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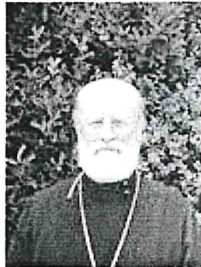
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Friday, 09 June 2006

Bishop Basil granted asylum by Bartholomew



In a provocative step that can only be regarded as a slap in the face to Moscow, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has granted asylum to Bishop Basil of Sergievo, until recently the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Britain. Read my original blog on this complicated story with lots of useful links here. Below is the statement from this week's meeting of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Holy and Sacred Synod. This eirenic picture shows Patriarch Bartholomew, and below is Bishop Basil.



The Synod statement reads: "The Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate during its meeting on June 8 2006 under the presidency of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, examined the appeal of His Grace Basil, Bishop of Sergievo, to the Ecumenical Patriarch and, taking under consideration canons 9, 17 and 28 of the 4th Ecumenical Council unanimously decided to accept under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate the above named Bishop, placing him in the Patriarchal Exarchate for Orthodox Parishes of Russian Tradition in Western Europe.

"Thereafter the Holy and Sacred Synod proceeded, at the request of Archbishop Gabriel of Komana, head of the above mentioned Exarchate, to elect Bishop Basil with the title of Bishop of Amphipolis, as his auxiliary Bishop, to serve the pastoral needs of Orthodox living in Great Britain who desire to place themselves under the jurisdiction of the Exarchate."

A long time was taken at the meeting to ensure this was phrased in the most diplomatic way possible. **But it still represents a resounding victory for Bishop Basil** and is one that has caused some surprise even among supporters.

At present the Ecumenical Patriarch, the Number One patriarch in the Orthodox church, has a number of Greek Orthodox parishes in the UK under the Archdiocese of Thyateira. Thyateira also has one Russian-tradition parish, in Bath. (Update: see correction to this statement sent into comments below by Archimandrite Kyrill.) The Russian Orthodox diocese of Sourozh, growing fast because of immigration, has about 30 parishes across the country including the beautiful cathedral in Ennismore Gardens, owned by a trust which makes no reference to Moscow but does name Bishop Basil as a trustee. The Charity Commission is looking into the whole affair, but if no accommodation is reached by Moscow with Bartholomew and Basil, we can expect a protracted and costly court case over the vastly valuable property at stake here. Meanwhile, about 15 and possibly as many as two-thirds of the Russian parishes are expected to defect to Constantinople with Bishop Basil, where they will be known as Orthodox Parishes of the Russian Tradition in the Amphipolis diocese, the titular name given to the UK. Amphipolis is a city in northern Greece without its own bishop.

I managed to speak briefly to Bishop Basil this afternoon. At present, Bishop Basil cannot celebrate or preach in Ennismore Gardens since he was involuntarily "retired" by Moscow. He hopes matters will not proceed to a court case. "With a bit of good will I think we can make some kind of arrangement," he said. "It is early days. I do not know how many people there will be. There will be a core who are really quite excited by this idea, and then those who at some point later might wish to join." He will be visiting and preaching soon at parishes such as St Peter's, Clapham, a Church of England building where the Russians meet twice monthly.

Posted by Ruth Gledhill on Friday, 09 June 2006 at 05:05 PM in Current Affairs, Religion, Weblogs | Permalink

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Listed below are links to weblogs that reference Bishop Basil granted asylum by Bartholomew:

» Bishop Basil of Amphipolis from David's Daily Diversions
 It's old new now - only because I've been too busy to see what's going on around me. Bishop Basil's appeal has been accepted by the Ecumenical Patriarch and he is now Bishop of Amphipolis as auxilliary bishop under Archbishop... [\[Read More\]](#)

Tracked on Tuesday, 13 June 2006 at 01:24 PM

Comments

For anybody really anxious to find out, for whatever reason, exactly the numbers and relevant vestments etc of the deacons, sub-deacons and priests at the diocesan festival, as well as the numbers of those attending (I was there!), I suggest they speak to Deacon Joseph at www.sourozh.org. I am sure he will give proper and exact information about everything.

Posted by: Helena | Tuesday, 20 June 2006 at 10:12 AM

It is so difficult to please these people from Vicarage of Amphipolis!. Now they say the "Church is empty and supporters of the Moscow Patriarchate are deserting", a few weeks ago the main theme was that the church is overcrowded by "extraordinarily numerous group of Orthodox neophytes". That reason precisely has been quoted for the Amphipolis defection. These new "neophytes", according to Vicarage people, one day "do not know about traditions of the orthodox church", the other day they are "too orthodox" and "dogmatically" trying to "introduce old Russian traditions" ...

One day the theme is "Bishop Basil has been dismissed in violation of canons by Moscow patriarchate" and therefore "remain Russian Orthodox Bishop" whatever "Moscow may think", the other "he has nothing to do with Russian Orthodox Church" all together, he is in fact, the Bishop of Amphipolis.

Sourozh itself - one day it was "certainly linked to Mother Church", the next day "never had links with Russian Church and Patriarchate" and the diocese documents "never mentioned patriarchate explicitly" anyway.

Note, how most of the poeple from the Amphipolis Vicarage, also changed their signatures on this forum: Most of them now dropped the word "Sourozh" and many dropped the word "Russian" too. It is delightful they left holy name of our Eparchy alone, safely in the hands of Mother Church. But still - there are suggestions that the defecting vicarage will be called "of Russian tradition". This capitalisation on the word "Russian" by Constantinople vicarage, using it as a sort of trademark - is a disgrace - especially after they poured so much dirt over anything Russian.

Posted by: wolfson | Tuesday, 20 June 2006 at 08:53 AM

I wonder? Do I detect a certain amount of desperation in the attempts of 'Friend' to ascertain exactly which clergy were present at Ennismore Gardens on Sunday?

Again as one who was there, I can confirm that he is right in his assumption that two of the celebrating priests were members of the Commission.

I cannot claim to know all the clergy of the Diocese of Sourozh by sight but, insofar as I can enlighten him:

At least eight of the celebrating priests were clergymen of the diocese;

Neither of the two retired priests he mentions were present;

One of the celebrating deacons, far from being on the staff of the cathedral, was a deacon of the diocese who had travelled all the way from Cornwall to be present for the occasion;

There was at least one other deacon present vested as a subdeacon (or rather as a deacon with cuffs but crossed orarion) - which is common Russian liturgical practice at hierarchical liturgies;

In addition, at least three other deacons of the diocese had beforehand sent their apologies for absence to the Diocesan Assembly in obedience to Archbishop Innokentii's request (I cannot claim to know how many priests had, likewise, sent their apologies).

I can also confirm that I recognized several other clergy of the diocese present in the congregation, plus at least two monastics.

I have to confess to being rather poor at estimating the numbers of large crowds, so I am unable to help out 'Friend' as to 'how many faithful were actually there'. All that I can say is that, as someone who has faithfully attended the diocesan liturgy annually for many years, the attendance was comparable to, if not in excess of, previous occasions at which I have been present.

I trust that this answers at least some of the questions posed by 'Friend'.

Nicholas T. Alexander

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Posted by: Nicholas T. Alexander | Tuesday, 20 June 2006 at 12:23 AM

The 'reliable source', to which 'Fofany' refers, is clearly as reliable as all other Basilite sources.

As those who were there can testify (among whom, unlike 'Fofany', I can count myself), at Sunday's Liturgy at Ennismore Gardens there were present: two archbishops, eleven priests, three (celebrating) deacons and numerous other clergy. The church was packed.

The service was sung in both Church Slavonic and English in about equal measure.

The best way I could describe the atmosphere of prayerful attentiveness is as one of overwhelming 'normality'. At least two persons (both Englishmen) independently commented on this to me. One said "All the pseudo-Orthodox have gone!". The other asked "But where are all the weirdos?". Their absence caused no appreciable dent in numbers - quite the contrary.

When I compare the congregation to that of fifteen years ago I can only say that it is massively more welcoming, appreciably younger and palpably more vibrant.

If 'Fofany' genuinely wants to be enlightened 'as to what is really happening' I would advise him to exercise a little more discretion when listening to the propaganda and spin of the Basilite schismatics, little of which is founded on investigable sources.

He would do better to wait for the Commission of Enquiry to present its findings. Then, I suspect, the true extent of 'dirty tricks' will become apparent, and we will see just what the Basilites had to hide when they urged their members not to have any communication with the Commission.

Nicholas T. Alexander.

Posted by: Nicholas T. Alexander | Monday, 19 June 2006 at 06:50 PM

With regard to the comment "the Liturgy for All Saints Day at Ennismore Gardens took place in an almost empty church, with only some five or six clergy present" the "official" report on <http://www.mospat.ru/index.php?page=31841> states that besides the two Archbishops (Innokenty and Anatoly) there were 11 priests and 3 deacons.

The 3 deacons were presumably the 3 on the staff of the Cathedral, which means that none of the other 10 deacons listed in the list of clergy of the diocese came in.

One presumes that two of the 11 priests were members of the "Commission of Enquiry" currently working in London. No information is given about where the others came from. How many were from the diocese? How many were brought in from elsewhere for the occasion? The diocese list of clergy gives 21 active priests. Of the two retired priests listed one lives in France and the other transferred to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia in January.

The official report also fails to indicate how many faithful were actually there.

Posted by: Friend | Monday, 19 June 2006 at 06:43 PM

About the comment of Myrrh (Sunday 18 June 2006) I have to say that Saint Ignatius said clearly:

"Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church". - Epistle to the Smyrnaeans, Chapter VIII

The letters of Ignatius have proved to be important testimony to the development of Christian theology, since the number of extant writings from this period of church history is very small. They bear signs of being written in great haste and without a proper plan, such as run-on sentences and an unsystematic succession of thought. Ignatius is the first known Christian writer to put great stress on loyalty to a single bishop in each city, who is assisted by both presbyters (priests) and deacons. Earlier writings only mention either bishops or presbyters, and give the impression that there was usually more than one bishop per congregation.

Ignatius stressed the value of the eucharist, calling it "a medicine to immortality". The very strong desire for bloody martyrdom in the arena, which Ignatius expresses rather graphically in places, may seem quite odd to the modern reader, but an examination of his theology of soteriology shows that he regarded salvation as being from the power and fear of death. So, for him, to try to escape his martyrdom would be to fear death and place himself back under its power.

THE BASIS FOR EQUALITY OF BISHOPS

The origin of the patristic insistence on the equality of all bishops can be understood only in terms of the presuppositions:

- 1) that the corporate eucharistic life locally manifested is an end in itself,
- 2) that individual communities are related to each other by their identity of existence in Christ (and not on a nationalistic base),
- 3) that the fullness of Christ dwells in the faithful who gather together in the life of Christ, and
- 4) that the episcopate is an inseparable part of this local life (and not living as in another country).

The order of the episcopate was not something that existed in itself, or itself, and over or apart from the local Church. It was definitely within the Church, and since the visible Church could be defined only in terms of the body of Christ locally manifested in its mystagogical life, the episcopate was definitely of local character. The existence of bishops in the smallest and

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remotest villages of the empire cannot be explained otherwise than in terms of the necessity to have a bishop and council of presbyters within and responsible for the life of each eucharistic center. Therefore bishops were equal because communities were equal. One local manifestation of the body of Christ could not be more body of Christ or less than another. Likewise the living image of Christ (the bishop) could not be more image or less image than another image because Christ, whose image the bishops are, is identically One and Equal with Himself.

