priest of Sts. Peter and Paul Romanian Orthodox Church in Astoria, New York. Among his books are The Icons: Theological and Spiritual Dimensions According to St. Theodore of Studion, Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002; The Isar Sign (Publish America Press, Baltimore, MD: 2010); Introduction to Christianity: The First Millenium (Romania of Tomorrow Press, Bucharest: 2008); and Philosophy and Literature: A Hermeneutic of the Metaphysical Challenge (Romania of Tomorrow Press, Bucharest: 2008).

Seraphim F. Danckaert is the assistant director of strategy at Princeton Theological Seminary. He is writing his doctoral dissertation under Fr. Andrew Louth through Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

George Demacopoulos, PhD, is Associate Professor of Theology and Co-Founding Director of the Orthodox Christian Studies Program at Fordham University. He has published widely on topics ranging from the fourth to the fifteenth century. He is currently completing a book on the creation and reception of the Petrine discourse during the fifth and sixth centuries.

Frank Dobbs has a BA from Yale University, has done graduate research in ancient Greek and corporate finance, and has worked as a financial analyst and a real estate investor. He is an accomplished poet and translator and an avid street photographer.
David J. Dunn holds a PhD in theology from Vanderbilt University. He writes on intersections of church and culture from an Orthodox theological perspective. He currently lives in Franklin, Tennessee.

Eftychios (Phil) Eftychiadis was for many years before his retirement an Associate Professor in the Television Production Department of Brooklyn College (CUNY). He taught social-issues oriented television documentary production. He subsequently gained a PhD from Union Theological Seminary, New York concerned with the correlation of Ethics and social issues confronting the Church.

William Ephrem Gall received an MA in Practical Orthodox Theology from the University of Balamand, Antioch House of Studies. His thesis addressed the specialization of persons with developmental disabilities. He is currently employed as an advisor in a group home in Millersville, PA.

Nikolas K. Gvosdev is a professor of national security affairs at the U.S. Naval War College and the author of *Church-State Relations in the Byzantine and Russian Empires*.

Paul Knitter is the Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions, and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York. He holds a Licentiate from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (1966), as well as a doctorate from the University of Marburg (1972). He is the author of numerous studies on World Religions.

Kim McCann completed her studies at Smith College (AB), Yale University (MBA) and the University of Wales in Lampeter, UK (Post-Graduate Diploma in Theology and Religious Studies, Celtic Christianity).

V.K. McCarty is a graduate of the General Theological Seminary where she works as Acquisitions Librarian. She is an associate of the Community of the Holy Spirit and has served as a preacher in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark.

V. Revd. Prof. John A. McGuckin holds the Nielsen Chair of Church History at Union Theological Seminary, and is Professor of Byzantine Christian History at Columbia University, New York. He is a priest of the Romanian Orthodox Church and a Fellow of the British Royal Historical Society. He is an extensively published scholar whose two
latest works are: *The Orthodox Church* (Blackwell Wiley, 2008) and *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Blackwell Wiley, 2010).

**Vicki Petrakis** is currently a doctoral student in the Early Christian and Jewish Studies Program in the Ancient Cultures Research Center at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. Her Ph.D. thesis is titled, “Gregory the Theologian’s Doctrine of the Logos and its Antecedents.”

Father **Alexander Rentel** is an assistant professor of Canon Law and Lecturer in Pastoral Theology at St. Vladimir’s Seminary. He received his doctorate from the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, Italy, under the direction of Fr. Robert Taft, SJ, studying the late-Byzantine, patriarchal Divine Liturgy. He has served as a canonical advisor to the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America.

**A. Edward Siecinski**, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Religion and Pappas Professor of Byzantine Culture and Religion at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

**Fevronia K. Soumakis** is a doctoral candidate in the History and Education Program at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research interests include education, immigration, women’s studies, and religion. Editor of this present volume, she is also the Treasurer of the Sophia Institute.

**Alexis Torrance** received his doctorate in Theology from the University of Oxford in 2010. He was awarded a Residential Fellowship at the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study, and is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow win the Hellenic Studies Program at Princeton University. His first monograph, entitled *Repentance in Late Antiquity: Framing the Christian Life in the Early Church*, is forthcoming with Oxford University Press.

**Sergey Trostyanskiy** is currently a doctoral student at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and recipient of the Spears Scholarship for Studies in Early Christianity. He is currently a Teaching Fellow in Church history at Union, and has several publications in the fields of ancient and modern philosophy, as well as the thought of Origen of Alexandria.

**Georgia Williams** is trained in Economics and Russian language (BA, Princeton 1993) and Theology (MA, Oxford University 2004). She is
currently pursuing a ThM at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, focusing on the conceptual relationships between Rabbinic Judaism and Greek and Semitic Christian thought.