

Philanthropy and Social Compassion In Eastern Orthodox Tradition



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Edited by Matthew J. Pereira.

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Edited by

Matthew J. Pereira

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President's Preface

The papers in this volume derive from the Second Annual Conference of the *Sophia Institute*, a research forum dedicated to issues of concern for the Eastern Orthodox Church. Fellows of the Institute and other invited members have gathered annually in New York, for several years past, to consider a general theme of significance, and consider how a faithful attention to deep Orthodox traditions can be correlated to issues that remain of enduring social import, and often enduring problematic. This gathering of scholars to speak for, and out of, Orthodoxy's old wisdom is one of the chief reasons for the existence and continuance of the *Sophia Institute*. Just as the Journal *Put* became a voice for the Russian Paris Exiles of the Soviet era, and achieved accomplishments beyond its modest resources, so too the small beginnings of a formal gathering of Orthodox intelligentsia in the New World may be expected to produce an impressive harvest in due time; in God's *Kairos*. The *Sophia Institute* exists to put these young (mainly so) Orthodox thinkers together, and to fashion a habit of consensual approach to major issues that address ecclesial traditions in an age of unprecedented change. The results of the first conference, addressing Orthodoxy and the issue of women's ministry in the Church, appeared in 2009 from Theotokos Press, New York (the imprint of the Sophia Institute), edited by J M Lasser, and entitled 'Women in the Orthodox Church: Past Roles, Future Paradigms.' This present volume, ably edited by Matthew Pereira, and with editorial assistance from Amy Barbour, continues the series 'Studies in Orthodox Theology' with select papers from the Sophia Conference of December 2009; one dedicated to the theme of Philanthropy.

The scholars approached the concept from a variety of angles: covering many aspects of historical as well as contemporary interest. The resulting synthesis brings together a deep overview of how Orthodoxy thinks about these things. The Western Churches have, over this past century, developed significant avenues of thought towards divine and human philanthropy; some of which have gained wide currency: to take Liberation Theology as one prominent example. The

West's experience in creating a liberationist perspective on matters of social and religious justice has been helped along by a (generally) favorable attitude to the potential of Marxist analysis for aiding Christian reflection. The experience of the Christian East, in the same period, on the other hand, has left it with a highly jaundiced view of the credibility, intellectual or otherwise, of Marxist systems. Too many of Orthodoxy's own intellectuals had 'too close an encounter' with Marxist principles in the course of the 20th century to allow liberationism anything like a similar intellectual underpinning in Eastern Christian thought. Several commentators have noticed how Orthodoxy, as a result, does not have a discretely packaged 'social theory' (comparable, let us say, to the extensive range of social-theological documents produced by the Roman Catholic tradition in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries). But if it does not have a detailed social dossier, Eastern Orthodoxy certainly has a 'way of thinking' about such central matters; for they are fundamental to the Evangelical *Kerygma*.

In this volume, several strands of that complex 'way of thinking' are brought together. A typical stress, so it seems to me, is that Orthodoxy will insist, time and again, that human philanthropy cannot be separated from the Divine Philanthropy that inspires, underpins, and models it. The order of two parts of the syntax is important: 'Love the Lord God with your whole heart and soul, and love your neighbour as yourself.' The Divine Philanthropy of the Economy of Salvation, is the model for the energy (*energeia*) of compassion among men and women inspired by Christ. For the Orthodox, it is the *Charis*, the grace, of the risen Lord operative in the Church; an energy of the Holy Spirit making up the Body. To that extent, the exercise of love, the existence of a powerful and central dynamic of compassion in the daily (as well as the international) affairs of the Church, so it seems to me, is rightly to be understood as one of the 'essential marks of the Church' (*Notae ecclesiae*). We have in the past given great stress to the 'four marks' of ecclesiality: 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic.' Perhaps we ought to add in a fifth today: that the Church is simply not Church, if it is not shining and radiant with Christ's own mercy and compassion in the otherwise so-cold world of Man's inhumanity to Man.

A common theme of many of the papers is that Philanthropy in Orthodox culture is not merely an ethical or a societal phenomenon: rather that it is part of the great *Mysterion* of Christ's presence in the world. Orthodoxy has, for centuries, resisted Augustine's sharp categories of the distinctions between nature and grace; seeing the 'world' not as merely some 'natural' order parallel with a divine blessing: but more as a sacramental reality that is intrinsically graced, holy, infallibly permeated with divine blessing. Not surprisingly, there is much stress here that Philanthropy is not first and foremost a *desideratum* of social polity, but more in the domain of a deep creation blessing: part of the Kingdom, both here and in the age to come. Philanthropy is thus seen as a highly charged Eschatological reality: an aspect of the matter that, possibly, has not been so far sufficiently addressed in other theologies of social compassion. From these papers there also emerges a strong, and again distinctively Orthodox, insistence that Philanthropy cannot be separated from the Altar. It is a Eucharistic mystery just as the Church itself is.

I have been instructed, moved and inspired by this collection of papers from such a range of Orthodox thinkers and practitioners. Our book is not the last word on the subject: but it is a splendid beginning; and if it inspires someone to make a more profound and extensive monograph dedicated to the theme, offering the Eastern Church at this important time of rebuilding and reconsideration of its social role (in an East that labours to repair so much infra-structural damage, and a West that labours to shine out from the bushel-measure of so much secularism) we will have accomplished more than we set out to do. In the meantime this volume stands as a small witness to the most pressing question: How does Christian Philanthropy articulate itself in Orthodox eyes?

Prof. Fr. John A McGuckin.
President of the Sophia Institute.

New York.

Nov. 1st 2010. Feast of Sts. Cosmas and Damien. Unmercenary Healers.

Editor's Preface

The essays in this collection were delivered at the Second Annual Conference of the *Sophia Institute*, convened at Union Theological Seminary in New York City on the 4th of December 2009. The central theme of the conference was philanthropy and social compassion within the Eastern Orthodox Tradition. The breadth of historical and contemporary concerns addressed within this volume, cogently articulated from representatives among the Orthodox laity, Orthodox clergy, scholars situated within other traditions in Christianity and leading academics in the field of Christian studies, has effectively given us a modern day *florilegium*, that is a vibrant bouquet of flowers as it were, from which to pick and choose for our edification and instruction. A number of the essays in this collection, on account of their breadth and range of critical engagement, evade conveniently fitting into the somewhat artificial categories of scholarship, such as historical, contemporary, theoretical or practical oriented studies. Much of the scholarship represented in this collection brings historical analyses to bear on contemporary concerns. Furthermore, many of the essays in this volume effectively blend together theoretical reflection with practical social engagement. For the sake of an expedient orientation towards the diverse materials represented in this volume, the essays were grouped together in a broadly conceived organizational manner.

In this second volume of *Studies in Orthodox Theology* from the *Sophia Institute*, the essays are presented, roughly speaking, in chronological groupings rather than strict chronological order. The first grouping of essays covers theologians, pivotal issues and key movements within the period of Late Antiquity. There are two studies, deservedly so, related to the master rhetorician St. John Chrysostom. In an essay titled, "St. John Chrysostom and Social Parasites," Paul Blowers, past president of the North American Patristics Society, analyzes Chrysostom's rhetorical construction and reimagining of social parasites in view of Christian society in the Late Roman Empire. In the second essay on Chrysostom, Theodor Damian provides an

assessment of Chrysostom's teachings on loving the neighbor. Damian concludes that Chrysostom himself provides the pedagogical exemplar for authentic love. Susan R. Holman, undoubtedly one of the pre-eminent scholars on social compassion in Late Antiquity, provocatively examines various paradigms for bridging the conceptual gap between ancient material, such as ancient texts and contemporary social praxis. Jill Gather's study on philanthropy in the Early Syrian Fathers aptly assesses the historical chronicles of Theodoret of Cyrrihus, Palladius and Sozomen, along with Syrian monastic sources in order to demonstrate the centrality of loving humanity as a means towards uniting faithful monks with the Triune God. In his essay, John A. McGuckin, president of the *Sophia Institute* and a leading scholar in Orthodox studies, argues that the Byzantines promoted philanthropy as a central theological concept through participation in the Liturgy and the establishment of hospitals. In her analysis of Gregory Nazianzen's *Oration 14 (On the Love of the Poor)*, Vicki Petrakis concludes that Gregory's rhetoric demonstrates the inextricable relationship between *theosis* and *philanthropia* as essential components within the Triune economy of salvation.

Three studies in this collection, to one extent or another, provide analysis of the role and status of women within the Orthodox tradition, an issue largely discussed during the First Annual Conference of the *Sophia Institute* in December of 2008, but nonetheless related to the broader issue of philanthropy as conceived within the context of loving and building up one another within the Church. In the first of these studies, Eftychios Phil Eftychiadis offers a historical reassessment of the ordination of deaconesses that provides the foundation for ethical praxis grounded both in tradition and theology. Antonia Atanassova's provocative study, the second essay that addresses the role of women in Orthodoxy, explores the manner by which Mary the Theotokos provides an archetypal spiritual model for the Empress Pulcheria, ascetic women and their male counterparts. The third essay related to women in Orthodoxy, authored by V.K. McCarty, argues that the historical evidence suggests Byzantine empresses made significant contributions to society in a manner that largely reflects the feminine embodiment of philanthropy.

This volume contains two historical essays that provide excellent assessments of modern exemplars of Orthodox social engagement. In the first of these two essays, Scott M. Kenworthy examines Orthodox social engagement as exemplified in the Holy Trinity – St. Sergius Lavra. In the second essay, Natalia Ermolaev’s study on Elizaveta Iurievna Skobtsova (a.k.a. Mother Maria) persuasively argues that Mother Maria’s understanding of the Mother of God significantly contoured her praxis and shaped her broader Orthodox social vision. Both of these essays provide substantial evidence that counters popular misconceptions of Orthodox monasticism as inherently disengaged from the world and society. On the contrary, Kenworthy and Ermolaev’s historical analysis suggest that modern disciples of the Orthodox monastic vocation are compelled to engage society on behalf of Christ and the Mother of God.

Other essays in this collection are primarily concerned with present day issues related to modern Orthodoxy and philanthropy broadly conceived. The majority of essays within this grouping begin with theoretical analysis in order to substantiate a reevaluation of Orthodox theory and praxis in contemporary society. Edward Epsen argues that a proper understanding of the *oikonomia* or economies of God and humanity illuminates the authentic nature of charity. In a thought provoking essay, Andrei I. Holodny, who serves currently as the Chief of Neuroradiology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, examines contemporary theological and ethical issues from both the perspective of an Orthodox theologian and medical doctor. This volume contains two essays that address the relationship between the concept of human rights and the Orthodox tradition. In the first of these two essays, after assessing perennial issues embedded within the reiteration of secular notions related to human rights, Antonios Kireopoulos argues for the constructive appropriation and promotion of human rights in a manner that faithfully and creatively reflects the Orthodox tradition. In the second essay, Sergey Trostyanskiy provides a constructive interpretation of the Russian Orthodox Church teachings on the modern notion of human rights. Trostyanskiy concludes that a careful reading of the Russian Orthodox Church’s position, despite

ecclesial warnings against subverting the Gospel with innovative secular teachings, ultimately demonstrates compatibility between the concept of human rights and Russian Orthodox theory and practice.

Three essays in this volume, broadly speaking, examine the constructive interrelationship between the Liturgy, the Eucharist and Orthodox praxis. These essays collectively argue that Orthodox praxis is grounded in the liturgical and the Eucharistic life of the Church. In the first of these three essays, David J. Dunn examines the relationship between the Eucharist and the Kingdom of God, concluding that in the Eucharist the faithful participate in the Kingdom of God inasmuch as they recognize that Eucharistic worthiness is bound up, at least to some notable degree, with neighborly love. In the second essay, Daniel Munteanu evaluates the efficacy of ecumenical diaconical work within the context of the Liturgy and the Church. Munteanu's argument, which is largely based on theological analysis, advances a robust critical appreciation for the promise of diaconical work. Teva Regule reaches conclusions that are largely compatible with Dunn and Munteanu. Of note, Regule's assessment of the interrelationship between the Liturgy and *philanthropia* ends with practical suggestions that strive to provide a fuller expression of *diakonia* within the Orthodox liturgical celebration. Following these three essays, Anne Mitsakos Bezzerides provides an assessment of educational theory and practices related to teaching youth about loving and serving their neighbors. In her essay, Bezzerides calls for a critical reevaluation of pedagogical methodology as it pertains to educating Orthodox youth in manner that faithfully reflects the Christian tradition.

The concluding two essays in this volume are distinctively reflective in their tone and presentation, and as such, provide us with edifying glimpses into modern Orthodoxy in action. In an inspirational and instructive essay, Julia Demaree-Raboteau, who is currently assistant director of the Emmaus House, narrates the story of Father David Kirk's ministry of living with the poor at the Emmaus House in Harlem, New York City. In the second essay, Sue Lane Talley, who currently serves as Director of the Music Program at Nyack College,

offers a thoughtfully engaging reflection on her activities within an international Orthodox music ministry.

This volume provides a wide range of approaches for assessing, reevaluating and addressing the Christian mandate to engage the world with the love of God. This volume, if nothing else, demonstrates that Orthodox Christians earnestly continue to reflect upon philanthropy, that non-negotiable Christian virtue most perfectly embodied in Jesus Christ, the eternal Lover of humanity. On the one hand, this volume contains essays from some of the foremost scholars in the field of Christianity; on the other hand, this collection contains reflections from Orthodox practitioners who remain on the ground engaging the world with the love of Christ. The breadth of essays within this collection demonstrates an underlying refusal to divorce scholarship from engagement, tradition and history from contemporary issues, and ultimately Orthodox theory from Orthodox praxis. These essays suggest that the coalescing together of theology and practice, tradition and contemporary action, Christian love of God with Christian love of humanity, effectively infuses vitality within the Orthodox Church.

Matthew J. Pereira

St. John Chrysostom on Social Parasites

Paul M. Blowers

Greco-Roman comic playwrights and their audiences loved the stock character of the social parasite, a figure on the one hand lampooned for his relentless sponging, flattery,¹ and ingratiating antics, but on the other hand endearing for his sheer bravado in cheating all the conventions of friendship, patronage, and the protocols of class hierarchy in ancient society. While originally the name “*parasite*” was applied to the assistants and dinner companions of priests in Greek temples, the label took on wholly different nuances in the theater.²

Foreshadowed in some of the beggars in Homeric poetry, the parasite first shows up in earnest as a comical character in the Sicilian dramatist Epicharmus (late sixth and early fifth century BCE), who is often considered the pioneer of ancient comedy relating to good manners and table etiquette. In his comic play entitled *Hope or Wealth* the parasite appears onstage as the quintessential freeloader, and speaks up for himself:

I sup with any one who likes, if he
Has only the good sense to invite me;
And with each man who makes a marriage feast,
Whether I'm invited or not, and there I am witty;
There I make others laugh, and there I praise
The host, who gives the feast. And if by chance
Any one dares to say a word against the host,
I arm myself for contest, and overwhelm him.

¹ The character of the parasite often overlaps with that of the “flatterer” (*kolax*), also a stock figure in Greco-Roman comedy. See Athenaeus of Naucratis, *Deipnosophistae*, VI.261F-262A (LCL 224: 176-8).

² On this transition of meaning, see Athenaeus' long discussion of parasites and flatterers, with abundant textual quotations, in the *Deipnosophistae* VI.234C-262A (LCL 224: 53-178).

Then, eating much and drinking plentifully, I leave
The house. No slave-boy doth attend me;
But I do pick my way with stumbling steps,
Both dark and desolate; and if sometimes
I do the watchmen meet, I swear to them
By all the gods that I have done no wrong;
But they still set on me. At last, well beaten,
I reach my home, and go to sleep on the ground,
And for a while forget my blows and bruises,
While the strong wine retains its sway and lulls me.³

Unwelcome, and yet deftly getting a foot in the door, eating and drinking his life away, a classic sycophant, the parasite also inevitably betrays his underlying poverty and inequality.⁴ Indeed, one of his especially useful satirical functions, in his marginal position, is to epitomize the thin line between social inclusion and exclusion,⁵ a position likely in effective drama to stir a range of audience emotions, from contempt, to blithe or humored approval, to tragic pity. In today's theatrical jargon, the parasite would be an ideal candidate for so-called black comedy.

Given this versatility, it is little wonder that the entertaining persona of the parasite has endured for centuries,⁶ assuming faces not only in the Greek comedies of Eupolis, Alexis, Antiphanes, Menander, and the later Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence,⁷ but again in the early modern

³ Epicharmus, *Hope or Wealth*, ap. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* VI.235F-236B (LCL 224: 62). The translation here is that of Charles Duke Yonge in *The Deipnosophists, or Banquet of the Learned of Athenaeus*, Bohn's Classical Library (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), 1: 372 (slightly altered).

⁴ John Wilkins, *The Boastful Chef: The Discourse of Food in Ancient Greek Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 321.

⁵ For a full study of this dramatic function of the parasite, see Elizabeth Tylawsky, *Saturio's Inheritance: The Greek Ancestry of the Roman Comic Parasite* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

⁶ See Myriam Roman and Anne Tomiche, eds., *Figures du parasite* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2001).

⁷ On the evolution of the parasite as dramatic type in Greek and Roman comedy, see Hans-Günther Nesselrath, art. "Parasite," in Hubert Cancik and Helmut Schneider, eds., *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 10: 522-3; J.C.B. Lowe, "Plautus' Parasites and the Atellan," in Gregor Vogt-Spira ed., *Studien zur vorliterarischen Periode im frühen Rom* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1989), 161-169; J. O. Lofberg, "The Sycophant-Parasite," *Classical Philology* 15 (1920):

and modern periods with the likes of Shakespeare's Falstaff, Molière's *Tartuffe* (1664), Hugo's Thénardier in *Les Misérables* (1862), and much more recently surfacing in the role of Jerry Baskin (Nick Nolte) in the 1986 motion picture *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*. There are no overt references to parasites in the New Testament and earliest Christian literature, though a case has recently been made that Paul has in mind to caricature his Corinthian opponents as parasites in 2 Corinthians 11:20, where he chides the faithful for putting up with those who prey on them.⁸ It has also been argued that the Apostle is taking on the role of a benevolent flatterer in 1 Corinthians in claiming to become all things to all people (1 Cor 9:19-23).⁹ But the parasite reappears much later in patristic homiletic literature, most notably in the late fourth century in John Chrysostom in the East, and a half-century after him, Valerian of Cimiez (Gaul) in the West. In this essay I want to propose that Chrysostom stages the parasite quasi-theatrically in some of his homilies not simply as a familiar stereotype in the real and fictional dinner parties of the wealthy, but as exactly the kind of marginal figure in society who can test a Christian audience's response to poverty and suffering, exploiting once more, like the ancient dramatists, the fine line between revulsion and compassion.

To St. John's preaching I shall return momentarily. But it is important, first, to examine what might have been some of Chrysostom's premier sources in exploiting the portrait of the parasite; and second, to try to establish how the profile of the parasite might have been received more specifically within John's own social and cultural foreground in Late Antiquity. Generally speaking, we can safely assume that any student enjoying the level of classical education obtained by Chrysostom would have been thoroughly familiar with the parasite as a literary and dramatic type. John rarely cites the Greek poets and when he does it

61-72; P.G.McC. Brown, "Menander, Fragments 745 and 746 K-T, Menander's *Kolax*, and Parasites and Flatterers in Greek Comedy," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 92 (1992): 98-107.

⁸ See Larry Welborn, "Paul's Caricature of His Chief Rival as a Pompous Parasite in 2 Corinthians 11.20," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32 (2009): 39-56.

⁹ See Clarence Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychogogy*, Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* 81 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 15-52.

is usually with contempt, not appreciation. There is only one fleeting (and anonymous) quotation from the comedy writer Menander, with no reference to parasites.¹⁰ It is certainly likely, however, that John would have had some familiarity with Lucian of Samosata's bold satire entitled *The Parasite*, a work whose sardonic protagonist, the parasite Simon, skillfully mounts an argument that sponging is an art (*technê parasitikê*) superior to rhetoric and philosophy.¹¹ We can imagine, too, that Chrysostom would have known Plutarch's renowned treatise, from his *Moralia*, on *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend*,¹² a text that had significant influence on pagan and early Christian view of friendship¹³—although Plutarch's target is more the subtle and sophisticated sycophant than the bawdy trickster who is the usual butt of John's criticism.¹⁴ Chrysostom's most likely direct source for the figure of the parasite, however, was his own former teacher, the esteemed rhetorician Libanius of Antioch. Among his *Declamations*, stylized monologues composed for practice-runs by students of rhetoric, are two placed in the mouth of a professional parasite.¹⁵

They are raucously funny and memorable. In the first of them, for example, the parasite delivers up a bombastic lamentation on having lost the opportunity to glut himself at a feast because of an accident involving the horse he had stolen from a hippodrome to ride to his

¹⁰ A quotation from Menander's *Epileptontes* appears in *Hom. in Matt.* 80.4 (PG 58: 729), identified by P.R. Coleman-Norton, "St. Chrysostom's Use of the Greek Poets," *Classical Philology* 27 (1932):216.

¹¹ Full text of *De Parasito* in LCL 130: 236-316. See also the important critical analysis by Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, *Lukians Parasitendialog: Untersuchungen und Kommentar* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1985).

¹² *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur*, in *Plutarchi Moralia*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, ed. W. R. Paton, Johannes Wegehaupt, Max Pohlenz, and Hans Gärtner, *Bibliotheca scriptorum graecorum et romano-teubneriana* (Stuttgart and Leipzig: Teubner, 1993), 97-149.

¹³ See Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Plutarch to Prince Philopappus on How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend," in John T. Fitzgerald, ed., *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 61-79; also David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 98-103.

¹⁴ For Plutarch's warnings against the subtle flatterers, see *Quomodo adulator* 4-6, 50D-52A (ed. Paton et al., *Plutarchi Moralia*, 1: 100-103).

¹⁵ *Declamationes* 28 and 29, ed. Richard Foerster, *Libanii Opera* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1911), 6: 573-610. There is an excellent annotated translation of *Declamation* 28 by D. A. Russell, *Libanius: Imaginary Speeches* (London: Duckworth, 1996), 130-4. Russell notes (p. 10), however, that the Libanian authorship of *Declamation* 29 is not absolutely verified.

host's home. "I have held out against starvation," he boasts, "just long enough to be able to tell you what I have suffered, and then end my life."¹⁶ He proceeds, then, in melodramatic detail to lay the blame on himself for the chain of oversights that led him to miss a good meal.

‘And so I shall depart from the human scene, for my sufferings are beyond human limits. Some are troubled by the loss of money, some have been led to death by the loss of children: these things do not trouble me so much because I have not been so keen on them in the first place; to me the greatest disaster is to be done out of a feast and a meal which is being set up in someone else's house.’¹⁷

The amusement of such a declamation, just like the farcical presentations of parasites in comedic plays, should nevertheless not distract us from the very serious, targeted role they were capable of representing in late ancient society. Let us return to the marginal status of the parasite. Already in Greek and Roman comedy, he provides comic relief precisely because he parodies Mediterranean cultures in which food is in great supply for some and in very short supply for others. He could appear as a poor wretch unable to conceal his desperation, or as an astute professional who could hold his own socially as long as the payoff was fine cuisine. As Cynthia Damon has further demonstrated in her insightful monograph *The Mask of the Parasite*, the parasite in Roman culture symbolized a particular “pathology” in the relation between a patron and one of lesser means looking to that patron for sustenance or other benefits. “The parasite,” Damon notes, “is in fact a conveniently compact personified form of something quite abstract, of a complicated nexus of social irritants including flattery, favoritism, and dependency.”¹⁸ The parasite, in a word, epitomizes and satirizes a whole range of possible abuses of the Roman patronage system.

¹⁶ *Declam.* 28 (ed. Foerster, *Libani Opera* 6: 574), trans. Russell, 131.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 17 (ed. Foerster, *Libani Opera* 6: 582-3), trans. Russell, 133.

¹⁸ *The Mask of the Parasite: A Pathology of Roman Patronage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 7. See also her “Greek Parasites and Roman Patronage,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995): 181-95.

At last we come to John Chrysostom's homiletical perspective on social parasites in his own time. This is not the place to rehearse in detail the socio-economic dynamics underlying John's audiences in Antioch and Constantinople. From what we can reconstruct, they were diversified, and there is ample evidence of the presence not only of the very wealthy, but of persons in the broad economic middle, and many whom Wendy Mayer, in her extensive studies of Chrysostom's audiences, calls the "relative poor," people with limited means but not destitute, who perceived themselves to be poor by comparison with even slightly better off fellow Christians.¹⁹ The foreground of John's preaching was a culture of rivalry and envy, of the constant comparing of lots and the acute consciousness of having and having not.²⁰ If Peter Brown and Richard Finn are correct in their respective assessments, it was a society in which many faced the live prospect of downward mobility.²¹ The fear of at least temporary destitution was real, and a regular reminder of the threat of economic disability was the desperately poor who, in some instances at least, placed themselves strategically at the doors of churches.²²

In such a culture, the parasite effectively served to parody the lavish life —and especially the dinner habits —of the wealthy, people who could afford to have parasites at their tables as the evening entertainment. Chrysostom explicitly repudiates the mutual exploitation of "the more affluent [who] pick out those persons whose laziness has made them victims of hunger, and maintain them as parasites and dogs feeding at the table; they stuff their shameless bellies with the leftovers of these

¹⁹ Pauline Allen, Bronwen Neil, and Wendy Mayer, *Preaching Poverty in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Realities* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlaganstalt, forthcoming), 92-4; also Wendy Mayer, "John Chrysostom: Extraordinary Preacher, Ordinary Audience," in Mary Cunningham and Pauline Allen, eds., *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 123, with citations; and see also Aideen Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 151-70.

²⁰ See my essay "Pity, Empathy, and the Tragic Spectacle of Human Suffering: Exploring the Emotional Culture of Compassion in Late Ancient Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18:1 (2010): 10 - 16.

²¹ See his *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002), 49-50; also Richard Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire: Christian Promotion and Practice* (313-450) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 18-26.

²² Mayer, "John Chrysostom: Extraordinary Preacher, Ordinary Audience," 124-5.

iniquitous banquets and exploit their hosts at will.²³ A generation or so after Chrysostom, the Gallican bishop Valerian of Cimiez similarly censures affluent Christians who, in the name of friendship, invited parasites to their banquets in order to abuse them for entertainment, making a mockery of them by teasing them with sumptuous food and drink.²⁴ Like John, Valerian's primarily indicts the rich hosts, but he is also concerned with the welfare of the parasites themselves, acknowledging that they are unfortunate victims of poverty acting out of desperation to get what they can from society's more privileged:

While this man is eating, his beard gets pulled; while that one is drinking, his chair is pulled out from under him. This fellow eats from wood easily split, that one drinks from a glass, which is easily broken. So great is the urge to laugh!...How great, do you think, are the miseries to which these deeds add up?²⁵

As we move more specifically into Chrysostom's portrait of parasites in his homilies, we must hold in mind the two most basic responses to the character of the parasite inherited within Greco-Roman literary and theatrical culture, revulsion and compassion. From one angle the parasite was an egregious exploiter and self-serving toady. But adjust the profile slightly and he was a victim of the system, a pawn in the deviant designs of the rich to enhance their public reputes and widen their circle of friends. Two of John's homilies are especially apropos here, *Homily 1 on Colossians*, in which he clearly castigates parasites and Christians' association with them, and *Homily 48 on Matthew*, in which he instead broaches the possibility of reaching out to parasites in benevolence and mercy. I will look at these two texts side by side before commenting on how their seemingly disparate responses to parasites might be reconciled.

²³ *Panegyricum in Babylam martyrem et contra Julianum et gentes* (PG 50: 544-545). Translations of quoted texts of John Chrysostom in this essay are my own.

²⁴ Valerian of Cimiez, *Hom.* 10 (PL 52: 722D-725A).

²⁵ *Ibid.* 10.2 (PG 52: 723C-D); trans. George Gantz, *Saint Valerian: Homilies*, Fathers of the Church 17 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1953), 366.

In the first, *Homily 1 on Colossians*, where he is encouraging bonds of spiritual friendship within the community of the church, John confronts his audience with images of two optional tables, or feasts, which the Christian might prospectively attend. The one is an extravagant spread in the presence of the wealthy and powerful, with all the fineries and costly meats and wines. It is a table of mere appearance and of earthly honor.²⁶ It can be imagined also as a thoroughgoing Herodian banquet (cf. Matt 14:6-11), a “theater of Satan” (*theatron satanikon*).²⁷ It is a table of demons (cf. 1 Cor. 10:21), a disgraceful feast of unbridled envy with the “evil eye” all around, the whole affair being shot through with personal and social rivalries.²⁸ But among its most prominent features is the presence of parasites presumably of all varieties—social climbers, hangers-on, flatterers and sycophants, fools and lewd comics—all trying to ingratiate themselves to the host and thus to be fed well.²⁹ The second table, however, is a table set in the company of the poor, the infirm, the alienated, with Christ seated prominently among those with whom he most closely identifies. It is a modest feast, absent of fineries or exquisite foods; but it is also a table of true honor, true freedom, immune from the evil eye of envy and parasitism, and marked by *philanthropia* and by a profoundly spiritual and perduring friendship.³⁰

John’s description of both tables, the one of shame and the other of honor, is couched in a consideration of the nature of true Christian friendship, against the larger backdrop of imminent eschatological judgment. As in certain pagan philosophical discussions, where parasites and flatterers are targeted as sham companions,³¹ and where, in the words of one historian, authentic friendship is “a breathing

²⁶ *Hom. in Col.* 1.4-5 (PG 62: 304-307).

²⁷ *Hom. in Matt.* 48.3, 5 (PG 58: 490, 493).

²⁸ *Hom. in Col.* 1.5-6 (PG 62: 306-308).

²⁹ *Hom. in Col.* 1.4, 6 (PG 62: 305, 308); *Hom. in Matt.* 48.6 (PG 58: 494-495). Cf. also *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 29.5 (PG 61: 247); *ibid.* 34.6 (PG 61: 296); *Hom. in Eutropium eunuchum et patricium* 1.1 (PG 52: 391).

³⁰ *Hom. in Col.* 1.4-6 (PG 62: 304-308).

³¹ As mentioned above (see n. 12), one of the standard pagan texts in Chrysostom’s time would still have been Plutarch’s *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* (*Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur*).

space in a society permeated by a concern about status distinctions,³² Chrysostom assails the utter vanity and superficiality of parasitic friendships, and like Valerian later on, sees an abusive aspect in them as well. In *Homily 48 on Matthew*, he writes:

For how, tell me, will you escape reproach and blame, while your parasite is stuffing himself, as is the dog that stands by you, while Christ appears to not be even as worthy as them? When the parasite receives so much fare for bringing laughter, while Christ gets not the least bit thereof for the Kingdom of Heaven? And while the parasite, on saying something charming, goes away filled, while this man (Christ), who has taught us things that, if we had not learned them, we would have been no better than the dogs, is counted unworthy of even the same treatment as the parasite? ...Cast out the parasites, and make Christ recline for a meal with you. If he partakes of your salt, and of your table, he will be gentle in judging you... And consider, when you are conversing with him, the parasites: What kind of actions do they have to show for? What do they do to profit your household? What do they possibly do to make your meal pleasant? How can their being beaten with sticks and their lewd talk be pleasant? What could be more disgusting than when you strike one who has been created in God's image, and from your insolence to him take enjoyment for yourself, turning your house into a theater, and filling your banquet with stage-players—you who are well-born and free mimicking actors who have shaved their heads for the stage?³³

In these banquet scenarios, in much the same manner as in his *Homilies on the Rich Man and Lazarus*,³⁴ Chrysostom intentionally and artfully plays up the theatricality of the situation. The profile of the

³² Engberg-Pedersen, "Plutarch to Prince Philopappus on How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend," 77.