On the other hand it seemed from the very beginning that the bishop of the great city (metropolis) gained more importance than the bishop of the village. The Orthodox Church has an "metropolitan based" ecclesiology. There were local synods presided over by a metropolitan (first among equals). There was the Pentarchy with 5 patriarchs presiding synods, and there was the "primus inter pares", who is since 1054 the Ecumenical Patriarch... If you don't accept that, I'm afraid that you are protestant...

Evgenij Syrov
Mannheim

Posted by: Evgenij Syrov | Monday, 19 June 2006 at 05:46 PM

Someone wrote these few words in this blog: "I have heard from a reliable source that the Liturgy for All Saints Day at Ennismore Gardens took place in an almost empty church, with only some five or six clergy present. If that is true, it suggests even the supporters of the Moscow Patriarchate are deserting the bishop they have imposed".

Really, does the Moscow Patriarchate is aware that it is losing its game!! Its own people stop trusting its system... which is not at all orthodox!

Oh Lord, what am I angry and at the same time ashamed...

Evgenij Syrov

Posted by: Evgenij Syrov | Monday, 19 June 2006 at 04:29 PM

I have heard from a reliable source that the Liturgy for All Saints Day at Ennismore Gardens took place in an almost empty church, with only some five or six clergy present. If that is true, it suggests even the supporters of the Moscow Patriarchate are deserting the bishop they have imposed. Can someone please enlighten me as to what is really happening?

Posted by: Fofany | Monday, 19 June 2006 at 03:31 PM

With regard to "proud to be Anglican"...

Dear member of Anglican community, please do not use this tragic situation in Surozh diocese for judging Orthodox Christianity-the saving ark of Christ.

-Humility of heart,

-daily attention to our words, acts and thoughts,

-compassion with the suffering ones in this world,

-the saving fear of God and His righteous judgement - these are the essentials for Orthodox Christians in their preparation for answering to Christ.

Being "PROUD to be anything/anyone" is surely a dangerous spiritual path for a Christian

Posted by: Karl Zharoff | Monday, 19 June 2006 at 03:18 PM

Despite the MP scare tactics (such as the impressionistic talk of schism), and the ongoing acid view of things published on the new Surozh.tserkov site, obviously monitored by the Bishop of Austria Ilarion (by the way, his account of things, in two installments, is worthy of a Dostoevsky pastiche), and too obviously addressed only to a Russian audience, the bickering is fading away.

Bishop Basil and Archbishop Gabriel of Comana got together in council over the weekend and began organizing the life of the newly founded Amphipolis Vicariat.

What is being written here and there is neither here nor there. Life is flowing past all that majestically quickly.

Posted by: smk | Monday, 19 June 2006 at 03:03 PM

Yes, the recent comments of "Proud to be Anglican" are so horribly close to the bone - and almost unanswerable. Except to say that there is so much more to the Church than power-seeking post-soviet behaviour and reactions to it. Have a look at the website of St Gregory's Foundation (www.stgregorysfoundation.org.uk) and read about the Gospel in action : feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting (and rehabilitating) teenage drug addicts and young prisoners, supporting those trying to develop the embryonic mentality of voluntary help in Russia. That activity, at least, would unambiguously be recognised by Christ.

Posted by: patrick palmer | Monday, 19 June 2006 at 01:06 PM

Dear Orthodox Christian,

- >Something exceptional happened on the website of the
- >Diocese of Surozh since middle May 2006 when Archbishop
- >Innokenty was appointed temporary administrator -
- >a Russian flag suddenly appeared on its' Home page!
- >What is it telling us?

It is telling us all that you are starting reading your diocese webpage

Conspiracy theory again

in English. If you like to start reading in Russian, there will be British flag, proudly appearing next to the diocese name. May be it is a conspiracy too, and the "Hand of Moscow" trying secretly support British cricket team to get to you this way? Try to figure it out for yourself and please post your ideas. We would be delighted to hear every one of them.

Posted by: webarchdeacon | Monday, 19 June 2006 at 08:47 AM

Dear Anglican

I'm sorry you and the non-Orthodox world have witnessed this spitefulness: surely you know that the arguments within close families are the most bitter and painful? You should not, however, mistake this jurisdictional squabbling for the kind of issues your own group is dealing with: we are of one mind when it comes to women priests, homosexuality, nature of the Eucharist, theology of the Trinity, etc. As someone who knows better than me said "this is all down to Bishops and those who try to control them: the laity will continue to worship wherever they can and it will resolve, eventually." Ultimately, we will all have to answer for every idle word. As such, I'll no longer be punishing myself by reading the vileness and hatred written on this site (and it's interesting how the addresses and names are often not real, or change a little as they go on).

Please come and visit a normal Orthodox church (not the Cathedral obviously!) to see how we really are, before the altar of Christ, who knows the secret heart of us all.

Posted by: K.S. | Sunday, 18 June 2006 at 09:58 PM

The comments exchanged between Orthodox "brothers" and "sisters" have made me think that the disputes we have within the Anglican Communion are a mere playground quarrel. As our Lord said, you should know a tree by its fruit (Matthew 7:16-20); if the current rift amongst the Orthodox here is an example of their fruit, all I can say is this: Glory to God that I am Anglican!

An afterthought: some of the Orthodox people contributing to this weblog use the names of other Confessions in order to denigrate and insult each other. If you have such a low opinion of these other Confessions, then, perhaps, you should stop using our churches for your services. At least that way you do not risk being "polluted" by us.

Posted by: Proud to be Anglican | Sunday, 18 June 2006 at 09:12 PM

I would like to thank John from Moscow for his contribution, which stands in such sharp contrast to the semi-literate rancour of which too much has been posted to your site.

I, for one, would like to assure John and all our many real friends in Russia that we shall do everything we possibly can to maintain our close links of Christian fellowship. Thank you very much for your suggestions! I pray that God will allow us the opportunity of taking these ideas forward.

Posted by: Seraphim | Sunday, 18 June 2006 at 09:10 PM

Many Russian Orthodox Christians will remember today's All Saints Day.

The service has been very special, very close to the hearts to all who remain true to our Mother Church. This day our parishioners and clergy from all corners of Sourozh Eparchy had the opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty by participating in this service and in a sense to renew their vows of commitment to the Orthodox course, to the memory of our late Vladyko Antony, to everything we hold dear in our Russian Orthodox Church.

What a beautiful sight. Church has been packed and to the great relief of many of us, most of the clergy were here too.

From our provincial parishioners, there were anxious glances towards the rows of golden-clad clergy. Is HE, our dear priest here too, with us? Then a great relief after seeing him side by side with many others, gathered around our Vladyko H.E. Innokentii. Our dear, dear Sourozh Priests, forgive our suspicions and thoughts, how could we doubt your loyalty, your true heart?

Special service indeed. How can one explain the joy of meeting an eye of the old friend, the feeling of being grateful, the feeling that all these nasty offerings of defection and schism business is finally fading away.

How insignificant, small, irrelevant seems all these discussions about 3rd Rome or canonical legality of Basil's defections.

Yes, we lost a few unfaithful, who protested against our Mother Church. We will pray for the solvation of their souls.

But the most important thing is that life of our beloved Sourozh is continued, and the people of Sourzh remain faithful to our Mother Church. There are ominous signs that recent difficulties will strengthen our resolve for unity among faithful, signs that we are getting over the defection episode well.

Posted by: V E Ludz | Sunday, 18 June 2006 at 09:05 PM

The Bishop Basil's move without a proper letter of dismissal has not been recognized by Moscow. Thus, the see of Amphipolis is vacant again. What a tragedy. Any more worthy candidates?

Posted by: Ivan | Sunday, 18 June 2006 at 08:29 PM

Evgenij Syrov wrote: "It seems that many doubt about the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarch is

the "primus inter pares" of Orthodoxy. They ignore that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is the center of unity of Orthodoxy. NOT THE VATICAN! It seems that many of our orthodox brothers and sisters need to study some more orthodox theology and especially orthodox ecclesiology."

I think the term "primus inter pares" was first used by Diocletian in mock modesty as he accepted the title Caesar and then proceeded to establish the first autocratic rule in the Roman empire..

But I must object to this idea that the Ecumenical Patriarch is the source of unity for the Orthodox - that is not Orthodox ecclesiology and has been called neo-papism. The centre of unity is Christ, the only head of the Church, the Body of Christ, and, unlike the RCC, Christ is always in our midst, so what need do we have for another head of the Church?

The first principle of Orthodox ecclesiology is Christ's canon against a hierarchical structure of the Church which is the ecclesia, the people, "It shall not be so among you".

For the Orthodox Church the whole Church, in heaven and earth, is with every continuation of the eucharist in any communion of worshippers, ordained in baptism, and is not an organisation of a group of baptised people.

The bishop is not separate from the other members of the body of worshippers, but is the leading voice of that community. All worship is in common in the liturgy, the work of the people, "we offer".

And so, apologies for the lengthy introduction, following on from Christ's rule, no other eucharistic community has any authority over another. As Cyprian of Carthage summed up in his statement when one bishop of old Rome attempted to extend his authority beyond his own diocese:

"For neither does any of us set himself up as a bishop of bishops, nor by tyrannical terror does any compel his colleague to the necessity of obedience; since every bishop, according to the allowance of his liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another."

It's a fine line to walk...

Myrrh

Posted by: Myrrh | Sunday, 18 June 2006 at 05:31 AM

May I contribute with just a few comments from Moscow.

First, what has occurred is clearly very sad and it is good for all to remember this whatever their point of view, and also to be generous to the fact that though in the Church different points of view are acceptable bitter disagreements frequently both have occurred in the past and do occur today. What has happened is sad most of all because Bishop Basil's presence was so important for us in Russia. I frequently go to the Monastery of Saint Andrew on the Banks of the Moscow River (well known among other things because Archpriest Avacuum of the Old Believers used to give his fiery sermons here). Both I myself and the other parishoners were very very fortunate to have such a kind and wise Bishop as Bishop Basil come and serve us (quite frequently as it turned out) and speak to us through his sermons and after the service. There is no doubt that this church here in Russia will be much the poorer for Bishop Basil's decision.

May I therefore ask that now that Bishop Basil and his flock are no longer under the control of the Moscow Patriarchate, you redouble your efforts to help all of those people in Russia who have always looked to you for help and guidance? In a way Russia needs you more than ever exactly now, given what is taking place in the Church in this country.

Some ways you can help: through charity work particularly in areas where the Moscow Patriarchate is scared of helping such as with young non-religious people, people using drugs, people with AIDS (a real problem in Russia now days), through the printing of translated religious and theological books into Russian, by creating a theological Russian language web site for those here who wish to find out more about the richness of the Orthodox tradition, by inviting Russian priests and laypeople to take part in discussion groups and meetings both in Russia and outside it.

The choice Bishop Basil made was in my view a tragedy that was forced on him by the powers that be here in Moscow. But now that the Russian Church in Britain has freed itself from the organs of power that have so undermined Orthodoxy here, you owe it to us to help us develop Orthodoxy here: humbly, accepting the Russians as they are but also giving of yourselves so that Orthodoxy can flourish here in Russia also.

