



The Orthodox Informer

“For it is a commandment of the Lord not to be silent at a time when the Faith is in jeopardy. Speak, Scripture says, and hold not thy peace.... For this reason, I, the wretched one, fearing the Tribunal, also speak.”

(St. Theodore the Studite, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. xcix, col. 1321)

In Memory of Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose), on the
Twenty-Seventh Anniversary of His Holy Repose
(August 20, 1982 [Old Style])

The Royal Path¹

True Orthodoxy in an Age of Apostasy



HIEROMONK SERAPHIM (Eugene Rose in the world) was born in 1934 of Protestant parents, in California. He studied at Pomona College in Los Angeles and received an M.A. from the University of California at Berkeley.

Philosophical by nature and thirsting for the Truth, after a long and wandering search, he discovered it in Holy Orthodoxy, which he eagerly embraced (in 1961), literally dedicating himself to it. His profound study of the works of the great Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky contributed to this, as did the friendship and bond that he formed with Gleb Podmoshensky, then a student at the Holy Trinity Orthodox Theologi-

¹ Source: Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐνστασις καὶ Μαρτυρία, Series 1, Nos. 26-29 (January-December 1992), pp. 3-16.

cal Seminary in Jordanville, New York, and subsequently his fellow ascetic, Father Herman.

In 1963, they founded the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood for the purpose of missionary work. In 1965, with the blessing of their spiritual Father, the most holy Archbishop John (Maximovich) of San Francisco (†1966),² they began publication of the well-known periodical, *The Orthodox Word*. Publishing this periodical was a veritable feat, when we bear in mind that, up until 1981, it was typeset manually and printed on a hand-operated press. In 1969, they founded the Monastery of St. Herman of Alaska in Platina, a wilderness region in Northern California, and in 1970 they received the monastic *schema*.

Father Seraphim was given a blessing to live in a small hut, where he followed a very strict ascetical regimen, praying, studying, and writing, until 1977, when he was ordained a Priest by the virtuous Bishop Nek-



Eugene Rose (at left) with his sponsors



Monks Seraphim and Herman after their Tonsure

tary of Seattle, of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (†1983), a disciple of the renowned last Elder of Optina, St. Nektary (†1928). Thereafter he worked more in a missionary capacity until his holy repose on August 20, 1982 (Old Style), at the age of only forty-eight.

Father Seraphim harmoniously combined in his person an asceticism astonishing in our days with freedom from anger, meekness, humili-

² For a biography of St. John of San Francisco, see *The Life and Conduct of Our Father Among the Saints, Saint John the Wonderworker, Archbishop Of Shanghai and San Francisco* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1996); <http://hsir.info/p/h4> See also “A Miracle Which Confirms the Traditional Church Calendar” (<http://hsir.info/p/yp>).

ty, silence, unceasing prayer, profound love, and spiritual discretion.

Recently a monastic from Serbia has written: “The Athonite hesychast and instructor of the prayer of the heart Bishop Amphilocius [Amfilohije] once said that Fr. Seraphim was granted the greatest gift that a man can be granted on earth—the gift of spiritual discernment.”³

He was particularly distinguished for his gift of eloquence and wisdom, as attested both by those who knew him and by his numerous writings, a large part of which remains still unpublished. In these writings “we find not only his profound education and his wealth of knowledge, but also the ever-living and flourishing spirit and Grace of our God-bearing Fathers, the ‘mind of Christ,’ and a strong nisus towards a life that is lofty and fully consecrated to our Life-giving Savior”⁴—the apocalyptic and prophetic dimension of our Holy Faith.

His knowledge of many languages, and especially his deep knowledge of Russian, impelled him to produce a multitude of very noteworthy translations, in order to make the treasures of the Fathers known in the New World. “In his short life, Father Seraphim offered himself for the glory of God and the salvation of his fellow men. His preaching ministry helped many people to find the way to Orthodoxy and their salvation, while his literary activity included hundreds of articles and dozens of books that bear witness to his anxiety to preserve and transmit genuine, traditional Orthodoxy.”⁵

It was precisely this anxiety, coupled with his healthy and pure zeal, that prompted him to write the following article, among others. His love for the true Faith, which he expresses in this article, and, at the same



Father Seraphim with Bishop Nektary after his Ordination to the Priesthood

³ “Fr. Seraphim Rose: Ten Years Later,” *The Orthodox Word*, Vol. xxviii, No. 4 (165) (July-August 1992), pp. 161-162.

⁴ Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, “†Ιερομόναχος Σεραφεῖμ (Rose)” [†Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose)], *Ἄγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 166 (October 1982), p. 128.

⁵ Petros Botsses, “†Ιερομόναχος Σεραφεῖμ (1934-1982)” [Hieromonk Seraphim (1934-1982)], *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 534 (February 4, 1983), pp. 1, 3.

time, his anguish and distress over the discernible trend among traditionalist Orthodox (in America, Greece, and elsewhere) towards an inordinate zeal marked by extremist tendencies, with very grievous consequences at an ecclesiological and at a practical level, is set forth with clarity, candor, and profundity. The timeliness of this article remains undiminished, even though almost thirty years have elapsed since it was written (in 1976).