³³ *Hom in Matt.* 48.6 (PG 58: 494). On the abuses of the pagan theater infecting Christian behavior and etiquette, see also *Hom. in Matt.* 37.6-7 (PG 57: 426-427).

³⁴ See Francine Cardman, "Poverty and Wealth as Theater: John Chrysostom's Homilies on Lazarus and the Rich Man," in Susan Holman, ed., *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 159-75.

parasite includes not just sponging, sycophancy, and sham friendship, but committing all these sins with the virtuosity of an actor, which for patristic writers was well-established as a profession of ill repute. To be in the company of parasites and their patrons, then, is to be caught up in a large-scale stage production that stands in outrageous contrast with the modesty and sobriety of a banquet with Christ in the company of the poor and the diseased.

Further into his *Homily 48 on Matthew*, however, after employing the image of a Herodian banquet to heap scorn on the spectacle of parasitism, John surprises us with a very different angle on parasites and on Christians' response to them. In effect he blurs his images of the two dining tables, with parasites now qualifying among the poor and the humble, for the focus turns abruptly from the buffoonery and entertaining antics of parasites to their desperate state as victims of poverty who need to be provided food like any other of the poor.

Let feeding him be for purposes of loving-kindness (*philanthrôpia*), not cruelty; let it be for mercy (*eleos*), not insolence. Because he is poor, feed him; because Christ [in him] is fed, feed him. Do not feed him for introducing satanic sayings and disgracing his life. Do not see him outwardly laughing, but examine his conscience, and you will see him speaking ten thousand curses on himself, and groaning, and mourning.³⁵

What is more, Chrysostom recommends going the extra mile with them:

So then let you meal companions be men that are poor and free, not perjurers nor mimes. And if you wish to barter with them for their food, bid them, if they see anything done wrongly, to reproach, to give counsel, to assist in taking care of your household and in governing your servants. Do you have children? Let these [former parasites] also be fathers to them;

³⁵ *Hom. in Matt.* 48.7 (PG 58: 495).

let them share your discipline with you, thus profiting you in ways that are cherished by God. Engage them in a spiritual profiteering. If you see one of them needing your patronage, help him, and command him to minister. Through these [former parasites] pursue strangers; through these clothe the naked; through these send to prison and relieve others' suffering.³⁶

St. John does not stop here. Through this redemptive bartering with parasites, he proposes the possibility of actually liberating them from their shame into authentic friendship (*philia*), so that “they again will dwell with you in confidence and appropriate freedom, and your house, instead of a theater, will become for you a church, and the devil will be forced to flee, and Christ will enter in, as will a chorus of angels.”³⁷ They are to be commended to the study of Scripture, to becoming ministers in the household, and thereby becoming the equals of angels.³⁸ “Set them free as well as your own self, and remove the name of parasite, and call them companions at your meals; and take away the label of flatterers, and apply to them the title of friends. This is why God created friendships: not for the detriment of the befriended and the friend, but for their welfare and benefit.”³⁹

Chrysostom's proposal of friendship with parasites is, in its societal context, and within the larger scope of his own moral preaching, quite daring. As several late ancient Christian writers indicate (including Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Paulinus of Nola), the faithful could legitimately embrace friendship with the desperately poor and diseased, since, in the spiritual protocol of almsgiving, the destitute could return such friendship by bestowing earthly or heavenly blessings on their benefactors.⁴⁰ But the friendship of parasites came with all the baggage of the culture of entertainment and debauchery with which they remained linked. Chrysostom barely tenders his scenario of redemptive

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid. (PG 58: 495-496).

³⁹ Ibid. (PG 58: 496).

⁴⁰ On this point, see Richard Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire*, 184-7.

friendship with parasites before counseling extreme caution, since such would carry every potential of their renegeing or lapsing.⁴¹ He finishes his homily with a stiff warning:

These friends are more grievous than any hostility. For if we so desire, our enemies can even benefit us, but friends like these must invariably damage us. Do not keep friends who give instruction in how to inflict harm. Do not keep friends who are enamored with your table rather than with your friendship. For all friends like these, if you cancel the luxurious living, renege on your friendship. But those who associate with you for virtue's sake remain with you constantly, bearing with every inequality of fortune. The race of parasites, moreover, is often given to seeking revenge, and bringing bad things on your reputation. On that point, I have known many respectable persons who have acquired bad reputations, some being accused of sorcery, others of adultery, still others of corrupting youths.⁴²

Why this virtually dialectical approach to benevolence toward parasites on Chrysostom's part? One could certainly make the case that, as a sage Christian moralist, John is carefully weighing the high cost of discipleship and negotiating his audience between the opportunities and the perils of relationships with exactly those persons thought to be incapable of escaping the throes of pagan culture. But I would like to come round again to the Greco-Roman literary and theatrical culture that underlies John's image of the parasite, and to substantiate my claim that he is skillfully playing on the classic audience reactions to parasites: from revulsion, to humored approval, to compassion. As I noted earlier, the figure of the parasite exploited the fine line between social inclusion and exclusion. He is the supremely marginal figure, since he has no secure status with the wealthy, but with his supreme survival skills alienates himself from the destitute poor as well.

⁴¹ *Hom. in Matt.* 48.7 (PG 58: 496).

⁴² *Ibid.*

Yet the parasite, as a dramatic persona, also exploited the fine line between comedy and tragedy, a line that Aristotle himself had originally recognized (*Poetica* 1453A), and of which ancient comic and tragic poets were also aware. Audiences gravitated to the spectacle of transgression, the reversal of norms, and social outrages, which could be found in comedy and tragedy alike.⁴³ In a very different context, as Blake Leyerle has shown in her monograph on Chrysostom's treatment of spiritual marriages, John himself juxtaposes the ostensible comedy of young virgins stupidly entering into such marriages with the utter tragedy of the disastrous consequences both for their victims and for the whole church.⁴⁴ The only redemptive outcome is for such virgins to become virtual tragic heroes and to withdraw from spiritual marriages, which are tantamount to prostitution, and thereby undo the havoc they have wreaked in the Christian community.⁴⁵

In the same manner, I would suggest that, in his forty-eighth *Homily on Matthew* at least, Chrysostom is seeking to steal the parasite from his native comic stage and recast him with a tragic script, as a hero of sorts striving to overcome his miserable circumstances in poverty and to find a new role, redeemed to a new dignity and honesty, in the theater of Christian virtue. It is a tragedy that comes with all the suspense of the parasite's potential or even likely relapse into his old ways, his redemption possibly turning out to be his undoing. But it is also a tragedy where Chrysostom's audience could very well feel itself being moved from revulsion to compassion.

Chrysostom, and the Cappadocian Fathers before him, had already cast the destitute poor and diseased as new tragic players on

⁴³ On this fine line between tragedy and comedy, see Blake Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives: John Chrysostom's Attack on Spiritual Marriage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 143-4; also Dirk Westerkamp, "Laughter, Catharsis, and the Patristic Conception of the Embodied Logos," in John Michael Krois et al., eds., *Embodiment in Cognition and Culture* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 229-40.

⁴⁴ Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 145-260, with citations from John's treatises *Adversus eos qui apud se habent subintroductas virgines* and *Quod regulares feminae viris cohabitare non debeant*.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

the church's stage.⁴⁶ Gregory of Nyssa calls them "poets of that new, ill-fated tragedy (*dystuchous tragôidias*), not using others' tragic circumstances to induce emotions but filling the stage with their own misfortunes."⁴⁷ In a separate essay I have argued that the Cappadocians, Chrysostom, and other bishops of Late Antiquity were in their own ways reinventing classical tragic pity in order to elicit from their audiences the depth of emotion conducive to benevolent action toward the desperately needy.⁴⁸ But the key to tragic pity is the fragile balance between *distance* from the suffering other (i.e. the subject's recognition of not being in remotely the same circumstance as the sufferer) and *likeness or proximity* to that sufferer (i.e. the possibility of sharing the same misfortune, the feeling of "there but for the grace of God am I"). The distance is necessary lest the audience be overcome with fear of a tragedy too close for comfort. The likeness or proximity, however, motivates the sympathetic negotiation of that distance, the identification with the other who languishes. When a writer like Gregory Nazianzen depicts in graphic terms the deformity of the diseased or the utter miseries of the destitute,⁴⁹ he takes the rhetorical risk of his audience recoiling with fear at their abject state, effectively abandoning their compassion.

But in pointing his audience toward social parasites, making them, as it were, the heroes in his own black comedy, John Chrysostom was taking on all the greater a challenge. At least the desperately diseased and indigent appeared clearly to be victims of circumstance and worthy of Christian mercy. Parasites were a whole other story. Their reputation preceded them. Even if grounded in poverty, their "tragedy"

⁴⁶ See Michael De Vinne, "The Advocacy of Empty Bellies: Episcopal Representation of the Poor in the Late Roman Empire" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1995), 8-9, 15, 18-19, 52, 58-62.

⁴⁷ *De beneficentia* (= *De pauperibus amandis* 2) (GNO 9.1:116-117); also Cardman, "Poverty and Wealth as Theater: John Chrysostom's Homilies on Lazarus and the Rich Man," 159-75. For a full analysis of the Cappadocians' treatment of the spectacle of the desperately poor and diseased, see Susan Holman, *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. 96-7, 135-82.

⁴⁸ See Blowers, "Pity, Empathy, and the Tragic Spectacle of Human Suffering," 16 – 22.

⁴⁹ *Oratio* 14.9-14 (PG 35: 868B-876B).

was by no means self-evident, and thus rhetorically (and dramatically) a very hard sell. In the end, however, this makes John's homiletic effort all the more admirable and compelling. He elevates one of the most marginal—and inflammatory—characters in the Greco-Roman cultural heritage as a potential candidate for Christian compassion and for gracious rehabilitation within the context of the church.

In comparison with the enormous achievements of Byzantine philanthropy extending back to the foundational work of Basil of Caesarea, Chrysostom's brief, benevolent outreach to social parasites, with all its tentativeness, may seem like a small victory, but it was a moral victory nonetheless. His rhetorical appeal, of course, was not just about the parasites themselves, but about the retraining of the Christian conscience with respect to the moral dregs of society. Yet it *was* also about the parasites, for they, like others who spectacularly epitomized the residual scandals of Roman culture, could, if admitted to the church's table and granted the chance to thrive there as friends, give unique and powerful testimony to the remaking of society in the crucible of Christian ecclesial life.

On the ground: Realizing an 'altared' *philoptochia*

Susan R. Holman

"I hold before my eyes the dreadful vision of the return of the kingdom." Thus Gregory of Nyssa begins his second sermon on the love of the poor, subtitled, "Whoever has done it to one of these has done it to me."¹ Imaging this passage from Matthew 25, on which the title of our conference is based, Gregory trembles at the threat of condemnation as he envisions God judging humankind according to how each has treated those in need. To escape this threat, Gregory urges his audience to "throw ourselves with zeal into the path of God where we will live, blessed by the Lord who holds Himself bound to the attentions that we tender to the needy." These attentions are to be direct and immediate for, Gregory adds, "the commandment is vital especially now, with so many in need of basic essentials for survival, and ... many whose bodies are utterly spent from suffering sickness."² He then launches into a gut-wrenching description of the bodies of the local homeless outcasts whose limbs are being eaten away by disease even as they starve for basic attention and survival.

Gregory's two sermons – as well as Basil of Caesarea's sermons and letters about famine, poverty, and economic injustices – are best known for the way that they describe the needy poor of the fourth century in entirely human, cosmic, and environmental terms that appeal to the physical senses in an action-based call for equality, shared human ethnicity, and justice. This focus on humanity and the created world is

¹Gregory of Nyssa, *De pauperibus amandis* ("On the love of the poor") 2, transl. Susan R. Holman, *The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 199; the critical edition of Gregory's two sermons on the love of the poor is that of Arie van Heck, ed., *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* (=GNO) 9.1, 93–108 (*Paup.* 1) and 9.1, 111–127 (*Paup.* 2); also available in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* at PG 46.453–470 (*Paup.* 1) and PG 46.471–490 (*Paup.* 2).

²Gregory of Nyssa, *Paup.* 2, trans. Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 200.

only half of the patristic picture, however. Gregory of Nazianzus and several others from this period construct similar views of the needy and human body that is also and more explicitly identified with the divine nature and body of Christ. In a famous passage at the end of his well-known Oration 14, *Peri philoptochia*, or “Concerning the love of the destitute poor,” Nazianzen writes, “Let us take care of Christ while there is still time, let us feed Christ, let us clothe Christ, let us gather Christ in, let us show Christ honor ... through the needy, who are today cast down on the ground.”³ And John Chrysostom, a few years later, makes the same point using the explicit liturgical image of the altar. In his sermon 20 on Second Corinthians, Chrysostom calls the poor the “living altar of the body of Christ.”⁴ Using his location in view of the liturgical focal point of the church altar, John orders his audience to direct special reverence to this other altar, to “sacrifice the victim” on the flesh of the Lord himself. For the church altar, by nature something made out of stone, he says, becomes holy only because it *receives* Christ’s body. But the poor who lie in the lanes and marketplace are intrinsically holy for they are that body itself. They lie ready, as public altars, ready to receive sacrificial alms at any time.⁵

This image of an “altared” philoptochia – that is, a love for the needy poor that is identified with concepts that relate them to the liturgical altar – was found in Christian teaching at least as early as the third century. It is repeated several times, for example, in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. Describing care for the poor, the author of that work emphasizes “the orphans and widows shall be reckoned by you in the likeness of the altar;”⁶ and again: “Let a widow know that she is the altar of God⁷... the

³Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 14.40, trans. Brian E. Daley, S.J., *Gregory of Nazianzus* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 97, modified slightly.

⁴Trans. Rudolf Brändle, “This sweetest passage: Matthew 25:31–46 and Assistance to the Poor in the Homilies of John Chrysostom,” in Susan R. Holman, ed., *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* (Holy Cross Studies in Patristic Theology and History; Grand Rapids, Michigan: BakerAcademic in association with Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2008), 130.

⁵Paraphrased from Talbot W. Chambers’s 1889 translation in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* [=NPNF] (repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), First Series, vol. 12, 374.

⁶*Didascalia Apostolorum* chapter 9.2.26, trans. R. Hugh Connolly (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929, repr. 1969), 88.

⁷*Didascalia Apostolorum* 15.3.5, trans. Connolly, 133.

holy altar of God, (even of) Jesus Christ.”⁸ The text emphasizes the place of widows and orphans in church order, noting that, “the bishops and the deacons [must] be constant ... in the ministry of the altar of Christ — we mean the widows and the orphans” in order that, when properly supported by these leaders, they “will offer a holy and acceptable ministry before Almighty God through His beloved Son and His holy spirit.”⁹

There is no question that widows and orphans were a stock image for the worthy poor in early church rhetoric. And certainly the patristic image of the poor as altar is catchy. As a metaphor, it invites poetic imagination; as an explicit Christian teaching, it invites theologically informed action. But as persons of faith who read the Cappadocians and seek, like Gregory of Nyssa, to focus on the most immediate needs around us, we may find this appeal to altared philoptochia insufficient for any contemporary realization of social justice and even compassion. We may find ourselves asking: what does it mean, really? And how do we get from these readings of fourth-century texts to realizing a creative shape for meeting “on the ground” needs of the modern twenty-first century? In this paper I will explore the challenges of bridging this cross-time, cross-cultural transition, and offer a few concepts that might help us shape practical guidelines for such applications.

The thoughts that I offer in this essay are explored in more depth in *God Knows There’s Need: Christian Responses to Poverty*,¹⁰ which considers the question of exegetical bridging across a broader historical landscape than is possible here. The exploration of these concepts here focuses specifically on a few examples from the Cappadocians and their neighbors in late antiquity. First, I will outline the question that drives this bridging exercise. Then I will consider some of the tools — and they are merely tools — that might aid the imagination as one

⁸ *Didascalia Apostolorum* 15.3.10, trans. Connolly, 143.

⁹ *Didascalia Apostolorum* 18.4.5, trans. Connolly, 156. For more on this image, see “The Widow as Altar: Metaphor and Ministry,” in Bonnie Thurston, *The Widows: A Women’s Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 106–113.

¹⁰ Susan R. Holman, *God Knows There’s Need: Christian Responses to Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

sets out in search of ways to lever informed and practical responses in the modern world. Both this essay and the book from which I draw these thoughts offer something of a personal narrative on a journey into shaping a deliberate interpretive exegesis.

Identifying the Exegetical “Gap”

The study that led me to write *God Knows There’s Need* began several years after I had finished *The Hungry are Dying*, which is a much more deliberately academic monograph. I was invited to join a group of scholars who, as part of a University of Virginia grant funded by the Lilly Endowment, were also writing about applied or “lived theology” as it pertained to one’s individual area of expertise. To be honest, I was sure at first that there was some mistake in my being invited to join the group; although my first reading of the Cappadocian poverty texts began while I was working in public health nutrition, I am neither a member of the clergy nor a social activist. As a natural introvert who especially thrives on solitude, I had deliberately shifted my career from clinical work to one that allowed substantial time in the focused stillness of research libraries and with the written text. But, indeed, this invitation to explore practical conceptual application was a logical step for any research about historical religious responses to poverty. Even when such texts focus on the distant past, they speak to an issue that cannot easily be locked into the academic ivory tower.

The challenge to connect the very different mindsets of poverty response in past and present might be illustrated by two images (Figures 1 and 2) and a brief discussion of the contrast between them. Figure 1 is a representation of the typical patristic Orthodox world view of liturgical relationships. In this icon — which is Russian and probably nineteenth century — we see a scene that embodies dominant personality images that patristic authors envisioned in care for the poor. Basil of Caesarea, on the left, was a church leader, administrator, and bishop who, his contemporaries tell us, sold his inheritance to buy grain for the starving poor, founded a hospital-poorhouse on family/church property, provided personal and trained care for the sick and destitute, and lobbied the political and old crony network of his day

in strident appeals for divestment and economic justice.¹¹ On the right we see a depiction of St. Alexis — also known as the “Syriac Man of God,” who was, according to legend, a rich young man who chose to live as a voluntary beggar and holy fool in fifth-century Edessa. He served the needy in his city by living anonymously as one of them, sharing the food he earned from begging, and spending his nights in cruciform prayer. His death, it is said, led Edessa’s bishop, Rabbula, into a radical, lifelong focus on church-supported care for the poor that virtually ignored all upkeep of the physical church buildings (more on the effects of this below).¹² Above these two in the icon we see the image of Christ in glory who, like Basil, has his right hand raised in blessing and his left holding a book, suggestive of the sheep-and-goat dichotomy of judgment in Matthew 25.¹³

While beautifully colorful, this icon is monochromatic in the gender and age of its subjects. Further, it evokes an ahistorical space where what seems to matter most is participation in the liturgical veneration and mindfulness of the two saintly exemplars. It offers a neat “snapshot” of two different models in the patristic dynamic of heaven-based philanthropy: on the one hand the civic/ecclesiastical leadership of Basil in philanthropic administration; on the other hand, the voluntary ascetic poverty of Alexis. The icon suggests nothing, however, about action that might result from viewer engagement in this visual meditative exchange. And the disenfranchised needy, whom both men served so famously, are nowhere to be seen.

¹¹ A useful translation of Basil’s key sermons on these issues is now available in C. Paul Schroeder, trans., *St Basil the Great: On Social Justice*, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2009).

¹² For a translation of the earliest available texts on Alexis, see Robert Doran, trans, *Stewards of the Poor: The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in Fifth-Century Edessa*, Cistercian Studies Series 208 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2006), esp. 3–38.

¹³ For a discussion of iconography of Christ as it relates to early Christian philanthropy, see Susan R. Holman, “God and the poor in early Christian thought,” in *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson*, ed. Andrew B. McGowan, Brian E. Daley, S.J., and Timothy J. Gaden, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 297–321, esp. 314–320, a discussion of the famous sixth-century Sinai icon of Christ.

Figure 2 offers a very different glimpse of divestment exchange, a photograph of philanthropy from a religious perspective familiar to our own time. Here we see two women in modern dress who appear to be tourists, giving alms to a woman begging on the plaza or atrium of the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.¹⁴ The cultural dissonance in this picture — between the donor in short sleeves, purse and wallet in hand, leaning over to give a coin, and the begging woman, whose subordinate position is emphasized by her position literally two steps down, and covered entirely by a burqa — is “bridged” here by the hand contact between the women in the act of the donation itself. The photographer, Bo Brunner, also includes in his frame a third woman, equally modern in short hair and sunglasses, who watches the alms exchange with an amused expression. And yet, despite its very contemporary feel, the context and background of this photograph, like the Russian icon, also contains a subtle appeal to divine space or “altared” philoptochia. For in the background we see the shrine of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, first built in the sixth century. The entire area is of course that very controversial location traditionally identified with the ancient Jewish Temple and with it that altar of altars in Jewish and Christian tradition: the Holy of Holies. And just a few yards away from the site of this photograph is the Western Wall plaza, where pious Jewish men and women of all ages converge to pray — and also to beg. Thus both this photograph and the Russian icon clearly represent views of philoptochia that are informed by religion, but within two very different worlds, one past and eternal, the other present in a specific moment.

The question that these images and their contrasts beg of us, as modern persons of faith who care about issues of poverty relief, human rights, and social justice, is this: what kind of conceptual bridge might

¹⁴ Online image available at http://www.flickr.com/photos/bo_brunner/2083647219, published under the Creative Commons license for noncommercial use only; license restrictions at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>. For an image of a very similar alms exchange taking place just a few yards away, in the plaza of the Western Wall of the ancient Jerusalem temple (for which I was not able to obtain permission to reprint here), see “Miracles and mirages: A strong economy built on weak fundamentals,” *The Economist*, April 3, 2008, available online at http://sweatshops-team4.wikispaces.com/file/view/Economist_Miracles+and+mirages.pdf, 2.

help us join the worlds of these two very different images in a way that can best use patristic texts in practical compassion today? That is, how might one go about joining the rhetoric of the past and the daily realities we face in the present? In his book on storytelling, Richard Kearney points out that “Stories alter our lives as we return from text to action;”¹⁵ yet “The act of *mimesis*, which enables us to pass from life to life story, introduces a ‘gap’ (however minimal) between living and recounting.”¹⁶ We might well experience this gap if we chose to spend our volunteer time at the local soup kitchen or homeless shelter by, for example, doing nothing beyond a public reading, while people munch on their soup and sandwiches, of some patristic text — Gregory of Nazianzus’s *Oration* 14 or Basil’s Homily 7, “Against the Rich.” Obviously the realization of justice for those in need calls for help with more practical issues, such as job counseling, equal access to food, legal services, and so forth. Patristic texts don’t instantly relate to the modern food pantry and soup kitchen, even in Christian settings. We need tools to bridge this gap between text and life.

Challenged in the writing of *God Knows There’s Need* to structure a lived theology, therefore, I found myself sorting through relevant early Christian texts in search of broad, general concepts that applied to both past and present responses to poverty. And because I have spent most of my adult life working in various academic medical settings, I found particularly helpful the concept of “translational medicine.” Translational medicine is a phrase that is used to define the deliberate role of doing academic laboratory research in such a way that it is also directly, and potentially immediately, useful for “on-the-ground” clinical settings and healing practices that can change lives. Doctors who do translational medicine seek to bridge a similar gap — between research and daily life — with a similar goal: to apply concepts and texts to the bodies of real people in situations that often relate to global health for resource-poor communities around the world. In medicine and public health, this process is highly collaborative. The researcher,

¹⁵ Richard Kearney, *On Stories* (London: Routledge, 2002), 156.

¹⁶ Kearney, *On Stories*, 132.

that is, may not be the same person who clocks up frequent flier miles and applies medicine to the wounds. Yet each person involved in the collaboration shares some level of identification or empathy with the human issues that can help even scholars — and introverts like me — play some role in improving human life. Translational tools are by nature empowering: they can empower healing, political or community autonomy, and the fostering of human freedom, rights, and dignity; and each of these empowerment concepts can also be found at some level in the Cappadocian sermons on responding to the poor.

The result of my conceptual exploration was to develop an interplay of two sets of ideas: one on reading the past, the other on translating our readings into new vision for the present. And while this may all sound very theoretical, in fact basing our ideas on what we find in early Christian texts reminds us that others from similar faith communities have addressed these issues, and they offer us a supportive community of voices from the past who, while very different from ourselves, can serve as mentors and even friends in our shared commitment to live for justice and mercy.

Reading the past

The first set of ideas is about reading the past. Here I suggest four basic “filtering” principles that seemed particularly useful in constructive critical readings, defined in terms of personal action. This is where interpretive patristics gets personal, and so I phrase these four ideas using the first person.

Looking for trouble

First I must be open to those places where the story troubles me, where the ancient practice seems to go against my own views of respect, human dignity, and justice. I may find troubling points in opinions, in the way people are treated, or in a dissonant moral to what is often a very biased, prescriptive story. For example, is charity understood as simply a political tool? Is the human person belittled in the emphasis on Christ’s centrality? Does the act of relief advise or condone behavior I would not wish to perpetuate?

Seeing the frame

Second, I must understand the cultural framework that shaped how people helped one another in ancient Graeco-Roman society. For example, patronage ordered a particular hierarchy of obligations and exchanges of goods and services where handouts always had strings attached, and it was considered normal to create interdependency but never equality. Even where philanthropy was defined as a fair market exchange – give to the poor and God will ring it up to your heavenly bank account with interest – the exchange assumed a static society — including essentially static class issues — quite different from our own fluid, Western ideals.

Reading gender

Third, I must be sensitive to what the text says — or more often does not say — about women’s issues or rights related to gender equality. Women have always been more likely than men to live with the challenges of poverty, and their dependent children (both boys and girls) suffer in ways that often cripple their own potential for growth, health, and maturity. Patristic texts do tell some stories about care for poor women. Basil’s sister, Macrina, for example, housed starving women during the Cappadocian famine of the late 360s,¹⁷ and the bishop Rabbula built hospitals for women in Edessa, putting women in charge of patient care.¹⁸ John the Almsgiver even prescribed that poor women beggars should receive a portion double that of male beggars.¹⁹ But in general, the texts often perpetuate rather than correct what we would consider shocking gender inequities.

¹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita S. Macrinae*, trans. Virginia Woods Callahan, “The Life of Saint Macrina,” in *Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Ascetical Works*, Fathers of the Church 58 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1967), esp. 172, 183.

¹⁸ “The Heroic Deeds of Mar Rabbula, bishop of Edessa, the Blessed City,” trans. Robert Doran, in *idem, Stewards of the Poor*, 65–105, esp. 100–101.

¹⁹ “The Life of our Holy Father, John the Almsgiver,” Supplement by Leontius, Chapter 7, in *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies Translated from the Greek*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977), 214.

Recognizing diversity

Fourth, true patristic tradition does not require a monolithic view on every single point and ideal. The ancient authors often differed even among themselves when it came to issues like social equality, determining who is a worthy beggar, and how best to ensure effective welfare and relief activities. As I recognize such patristic diversity, this opens the door to a modern religious dialogue that freely grants — and even welcomes — a range of options for the discussion of faith-based views on philanthropy and social compassion.

These four critical filters may aid, then, in thinking how the Cappadocian texts might or might not be helpful in conversations and actions that address modern social issues. Undoubtedly other exegetical markers might be added to this list.

In suggesting such carefully critical reading, however, let me emphasize that I am not saying we can only benefit from these texts if we first strap on some moral, text-critical goggles. Early Christian social history and its narratives about human need are often simply fun to read. Let us not deprive ourselves of such pleasure and perhaps even inspiration. The critical filters that I suggest are intended as tools to apply lightly, and ideally to apply even before we put the advice of the text into action. They may help us distinguish — insofar as it is possible — the intent of the text from our own personal viewpoints, biases, and reactions to the text and what it describes.

Three translational paradigms to inform action

Once we have read these texts critically and hopefully also enjoyed them, how then do we carry them with us into the conversations and ideas that inspire and shape social justice and relief activities in our own day? Here my search for common ground in past and present identified three particular paradigms into which most of the rhetoric, recommendations, vision, and stories about patristic philanthropy might fit. These are (1) sensing need, (2) sharing the world, and (3) embodying sacred kingdom. Each of the three may be useful in informing any faith-based effort at wise compassion. In light of the

limits of this paper, I offer here only a brief definition of the first two, followed by a closer look at the third. For it is embodying sacred kingdom that is most relevant to any construction of an altar-centered philoptochia.

Sensing need

Sensing need is the first step in any social welfare response. It is what happens at the level of personal perception. One cannot respond to issues of justice or need until they affect our nerves or senses to create in us a basic awareness. Sensing need is that process by which persons or issues outside of ourselves somehow touch our literal sensations, although our sensory responses to this encounter may vary widely.

Early Christian sermons on the poor are packed with sensory images. As noted above, Gregory of Nyssa began his homily with an appeal to the vision and dread of what might happen at the last judgment – what – Carlos Eire in his book on eternity calls “scaring the hell out of people, literally.”²⁰ In describing the destitute poor Gregory of Nazianzus writes, “There stands before our eyes a terrible, pitiable sight.”²¹ John Chrysostom’s sermons are especially rich in such language.²² And of course we encounter similar appeals daily in the media, photojournalism, word descriptions in books on social justice, and an endless river of charitable junk mail.

While most discussion of religious response to need begin with external action, recognizing this first perception may help prevent kneejerk responses and enable actions that can be properly participatory, especially when they also include recognizing the personal baggage of background and bias that may shape our own responses. While this initial breathing space often gets lost in social activism, beginning with prayerful mindfulness might help us “re-member” the social structures

²⁰ Carlos Eire, *A Very Brief History of Eternity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 160.

²¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 14.10, trans. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 80.

²² His visual and theatrical imagery is discussed at length in Francine Cardman, “Poverty and wealth as theater: John Chrysostom’s homilies on Lazarus and the rich man,” in Holman (ed.), *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, 159–175.

that are of concern. In this way we may also come closer to developing a more nuanced concern for the human person. Considering the needs of others is inevitably intertwined — sometimes unconsciously — with how we view and respond to our own history of need, poverty, and economic and social choices. Sensing also prepares us to listen to the other. It opens the door to “hearing” creative narrative that may encourage further dialogue and understanding, and lead to thoughtful practice of the second paradigm, that of “sharing the world.”