Posted by: John | Saturday, 17 June 2006 at 03:09 PM

PRIMACY AND UNITY IN ORTHODOX ECCLESIOLOGY

Dear friends,

It seems that many doubt about the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarch is the "primus inter pares" of Orthodoxy. They ignore that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is the center of unity of Orthodoxy. NOT THE VATICAN! It seems that many of our orthodox brothers and sisters need to study some more orthodox theology and especially orthodox ecclesiology. Therefore I

do not compare to Rome. Union of Moscow and Rome.

Class Conflict Reaction in Russia



propose them to read this parts of an article written by Fr. John A. Schroedel, priest of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA).

To my opinion we need to accept that the Ecumenical Patriarchate has its role to play: to be the "first among equals" and to be the only churchbody responsible for the orthodox diaspora, to have local synods of bishops in this diaspora electing bishops etc. Moscow has enough problems to solve in Russia...

PRIMACY AND UNITY IN ORTHODOX ECCLESIOLOGY

The question of universal primacy is a central ecclesiological issue of our time. According to Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, "The issue of primacy is perhaps the most important ecumenical problem." A recent agreed statement of the World Councils of Churches shows that, while some degree of ecumenical consensus exists on the issue, much work remains to be done:

Whenever people, local communities or regional churches come together to take counsel and make important decisions, there is need for someone to summon and preside over the gathering for the sake of good order and to help the process of promoting, discerning and articulating consensus. Synods and councils of all times and in all churches demonstrate this clearly. The one who presides is always to be at the service of those among whom he presides for the edification of the Church of God, in love and truth. It is the duty of the president to respect the integrity of local churches, to give voice to the voiceless and to uphold unity in diversity.

PRIMACY IN ORTHODOX-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

Papal primacy is often recognized as the greatest single issue dividing the Eastern and Western churches. Fr. John Meyendorff wrote that "The whole ecclesiological debate between East and West is thus reducible to the issue of whether the faith depends on Peter, or Peter on the faith." Pope Paul VI said that "the pope...is undoubtedly the most serious obstacle on the path of ecumenism."

Primacy is an especially pertinent issue in Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue. This is not only the case because discussions of primacy naturally begin with the Roman Catholic concept as a point of departure, but also because of some important recent developments. In the 1995 encyclical Ut Unum Sint, Pope John Paul II wrote:

Whatever relates to the unity of all Christian communities clearly forms part of the concerns of the primacy....I am convinced that I have a particular responsibility in this regard, above all in acknowledging the ecumenical aspirations of the majority of the Christian Communities and in heeding the request made of me to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation. However skeptical one may be about the actual application of the Pope's words, nevertheless such openness to dialogue is unprecedented. Many Orthodox theologians have felt a need to respond thoughtfully, for, as Fr. John Meyendorff writes, "the issue placed by the papacy before the consciousness of all Christians is that of a world Christian witness."

PRIMACY AND COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY

In order to provide some context, it is worth noting that an important concept underlying much of the ecumenical discussion on the subject of primacy is "communion ecclesiology." Popular in ecumenical circles, it has been enthusiastically accepted by Catholics and Orthodox, who are also responsible for laying some of its basic foundations. Zizioulas, for example, in his book Being as Communion draws on the Eastern Church Fathers to define Christian life within the framework of "communion."

The influence of this kind of ecclesiological outlook is fundamental to many modern discussions of primacy. For example, Zizioulas writes:

"For such a primacy to be accepted and applied an ecclesiology of communion rooted deeply in a theology, and even an ontology of communion, would be necessary. I believe that the 2nd Vatican Council has made an historic advance in this direction, and we can proceed in the deepening of such a theology of communion and apply it to all matters still dividing us, including that of the Roman primacy".

AN ORTHODOX VISION OF PRIMACY

In what ways does the Orthodox understanding of primacy differ from the Roman Catholic view? The Orthodox perspective is rooted in principles drawn from the early canonical tradition. It is worth mentioning that even within Orthodoxy the question deals first and foremost, because of historical considerations, with the legitimate primacy exercised by Rome before the schism.

THE THEOLOGICAL NECESSITY OF PRIMACY

Orthodoxy has never accepted Rome's self-supported claims of universal jurisdiction, but has always rebuffed them. A closer examination, however, reveals the many subtleties of the issue. As Thomas FitzGerald wrote, "Orthodox theologians have not rejected the concept of primacy, but only its development by the Church of Rome."

An understanding of corporate personality is important for any study of primacy. Zizioulas writes: "The idea of the incorporation of the 'many' into the 'one,' or of the 'one' as a representative of the 'many' goes back to a time earlier than Paul." More directly, he says, "Bishops are not to be understood as individuals, but as heads of communities." This would necessitate a single representative showing forth the unity of the episcopate. There is another important point here: that primacy belongs to a see, not to an individual. As Zizioulas states: "In an ecclesiology of communion, we have not a communion of individuals, but of churches." The Orthodox understanding of primacy is rooted in the need for taxis. Meyendorff explains:

Constantinople / Moscow.

It is a fact, however, that there has never been a time when the Church did not recognize a certain "order" among first the apostles, then the bishops, and that, in this order, one apostle, St. Peter, and later, one bishop, heading a particular church, occupied the place of a "primate."

Zizioulas says that the question of Roman primacy must be approached theologically rather than historically; if primacy was only contingent on historical developments, then it could not be viewed as a necessity for the Church. His question is, does Roman Primacy belong to the esse of the Church or is it only for her bene esse?

PRIMACY OF HONOR NOT WITHOUT AUTHORITY

Metropolitan John Zizioulas says that the phrase "primacy of honor" often used by Orthodox may be misleading, because the exercise of primacy necessarily involves actual duties and responsibilities. The primacy exercised by the Patriarch of Constantinople, for example, has included such things as the right to convoke councils in cooperation with the other Patriarchs, and an emergency right of intervention when help is requested by another Patriarchate:

"In response to the present Roman Catholic understanding of the Petrine Office, Orthodox theologians have not rejected the concept of primacy but only its development by the Church of Rome. Among the Orthodox, there has been an attempt to recognize the various expressions of primatial leadership in the life of the Church, and to place primacy within the framework of conciliarity."

Professor Erickson points out that for the Orthodox, Roman primacy has been understood as a pragmatic, rather than theological, issue, growing out of a principle of accommodation.

Honor and primacy must be linked to ministry and service, and the Pope must function as head of his see, as one who is among, rather than over, the other bishops. Again, primacy involves more than simply "honor," but is linked to a universal pastoral concern, a "presidency in love." This means leadership, not juridical authority.

Zonaras observes:

"Just as bodies, if the head does not maintain its activity in good health, function faultily or are completely useless, so also the body of the Church, if its preeminent member, who occupies the position of head, is not maintained in his proper honor, functions in a disorderly and faulty manner."

Zonaras also mentions the prime importance of harmony among all, bound together by the bond of love.

From the time of the first Ecumenical Council on, Byzantine canon law had always assigned primacy of honor to Rome, for example Nicea canon 6. Even when the capital of the Empire was moved to Constantinople, the "new Rome," the priority of the old Rome was safeguarded. Constantinople 3 states: "As for the Bishop of Constantinople, let him have the prerogatives of honor after the bishop of Rome, seeing that this city is the new Rome." Even when Anna Comnena, daughter of Emperor Alexis I, tried to interpret "after" in a purely chronological sense, she was corrected by both Zonaras and Balsamon, who maintained that "after" certainly shows hierarchical inferiority.

Meyendorff summarizes the "privileges" spoken of in Constantinople canon 3:

...this ministry was always understood in moral terms, rather than in terms of formal power, or rights. The actual exercise of this power depended upon political circumstances, as well as the orthodoxy, the wisdom, and the prestige of the "first bishop" himself... it is only when the "Old Rome" decisively and consistently pretended to transform its moral "privilege" into actual jurisdictional and doctrinal power that the Orthodox East refused to allow it.

Chalcedon canon 28 is also notable. It says, in part:

The fathers in fact have correctly attributed the prerogatives to the see of the most ancient Rome because it was the imperial city. And thus moved by the same reasoning, [we] have accorded equal prerogatives to the very holy see of New Rome, justly considering that the city is honored by the imperial power and the senate and enjoying the prerogatives equal to those of old Rome, the most ancient imperial city, ought to be elevated as Old Rome in the affairs of the Church, being in the second place after it.

IN SUMMARY

Bishop Kallistos Ware points out two short formulae that may be helpful in summing up the eastern attitude towards primacy: "Among the bishops, the pope is the elder brother, in the absence of the father", and, "The pope is the mouth of the Church and of the episcopate." These two pithy sayings capture in many ways the approach many Orthodox would take toward this topic.

PRIMACY WITHIN ORTHODOXY TODAY

Our historical understanding of Roman Primacy is one thing, but how do we understand the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch today? For, as Meyendorff states, "After the schism, Constantinople was left with primacy in Orthodoxy." There remains a need to look at some of these difficulties posed by the question of the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch in the modern Orthodox world.

Surely it is not enough to rest on history. Fr. John Meyendorff states: "...since Byzantium does not exist anymore, it is simply meaningless to attempt a definition of the rights of the ecumenical patriarchate in Byzantine terms."

Michael Fahey describes the contemporary functioning of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. "The synod addresses matters of moment to the patriarchate and, because of the primacy of this patriarchal church, it also discusses many far-reaching matters crucial to the life of Orthodoxy worldwide." Fahey outlines four ways the Ecumenical patriarch, along with his synod, has exercised primacy in recent years: 1) promotion of Orthodox unity and pan-Orthodox cooperation. 2) by agreeing to hear appeals from other local churches. 3) through ecumenical initiatives, and 4) through pastoral care of the diaspora.

THE MINISTRY OF UNITY

Among the four functions enumerated by Fahey, two have to do with the ministry of unity. One

Constantinople - Pro Phanar

concern here is the question of who should speak for the Orthodox. Thomas FitzGerald, in a booklet entitled The Ecumenical Patriarchate and Christian Unity discusses the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch within Orthodoxy as its visible representative and spokesman. A statement in the front of the book by Patriarch Bartholomew reads: "Our Ecumenical Throne is fully aware of its historic heritage and of its responsibility, by the Grace of God, to do whatever is possible, to serve the unity of the Church"

HEARING APPEALS

Chalcedon canons 9 and 17 describe the authority of the see of Constantinople to hear appeals. Lewis Patsavos clarifies: "In both cases, bishops and other clergy dissatisfied with their metropolitan are not compelled by the council to appeal to the see of Constantinople, but thereby overturning the decision of the exarch of the diocese. On the contrary, they are given this option only if they so desire."

TERRITORIAL LIMITS

Too often, the "pastoral care of the diaspora" has seemed more like a ploy for power. The question of territorial limits is a hotly debated today. Based on a certain interpretation of the term "barbarians" I Chalcedon canon 28, the Ecumenical Patriarch has tried to argue in recent years for jurisdiction over the "diaspora." The question remains: Does Constantinople have a certain jurisdiction over the "diaspora" not otherwise in the "territory" of another mother-church? Many would say yes. While shying away from the full brunt of the Constantinopolitan position, Lewis Patsavos defends this fundamental right to hear appeals, saying: "Constantinople has always maintained that the canonical legacy of the Fourth Ecumenical Council proves without a doubt... areas not claimed by a specific ecclesiastic jurisdiction were under the authority of the bishop of Constantinople."