Father Seraphim typing

If the sacred struggle for the Faith is to succeed, it must be conducted “properly” and “lawfully.” The most important thing is to protect and preserve the Faith from the insidious pollution of heresy and to witness to it in a Patristic, traditional, and Orthodox spirit. The message of Orthodox resistance on the part of those who abide by the Traditions of the Fathers must not be sullied by injudicious activities and unsound ideas.

The path of moderation, the Royal Path, which the late Father Seraphim chose and which he consistently followed in matters of Faith, did not please everyone.

Many who belonged to “official” Orthodox Churches enmeshed in the ecumenical movement considered him a “dangerous fanatic,” although they admired his spiritual greatness and praised his otherwise indisputable contribution to Orthodoxy. Others, distinguished by their “zeal not according to knowledge,” denounced him as a betrayer of Orthodoxy!⁶

Such has always been the “lot” of those who follow the royal path of moderation and discretion....

Let the present article be considered a very small tribute to the memory of the late Father Seraphim, this year being the twenty-fifth anniversary of his holy repose, let his holy and discerning zeal be a shining example for us, and let his holy prayers guide us on the “Royal Path.”

⁶ Father Alexey Young, “For His Soul Pleased the Lord,” *Orthodox America*, No. 2 (22) (August-September 1982), p. 9.

The Royal Path

True Orthodoxy in an Age of Apostasy¹

“As the Fathers say, the extremes from both sides are equally harmful.... (We must) go on the royal path, avoiding the extremes on both sides.”²

1. “The devil strives to convert the Body of Christ into an ‘ecumenical’ organization”

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS live today in one of the great critical times in the history of Christ’s Church. The enemy of man’s salvation, the devil, attacks on all fronts and strives by all means not merely to divert believers from the path of salvation shown by the Church, but even to conquer the Church of Christ itself, despite the Saviour’s promise³ and to convert the very Body of Christ into an “ecumenical” organization preparing for the coming of his own chosen one, Antichrist, the great world-ruler of the last days.

Of course, we know that this attempt of Satan will fail; the Church will be the Bride of Christ even to the end of the world and will meet Christ the Bridegroom at His Second Coming pure and undefiled by adulterous union with the apostasy of this age. But the great question of our times for all Orthodox Christians to face is a momentous one: the Church will remain, but how many of us will still be in it, having withstood the devil’s mighty attempts to draw us away from it?

¹ *The Orthodox Word*, Vol. XII, No. 5 (70), pp. 143-149. The footnotes, layout, and subtitles are ours—*Editors*.

² St. John Cassian, *A Most Beneficial Discourse to Leontios the Abbot Concerning the Holy Fathers of Sketis and Concerning Discretion*, in *Φιλοκαλία* (Athens: Ekdotikos Oikos “Aster,” 1974), Vol. 1, pp. 93, 86. The title of the Latin original is “Second Conference with Abba Moses, Concerning Discretion” (see *Jean Cassien: Conférences*, ed. and trans. Eugène Pichery, Vol. XLII in *Sources Chrétiennes* [Paris: Cerf, 1966], pp. 110-137).

³ “...and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (St. Matthew 16:18).

2. “Our times are even worse and more dangerous than those of St. Mark of Ephesus”

OUR TIMES are much like those of St. Mark of Ephesus in the 15th century, when it seemed that the Church was about to be dissolved into the impious Union with the Latins.

Nay, our times are even worse and more dangerous than those times; for then the Union was an act imposed by force from without, while now the Orthodox people have been long prepared for the approaching “ecumenical” merger of all churches and religions by decades of laxness, indifference, worldliness, and indulgence in the ruinous falsehood that “nothing really separates us” from all others who call themselves Christians.

The Orthodox Church survived the false Union of Florence, and even knew a time of outward prosperity and inward spiritual flourishing after that; but after the new false Union, now being pursued with ever-increasing momentum, will Orthodoxy exist at all save in the catacombs and the desert?

During the past ten years and more, under the disastrous “ecumenical” course pursued by Patriarch Athenagoras and his successor, the Orthodox Churches have already come perilously close to total shipwreck.

The newest “ecumenical” statement of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, “The Thyateira Confession”⁴ is already sufficient evidence of how far the Orthodox conscience has been lost by the Local Church that once

⁴ Athenagoras Kokkinakis, Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain, *The Thyateira Confession: The Faith and Prayer of the People of God* (Leighton Buzzard: The Faith Press, 1975).

- The late Metropolitan Philaret (†1985), First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, wrote a forceful and very comprehensive Orthodox critique of this book. At one point he exclaims: “If one turns to the *Thyateira Confession* itself, alas, there are so many internal contradictions and un-Orthodox thoughts therein that in order to enumerate them we would have to write an entire book” (“The Thyateira Confession: An Appeal by Metropolitan Philaret to the Primates of the Holy Churches of God, and Their Eminences, the Orthodox Hierarchs”, <http://hsir.info/p/ud>).