Sharing the world

Sharing the world is where the text hits the ground, so to speak. This is the external action in relationships that logically follows the initial sensory encounter. Sharing the world is incarnational giving, broadly defined. I emphasize the word sharing rather than giving because justice, relief, and cosmic healing are not understood in Christian tradition as one-way activities. Rather, they are engagements in reciprocity and relating to one another equally at the level of creation. Most charity and justice projects operate exclusively in terms of this second paradigm.

Embodying sacred kingdom

The third paradigm, that of “embodying sacred kingdom,” is an ideal that often goes unstated or quietly assumed in aid and relief activities. We find it, for example, in an ideological commitment to global or environmental wholeness, a belief in eschatological unity, the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*, “healing the world,” and the Christian idea of redemptive almsgiving as a necessary exchange in realizing the kingdom of heaven. Restorative restructuring of the world as an ideal is present in many aspects of modern traditions about justice; these include Catholic liberation theology, secular human rights ideologies, the Jewish teachings on *tzedakah* (charitable righteousness) and the Arabic cognate “*sedaqa*” — almsgiving — that is one of the five foundational tenets of Islam.²³ The parable of final judgment based on

²³ For more on the relationship of these Hebrew and Arabic concepts to early Christian philanthropy, see Susan R. Holman, “Healing the world with righteousness? The language of social justice in early Christian homilies,” in *Charity and Giving in Monotheistic Religions*, ed. Miriam Frenkel and Yaacov Lev, *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients* 22 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 89–110.

deeds that we find in Matthew 25:31– 46 is perhaps the quintessential image of this idea in Christian tradition. It is on this level that the poor are understood as the altered embodiment of Christ.

While it is fairly easy to bring to any social action a mindfulness of the first two paradigms, the third paradigm poses a particular challenge, since ancient and modern views on sacred kingdom may differ. Even the phrase “sacred kingdom” may trouble those who hear in it that long history of colonialism, oppression of minorities, infantilizing paternalism, and the violation of human dignity. The Matthew 25 image with its theme of hell and an afterlife also runs counter to our culture’s affirmation for universal salvation. Its economic balance sheet of good works does not go down well with Protestant views on salvation by faith. Perhaps the Orthodox emphasis on the liturgical present – liturgy as participating in eternity in the here and now – may be particularly useful for philanthropic vision today.

But embodying sacred kingdom is more than just external liturgy. Rather, all of life is engagement in the sacred realm, though daily awareness may be easily distracted by encounters with other human beings who stink, beg, behave in disturbing ways, or otherwise cause us grief. This meditative engagement with social response is also similar to another value in modern society, that which Charles Mathewes has called “charitable citizenship.” As Mathewes puts it,

“The basic challenge of political life is...the proper ordering of our loves into harmonious polyphony – albeit a polyphonic harmony only eschatologically attained...[W]e must insist on this complexity...and on the possibility that good can come out of our being political in this way, however difficult the path may be.”²⁴

²⁴ Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 306–307.

In Christian tradition, of course, Christ is at the center of both the needs themselves and that embodied kingdom. Salvian of Lérins wrote that “Christ alone feels hunger with the hungry, and He alone feels thirst with the thirsty. And therefore, insofar as it pertains to His compassion, He is in need more than others.”²⁵

Altared bodies in tension

Yet this connection between sacred flesh and sacred stone altar as liturgical locus was not without certain tensions, even in antiquity. One of the tensions that the early church faced in the call to embody sacred kingdom in the poor was the perpetual challenge to choose between liturgical splendor and material divestment. While the Cappadocians built and supported both church buildings and relief activities, we recall that bishops and monastics such as Rabbula and others were famous for diverting donations from ecclesiastical construction and investing them in relief activities. Gold and silver communion vessels and richly embroidered altar cloths were sold or melted down — often amidst much controversy — to redeem captive slaves or feed and clothe local beggars. Bishops who were condemned for their lack of mercy to the poor were often defined by the pomp and glitter of their liturgical trappings, just as Basil condemns the luxury of those who enjoy secular wealth, in his homily 7 directed at the wealthy in his congregation.²⁶ The story of Ibas — or Hiba — of Edessa offers one such example of this narrative tension.

Rabbula’s successor at Edessa, Ibas quickly got into trouble for his radically different use of wealth. He reversed Rabbula’s charitable spending so drastically that just two years after Rabbula died “a great silver altar weighing seven hundred twenty pounds was presented to the Cathedral Church in Edessa.”²⁷ As scholars have shown, costly donations to adorn the church were mostly tolerated²⁸ unless, as in

²⁵ Salvian, “The Four Books of Timothy to the Church” (*Ad Ecclesiam*) 4.4, in *The Writings of Salvian, The Presbyter*, trans. Jeremiah F. O’Sullivan (New York: CIMA, 1947), 361.

²⁶ For translation of Basil’s *Hom. 7*, see Schroeder, *St Basil the Great on Social Justice*, 41–58.

²⁷ Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*, 116.

²⁸ See e.g., A. Edward Siecienski, “Gilding the Lily: A patristic defense of liturgical splendor,” in Hol-

Ibas's case, expenditures were tainted with charges of theft and heresy. In the accusations against Ibas, we find in fact a curious conflation of the church and the poor as equal and comparable victims of the bishop's greed: "Holy vessels were melted down," the texts tell us, "which were collected from the yield of widows and orphans and women who raised it by themselves" — with which Ibas promised to ransom captives — but in fact kept mostly for himself.²⁹

At the Second Council of Ephesus, Ibas was accused of Nestorianism. Although the text does not make the connection, it is curious that his so-called "wrong" doctrine concerns ideas about Christ's humanity at the same time as Ibas is cheating the poor who were viewed as the altar of Christ's body. One who fails to admit the full humanity of Christ might be hardly expected to endorse the physically undesirable needy poor as embodying that very flesh and thus equal to the altar. Whether or not Ibas actually held these "heretical" views, he did shock his critics by dressing up in church — wearing fine linen³⁰ — in direct contrast to Rabbula's model of deliberate poverty. The council's report of the charge against Ibas suggests that his enemies were quite excited in their expressions of outrage:

Hiba has ravaged the church! ... His party seized the riches of the church! Let what belongs to the church be returned to the church! Let what belongs to the poor be returned to the poor! ... Holy Rabbula, petition with us! ... Hiba has ravaged Osrhoene! ... Selling the riches of the church! Hiba has left nothing in Sarug! Let Hiba go to the mines!"³¹

At his synodical judgment, one bishop states that Ibas is "required [to restore] whatever he dared to plunder from the sanctuary," while another bishop makes the same statement in a way that unites concerns of both liturgical altar and community poor by stating that "He is bound

man, ed., *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, 211–220; and also Dominic Janes, *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge/New York; Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²⁹ Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*, 180, quoting from the Acts of the Second Council at Ephesus.

³⁰ Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*, 150.

³¹ Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*, 142–143, and 144, selections.

to restore to the poor of the church the gold that he plundered.”³² Here the distinctions are muddy enough to suggest that the Christ-poor and the liturgical altar were perceived in an integrated synergy that was not easily separated into clearly distinct responses.

Ibas’s crime is apparently not that he endorses liturgical splendor, but rather that he denies both the human and divine body of Christ by snubbing his nose at both sacrificial donors in the poor and the sacred glory of the sanctuary itself.

While many different aspects of Ibas’s story might be discussed in light of the interpretive guidelines outlined above, here let us focus instead on one small detail in this scandal: The charge that Ibas’s actions robbed the church at nearby Sarug. To conclude, let us turn to a text we have from Sarug, written by its bishop, Jacob, nearly a century later. With poetic style that earned him the title, “Flute of the Holy Spirit,” Jacob of Sarug’s metrical homily “On the love of the poor,” here translated by Sebastian Brock, is one of the most vivid images extant on the Christ-poor as embodying sacred kingdom in an explicit “on-the-ground” context of altared philoptochia. Jacob writes,

For your sake He was made a beggar in the streets,
The Creator, to whom the entire creation belongs ...
He is hidden and exalted high above all the ranks of heavenly
beings, but when a poor person stands at your door, you see
Him! He who has constructed the house of (both) worlds for
the races to live in...
He with whom the Creation is full, and cannot contain Him, is
knocking to enter your house in the person of the despised and
the insignificant...
He whom the cherubim convey on their backs with trembling
lies smitten on the bed of sickness, along with the sick.
Wherever you want to see Him, you will find Him...
Brought low, wretched, buffeted and afflicted, He has come to

³² Doran, *Stewards of the Poor*, 188.

you; sit Him down at ease, while you get up and serve Him, rejoicing as you do so...

For the poor person who has stood at your door is God Himself... In a lowly and despised guise He has come to visit you, so that when you fill His belly, you will find the Bread of Life.³³

Jacob's imagery contains all three paradigms. It contains an appeal to "see" the Christ poor. It provides specific instructions about sharing worldly goods. And it radiates throughout with eschatological imagery – the heavenly hosts, the cherubim, and the final call to that ultimate liturgical experience, the Bread of Life. This "inversion" — that, by feeding Christ we are fed by Christ — brings us back to that initial image of the body as living altar and location for personal and community transformation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, patristic texts on issues of social welfare have much to offer modern practical applications. However, their use is challenged by conceptual "gaps" that invite us to shape constructive bridging of past and present ideas. I have offered here a few suggestions for creating such shaping that might lay the groundwork to realize a philoptochia centered on the image of christ-poor as altar. These suggestions, tools, and paradigms obviously do not in themselves feed or clothe the needy nor do they automatically empower dignity, justice, and human rights. Nonetheless, such ideas for crossing the gap between text and action in order to embody sacred kingdom, as a basic part of applying social compassion in Christian tradition, are more than an exercise in passive escapism from problems here and now. Rather, meditations on icons, images, and texts, responses that begin with self-reflection and recognize bias and cultural concerns, may help alter who we are and our effectiveness at charitable citizenship. Patristic stories and sermons address issues that are timeless and easily understood in perhaps almost

³³ Jacob of Sarug, "On the Love of the Poor"; the Syriac text is *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, Vol. 2, ed. Paul Bedjan (Paris: Lipsiae, Otto Harrassowitz, 1906), 816–836, selections. The translation here is by Sebastian Brock, used with permission.

any if not all cultures. Sensing and remembering such bodies in ancient texts — and letting them speak to the action of our own choices — is in itself a form of living on sacred ground.



Figure 1. Russian icon of saints Basil and Alexis (photo by the author)



Figure 2. Almsgiver and a beggar outside the Al Aqsa Mosque (IL 5396), © copyright Bo Brunner, 2007 under the Creative Commons license, image available for noncommercial use only (http://www.flickr.com/photos/bo_brunner/2083647219). License restriction details are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>.

Embodying the New Society: The Byzantine Christian Instinct of Philanthropy

John A. McGuckin

Philanthropia in Classical Greek Thought

The Byzantines stand, in their usage of that key and plastic concept of *Philanthropia*, on the shoulders of a long and venerable tradition of the word's use and its ethical significance in classical antiquity. As with so much else in the foundations of Eastern Christian thought, what we rightly see as a distinctly new Byzantine use of the term *Philanthropy* to designate the appropriate Christian response to human need, the divinely inspired human movement to compassion, and the God-graced desire to establish justice, is actually a synthesis of classical thought on matters of civilized values. These values were forged in a creative interplay as these concepts were brought into a dynamic synthesis with the New Testament and early Patristic notions of the divine Kenosis of the merciful Christ; often with the crucible of the Divine Liturgy serving as both text and context for the interchange and fusion.¹ In the use and renovation of the concept of Philanthropy as a primary way of negotiating ideas about what we moderns would tend now (rather flatly perhaps) to call social ethics, Byzantine Christian society shows its creative élan in refashioning two older societal visions, that of the Hellenes, and that of the Hebrew Prophets, in a way that gives a newly universalized priority to the underlying rationale of why mercy ought to be shown to others.

In the first instance, the Hellenic vision of a civilized order where loyalty and respect ought to be shown to kin, and beneficent *agape*

¹ With one exception, the LXX use of *Philanthropia* shows no significant difference from the classical Greek concept of beneficent kindness of patron to client. See: 2 Macc. 6.22; 2 Macc. 9.27; 2 Macc. 14.9; 3 Macc. 3.15; 4 Macc. 5.12. The exception is a significant one—for the Wisdom tradition applies *Philanthropia* as a quintessential mark of Wisdom: a tradition that underlined the Christian Byzantine use of *Philanthropia* in the Christological tradition. See: LXX. Wis. 1.6; 7.23; 12.19.

to strangers² (*agape* being something we ought best to translate in this context as ‘kindly regard’) is upgraded by its elevation to *Philia* (the active kindness of a friend). This very simple question of why we ought to show philanthropia to another, and especially to one in need, is one that may seem self-evident in a social context formed by Christian values over so many centuries. It was not at all self-evident to classical society.

As may be still evident in some eastern civilizations today, ancient thought was dominated by the ubiquity and irreversibility of Fate. If there were indigent, underprivileged, and sick people around in society, this was not the fault of society. It was the will of the gods. Karma mattered, to put it in more recognizable terms to us. If one intervened by giving extraordinary charity to someone who was in the depth of misery and wretchedness (let us think of blind Oedipus for example), then one risked the strong possibility that a mere mortal intervened in the punishments of the gods. This was the widespread way in antiquity that suffering, sickness and poverty were cosmologically explained: It was the Fate that had fallen on this or that individual.

The very first example in the history of Greek rhetoric where a philosopher (consciously modelling himself on Demosthenes let us note) argued the case that the wretched and sick were icons of God that called out to all to assist them as a moral imperative (an aspect of true worship since the icon of God could not be allowed to corrupt) was Gregory the Theologian in his Oration 14, *On the Love of the Poor*. Here he makes the extraordinary claim (for ancient ears) that the Lepers of his time were not abandoned by God, but were objects of divine compassion and used as teaching aids for humans to learn the character of compassion from God. Nowhere else in ancient literature outside the scripture could we find such an extraordinary claim. And yet, after him, the Byzantine philosophy of Philanthropy develops, so as to bring the concept of compassion as an act of worship to central stage.³

²Downey (1965).

³See J A McGuckin. *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*. SVS Press. New York. 2001. pp. 147–155. (Oration 14: *On the Love of the Poor*) See also S Holman. *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops In Roman Cappadocia*. OUP. Oxford. 2001.

In the second place, if Hellenism is thus transfigured by synthesis, we can also note how the Hebraic concept of duty to the poor and stranger, which ought to characterize the elect community of the covenant, is also upgraded in the rooting of this notion henceforth in the basis of a universalized anthropology. We must observe, for example, that it is now *Phil-Anthropia*, the love of humanity itself that is the reason that undergirds social compassion. Kinship, on the one hand, and race or tribe on the other, as ways of organizing societal obligations have passed away as foundational reasons in a new synthesis of the Byzantine Gospel that saw, in the Kenosis of Christ, a model of alterity of an utterly new kind. There is no longer Greek or Hebrew; things are being made new in Christ, to paraphrase the Apostle (Col. 3.10–13).

This fundamental change of vision at the level of deepest *theoria* can be traced in the new semantic of the Byzantine use of the term *Philanthropia*. It was an intellectual reordering of major proportions that would, inevitably, produce an effect in the domain of *praxis* sooner or later. The actual record of early medieval Byzantine philanthropic foundations will be the concrete evidence for this. But it is the mental shift of perspective that precedes that reordering of society; and this is something that happens extensively almost from the moment that the Greek Christians commanded the imperial system sufficiently to ensure stable political associations.

That context was in place by the mid-fourth century. By the fifth, bishops had entered philanthropic work so fundamentally into the ecclesial substructure that they had earned the common-parlance title of *Philoptochos* (friend of the poor). By the sixth century the great philanthropic foundations of Leprosaria, hospitals, orphanages, geriatric homes, and food-relief centers⁴ had become common in the cities of the Byzantine world.

From there, such matters became a constitutive mark of the Church's presence throughout all its history and more or less across all

⁴The 'food liturgy', known even at ancient Athens and Rhodes, and organised for poor relief in exceptional circumstances.

its geographical extension. The work of Philanthropy can even be said to have emerged as a distinctive mark (if not a formal creedal one) of the Church's integral mission. We might not be amiss in adding (as a necessary ecclesiological descriptor) to the creedal definition of One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, this extra dimension of 'Philanthropic': the fifth authentic mark of the Church of Christ on earth.

Among the Orthodox, this immense work of ecclesial Philanthropy, and its concrete historical heritage has, of course, been subject to immense depredations from early modernity onward, because of various political vicissitudes in the domains of Eastern Christianity. However, never has the Church forgotten that heritage. Even now, with diminished resources in the shattered social structures of Eastern Europe, it is the newly liberated Church that is once again clearing the way for a societal return to principles of Philanthropy nurtured in the freedom and dignity of the person.

For the Byzantines, this fundamental commitment to the principles of *Philanthropia*, marked the very essence of what a civilized society meant. They had learned this from the ancient Philosophical tradition, although they were to take the ideas further. In the Poets,⁵ as well as in Plato, philanthropy signified the generic love that the deity had for humankind.⁶ It was a pacific, detached regard of beneficence, that undergirded the mission of various *daimones*, spiritual entities, who took charge of the governance of races and societies in order to allow justice to flourish among mortals and to cause a cessation of wars and hostilities. The spirit of philanthropy, which arose when hostility was laid aside, directly allowed civilization to flourish. Philanthropy was, therefore, a prime characteristic of the divine ethos for the pre-Christian Hellenes.

Philanthropy was the defining mark, and thus the separator, of the superior over and against the needy inferior. The deities offer to

⁵Aristophanes. *Peace*. 392f,

⁶Plato. *Laws*. 713d. 'God in so far as he is Philanthropos towards us, has set the Daimones to have governing-charge over our race...'

humankind, as patrons to their clients, all the benefits of a happy life, the fruits of the earth, and so on.⁷ Deriving from this divine character of beatitude, philanthropy also meant, in many Greek sources, the affective attitude of humans, which marked them as beneficent and civilized in their manners. Philanthropy as shown by human to human, for the Hellenes was the attitude of politeness, kindness, generosity, and the manifesting of deeds that supported one's city or state.⁸

Derived from the divine, *philanthropia* and its expression raised the human out of the ranks of the merely animal. Among animals savagery was understood as a constant backdrop of all inter-relation. Accordingly, savagery could not be accounted to them as a fault; but neither could that complex level of social interaction be expected of them that would ever merit the name civilization. Civilization demanded a divine ethos, a divine spur.

The Hellenes, before the Gospel, generally doubted strongly whether the *barbaroi* would ever rise to that status either. Yet, when humans rose to the level of philanthropy, in Greek thought, they became the fulfillment of their own higher destiny and acted beneficently to one another just as the gods acted. Thus, philanthropy is the very root and core of all that is meant by civilized values.

For this reason, throughout much of Greek literature it is presumed that the most godlike among human society, namely the kings, are characterized as royal precisely because of the philanthropy they show⁹ (far more than the power that they can command). The Spartan king Agesilaos (398–360 BC) is described by Xenophon as *Philanthropos* because of three distinguishing characteristics of his dominion: his compassionate policy toward prisoners of war, his care for destitute orphans, and his compassion for the aged who were without protectors.¹⁰

⁷ Xenophon. *Memorabilia*. 4. 3–7.

⁸ Lorenz (1914); Martin (1961) 164–175.

⁹ Isocrates *Oration*. 9. 43.

¹⁰ Xenophon. *Agesilaos*. 1. 21–23.

The Philosopher-Orator Isocrates set out for Philip of Macedon his ideal of what a true Greek king would be: an iconic representation of the divine Heracles, who spent his life on the defense and establishment of justice on earth, working tirelessly for the benefit of humankind, and advocating high moral standards.¹¹ Works of philanthropy thus defined the civilized city-state and were used by the Hellenes to demonstrate their great distance from barbarian societies, which lacked both the *theoria* of that term and its *praxis*.

The care of the orphan and the aged were particularly elevated as marks of true philanthropy among the ancient Greeks.¹² Many of the ancient city-states had established works of public assistance for orphans and the aged;¹³ and the redemption of captives was always held to be one of the highest demonstrations of true philanthropy. In like manner hospitality was often taken in Greek writing to be a quintessential mark of philanthropy. The kindly regard for the stranger (the *Xenos*) and assistance to the indigent are among the notable marks of the morally good person as Homer describes him in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It is his equivalent of the concept of *philanthropia*, without him actually employing that term as yet. The epitome of evil and shame, conversely, is manifested by the abusers of hospitality. The symbols of Circe and the Suitors at the house of Penelope spring to mind readily. For Demosthenes it was the exercise of *philanthropia* among citizens that defined the state, guaranteed its character as civilized, whereas toward enemies the state had to adopt a protective attitude of enmity and hostility.¹⁴ Most of these efforts, however, were a reflection of the city organization: generally the work of the élite leaders of the city-state.

After the age of the city-state had passed into the age of the strings of imperial cities, each with their vast hinterland of rural support systems feeding into the urban environments of the Late Antique

¹¹ Isocrates, *To Philip*. 48–49.

¹² Gulick (1912) pp. 38, 41,

¹³ Lallemand (1902, vol. 1) pp.55–100.

¹⁴ Demosthenes. *On the Chersonese*. 2. 70–71.

age, this responsibility for the works of *philanthropia* was continued chiefly by town Curias, and by vastly wealthy plutocrats, who often used philanthropy as a replacement of the old system of the *Leitourgia*, or civic work program, and thereby advanced themselves politically as well as emerging as a new model of philanthropy from on high. The notion of claiming back the philanthropic process as a common enterprise, a more democratically balanced affair, is not seen again among the Hellenes until the early Christian era, when it is then presided over by the bishops who stood in as ‘friends of the poor.’ Even so, the rootedness of the Hellenic conception of Philanthropy as a mimesis of the gods makes the concept of patronage a fundamental aspect of all ancient philanthropic thought. We have to add to this theoretical judgment, of course, the economic observation that in this form of society more than 90 percent of all disposable wealth was held by less than five percent of the landowning aristocracy. There is a chasm existing here between the wealthy and the poor, with no middle class in between (the kind of environment assumed in Jesus’ parable of Dives and Lazarus where he explicitly applies the word ‘chasm’).¹⁵ We may think that this has shifted today, but the New York Times this very week of our conference, reports for our edification the statistic that the collective wealth of the richest 1 percent in modern America is greater than the combined wealth of the bottom 90 percent combined.¹⁶

After an extensive review of the evidence, however, Ferguson characterizes the essence of this pre-Christian Greek theory of *philanthropia* as fundamentally related to immediate kinship structures.¹⁷ In short here Charity begins (and ends) at home. And Constantelos, following Monnier, also sums up the whole of the Hellenic effort as having high spots of symbolic value, but very limited range of applicability:¹⁸ ‘As a rule,’ he notes, ‘No underlying and widespread

¹⁵ Lk. 16. 19–31. ‘Between us and you a great chasm has been fixed.’ Lk. 16.26.

¹⁶ New York Times. Sat. Nov. 28th 2009. Op-Ed Article ‘Stacking the Deck Against Kids.’ by Bob Herbert. p. A19.

¹⁷ ‘The “love of man for man” found its actual outlet in application to relatives, friends, fellow citizens, or allies.’ Ferguson (1958) pp.107–108.

¹⁸ Monnier (1866).

spirit of *philanthropia* prevailed....The limitations of ancient Greek *philanthropia* were defined by their ideas of responsibility for one's fellow man. Their philanthropy was practiced in a limited field and was directed mostly toward the civilized Hellenes.¹⁹ Constantelos, in an excellent and field-turning study, went on to excavate Byzantine philanthropic establishments, developing the thesis that here at last was a genuinely outreaching altruistic philosophy, which built institutions to exemplify its *theoria*, and can be legitimately contrasted with Hellenic values and social welfare institutions. I certainly do not wish to contradict that overall thesis, but its needs more qualification than he tended to offer, for some of the evidence he presents tends to be somewhat de- contextualized; and it is an area of research that could be fruitfully re-engaged. It is significant to note, for example, that the Byzantine Orphanages cannot simply be elevated as signs of how the Byzantine legal system had kindly regard for orphans as such. Orphans in the legal literature are wealthy minors devoid of fiscal protectors, since their mothers were non-persons for long stretches of time under Roman law, and could not as widows straightforwardly assume the running of the household (*Oikos*) after the death of their husband. Thus, there were often people lining up in the streets to become the guardians of these, and assume the administration of their estates; which is why the state intervened.

What is not said in this regard is just as significant as what is said: for children abandoned on the country roads or in the market places of Byzantium, ordinary poor children whose parents had died, or just did not want them, were not regarded as 'orphaned' simply as abandoned. Their lot, and it must have been the lot of the large majority of invisible ordinary cases, was to be picked up eventually for service as country serfs, prostitutes, or household workers.

Similarly the available beds in the Byzantine hospitals at Constantinople, could have been able to hold, I would estimate, no

¹⁹ Constantelos (1968) p. 11.

more than one in a thousand *per capita*. It is not a negligible thing by any means (given that standard medical care in Byzantium was presumed to be home-based not institution-based); but neither is it the ideal *panacea* we might wish it to be.

The Greek notion of Philanthropia was so infused with the concept of the earthly magnate mimicking divine benefactions among society, as *Philanthropos Soter* that the early Church held it at first in deep suspicion, as part and parcel of the pagan cult of the divine ruler. It was therefore with some audacity that the idea was subverted when applied to Christ, and claimed as the title of the Lord Jesus who in his humble kenosis, his incarnation, brought it to a culmination in laying down his life for his friends. The Johannine passage,²⁰ which describes the kenotic self-sacrifice of Christ, is the basis for the theological connection in the Church of *Philanthropia* with that mutuality of love, which must henceforth describe the Church.

We note that the Hellenic spirit of patronal superiority over another in need, is set aside in the manner in which the Lord-as-Servant elevates his disciples to the status of ‘friends’ (*philoï*) who are able to put into effect what the Father has revealed to the Son, and which in turn has been passed on and understood, so that the disciples can go out and ‘bear fruit that will endure.’ It is thus a different kind of *mimesis*, which is set in place here: a radical turning aside of the spirit of Hellenic Philanthropia acting from privilege, toward a mutuality of communion. Stripped of its aristocratic ideology, therefore, the notion of Philanthropia soon assumed a powerful status in early Christian thought to indicate the act of supreme compassion of God for the world: the stooping down of the Logos to the world in the Incarnation. A key description of this can be found in Titus 3:4–8:

But when the goodness (*chrestotes*) and philanthropy of God our Savior appeared, he

²⁰ Jn 10.15; Jn. 15.13–17.

saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. The saying is sure. I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable things for all.

The connection here between the recognition of the kenotic and liberative Philanthropy of God in Christ and the response of the Church's own philanthropy is a strong one. The Philanthropic work is a mimesis of God's action on earth, just as it was throughout most Hellenic thought, but now the motive is different, profoundly related to the ethical imperative in a way that no writer in the Hellenic philosophical tradition ever connected it. For nowhere in the long vocabulary of pre-Christian Greek Philanthropia did the philosophers attach it strongly to ethics, or develop it as a major branch of ethical theory. It was left in the Greek tradition simply as part of the popular folk tradition of good behavior²¹ and did not enter the vocabulary of the philosophers as such until well into the Middle Platonic period, slightly after the New Testament itself. Justin Martyr,²² and the Thomas traditions²³ are influenced by the combination found in Titus of Philanthropy and merciful kindness (*Chrestótes*). And both reflect on the abundant mercy of the Lord who showed compassion so richly towards humanity in the selfless love of the Christ. Philanthropy, thus, for Christians became exemplary of the perfection of love as manifested in the cosmos; something more public and social than *agape*, (which reflected chiefly the mutuality of charity among members of the Church), and something closely allied to the

²¹ What Luck calls a tradition where only the rhetoricians (not the philosophers) were 'following polite popular ethics when they lauded the virtue of philanthropia: e.g. Demosthenes Orat. 20.165.' Kit-tel-Friedrich (edd). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. vol. 9. pp. 108–109.

²² *Dialogue With Trypho* 47.5

²³ *Acts of Thomas* 123; 156; and 170, the latter designating Jesus as the Messiah Philanthropos.

Church's duty to reflect in the world the impact of the philanthropy of God experienced within it that released it from bondage toward a new sense of compassion and love.

The Alexandrian theologians, Clement²⁴ and Origen²⁵ are the ones who pass these insights on to the Byzantine Church, and set the terms for the way in which Philanthropy is consistently referred to thereafter. It regularly now comes with its paired cognates *Agape* and *Chrestótes*; love and loving kindness, but always connoting a stronger sense of action: love as made manifest to the other in the form of help. The Christocentric context is fixed as basic in the Alexandrian tradition. Christ is the perfect summation of the love and mercy of God to humanity, and his Philanthropy encompasses the entire cosmos in its scope. The philanthropic love that God stirs up in the hearts of the believers is a spiritual force that manifests the gift of salvation, which has been accomplished in the Logos' illumination of his chosen elect. For this reason the works of love within the Church compose an essential part of its manifest charism of closeness to its indwelling Lord. Once again we can conclude that, to all intents and purposes, the sense is urged that Philanthropy is the fifth mark, or note, of the Church's identity: One, holy, catholic, apostolic and philanthropic. In the Church's Philanthropy within the cosmos, the world can recognize the authentic features of the Christ made present to it again in mercy.

The work of the Fathers, is, from the outset (as can be seen in the Cappadocians establishing monastic establishments at Caesarea, which serve a medical function, or Chrysostom's relief work at Constantinople, or the deep traditions of hospitality and medical care for travelers in

²⁴ In *Stromateis* 2.9. Clement defines Philanthropia as God's creative action towards mankind (*Protreptikos* 10; *Quod Dives Salvetur*.3) and as the church's charism of a 'spiritual love of the brotherhood', and a fellow-feeling towards those of the same communion who have been brought together by the Spirit of God. It is for him principally an ecclesial virtue. Its root is in the prior outreach of God to humanity in and through the kenotic incarnation of the Logos. (*Pedagogus* 1.8; *Stromateis* 7.2). St. Athanasius will classicize this approach in his *De Incarnatione*. 1.3; 4.2;

²⁵ Origen *Com Jn.* 2.26. (on *Jn* 1.5) and *Ibid* 1.20. (on *Jn* 1.1.). In the *Contra Celsum* 1.67, Origen describes how the very name of Jesus creates Philanthropy and Kindliness (*chrestotes*) in those upon whom it is manifested. In the *Com in Mt.* 10.1. He describes the supreme Philanthropy of the divine Logos making his way, by incarnation into time and space, to bereft creatures who had utterly lost the capacity to make their way to him

the Egyptian and Palestinian monasteries) a theory that is grounded in the practicalities of applying the Church's 'Treasure-Chest' for social ends. Each one of the varied Byzantine establishments, often imperially endowed and supported, in the form of *Gerocomeia* (old age homes) *Ptochia* (houses for the indigent), *Xenones* (hospices for travelers and sick foreigners) *Orphanotropheia* and *Brephotropheia* (homes for orphaned children and abandoned infants) and *Typhlocomia* (homes for the blind), merits further and deeper study. Constantelos' pioneering work has been partly continued, but there remains more work to be done in cataloguing and describing the regularity with which monastic establishments, the patriarchal administration, and the imperial and aristocratic families, collaborated to constitute a nexus of philanthropic welfare systems in the eastern empire. Here, in the terms of this present study, I wish only to make symbolic reference to a few incidences of how the Byzantines elevated philanthropy as a major term of theological reference; two in particular: how they referred to it in the liturgy, and also how they tried to exemplify it in some of the medical establishments they created.