CONCLUSION

Throughout this article we have examined various nuances of an Orthodox approach to the issue of primacy. The subject is frustrating, because our theory seems quite distant from the actual reality of church life. We may hope, however, that by keeping this vision alive our Church will one day grow into its own theology.

Posted by: Evgenij Syrov | Saturday, 17 June 2006 at 10:28 AM

Something exceptional happened on the website of the Diocese of Sourozh since middle May 2006 when Archbishop Innokenty was appointed temporary administrator - a Russian flag suddenly appeared on its' Home page!

When Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh was alive, no Russian flag appeared on the Diocese of Sourozh's website.

What is it telling us?

Posted by: An Orthodox Christian | Saturday, 17 June 2006 at 05:28 AM

Here we are again with the Basilites crowing on about their supposed injustice at the hand of the Patriarch of Moscow.

The retired Basil has guaranteed his place in history. What started off as a petty squabble in a tin-pot diocese has now turned into a schism that threatens to split the entire Church.

Posted by: Seb Richards | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 11:50 PM

'Helena's' protestations with respect to 'dirty tricks' are rather rich.

Perhaps the stunningly gorgeous Ruth Gledhill could investigate an interesting anomaly?

If the glamorous Ruth were to telephone the supposed signatories of the letters from the 'Deans' on the former Bishop Basil's website she might soon discover that at least one of the alleged signatories had in fact totally dissociated himself, in writing, from the Basilite claims.

Posted by: Nicholas T. Alexander | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 11:41 PM

What nonsense from 'Times Reader'. One guesses that his ecclesiology of Orthodoxy comes from a corrupted old Sourozh version.

In Orthodoxy no Patriarchate has supreme jurisdiction, if Basilites believe this they should indeed become Papist Catholics. Constantinople did indeed, at one time, have an historic and functional primacy. The fact that for centuries this has not been the case is conveniently ignored by the Basilites. The arrogance of the current Patriarch of Constantinople is even greater than that of the failed administrator of a diocese, Basil.

Posted by: Seb Richards | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 11:15 PM

Abba Moses. You are not really Abba Moses, are you?

If you are real Abba Moses, you would be in a Guinness book of records as Mrs "Russian von Orthodox" would say, because it is even before time the Sourozh eparhy has been formed.

Also as being Moses' Arch-Web-Deacon I would like to declare with full authority that Mr. Moses is not on my list of e-mail addresses. And even if he were, at the time of Moses there were no internet!

It is therefore the whole message from Moses should be attributed to the new administration

Pro Phanar

Constantinople

Quote

of Sourouz and their dirty tricks.

Posted by: Moses Webarchdeacon | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 10:28 PM

In the past two/three months I have seen

Close friends reduced to tears
Heard that the troubles within the church have effected peoples work
Heard that people, including myself, have had difficulty sleeping

A split instigated by Bishop Basil has caused all this tension
A split, which has caused pain, anxiety and stress to many
A split, which has made many feel that they are in a civil war
A split, which has made many, feel they are the children of a cruel divorce
A split, which has even divided friendships
A split, which has tried to damage the unity and reputation of the Russian Orthodox church

Why the split?
Are we in a period of war?
Is the cold war still on?
Is the church controlled by a totalitarian state?

No!No!No!: The split is due apparently to two factors(Bishop Basils' version)
A small group of supporters who undermined Bishop Basil
The influx of new émigrés

But why cannot a Bishop control his own flock?
If someone has the strength to divide a parish and cause a split, surely they have the strength to manage a few individuals
Perhaps Bishop Basil just didn't want to listen to the majority view of his flock?
Perhaps he just wants to defend a small group of disenters

And why does he want to divide his flock by ethnicity – based on ethnicity
Does it really make life easier to divide a flock on ethnic grounds?
Should we not be a broad church?
I thought we were neither 'Jew' nor 'Greek'
I thought we should love all our Orthodox 'brothers' and 'sisters'
Does this not just lead to cultural tensions
Does this just not lead to mistrust
Does this just not lead to the raising of cultural walls

The raising of cultural walls. Within the Cathedral there have been numerous examples of a lack of cultural understanding

A senior member of the laity who claims that women look like Muslims in their head wear:
How offensive is this statement? How cruel is this statement? I hope you pray for your lack of understanding? I hope you pray for your bigotry.

Calling new émigré parishioners 'new Russians' (a term used by Bishop Basil - in a number of documents). Which is an incorrect term especially as many are not rich and many new émigrés are not Russian
Claiming that Russians know nothing about Orthodoxy. Who are you to make these assumptions? Who are you to judge?

Complaining about the Russian language being spoken outside of the services – you are in a Russian church

Complaining about the notice board being in Russian – what do you expect

Saying that I'm on the Russian side. No I'm on a side supported by: Belarusian's, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanian, Georgians, Greeks, Russians and Ukrainians

Claiming publicly that we never had a problem with 'Old Russians' – thus suggesting that new émigrés are a problem

Complaining that the church is overcrowded

How can we complain about the increasing number of émigrés?

England is in a moral Sahara
Most forms of Christian churches are decreasing in numbers
Orthodoxy is rising
We are on good terms with our brothers and sisters in the 'church in exile'
And some of Bishop Basil supporters call it a problem

Surely we should be celebrating the rise of Orthodoxy
The Third Rome is rising.
We should be praying for this
Not condemning it or criticising it

Surely as Christians we should be helping 'new émigrés' not call them a problem

Surely we should be building or forming churches in areas where people need it and not just in nice areas like Clapham

head scarves
terminology

5

language

Surely we should all be working together

What should we do? Perhaps we should recognise
Many new émigrés are nervous living here
Many are scared living here
Many do struggle
Many are home sick
Many need TLC

What Bishop Basil and his supporters have done is create a wall based on ethnic grounds
Let us break down these walls
How can we turn our back on them? How can we break down these cultural walls?

Perhaps we should make more an effort to understand new émigrés rather than condemn them. They are not the problem – your prejudices are the problem. If these prejudices continue we will create a cultural ghetto

Do we really want a cultural ghetto?
For me a cultural ghetto is an evil
Do we really want a Cathedral split by nationality
Do we really want a Cathedral that is like Paris Russian Exarchate cathedral in Paris where the French worship on one floor and the Russians on another?
Do we want a 'middle class' ghetto?
Do we want a cultural ghetto based on Old Russians and English?
Surely we should look to the future and not to the past

Many look back to the past with 'rose tinted' glasses
Many wish to return to the past
Many wish to go back to a time when the parish was smaller
These are 'noble' aims, but you cannot turn back the clock. We should be growing orthodoxy

We should be working with our brothers and sisters in the Church in exile
We should be building unity
We should be unifying under the banner of 'Third Rome'
We should not be creating a division based on nationality or social class
We do not want a closed club

A closed club
We do not want a club – we are a church
A club that is based on nationality
A club where if you are English or Old Russian you are part of the inner circle
If you are not English or Russian you are on the fringes
A club where you can 'pick and mix' rites

Surely it is better to have an open church
A church that listens
A church that is open

The 'legitimate' committee has been an excellent example of openness
The committee is listening
The committee is talking to everyone
The committee has asked for open opinions
The committee has allowed debate
The committee has respect for peoples views

However, not everyone has respect, and some of Bishops Basil's supporters have taken disrespect to another level. For example at the Oxford conference some of his supporters:
Shouted at Archbishop Innokenty
Interrupted Archbishop Innokenty when he was talking
Made time gestures to the Archbishop when he was talking
Put up leaflets and propaganda material around the conference
Claimed that the committee was using KGB tactics – what an insult to all those who have suffered under communism and held their faith.

Bishop Basils supporters have tactics similar to that of 'militant' in the 1980's they are the tactics of bullies – still I will pray for your hard hearts.

The above tactics employed by those at the fringes are underpinned by that of spin. For instance
Calling the majority voice that of dissenters
Calling those who have opinions different to themselves 'terrorists' what an insult to those who have suffered under terrorists
Claiming publicly that some Russians do not want children in the church

However, this culture of spin is not a new initiative within the church, it could be claimed that a silent totalitarian hand had previously ruled the church: as the following few examples illustrates

When Father Andre was invited to speak freely at a conference - why was he criticised, condemned and expelled by Bishop Basil. What about free speech? What about liberty? What about right of expression? Does Bishop Basil believe in these principles?

Class
English Blogger
(4)

The Committee of Inquiry
Behaviour
(7)

of English

Why initially was there no communication about Father Andre dismissal? Why did Bishop Basil strangle the oxygen of communication?

Why did Bishop Basil claim that Father Andre was sent back due to ill health? Why were there no public meetings? Why could people not express their views? Surely these are the tactics of a Kuchma

Why was a pressure group of English and Old Russian parishioners formed? What was the purpose of these meetings? Was the purpose of the meetings to discuss how to manipulate parishioners?

Why in Feb and March were parishioners openly talking about a move to the Greeks?

Why in a purge were all the Russian elected members of the committee expelled for having opinions different to that of Bishop Basil? Did Bishop Basil want to disfranchise the majority opinion?

Let us pray that we can turn this darkness around and build unity.

Orthodoxy is on the rise - let us celebrate this and not separate the family. Let us work with the committee and embrace openness and forgive the underhand authoritarian tactics of the past. Let us be united and not separated by nationality

For

"United we stand divided we fall".

Posted by: Steven Lacey: A defender of Third Rome | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 07:51 PM

The Diocese of Sourozh was organised with fidelity of spirit to the Russian Church Council of 1917/18 when the yoke of Peter the Great's appropriation of the Church organisation had finally come to an end and Patriarch Tikhon was appointed patriarch to lead the way back to the Orthodox Tradition of conciliarity.

As explained below, there appears to be an official posted proposed direction for ROCOR about which even some bishops of the Synod of Bishops have no knowledge.

http://www.ipc.od.ua/_jizn_tcervi_txt_060523.html

Notice to the flock of the Odessa and Zaporozh'ye Dioceses of ROCOR regarding the conclusions of the IV All-Diaspora Council and Council of Bishops

By the will of God, the IV All-Diaspora Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was conducted in the spirit of unanimity and sobornost'.

Regarding the union with the Moscow Patriarchate, practically all those who spoke said that this union was desired, but in our Church there are different understandings of when and under what conditions such a union can take place.

The resolution of the IV All-Diaspora Council, accepted practically unanimously (with but a few abstaining or voting against), states that such a union is possible in the future, after the elimination of the differences between us of a fundamental nature (ecumenism was mentioned), and that this union can become final only at the Local Council of the entire Russian Church, with the participation of clergy and laity.

There is some evidence that the thrust of this document was inspired by St. John Maximovich, on whose relics were laid the preliminary draft of the resolution while a moleben was served. Personally, the invisible presence and influence of St. John on the work of the Council are obvious to me.

Such was the divinely-inspired determination of the IV All-Diaspora Council.

