

## **A Concerned Voice from the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad Under the Moscow Patriarchate (ROCOR/MP)**

This letter is a concerned voice from a soul who has always belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR).

In 2001, the Synod of Bishops of ROCOR stated in an Epistle that,

*"During these days of universal apostasy, which, through the pan-heresy of ecumenism, has even infected most of the Local Orthodox Churches, we must stand united, that the enemy of our salvation may not use our divisions to destroy the voice of our confession in the homeland and the diaspora."* [1]

Sadly enough this voice of confession is not heard anymore. Instead, ROCOR/MP moves closer and closer toward the ecumenical Orthodox hierarchs and clergy, while rejecting the True Orthodox Christians, with whom we once confessed our unity. We promised to defend the Truth, but who reached out to support Vladyka Diomid in his lonely fight for the Truth? Who spoke up against the un-Christian World Summit of Religious Leaders in Moscow in 2006? Why are our spiritual leaders silent?

It is well-known that the Moscow Patriarchate together with World Orthodoxy participates in the ecumenical movement. It is also well-known that the Moscow Patriarchate still believes in the salvific act of the Declaration of 1927. And still our hierarchs state that ROCOR, under His Eminence Metropolitan Agafangel, together with all other True Orthodox Churches, who have walled themselves off *"during these days of universal apostasy"* are outside the Church and their sacraments invalid. How can this be when we ourselves just recently confessed our unity with them?

We are canonical and in the Church. That is our main argument. And yet, the soul is in dire agony, feeling that something is completely wrong. Fr. Seraphim Rose explains it the following way:

*"The apostasy of our times, to a degree unique in Christian history, is proceeding not primarily by false teachings or canonical deviations, but rather by a false understanding of Orthodoxy on the part of those who may even be perfectly Orthodox in their dogmatic teaching and canonical situation. A correct 'Orthodoxy' deprived of the spirit of true Christianity - this is the meaning of Sergianism, and it cannot be fought by calling it a 'heresy,' which it is not, nor by detailing its canonical irregularities, which are only incidental to something much more important."* [2]

Obviously, apostasy is not only a deviation from the canons, but first of all a deviation from the spirit of Orthodoxy. Besides the example of Sergianism, one can also mention the New Calendar. Neither of these two can, strictly speaking, be considered heresies. And yet, we know very well the damage they have both caused the Orthodox Church. Canonicity and apostasy can and do, therefore, easily go hand in hand.

Today obedience is no longer understood as a God-pleasing obedience to Christ and His Church, but rather as a complete submission to Church authority, regardless of its teaching. Salvation is no longer attained by following the conscience of the Church of Christ and one's own conscience, but by blind obedience to the official Church authorities. To be, not in the Church of Christ, but in today's World Orthodoxy, has become the absolute criterion for salvation. These Church authorities are, therefore, not interested in believers who follow their conscience according to the conscience of the Church. We are not only asked not to think, but made not to think.

In the Church of Christ, though, there can be no violence on the conscience. Such violence breaks people morally and creates a spiritual apathy, depriving them of the ability to freely and truly follow Christ. Every Christian must follow his conscience, should it be even unto death. One, though, must do so in a truly Orthodox manner – with Christian love, humility and moderation.

We must try to understand that most of the believers, who are not following World Orthodoxy, are acting by their own conscience and the conscience of the Church. Seeing that World Orthodoxy does not have the correct and saving confession of the faith, many sober and pious faithful have walled themselves off – not from the Church of Christ – but from apostasy. The Old Calendar Movement is therefore not a heresy, neither is it a schism, but a walling off from falsehood.

Having accepted the position of the official Church leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy, together with their spirit of apostasy and conformism, the spiritual leaders of ROCOR/MP have not only compromised themselves in the saddest way, but have also deeply disappointed many of its faithful, as well as many of our pious brothers and sisters inside the Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy itself, who expected to see this Champion of Truth courageously expose all falsehood. The pain of witnessing this fall is intensified even more when one is asked to accept it as a glorious victory. The tragedy of ROCOR/MP, therefore, is not so much its formal union with the Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy, but its wholehearted acceptance of their path and spirit.

If our Christian life is to be truly pleasing to God, both a Christian loving heart and a true confession of Faith must be present. It is not only a question of *where*, but also of *how* one confesses his faith. Without a Christian loving and humble heart, one`s "confession of Faith" will have no justification in the eyes of God, but will only harm oneself and the sacred unity of the Church. On the other hand, if we reject the salvific Truths, Traditions and spirit of the Church, or perhaps just indifferently follow along, then that will equally endanger our salvation. Both extremes lack the "*spirit of true Christianity*" – the divine Love of God – and should be avoided. Apostasy, therefore, is simply the deviation from the Royal Path of Christian love towards God and man manifested in heresies and the lack of the spirit of true Christianity.

We observe that World Orthodoxy is getting more and more infected by "*the pan-heresy of ecumenism,*" estranging itself from the spirit of Christianity, while preserving the outward forms of the Church. This has been prophesied by the Holy Fathers and Holy Scripture and the process began a long time ago. That is why many pious Orthodox Christians are quietly stepping aside, in order to protect themselves. Many faithful in World Orthodoxy itself are also slowly beginning to lose patience.

This letter is a concerned and quiet voice. Such voices, though, are labeled as proud, rebellious and full of self-deceit.

World Orthodoxy has taken its course. It is a course based on the wide path of love for this world. It is not the narrow path of the Cross and it is not a path which should be followed.

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Ss Cyprian and Justina, October 2/15, 2010.

[1] Living Orthodoxy, *Epistle of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2001.* #126, vol.XXI # 6, p.26, left column, last par., line 5.

[2] Andreyev Ivan: "*Russia`s Catacomb Saints, Lives of the New Martyrs*". Saint Herman of Alaska Press, Platina, California, 1982, p. 257, par. 2.