The Divine Liturgy

Let us begin with the Divine Liturgy as I would certainly posit this as the most extensive spiritual formative force for the ordinary Byzantine, intellectual or non-intellectual, rich or poor, male or female: a theological force of *paideia* repeated throughout centuries of Byzantine Christian civilization. Over innumerable times in the course of each person's civic and ecclesial life the words and phrases of the liturgy were spoken and sung over them, so that they entered into the fabric of the heart and consciousness of each individual in a way that is hardly imaginable for a modern.

St. John Chrysostom shows the classic Byzantine approach to the theology of compassion when he begins with the divine initiative and contrasts the compassion and generosity of God with the immeasurably smaller compass of the human heart's openness to others. The divine mercy, he says, always challenges the paucity of its earthly reflection: the philanthropy of God is like the fathomless waves of the sea, a

profundity of loving outreach in the divine nature that cannot be encompassed by human speech.²⁶ The liturgy that bears his name, represents the divine philanthropy quintessentially in the Prayer of the Trisagion²⁷ that recounts God's prevenient and abundant gifts to humankind. The same sentiment is expressed in the Preface to the Anaphora.²⁸

The Priestly prayer concluding the Litany of the Lord's Prayer entrusts the entire life of the faithful to the Christ Philanthropos:

'To you O Master and Lover of Mankind we commend our entire life and our hope, and we pray, entreat and implore you to count us worthy to share in your heavenly and awesome mysteries.' The prayer immediately after this continues the same sentiment:

'We thank you invisible King, who through your boundless power created all things, and in the abundance of your compassion brought them into being from out of nothing. Master look down on those who have bowed their heads before you... and make smooth the path for our good in what lies before us, according to our several needs: sail with those who sail, journey with those who journey, heal the sick, since you are the Physician of our souls and bodies. Grant this through the grace and compassion and Philanthropy of your Only Begotten Son, with whom you are blessed together with your all Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages.'

The Thanksgiving prayer after the reception of the mysteries continues the selfsame theme: 'We thank you Lord Philanthropos

²⁶ Chrysostom. *Hom Mt.* 18.23.

²⁷ 'O Holy God at rest in the holy place...'

²⁸ It is fitting and right to hymn you, for you brought us from non existence into being and when we had fallen raised us up again and left nothing undone until you had brought us up to heaven...'

benefactor of our souls, that you have counted us worthy this day of your heavenly and immortal mysteries. Make straight our way, make firm our steps, watch over our life, and establish us all.’ The prayer of thanksgiving immediately after the Liturgy concludes describes Philanthropy in these terms:

‘Master and Philanthropos who died for our sake and rose again, and gave us these awe-inspiring Mysteries for the well-being and sanctification of our souls and bodies: grant that these gifts may also bring me healing of soul and body, the repelling of all adversaries, enlightenment in the eyes of my heart, peace in my spiritual powers, faith unashamed, love without pretense, fullness in wisdom, the guarding of your commandments, the increase of your divine grace, and the gaining of your kingdom....that I may no longer live as for myself, but instead for you our Master and benefactor.’

There could be countless other examples brought forward. The common titles of Christ in the Liturgical texts are: *Philanthropos Theos*; *Philoptochos*, *Philanthropos Evergetis*; *Kyrios Philanthropos*, *Eleimon Theos*, and *Philopsychos*. But let it suffice for the present, to sum up this vastly extended liturgical *paideia* about God’s Philanthropy, by noting that it is used as a dense synoptic motif in the ever-recurring Byzantine doxology:²⁹ ‘For you are a Merciful God, and Philanthropos, and to you we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, Now and ever and to the ages of ages.’

The divine liturgy and the prayers of the hours repeated so extensively, so civically, in the life of Byzantium, spread, as it were, a tapestry of a spirituality of *Philanthropia* over the members of the Church, a woven garment that constantly reiterated fundamental

²⁹ As taken for example from the Rite of Anointing and so many other places.

truths about this biblical and patristic doctrine: namely that God's abundant philanthropy was endlessly renewed over creation, that it restored the weak and the failing, and that it called out to the one who was lifted up, to lift up others in mimesis of the selfless love of God. Such was the quintessential synopsis of the Christian religion that the liturgy celebrated as the: 'Awesome Mysteries of Christ.' The healing it envisaged was not a spiritually disembodied one; but a one of body and soul; not an isolated individual phenomenon, but a matter of compassion for all who sail, or journey, or labour, or are sick. The liturgy teaches that it is in the communion of the philanthropic mercy of Christ, first and foremost experienced in powerlessness, that the believer truly experiences the authentic presence of the God who wishes beneficence on all; and who sets this example of philanthropy as the gold standard of discipleship. It was no wonder that the Byzantine Christian immersed in such a *paideia* was suffused with this notion, and grew up with it inculcated as the primary aspect of God: so much so that by the Paleologan period it was standard to inscribe the Christ icons with the title: *Christos Philanthropos*; and the Crosses with the superscription: *Philanthropos Theos*.

The Hospital as Symbol of the Church

How far did this mystical doctrine of Christ's proximity to his Church in philanthropy carry over into a program of actual philanthropic work in Byzantine daily life? I want to end here with a very short review of some of the principles evoked in the establishment of houses of philanthropy in the capital. These few symbolic remarks simply point up the need for a full-scale ethical study that can combine the Byzantine social evidence with the religious premises that underlay it.

In one sense we can take for granted the operation of charity from the basis of the monastic houses, which regularly offered forms of support for the indigent of the various localities. The offering of hospitality and poor relief is so fundamentally structured into the monastic *Typika* that it can often be taken for granted. But the large extent of monastic establishments in the capital at Constantinople made it a unique center of urban asceticism, and thus provided within this Queen of Cities

at least, a considerable ring of institutions where the indigent were looked after with some stability. The hospital attached to the Stoudios monastery was renowned in the city for the quality of its care.

In Justinian's time the Xenodochion, or hospital, of Sampson, located between the Hagia Sophia cathedral and the Church of Saint Irene, which had been functioning for some time, was burned down in the Nika revolt.³⁰ Justinian rebuilt it on a grander scale and endowed it with an annual income so that it could extend its range of services to the sick of the capital. From this time onward Byzantine hospitals began to function proactively as centers where doctors assembled together professionally to practice healing arts on sick who were brought to the hospital. It proved to be a major stimulus to the medical capacity and skill of the profession. In Byzantine hospitals, unlike many of their medieval western counterparts, the treatment of the inmate was undertaken with concerted action.

As his own foundation, and that of Theodora, Justinian also established the two Xenones, hospices, of The House of Isidore, and the House of Arcadios.³¹ It is recorded that he also constructed large hospitals at Antioch³² and at Jerusalem. In the latter case he responded favorably to the petition of the ascetic St. Saba, which the pilgrimages to Jerusalem left many arriving visitors sick and exhausted and in need of special care. In this instance we know that Justinian supervised the building of a centre that contained two hundred beds and was endowed with an imperial gift of annual income of 1850 gold solidi for its maintenance (a very large sum of money).

Justinian's successor Justin II (565–578) established the Zoticon hospital for Lepers (Leprocomion) in the peripheral suburb of Irion across the Bosphorus; probably on the hill where Pera began in the Galata region. It was headed by the Imperial Protovestiaris Zotikos,

³⁰ Procopios. *Buildings*. 1.2.15.

³¹ Procopios. *Buildings*. 1.2. 17

³² Procopios. *Buildings*. 2.10. 80.

who had served Justinian and then retired, and from him it took its name ultimately. The first foundation was burned by Slav raiders in the early seventh century, rebuilt in wood by Heraclios soon after in 624,³³ restored and expanded in the tenth century by Constantine Porphyrogennitos³⁴ (913–959) and rebuilt and expanded again by John Tzimisce (969–976) who left half his personal property to it in his will.³⁵ We hear of it again in the eleventh century when an earthquake destroyed the buildings and caused emperor Romanos Argyros to rebuild it in 1032.

Other hospitals are known to have been established by Constantine Monomachos IX, next to the ‘Church of St. George.’³⁶ In each case we are, doubtless, dealing with what we today would regard as the partial re-distribution of imperial largesse gained from an economy of a massively repressive type. In this respect it is important not to allow the rhetorical excesses of the sources to carry us away with their praises of the beneficence of the rulers.

One such example of fulsome rhetoric along these lines is the panegyric of Anna Comnena for her father emperor Alexios in the eleventh century who built and endowed hospitals in the by now classical imperial manner. What is interesting, however, above and beyond the state propaganda, is the rhetoric that constantly associates the Emperor’s philanthropy as an earthly *mimesis* of that of Christ himself. The *Basileus*, therefore, becomes the God-Beloved, *Theophilestatos*, precisely to the extent that he iconizes the mercy of Christ to the people.

In this sense the Byzantine religious system reined in its reliance on the archaic Hellenic sense of the superior patron dispensing largesse and retained its New Testament heritage concerning the duty of all humanity to serve the other in mercy. In other words the Church

³³ George Cedrenos. *Historiarum Compendium*. 1. 698–699.

³⁴ Theophanes Continuatus. *Chronographia*. 449. 4.

³⁵ Leo the Deacon. *History*. 6.5.

³⁶ R. Janin Geogr. *Eccles* p. 78.

allowed the emperor to iconize Christ's Philanthropy, but only on a more spectacularly larger scale than all other Christians were expected to iconize that mercy. He was not elevated above others in his capacity for philanthropy, merely expected to demonstrate that philanthropy was a fundamental religious duty to his people.

It may seem a small difference in the massively unbalanced economic systems of the ancient world, but I think it is a significant one: and points to the way eastern Christianity, although availing itself regularly of imperial and aristocratic donations, never reduced philanthropy to the status of merely charitable patronage; but held to the archetype of philanthropic exercises as an icon of kenosis, expected as a response in duty to suffering humanity whom God elevated as particular occasions of his concern.

The twelfth-century hospital of the Pantocrator was one of the most prestigious of the hospitals of the capital.³⁷ It was founded in 1136 by John Comnenos II.³⁸ Its *Typikon* survives, as do extensive buildings, recently restored from dilapidation and closed as a mosque to reopen as a museum. There were five clinics operating at the Pantocrator: three of them for special treatments (a ward of ten beds for surgery; a ward of eight beds for ophthalmic and intestinal illness; a ward of twelve beds for gynecological problems, which was staffed by women medics), and two larger clinics for general illnesses with twenty seven beds in each. It is clear from the extensive and detailed instructions in the Pantocrator *Typikon* that treatment of the diseases was actively pursued, and cures expected. The staff are constantly urged by the terms of the establishment to treat the sick as if they were entertaining Christ himself. It is an extraordinary testimony to a civic sense of philanthropy developed beyond anything else comparable in medieval society. This testimony is even beyond modernity in some respects as a philanthropy incarnated and concretized in particular instantiations.

Of course, a phenomenon like the imperial relief houses at

³⁷ See Constantelos fn 105 p. 171

³⁸ See Constantelos p. 171.

Constantinople relied on an economic system that could hardly be sustained over the long term and one which fell back progressively as the loss of territories in the hinterland reduced the realities of Byzantine taxation to a small circle around Constantinople itself. The legacy it left, however, is a challenge for the eastern Church, which for the first time in half a millennium (excepting the case of Russia) finds itself in a position to do more than feed itself, more than hold on to survival in a hostile environment: a Church that has once more, even unexpectedly, come into freedom and the beginnings of an affluent society—the new imperium of the West.

The Byzantine legacy offers us paradigms not simply to reproduce but to emulate in new conditions and with new understandings. Henceforth superior patronage will not be enough. The Church will never again, perhaps, be entrusted by the wider society with the sole care of its philanthropic missions. But the Church did propose to society in times past, and can do so again, that the starting point of all philanthropic action is an anthropology of love; a divine anthropology; an iconic philosophy that values all men and women as symbolic and transcendent images of God incarnate. The Church was able with that new vision of the dignity of humankind, to steer away from charity as merely a patronizing emergency relief to token cases of an underclass no one really wanted to liberate.

So much of philanthropy in our modern world has returned to the pre-Christian Hellenic model. It is motivated by concomitant patterns of guilt, accompanied by loathing and neglect for the marginalized (a state of affairs so brilliantly satirized by Kafka's image of Gregor the cockroach in his tale *The Metamorphosis*). Can there be in this archaeology of Byzantine Christian Philanthropy the basis for a return to a much more encompassing vision of energetic rebuilding of social structures on the basis of remaking a sense of the mystical dignity of the person? This task is deeply theological. It is equally a pressing social demand. The two things are not incompatible but have not yet been sufficiently considered in modern Orthodox thought. Our task today is one of extensive reconstruction.

The task is not a lost Byzantium that we need to rebuild. We need a sense of how to restore to an Orthodoxy, which has been in servitude for centuries, the sense that philanthropy is not an added extra. Philanthropy is as significant an aspect of ecclesial identity as the other four, more commonly recognized marks of the Church. To its oneness, its holiness, its catholicity, and its apostolicity, we need to learn that there can be no true Orthodox Church without its ever-manifested philanthropy.

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The Concept of Philanthropy in the Early Syrian Fathers

Jill Gather

Philanthropy implies love of humankind and the wish to improve the welfare of one's neighbor, often through charitable deeds or donations. The philanthropic mission therefore also implies relatedness, because it depends on a setting in which the needs of fellow beings are discerned and met. The understanding that philanthropy and communal existence are intimately linked is at the heart of this article.

Given the close association of philanthropic work and interrelatedness, a discussion of the former notion within the context of Oriental Christianity may, at first sight, appear a rather hopeless enterprise, especially if considering the more extreme manifestations of early Syrian ascetical practices, which are reported in historical sources. Passages from texts, such as Theodoret of Cyrrhus' *History of the Monks of Syria*,¹ Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca*,² or Sozomen's *Church History*,³ conjure up the image of Syrian ascetics living in remote, isolated areas, untouched by civilization: How could this lifestyle be reconciled with the philanthropic ideal? Can ascetics who are described as living off roots and wild fruits,⁴ wholly exposed to the elements and in harmony only with God and wild animals, be said to contribute to the well-being of their contemporaries?

In addition, the peculiar ascetical institution for which the Syrian Orient is renowned, the Stylite, envisions a holy person perched on top of a pillar, seemingly oblivious to human bonds and to the cares of fellow

¹ Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks of Syria*, trans. R. M. Price (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1985).

² Palladius, *The Lausiaca History*, trans. Robert T. Meyer (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965).

³ Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History*, trans. E. Walford (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855).

⁴ Sebastian Brock, *Syrian Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), pp. 11-12; Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 332-334.

beings.⁵ How does the solitary virtuoso, who is said to have dominated the scene of late antique Syria, fit into a discussion on social welfare?⁶

The Syrian Orient was home to followers of dualistic teachings, most notably the teachings of Marcion, Mani, and Bar Daysan,⁷ and it is therefore not uncommon to encounter world-denying tendencies in early Syrian church writings. For instance, the *Acts of Thomas*, which were very much a product of this particular ascetical milieu, advocate a severe stance toward human embodiment, as well as worldly involvement, and, for this reason, enjoyed considerable popularity amongst dualistic thinkers. Writings such as the Acts of Thomas encouraged Christians to live as “strangers,” “foreigners,” or “passing travelers”⁸ in the world, thereby lending weight to the assumption that the Syrian ascetic was too isolated and eccentric a person to engage in philanthropic relief.

This understanding, however, is but one part of a larger, more complex picture. The present article wishes to provide a more nuanced reading of ascetical existence of early Syrian Christians. By considering a small number of writings produced by fourth-century ascetics (rather than by later historians), an attempt is made to discern the degree to which the existence of these ascetics was embedded within the local community and shaped by a loving concern for fellow beings.⁹

In the hope, then, of showing that the lifestyle of Syrian spiritual pilgrims was less secluded than some sources might suggest, an inquiry into the works of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage (died c. 345), and Ephrem of Nisibis (c. 306-373) is of interest. The writings of both theologians are notable for showing few traces of Greek thought forms and, hence, for

⁵ Sidney H. Griffith, “Asceticism in the Church of Syria: The Hermeneutics of Early Syrian Monasticism,” pp. 220-245, in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 220.

⁶ Brock (1984), p. 13.

⁷ Griffith (1995), p. 220.

⁸ Brock (1984), p. 9.

⁹ Within this context, it is helpful to note that five Syriac texts which were previously attributed to Ephrem and which describe the extreme and highly individualistic lives of Syrian ascetics have been shown to stem from a later period; see Griffith (1995), p. 222.

being genuine representatives of a Semitic Christianity, which was still largely un-Hellenized.¹⁰ They are also invaluable for revealing a native Syrian tradition of the consecrated life, which was in existence before the Egyptian-inspired form of monasticism began to spread into Syria toward the latter part of the fourth century.¹¹ This indigenous form of monasticism, also termed proto-monasticism,¹² was practiced by the *ihīdāyē*, or “single ones,” who dedicated themselves to the pursuit of divine intimacy through a life of celibacy and holiness. Aphrahat and Ephrem are believed to have been members of this ascetical tradition, and a brief preliminary discussion of its salient features helps to better understand the historical context that gave rise to the writings of these two early Christian theologians.

The term *ihīdāyā* has a variety of connotations and can mean “singular,” “individual,” “unique,” “single-minded,” “undivided in heart,” “single,” “celibate,” as well as “Only-Begotten.”¹³ At this point, it is important to establish that the Syriac term and its possible rendition as “single” and “celibate” does not imply a solitary lifestyle on the part of the person to whom the term refers. The *ihīdāyē* were neither grouped in separate communities in the style of Pachomian monasticism, nor did they live as semi-anchorites or hermits in remote parts of the countryside, away from towns.¹⁴ Instead, adherents of this ascetical tradition lived in small, informal groups in the midst of the larger Christian community.¹⁵ Most likely, the *ihīdāyē* were called by this name because they were

¹⁰ Sebastian Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987), p. xi.

¹¹ Brock (1987), p. xxi.

¹² Brock (1987), p. xxi.

¹³ Brock (1987), p. xxii.

¹⁴ Alexander Golitzin, “Dionysius Areopagita: A Christian Mystic?” Based on a lecture given by invitation of the Lumen Christi Society at the Faculty of Theology, University of Chicago, on February 19th, 1999, <http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/Lumxida.html>.

¹⁵ Brock (1987), p. xxi; Vincent L. Wimbush, ed., *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 7. Griffith suggests that celibates were free to choose their own living arrangements within the local community; see Griffith (1995), p. 237. Dempsey draws on Brock’s research and notes that some *ihīdāyē* lived in their parent’s home, while others lived a communal life in groups of two or three; see Deirdre Ann Dempsey, “The Phrase ‘Purity of Heart’ in Early Syriac Writings,” pp. 31-44, in *Purity of the Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honor of Juana Raasch*, ed. Harriet Luckman and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 36, n. 22.

“single-minded” or “undivided in heart” in their devotion to the “Only-Begotten,” Christ, to whom they were betrothed at baptism.¹⁶

For the *ihīdāyē*, or the *bnay/bnāt qyāmā*, the “sons/daughters of the covenant” as they were also called, baptism marked a decisive moment in their religious existence. At this point, spiritual seekers clothed themselves in the heavenly *Īhīdāyā*, the divine Bridegroom, and committed to a life designed to reflect the purity of the angelic community.¹⁷ In this lifetime, Christ’s followers hoped to anticipate the splendor with which Adam had been endowed before the fall and which could be fully realized only at the resurrection.¹⁸ By dedicating themselves to God with a singleness of purpose, the *ihīdāyē* were incorporated into the unity of the body of Christ and acquired a new identity given “in the Spirit.” This new identity allowed them to share in the Lord’s divine sonship; it introduced the possibility of transcending the many limitations of earthly existence and of meeting fellow beings as equals.¹⁹ As Aphrahat writes in his sixth Demonstration, the earliest reference to the institution of the covenant, there were to be neither male and female (we note the Greek text has the *kai* copula, not an “or” here), neither bond nor free among the *bnay qyāmā*. All followers of the “Single One” were equal in the eyes of the Most High.²⁰

For the *ihīdāyē*, then, the ultimate goal was to emulate Christ in a spirit of equality and love. This attempt to replicate the heavenly

¹⁶ Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 32. See also Rebecca Krawiec, “Asceticism,” pp. 764-785, in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 770.

¹⁷ With the intention of anticipating the marriageless life of the angels on earth, the *ihīdāyē* dedicated themselves to the celibate life. Hence, married couples lived a life of continence. Brock notes that the term *ihīdāyā* normally included two categories of people, the *bthule*, “virgins,” both men and women, and the *qaddishe*, or married people who had renounced marital intercourse; see Sebastian Brock, *Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990), pp. 26-30.

¹⁸ Brock (1987), pp. xxi-xxv.

¹⁹ John D. Zizioulas, “The Early Christian Community,” pp. 23-43, in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroads, 1997), pp. 27-30.

²⁰ Aphrahat, *Demonstration 6.6*, in *NPNF II.13*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 367, cited in Griffith (1995), p. 225.

realm by overcoming the corruption and division of human life did not, however, imply that they were unavailable to the surrounding community and oblivious of its needs. On the contrary, the wish to attain angelic purity and Christ-like perfection propelled the *īhīdāyē* to engage ever more fully in the world, so as to alleviate suffering and advance peace. Their link to the community of the church was firm, and although adherents of this ascetical tradition were not usually members of the clergy, this occasionally could be the case.²¹ With this information on the institution of the *bnay qyāmā* in mind, it is now of interest to turn our attention to Aphrahat's *Demonstration on Prayer* and to examine the author's commitment to Christian philanthropy.

The Persian sage placed great emphasis on inwardness and silent prayer. In the opening paragraph of his fourth *Demonstration*, he writes that, "silence united to a mind that is sincere is better than the loud voice of someone crying out."²² Aphrahat urges members of his audience to raise their hearts upward, to lower their eyes downward, and to retreat into themselves the moment they start praying.²³ If the Lord taught his disciples to "enter the chamber and pray to your Father in secret" (Matt 6:6), what could he have meant other than that they withdraw into the heart and close the door, that is, the mouth?²⁴ Aphrahat invests silent prayer with such power as to suggest that it enabled Jacob to open the gate of heaven, Moses to behold the Shekinah of God and part the sea, and Hannah to conceive and bear Samuel.²⁵

Yet despite Aphrahat's emphasis on the withdrawal into the inner chamber of the heart and on the silent contemplation of God,

²¹ Griffith (1995), p. 223. Aphrahat seems to have been such an exception to the rule. Although little is known of his life, a surviving synodical letter written by the theologian to the bishops in Persia denouncing clerical abuses suggests that he held a high-ranking position in the Persian church and may have been a bishop. For more information on Aphrahat's life, see Robert Lavenant, "Aphraates," in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, 2 vols, ed. Angelo Di Berardino (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), vol. 1, p. 54; John A. McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville, KE: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), v.s. "Aphrahat," p. 19.

²² Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 4.1, in Brock (1987), p. 5.

²³ Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 4.13, in Brock (1987), p. 17.

²⁴ Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 4.10, in Brock (1987), p. 14.

²⁵ Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 4.4-9, in Brock (1987), pp. 8-14

it is important to note that the theologian was equally committed to involvement in communal outreach. For him, prayer and the pursuit of purity of heart through charitable deeds were linked intimately. Aphrahat explores this link in the following lines:

First of all, it was through Abel's purity of heart that his offering was acceptable before God, while that of Cain was rejected. . . . And the fruits of Cain's heart later testified and showed that he was full of deceit, when he killed his brother: for what his mind had conceived, his hands brought to birth. But Abel's purity of heart constitutes his prayer.²⁶

The Persian sage equates prayer with forgiveness, with reconciliation, and with that which human hands bring to birth, (i.e., with deeds). An interior offering of prayer is acceptable to God if it is presented by individuals who are capable of forgiveness, have been reconciled to their neighbors, and engage in social welfare. Just as the fruits of Abel's compassionate heart constitute his prayer, our acts of goodwill constitute our prayer. Aphrahat does not distinguish between prayer and love in action:

Now it says in the prophet: *This is my rest; give rest to the tired* (Is 28:12). Therefore effect this 'rest' of God, o man, and you will have no need to say 'forgive me'. Give rest to the weary, visit the sick, make provision for the poor: this is indeed prayer, as I shall explain to you, my beloved. All the time that someone effects the 'rest' of God, that is prayer.²⁷

With these words, we arrive at the heart of Aphrahat's understanding of philanthropy. Philanthropy and prayer are inseparable. Giving rest to the weary, visiting the sick, and making provision for the poor is prayer par excellence. It is the quintessential means of acting in accordance with the divine will. Philanthropy allows humans to combat sin and to affect the "rest" of God:

²⁶ Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 4.2, in Brock (1987), p. 6.

²⁷ Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 4.14, in Brock (1987), p. 19.

Watch out, my beloved, lest, when some opportunity of ‘giving rest’ to the will of God meets you, you say ‘the time for prayer is at hand. I will pray and then act’. And while you are seeking to complete your prayer, that opportunity for ‘giving rest’ will escape from you: you will be incapacitated from doing the will and ‘rest’ of God, and it will be through your prayer that you will be guilty of sin. Rather, effect the ‘rest’ of God, and that will constitute prayer.²⁸

According to Aphrahat, then, all activities undertaken in the hope of “giving rest” to God by improving the welfare of fellow beings denote prayer. Prayer implies the continuous reaching out to neighbors. It can take place in the midst of worldly turmoil and in moments of seemingly great inconsequence. Aphrahat illustrates that prayer is most pleasing to God in precisely such moments:

Or again, suppose you go on a journey during the winter and you meet rain and snow and get exhausted from cold. If once again you run into a friend of yours at the time of prayer and he answers you in the same way, and you die of cold, what profit will his prayer have, seeing that he has not alleviated someone in trouble? For our Lord, in his description of the time of judgement when he separated out those who were to stand on his right and on his left, said to those on his right: “I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, I was sick and you visited me, I was a stranger and you welcomed me in” (Mt 25:35). He spoke in the same sort of way to those on his left, and because they had done none of these things, He sent them into torment, while those on the right He sent into the kingdom.²⁹

Given this understanding of prayer, it is not surprising that Aphrahat and fellow *ihīdāyē* chose to adopt a lifestyle that called for the striking of a balance between inwardness, contemplation, and silence, on the

²⁸ Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 4.14, in Brock (1987), p. 20.

²⁹ Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 4.15, in Brock (1987), pp. 20-21.

one hand, and communal outreach on the other hand. The Persian sage insisted that genuine prayer implied the readiness to please God through constant acts of mercy and kindness. Pure prayer described an attitude of love that was expressed in life and action rather than through specific religious practices.³⁰ For him, formal prayer was a means to an end. Although it was an essential feature of Christian existence and not to be disregarded,³¹ it was never the goal of ascetical strivings. The true goal of the Christian life was to discover the presence of divine love in oneself, in one another, and in the world at large; and to convey this love to members of the community. A vital means of doing so was to engage in the philanthropic mission.

The essentially relational nature of the early Syrian ascetical lifestyle and its philanthropic orientation is reflected also in the work of Ephrem. Although Ephrem did not expound on the importance of philanthropy within a specific context, such as prayer, a brief discussion of his writings supports the proposition that members of the covenant were invested in social welfare.

To begin with, Ephrem, a deacon and catechetical teacher of the church of Nisibis, was very likely an *ihūdāyā*. As seen earlier, this piece of information confirms that members of the covenant occasionally held pastoral offices and that Syrian proto-monasticism, unlike Egyptian monasticism, was essentially a village or urban phenomenon.³² The early native Syrian tradition of the consecrated life flourished in a setting in which the ability to imitate Christ by reaching out to fellow beings was at all times a given. Ephrem declared a deep commitment to philanthropic deeds in his *Hymns on Paradise*. In one of the hymns, he indicates that the true imitator of the heavenly *ihūdāyā*, the philanthropist, will be richly rewarded in paradise:

³⁰ Juana Raasch, "The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and Its Sources (IV)," *Studia Monastica* (1969): 272-282, cited in Dempsey (1999), pp. 37-38.

³¹ Hence, he writes: "I have written to you, my beloved, to the effect that a person should do the will of God, and that constitutes prayer. That is how prayer seems to me to excel. Nevertheless, just because I have said this to you, do not neglect prayer," *Demonstration* 4.16, in Brock (1987), p. 21.

³² Brock (1990), p. 26; Griffith (1995), p. 237.

Whoever has washed the feet of the saints
will himself be cleansed in that dew;
to the hand that has stretched out
to give to the poor
will the fruits of the trees
themselves stretch out;
the very footsteps of him
who visited the sick in their affliction
do the flowers make haste
to crown with blossoms,
jostling to see
which can be first to kiss his steps.³³

A further indication of Ephrem's philanthropic sentiment is provided in the *Nisibene Hymns*. In the seventh hymn, the theologian praises Bishop Abraham of Nisibis (361-363) for his single-minded devotion to the protection and welfare of his flock. It is notable that his flock seems to have included members of the covenant, a further indication that some formal ecclesiastical organization did indeed exist among the *bnay qvāmā*.³⁴

There is none that envies thy election,
for meek is thy headship;
there is none angered by thy rebuke,
for thy word sows peace;
there is none terrified by thy voice,
for pleasant is thy visitation;
there is none that groans against thy yoke,
for it labors instead of our neck,
and lightens the burden of our souls.³⁵

Like Abraham, who labored for his community by sowing peace,

³³ Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* 7.17, in Brock (1990), p. 125.

³⁴ Griffith (1995), p. 237.

³⁵ Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns* 19.9, in Schaff and Wace (1956), p. 189.

nursing the sick, and caring for the poor, Ephrem sought to live the philanthropic ideal. His commitment to this ideal is best conveyed, perhaps, by his own actions. Emphatic that goodly deeds are more valuable than the hearing of ten thousand words,³⁶ the theologian heeded this maxim by engaging in charitable work; most notably he aided contemporaries during a famine, which struck Edessa toward the end of his life. An account of the event is presented in Palladius' *Lausiatic History*:

A dire famine weighed down on the town of Edessa, and in his compassion for the condition of the people who were wasting away and perishing, observing that those who were hoarding grain in their storehouses had no sense of pity, he [Ephrem] addressed them as follows: "How long will you fail to pay attention to God's compassion, allowing your wealth to be corrupted, to the condemnation and damnation of your own souls?" They decided among themselves to say to him, "We have no one we can trust with providing for those who are dying of starvation; for everyone is dishonest, and will act in an underhand way." Ephrem replied, "What opinion do you have of me?" for he had a great reputation with everyone, in a quite genuine and unfeigned way. They answered, "We know you are a man of God." "In that case," he said, "entrust me with the business; I will devote myself to becoming a hostel manager." Having received some money he began to shut off suitable areas in the streets, and saw to the provision of three hundred beds; some of these were to be used for burying those who had died; while other were for those who still had some hope of life to lie upon. Furthermore, he also had all those suffering from starvation in the villages brought in and given beds. He spent every day in constant attendance on them, seeing to their every need with great caring, making use of the means available to him. This he did joyfully, with the help of those whom he had asked to assist in the matter.³⁷

³⁶ Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns* 18.9, in Schaff and Wace (1956), p. 188.