The Council of Bishops which took place afterwards confirmed this determination of the All-Diaspora Council. The principal discussion at the Council of Bishops concerned the Act of Canonical Communion; a completely confidential document, developed by the commissions for discussion, the consideration of which had not been provided for even among all the bishops of ROCOR and the reading of which was not initially proposed even at the All-Diaspora Council. In view of its questionable nature, references to this Act were intentionally excluded both from the resolution of the IV All-Diaspora Council and from the Epistle of the Council of Bishops.

At the Council of Bishops I gave a separate opinion about this Act. In it is said:

"I consider the appearance itself of this Act of Canonical Communion and, all the more, its consideration, to be premature, since the differences of a fundamental nature between our sides - questions about ecumenism and sergianism - have not yet been resolved.

Furthermore, we recognize that according to the decision of the Local Council of 1918, the supreme authority in the Church belongs to the Local Council with the participation of bishops, clergy and laity. Only such a Council is empowered to select a church administration which may act in the inter-conciliar period.

The fullness of the Russian Church has awaited and waits for namely this Council since the time of the repose of Patriarch Tikhon and, since such a Council has not been convened, we do not have the right to arbitrarily establish a Supreme Church Authority, or ourselves determine our canonical status. We only can temporarily, until the convocation of the Local Council, mutually recognize or not recognize the canonicity of the existence of various parts of the Church with their existing authority, with the condition of the acknowledgement of the absence to this day of a legitimately chosen Supreme Church Authority.

The Act, however, without basis places one part of the Church above the other and actually makes the authority of one of the parts of the ROC the Supreme Church Authority (commemoration of the head of one part of the Church by the other part, obtaining of Holy Myrrh, the confirmation of hierarchs, etc.), which is illegitimate.

Upon reaching unanimity on the questions of ecumenism and sergianism, and mutual recognition of the authority in the ROC of the coming Local council, we can establish eucharistic communion without creating in this case, naturally, a common supreme authority.

In light of what has been presented, I consider it necessary to put off the examination of the aforementioned Act, bearing as it does a threat to the existence itself of ROCOR, until an agreement in principle is reached on all the questions which divide us."(text based on a draft of this document).

This separate opinion was appended to the protocols of the Council of Bishops.

The document was supported also by their Graces Daniel and Gabriel. There was no vote on adoption of the Act and therefore I am not completely clear on the provenance of the assertion that the Act "was adopted and approved in principle." Neither does the communication correspond to reality when it says that "final confirmation of the text of the Act, as well as details as to its ceremonial signing, was conferred upon the Synod of Bishops." The question of the "final confirmation of the text of the Act by the Synod of Bishops" was in fact raised (without reference to the "details as to its ceremonial signing" - I read this word combination for the first time on the Internet), but because of the presence of different opinions it was postponed without a final decision of the Council. Voting on this question also was not conducted. Therefore the communiqué about the conclusion of the Council of Bishops of ROCOR of May 19, 2006, placed on the official site of our Synod, causes, at the least, bewilderment - indeed, besides the above-mentioned, it actually contradicts the resolution taken and affirmed by the IV All-Diaspora Council.

I believe that some time will be needed in order to comprehend all that which occurred at the All-Diaspora and Bishops' Councils and henceforth, until there has been a complete and final explanation of Conciliar opinion, it will be necessary to abstain from various categorical statements which contradict the spirit and letter of both Councils of our Church. So far it can only be said definitively that the Councils undertook no "revolutionary" changes in the life of ROCOR, and it remains for us to live the same life as always. There can only be a question about which direction (in relations with the MP) this church life is given.

Glory be to our God!

+ Bishop Agathangel

Odessa, May 23, 2006

Posted by: Myrrh | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 06:01 PM

This canon's been around for over a thousand years and not much has changed...

Apostolic Canon XXXI

"If any Presbyter, condemning his own bishop, draw people aside and set up another altar, without finding anything wrong with the Bishop in point of piety and righteousness, let him be deposed, on the ground that he is an office-seeker. For he is a tyrant. Let the rest of clergymen be treated likewise, and all those who abet him. But let the laymen be excommunicated. Let these things be done after one, and a second, and a third request of the Bishop."

Posted by: Myrrh | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 05:41 PM

Bishop Ippolit of the ROC in Ukraine speaks of a "common Russian self-awareness" in which Great, Little and Evgeniy Sirov wrote: "White Russia constitute "Holy Russia," while another ROC agent meets with President Kuchma, calling for the unification of all Orthodox groups in

Ukraine.

Is the Russian Orthodox Church Russia's Trojan horse in Ukraine? If the past is to be our guide, the answer has to be "yes."

I have a strong suspicion that Filaret is not the persona non grata that the Moscow Patriarch makes him out to be..

As in the present with ROCOR - the movement for changing loyalty to Patriarch Tikhon's Ukaz came from inside and your analysis above could show the same pattern of divide and conquer.

ROCOR went from being the Russian Orthodox Church abroad not recognising any the Moscow Patriarchate as the Mother Church nor any incumbent Patriarch of the Mother Church until such time as an All Russia Council could be called which it understood to be the highest authority in the Church, comprising as it must of bishops, clergy and laity, to putting forward an agreement at the IV All Diaspora for ROCOR to be an autonomous unit within the Moscow Patrarchate which considers itself to the whole of the Russian Orthodox Church with a synod of bishops as the supreme authority. (Although as we've seen at Sourozh, the MP tends to forget that clause..)

Bishop Agathangel's Statement explained the illegality of the proposed direction agreed at the IVth All Diaspora.

If you're interested and can't find it, it's becoming difficult to find on-line, actually, perhaps I should post it because it's relevant to Sourozh in that Bishop Agathangel's analysis shows the difference between the thinking of the 1917/18 Council and the usurpation of the Church's authority by a bunch of bishops.

I'll find it.

Myrrh
Myrrh

Posted by: Myrrh | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 05:31 PM

A brother in Scetis committed a fault. A council was called to which abba Moses was invited, but he refused to go to it. Then the priest sent someone to him, saying, "Come, for everyone is waiting for you". So he got up and went. He took a leaking jug and filled it with water and carried it with him.

The others came out to meet him and said, "What is this, father?" The old man said to them, "My sins run out behind me, and I do not see them, and today I am coming to judge the errors of another." When they heard that, they said no more to the brother but forgave him.

Posted by: Abba Moses | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 02:42 PM

It is so sad, all those years of clinging on to our Russian links and when we can be united we find we can't worship in the same cathedral as each other. I hope that now we can separate into different parishes we will start concentrating on all we have in common, as opposed to the few things we don't.

I also hope we will stop complaining over the heads of our clergy.

Posted by: Elena | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 01:54 PM

It seems that the Patriarch of Moscow is hopping mad because bishop Basil (Osborne) has had the temerity to leave his jurisdiction despite having been forbidden to do so.

He really needs to 'get real' !

Does he really think that it's in his gift to stop anyone leaving?

Can't he see that by trying to erect a Berlin wall around his church he will only succeed in making it look like its being ruled by old KGB apparatchiks reverting to type ?

Does he have any idea of how petty, spiteful and ridiculous this makes the Russian Church look.

If he doesn't care about this perhaps the Russian secular authorities will! This whole fiasco has only served to alienate those who have always been the natural friends of Russia.

Posted by: Times Reader | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 11:14 AM

The Sourozh webdeacon is suggesting the 'protestants of Amphipolis' are playing dirty tricks. I very much doubt it - we have no need, for the facts themselves are sordid enough. But the 'new administration' at Sourozh certainly are - the 'peace' letter To All Parishioners' posted on their site is a fine example, but you have to request the signatures and know who these people are in order to crack it.

Posted by: Helena | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 10:31 AM

Putin's Third Rome in collaboration with the Moscow Patriarchate

Moscow is undergoing a revitalization campaign. It's not a religious revival, although there are hints of that. Nor is it an economic or a political renewal, despite some cosmetic changes. The recovery that is taking place is religio-cultural and what is being restored is the vision of Moscow as history's Third Rome.

The concept of Moscow as the Third Rome is centuries old. It was first articulated by Filofei, a Russian monk, in a letter to Tsar Ivan III, soon after the fall of Constantinople (the Second Rome) to the Turks in 1453. "Take note, O religious and gracious czar," wrote the monk, "that all Christian kingdoms are merged into thine alone, that two Romes have fallen, but the third

Third Rome
= Amari.
1/2/06



INTRO

stands and there will be no fourth." This doctrine soon became a significant pillar upon which the Muscovite state was solidified and later expanded.

Two other doctrines characterized the Muscovite state: autocracy and "narodnichestvo." Autocracy was the principle of absolute supremacy of the tsar whose consummate powers were divine. Even the Church was subservient. Narodnichestvo was a kind of deified version of the Russian people, the messianic soul of Holy Russia, the "narod" (the people) steadfastly loyal to tsar and patriarch.

Although open fidelity to the Orthodox faith disappeared during Soviet times, the three tenets of the Russian state remained. "Instead of the Third Rome in Russia, the Third International was achieved and many of the features of the Third Rome pass over to the Third International," wrote Russian philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev in 1948. "The Third International is also a consecrated realm, and it is also founded on an orthodox faith." Under the Soviets, the messianism of the narod was transferred to the proletariat, vanguard of Marxism/Leninism. During the 1920s and 1930s, religion was ruthlessly persecuted by Lenin and his heirs. The first significant change came during the second world war. When it appeared that Soviet citizens were less than enthusiastic to fight and die for Stalinism, the Russian patriarch was called in to broadcast a message urging Soviets to fight for "Holy Russia."

"The modern history of the role of religion in Soviet foreign policy began on April 10, 1945," writes William C. Fletcher in his book "Religion and Soviet Foreign Policy, 1945-1970" (1973). "On that date Stalin, together with Molotov, was visited by the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church ..." From then on the Russian Orthodox Church was once again a willing vehicle of Russian imperialism.

Controlled by the NKVD and later the KGB (most ROC clergy were KGB agents), the plan from the beginning was to secure ROC hegemony over all Orthodox Churches within the Soviet occupation zone. The plan succeeded. By 1950 "the Moscow Patriarchate emerged as the unquestioned leader of Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe," writes Dr. Fletcher. Especially close relations were established with Orthodox Church leaders in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania, Poland and Moldova.

During Khrushchev's time, atheistic violence returned to plague all religious denominations in the USSR. The foreign policy role of the ROC, however, continued. The ROC was welcomed into the left-leaning World Council of Churches (WCC). The WCC adopted all initiatives, proclamations and denunciations of the West drafted by the KGB. Whether it was "peaceful coexistence," "colonial oppression," "wars of national liberation," missile testing or any other Cold War issue, it was usually the motives of the United States rather than the USSR that were questioned by the WCC.

Today, Russia is ruled by Vladimir Putin, and the Third Rome ideal has been reborn. Autocracy has returned. Elections have been stolen; Russia has been divided into seven "okrugs" (regions) under the direct control of the president; an independent press has all but disappeared; political murders are never solved; plans are under way to draft a new Russian Constitution predicated on greater presidential control; independent-minded scholars and intellectuals are being arrested; the government has clamped down on international scientific cooperation; and Chekists have been feted during a gala anniversary celebration of the Russian secret police. Mr. Putin later declared that no government, let alone his, could survive without secret agents.