- The fallen Archbishop Athenagoras “responded” to the charges of Metropolitan Philaret in his work *Ecclesiological Problems: Church Beyond Boundaries* (1976), which is, in essence, a violent attack upon the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. It is riddled with errors and willful distortions and is characterized primarily by ignorance of historical developments, while the open proclamation by the author of patently anti-Orthodox ecumenist ideas and views surpasses every limit and borders, indeed, on fatuity.

was first among the Orthodox Churches in the confession of Christ's truth; this dismal document only shows how close the hierarchs of Constantinople have now come to being absorbed into the heterodox "Christianity" of the West, even before the formal Union which is still being prepared.

3. "The roots of ecumenism"

THE ROOTS of today's ecumenism in the Orthodox Churches go back to the renovationism and modernism of certain hierarchs in the 1920's.

In the Russian Church, these currents produced, first, the "Living Church" movement which, with the help of the Communist regime, tried to overthrow Patriarch Tikhon and "reform" the Church in a radically Protestant manner, and then—as a more "conservative" successor to the "Living Church"—the Sergianist church organization (the Moscow Patriarchate), which emphasized at first the political side of reconciliation with Communist ideology and aims (in accordance with the infamous "Declaration" of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927),⁵ and only in recent dec-

• By way of rejoinder, the Russian Synod published a detailed refutation, *A Reply to Archbishop Athenagoras* (Montreal: 1979), which literally pulverizes the novel errors to which the accuser succumbs.

⁵ "On March 9, 1927, Metropolitan Sergius, having been released from prison, received authorization to resume his duties and form a provisional Synod, officially recognized by the Government.... On July 24, Metropolitan Sergius issued a veritable declaration of obedience to the Soviet Government. This declaration was to give rise to a new schism in the Church. In affirming, in the name of the entire Church, that 'We want to recognize the Soviet Union as our civil motherland, joys and successes of which are our joys and successes and misfortunes of which are our misfortunes,' Metropolitan Sergius was making the Church an active ally of the Soviet Government. By putting the blame solely on the clergy for the deterioration of relations between Church and State, and by expressing his 'thanks to the Soviet Government for the concern it shows for all the needs of religion,' he deeply wounded the feelings of all those who were suffering for the Faith and for Christ; he was steering the Church onto the path of half-truths, if not of untruth.... In demanding from the émigré clergy a declaration of loyalty to the Soviet Government, Metropolitan Sergius was driving his own policy into the realm of absurdity" (Nikita Struve, *Les Chrétiens en U.R.S.S.* [Christians in the U.S.S.R.] [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1963], pp. 38-39. On pp. 305-309 there is printed, as "Document G," the full text of the declaration signed by Sergius and seven Hierarchs, "members of the

ades has ventured once again into the realm of ecclesiastical renovationism with its active participation in the ecumenical movement.

In the Greek Church the situation has been similar: the renovationist “Pan-Orthodox Council” of 1923,⁶ with its Protestant reforms inspired

provisional Patriarchal Holy Synod”). See also Thomas Fitzgerald, *Οι σχέσεις μεταξύ της Ελληνικής Ὁρθοδόξου Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Βορείου καὶ Νοτίου Ἀμερικῆς καὶ τῆς ἐκτὸς Ρωσίας Ρωσικῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας στὶς Ἠνωμένες Πολιτεῖες κατὰ τὴν χρονικὴ περίοδο 1921-1971* [Relations Between the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia in the United States During the Period 1921-1971] (Thessalonica: Patriarchikon Hidryma Paterikon Meleton, 1985), pp. 126-127.

⁶ See the “Resolutions of the Pan-Orthodox Congress” in Dionysios M. Batistatos (ed.), *Πρακτικὰ καὶ Ἀποφάσεις τοῦ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Πανορθοδόξου Συνεδρίου, 10.5.8.6.1923* [Proceedings and Resolutions of the Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople, May 10-June 8, 1923] [Athens: 1982], pp. 211-222.

- Resolutions: 1. concerning the correction of the Julian Calendar and the determination of the date of [the celebration of] Pascha “on the basis of astronomical calculations”; 2. concerning conditions for participation [by the Orthodox Church] in a consultation regarding the devisal of a more accurate calendar that would be acceptable to all Christians and concerning the abolition of the usual number of days in the week and a fixed date for the celebration of Pascha; 3. concerning the marriage of Priests and Deacons after Ordination; 4. concerning the second marriage of widowed Priests and Deacons; 5. concerning various matters: the age at which clergy should be ordained, the criteria for the competence of pastors to serve the Church, the cutting of the hair and the outer clothing of clergy, the keeping of monastic vows, impediments to marriage, the celebration on non-working days [weekends] of Saints’ Days that fall in the middle of the week, the fasts; 6. concerning the celebration of the sixteen-hundredth anniversary of the First Œcumenical Synod at Nicæa and the convocation of a Pan-Orthodox Synod; and 7. concerning sympathy for Patriarch Tikhon of Russia, who was in prison.