³⁷ Brock (1990), pp. 13-14. According to Brock, who provides a translation of this account, there is no reason to doubt the historicity of this narrative; see Brock (1990), p. 15.

Hopefully, the above discussion of Ephrem's views on philanthropy, although brief, has confirmed and strengthened the observation that the celibate life of the *ihīdāyē* was invested greatly in the welfare of fellow humans. Every *ihīdāyā* chose the means by which he or she could be of greatest benefit to the local community. Although the imitation of Christ and the attempt to anticipate the angelic life in the here and now demanded that the "single ones" become strangers to the world and its many distractions,³⁸ this prerequisite did not call for the physical withdrawal from village or city life. Aphrahat and Ephrem viewed involvement in the urban Christian community as invaluable to the cultivation of divine-human fellowship. Both early Syrian ascetics were convinced that the reaching out to neighbors in an accepting, loving, and generous manner foreshadowed the peace, equality, and love of the heavenly realm. By giving rest to their contemporaries, the *ihīdāyē* gave rest to God. They offered the purest of sacrifices and drew uniquely close to Deity.

A further ascetical work of the early Syrian church, which pays close attention to the notion of philanthropy, is the *Book of Steps*, or *Liber Graduum*.³⁹ The text is believed to have been written toward the late fourth or the early fifth century, most likely in the midst of a wider, secular community.⁴⁰ The latter feature is noteworthy, especially if one bears in mind that, by then, Egyptian monasticism and its emphasis on the physical withdrawal of spiritual pilgrims had begun to spread into Syria. Hence, the *Liber Graduum*, like the writings of Aphrahat and Ephrem, provides insight into the alleviation of suffering experienced, first and foremost, by humans living within an urban setting.⁴¹

Throughout the *Book of Steps*, the author pays close attention to the explication of two distinct paths of spiritual advancement, the path of the upright, whose followers practice the small commandments of

³⁸ See, for example, Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 6.1, in Schaff and Wace (1956), p. 362.

³⁹ *The Book of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum*, trans. Robert A. Kitchen and Martien F. G. Parmentier (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2004).

⁴⁰ Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. 1.

⁴¹ Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. lxxxii.

the Gospel, and the path of the perfect, which is pursued by Christians who abide by the great commandments and who embrace the complete renunciation of family, marriage, and property.⁴² The minor commandments are the milk, which is given to infants too weak to digest the major commandments of love and perfection, the solid food of the fully grown.⁴³ A closer look at these two expressions of Christian existence open up a better understanding of the prominence given therein to philanthropic relief.

As laid out by the author of this work, Christians who follow the small commandments devote themselves to the pursuit of active service. Until they have gained sufficient strength to enter the great road of the major commandments, which leads to the city of the saints,⁴⁴ they feed the poor, care for the needy, and make peace with their enemies. The upright “clothe the naked, just as our Lord said. They open the door to the strangers on a cold or hot day, and they have pity upon [other] people as upon themselves.”⁴⁵

The entire existence of the upright is dictated by social welfare and by the call to give liberally to everyone, not withholding possession, food, drink, or clothing.⁴⁶ Immersed in mundane, every-day existence, these Christians attempt to strike a balance between involvement in trade and commerce, on the one hand, and the quest for purification on the other hand. Christians pursuing this particular lifestyle take “one wife as is appropriate for Uprightness and for the ways of the world, treating well every person as they desire that everyone should treat them well, in as much as possible.”⁴⁷ Wealth is permissible, as long as it is used to benefit the greater good.⁴⁸

⁴² Brock (1989), p. 43.

⁴³ *Book of Steps* 19.35, in Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. 205.

⁴⁴ *Book of Steps* 19.35, in Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. 205.

⁴⁵ *Book of Steps* 13.3, in Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. 130.

⁴⁶ *Book of Steps* 13.4, in Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. 130.

⁴⁷ *Book of Steps* 13.5, in Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. 131.

⁴⁸ Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. xxxix.

Despite the nobility of this way of life, the author deems a person in pursuit of uprightness “inferior to the Perfect because he has not renounced the world and become sanctified and taken up his Cross, gazing upon heaven and understanding the truth that is the perfect Cross of our Lord.”⁴⁹ The perfect alone can hope to enter the heavenly church and to worship God in the company of the angels. Only they can be genuine imitators of Christ. Bearing in mind that the perfect commit to an existence of complete renunciation, one might wonder to how great a degree these Christians are able to pursue the philanthropic mission. Can social welfare hold a pride of place in the lives of spiritual pilgrims, who wander from place to place without permanent domicile and who depend on alms?⁵⁰

Although practical charity does indeed feature little in their existence, the perfect exemplify the philanthropic ideal. While poor and devoid of material means to promote the well being of their neighbors, they are of such purity and kindness of heart as to sow love, patience, and gentleness wherever they go. Indeed, the author refers to the perfect as “lambs among wolves,”⁵¹ who know no boundaries, no social statuses, no objects of avoidance. They are “disciples of love,”⁵² who enter distant cities without feeling shame at the profanity of urban life.⁵³ Filled with the Spirit, these holy men and women are like the angels whose spiritual prowess enables them to increase the welfare of contemporaries by teaching and by reconciling warring factions. Since the perfect have full knowledge of the Lord, “they are all things with all people and know how to instruct every person as it is helpful to him. . . . [B]ecause they travel to many places, [the perfect] speak to each one the word that is helpful to him and leave them for another place.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Book of Steps* 7.2, in Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. 66.

⁵⁰ Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. li.

⁵¹ *Book of Steps* 19.30, in Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. 202.

⁵² In *Discourse* 30, the author suggests a distinction between the perfect and the disciples of love, the latter being on an intermediary level between uprightness and perfection. Yet as noted by Kitchen and Parmentier, the behavior of both sets of Christians seems barely distinguishable; Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. xlv.

⁵³ Brown (1988), p. 335.

⁵⁴ *Book of Steps* 19.31, in Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. 203.

Ascetics pursuing the path of perfection are guided by the ultimate commandment, the commandment of love:

Love loves all, which the apostle extolled more than all [other] good gifts. It is acquired by these major commandments, and that Perfection, which our Lord said is like the angels, is accomplished on this difficult and narrow road.⁵⁵

As indicated throughout the *Book of Steps*, the road of love and perfection is narrow. Few people can hope to traverse it. Yet although narrow, no one walks in isolation. The perfect are neither cloistered monks nor solitary hermits. They live the angelic life in the midst of the manifest church and its community of faith, with all of its shortcomings and conflicts.⁵⁶ Within this setting, they express their philanthropic sentiment by mediating disputes and by teaching the gospel of compassion. Following the model of Christ and his heavenly community, their greatest call is to possess unlimited love for their sin-ridden companions. The perfect wish to die so that sinners might live.⁵⁷

Regardless of their respective stages of spiritual advancement, then, members of this early Syrian community based their existence on philanthropic activity. Concern for their contemporaries provided the upright and the perfect, each according to their abilities, with the opportunity to imitate Christ and to deepen communion with God. The pursuit of social welfare, a pursuit closely tied to the urban church, was an essential means of catching a glimpse, in the here and now, of paradise restored.

The sentiments conveyed in the works of Aphrahat, Ephrem, and in the *Book of Steps* are remarkably consistent. None of the three authors could conceive of the quest for God without the church and its network of social relationships. The local parish provided the context in which

⁵⁵ *Book of Steps* 19.36, in Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), pp. 205-6.

⁵⁶ Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. 1.

⁵⁷ Kitchen and Parmentier (2004), p. xliii.

the suffering of fellow beings was alleviated. Here, the philanthropic mission was anchored. The love that early Syrian ascetics harbored for their contemporaries and, indeed, for the entire created order, was deep. If the world's beauty was marred and its people divided, this state of affairs could be rectified by taking the community of the angels as model and by committing to a life that emphasized interrelatedness and love in action. Neither Aphrahat, nor Ephrem, nor the author of the *Liber Graduum* ventured to propose that the pursuit of divine union called for the withdrawal from the local community and the curtailing of social outreach. All three theologians believed the urban philanthropic mission to be an invaluable means of being on the most intimate of terms with Deity. They were convinced that social welfare allowed Christians to do the will of God in the midst of worldly existence and to do so throughout the day, every day.

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Philanthropia as a Social Reality of Askesis and Theosis in Gregory the Theologian's Oration: On the Love of the Poor

Vicki Petrakis

Introduction

In his Oration 12, *To His Father, when he had Entrusted to him the Care of the Church of Nazianzus*, St. Gregory the Theologian delivered the following concerning the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit:

For how long shall we hide the lamp under the bushel, and withhold from others the full knowledge of the Godhead, when it ought to be now put upon the lampstand and give light to all churches and souls and to the whole fullness of the world, no longer by means of metaphors, or intellectual sketches, but by distinct declaration?¹

Indeed no more metaphors! “Poets speak reasoned truth not metaphor”.² This is the time of the indwelling, the time of the Holy Spirit to make His home in the human person.³ If Gregory’s assertions of the full consubstantial deity of the Spirit sounded as a “startling

¹ Gregory Nazianzus, Or. 12.6 in *Select Orations of St. Gregory Nazianzen Sometime Archbishop of Constantinople*, trans. J.E. Swallow and C.G. Browne, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. H. Wace P. Schaff. (W.M. B, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, [1974]), 247.

² Gregory Nazianzus, Or. 28.29, in *On God and Christ St. Gregory Nazianzus The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, trans. L. Wickham. (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, New York 2002), 62.

³ Cf. Or. 2.97, Op. Cit Browne & Swallow, 224; Or. 31.26, Ibid. Wickham, 137; Or. 31.27 in Wickham, 138; Or. 34.12, Browne & Swallow, 337; Gregory Nazianzus, Or. 41.5, in *Festal Orations Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, trans. N. V. Harrison in *Popular Patristic Series*, ed. John Behr, (SVS Press, 2008), 147; Or. 41.11, Browne & Swallow, 383.

thunderclap”,⁴ his other concern over the human person becoming ‘god’⁵ would no doubt have delivered the concise thunderbolt to awaken one into the presence of the Holy Spirit. “If the Holy Ghost is not God, let Him first be made God, and then let Him deify me His equal.”⁶ Was there a message that Gregory was attempting to deliver to ears perhaps not quite ready to understand: Holy Spirit, gods, union, theosis language? His own life concerning “regret and enthusiasm”⁷ marks a familiar story, one course suggested flights, desert and spiritual healing, the other to be steered forward, work for the common welfare, “...and bring to God a people for His own possession”.⁸ The story of *Philanthropia* or love for one’s neighbour in Gregory’s Oration 14, *On the Love of the Poor* is a story of friendship; a friendship between God making Himself known and uniting with His people.⁹ It is out of this friendship/relationship that philanthropy as an ethical metaphor of deification emerges vividly.¹⁰ Yet for Gregory *philanthropia* was no metaphor, it was a living reality of love in action and the expression of a union between the Holy Spirit and the human person.

The present article will attempt to examine Gregory the Theologian’s practical notion of philanthropy as expressed in his Oration 14, *On the Love of the Poor*. It will examine *philanthropia* from a theological perspective of intimate communion between God and his ‘gods’. More precisely, it will explore the relationship between *askesis*, *theosis* and *philanthropia* in order to determine the nature of the philanthropic act. The paper will aim to show that for Gregory *philanthropia* was the expression of the highest virtue, and the fruit of the meeting between human volition in *askesis* and divine grace in *theosis*.

⁴ J. McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus An Intellectual Biography*, (SVS Press, New York, 2001), 206.

⁵ See the specific references given in Note 20.

⁶ Or. 34.12, *Op. Cit* Browne & Swallow, 337.

⁷ Or. 12.4, *Ibid.* Browne & Swallow, 246. C.f. also Or. 2.90, Browne & Swallow, 222.

⁸ Or. 12.4, *Ibid.* Browne & Swallow, 246.

⁹ *Gregory Nazianzus*, Or. 14.7 in Gregory of Nazianzus, trans. B. E. Daley, in *The Early Church Fathers*, ed. Carol Harrison (Routledge, New York, 2006), 120.

¹⁰ D.F. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus*, (The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation Ltd. Massachusetts, 1979), 196.

Askesis, *theosis* and *philanthropia* are linked and link creation to a broader theme, God's economy to salvation. In Oration 14 Gregory appealed to the congregation to care for the destitute. Whether as a support campaign for Basil's hostels for the sick and the poor, he attempted to show that there was a proportional relationship between philanthropy and salvation.¹¹ Locating philanthropy within God's salvific plan, *theosis* will firstly be examined as the personal experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the human person for the flowering and fulfilment of the good. *Askesis* will then be evaluated to determine the extent of human desire and volition in participating in the indwelling mystery. The final section will examine *philanthropia* as *theosis* in its social revelation.

Theosis

Theosis or deification¹² for St. Gregory was a progression towards God transcending the barriers that separate Uncreatedness and creation. His use of the term '*theosis*' provided a significant insight into understanding the living God and His presence in creation. *Theosis* as communion between God and the human person was divine grace exemplified. It contributed to anthropology and manifested in practical living. It marked a journey with God and unto God¹³ but also a journey in love with humanity or *philanthropia*.

What St. Gregory meant by the term *Theosis* may be explored within the general categories of the indwelling mystery, when the Holy Spirit which fills all things and is in all things comes and dwells in the human person. It is not so much the glory of the future discovered upon one's termination of this life, but a fulfilment of that journey, when the Spirit "resides amongst us, giving us a clearer manifestation of Himself than before."¹⁴ *Theosis* describes a relationship between God and the

¹¹ C.f. Or. 14.5, Op. Cit Daley, 78.

¹² Deification or theosis, theopoiesis or 'becoming God' was the term used for the effect of grace. Its biblical references include 2 Peter 1:4; Romans 8:17-19, 21 and John 10:34-5.

¹³ C.f. Or. 18.3, Op. Cit. Browne & Swallow, 255; Or. 42.5-9, Op. Cit. Daley, 142-145.

¹⁴ Or. 31.26, Op. Cit. Wickham, 137.

human person. This is dynamic and “multi-directional”¹⁵ and can not be confined to the present or any one moment in time but to an ongoing perfecting reality.

The experience/understanding of God in *Theosis* and an ethical life were also inexorably connected for St. Gregory.¹⁶ *Theosis* was not solely a gift of God, but also a prize for virtue and important in the dynamics of one’s freedom to ‘choose’ God voluntary.¹⁷ As Winslow describes, “Theosis, quite precisely, is a ‘prize’, and salvation can be ‘purchased’ by moral effort.”¹⁸ St. Gregory’s assertions of the ascetic importance in contributing to *theosis* not only defined his life and beliefs, but came to embody the very notion of how to ‘find’ or experience *Theosis*. As he suggested, *Theosis* was not to be taken literally as one cannot become God, but sons and daughters by adoption, or in that secondary account, gods by grace.¹⁹

The use of this suggestive language on becoming god was purposely launched into the theme of deification in Oration 14 because *Theosis* was difficult to embrace conceptually. It indicated that deification could also be simple and practical in its expression. As it will be identified below under the subheading ‘*Philanthropia*’, Gregory advised all to become gods by giving alms to those in need and having compassion for the sick and needy. These intimations were aimed to confer a ‘godlike’ disposition and attitude, the outcome being the recipient’s welfare, but also the well being of the giver. *Theosis* through philanthropic acts was as much about God’s mercy and grace as it was about human volition attaining this ‘godlike’ persona by approaching God more nearly through other people.

¹⁵ Op. Cit. Winslow, 192.

¹⁶ C.f. Or. 27.3, Op. Cit Williams, 27; Or. 28.2, Wickham, 37-38.

¹⁷ C.f. Or. 2.17, Op. Cit Browne & Swallow, 208.

¹⁸ Op. Cit., Winslow, 158.

¹⁹ C.f. Or. 1.5, Op. Cit Browne & Swallow, 203; Or.14.26, Op. Cit Daley, 90. St. Gregory excludes participation in divine nature and unification with God c.f. Or. 42.17, Browne & Swallow, 391. However see the strong suggestive language he uses in Or. 38.7, Daley, 120 and in Or.14.23, Daley, 88. He also discusses a nearness to God, c.f. Or. 28.2, Wickham, 37-38 and a union as the final state of the human person, c.f. Or.14.23, Daley, 88.

In social compassion or *Philanthropia* the human person reconciled themselves to God (through ascetic awareness and practice) so that *Theosis* acquired another metaphorical understanding of its ethical and salvific significance. One could ‘find’ the one body of Christ through people and “heal wounds by wounds, regain likeness by likeness – or rather, be healed of major things by minor things!”²⁰ In Oration 14 St. Gregory developed and pursued the idea that human kindness or otherwise love for humanity makes one mostly resemble God. He assimilated philanthropy as an outcome of *Theosis* and suggested its attainment through ascetic means.

Askesis

In the opening paragraphs of Oration 14 Gregory examines the virtues in search of the supreme virtue. *Askesis* or asceticism and a virtuous life are related to philanthropy. In his attempt to show that *philanthropia* was the expression of the highest virtue love,²¹ Gregory indicated how this was attained and found expression through ascetic pursuits. On the notion of ‘love’, a term which Maximos the Confessor used synonymously with ‘charity’, it was considered a “good disposition”.²² As a state of being, love or charity was something to partake in, requiring human effort in its ‘acquisition’.²³ The first example Gregory uses in Oration 14 to demonstrate what love was, was the Apostle Paul who did not act/speak out of self-interest.²⁴ A similar thought was pursued by Maximos in his *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, where love was a state of detachment.²⁵ In both authors love found expression in the absence of ‘self’ and the presence of Christ as the ultimate manifestation of the One who exemplified and became

²⁰ Or. 14.37 Ibid. Daley, 96.

²¹ C.f. Or. 14.5 Ibid. Daley, 78.

²² Maximos the Confessor, ‘The Four Hundred Chapters on Love’, in *Maximos the Confessor Selected Writings*, trans. George C. Berthold (Paulist Press, New York, 1985), 36.

²³ C.f. Ken Parry, ‘Maximos the Confessor and the Theology of Asceticism’, *PHRONEMA*, vol 17, (2002): 51-57 on the relationship of asceticism and the manifestation of virtue which the human person is naturally endowed with.

²⁴ C.f. Or. 14.2, Op. Cit Daley, 76.

²⁵ *Op. Cit* Berthold *trans.*, 51.

this virtue. The attainment of love then was pursued through an ascetic framework of rightful/truthful living. Asceticism provided the means for participating in the virtues by relating to other people through philanthropic acts.

In Gregory's Oration 14, *askesis* or asceticism cannot be pinned down to a precise formula of action to be undertaken for attaining certain higher ends. Each person's response to God's call is framed in a unique relationship.²⁶ *Askesis* is presented as a condition of refining the soul and indeed the whole human person in their quest to come nearer to the living God. Gregory considered asceticism as a response and as a precondition to the philanthropic action. *Philanthropia* awakens within oneself the presence of the living God. This recognition, a characteristic of asceticism and the mature respect for one's dual created formula, "... an alliance and an alienation!"²⁷ was elevated in Oration 14 to a plateau that warranted self-observation of God's abiding presence. Elsewhere he wrote, "Yet one wonders at the ungraspable, and one desires more intensely the object of wonder, and being desired it purifies, and purifying it makes deiform".²⁸

Gregory posited asceticism as the attainment of the heavenly and the lasting over the earthly and perishing. "The prudent ones, then, are those who do not rely on the present circumstances, but make their treasure of what is yet to come".²⁹ What did Gregory mean? Firstly, he sought to refine the human condition allowing the image of God within to permeate without. The purpose of asceticism in this instance was the polishing of the image through the careful consideration that one was

²⁶ The topic of asceticism warrants discussion in light of Gregory's First Theological Oration, where he cautioned on the pursuit of excessive theologising and similar undertakings. When exerting the benefits of ascetic practices Gregory spoke in the capacity of a spiritual elder, this including his Orations 2 and 7. In Or. 14.5, Daley, 78, he remarks, "Let each one simply walk on the way, and reach out for what is ahead, and let him follow the footsteps of the one who leads the way so clearly, who makes it straight and guides us by the narrow path and gate to the broad plains of blessedness in the world to come." In his own life he attributed this role to both his father and St. Basil.

²⁷ Or. 14.7, Op. Cit Daley, 79.

²⁸ Or. 38.7, Op. Cit Harrison, *Festal Orations*, 65.

²⁹ Or. 14.19, Op. Cit Daley, 85.

endowed with “guiding reason”³⁰. This was evidenced in his appeal to those alienated and fearing the condition of leprosy:

...do not you, O servant of Christ – lover of God and of your fellow men and women – fall into a sordid state yourself! Have confidence in your faith; let your mercy conquer your cowardice, your fear of God overcome your squeamishness; let your piety take precedence over your thoughts...³¹

Gregory’s call for asceticism challenged one’s thinking and appealed to reason, “...if reason matters at all to us, who claim to be reasonable people and servants of Reason himself”.³² As he maintained elsewhere, “...let us become reason-endowed whole burnt offerings”³³, which for Gregory marked the highest living condition, “...rational beings, recipient of God’s grace”.³⁴

The ‘face’ of asceticism is thoughtfully articulated in Gregory’s Oration 14. It is marked as a principle that caters to the individual’s capabilities. It is not an unreasonable and exacting preoccupation,

To the one who asks your help...lend him God’s word...if you cannot do this, give the secondary smaller gifts, as far as is in your power”.³⁵

Yet asceticism drives the human person to mark new grounds in terms of personal living and set them on a new course. In this sense it was associated in this Oration with possessing “jealous zeal” for God, “mortification of the body”, “prayer and watching”, “chastity

³⁰ Or. 14.7, Ibid. Daley, 120. C.f. also Or. 42.8, Daley, 144, “Nothing is so magnificent in God’s sight as a purified reason and a soul made perfect by the doctrines of truth.”

³¹ Or. 14.27, Ibid. Daley, 91.

³² Or. 14.33, Ibid. Daley, 94.

³³ Or. 40.40, Op. Cit Harrison, Festal Orations, 136.

³⁴ Or. 28.15, Op. Cit Wickham, 48.

³⁵ Or. 14.27-28, Op. Cit Daley, 91; C.f. also Gregory Nazianzus, Or. 19.9, in *St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Select Orations*, trans. M. Vinson, in *The Fathers of the Church* Vol 107. ed. T.P Halton (The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 2003), 100.

and virginity”. “self-control”, “solitude and silence”, “frugality”, “humility”, “poverty”.³⁶ For Gregory, all this provided a training ground in order to receive the experience of God.³⁷ For instance, mortification was geared towards reliance upon God and not one’s self indulgence.³⁸ Asceticism forces to the fore front trust in the Lord. It is the means for developing the senses in order to “...feel pain at the weakness of my own flesh and sense my own weakness in the suffering of others.”³⁹ This training ushers in the ‘softening’ of the heart and appeals to reason to understand the unique and common bond of humanity, its slavery and dignity. While the body and the senses are associated with the former, Gregory critiqued but did not condemn his “fellow worker”.⁴⁰

Gregory’s association of the body to “filthy clay”⁴¹ highlighted its temporality in his search for the immortal. His suggestion was that for both the body and the soul, the single path to salvation lay in human kindness.⁴² Thus *philanthropia* is at once an ascetic endowment and a disposition expressing love and *Theosis*. The practice of asceticism drives a deeper wedge into a faithful expression of what is yet to come. This is why Gregory pursued it as a course of refinement and a state of living. He recognised that the inconstancy of the human condition was overcome by effort (*askesis*) but also by the image that draws us up into itself (*Theosis*).⁴³

Gregory does not abandon the present world, even though at times he yearns passionately for the other, “...support nature, honor primeval liberty, show reverence for yourself and cover the shame of your race...”⁴⁴ In asceticism he recognised the fluidity and temporality of the present,

³⁶ C.f. Or. 14.3-4, Ibid. Daley, 77.

³⁷ Or. 14.7, Ibid. Daley, 79.

³⁸ C.f. Or. 14.3, Ibid. Daley, 77.

³⁹ Or. 14.8, Ibid. Daley, 79.

⁴⁰ Or. 14.7, Ibid. Daley, 79.

⁴¹ Or. 14.6, Ibid. Daley, 79.

⁴² C.f. Or. 14.8, Ibid. Daley, 80.

⁴³ C.f. Or. 14.20, Ibid. Daley, 86.

⁴⁴ Or. 14.26, Ibid. Daley, 90.

and yet it was in this moment that God dwells. Thus for Gregory it was from within created beauty that he sought to draw disciples towards a heavenly ascension and becoming. The inconsistency is merged via the ascetic method:

...let us come to possess our souls in acts of mercy; let us share what we have with the poor, in order that we may be rich in the things of the world to come. Give a portion of your goods to your soul, not simply to your flesh; give a portion to God, not simply to the world. Take something away from the belly and consecrate it to the spirit...Give a share to the “seven” – that is, to this life – and also to the “eight” – to that which awaits us after this life.⁴⁵

If asceticism has an inverse proportional effect to that which was pursued then Gregory suggested:

...give your all to the one who has given all to you. You will never surpass the lavish generosity of God, even if you throw away all things, even if you add yourself to the possessions you give away.⁴⁶

Asceticism for Gregory was stewardship, the providential care of all that is given, beginning with oneself. It is not a rigid campaign or a contract of created living, but an induction into the heavenly realm. Asceticism is the aid of the destitute, a class to which we all belong; “for all of us are beggars and needy of divine grace”.⁴⁷ Finally, asceticism in Oration 14 is the dressing of the self in the Beatitudes. Gregory makes us think twice about its nature and importance as a philanthropic outcome and precursor. “Do you think that kindness to others is not a necessity for you, but a matter of choice?”⁴⁸ As Verna Harrison explains,

⁴⁵ Or. 14.22, Ibid. Daley, 87.

⁴⁶ Or. 14.22, Ibid. Daley, 87-88.

⁴⁷ Or. 14.1, Ibid. Daley, 76.

⁴⁸ Or. 14.39, Ibid. Daley, 97.

almsgiving is transformed and associated to worship, a “self-offering” which echoes ascetic practices.⁴⁹

Philanthropia

For Gregory, Philanthropy is simply ‘God in action.’ Gregory’s message is clear as to how it may be accomplished, “...it is through my actions that I am to ascend to God.”⁵⁰ It takes us to the act prior to the first creation where Goodness sought to become motion for its beneficiaries.⁵¹ Harrison clarifies the matter thus:

What Gregory describes...is actually the reciprocal self-giving among divine and human persons which constitutes the life of God’s eternal kingdom...such reciprocal giving can be seen as an icon of the life of the Holy trinity and a participation in it.⁵²

The term *philanthropia* in Oration 14 was not only associated with the poor and the sick but included those who were suffering all types of evils, whether long or short term in a way which suppressed one’s dignity.⁵³ Gregory linked *philanthropia* to the greatest virtue, love. He showed that its chief exponent was Jesus who was also ready to suffer for us.⁵⁴ It is a virtue characterised by works in the sense of receiving Christ as a guest and looking after Him in the person in need.⁵⁵ Love as a virtue is merited in philanthropic works. God, says Gregory is served by acts of mercy and not the performance of the virtues, *per se*.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Verna Harrison, ‘Poverty, Social Involvement, and Life in Christ according to Saint Gregory the Theologian’, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. 39, no 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1994): 163.

⁵⁰ Or. 14.6, Op. Cit Vinson, 43.

⁵¹ C.f. Or. 38.9, Op. Cit Daley, 121.

⁵² Op. Cit Harrison, ‘Poverty, Social Involvement, and Life in Christ according to Saint Gregory the Theologian’, 163-4.

⁵³ C.f. Or. 14.6, Op. Cit Daley, 78.

⁵⁴ C.f. Or. 14.2, Ibid. Daley, 76.

⁵⁵ C.f. Or. 14.4, Ibid. Daley, 78.

⁵⁶ C.f. Or. 14.5, Ibid. Daley, 78.

Allotting mercy as an attribute worthy of the call of humanity's plight, Gregory sought to confer on the human person divine-like qualities. It was in instilling His image into the clay that the image, acting as a "guide" for higher things in the present, enabled the human person to perform "good works".⁵⁷

Gregory's theological worldview in which *Theosis* featured prominently was mediated through a Plotinian understanding of the presence of the One which made sensible phenomena understood. Thus it was the heavenly within one that allows one to love and act in love towards those in need. As he reasoned elsewhere:

...it is more in keeping with the greater majesty of the first cause... to reach the creatures through the medium of divinity rather than the reverse, that is, for divinity to acquire substantive existence for their sakes, as our very subtle and high-flown thinkers imagine.⁵⁸

His theological perspective of existence encompassed activity and understanding that unfolded in the presence (or absence) of the Holy Spirit in a world belonging intimately and by choice to the Word. As he describes in Oration 17, *To the Frightened Citizens of Nazianzus and the Irate Prefect*:

...remember whose creature you are and the task to which you are called; how many things you have received and the extent of your obligation...For these reasons imitate God's philanthropy.⁵⁹

The expression of *theosis* is the recognition of one's source in God and the activation of grace in one's life. *Philanthropia* as its social outcome is the mimicking of God in His creative and just treatment equally upon all:

⁵⁷ C.f. Or. 14.2, Ibid. Daley, 76-77.

⁵⁸ Or. 23.6, Op. Cit Vinson, 136.

⁵⁹ Or. 17.9, Ibid. Vinson, 92.

...a human being has no more godlike ability than that of doing good...even if God is benefactor on a grander scale, the human on a lesser, still each does so...to the full extent of his powers.⁶⁰

Elsewhere he encouraged:

It is in this [philanthropy], in doing good, that man is pre-eminently divine. You can become God without hardship; do not forget the opportunity for deification.⁶¹

What does *philanthropia* ‘look like’? Keeping within the Scriptural tradition of the faith, Gregory’s first prescription was the word of God:

...have mercy and lend him God’s word, and earnestly demand your loan back, with the growth of the one you have helped as your “interest” – for he [God] always adds something to the word you have given by letting the seeds of piety grow a little more within himself.⁶²

He continues:

But if you cannot do this, give the secondary, smaller gifts, as far as is in your power: come to his help, offer him nourishment, offer her a scrap of clothing, provide medicine, bind up his wounds, ask something about her condition, offer sage advice about endurance, give encouragement, be a support. Surely you will not pose any danger to yourself by doing this much!⁶³

⁶⁰ Or. 14.27, Op. Cit Daley, 90.

⁶¹ Or. 17.9, Op. Cit Vinson, 92.

⁶² Or. 14.27, Op. Cit Daley, 91.

⁶³ Or. 14.27, Ibid. Daley, 91.