In an essay published in December 1999, President Putin made it clear that Russia would never become another United States or Great Britain, "where liberal values have deep historic roots. Our state institutions and structures have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and its people. For Russians, a strong state is not an anomaly to be gotten rid of - it is a source of order and the driving force of any change."

Narodnichestvo also is making a comeback. Ultra-nationalists such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn are wooed by Mr. Putin. New histories of the Cold War are published suggesting, once again, that it was American imperialistic aims after World War II that led to the Cold War. Adopting the melody to the Soviet anthem for the Russian national anthem is a not-so-subtle attempt to emphasize the continuity of Russian history and its greatness.

The ROC is once again under government control. In a special Easter message last April, Mr. Putin noted that "the Orthodox Church has played a special role in the history of Russia, in the establishment and consolidation of the state." A 1997 law recognizes Orthodoxy as the only Russian religion worthy of the name; other "non-traditional" faith expressions have been relegated to second-class status. Russian Orthodox publications regularly warn readers of American imperialist aggression and the dangers of globalization.

Mr. Putin is using the Russian Orthodox Church to bring Ukraine back into Moscow's fold. During a recent meeting Presidents Kuchma and Putin both stressed the importance of Orthodoxy in the march toward Slavic unity. Bishop Ippolit of the ROC in Ukraine speaks of a "common Russian self-awareness" in which Great, Little and White Russia constitute "Holy Russia," while another ROC agent meets with President Kuchma, calling for the unification of all Orthodox groups in Ukraine.

Is the Russian Orthodox Church Russia's Trojan horse in Ukraine? If the past is to be our guide, the answer has to be "yes."

Posted by: Evgenij Syrov | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 09:58 AM

Natalia Kulkova wrote: "I wonder how Bishop Basil and the people around him fished out the old idea of Moscow the third Rome."

For 90 years nobody remembered it and the digging it out from the past seems to me a strange and a very skilful way to strengthen Bishop Basil' way."

This old idea of Russia as the 3rd Rome has been resurrected by the Moscow Patriarchate Church, not by the supporters of Bishop Basil.

.....

intro
Intro Third Rome

Quote
Mikhail
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? Russia!

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew Denounces Moscow's "3rd Rome" Theory.

According to the Athens newspaper To Vima of 8 July 2004, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew responded to the "3rd Rome" theory of the Patriarch of Moscow (which had been brought up for discussion during the 8th International Assemblage of the Russian Orthodox Church) by calling it "...foolish, hubristic, and blasphemous," because "...it resounds with the spirit of caesarapism and vaticanism; something totally unacceptable to the Orthodox Church."

http://grecoreport.com/Bartholomew_Denounces.htm

which led to:

<http://portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=english&id=113>

and further to:

http://tovima.dolnet.gr/front_page.php

Myrrh

Posted by: Myrrh | Friday, 16 June 2006 at 05:48 AM

'It is difficult then not to wonder if this correspondent ("sourozh parishioner for 120 years") is in fact a member of Archbishop Innokenti's clergy. I do sincerely hope I am wrong'. Patrick, I am glad to be able to assure you that indeed, you are wrong. mysourozh@sourozh.org is a fake address; there is no such user on the sourozh.org domain. In fact, one cannot exclude the possibility that the aged sourozh parishioner is really a supporter of the Bishop of Amphipolis writing in this vein to discredit the new administration of the Diocese of Sourozh! As the official diocesan website, sourozh.org does, of course, operate under the control of the bishop in charge of the diocese. In this respect, at least, nothing has changed.

Posted by: webdeacon | Thursday, 15 June 2006 at 11:54 PM

His Holiness The Moscow Patriarch, Bishop Innokenty and The Russian Ambassador to Great Britain must come together and do something URGENTLY to stop a few of their lost sheep from building up such a bad name and reputation to The Moscow Patriarchate, to The Russian Orthodox and to the Russian name in general in this country. The British people are gradually being misled in having a very wrong idea of Russian people - their honesty and integrity are at stake here!

Tell the lost sheep,

- 1) It is a sin to steal,
- 2) The Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Ennismore Gardens, even though it bears the name Russian, is NOT owned by The Russian Government or The Moscow Patriarchate because
 - a) The Moscow Patriarchate, the Tzar and his family, the Soviet government, and the Russian Government DID NOT contribute any money to buy the property.
 - b) The principal and main donors of the property were not Russian or Soviet nationals. They DID NOT donate the property to The Moscow Patriarchate or to the Soviet/Russian Government or to the Tzar and his family.
 - c) The principal and main donors donated their money to a UK charity "for the benefit of The Parish of Russian Orthodox Christians in the United Kingdom".
- 3) In God's world, the truth is always simple. Only man's greed complicates the truth.
- 4) Tell them the truth, tell them quickly, tell them before all Russians living in this country are accused of stealing something which never belonged to them.
- 5) Russians have suffered a lot but are still proud, honest and good people. I believe it. Prove it.
- 6) Don't let a few strays spoil the good name.

Posted by: An Orthodox Christian | Thursday, 15 June 2006 at 01:18 PM

The 'Sourozh parishioner for 120 years' refers to 'protestants leaving to Amphipolis'. The application of such terminology to current events is as anachronistic as it is uncharitable. In what respect are the Faithful who have held to their uncanonically deposed bishop 'protestant'?

It is, of course, true that many Orthodox believers in this country come from some sort of Western Christian background. They have recognised the fullness of Truth in Orthodoxy and prayerfully, often after many years of deliberation, have freely chosen to be Orthodox Christians rather than remaining Protestant, Roman Catholic, or whatever else they might have been by accident of birth or nationality.

If being 'protestant' means remaining loyal to my lawful bishop and perceiving the locus of Authority as being in the Holy Tradition as a whole (including crucially in this case the Ecumenical Councils) I, for one, plead guilty.

If, when forced to acknowledge the authority of the real 4th Council rather than that of an imagined '3rd Rome', I am called a 'protestant', so be it.

How this places me in the company of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli I do not know !

Ian Page

Posted by: Ian Page | Thursday, 15 June 2006 at 10:56 AM



Russophobia

I'm curious why people such as 'Sourozh parishioner for 120 years' are so intent on keeping the cathedral for themselves. They have said that large amounts of money have already been raised not only in order to fight for the cathedral in the courts but also to build another one. Why go through the heartache of a court battle when a cathedral could be built from scratch and have everything – architecture, culture, bishop and patriarchate – exactly as you want and need it? It surprises me that 'Sourozh parishioner for 120 years' and others want the Ennismore Gardens cathedral at all as it was of course previously a Protestant church and is built in the Romanesque style. It seems both these facts make it impossible for it to be a 'real' Russian Orthodox cathedral in the eyes of those raising money to fight for it.

Posted by: Sophie Barnard | Wednesday, 14 June 2006 at 11:12 PM

Sourozh parishioner of 120 years - (I take it you are in the Guinness Book of Records? this even predates the Sourozh parish!)

Russian, because that is what I am by birth, culture and upbringing. Orthodox, because I have been born into a Russian Orthodox family and have professed the faith all my life (although not for 120 years!).

Indeed, I appreciate the British way of life, which is why I choose to live here. However, perhaps unlike you (although your "sourozh.org" address would suggest otherwise) I am frequently in the Mother Country and see the Mother Church at first hand. Openness, humility, service to the people, tolerance are not characteristics, which would describe the majority of the higher ranked clergy. Oh, but of course you will claim that our expectations of Metropolitan Antony like humility, simplicity and service is our protestantism speaking out! A true Orthodox must expect his bishops to enjoy vodka laden feasts, Sumo-like girth and to dole out his blessings in an of-hand manner.

Like you, we also come to church to pray and not for any social club activity, but unlike you we do not denigrate our opponents.

And I am glad Roman Abromovich, despite being of a different persuasion, has promised to fund the new Cathedral.

Posted by: A Russian Orthodox | Wednesday, 14 June 2006 at 07:50 PM

Patrick, you are not adding to ghastrliness but helping stem a tide of sludge. No matter how one feels towards the "new" Russians, the sheer hatred developing towards Bishop Basil is in need of well-expressed oponents.

Thank you, too, Ian. I have the feeling a little logic will go a long way in all this.

Posted by: Marguerite S. | Wednesday, 14 June 2006 at 06:34 PM

I did not intend to add to this ghastrliness...but as a layman in the Diocese of Sourozh for 27 years I am disturbed to see that the legacy of 2 years of anonymous hate web-blogging on Kuraev continues still: when I pass my cursor over "sourozh parishioner for 120 years"[sic], the author of a more than usually nasty offering (and a person who is clearly obsessed with - and knowledgeable- about matters of money in the Cathedral), I discover that this correspondent's e-mail address is "mysourozh@sourozh.org". Now, as I understand it, Sourozh.org is the domain and diocesan website now in the control of the clergy (and possibly close lay associates?) of Archbishop Innokenti. It is difficult then not to wonder if this correspondent is in fact a member of Archbishop Innokenti's clergy. I do sincerely hope I am wrong. It would of course resolve the question if this person had the courage to come clean and reveal his or her identity.

Posted by: patrick palmer | Wednesday, 14 June 2006 at 01:13 PM

The 'defender of the Third Rome' and co. seem to have an indefensible position. Either:
a) They have to accept the Ecumenical Patriarch's judgement of Bishop Basil's appeal and face up to its implications.

Or

b) They must reject the canonical grounds of both the appeal and the Ecumenical Patriarch's response. i.e canons 9, 17 & 28 of the Council of Chalcedon.

Maybe they believe that if authority is vested in a 'Third Rome' Ecumenical Councils become redundant. If so, they have every right to make such a private judgement, but cannot expect Orthodox Christians to take it seriously.

Ian Page.

Posted by: Ian Page | Wednesday, 14 June 2006 at 09:58 AM

"A Russian Orthodox" - strange signature giving that you think that our Moscow patriarchate Church is no more than "dogmatic accretions, which have built up over the ages", and the fact that together with other protestants you would defect from it soon, following defecting bishop.

Thankfully, Our Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox Church has nothing to do with the "vision" you described, Church as "comfortable, ready built nest" where "newcomers" come as "guests" or "visitors", having no rights because the "funds bequeathed to the Church by old émigrés" etc...

As for your emphasis on fiscal matters, your donations were CHARITY, and as being such, "houses and bookshop" were not bought by individuals, but donated to the Moscow Patriarhachate Church. As for the value of the donations themselves - they have never been

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Clam
conflict

web site
conspiracy

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Culture Clash
Club / sub

ecumenology → mention pyramid & "I have the power" Hilario

substantial. Last year, for instance, it was miniscule 30000 pounds or so. It is a fraction of a percent of the funds pledged already by "wealthy newcomers" for the property court case and for building of a new Russian Orthodox Cathedral. I hope these donations will be available as soon as the situation settles and protestants leave to Amphipolis.

We believe in open, true Orthodox approach, where people who come to the Church to pray and not for the "cosiness of the nest", everybody having equal rights before God, equal rights irrespective of their race, immigration status or how much funds they "bequeathed". This is how our life in the Orthodox Church will continue when those who want to defect leave, and in fact this is how we live already in modern Britain.

Culture Clash

Surely, there is something in British life "signed: Russian Orthodox(?)" liked, as he has been in our country for so long, and surely there is some Orthodox traditions he liked too as you called yourself "Orthodox" (even though "linked" but not "funded", as you put it).