- These innovations of Meletios Metaxakes were not received in silence. Even the Masons write of this: “But he met with strong resistance when he wanted to implement certain American ways in Constantinople, as well as his innovative ideas regarding the calendar and the *Paschalion*, the marriage of clergy, and other ideas that he promoted at the Pan-Orthodox Congress, which created problems and an outcry” (see Alexandros I. Zervoudakes, “Διάσημοι Τεκτ.: Μελέτιος Μεταξάκης” [Famous Freemasons: Meletios Metaxakes], *Τεκτονικὸν Δελτίον* (the “Journal of the Grand Lodge of Greece”), No. 71 (January-February 1967), p. 43 [*emphasis ours*]).

- Archbishop Chrysostomos (Papadopoulos) of Athens makes no secret of the reaction that ensued: “Unfortunately, the Eastern Patriarchs who refused to take part in the Congress rejected all of its resolutions *in toto* from the very outset. If the Congress had restricted itself only to the issue of the calendar, perhaps it would not have encountered the kind of reaction that it did” (Archbishop Chrysostomos of Athens, *Ἡ Διόρθωσις τοῦ Ἰουλιανοῦ Ἡμερολογίου ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τῆς Ἑλλάδος* [The Correction of the Julian Calendar in the Church of Greece] [Athens: 1933], pp. 31-32 [*emphasis ours*]).

by Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis of sorry memory,⁷ proved to be too radical for the Orthodox world to accept, and the renovationists had to be satisfied with imposing a calendar reform on several of the non-Slavic Churches.

4. “Large movements of protest” against the reforms

LARGE MOVEMENTS of protest opposed the reformers in both the Russian and Greek Churches, producing the deep divisions which exist until now in the Orthodox world.

In the Russian Church, Sergianism was decisively rejected by very many of the bishops and faithful, led by Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd; this “Josephite” movement later became organized to some extent and became known as the “True Orthodox Church.” The history of this illegal “Catacomb” Church of Russia is, to this day, veiled in secrecy, but in the past few years a number of startling evidences of its present-day activities have come to light, leading to stern repressive measures on the part of the Soviet government. The name of its present chief hierarch (Metropolitan Theodosius) has become known, as has that of one of its ten or more bishops (Bishop Seraphim).⁸

- With particular regard to the resolution of the “Congress” concerning the calendar, “it was rejected by almost all of the Orthodox world” (see [Metropolitan] Germanos of Sardis and Pisideia, “Τὸ Ἡμερολογιακὸν Ζήτημα” [“The Calendar Question”], *Ὁρθοδοξία*, No. 3 (June 30, 1926), pp. 59-70; see also A.D. Delembases, *Πάσχα Κυρίου* [The Lord’s Pascha] [Athens: 1985], pp. 671-674).

- Very telling are the words of Patriarch Photios of Alexandria, who, writing to Archbishop Chrysostomos of Athens (Protocol No. 2664, August 1/14, 1923), speaks “about all of the other issues, both the decrees that are being hurled from Constantinople with a zeal not according to knowledge, to the detriment of the whole Church, and the machinations and threats that are being made, with the rapacious ferocity of our eternal enemies, against the most holy Mother of the Churches...” (see Archimandrite Theokletos A. Strangas, *Ἐκκλησίας Ἑλλάδος Ἱστορία* [History of the Church of Greece] [Athens: 1970], Vol. II, pp. 1161-1162 [*emphasis ours*]).

⁷ Regarding the personality of the truly “pernicious Patriarch Meletios Metaxakes” (as Metropolitan Irenæus of Cassandrea puts it), see the revealing article “Œcumenical Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakis) (1871-1935),” <http://hsir.info/p/u4>

⁸ For an informative historical presentation of the Catacomb Church in the former U.S.S.R. up to our own days, see the article (with a bibliography on the subject) by Vladimir Moss, “The True Orthodox Church of Russia,” *Religion in the Communist*

In the Diaspora, the Russian Church Outside of Russia committed itself from the very beginning of Sergianism in 1927 to a firm anti-Sergianist position, and on numerous occasions it has expressed its solidarity with the True Orthodox Church in Russia, while refusing all communion with the Moscow Patriarchate. Its uncompromisingness and staunch traditionalism in this and other matters were not to the taste of several of the Russian hierarchs of Western Europe and America, who were more receptive to the “reform” currents in 20th-century Orthodoxy, and they separated themselves at various times from the Russian Church Outside of Russia, thus creating the present “jurisdictional” differences of the Russian Diaspora.