The indwelling mystery experienced partly as social compassion or *philanthropia* was for St. Gregory to share the common bond of humanity. As he explained:

feel pain at the weaknesses of my own flesh and sense my own weakness in the sufferings of others, what reason urges me to say is this: brothers and sisters, we must care for what is part of our nature and shares in our slavery.⁶⁴

His pastoral advice from emperors to the poor was that the human person may partake in one of the divine attributes by acting as God would act through their actions. In Oration 19, *On His Sermon and to the Tax Adjuster Julian* he advises:

...let all of us alike make our contribution too, some a greater, others a lesser one...and thus be joined and fitly framed into a perfect work, *a dwelling place of Christ, a holy temple* according to the master plan of the Spirit.⁶⁵

In Oration 36, *On Himself and to those who claim that it was he who wanted the see of Constantinople*, he suggested, “Behave like gods towards your subjects, if I may put it so boldly.”⁶⁶ The same theme is in Oration 17, *To the Frightened Citizens of Nazianzus and the Irate Prefect* where he addressed an official in his audience, “You rule with Christ and you govern with Christ”.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Or. 14. 8, Ibid. Daley, 79.

⁶⁵ Or 19.8, Op. Cit Vinson, 99.

⁶⁶ Or. 36.11, Ibid. Vinson, 228.

⁶⁷ Or. 17.9, Ibid. Vinson, 91.

Poverty and charity for St. Gregory were two sides of the same coin. What he revealed was an insight into a unified human nature sharing a single spirituality through a common material life. Charity towards the poor and help towards the sick was a unifying action with respect to Christ's body. The human person's capability for deification and a life in Christ thus applies to both the giver and the receiver. Both are capable of identifying with Christ.

Conclusion

The idea of a God who reveals Himself in the world as part of His act of salvation and the human person who acquires the likeness of God by imitating Him as a response to God's economic activity are mutually related. *Theosis* in its social reality as *philanthropia* reveals the crux of St. Gregory's Trinitarian theology as the understanding and experience of the presence and glory of God in creation and beyond.

Philanthropia is presented in Gregory's works as part of an ascetic account of living. It encompasses the aspect of the image-endowed human person caring for the body which is called to the same inheritance. Gregory supported this poem of co-existence not in terms of individual and private living but positions the wellbeing of the individual as dependant on the welfare of the many. "And what the limbs are to each other, each of us is to everyone else, and all to all."⁶⁸ Love for humanity is a heavenly seeking virtue allowing one to partake in God's salvific economy.

⁶⁸ Or. 14.8, Op. Cit Daley, 79.

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St. John Chrysostom's Teaching on Neighborly Love

Theodor Damian

Introduction

For the 4th century C.E., St. John Chrysostom was like a flowing of heaven on earth and a source of God's mercy upon people. A powerful representative of this century, he contributed substantially to the intensification of Christian faith by raising the cultural awareness of his contemporaries. Thus, Chrysostom contributed to the special brilliance of his century, the so-called golden century of Christianity.

Even during his lifetime, Chrysostom was well known and highly regarded. This is explained by the fact that St. John Chrysostom, maybe more than the other preachers of the Christian faith, combined harmoniously the principles of Christ's Gospel consistently with his own lifestyle. Hence, his unwavering exigency regarding the observance of the norms of the moral life, and, as Palladios pointed out, his courage to speak frankly in the Church reprimanding publicly both sins and sinners,¹ led to his enemies diligently preparing his tragic end.

St. John had an infinite love for those who came under his pastoral guidance. This love, manifested in numerous charitable works, constituted the golden rule of his life. He considered the Christian dogma to be only the crowning of a superior lifestyle based on the practice of Evangelical virtues.

St. John called himself an "ambassador of the poor," and he was considered "the preacher of alms" as he lived in a society full of beggars and slaves.² Saint John suffered together with the mendicants,

¹ Palladios, *Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome*, I, Introduction, text critique, traduction et notes, par Anne-Marie Malingrey, "Sources Chrétiennes," Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1988, 377.

² Ph. Rancillac, *L'Eglise, manifestation de l'Esprit chez Saint Jean Chrysostome*, Dar Al-Kalima, Beyrouth, 1970, 45.

with the jobless, the unfortunate, and with all those in want and in suffering. He tried to get closer to them as if drawing nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ. For St. John, the poor and the oppressed were the altar on which he brought both his sacrifice and grateful thanksgiving to God. Good works and charity, the vehicles of one's expression of love, represented for St. John, the essential elements of neighborly love. The works we have in view here are in particular St. John's homilies. As it is reflected in this study, these sermons are not theological treatises; rather, they represent accessible addresses for a wide public audience. Yet his homilies clearly convey the biblical message of the Gospel in a very pastoral manner. Figures of speech such as metaphors, epithets and comparisons, intended repetitions and other such literary tools and strategies are meant to strengthen the message, impress the auditor and create a lasting effect in people's hearts.

Love of the Neighbor

Giving a practical example, St. John Chrysostom asks us to consider the following scenario, where we have a friend that loves a certain person. We know that our friend will consider a good deed towards the loved person as if the deed was made towards the friend. Furthermore, we will try to be helpful towards the person loved by our friend in order to please our friend. All the more, Chrysostom concludes, we should be helpful towards our neighbor, in which we see Jesus Christ, in order to please God.³

The love for neighbor is inseparable from the love of God. When one has an authentic love for their neighbor, one does all one can in order to get the neighbor's attention and affection. Likewise, when we love God we are compelled to do the same. In his paraphrasing of the words of Christ, St. John concludes, "The one who will love his neighbor for Me, will have Me with him and I will take care that he get other necessary virtues."⁴

³ St. John Chrysostom, cf. J. Bareille, *Oeuvres complètes de S. Jean Chrysostome*, (twenty volumes plus index), Ed. L. Vivès, Paris, 1865-1873, tom. IX, 141.

⁴ *Idem*, *Homélie sur Saint Matthieu*, LX, Bareille, tom. XII, 490.

Usually, people love their neighbors as a response to another feeling of love, or because their neighbor might be useful in one's temporal dealings. In fact, personal interest is at the basis of most social relationships. The one who loves in order to be loved diminishes or loses his love as soon as he notices the loved one's insensitivity or instability. People are more inclined to love others if they consider Christ's teaching. The one who loves according to Christ's teaching will not consider race, nobility, country, possessions, and will not even expect the friendship of the loved one. Even when the loved one hates the one who loves or wants him dead, the lover has a strong reason not to renounce his love, for Christ loved those who hated and crucified Him with the highest love.⁵

Love confers nobility on us even when we decide freely to become somebody else's slave. If one wants to be a good master over somebody, one needs to become first his slave based on love. Stability is an important characteristic in a loving relationship. Since brotherly love is a fulfillment of the divine will, the stability in such a love will also exist in one's relation to God. When Jesus Christ teaches that we love one another, and not in whichever manner but "the way I loved you" (John 15:12), He gives us the characteristics of love; love must be constant, profound, engaged, evident, concrete, sacrificial.

One of the objectives of neighborly love is participation in the loving communion of Christ. Thus, since neighborly love leads to love of God, it offers us a double and magnificent compensation. This double aspect is indicated by the great commandment of love, "You shall love your God, the Lord, with all your heart, with all your soul and your mind and your neighbor as you love yourself (Matthew 22, 37-39)."

In his or her transient existence, one has to confront many evil temptations. These are overcome by Christ's love for us culminating in His blood offered for us, which is a source and model for our love

⁵ *Ibidem*, 495.

towards people. Even though the distance between God and humanity is infinite, God asks us to love one another with a mutual love similar to that which exists between the persons of the Holy Trinity. When you love somebody, St. John writes, his or her name will constantly be on your lips. This is the expression of a sentiment started from a sincere and burning heart, a heart that becomes a pleasant shelter for the loved one. Love for the enemy is part of this teaching too. An enemy must be loved the way one would feel great love for a spouse, and for that reason be ready to forgive all offences she might commit against her closest partner.⁶ This is true love, when the human being, friend or enemy, is understood as God's creature and must be looked at with love.⁷

In his treatise *On Priesthood*, St. John affirms strongly that, "I don't believe that one can be saved without having done something for my neighbor's salvation."⁸ When someone is loved and loves at the same time he or she will get from the loved one an even greater love. Sin consists of not loving the one who loves you. Here one can see the pride, which causes the person, who does not love their neighbor and only loves God a little, into thinking that he or she is worthy of a greater love from their neighbor and from God. In fact, it is when one intensely loves someone else that their desire to be loved by the other, and even as much as the lover loves the beloved, appears in the lover's soul. Consequently, God wants humanity to love the Trinity so intensely because that is how much God loves humanity.

Yet when one loves somebody, who has defects or mistakes, with the purpose of correcting them, then their love receives more value and is worthy of more praise. Love is the primary principle of existence and the main condition of salvation. Just as God loves humanity in their present condition, so too, the faithful need to love other people in their

⁶ *Idem, Homélies sur l'épître aux Ephésiens*, VII, Bareille, tom. XVIII, 241.

⁷ Prof. Constantin Cornitescu, *Umanismul la Sf. Ioan Gura de Aur* (teza de doctorat), Institutul Teologic de grad universitar, 1971, Bucuresti, 85.

⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *On Priesthood*, II, 10, cf. Ierom. Prof. N. Mladin, "Sf. Ioan Gura de Aur despre desavarsirea crestina," in *Ortodoxia*, an IX, nr. 4, 1957, Bucuresti, 581.

present state in order to be like God “who causes His sun to rise over the good and the bad ones and sends the rain over the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45).” The one who offers love in this life, in the Kingdom of God will receive love as a crowning of his victory.

The identity between those who love each other is so great that even death cannot separate them,⁹ as they are bound together in Christ’s body, the Church,¹⁰ where the Holy Spirit is given to all at once. At the same time, the identity between the love for God and the love for the neighbor leads to the identity between Christ and His followers. St. John does not precisely define what kind of identity he is referencing in his discussion of the relationship between Christ and His followers. Yet, this identity between Christ and His followers is grounded in love that ensures the unity of the Church as the body of Christ,¹¹ a love that André Scrima calls “ecclesiology in act.”¹²

On the other hand, the act of an exaggerated self-love is a sin against the authentic sentiment of love. This sinful love makes one think only of one’s own interest, thus generating greed, arrogance and other vices that chase away the enthusiasm for charity.¹³ The truth is that whoever loves themselves in an over exaggerated manner does not have true love, but cheats himself, since true love needs to be communicated to someone, as this is part of love’s nature. Here again St. John seems to be rhetorical and pastoral since a distinction between the nature of self-love and the love for someone else is not made.

Yet he does suggest such a distinction when he writes that love was designed by God to be in several kinds: that of the parents for children and vice versa, of the husband for wife and vice versa, that

⁹ Sf. Ioan Gura de Aur, *Cuvant inainte de exil*, P.G. LII, 430, apud, Prof. C-tin Voicu, “Sf. Ioan Gura de Aur si unitatea Bisericii,” in *Studii Teologice*, seria II, an XXVIII, nr. 1-2, 1976, Bucuresti, 76.

¹⁰ Prof. N. Chitescu, “Aspecte ale eclesiologiei la Sfantii Trei Ierarhi,” in *Studii Teologice*, seria II-a, an XIV, nr. 7-8, 1968, Bucuresti, 403-404.

¹¹ Ph. Rancillac, *op. cit.*, 81.

¹² *Ibidem*, 12.

¹³ St. John Chrysostom, *Homélie sur la II-ème épître à Timothée*, VII, Bareille, tom. XIX, 593.

among friends, love of enemy. God made these types of love in order to introduce in human relationships such features as virtue, rule of law and reward, and through them to determine the education of the will towards action. Nothing makes one more like Christ, according to the Patriarch of Constantinople, than caring for their neighbor. Between Christ and the poor, who are in pain, there is a mystical and indissoluble link. The neglect of one single person in need is the neglecting of one part of Christ's body. In this context, where the need to sing thanksgiving praises to God emerges from having the privilege to be part of Christ's body, St. John advises, "If you don't know how to compose a thanksgiving song to the Lord, call together the poor, employ their tongues and bring them to your service. God will, for sure, listen to the song they sing on your behalf."¹⁴ This kind of caring love, which leads from one's isolation to communion, is the way to perfection since the essential element of the divine perfection is also love.

St. John Chrysostom has imagined a society where rich and poor or mine and yours no longer exist, where everyone is part of a great family and where everyone contributes to the salvation of someone else. In fact, St. John argues that the "failure to share one's goods with others is equal to theft, swindle and fraud."¹⁵ Charity, according to Saint John, is contagious and embraces all parts of Christ's body.¹⁶

Examples of Authentic Love

When it comes to illustrating his speeches on love, St. John Chrysostom is also very biblical as he uses all kinds of examples from both the Old and New Testament alike. One has to notice also that all these examples lead to Christ and culminate in His sacrificial love for humanity and salvation. At the same time, Saint John is well rooted in psychology. For example, Saint John often explains different aspects of love that reflect a psychological tone, such as the love of the people or

¹⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms*, I, Translated and with an introduction by Robert Charles Hill, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Mass, 1998, 229.

¹⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, Translated and introduced by Catharine Roth, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1984, 49.

¹⁶ Ierom. Prof. N. Mladin, *op. cit.*, 568-569.

in his application of those aspects to the loving inter-personal relations that ideally we would develop and cultivate.

For the Patriarch of Constantinople, God is a good example of authentic love as God creates the world and provides for it out of love. This love is then prolonged in the Son's sacrifice on the cross, where He gives His life for His friends, the highest proof of authentic love. Moreover, He gave His life for His enemies. St. John wonders how can such a love be equalled? In sacrificing His life for humanity, Christ gave to us what is His own, whereas we do not give to others even that which was entrusted to us temporarily.¹⁷ Consequently, on account of what Christ did for us, our love to Christ becomes a dutiful obligation. When he examines the Old Testament examples of love, St. John refers to Jacob's love for Rachel and the way he endured all kinds of hardship while in Laban's service, as well the love for his brother which conquered the fear he had on his way back home.

Now, St. John provides a theoretical interpretation, whereby he asserts that love indeed makes time shorter and diminishes the difficulties because Jacob experienced the seven years of service as if it was merely seven days. Also Jacob's love for Rachel adorned him with other virtues such as modesty. In return for his years of labor, Jacob asked Laban for nothing, except for what he had asked for at the beginning. The greatest dangers and the harshest deprivations are endured with joy by the one who loves because they aim to satisfy their own needs and desires.¹⁸ Out of a similar authentic love, Moses chose to stay with his people through all circumstances of life, no matter how difficult. In other examples from the Old Testament, Job did not stumble throughout all the days of his troubles, but remained stable in his faithfulness because of his profound love for God, while David, out of the same deep love wrote that his soul longs for God "as a deserted land, dry and without water."

¹⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *Homélie sur l'épître aux Romains*, VII, Bareille, tom. XV, 540.

¹⁸ *Idem*, *Homélie sur la Genèse*, IV, Bareille, tom. VIII, 160.

When it comes to the New Testament, St. John uses St. Peter's example, whose soul burned with love for Christ; also, he refers to St. Paul, who in his love for the Lord did not care about either glory or defamation. The Patriarch of Constantinople writes that Paul endured any barrier and hardship, mistreatment and captivity, as if from a foreign body in a body of diamond.¹⁹ Love not only excludes evil, but according to St. John, love does the good, transforms fear into courage, wildness into calm, petrification into tenderness, disdain into respect.

In order to make his listeners more aware of the value in love for Christ, Chrysostom, asks the rhetorical question: if out of love for the neighbor one is able to even go to death, so how much more will do one's love for Christ? This love gives force throughout all of life's circumstances; furthermore, this love makes one feel as if they live with the angels in God's kingdom, and as if they have already reached the happiness contemplated as if before God face to face.²⁰

Conclusions

St. John Chrysostom modeled an ideal example of authentic neighborly love. He insisted that there could be no love without it being materialized in good deeds. It is morally right to share one's goods and this sharing leads to a "philosophic life" in the ascetic sense of the term,²¹ which implies choosing the way of wisdom. In order to be consistent with this principle of love, St. John risked the peace of his daily life, his social status and ecclesial rank, and even his very life.²² In his position as Patriarch of Constantinople, Saint John suppressed all useless expenditures at the Patriarchate and whatever remained as surplus was distributed to the existing hospitals, or offered for the construction of new hospitals. St. John appointed pious priests as leaders of these new hospitals. Also, St. John offered help to the needy in many other ways.

¹⁹ *Idem, Homélie sur les Actes des Apôtres*, LII, Bareille, tom. XV, 399.

²⁰ *Idem, Premier discours sur la comonction*, Bareille, tom. I, 235.

²¹ St. John Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, Select homilies and letters introduced, translated and annotated by Wendy Mayer (with Bronwen Neil), St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 2006, 22.

²² Theodor Damian, "Virtutea dragostei la Sf. Ioan Gura de Aur," in *Biserica Ortodoxa Romana*, An XXXI, nr. 5-6, 1979, Bucuresti, 685.

St. John's way of being created powerful and redoubtable enemies all the more since bishop Nectarius, his predecessor, used to live in brilliant luxury. In fact here is a list with some of the accusations raised against him when he was condemned before he died in exile in 407:

He sold the precious stones from the Church treasury; He sold the marble that Patriarch Nectarius destined to decorate the Church of the Resurrection; He sold the dowry, left by a rich person named Teckla; He used the Church's income to endow establishments unrecognized by anybody else.²³

St. John took all these risks in order to help the poor and the sick even though he himself came from a rich family. He was so dedicated to charity that he created charitable institutions in Antioch and Constantinople and contained lists with the numbers and names of the poor, which in Antioch totaled approximately 3000 (in particular widows and virgins)²⁴ and in Constantinople and its surrounding area, about 50,000. Even if many of these were not Christians, St. John still offered assistance, clothing and food.²⁵ On account of his actions, St. John proved to be a person who incorporated within his life the principle of loving the neighbor, a moral imperative that he so emphatically preached and practiced.

²³ Pr. Prof. Ioan G. Coman, "Personalitatea Sf. Ioan Gura de Aur," in *Studii Teologice*, seria a II-a, an IX, nr. 9-10, 1957, Bucuresti, 599.

²⁴ David Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church: The Full Views of St. John Chrysostom*, St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, South Canaan, PA, 1996, 39.

²⁵ Pr. Magistrand Marin M. Braniste, "Conceptia Sf. Ioan Gura de Aur despre prietenie si dragoste," in *Studii Teologice*, seria a II-a, an IX, nr. 9-10, 1957, Bucuresti, 669.

The Ordination of Deaconesses as a Reconciliatory and Liberating Praxis

Eftychios Phil Eftychiadis

“An example of this [critical thinking] would be the debate among the Orthodox churches concerning women’s ordination and the rediscovery of the existence of the order of deaconesses in the early history of the church.”¹

Emilio Castro

The main purpose of this article ² is to analyze the event of female diaconal ordination in the Eastern Early Church in response to very important needs. The hypothesis of this work is to retrieve and also analyze contextual elements in relation to needs in the praxes of the early church and its great Fathers, in ordaining women to the diaconate, and to identify significant theoethical values that are derived from those praxes in the early Tradition of the church.

Theo-ethical values are those that are derived from the praxes of the church manifesting its sacred Tradition. Moreover, these values are derived from theological truths that always guided the church in defining praxes in its ministry in the Tradition. The theological truths of the Trinity and the Eucharist, for instance, support the theoethical values of community and participation. The important theoethical values that are derived from the praxes of the Eastern Early Church and

¹ Castro, ‘Ethical Reflections among the Churches,’ (1995) p. 45.

² This article is developed from the author’s Ph.D. dissertation: “Building an Orthodox Contextual and Liberative Social Ethic: Based on the Liberative and Salvific Theoethical Values of Deaconesses’ Ordination.”, by Eftychios Phil Eftychiadis. See: <http://disexpress.umi.com/dxweb>. Comments to philef@usa.net.

its great Fathers in ordaining women to the diaconate are participatory, community strengthening, reconciling and liberating, along with the goal of salvation.

The analysis of the fact that deaconesses were accepted in the ministry of the Eastern Early Church through ordination is another important objective of this work. With regard to the contemporary posing of the question of women's ordination, the Orthodox Church is strongly influenced by guidance from its ecclesial Tradition. The participatory, community-strengthening, reconciliatory and liberative symbols that are manifested in the acceptance of deaconesses in the ministry of the Eastern Early Church take on specific significance and depth, when we recognize that this acceptance was through the fact of ordination. Through this analysis of Tradition, in the end, the nature of the Tradition of the church in accepting change could be further clarified through its own praxes regarding female diaconal ordination.

The chief findings of this article are: that the Eastern Early Church did ordain women to the first level of the major order of priesthood, the diaconate; that the initiation of deaconesses was an ordination to the diaconate is supported by major similarities between the ordination ceremony of the order of deaconesses and the ordination rite of male deacons, and by the analogous responsibilities of the deaconesses. This event of the ordination of deaconesses reveals important theoethical values and methodological praxes, which grew out of specific attention the early Church was paying to social needs. The above are reflected in the decision of the Eastern Early Church formally to accept women in this ordained ministry; the actual functions of deaconesses in the church and society; and the teaching and actions of the Fathers of the church of the era in question. These theoethical values, when analyzed in the social and cultural context of our own time, can stand as important bases upon which the ordination of contemporary Orthodox women to the diaconate could be accepted and the functions of modern-day deaconesses could be re-defined in order to make them both effective and relevant, and in full accord with the Eastern Tradition.

The Eastern Early Church's choices on the position of female diaconal ordination and the functions of the deaconesses have been developed, to be sure, within the scope of certain limitations, for we can note that androcentric and patriarchal attitudes prevailed in society and the church in the centuries in question. This article will concentrate mostly on the liberating aspects of the event of deaconesses' ordination, which took place in the midst of what was, for women at that time, overwhelmingly oppressive social and cultural conditions.

The main historical periods related to the life of the order of deaconesses were two in number: the first was from the end of the third century until the seventh, while the second covered the period of the seventh century to the eleventh. During the first period, we have the development and the maturity of the order of deaconesses. During the second, we have the gradual lapse of this order. Let us consider some of the pertinent facts.

The Nature of the Order of Deaconesses

The order of deaconesses was developed from the last part of the third to the seventh century C.E. From its origin, the members of this order lived mostly in groups, just as the widows did before them. However, instead of being mostly an office of prayer, deaconesses were required to be more active in the service (*diakonia*) of the church.³ Deaconesses were accepted through ordination as an order of women dedicated to the ministry of the church. They were the first women accepted as an official type of ministry in the Eastern Early Church.

The required age for deaconesses was at least forty years of age. Deaconesses were single women or widows who had been previously married once. Once selected, deaconesses had to promise to live a

³ The order of widows was an order of women who were very active in the life of the church from the third until the fifth century C.E. The order consisted of older widowed women, around sixty years of age, who devoted themselves to God with prayers and contemplation. Widows were not involved in ministry work. Only in very rare cases, they were involved in certain ministry activities; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 79-81, 112-113; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 146; Theodorou, *The "Ordination,"* 1, 5-11, 38; Fitzgerald, "The Characteristics," 88; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 202-204; Thurston, *The Widows*, 104-105, 114-117.

life of celibacy.⁴ Celibacy for ancient deaconesses was an absolute requirement. There were no exceptions. All the original sources agree on the absolute nature of this requirement. This fact alone, however, does not mean that the order of present deaconesses would have to follow this requirement. Despite the above, the Eastern Early Church was accepting married deaconesses, but without emphasizing it. It is a matter of continuing uncertainty as to the extent of married deaconesses in antiquity (despite the generic rule for celibacy): one suspects that there were deaconesses holding that function while married, especially to priests and bishops in the rural regions before the 5th century. Such a case is represented in Nonna, who was the mother of Gorgonia and Gregory the Theologian, wife of the Bishop Gregory the Elder of Nazianzus.⁵

Moreover, deaconesses had to be well educated in the faith in order to teach women who were catechumens and women who had just been baptized. Deaconesses were required to show certain virtues; to be caring for others, eager to get involved in actions of philanthropy, patient and dedicated to a life of simplicity.⁶ These qualifications were inspired by the qualifications of women mentioned in 1 Tim 3:11. The age requirement of forty years for deaconesses, however, was much less than the one of sixty required for the initiation of the widows.⁷

It is obvious here that the objective for the order of deaconesses was to have younger women at the forefront who were healthy and strong and who could meet the demanding functions of their ministry. Moreover, other women younger than forty were also admitted to the order in exceptional cases. Special qualifications of character, virtue, education and proven dedication to the church were the main reasons for these exceptions.

⁴Theodorou, *The "Ordination,"* 73; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 246-248.

⁵Tsame, *Miterikon*, Vol. A, 226-281; Tsame, *Miterikon*, Vol. B, 168-175; Migne, PG 46. 960A-1000B; See also FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 28-58.

⁶Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 79-81, 112-113; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, , 134-137; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 146-147; *Didascalia* 16:3:12; *Apostolic Constitutions* 2:7:57-8, 3:2:15-6; FitzGerald, "The Characteristics," 80-81; Theodorou, *History*, 132-146.

⁷Ibid.

The official insistence on forty years of age for deaconesses also stemmed from the belief of the Fathers of the church that older women could be trusted more than younger ones to follow the requirement of celibacy in their life. Deaconesses were not allowed to remarry if they were widows before their ordination.⁸ The order of deaconesses spread to almost all the areas of the Eastern regions of the early church. There were only a few areas in these regions that did not have this order. These areas, (one of which was Egypt) retained the order of widows instead, with special ministerial responsibilities bestowed upon them.⁹

The notion presented by certain contemporary scholars that deaconesses influenced the lapse of the order of the widows¹⁰ may or may not be correct. The functions of deaconesses were certainly different from those of the widows. The widows' emphasis was on spirituality, while deaconesses were mostly involved in the official ministries of the church. That is why the order of widows continued to endure long after the introduction of the order of deaconesses in the church. Both of these orders coexisted for over a century. In my judgment, both of these orders, the widows and the deaconesses, with their overlapping responsibilities and their own different types of spirituality, were needed in the church. The church needed women's charismatic groups with certain ministry responsibilities, such as those the widows carried out. The church, however, also needed ordained women to the diaconate with full-time pastoral responsibilities, who would also have liturgical and sacramental ministries with a rich spiritual life, such as the deaconesses represented.

The Liturgical and Sacramental Functions of the Deaconesses

In the Eastern Early Church, the ministry of deaconesses included the three types of functions relevant to all the major orders of priesthood: sacramental responsibilities, teaching, and pastoral work. In their

⁸ Theodorou, *History*, 97-99, 122; Theodorou, *The "Ordination,"* 73; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 246-248.

⁹ Theodorou, *The "Ordination,"* 1, 5-11, 38; FitzGerald, "The Characteristics," 88; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 202-204; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 111.

¹⁰ Thurston, *The Widows*, 104-105, 114-117.

sacramental function, deaconesses had the responsibility of offering sacramental service to the ecclesial community under the supervision of the bishop, just as deacons did.¹¹ In comparison to deacons, however, deaconesses had a slightly more limited participation in the sacramental and liturgical service. That primarily was due to the androcentric context of the society of the Eastern Early Church, which was generally excluding of women. Female deacons did not offer the litanies in the public (male dominated) section of the Church nave. They did however take up station in the female sections in the great cathedral at Constantinople, and supervise prayers there. At the altar during the Eucharist the deaconesses stood in silent prayer, along with the presbyters and the male deacons surrounding the bishop. The deaconesses stood at the altar, along with all the other clergy, to receive the Holy Mysteries immediately after the consecration of the Holy Eucharist.¹² Afterwards, the deacons would administer Holy Communion to all the faithful in the church. The deaconesses were not allowed to do this during the Divine Liturgy. It is most likely, that they did administer the Eucharist to women who were sick at home. These visits by deaconesses were necessary, because it was not considered proper for the deacons to enter the quarters of women. Deaconesses offered the sick, housebound and pregnant physical and spiritual assistance.¹³ They also were known to handle the sacred vessels, a function reserved solely to the ordained.

¹¹ Theodorou, "The 'Ordination,'" 61-63; Hauke, *Women in the Priesthood?*, 425-427; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 60-65.

¹² Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 173; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 171-172; Theodorou, *History*, 136-142, 192-194.

¹³ Gryson, *The Ministry*, 61-63; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 60-64, 118, 159-166; Theodorou, *The 'Ordination'*, 25-28, 32-34, 49-51; Theodorou, *History*, 114-119, 141-145; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 246-248. Other documents and historians of the Eastern Early Church and the church of the middle ages added the information that deaconesses who lived in the monasteries could offer Presanctified Holy Communion to the nuns, other deaconesses and women visiting the monasteries, when a priest was not available to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. In addition, deaconesses who lived in these isolated monasteries could read pericopes of the Scripture and certain prayers in the church of the monastery, again when a priest was not available. These actions of deaconesses were defined in accord with the principle of substitution. The Fathers of the Church allowed certain exceptional activities to be performed in place of traditionally accepted practices under special circumstances. Theodorou, *History*, 136-137, 140-146; Blastares, *Syntagma*, Migne, PG 144; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 60-63, 171-173; Balsamon, *Scholia in Concilium Chalcedonense*, Migne, PG 134. 441; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 174.

This intimate and sacred participation of the deaconesses at the altar, along with other deacons, presbyters and the bishop, is a clear indication that they were indeed ordained to one of the three major orders of the priesthood.¹⁴ Deaconesses, therefore, were never presbyters but as consecrated deacons they were indeed priests: along with the other two orders of the ordained priesthood, the presbyters and bishops.

During the Divine Liturgy, deaconesses welcomed women at the entrance of the church. This was in accord with the Old Testament saying that women guarded the entrances of the Tabernacle.¹⁵ In my view, this connection of the work of deaconesses during the liturgy to women's responsibilities at the Tabernacle in Exodus 38:8 gave particular importance to the liturgical character of this greeting responsibility of deaconesses. In connection with this latter duty, deaconesses also exercised particular supervision over all women in the church who were attending the Divine Liturgy.¹⁶

Deaconesses thus had many analogous responsibilities to those of the deacons during the Divine Liturgy.¹⁷ But there were difference apart from those noted above. Deaconesses were not allowed to perform baptisms, for example, even in emergencies. The teaching of the church at that time stated that, if God allowed women to baptize, then Mary, the mother of Jesus, rather than John the Baptist, would have baptized Jesus.¹⁸ Scholars such as Gryson and Theodorou even so, state that deaconesses may well have served 'By economy' to perform emergency (or 'clinic') baptisms in specially straightened circumstances.¹⁹

¹⁴ Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 146, 173; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 171-172; Theodorou, *History* 136-142, 192-194; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 79-81.

¹⁵ Gryson, *The Ministry*, 60-62, 144-146.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.; Theodorou, *History*, 136-137, 140-146; Blastares, *Syntagma*, Migne, PG 144; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 60-63, 171-73; Balsamon, *Scholios*, Migne, PG 134. 441; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 174.

¹⁸ Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 246-248; *Didascalia* 16:3:12; *Apostolic Constitutions* 2:7:57-8, 3:2:15-6; FitzGerald, "The Characteristics," 80-81; Theodorou, *History*, 76-79, 86-90, 94-95, 105-108, 114, 116, 119, 119.

¹⁹ Ibid.; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 60-63; Theodorou, *History*, 142-144.