Posted by: Surozh parishioner for 120 years | Wednesday, 14 June 2006 at 09:26 AM

I wonder how Bishop Basil and the people around him fished out the old idea of Moscow the third Rome. It was written in the beginning of 16 century soon after the fall of Constantinople when the orthodox were greatly shaken by the fact and looked around for a support. The Third Rome idea was popular during the Tsarist time and it was referred to when the Greeks appealed to Russian Tsars for help.

For 90 years nobody remembered it and the digging it out from the past seems to me a strange and a very skilful way to strengthen Bishop Basil' way.

Posted by: Natalia Kulkova | Wednesday, 14 June 2006 at 07:22 AM

I believe I owe the fact I am alive today to the attitudes nurtured by Metropolitan Anthony and the man he chose to be his successor, Bishop Basil. In failing to support Bishop Basil Moscow has lost a truly compassionate and courageous hierarch. My prayers will always be with him.

Posted by: Marguerite S. | Tuesday, 13 June 2006 at 07:28 PM

I am Russian, Orthodox from birth and a member of the London parish since the 60s. I have been privileged to know Metropolitan Anthony for all those years until he left us and can, therefore, speak of his feelings based on knowledge, rather than conjecture, as is the case in many of the contributors to this debate.

Metropolitan Anthony had built up the Surozh Diocese out of almost nothing. Everything that exists now, is the result of his lifetime's hard work and the support of the original Orthodox community, which included Russian emigres, their descendants, English converts, Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians, Georgians, Orthodox Indians and Americans and Ethiopians. He built a diocese of inclusion and love, not of narrow nationalistic boundaries and dislike of foreigners.

He was, indeed a great advocate of communion with the Mother Church, but unity based on respect and autonomy, not on domination by the central bureaucracy and the Patriarchate.

Metropolitan Anthony saw the duty of the Bishop and Clergy as serving the community, not of ruling it, as is often the case in Moscow.

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He professed a faith, which went to the true teachings of Orthodoxy and Christianity, not the many dogmatic accretions, which have built up over the ages. As one example, he insisted on baby girls being brought into the Sanctuary at Baptism, since nothing in the teachings of the Church actually prohibits it.

Everything that exists in Surozh - the Cathedral, the Parish Hall, the houses, the bookshop, etc. was created and bought, paid for by the efforts of the original members of the diocese, by the funds bequeathed to the Church by old emigres and the many non-Orthodox friends and admirers of Metropolitan Anthony. This was done in love, by people who wished to follow and help build Metropolitan Anthony's vision of a non-dogmatic, open Russian Orthodox Church, true to the real teachings of Orthodoxy.

While the Surozh Diocese was certainly linked to the Mother Church, it had not been created by it, it was not funded by it, its buildings were not paid for by the Patriarchate.

Metropolitan Anthony, the Clergy and the original diocesan community welcomed with open arms the newly arriving Russian visitors and new parishioners. All were welcome to join the existing community with its established tradition of open-mindedness and inclusiveness. Many of the newcomers had and do respect, that they join an ongoing tradition of a Russian Orthodox Church in England with a mixed community of worshipers. A relatively small number wish to change everything to their own liking. They are quite happy to enjoy the many benefits of the British way of life (why else settle here?), but in religion - we want it done our way, never mind the rest. Like a cuckoo they have found a comfortable, ready built nest and proceed to mould it to their own liking, no matter if the original builders are expelled in the process.

Posted by: A Russian Orthodox | Tuesday, 13 June 2006 at 06:55 PM

Wolfson: I think it's a good idea when discussions are held on the internet to restrict matters to the argument itself, and not to make inferences concerning another's character. It tends to detract from the actual content.

This weblog is an opportunity for people to discuss various topics pertinent to the Diocese of Surozh. Such people may be of any religious faith and, indeed, geographically located in any of the many time zones to be found on this planet.

13 Culture Clash

Posted by: Alex Koyama | Tuesday, 13 June 2006 at 11:01 AM

How strange that Ruth Gledhill can write "the beautiful cathedral in Ennismore Gardens, owned by a trust which makes no reference to Moscow but does name Bishop Basil as a trustee."

A search on the website of the Charity Commissioners clearly contradicts this statement. Of the three registered charities related to Sourozh there is the "Russian Orthodox Diocese of Sourozh" (Reg.No. 277508) and "Trust Property in Connection with the Patriarchal Russian Orthodox Parish in London" (Reg.No. 254025, the third relates to a drug user rehabilitation project.

It is bizzare that the Basilites should claim that 'Russian' or 'Patriachal' are not mentioned. Even stranger that the Diocesan Secretary has sent a letter to Diocesan Assembly members saying that the long scheduled meeting this coming Saturday is invalid (a view which Archbishop Innokenty clearly does not share) and has called for a separate meeting in an hotel for July. Interestingly on the agenda there is an item for 'renaming' of the charitable trust - one guesses the words 'Russian' and 'Patriarchal' are targetted for omission!

Posted by: Seb Richards | Tuesday, 13 June 2006 at 10:16 AM

Confusing though it is, the Russian Church Outside Russia has not actually united with the Moscow Patriarchate but the 20 or so Bishops in San Francisco have signed a declaration of readiness to unite when one or two matters have been cleared up. This is certainly a miracle and a matter for rejoicing but it might take some time still.

Moreover, they may well keep their own administration, while being in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate.. This would mean that their position would be, as far as I can understand exactly the same as that of the NEW diocese under Bishop Basil. My information comes from the magazine of the monastery of Brookwood and I should so much like correction if I have misunderstood it This proposed example of goodwill with a parallel administration, a common Russian tradition and communion is surely an important one but I would welcome comments.

Posted by: Vaïla Cochrane again | Monday, 12 June 2006 at 11:13 PM

Sorry for my bad english I am French : We must read St. Paul, The Church is anchored in a country . Consequently it seems for me wise to follow a line respecting the Orthodox tradition of faith and the russian tradition heritage but in the Country and for the people living in this Country i.e Great Britain whatever the origin of the people are. As a personal testimony I rode the books of Métropolitain Antoine Bloom it helped me in my faith and I am sure that it is true for many other people. You must keep this heritage and I am sure that it will be possible to do it with the Patriarchat of Constantinople which has no political or imperialist goal. The Tension you are leaving is a wound for all Christian and I pray for your Church.

Posted by: François COUSIN | Monday, 12 June 2006 at 09:53 PM

to a "Defender of Third Rome"

I am not middle class
I am not English (or Russian)
I am not a mason, a protestant or a heretic
I am under 35
I pray to the Saints of Russia (and Greece and old Britain...)

and yet I am welcomed with love and joy by those you clearly hate.

May the Lord open your eyes and heart, and forgive you for demonstrating your hardness and cruelty in public. If you personally have had a bad experience then perhaps you should reflect upon it in prayer, rather than blame others?

Glory to God for all things,

a sinner.

Posted by: K.S. | Monday, 12 June 2006 at 07:37 PM

Thanks to the timing of his letter at least we all know now how Alex Koyama spend last Sunday while we all have been in the Church celebrating Pentecost...

It is bizarre how some people hijacked the memory of our Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Antony for their own political needs, quoting him out of context and even criticising his life work. What these people cannot do though - is to change his life work achievements, the fact that he remained dedicated to Russian Church and Moscow Patriarchate throughout his life to the end of his days.

As for the negative role of Constantinople in the matter of unity of Orthodox Churches, nobody may write more clearly than Metropolitan Antony himself in Tserkovny Vestnik, issue 23, 2002 "... it is necessary for the various national churches to recognise their unity and want their unity to be manifested by being members of the same organisation. So far this has been impossible. It has been impossible because Constantinople claims to be almost a papacy and that it must have authority over everyone else..."

I personally seriously doubt any true Russian Orthodox Christian will suddenly betray his Mother Church and convert to the "papacy of Constantinople" as our late Vladyko Antony

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Constantinople

Constantinople
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used to call it. We will remain true to Vladyko Antony and always remember his life's work and in particular his loyalty to our Mother Church to the end of his days. His loyalty should be (and I am sure will be) example to us all.

Posted by: wolfson | Monday, 12 June 2006 at 01:27 PM

Attack on Vladyka Anthony and his style of work as the head of Russian Orthodox diocese of Sourozh continues. I was surprised to hear Basil of Amphipolis (formerly known as Bishop Basil of Sergievo) says 'VERA I VEK', BBC Russian, THE ONLY REASON VLADYKA ANTHONY DID NOT DEFECT TO CONSTANTINOPLE is that he was tired and lost the energy to carry it out (!!!!), (full text of the interview is available on the net):

BBC: Now, don't you think, vladkyo Vasili, that by postponing this decision, you, both of you, I mean vladkya Antonii and yourself actually brought this disaster on the diocese?

BASIL: I am afraid I have to agree with you. The decision which has been taken now should have been taken much earlier. It should have been taken by Metropolitan Anthony, but in his last years he simply lost the energy to carry it out. He was ill, he was tired, and he let things just drag on, and we found ourselves then in a very weak position with his death.

Even more, we are hearing on BBC even DOUBTS ABOUT THE CHARACTER of a great man along the lines that HE USED SAY PUBLICLY ONE THING AND PRIVATELY ANOTHER !!!!

BBC: And when Vladyka Anthony understood there was a danger that this tradition and this life would be undermined, did he ever have thoughts of leaving the Moscow Patriarchate?

BASIL: Well, I can tell you personally, that he certainly thought of it and was very worried about what the future would hold for the diocese. He did think of leaving. It is hard to believe, because in his public statements, of course, he was always very positive about staying, but in his private statements he was really quite nervous.

I wonder what Vladyko Anthony would say to those who want to turn around his life work, saying that his life time loyalty to Moscow Patriarchate was due to his "tiredness" and that really lived double life saying in public writing things he really did not believe in. Was it really necessary to wheel out all these unsightly arguments to justify defection to Constantinople?

Posted by: Sourozh parishioner | Monday, 12 June 2006 at 12:57 PM

IT'S ENOUGH...

I'm of russian descent living since 12 years in Western-Europe and integrated in the orthodox church here. Those who have studied some theoloy and more special ecclesiology have understood and know well that the orthodox diaspora belongs to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and only to it. It's enough! When shall the Moscow Patriarchate, the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Serbians and Antiochians leave the orthodox diaspora. It's really time! We need more than ever an integrated orthodox church in Western Europe. Me too I had to learn german, english and french to be able to communicate in a proper way in this area of the world. We don't need priests and bishops who were dropped here and speak only romanian, russian, greek. We need people who are able to take care in their pastoral duties of the the orthodox faithful of their region.

Please, let us all ask metropolitan Kyril of Smolensk to make only trouble in his homecountry!! He has nothing to do with Western Europe.

I know I'm hard. But we must, in order to find a solution.

We must all help bishop Basil and the Ecumenical Patriarchate to go in this way...

Evgenij Syrov,
Mannheim

Posted by: Evgenij Syrov | Monday, 12 June 2006 at 11:56 AM

"Slap in the face indeed". But why it has been described as the "slap in the face to Moscow"? Moscow Patriarchy, being the centre of the Orthodox Christian World, enjoys unprecedented growth in Parishioners worldwide.