In Greece the movement of protest, by a similar Orthodox instinct, likewise took the name of “True Orthodox Christians.” From the beginning in 1924 (when the calendar reform was introduced), this movement has been especially strong among the simple monks, priests and laymen of Greece; the first bishop to leave the State Church of Greece and join the movement was Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina, and today it continues its fully independent life and organization, comprising about one-fourth of all the Orthodox Christians of Greece, and perhaps one-half or more of all the monks and nuns. Although popularly known as the “old calendarists,” the True Orthodox Christians of Greece stand for a staunch traditionalism in Orthodox life and thought in general, viewing the calendar question merely as a first stage and a touchstone of modernism and reformism.

5. “Increasing sympathy” for the anti-ecumenists

AS THE “ecumenical” cancer eats more and more away at the remaining sound organs of the Orthodox Churches today, an increasing sympathy is being shown by the most sensitive members of the “official” Orthodox jurisdictions for the cause and the representatives of the anti-ecumenist, anti-reformist Churches of Russia, Greece, and the Diaspora.

Lands (Keston College, Oxford), Vol. XIX, Nos. 3-4 (Winter 1991), pp. 239-250. See also Ivan Andreyev, *Russia's Catacomb Saints: Lives of the New Martyrs* (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Press, 1982), esp. pp. 47-68, 105-129, 511-577. [*Trans.*]

Some, seeing the “official” jurisdictions as now irrevocably set on a course of anti-orthodoxy, are abandoning them as sinking ships and joining the ranks of the True Orthodox Christians; others, still hoping for the restoration of an Orthodox course in world Orthodoxy, think it enough for now to express sympathy for the True Orthodox Christians or to protest boldly against the “reformist” mentality in the official jurisdictions. The ten years of anti-ecumenist epistles of Metropolitan Philaret, Chief Hierarchy of the Russian Church Outside of Russia,⁹ have struck a responsive chord within a number of the Orthodox Churches, even if the “official” response to them has been largely silence or hostility.

Today, more than at any other time in the 50-year struggle to preserve the Orthodox tradition in an age of apostasy, the voice of true and uncompromising Orthodoxy *could* be heard throughout the world and have a profound effect on the future course of the Orthodox Churches.

Probably, indeed, it is already too late to prevent the renovationist “Eighth Ecumenical Council” and the “ecumenical” Union which lies beyond it; but perhaps one or more of the Local Churches may yet be persuaded to step back from this ruinous path which will lead to the final liquidation (as Orthodox) of those jurisdictions that follow it to the end; and in any case, individuals and whole communities can certainly be saved from this path, not to mention those of the heterodox who may still find their way into the saving enclosure of the true Church of Christ.

6. “A return to the patristic path of moderation”

IT IS OF CRITICAL importance, therefore, that this voice actually be of *true*, that is, *patristic* Orthodoxy.

Unfortunately, it sometimes happens, especially in the heat of controversy, that basically sound Orthodox positions are exaggerated on one

⁹ As is well known, Metropolitan Philaret of New York, who was First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad for twenty years (1965-1985), initiated a God-pleasing anti-ecumenist endeavor, by way of appeals and open letters (“Sorrowful Epistles”) to the Primates and the other Bishops of the Orthodox Churches, in order to raise their consciousness and call them to action against the pan-heresy of ecumenism, which was by then waxing perilously as a precursor of the very Antichrist. An anthology of the principal anti-ecumenist texts of Metropolitan Philaret was published by the Athonite Hieromonk Kallinikos under the title *Ἐρθόδοξος Μαρτυρία* [Orthodox Witness] (Holy Mountain and Athens: 1985).

side, and misunderstood on the other, and thus an entirely misleading impression is created in some minds that the cause of true Orthodoxy today is a kind of “extremism,” a sort of “right-wing reaction” to the prevailing “left-wing” course now being followed by the leaders of the “official” Orthodox Churches.

Such a political view of the struggle for true Orthodoxy today is entirely false. This struggle, on the contrary, has taken the form, among its best representatives today—whether in Russia, Greece, or the Diaspora—of a return to the patristic path of *moderation*, a *mean* between extremes; this is what the Holy Fathers call the ROYAL PATH.

The teaching of this “royal path” is set forth, for example, in the tenth of St. Abba Dorotheus’ *Spiritual Instructions*, where he quotes especially the Book of Deuteronomy: “Ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left, but go by the royal path,”¹⁰ and St. Basil the Great: “Upright of heart is he whose thought does not turn away either to excess or to lack, but is directed only to the mean of virtue.”¹¹

But perhaps this teaching is most clearly expressed by the great Orthodox Father of the 5th century, St. John Cassian, who was faced with a task not unlike our own Orthodox task today: to present the pure teaching of the Eastern Fathers to Western peoples who were spiritually immature and did not yet understand the depth and subtlety of the Eastern spiritual doctrine and were therefore inclined to go to extremes, either of

¹⁰ St. Dorotheos, *Various Soul-Profiting Teachings*, x, “That We Should Traverse the Path of God With Resolve and Vigilance” §3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXVIII, col. 1725D; *Oeuvres Spirituelles*, x, §166, ed. and trans. Dom Lucien Regnault and Dom J. de Préville, Vol. XCII in *Sources Chrétiennes* [Paris: Cerf, 1963], p. 340.