Deaconesses would always participate in the sacrament of the baptism of women under the coordination of the bishop who performed the baptism. Since it was not proper for the bishop to face the naked body of the woman, the presence of the deaconess was needed.²⁰ After the baptism, the deaconess would guide the newly baptized woman out of the baptisterion, the area where the baptism took place. The function of the deaconess was then to instruct this woman on her responsibilities as a new member of the church and on her spiritual life as a Christian.²¹

It was not until later medieval centuries, when the androcentric ethos of ancient society actually became strengthened, not relaxed, in comparison to Late Antiquity, that a common reason for prohibiting women from service on the altar first begins to gain currency (an argument when it first appeared which was rejected by the earliest Christian sources as ‘Judaizing’) and that was the elevation of the Levitical purity rules.²² The purity provisions from Leviticus, focused on blood issues, gained an increasing acceptance in the Medieval Eastern Church from the eighth century onward. These provisions have been quite unjustifiably dominating views about women and their position in the church and society even until the present time.²³

Excessively ‘monastic’ gynophobic aspects of the spirit of the eastern church of the middle ages may have contributed a great deal to the acceptance of these purity provisions, along with the overarching androcentric cultural conditions of that era. The provisions became a major factor that decisively influenced the lapse of the order of deaconesses. While the Levitical prescriptions were from ancient times accepted symbolically in Christian culture, at this time chiefly with

²⁰ Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 246-248; *Didascalia* 16:3:12; *Apostolic Constitutions* 2:7:57-8, 3:2:15-6; FitzGerald, “The Characteristics,” 80-81; Theodorou, *History*, 76-79, 86-90, 94-95, 105-108, 114, 116, 119, 119.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Theodorou, *The “Ordination,”* 67-70, 78-80, 92-94; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 34-38, 54-63, 79-81; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 172-178, 246-248.

²³ Lev 15: 19-30; Theodorou, *The “Ordination,”* 51-69, 78-94; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 61-63, 79-81; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 172-178; FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 65-77.

regard to the female diaconate, they began to be held up literally.²⁴ Even though the androcentric and patriarchal spirit of those centuries contributed to this literal appropriation, nevertheless, despite all of those negative factors, the Eastern Early Church did define important liturgical and sacramental duties for the deaconesses, along with very rich pastoral responsibilities.

The Fathers of the church, in general, did not question these ecclesiological notions about Christian women. There were, however, exceptions. Among those fathers who questioned this unevenness of approach in relation to female roles and offices were St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. Chrysostom emphasized the importance of the purity of a person's heart rather than such purity provisions.²⁵ Chrysostom's position, along with similar positions in the Didascalia, and by Pope Gregory the Great,²⁶ can be important sources for setting aside these economically limiting canons about blood purity, and for supporting women's greater liturgical participation in the present church,

The Teaching Function of the Deaconesses

Deaconesses were well educated in matters related to the teaching of the church,²⁷ even though they were expected to teach women only. During the early centuries, the position of the church on this issue of the prohibition of women's preaching during liturgy and teaching men was that if Jesus wanted women to teach men, he would have officially selected them to be part of his group of Apostles.²⁸ This prohibition was also based on the church's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34—"Women should be silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says."

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 79-81, 112-113; Theodorou, *The "Ordination,"* 49-50; FitzGerald, *Women deacons*, 66-75.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 79-81, 112-113; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 134-137; Theodorou, *The "Ordination,"* 49-50; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 116-118, 146.

²⁸ Ibid.

The Fathers of the church interpreted this verse to mean that women should not preach during the liturgy and men should have authority over women.²⁹ All those positions were strongly influenced by the androcentric context of those centuries. Even so, deaconesses could teach women catechumens and who had to prepare for their baptism; deaconesses could also continue to educate these women after their baptism. They could also teach the basics of the faith to groups of children and youth.³⁰ Deaconesses were not allowed to read pericopes from the Scripture to the congregation during the Divine Liturgy.³¹ But they were allowed to read pericopes in women's monasteries during prayer meetings in the church when a priest was not available.³² The home ministry of deaconesses also offered many opportunities for theological catechesis to others,³³ so too did the regular movement of women to important monasteries where they could find female Elders. Historically, certain deaconesses became very influential and famous for their teaching and spiritual counseling abilities that attracted not only important women visitors from all the areas of the empire, but also officials of the state and other powerful men. We know of such leading deaconesses as, for instance, Domnica, Melania, Macrina, Xenia and Irene Chrysovalantou.³⁴ This symbolic role of the female teacher offered among Christians a very powerful witness to the dignity of all believers in Christ.

An indication of this important liberating influence of deaconesses on other women was the increase of the number of women living and studying in monasteries during these early centuries. These women studied the word of God and many other areas of learning that were

²⁹ 1 Cor 14:34; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 79-81, 112-113; Theodorou, *The "Ordination,"* 49-50; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 116-118, 146.

³⁰ Theodorou, *History*, 133-137.

³¹ Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 79-81, 112-113; Theodorou, *The "Ordination,"* 49-50; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 116-118, 146.

³² Theodorou, *History*, 133-135, 142-146.

³³ Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 146, 246-248; Theodorou, *History*, 133-140; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 79-81.

³⁴ Tsame, *Miterikon*, Vol. A, 146-153, 221-280; Tsame, *Miterikon*, Vol. B, 202-238; Fitzgerald, *Women Deacons*, 28-58.

available to them in those centuries.³⁵ After the completion of their studies, they could, in turn, become new vehicles for the transmission to other women of the participatory and liberating values they had received from the teaching of the deaconesses.

Pastoral Functions of the Deaconesses

Deaconesses were required to participate extensively in pastoral work. When deaconesses visited sick women in their houses, for example, they not only prayed for the women's recovery, as the Widows did, but also were expected to offer these women physical assistance. They bathed and helped them in any way that might have contributed to their recovery. In addition, as representatives of the bishop and the liturgical and Eucharistic community, deaconesses showed great devotion in their extensive participation in and coordination of multiple efforts for helping needy persons. Deaconesses cared for the poor, the sick in hospitals, people returning from captivity, refugees in prison camps, widows and orphans who needed help, people in jail, and people who needed food.³⁶ The work of the deaconesses in all of these areas of charity was invaluable to the church at large, and to the needs of the society of the day. Deaconesses, who mostly lived and worked in monasteries, developed large-scale philanthropic works and managed large benevolent institutions, which had considerable influence on society and its needs. Common people and powerful officials, even from faraway places, admired the work of these deaconesses, during those early centuries of the church and throughout history.³⁷ Deaconesses were also instrumental in building very important social institutions for the needs of individuals and the church in the churches acting in society and in the monasteries. Certain of these benevolent social institutions were built for the first time in history. From all of this we can clearly see that even if the ministerial functions of the deaconesses were limited

³⁵ Liveris, "Orthodox Women as Writers," 132-133.

³⁶ Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 146, 246-248; Theodorou, *History*, 133-134; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 79-81; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 126, 134-137; Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy*, 84-87.

³⁷ Ibid.; Tsame, *Miterikon*, Vol. A, 146-153, 221-280; Tsame, *Miterikon*, Vol. B, 202-238; See also FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 28-58.

slightly in comparison to their male counterparts, they made of their ordained ministerial work a witness that was favorably comparable to their male colleagues in every respect. Within the whole experience of the Divine Liturgy, of course, we need to remember that deacons and deaconesses received the offerings of the congregation and carried them to the bishop, in order that the offerings would be sanctified during the consecration of the Holy Eucharist. In this way, by this whole process, both deacons and deaconesses were important iconic representations of the whole congregation to the bishop. The distinct point here is that not only an ordained male member of the diaconate but also an ordained female member of this order represented the congregation, consisting of both men and women, during this important liturgical event.

Notes on the Ordination Rite of Deaconesses

The oldest document describing the ordination ceremony for deaconesses is the Apostolic Constitutions which dates from the last part of the fourth century.³⁸ The ceremony here is a simple one. It involves the laying-on of hands [*cheirotomia*] by the bishop, the calling upon the Grace of God, and one main short prayer. After the fourth century, this ordination rite was gradually enriched to include in its final form, in addition to a number of short prayers, the laying-on of hands, the calling upon the Grace of God, and two main long prayers. The above ceremony was fundamentally similar to that of the deacon.

There are certain visual characteristics of the deaconesses' ordination ceremony that also strongly suggest that this rite has to be seen as paralleled theological to the ordination ritual to order of the deacons. These basic elements, included in the ordination rites of all three major orders of priesthood (bishops, presbyters, deacons), were the laying-on of hands by the bishop within the altar during the Eucharistic mystery itself, the calling upon the Grace of God to empower the candidate to fulfill the functions of the order, and the two main prayers. Other bishops, presbyters, deacons and deaconesses participated in this ceremony, as they did in the ordination of the other

³⁸ Theodorou, *The "Ordination,"* 1-2, 32-33; Gryson, *The Ministry,* 61-63; Martimort, *Deaconesses,* 60-63, 152-54, 160-166.

major orders.³⁹ There is no serious evidence to underpin the (late) argument that a distinction needs to be drawn between ordination (*Cheirotonia*) of men, and blessing (*Cheirothesia*) of women deacons. All the evidence suggests, to the contrary, that female deacons were not appointed to a minor order, but ordained to the major order.

Beside the fundamental similarities of the male and female ritual, there were also certain differences. A deaconess, in her ordination rite, responded through certain symbolic actions differently from the way a deacon responded during his ordination. These actions of the deaconess were mainly because the deaconess was a woman and in Byzantine society she was accustomed to express herself differently (the differences relate to public and private ‘respectability’ issues prevalent in that society. None of these differences, however, were part of the essential visual elements of ordination common to the rites of all the major orders of priesthood.⁴⁰ The different actions of the deaconess in her ordination ceremony were as follows: After receiving the Holy Mysteries, she did not lay her forehead on the altar as the deacon did. This might have been symbolic of the idea that the deaconess could not fully serve during the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (no cutting up of the Lamb) . We note, however, that the bishop gave the stole to the deaconess, as the essential symbol of the order, exactly as he did to the male deacons. More specifically, the stole was tied crosswise for both the deaconess and the deacon.⁴¹ This stole was also an important symbol indicating same status, a status of equality among these two expressions of the diaconate. It indicates the very essence of equality in order, just as that vestment (*Epitrachelion*) does among the presbyters. When the deacon was sent out to lead the litanies and public prayers, he had one part of the stole hanging to his right. This was not the case

³⁹ Gryson, *The Ministry*, 61-63; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 60-63, 152-54, 160-166; Theodorou, *The Ordination*, 25-28, 32-34, 49-52; FitzGerald, “The Characteristics,” 75-77, 85-87, 90-93.

⁴⁰ Theodorou, *The Ordination*, 78-80, 92-94; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 54-56, 61-63, 79-81; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 172-174, 246-248.

⁴¹ *Apostolic Constitutions* 2:4:26, 8:3:20, 8:3:28; Theodorou, *The Ordination*, 67-70; FitzGerald, “The Characteristics and Nature of the Order of the deaconesses,” 82-84; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 34-38; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 146-150, 244-247.

with the deaconess who did not lead public elements in the liturgy.⁴² This difference in the functions of deaconesses of not leading public elements can be interpreted in ways that may or may not indicate inferiority for deaconesses. As an example, sometimes ‘junior’ priests were sent out to distribute Holy Communion, while no argument was raised because of this about their ‘inferior status’ among the rank of presbyters. After the Eucharist, although the bishop would offer the Holy Mysteries to the deaconess and give her the Holy Chalice, the deaconess would place this Chalice on the altar. She would not use it to offer Holy Communion to the attending Christians, as the deacon did.⁴³ Theodorou offers another interpretation of the event concerning the Chalice. He hypothesizes that, in earlier times, the bishop also offered the deaconess the Chalice, but she responded differently from the way she did in the time of the Eastern Early Church. In these earlier times, she proceeded to offer Holy Communion to the clergy. The offering of the Chalice to the deaconess in the Eastern Early Church, therefore, might have been a truncated event of this previous practice: which was rejected by the presbyterate in due course.⁴⁴

Both on ethical terms and theological terms the ministry of the Orthodox deaconess shows a radiant sense of empowerment, even if in social terms the androcentric culture of antiquity did not rise to the sense of female equality of status. Rich participatory, community-strengthening, reconciliatory and liberative values were reflected in the praxis of the Eastern Early Church of ordaining deaconesses and from those praxes, accomplishments, that the deaconesses’ worked out among themselves.⁴⁵ Differences in Female Diaconal Ordination from the Initiation Ceremony of the Minor Orders.

⁴² Theodorou, *The “Ordination,”* 25-34, 49-71; Gryson, *The Ministry*, 34-38, 60-65; Ide, *Women as Priests*, 45-52; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 146-150, 244-247.

⁴³ Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 147-164.

⁴⁴ Theodorou, *The “Ordination,”* 67-70, 78-80, 92-94; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 64-67, 172-174, 246-248, Gryson, *The Ministry*, 34-38, 54-56, 61-63, 79-81.

⁴⁵ Theodorou, *History*, 109-115; Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 148-150; FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 78-87.

Another indication that deaconesses' ordination was an indeed ordination rite, and not a simple blessing to a minor order, is supported by the many liturgical and other essential differences that existed between the deaconesses' ordination rite and the initiation ceremony of the minor orders in the early church. The Eastern Early Church also developed ministries of non-ordained persons. The initiation ceremony of the non-ordained ministries took place at the entrance of the church, never in the altar before the Holy Table, where the deaconesses' ordination took place. Moreover, the minor ceremonies took place after the Divine Liturgy, never in its course. The minor orders were conferred by a simple laying-on of hands by the bishop [*cheirothesia*], and only one simple prayer, through which the bishop asked the blessing of God's Charis on the candidate's efforts to perform the work assigned to this candidate by the church.

Other bishops, presbyters, deacons and deaconesses were not officially invited to attend the initiation ceremony of these minor orders. This initiation ceremony of the minor orders, therefore, was not an ordination to priesthood, but a simple appointment [*cheirothesia—benedictio*] to a specific ministerial function.⁴⁶

Our conclusion is strongly this: the text of the Byzantine rite of the ordination of deaconesses itself argues most strongly that women cannot be denied ordination to the major order of diaconate, simply on the grounds that they are women. Moreover, it strongly suggests that, in our own time and condition, deaconesses can and should be fully accepted in the ministerial work of their order with all the essential functions of the diaconate: including eucharistic and catechetical and charitable service in the name of the Church.⁴⁷ To state this simply, and strongly, is of enormous importance in the Orthodox Church today because the unarguable facts of the ancient church (denied and slighted by many in more recent times) offer a theological and theoethical basis for the

⁴⁶ *Didascalia* 9:2:28; *Apostolic Constitutions* 2:4:25, 3:2:15-6; FitzGerald, "The Characteristics," 80-81; Theodorou, *History*, 94-95, 105-117.

⁴⁷ Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 147-164; Theodorou, *History*, 104-110; FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 82-83, 87.

support of the restoration of a full sense of deaconesses' ordination. Even patriarchal prejudicial attitudes in the church and society of the ancient centuries did not stop the Eastern Early Church from accepting women to the order of deaconesses through ordination. We who are in a position to know better in relation to the capacities and dignities of women, must not continue the androcentric limitations. We ought to learn from the sacred ritual itself which ways most clearly: "Oh Lord, you who do not reject women who are consecrated to you in order to serve in your holy places . . . [grant] the Grace of your Holy Spirit, just as you gave the gift of your diaconate to Phoebe" ⁴⁸

The early Fathers of the church seriously considered need and context in defining deaconesses' functions in realistic and practical terms. Need and context, determined what the early deaconesses should, and could do. Similarly practical considerations, under the general principles of diaconal service, can no less determine how a restored female diaconate might work in the Orthodox Church today. The Fathers of the church did not elaborate on the exact use of the contextual elements in defining their praxes. In those social and cultural conditions, these contextual and theoethical approaches in defining praxes were part of the praxes of the Eastern Early Church and its Fathers in their ministries, rather than of a theoretical reflection on those approaches. The Father and the church did not formulate a methodological process as the contemporary world contextual theologies and their social ethics, which are part of the ecumenical movement, have done, while also using liberating and other directives that are derived from their Tradition and the Scripture. Today, the ministry of the deaconess should be defined both realistically and holistically on the basis of our new prevailing conditions (and the condition of modern womanhood) specifically to really confront needs, that is to care for the pressing and real material and spiritual needs of others. In its attitude to women deacons in spite of many negative cultural conditions and attitudes of the andro-centric ancient society the Early Eastern Church was clearly guided by participatory criteria, driven by its evangelical liberative and prophetic values: values that

⁴⁸ Ibid.

constituted its sacred Tradition. It is the same principles that will guide us today in reassessing the role of female deacons.

In the later medieval period when the Byzantine cities and their great cathedrals were in decline, and a more repressive spirit applied throughout Greek and Slavic societies in relation to women's public appearances, the hierarchs unfortunately allowed the whole order of deaconesses gradually to fall into disuse. The hierarchs made this lamentable choice by ignoring the multiple needs of the women and young girls in church and society, the needs of the church as a healthy diverse institution, and of society in general (the Church's social outreach). Influenced by many factors that narrowed social understanding in this period, the hierarchs, gradually made deaconesses of churches still acting in society turn away from involvement and live and serve only in churches of isolated monasteries. As the next step, the hierarchs ceased ordaining active city deaconesses and, finally, also ceased ordaining any deaconesses even in the churches of the female monasteries. In this way, by the end of the eleventh century, the whole order of deaconesses fell into disuse.⁴⁹

This decision of the lapse was not only against the needs of the faithful, the church and society, and against the church's mission to respond to needs, but frankly, was also unjust to the deaconesses themselves, an unwarranted intrusion into the sacred tradition regarding the full diversity of the ordained priesthood. The deaconesses were excluded only, so it seems to me, because of their gender. But that was precisely what the text of the Byzantine ordination ritual for women deacons sets out to warn us about. It emphasized that women should not be excluded from this order of deaconesses because of their gender. It gives us God's own view of the matter: "Oh Lord, you do not reject women who are consecrated to you in order to serve in your holy places . . . [grant] the Grace of your Holy Spirit, just as you gave the gift of your diaconate to Phoebe . . ." ⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 147-164; Theodorou, *History*, 104-110; FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 82-83, 87.

Even so, we must remember that the order of deaconesses was never canonically abolished in the Orthodox Church. No ecumenical synod has ever decided to set this order aside.⁵¹ This means that the hierarchies of the regional churches and even individual bishops of the church, thereafter, could ordain women to the diaconate, in response to very important needs in the ministry of the church and in society. It is an urgent question for the Church at large to discuss, and for the hierarchy to take a lead in arranging: above all for women Orthodox to have their voice heard. It is not only a highly practical matter of ministry and mission. It is an important symbol concerning the proper role of women in the ministry of the Church of Christ.

For the Church of our own day, there is another pressing reason to consider the restoration of the female diaconate. This is the witness that the Sacred Tradition itself gives to the presence of ordained women in the major orders. If Sacred Tradition elevated this in the early centuries, are we not in danger of departing from Tradition, by setting aside the patristic witness in the light of what looks like simple androcentric prejudice of the later medieval period? That action of the early Tradition, in the Eastern Early Church, in ordaining women to the diaconate can thus be a very influential factor in the acceptance of this ordination of women to the diaconate in the ministry of our contemporary church seeking to be faithful to the ancient Tradition itself. The Orthodox Church today, particularly in a new era of the widespread recognition of female gifts and charisms, has a renewed opportunity and responsibility to use these more sensitive contextual approaches and theoethical values of Tradition in its life and ministry. There can be no question other than that the ancient Orthodox Tradition was once accepting of the liberative and energetic ministry of ordained women; to restore the office in our own time would be a major reaffirmation of authentic Orthodox Christian values: important both symbolically, as well as ethically and practically.

⁵¹ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 292-294; Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women*, 174-178, 194-195; FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 146-147.

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Orthodox Women's Defense of the Theotokos: The Case of Empress Pulcheria and the Council of Ephesus

Antonia Atanassova

This paper aims to highlight briefly the role of Eastern Orthodox women's presence in the 5th c. *Theotokos* controversy. I comment on the presence of women here, scarcely documented and largely speculative as it is, as an illustration of the way Christian doctrine is tested in the Eucharistic assembly and a proof that theology is ultimately not an intellectual, but faith-based enterprise. In addition, I aim to draw attention to the fact that, in this context, the image of the Virgin Mary holds special significance for those who refer to her as an exemplar of a chaste Christian lifestyle. It is not accidental that the first recorded Marian appearance comes from the ascetic Gregory Thaumaturgus and that an Alexandrian-based treatise on virginity, ascribed to Athanasius, draws a similar parallel between Mary and Christian virgins. In a remarkable passage Gregory of Nyssa describes (Mary's) virginity as a rock against which the devil dashes with all his force and is shattered.¹ Virginity and its accompanying virtues are seen as a "frontier between life and death" which faithful Christians establish in the act of imitating Mary's piety. The existence of these texts shows that the antique conception of the merits of virginity was regularly discussed in reference to Mary and that, as Susanna Elm observes, the calling of virginity was seen as especially pertinent to women.² The social status of Mary's female devotees ranged from the

¹ Bertrand Buby. *The Marian Heritage of the Early Church*, 3 vols. New York: Alba House, 1996, 3:246.

² See Susanna Elm. *'Virgins of God': the Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

imperial family to the common citizen. Even if the women's story is not told in their own words, it is fascinating to try and reconstruct it within the context of conciliar events, as the controversy over the Marian title *Theotokos* unfolded.

A theoretical model of ancient women's appropriation of the Marian cult needs to take into account the ways in which women celebrated Mary as related to their social class. The most conspicuous Marian devotee from this period is the Augusta Pulcheria, the sister of emperor Theodosius. Pulcheria's influence in the context of Ephesus and Chalcedon is interesting to consider, as the evidence does not give us the direct nature of her involvement, but suggests that it was substantial. She is often cast as the leading figure in the promotion and material establishment of the early cult of Mary.³ Pulcheria sponsored the building of three major churches dedicated to Mary: the Blakhernai, the Hodegoi and the Khalkoprateia, and brought over valuable relics from the East, including the Virgin's girdle.⁴ The Syrian historian Barhadbeshabba reports that Pulcheria had her image painted in the Great Church of Constantinople above the altar, a place which would later on traditionally be inscribed with the image of the Virgin.⁵ Thus the Augusta was one of the very few women who had the means to challenge (subtly but visibly) the social constraints of their era and craft a public *persona* whose claim to holiness was evident throughout their lifetime. Pulcheria's lavish philanthropy directed at the church, her acquisition of Marian relics, and church construction in Constantinople, testify to her prominent and intentional ties with the cult of Mary. Her engagement with the councils of both Ephesus and Chalcedon marks the culminating points of her Marian agenda.

³See Kenneth Holum. *Theodosian Emperresses*. Berkeley, 1982, 142-3.

⁴Holum, *ibid*. Peltomaa notes that according to the Byzantine sources, Pulcheria was responsible for building only the Blakhernai; the Khalkoprateia was probably built together with Theodosius II. See Leena Mari Peltomaa. *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*. Leiden: Brill, 2001, 76; cf. R. Janin, *La Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin I, III: Les Églises et les monastères* (Paris: 1953), 169, 246. It is possible that Pulcheria tried to emulate the example of Constantine I's mother, Helena, who built a splendid church for Mary in Bethlehem.

⁵Barhadbeshabba, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 27, in *Patrologia Orientalis* 9, 565.

Still, was the cult of Mary as *Theotokos* primarily an imperial creation? In examining the sources it will be misleading, I suggest, to consider separately and as irrevocably different the emergence and formulation of Marian themes in formal theological writings and liturgical materials. These three contextualizations of the Marian cult—doctrinal, historical, and liturgical, - easily and rather effortlessly compliment each other in the process of establishing Marian imagery and vocabulary as a whole. In this connection to divide the impact of the mariological message by compartmentalizing it in sections labeled “Mary of the hierarchs” or “Mary of the people” also rings false: as if it is not the single identity of the Virgin that informs the devotion of both the Christian “masses” and their better-educated leaders.

Kenneth Holum suggests that a “memorial of Mary had become part of the liturgical year by the time of Nestorius’s episcopacy, and that this Mary festival honored virgins and women in the most blessed exemplar of their sex.”⁶ Nicholas Constatas specifies the possible object of such honor: for him the *laudatio* to the *Theotokos* is linked with the implicit praises of women from the imperial household who had dedicated their lives (and virginity) to God. Continuing along the same lines, Vassiliki Limberis argues that “Pulcheria understood [any] attacks on the *Theotokos* as a personal affront.”⁷ Limberis continues to say that, “Pulcheria had taken the Virgin *Theotokos* as the model of her life”⁸; hence, “[W]hen she claimed that her identity was the Virgin’s, suddenly the identity of the *Theotokos* was merged with the imperial power Pulcheria held as Augusta.”⁹

However, Leena Mari Peltomaa had cautioned about unbalanced interpretations of Pulcheria’s dedication of virginity to Mary.¹⁰ From

⁶ Holum, 156.

⁷ Vassiliki Limberis, *Divine Heiress. The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople*. New York, 1994, 55.

⁸ Cf. Holum, 141: “She [Pulcheria] embraced Mary as a paradigm of her own asceticism, in the belief that by emulating the *Theotokos* she would receive the Divine Word in her own body.” This belief is not attested in Pulcheria’s own voice.

⁹ Limberis, 59, 60.

¹⁰ Peltomaa, 51.

public records, Peltomaa states, we know nothing of Pulcheria's self-perception of her spiritual practice as Mary-like or of her ambitions to promote the cult of the Virgin.¹¹ Similarly, she continues, Holum's "exceptional and excessive identification of Pulcheria with Mary" and conversely, of Mary with an Augusta-like figure, ignores the theological significance that Mary would hold for the (female) ascetic movement as a whole.¹² How this significance was translated into practice is difficult to discern. The theological idea of *imitatio Mariae* is attested far better in pre-Nestorian Constantinople than specific cultic practices at which we can only guess. Our sources are too meager to permit a solid judgment about the precise nature of the connection between Mary and female asceticism. The very nature of the *Theotokos* controversy indicates that a doctrinal framework of the popular veneration of the Virgin was lacking.

It is plausible, even if not provable, that Pulcheria built her attachment to Mary (rather than a cultic practice *per se*) on the merit of the Virgin's significance in female asceticism. In one anecdotal incident, Pulcheria, the consecrated virgin, referred to herself as having 'given birth to God', while seeking access to the sanctuary to receive the Eucharist. It is significant, I believe, that in order to affirm her right of access to the Holy of Holies, Pulcheria did not refer to her imperial privilege as an Augusta, but to the character of her Christian vocation. As a woman and a Christian virgin she felt entitled to approach a territory that was traditionally reserved for ordained males. The incident is all the more interesting, for it indicates that by identifying with Mary female candidates for sainthood like Pulcheria could succeed in subverting the existing order of powers by appealing to a powerful female figure whose special relationship with God enabled them to plead for what a male-dominated society would ordinarily refuse them (i.e. entering the sanctuary).¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 62.

¹² Ibid., 51.

¹³ Pulcheria was eventually canonized; her feast day is celebrated in the Orthodox church on September 10.

Devotion to Mary was not the only venue in which women could excel. The philosophical aspect of the controversy would also be offered to Pulcheria's scrutiny. In 430, Cyril of Alexandria sent several theological treatises to the imperial family, two of which were titled *Address to the Princesses* (emperor Theodosius's sisters, Arcadia and Marina) and *Address to the Empresses* (Pulcheria and Eudokia, Theodosius' wife). Three of the presumed recipients have taken vows of virginity. To them Cyril offers them a lengthy christological argument, in the context of which the Virgin Mary is depicted as a Birthgiver of the divine Word. The treatise is supplemented by a collection of patristic proof-texts asserting the validity of the title *Theotokos*. Finally, Cyril cites lengthy excerpts from Scripture, selecting texts which encourage faith in the mission and miracles of Jesus Christ, including his birth from a virginal woman.¹⁴

Cyril's works indicate that ascetic women, no less than their male counterparts, would have a special reason to venerate the Virgin as a *Theotokos*. The female addressees of the letter should be seen as capable of reading, understanding, and relating to the theological message it contained. They are also expected to act, as Cyril would have it, in defense of Marian orthodoxy. Thus, even if no direct account of the women's reception of the letters is available, we could speculate that, in both theory and practice, they would act on behalf of the Marian party and promote its doctrinal agenda. Thus women, especially those who were educated and in high social standing, would be instrumental in the formulation and perpetuating of early Marian theology.

What could be said with certainty is that orthodox women's endorsement of Mary's figure casts a powerful shadow across the contents of both doctrine and tradition; the influence of her image is not restricted to the sphere of abstract speculation or the intricacies of imperial politics. Mary the *Theotokos* could prove to be an inspiration

¹⁴ Examples include Romans 1-4; Galatians 4:6; 2 Corinthians 3:14-17; Hebrews 1:6; Matthew 1-3 (the birth narrative). The Scriptural quotations are overwhelming in quantity and occupy more than two thirds of the contents of this text.

and an outlet for genuine feelings of devotion. In a telling episode, during the council of Ephesus in June, 431, when Mary's title of *Theotokos* was confirmed as legitimate by the bishops, led by Cyril of Alexandria, the Ephesian crowd waiting at the door erupted in jubilant celebration. As Cyril relates, "as we came out of the church, they [the people waiting] preceded us with torches as far as the inn, for the evening was near; and there was much joy and lighting of lights in the city, so that even women carrying censers led the way for us."¹⁵ It is worth repeating that this picture of communal celebration contains a special reference to women both at the head of the procession and as censer bearers. Even if they remain nameless, unlike Pulcheria, their contribution to the early developments of the Marian cult deserves additional scrutiny.

Likewise in Constantinople the people gathered to express their support for Cyril and the *Theotokos* party. In a large gathering at the Great Church of Constantinople on July 4, 431, the people acclaimed the victory of Mary the *Theotokos* and Pulcheria as Mary's advocate: "Mary the Virgin has deposed Nestorius! Many years to Pulcheria! She is the one who has strengthened the faith!"¹⁶ Pulcheria's mention in the popular acclaim could be seen as a blatant example of political flattery, but also an indication of the significance of female support for the Virgin's cause. Thanks to such efforts the *Theotokos* had become an object of praise for the laity, a role model for virgins and ascetics, and an inspiration for theologians like Cyril. In regard to the ascetics and especially the community of the virgins of whom Pulcheria was a most illustrious representative, Mary exemplified the holiness of a life dedicated to God.¹⁷ Thus political considerations alone could hardly

¹⁵ Ibid., trans. McEnerney, 1:107. See John McEnerney. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Letters. Fathers of the Church*, vols. 76-77. Washington, 1987. Cyril does not mention Mary as the object of this celebration. Holum suggests that the celebrations were in honor of the Virgin *theotokos* and this is the reason why women led the triumphal procession throughout the city. See Holum 166, also Peltomaa, 58.

¹⁶ Eduard Schwartz ed. *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, I: Concilium Universale Ephesinum* (5 vols); II: Concilium Universale Chalcedonense (6 vols). Berlin, 1927-1932, I.1.3, 14; Holum, 170.

¹⁷ Ibid., 72: "It is probably correct to characterize early fifth-century Constantinople as the 'city of virgins', because female asceticism had spread to every social class, and because the Virgin had become an object of imitation, not only to unmarried women, but to married women, mothers and widows as well."

have motivated the crowd to merge Pulcheria and Mary. Perhaps the importance of virginity as a late antique way of empowering devout women, seamlessly led to their praise and defense of Mary as the Virgin par excellence.