Yet in London and UK, Russian Tradition Christians both or Russian and non-Russian descent while outnumbering other parishioners 50 to 1, will loose most of their parishes: "possibly as many as two-thirds of the Russian parishes are expected to defect to Constantinople" as Ruth wrote in her article.

So I would agree, the whole Basil's saga is disgraceful, but it is slap in the face to LONDON, not Moscow.

Posted by: L. D. Ignatieff | Monday, 12 June 2006 at 07:00 AM

It is indeed a wonderful sign of the Holy Spirit, whose day this is, that the Ecumenical Patriarch has blessed Bishop Basil's wise decision to leave behind the new imperialists of Moscow. Orthodoxy in Western Europe is not about bolstering the old regimes who live in the old pre-modernist world; it is about inculturation into the new post-modernist world, a world of beauty and fragility where we all live and share responsibility together for God's creation. A true Orthodoxy for the twenty-first century will look outwards, not inwards. It will look to the presence of the Holy Spirit in all things. It will engage with other faiths with discernment. It will

Constantinople

Ecumenical World-views

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inspire a spiritually starved world with the joy of the Risen Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It will engage with the tremendous spiritual energy which exists beneath the surface of the modern world, which cries out to be heard, which groans with travail like the whole of Creation. Orthodoxy is not about preserving hierarchies, old calendars and rituals, about preserving - or rather returning to - a pre-Modernist outlook. It is not about putting our heads in the sand and saying we know everything already. Orthodoxy is the radical message of Christ interpreted through the Holy Spirit **blowing wheresoever she wills**. In other words, Orthodoxy is a dynamic faith moving forward into the new millenium, into new encounters, new meetings, new directions.

This is the hope that I feel from the Ecumenical Patriarch's decision to bless Bishop Basil's brave, wise and necessary decision.

Posted by: Andrew Morris | Monday, 12 June 2006 at 12:33 AM

I'm glad to hear that Bishop Basil's appeal has accepted. I don't imagine that this signals the end of conflict and squabbling, but it does offer an exit route for those within the current Diocese of Sourozh unhappy about the direction and management style of the Moscow Patriarchate. I suggest they be allowed to leave as swiftly as possible. Let them take the property with them. Is Moscow really not able to make up the shortfall? If this break is achieved with the minimum of animosity or recrimination, it's all the easier for cordial relations and possible rapprochement to occur within the future.

Defender of Third Rome: I think you make some valid points amidst your comments, yet I feel some some corrections should be offered.

No Orthodox church has been built in Clapham. Rather, an Orthodox community has been founded that celebrates in an Anglican church. It's the only other Orthodox community under Sourozh in London to my knowledge and therefore your extrapolation from this sole example that Sourozh "only builds churches in the nice areas of London" is somewhat faulted. I very much wish that similar communities are established elsewhere in London. I imagine Greek, Syrian and other Orthodox churches to be more than welcoming if the trip to Knightsbridge or Clapham proves inconvenient on a given day.

As to your use of such terms as "totalitarian", "authoritarian" and against "free speech". Well, I've no idea whether the now Bishop of Amphipolis has behaved in such a manner or not, but I must say that my historical confidence in Russian institutions to practise the opposite is rather low. If the behaviour of Moscow during this period has been to indicate its openness and transparency (never mind its Christian spirit), it has been a significant PR failure.

And remember:

"A rabbi whose congregation is not trying to get rid of him is not a rabbi. A rabbi who lets them is not a man.

Geyt gezunterhey!

Posted by: Alex Koyama | Sunday, 11 June 2006 at 12:27 PM

All this talk of jurisdictions and canonical release is so much nonsense really, where a bishop is there let the people be. **We are not a hierarchical Church** but it seems few priests are willing to stick their necks out to continue teaching this. I am horribly disappointed that in this day of mass communications all we present is a worldly scrabble for power that intrinsically denies Christ's ecclesiology. The "Orthodox" church is a getting to be a bad joke, pretending that nothing has changed in it, that it is the true continuation of the Apostolic church when nothing could be further from the truth. It has changed, and for the worst. The Council of Moscow, under the last true Patriarch of Moscow, was also the last genuine Russian Orthodox council. The Church is not hierarchical, a synod of bishops is not the highest authority in the Church, the EP is not the principle of unity proving canonicity, the MP is not the Great Lord and Father of the Russian Orthodox, which is the current teaching from those bishops who would control the Church's destiny.

All in all the article below is a good read, but especially note the one problem that is at the heart of this dispute, and which both the Stalin organised MP and the EP have no interest in promoting intent as they are in furthering their own authority over the churches.

"In the UK the distinct and dynamic witness of Orthodoxy was not a matter of numbers, but a matter of spiritual integrity, integrity manifested both in the voice of Orthodoxy to the society at large and in the internal life of the diocese led by Metropolitan Anthony. There was a period during which his views and words were sought out in the same way as the views and words of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Church of England) and the Archbishop of Westminster (Roman Catholic), although Metropolitan Anthony's flock, by comparison, was numerically a tiny one. In ordering the life of his diocese, Metropolitan Anthony was guided by the Church of Russia's Moscow Council of 1917-1918. In accordance with the vision and norms of this Council, clergy and laity were seen as collaborators of the bishop, and not as the bishop's "subjects."

UK diocesan crisis tests Church's mission to all, by Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky

<http://www.oca.org/News.asp?ID=1013&SID=19>

Posted by: Myrrh | Sunday, 11 June 2006 at 12:16 PM

I am a third generation Russian, my family has always had a very close link with the Russian Church. My great uncle Nicolas Zernoff was a theologian of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The current conflict within the Russian Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom has little to do with jurisdictions: the main problem is Bishop Basil's very poor leadership. Since Bishop Basil has been in charge of our parish there has been one conflict after another.

It is extremely odd that both in religious and cultural matters an American Bishop and a British Professor Simon Franklin of Cambridge University are representing the interests of the Russian community in the United Kingdom. In both areas their leadership, has in my view, been, controversial and they have taken actions many members of the Russian community consider to be mistaken. For instance more than 500 people signed a petition against the sale of Pushkin House and they still went ahead with it. No attempt was made to see whether a fund raising campaign or a application to the Heritage fund would be successful. New directors were appointed to the board of Forum Houses the Charitable company which owned Pushkin House only on condition that they supported the sale. I would recommend that you do some research into why Bishop Basil and Professor Franklin decided to proceed with the sale of Pushkin House on the 50th anniversary of the club which my grandmother founded.

I feel that their actions have been high handed to say the least.

I feel that Russians are capable of, and should be representing themselves in cultural and religious matters.

It is extraordinary that Bishop Basil has chosen a moment when parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church should be celebrating the reunification of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile with the Moscow Patriarchate to announce his decision to move to another jurisdiction.

It is my submission that should there be a referendum or a petition, there would be massive support for Bishop Basil's and Professor Franklin's resignation.

Yours sincerely,

Nicolas Kullmann

Posted by: Nicolas Kullmann | Saturday, 10 June 2006 at 09:41 PM

Membership of this diocese is a way to be an English Orthodox without sacrificing liberty of conscience or behaviour. We hope it won't be a chic little club but open to all as the most beautiful and ancient of all liturgies conveying the fullness of the faith. I don't believe most people would think the disciplines we try to keep are contemptible or the services so very short, though not of Athonite severity.

Posted by: vaila Cochrane | Saturday, 10 June 2006 at 07:00 PM

It is regrettable that the Patriarch of Constantinople has taken this action of legitimizing the claims of Bishop Basil. The Patriarch does not know the history behind this disagreement which has been going on for many years. Bishop Basil and his supporters have always wanted their own 'British Church', free from things Russian and 'foreign'. Unfortunately this group has always had the support of the Russians who came here escaping the Russian Revolution and who have always looked down on their 'uneducated and peasant' compatriots who have come here during the past ten years. Bishop Basil is supposed to represent the unity of the Church, instead he had become a symbol of disunity, and he has put his personal ambitions above that of the unity of Christ's church. The Russian Orthodox faithful who have come to the country now are faced with a dilemma: should they continue their allegiance to the Patriarch of Moscow and find themselves eventually without a church to worship in, or should they follow a bishop who has severed his links with their own patriarch and country? This is a great tragedy for Orthodoxy.

Posted by: has caused nicholas gavrillov | Saturday, 10 June 2006 at 05:47 PM

It is a great shame that this split, instigated by a minority who follow a liberal protestant orthodox tradition, has happened.

We now have three forms of Russian Orthodoxy

Two which practice the traditions of Third Rome and one which is now part of a church lead by an 'Eastern Pope'

The false one

Lead by a totalitarian renegade bishop who used to be a Bishop in the Moscow Patriarchate.

This so called 'parish' displays the following characteristics:

It is dominated by ex Protestants who still wish to carry on their old traditions

It is controlling and authoritarian

It is de-facto

It bans free speech

It attacks 'Holy men' with rude comments and has no respect

It has no understanding of the 'Saints of Russia'

It is anti new émigrés

It is unchristian towards new émigrés

It is like a sweet shop – believing that you can pick and mix orthodox traditions

clay

It believes that Orthodoxy is like DIY – you can do it yourself

It is a 'middle class social club'

It only builds churches in the nice areas of London: where there are rich Guardian reading supporters e.g. Clapham

It is old – the average age of supporters must be in the mid 50's and it is not welcoming to the young

It is a cultural 'Ghetto' full of English and Old Russians

It is not welcoming to those who are not of the same nationality or class

It has a Bishop who only looks after a fraction of its flock

It is best friends with the protestant churches

Class

One has to ask will this Church soon have women and gay priests? Will there be funny handshakes in church? Will this church soon become part of the Church of England? (when Bishop Basil gets bored of Constantinople)

Just remember

'Bishop Basil can get rid of the head of the body but cannot get rid of the body you are the body.'

Do not give in to these so called 'Christians' who do not care for any but their own kin.

Posted by: A Defender of Third Rome | Saturday, 10 June 2006 at 05:06 PM

Two corrections:

(1) The Archdiocese of Thyateira has at least six parishes of Russian tradition. As well as Bath there are parishes in Bristol (where the Russian tradition has been transmitted through the Polish Orthodox Church), Sheffield, and three Belarusan parishes in London, Wolverhampton and Stoke-on-Trent.

(2) The Ecumenical Patriarchate also has a number of Ukrainian parishes in Britain, with their own Bishop (based in London) and about seven priests.

Posted by: Archimandrite Kyril | Saturday, 10 June 2006 at 03:51 PM

The Ecumenical Patriarchate's move opens an avenue of virtue. There will now be more freedom and greater mutual respect among the orthodox in the EU.

The late Bishop Anthony's vision will be fulfilled: European Orthodox now have the blessing to live and grow on their own, as they deserve, in respectful connection with all orthodox diasporas (not to mention other christians, other faithful, other non-faithful; the world!).

Bishop Basil showed courage and wisdom; Faith, in short. Many are grateful, and there will be more to come.

Posted by: smk | Saturday, 10 June 2006 at 03:43 PM

God is great and He is looking after this flock of Orthodox worshippers in Great Britain and Ireland.

Now it is time for the Moscow Patriarchate to act graciously, fairly and truthfully under the Will of God.

Posted by: An Orthodox Christian | Saturday, 10 June 2006 at 10:49 AM

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