• Cf. “[Y]e shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left, according to all the way which the Lord your God hath commanded you to walk in it” (Deuteronomy 5:32-33); “[W]e will go by the king’s highway, we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left” (Numbers 20:17; 21:22); “[T]he Lord spake to Jesus [Joshua] the son of Nave... saying: ...Be strong, therefore, and quit thyself like a man, to observe and do as Moses My servant commanded thee; and thou shalt not turn therefrom to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest be wise in whatsoever thou mayest do,” “and Jesus [the son of Nave]...said unto them: ...Do ye therefore strive diligently to observe and do all things written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not to the right hand or to the left” (Joshua 1:1, 7; 23:1, 6); “Turn not aside to the right hand nor to the left” (Proverbs 4:27).

¹¹ St. Basil the Great, “Homily on Psalm 7,” §7, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXIX, col. 244D.

laxness or over-strictness, in applying it to life. St. Cassian sets forth the Orthodox doctrine of the *royal path* in his Conference on “sober-mindedness” (or “discretion”)—the Conference praised by St. John of the Ladder for its “beautiful and sublime philosophy”:¹²

“With all our strength and with all our effort we must strive by humility to acquire for ourselves the good gift of sober-mindedness, which can preserve us unharmed by excess from both sides. For, as the Fathers say, the extremes from both sides are equally harmful—both excess of fasting and filling the belly, excess of vigil and excessive sleep, and other excesses.” Sober-mindedness “teaches a man to go on the royal path, avoiding the extremes on both sides: on the right side it does not allow him to be deceived by excessive abstinence, on the left side to be drawn into carelessness and relaxation.”¹³ And the temptation on the “right side” is even more dangerous than that on the “left”: “Excessive abstinence is more harmful than satiating oneself; because, with the cooperation of repentance, one may go over from the latter to a correct understanding, but from the former one cannot” (i.e., because pride over one’s “virtue” stands in the way of the repentant humility that could save one).¹⁴

Applying this teaching to our own situation, we may say that the “royal path” of true Orthodoxy today is a mean that lies between the extremes of ecumenism and reformism on the one side, and a “zeal not according to knowledge”¹⁵ on the other.

True Orthodoxy does not go “in step with the times” on the one hand, nor does it make “strictness” or “correctness” or “canonicity” (good in themselves) an excuse for pharisaic self-satisfaction, exclusivism, and distrust, on the other.

¹² St. John of Sinai, *The Ladder*, Discourse IV, “On Obedience,” §105, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. LXXXVIII, col. 717B.

¹³ St. John Cassian, *A Most Beneficial Discourse to Leontios*, in *Φιλοκαλία*, Vol. 1, pp. 93, 86.

¹⁴ The final passage from St. John Cassian cited by Father Seraphim is a rather free translation of ch. 17 of the “Second Conference.” What St. John actually says is: “Immoderate abstinence trips one up more perniciously than does heedless satiety. For from the latter one can ascend to the proper measure of strictness, through the mediation of salutary compunction, but not from the former” (*Patrologia Latina*, Vol. XLIX, col. 550B). [*Trans.*]

¹⁵ Romans 10:2.

This true Orthodox moderation is not to be confused with mere lukewarmness or indifference, or with any kind of compromise between political extremes.

The spirit of “reform” is so much in the air today that anyone whose views are molded by the “spirit of the times” will regard true Orthodox moderation as close to “fanaticism,” but anyone who looks at the question more deeply and applies the patristic standard will find the royal path to be far from any kind of extremism.

Perhaps no Orthodox teacher in our own days provides such an example of sound and fervent Orthodox moderation as the late Archbishop Averky of Jordanville; his numerous articles and sermons breathe the refreshing spirit of true Orthodox zealotry, without any deviation either to the “right” or to the “left,” and with emphasis constantly on the *spiritual* side of true Orthodoxy.¹⁶

7. The Russian Church Outside of Russia traverses the “royal path” and supports the True Orthodox of Russia and Greece¹⁷

THE RUSSIAN CHURCH Outside of Russia has been placed, by God’s Providence, in a very favorable position for preserving the

¹⁶ Concerning Archbishop Averky (†1976), see the following articles: “Are the Terms ‘Christian’ and ‘Orthodox’ Accurate For Our Times?” <http://hsir.info/p/in> (which also contains a brief biography of Archbishop Averky); “True Orthodoxy,” <http://hsir.info/p/6>; “Holy Zeal,” <http://hsir.info/p/at>

¹⁷ By the time this article was originally posted (August 20/September 2, 2007), the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad had entered into communion with the Moscow Patriarchate (May 4/17, 2007), having previously severed communion with the Holy Synod in Resistance and its Sister Old Calendar Churches in Romania and Bulgaria. However, towards the end of the same year, some of the communities within the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad which had rejected the aforementioned union with the Moscow Patriarchate rallied around Bishop Agafangel of Odessa and Tauris (Ukraine) and subsequently reaffirmed communion with the Synod in Resistance and, by extension, with the Romanian and Bulgarian Old Calendar Churches (see “Standing Holy Synod in Resistance: Extraordinary Meeting v, (November 16, 2007 [Old Style]),” <http://hsir.info/p/ux>; “Greek and Russian Anti-Ecumenists Embrace in Concelebration,” <http://hsir.info/p/3>; “Participation by the Orthodox Church of Greece, Holy Synod in Resistance, in Consecrations of Russian Hierarchs,” <http://hsir.info/p/t7>; “The Participation of the Holy Synod in Resistance in Important and Historic Events in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad,” <http://hsir.info/p/y2> [*Trans.*]

“royal path” amidst the confusion of so much of 20th century Orthodoxy.

Living in exile and poverty in a world that has not understood the suffering of her people, she has focused her attention on preserving unchanged the faith which unites her people, and so quite naturally she finds herself a stranger to the whole ecumenical mentality, which is based on religious indifference and self-satisfaction, material affluence, and soulless internationalism.

On the other hand, she has been preserved from falling into extremism on the “right side” (such as might be a declaration that the Mysteries of the Moscow Patriarchate are without grace) by her vivid awareness that the Sergianist church in Russia is *not free*; one can of course have no communion with such a body, dominated by atheists, but precise definitions of its status are best left to a free Russian church council in the future.

If there seems to be a “logical contradiction” here (“if you don’t deny her Mysteries, why don’t you have communion with her?”), it is a problem only for rationalists; those who approach church questions with the heart as well as the head have no trouble accepting this position, which is the testament bequeathed to the Russian Church of the Diaspora by her wise Chief Hierarch, Metropolitan Anastassy (†1965).¹⁸

Living in freedom, the Russian Church Outside of Russia has considered as one of her important obligations to express her solidarity and full communion with the underground True Orthodox Church of Russia, whose existence is totally ignored and even denied by “official” Orthodoxy.

In God’s time, when the terrible trial of the Russian Church and people will have passed, the other Orthodox Churches may understand the Russian Church situation better; until then, it is perhaps all one can hope for that the free Orthodox Churches have never questioned the right of the Russian Church Outside of Russia to exist or denied the grace of her Mysteries, almost all of them have long remained in communion with her (until her non-participation in the ecumenical movement isolated her

¹⁸ Metropolitan Anastassy (1873-1965), whose secular name was Alexander Gribanovsky, was the successor of the first leader of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev (1863-1936), serving as its First Hierarch for almost thirty years (1936-1965). See the biography of him by St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco in *The Orthodox Word*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (10) (July-August 1965), pp. 135-140.

and made her a reproach to the other Churches, especially in the last decade), and up to this day they have (at least passively) resisted the politically-inspired attempts of the Moscow Patriarchate to have her declared “schismatic” and “uncanonical.”¹⁹

In recent years, the Russian Church Outside of Russia has also given support and recognition to the True Orthodox Christians of Greece, whose situation also has long been exceedingly difficult and misunderstood.

In Greece the first blow against the Church (the calendar reform) was not as deadly as the “Declaration” of Metropolitan Sergius in Russia, and for this reason it has taken longer for the theological consciousness of the Orthodox Greek people to see its full anti-orthodox significance.

Further, few bishops in Greece have been bold enough to join the movement (whereas, by contrast, the number of non-Sergianist bishops in the beginning was larger than the whole episcopate of the Greek Church).

¹⁹ A year before the collapse of Communism in Russia in August of 1991, the Russian Orthodox Church began to receive petitions for acceptance into its jurisdiction from both clergy and parishes in the Moscow Patriarchate who, for reasons of conscience, could no longer endure the persistence of Sergianism and ecumenism in the life of the Patriarchate (see, in particular, the October 1991 Encyclical of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, in *Orthodox Life*, Vol. xli, No. 6 [November-December 1991], pp. 9-12). In response to this pastoral activity by the Russian Synod, the Patriarchate issued official and synodal statements about the “schismatics of the Karlovtsy Synod,” whose actions were supposedly divisive and senseless [*Trans.*].

- In fact, Sergianism and ecumenism are patently matters of Faith, which totally justify the implementation of Orthodox “walling-off” in accordance with canonical order (Apostolic Canon xxxiii, Canon xv of the First-Second Synod).

- The paradoxical thing is that, notwithstanding the silence—at least officially—of the other Orthodox Churches, the Fathers of Mount Athos hastened, through their despicable epistle (May 8, 1991) to the Œcumenical Patriarchate on the subject of Father Ephraim, Abbot of Philotheou, to characterize the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad inadmissibly as “schismatic” and a “para-ecclesiastical conventicle,” with the clear insinuation that it is outside the Church and is, for this reason, deprived of Grace and the Mysteries (*Ἐκκλησία*, No. 11 [July 1-15, 1991], pp. 391-392). Regarding this great fall of the Athonites and their tremendous responsibility in the face of the betrayal of the ecumenists of the Phanar, see the articles “Ἀπάντησις πρὸς τὴν Ἱερὰν Κοινότητα τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους” [Response to the Sacred Community of the Holy Mountain], *Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐνημέρωσις*, No. 5 (April-June 1991) and “A Tragic Fall: The Silence of Mount Athos,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. xi, No. 1 (1994), pp. 58-62.

And only in recent years has the cause of the old calendarists become even a little “intellectually respectable,” as more and more university graduates have joined it.

Over the years it has suffered persecutions, sometimes quite fierce, from the State and the official Church, and to this day it remains disdained by the “sophisticated” and totally without recognition from the “official” Orthodox world.

Unfortunately, internal disagreements and divisions have continued to weaken the cause of the old calendarists, and they lack a single unanimous voice to express their stand for patristic Orthodoxy.²⁰ Still, the basic Orthodoxy of their position cannot be denied, and one can only welcome such sound presentations of it as may be seen in the article that follows.²¹

8. “A ‘united front’ of confessing Churches”

The increasing realization in recent years of the basic oneness of the cause of True Orthodoxy throughout the world, whether in the Catacomb Church of Russia, the old calendarists of Greece, or the Russian Church Outside of Russia, has led some to think in terms of a “united front” of confessing Churches²² to oppose the ecumenical movement which has taken possession of “official” Orthodoxy.

²⁰ One step in this direction of “Patristic Orthodoxy” is the document “An Ecclesiological Position Paper for Orthodox Opposed to the Pan-Heresy of Ecumenism” (<http://hsir.info/p/c>), which constitutes in principle the basic charter of the Holy Synod in Resistance under Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle.

²¹ “[T]he article that follows” in the same periodical (*The Orthodox Word*, Vol. XII, No. 5 [70] [September-October 1976], pp. 150-159) is entitled “The Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Fili, Attica: Witness of True Orthodoxy in Greece”; see <http://hsir.info/p/9m>

²² At the time when Father Seraphim was writing the present article (1976), the existence of the martyric Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Romania was not yet known in the West. After the anti-ecumenists of Greece had entered into formal ecclesiastical relations with it, it became widely known and was enthusiastically hailed by traditionalist Orthodox all over the world. The same Father Seraphim hastened to dedicate a special issue of *The Orthodox Word* to this Church (Vol. XVIII, No. 1 [102] [January-February 1982]), featuring an article on it by Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, with some representative photographs, entitled “The True Orthodox Christians of Romania.”

• For a history of the anti-innovationists in Romania, see Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, *Ἡ Μαρτυρική Ἐκκλησία τῶν Γνησίων Ὁρθοδόξων Χριστιανῶν τῆς Ρου-*

However, under present conditions this will hardly come to pass; and in any case, this is a “political” view of the situation which sees the significance of the mission of true Orthodoxy in too external a manner.

The full dimensions of the True-Orthodox protest against “ecumenical Orthodoxy”, against the neutralized, lukewarm Orthodoxy of the apostasy, have yet to be revealed, above all in Russia. But it cannot be that the witness of so many martyrs and confessors and champions of True Orthodoxy in the 20th century will have been in vain.²³

May God preserve His zealots in the royal path of true Orthodoxy, faithful to Him and to His Holy Church until the end of the age!



μανίας [The Martyric Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Romania] (Phyle, Attica: 1981).

²³ A “miracle” has already come to pass. The witness of the “martyrs and confessors and champions of True Orthodoxy” in the last century was not in vain. Communion between the True Orthodox of Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is now a reality, and the “united front” of which Father Seraphim speaks is not a distant vision.

• See the following articles: “Ρουμανία 1992: Ένότης Ὀρθοδόξων Ἐνισταμένων” [Romania 1992: Unity of the Orthodox in Resistance], *Ἅγιος Κυπριανός*, Nos. 248-249 (May-August 1992), pp. 65-66; “Ἡνώθησαν οἱ Ρῶσοι καὶ Ρουμᾶνοι τοῦ Πατρίου Ἡμερολογίου” [Union Between the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and the Romanian Old Calendarists], *Ἅγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 252 (January-February 1993), pp. 99-101; “Ἡ Χειροτονία τοῦ θεοφιλεστάτου Ἐπισκόπου Τριάδιτσα κ. Φωτίου” [The Consecration of His Grace, Bishop Photii of Triaditza], *ibid.*, pp. 107-110; “Αἱ ἀντι-οικουμενιστικαὶ φωναὶ γίνονται ἰσχυρότεραι” [The Anti-Ecumenist Voices Are Becoming Stronger], *Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐνστασις καὶ Μαρτυρία*, Nos. 22-23 (January-June 1991), pp. 273-276.