In conclusion, in the context of late antique devotion and theology it is fitting to describe Mary the Theotokos as an “archetype of both mothers and virgins.”¹⁸ She is an especially suitable model for women who live like her, from the imperial court to the nameless participants in the crowd cheering Cyril’s victory at Ephesus. In the context of early Mariology this affirmation of Mary’s role in the life of the ecclesiastical community and its special significance for women is a theme worth additional study.

¹⁸ Theodotus of Ancyra, *Homily Six*, PO 19.331, trans. Gambero, 261. In: Luigi Gambero. *Mary and The Fathers of the Church: the Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*. San Francisco : Ignatius Press, 1999.

Following the Command of Christ: Philanthropy as an Imperial Female Virtue

V.K. McCarty

Byzantine Empresses and women within the imperial court were brought up and educated in an environment rich with awareness of the *philanthrōpia* of God, the forgiving and patient generosity of God's mercy. Several of those responding in obedience and gratitude to the love of God for humankind leave a record of their patronage in church and monastery-building projects, which stands as a tribute to their faith. The Christian virtue of philanthropia was preached by bishops and patriarchs in the Cathedral and cited in the traditional Orthodox liturgies of the Church. Women in the imperial family also would have been taught philanthropy by the example of the empresses and princesses who had gone before them. After its august beginnings in Attic drama,¹ the term *philanthrōpia* is mentioned only a few times in the New Testament,² and in the Septuagint as well,³ but the exhortation to charitable works was established early in the development of Byzantine thought. It is well attested in the patristic teachings of the Church,⁴ which could assist in the formation of a God-fearing empress; so that philanthropia, as it was

¹ Its first use is reported in the Aeschylus tragedy, *Prometheus Bound* (ca. 463 BCE) and again in the Aristophanes comedy, *Peace* (ca. 421 BCE); later it appears in Plato's dialogue, "Euthyphro" (ca. 399 BCE), and the treatises of Aristotle as well.

² Acts 28:2, and 27:3 as an adverb, and Titus 3:4: "But when the goodness and loving kindness (*philanthrōpia*) of God our Savior appeared, he saved us"

³ Septuagint references to *philanthrōpia*, some as a verb or adjective: II Macc. 4:11, 6:22, 9:27, III Macc. 3:15, 3:18, 3:20; IV Macc. 5:12, Esther 8:13, I Esdras 8:10, Wisdom 1:6, 7:23, 12:19.

⁴ References to philanthropia in the Fathers of the Church include but are not exclusive to: Clement of Alexandria, Homily 2.45, Homily 11.10, Homily 12 (6 times), Homily 16.19, *Epistle of Clement* 8, *Protrepticus* 1, 10; *Quis Dives Salvetur*, 3; *Paedagogus* 1.8, 2.18; *Stromateis* 2.9,18; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.27, 67; Commentary on Mt. 10:1; Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 1.3, 4.2,3; 15.2, *Orationes Tres Adversus Arianos* 3.67, 2.51; John Chrysostom, Homily "In Parabolam Debitoris" in Mt. 18.23, Homily 28.1 in Jn., Homily 14.3 in 2 Cor., Homily 3.2 in Philem., Homily 3.6 in Heb., Homily 4.9; Justin Martyr, *Apologiae* 10, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 47.5, Basil the Great, *Homily VI*, Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Orations*, XV, Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 14*, Ambrose, "Naboth."

reflected in its theology and liturgy, was a significant inheritance for the Byzantine Church.

From the treasury of patristic teaching in place before the establishment of the Byzantine Empire, let us look at some of the texts that shed light upon the virtue of *philanthrōpia*. Clement of Alexandria (ca.150–ca.215) characterized philanthropia as the greatest of God’s attributes, God’s love of humankind manifested through the gift of God’s incarnate Son. The philanthropia of Christ was seen as deriving “from His personal experience of becoming flesh and feeling its weaknesses,” and therefore even a crowned empress could attain to philanthropia by “becoming poor” and identifying with those in need by way of her philanthropic acts.⁵ Her theological advisors could demonstrate how a wealthy empress might nevertheless become poor in spirit by reciprocating God’s love of humankind. “If one is faithful and surveys the magnificence of God’s love of mankind,” surely she will “use wealth rightly, so it ministers to righteousness; for if you use it wrongly, it is found to be a minister of wrong.”⁶ The theologian Origen (c.185–c.254), Clement’s successor to the catechetical school of Alexandria, provided encouragement for the philanthropic dimension in religious life by describing Jesus as the *Logos Philanthropos* and teaching that the loving influence of Christ inspires a profound transformation in the human character; so each in turn become themselves humanitarians and philanthropists.⁷ Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria (c.296–373) wrote that love for humankind is a principle motive of God for the Incarnation because “our transgression called forth the loving-kindness of the Word that the Lord should both make haste to help us and appear among men.”⁸ He taught that the loving attitude of God demands that we generously emulate it in our relationships with one another. The

⁵ Clement, *Paedagogos*, Bk. I.VIII.10ff, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Erdmann’s, 1951), vol. II, 228.

⁶ Clement, “The Rich Man’s Salvation” (Quis Dives Salvetur) 3, 14 *Clement of Alexandria*, G.W. Butterworth, trans. (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1968), 277, 299.

⁷ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, Bk. I.67, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 62.

⁸ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, 4:2, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), Vol. IV, 38.

commandment of the LORD exhorts us to humanitarian concern and philanthropy for the poor and needy, and for widows, strangers, and orphans.⁹

The wisdom of the Cappadocian Fathers may have been influential to succeeding generations of the Byzantine imperial family as well, particularly the women closest to the throne. Basil the Great (c.330–c.379) taught that by philanthropic generosity, “God will welcome thee, angels will laud thee, mankind from the very beginning will call thee blessed. For thy stewardship of these corruptible things thy reward shall be glory everlasting, a crown of righteousness, the heavenly kingdom;” since, after all, “the grace of good works returns to the giver. Thou hast given to the poor, and the gift becomes thine own, and comes back with increase.”¹⁰ In his *Catechetical Oration*, Gregory of Nyssa (335–394) calls philanthropia “a special character of the divine nature,” and therefore “the cause of the presence of God among men.”¹¹ He thus considers it responsible for the Incarnation.¹² Gregory Nazianzen (c.325–c.389) in his innovative *Oration 14* “On the love of the Poor” showed how by becoming “friends of the poor” (*Philoptochos*), bishops and laity, empresses and merchants alike, can learn to emulate the transactional aspect of God’s saving love of humankind in generosity to the poor.¹³ “Let us share what we have with the poor that we may be rich in the bounty of heaven. Give a portion of your soul too, not just your body; give a portion to God too, not just the world; take something from the belly, dedicate it to the Spirit.”¹⁴ By one fortunate enough to be chosen as empress, patriarchal teaching could

⁹ Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1968), 33.

¹⁰ Basil the Great, Homily VI on Luke xxi.18, *Writings of Basil*, Blomfield Jackson, trans. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895).

¹¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration*, XV, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 15, 487.

¹² Glanville Downey, “Philanthropia in Religion and Statecraft in the Fourth Century after Christ,” in *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 4:2/3 (1955), 204.

¹³ John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 147.

¹⁴ *Oration 14* in *St. Gregory Nazianus: Selected Orations*, M. Vinson, trans. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 22, 55.

well be taken as cautionary advice as well. Ringing through the “Verses against the Rich” is Gregory’s cry for a humanitarian Christian response to the needs of the poor, and as Shewring charmingly renders it:

Give to the poor; they before God can plead,
And win, and richly give, the grace we need...
Honour in him God’s handiwork expressed;
Reverence in it the rites that serve a guest.¹⁵

Ambrose (339–397), while Bishop of Milan in the Western Church, was influential to Emperor Theodosius I, and his advice may have been familiar to the Theodosian empresses in court circles, reminding them that “it makes your debtor God the Son, who says ‘I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, and I was a stranger and you took me in, naked and you clothed me’ (Mt. 25:35–36). For he says that whatever was given to any of the least ones was given to him.” Having given birth herself, the message of St. Ambrose may have registered even more deeply with an imperial Byzantine lady than with her husband: “Earth was established in common for all, rich and poor alike. Nature, which begets everyone poor, knows no wealthy for we are not born with clothing or begotten with gold and silver. Naked, it brings us into the light, wanting food, clothing, drink, and naked the earth receives us whom it brought forth, not knowing how to compass our possessions in the tomb.”¹⁶ Closer to home, Patriarch of Constantinople John Chrysostom (347–407) also vigorously proclaimed the Gospel imperative of Matthew 25, for which he came under criticism from the imperial court and endured temporary exile. He cited it and alluded to it numerous times in his preaching, in Homily 79 on Matt 25:31–41, he calls it “this sweetest passage of Scripture” (*tes perokopes tes hedistes*),¹⁷ for “great indeed was Christ’s regard

¹⁵ Gregory Nazianzen, “Verses against the Rich,” (Moral Poems, XXVIII), quoted in *Rich and Poor in Christian Tradition*, 49.

¹⁶ Ambrose, “Naboth,” quoted in *Ambrose*, Boniface Ramsey (London: Routledge, 1997), 138, 118.

¹⁷ Greek translation by Rudolf Brandle, in “This Sweetest Passage: Matthew 25:31-46 and Assistance to the Poor in the Homilies of John Chrysostom,” in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, Susan R. Holman, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008), 132. For what follows, Homily 79, St. John Chrysostom, “Homily LXXIX,” *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*,

for philanthropy and mercy.” Poignantly illustrating the theology of philanthropy, he shows that it is Jesus himself—hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, sick, and imprisoned—whom we encounter among the poor in the streets in need, “for no costly table did He seek, but what was needful only, and His necessary food, and He sought in a suppliant’s garb” and teaches that Christ sees what is offered to the poor as offered to him; “the dignity of the one receiving, for it was God, who was receiving by the poor.”

The early fifth-century historian Sozomen describes how philanthropia is acquired by imitating the prototype, the Heavenly King, who is its source. He illustrates how it functions as an imperial virtue by praising Emperor Theodosius II (401–450), to whom the *Ecclesiastical History* is dedicated.¹⁸ Like the emperor, the Christ-loving empress also “promoted the salvation and welfare of the people, placating God of the sake of the empire and emperor.”¹⁹ The women in the imperial court attending the Liturgy heard the exhortation to philanthropia numerous times in each service. Although the Liturgies of St. Basil and John Chrysostom may have evolved to their present forms in the eighth and ninth centuries, and as such have been attended by empresses from those centuries and afterward, philanthropia is repeated as an attribute of God in the former ten times, and in the latter, twelve times. “The services of vespers and orthos, the hymns and prayers of everyday services, reveal that sinful man is redeemed through the philanthropia of God, which is described as ‘unfathomable,’ ‘indescribable,’ ‘immeasurable.’”²⁰ In times of catastrophe, litanies rang out invoking the philanthropia of God and galvanizing the humanitarian efforts of, for example, Empress Irene after the earthquake of 740.

Philip Schaff, ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 474-479.

¹⁸ “Girt with the purple robe and crown, a symbol of thy dignity to onlookers, thou wearest within always that true ornament of sovereignty, piety and philanthropy...thus, thou art humane and gentle, both to those near, and to all, since thou dost imitate the Heavenly King who is thy pattern.” Sozomen, Introduction, *Ecclesiastical History*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. II (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 236.

¹⁹ Liz James, *Empress and Power in Early Byzantium* (New York: Leicester Univ Press, 2001), 14.

²⁰ Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1968), 34.

These examples illustrate the foundation that was laid down in Christian thought by patristic rhetoric elucidating the theology of philanthropia. In reflecting on the relationship between poverty and merit, it showed the way forward for the development of the imperial patron-client relationship as a means of emulating God's love of humankind. The teachings of the Fathers clearly prepared the way for a humanitarian response to the needs of the poor, who were to be identified as the image of God, rather than cursed by the gods as they were seen in Greek society. Because of the love of the Creator, everyone owes generosity to one another, especially those raised to the imperial throne by birth or marriage. Thus, with the rise of the Byzantine state, and certainly by the fifth and sixth centuries, philanthropy along with piety was increasingly promoted as a principle of conduct for imperial women, with Helena (c.255–c.330), the first Christian empress offered as the definitive role model. Eusebius records that among Helena's several philanthropic pursuits, she built numerous churches in the Holy Land. Much of her philanthropic work resonated with the command of Christ in Matthew 25: "Especially abundant were the gifts she bestowed on the naked and unprotected poor. To some she gave money, to others a supply of clothing; she liberated some from imprisonment, or from the bitter servitude of the mines; others she delivered from unjust oppression, and others again, she restored from exile."²¹ Although her achievements might be in part legendary, her inspiration to generations of Byzantine imperial women was very real. By their endowment of charitable institutions and other philanthropic actions, several empresses, including Pulcheria, were acclaimed as "new" or "second" Helenas.²²

As the royal sister of Theodosius II (401–450) and crowned in her own right after his death, Empress Pulcheria was known to have corresponded with Pope Leo I,²³ and she was responsible for establishing

²¹ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* Bk III, 44, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. I (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 531.

²² "Pulcheria was saluted as a new Helena at the Council of Chalcedon, Ephemia by the Council of 518, Sophia at both Corippus and Venantius, who also compared her to the apostle Paul." Liz James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (New York: Leicester Press, 2001), 14.

²³ *Patrologia cursus completus, series Latina*. Paris: J.P. Migne, 1844–66, vol. 54, cols. 905–8, cited in Andrew Kadel, *Matrology* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 56.

the education of her imperial brother. Her philanthropic projects reflected pious generosity on a grand scale; ancient sources record that Pulcheria, “possessing great wisdom and a holy mind, educated her brother Theodosios. She gave him a royal training, above all in piety towards God...After building numerous churches, poor-houses, hostels, and monasteries; she endowed all of them with appropriate income in imperial style.” She brought her sisterly influence to bear on her imperial brother’s philanthropic activities as well, “The pious Theodosius, in imitation of the blessed Pulcheria, sent much money to the archbishop of Jerusalem for distribution among those in need.”²⁴ Theodosius learned the virtuous habit of philanthropy in part from his pious sister Pulcheria, who was educated enough to have read it and heard it from the Patriarchs themselves. The writings of the court orator Themistius may have contextualized his understanding of philanthropia as well, because his addresses to the first Theodosius, when he was a new ruler, had taught him that philanthropia is the greatest of the imperial virtues, for by it the soul is fashioned into the image of God.²⁵

It was often through imperial philanthropic initiative that many of the most important relics of the saints were brought to the Byzantine capitol and reverently housed in churches built specifically for them. These churches became in turn the location where empresses were crowned and betrothed. Thus, Constantinople grew to be the greatest treasury of relics in Christendom, and this became especially significant after the loss of Jerusalem during the Crusades.²⁶ When the relics of John Chrysostom were translated from Komana to the capitol, “the blessed Pulcheria placed them in the Church of the Apostles, thus uniting those which had been separated following his deposition from

²⁴ Theophanes, the Confessor, *Chronographia: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813* / trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 125.

²⁵ Glanville Downey, “Philanthropia in Religion and Statecraft in the Fourth Century after Christ,” in *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 4:2/3 (1955), 201.

²⁶ The relics “functioned as instruments of power, investiture, and leadership, guaranteeing political authority and displaying divine approval to those who possessed them.” Ioli Kalavrezon, “Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, Henry Maguire, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 55.

the Church.” Pulcheria also “built a wonderful church for the blessed First Martyr and deposited his holy relics there.”²⁷ By her benefaction, the Chapel of St. Stephen was added to the Daphne Palace complex to house the relic of the Protomartyr’s arm brought from Jerusalem and as a treasury for other important relics, such as the precious cross traditionally attributed to Constantine containing a relic of the True Cross. She was also responsible for building a church for the much-beloved icon with the Hodegitria in the Arsenal area of the capitol.²⁸

After the multi-faceted philanthropic projects of Empress Pulcheria, the bride chosen for her imperial brother, Athenais-Eudokia, carried on her pious work, especially later in life when exiled. Athenais was a convert to Orthodoxy from Athens; when she was baptized she took the name Eudokia, and like Helena, “carrying out the command of Christ in Matthew 25, she was able to offer service for people—especially for the sick, the hungry, the unclothed, the poor and the neglected.”²⁹ The imperial sisters-in-law, both hailed as “most-pious” by historians, each offered their robes to the service of the Church to be used as fair linens upon the Altar.³⁰ Among the many philanthropic institutions that Athenais-Eudokia established was a great poor-house, which was capable of housing four hundred. Empress Athenais-Eudocia was reported to have worked tirelessly to support the building up of the city walls through her patronage of Kyros of Panopolis, whom she influenced her husband to appoint as prefect of the city. He was said to have built up the walls and lit up the dark capitol.³¹ Her charitable works in the Holy Land were impressive as well. History has recorded her pilgrimage to Jerusalem

²⁷ Theophanes, the Confessor, *Chronographia*, 135–136,144.

²⁸ Thomas F. Mathews, *The Byzantine Churches of Istanbul: A Photographic Survey* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 201.

²⁹ Constantelos, Demetrios J., “Women and Philanthropy in the History of Hellenism,” (available at <http://www.goarch.org/print/en/ourfaith/articles8144.asp>, accessed 1/18/2005), 4.

³⁰ Liz James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (New York: Leicester Univ Press, 2001), 154.

³¹ “From 439 to 441 there was feverish activity in Byzantium; the best men of the community were working for its welfare. ...Kyros wanted to satisfy Augusta Eudocia, to accomplish her assignment quickly. ...no poor man was idle in the capital. Out of the generosity of her nature, Eudocia stood by them, rich in her resources. ...In the few years of his consulship, this poet and builder accomplished miracles. He built the walls. He lit up the dark capitol.” Jeanne Tsatsos, *Empress Athenais-Eudocia: A Fifth Century Byzantine Humanist* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1977), 76.

in the company of St. Melania the Younger and their relic-collecting projects; after first visiting to set up the foundations, she commissioned designs for churches, a palace and a large inn for pilgrims, determining that it was not proper for them to sleep in the churches. “There must be no poor man without help, no old man without care.”

Her humanitarian generosity, especially toward the end of her life, became renowned. “She spent it all for Christ’s work. It is reckoned that in the last seventeen years of her life, she spent for the buildings and for the maintenance of the Holy City more than 20,000 pounds of gold; yet she herself lived in monastic simplicity.”³² The example of Empress Eudokia was undoubtedly an inspiration to the imperial women who came after her, perhaps most explicitly her own great granddaughter, Princess Anicia Juliana.

Recent archeological exploration has uncovered restoration and building expansion, which carried on the work of Empress Eudokia into succeeding generations and has brought to light a Byzantine princess who was a significant benefactress of philanthropic projects. In 1960, grading operations around Istanbul’s current city hall at Sarachane, in the center of the ancient city, uncovered a number of ornately worked cornices and marble blocks. Two of these carried an inscription describing the Byzantine princess Anicia Juliana, praising her royal lineage, and the elaborate church that she had constructed in honor of St. Polyeyktos; this church replaced a similar one, which had been built on the site by Empress Eudocia. The inscription, which adorned the upper periphery of the church, witnesses to the philanthropic generosity of her imperial granddaughter and her motivation for building.³³ The Church

³² Ibid., 96.

³³ It read, in part: “The Empress Eudocia, in her eagerness to honour God, was the first to build a temple to the divinely inspired Polyeyktos...she raised this building from its small original to its present size and form.” (from lines 1–10) “May the servants of the heavenly King, to whomsoever she gave gifts and to whomsoever she built temples, protect her readily with her son and his daughters. And may the unutterable glory of the most industrious family survive as long as the Sun drives his fiery chariot.” (from lines 34–41) “What choir is sufficient to sing the work of Juliana, who, after Constantine—embellisher of his Rome, after the holy golden light of Theodosius, and after the royal descent of so many forbears, accomplished in few years a work worthy of her family, and more than worthy? She alone has conquered time and surpassed the wisdom of renowned Solomon, raising a temple to receive God, to be the gift of Juliana.” (from lines 42–64) “Such is the labour that Juliana,

of St. Polyuktos, which was built in only three years, was reported by the *Book of Ceremonies* to lie along the imperial processional route from the Theodosian Forum to the Church of the Holy Apostles. It was a remarkable structure to uncover, “a church of such evident grandeur securely dated to the period immediately preceding the accession of Justinian, and some ten years before St. Sophia.”³⁴ In the company of other more familiar characters discussed here, it is fascinating to ponder this lesser known Byzantine princess who “surpassed the wisdom of renowned Solomon” and raised a temple to receive God. There is an authoritative-looking portrait of her standing between personifications of Magnanimity (*Megalopsychia*) and Prudence (*Sophrosyne*) in the splendidly illuminated medical treatise of Dioscorides, which was said to be produced for her.³⁵ It has even been suggested that Anicia Juliana is represented in the large marble bust of an imperial woman of this period prominently displayed at the threshold of the Byzantine collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.³⁶

Anicia Juliana was born in about 462 and was descended on her mother’s side from Emperor Theodosius I. The archeological evidence witnesses to the artistic excellence of the church that she added to her palace, which for ten years was the largest in Constantinople. She spared no expense on its construction and embellishment, which were on a level of quality not seen before in the capitol. As her construction workers finished building the church, probably in 526, “their places on the scaffolding were taken by the decorators—sculptors, mosaicists and workers in revetment and inlay.”³⁷ Like the Sistine Chapel from the later Renaissance period, the church built by Anicia Juliana attempted to parallel in its dimensions the first Jerusalem Temple: “the sanctuary

after a countless swarms of labours, accomplished for the souls of her parents and for her own life, and for the lives of those who are to come and those who already are.” (from lines 74–76) Martin Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium: The Discovery and Excavation of Anicia Juliana’s Palace-Church in Istanbul* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1989), 33–34.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁵ It is currently housed in the Vienna Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek. It is fascinating pondering what philanthropic intention inspired this Byzantine princess to commission a medical treatise!

³⁶ Martin Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium*, 36.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

may have been exactly twenty cubits square, the precise dimensions of the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Solomon;” and similar to the description in 1 Kings 6:29 and Ezek. 41:18, “the Temple included palm trees alternating with pairs of cherubim around the interior... The conclusion that Anicia Juliana was attempting to evoke the Temple is hard to resist.”³⁸ The Church of St. Polyeuktos now stood as the most sumptuous church in Constantinople, and thus, Justinian’s St. Sophia, in its scale, design, and comparative austerity, “is best seen as a deliberate reaction to it.”³⁹

Although philanthropic foundations were erected by Byzantine imperial women primarily to the glory of God, some may also have been established as an atoning gesture. Empress Theodora, the sixth-century wife of Justinian I (483–565), used her own humble origins to good philanthropic effect by establishing the girls school “Of Repentance” (*Metanoia*) for wayward women around 530; Kuleli College now occupies the former site of this charitable foundation. “Girls who had been exploited by greediness and lascivious desires of some unscrupulous men found attention, protection, home and food in the philanthropic establishments of Theodora. There, they were prepared to be able to face the difficulties of life, either as wives and mothers or as nuns and social workers.”⁴⁰ Thus, the philanthropia of God was able to absolve sin, provided that prayers and charities were offered on one’s behalf. So, for example, Empress Theodora, wife of Theophilos (829–42), asked a group of bishops and monks to pray that her husband be absolved of the sins he had committed through his iconoclastic policy, and was assured by Symeon of Studios the New Theologian that, relying on the philanthropia of God, the emperor had indeed been received among the Orthodox with his sins forgiven.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid., 138-139. “He carved the walls of the house all around about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers.” (1Kgs. 6:29) “It was formed of cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub.” (Ezek. 41:18)

³⁹ Ibid., 139.

⁴⁰ Demetrios J. Constantelos, “Women and Philanthropy in the History of Hellenism,” (available at <http://www.goarch.org/print/en/ourfaith/articles8144.asp>, accessed 1/18/2005), 4.

⁴¹ Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1968), 38.

Empress Irene, the wife of Emperor Leo IV (750–780) and Regent for Constantine VI (771–797), offers an instance of humanitarian action as a thanksgiving to God for healing. Throughout her life exercising imperial authority, Irene demonstrated an increasingly spiritual sense of the imperial duty to practice philanthropy by patronizing building projects. Particularly after Constantinople was stricken in 740 by a disastrous earthquake, Irene responded generously by funding restoration to churches and monasteries which were ruined, and was perhaps inspired to her generous humanitarian action by the litanies offered on the behalf of the “Philanthropos Theos.” One example of this restorative work is the Church of the Virgin of the Spring (*tes Peges*), where the source of the water was a spring known for its miraculous healing cures; a spring in fact marked by a mosaic thank-offering by the empress herself.⁴² She may have also had a hand in the building of the new complex of the Eleutherios Palace.⁴³ It has been said that the building of a new silk-weaving workshop among its structures may indicate Empress Eirene’s charitable interest in this traditionally imperial enterprise. The treasured purple silk designs, such as the “eagle” silk and “charioteer” silk, used as the shroud for Charlemagne were produced at workshops of this sort.⁴⁴ It is recorded that around the Church of St. Luke, Empress Irene “built three most important [monuments] for death, life and health. Thus, for death she built the cemeteries for strangers (*xenotaphia*) and for life she built the dining halls (*triklinous*) of Lamias of Pistopeon, and for health she built the hostel (*xenon*) called the Eirene (*ta Eirene*).”⁴⁵ Her building projects also included senior center dining halls (*gerotropheia*), soup kitchens, and retirement homes. The St. Luke complex came to symbolize her imperial calling to philanthropy. “This extraordinary combination

⁴² “Healed at Pege, [she] dedicated gifts to God in thanks—but also so that her healing, this sign of divine favour, would not be forgotten. Religious patronage is a way open to empresses to display their special relationship with God.” Liz James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 158.

⁴³ “Since there is no independent evidence that Constantine was concerned with building, I think we can safely assume that the empress took most of the initiative.” Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple: Rulers of Medieval Byzantium* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 102.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

of life, health and death with clearly philanthropic aims and public functions, embodies Irene's concerns for the well-being of the city."⁴⁶

Although the early Byzantine historians have left a narrative record rich with detail, monastic foundation documents (*typika*) also provide an invaluable treasury of textual resources, illustrating in greater interior depth the imperial virtue of *philanthrōpia* lived out by Byzantine empresses. It is always possible that humanitarian projects funded by imperial women were simply part of the social duty expected of every Roman aristocrat by virtue of her rank. After all, if a royal foundation was funded only to increase social standing, it could hardly be said to be truly "philanthropic." However, even allowing for the contributions of editors and the occasional ghostwriter, *typika* for monasteries founded by empresses offer insights into the spiritual intent for their philanthropic projects, often in their own words; their Christian response to the love of humankind by the "Philanthropos Kyrios" is richly evident in this material.

Such is the case with Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene, wife of Alexios I Komnenos (1082–1118): her philanthropic work is not only reflected in the *Alexiad* written by her daughter, but also in the *typikon* of the Convent of the Mother-of-God Kecharitomene in Constantinople, which she founded. She was known to have beneficially influenced not only her son the future Emperor John II Komnenos and her daughter, Anna Komnene, but also her sixth child as well. Isaac Komnenos was the founder of the Monastery of the Mother of God Kosmosoteire and benefactor of the reconstruction and magnificent mosaic work in the Chora monastery still evident to visitors today. Anna Komnene describes her mother giving charity to beggars while on military campaign with her husband,⁴⁷ encouraging them not to lose heart or to beg. She exhorted them to find active work, which suggests that her philanthropic projects could be "viewed as a way of obtaining God's mercy through

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *The Alexiad of Anna Komnene*, E.R.A.Sewter, trans. (London: Penguin, 1969) Bk 12, Ch iii, 378.

giving mercy to the less fortunate.”⁴⁸ In addition to the Convent of the Theotokos Kecharitomene, Irene Doukaina also jointly founded the male monastery of the Christ Philanthropos; thereby contributing to the reemergence in the twelfth-century of double monasteries. Although now a military depot, it can still be seen in the “colorful façade of its substructures” in the Arsenal-area ruins in Istanbul.⁴⁹

The Kecharitomene Typikon reflects issues contemporary to the Byzantine Monastic Reform Movement of the twelfth century, concern that checks and balances be set in place against financial misconduct among them. It also demonstrates the philanthropic Christian intentions of a deeply pious empress. The typikon is especially notable because it begins with an elegantly crafted prayer addressed to the Mother of God Kecharitomene, calling her the “ornament of our race with most saving power,” and the “adorned queen standing at the right hand of the Pantokrator,” who protects Constantinople, that “the great city entrusted to you be preserved as an ever-flourishing root and ever-flowing font of piety.”⁵⁰ Empress Irene credits the Mother of God with leading her to the position of empress, and granting her “much fruitfulness in the Purple” in the blessing of her many children. Empress Irene is quite specific in stating her philanthropic intention to respond to God’s saving love for humanity: “to praise and worship your greatness...and to thank you in a spiritual way for your compassion and mercy towards us; all that I bring to you in return is most fervent love, you who with your First-Born and Only-Begotten maintain the most providential and saving love for humanity.” Acknowledging that the stream of all good things on earth comes from God’s love of humankind, so that we “possess nothing of ourselves but are entirely God’s...I myself have

⁴⁸ Alice-Mary Talbot, “Byzantine Women, Saints’ Lives and Social Welfare,” in *Women and Religion Life in Byzantium* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2001), 11.

⁴⁹ Thomas F. Mathews, *The Byzantine Churches of Istanbul: A Photographic Survey* (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1976) 200.

⁵⁰ For this and the following, “*Kecharitomene: Typikon of Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene for the Convent of the Mother of God Kecharitomene in Constantinople*” in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders’ Typica and Testaments*, John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, eds. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 649-724.

built for you a holy temple.” Thus, the Convent of the Mother of God Kecharitomene is offered; intentionally giving back some of what God has given her, she establishes a nunnery of “solitary singers of praise... dispensing to each of them from your great gifts to me the yearly and daily necessities in accordance with their physical needs.”

Empress Irene’s typikon outlines the parameters of monastic life in specific liturgical detail: “I have set up the life of devotion for them coenobitic in everything, establishing and ensuring for this divine company an absence of distraction from all sides in the matter of their holy way of life.” The Divine Office is to order the lives of the nuns, “bowing down... to God seven times a day...rising with David at midnight...lifting holy hands during the night to the Holy of Holies.” Irene undergirds the instructions for her earthly support with numerous Scriptural citations and acknowledgement that all good monastic praise and work comes first from God’s loving support of humankind, for if “divine help is not present, no good action is easy to accomplish for anyone at all.” Citing Heb. 13:20–21, the typikon ends as it began with prayerful exhortation: “May the God of peace who called us to his eternal glory through his great and unspeakable goodness confirm and strengthen you in his holy will through his only-begotten Son Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the All-Holy Life-Giving Spirit through the intercessions of our Mother of God Kecharitomene,” signing herself, “Irene Doukaina in Christ Our God the faithful Empress of the Romans.”

Another example of the philanthropy of an empress illustrated in the textual record of the monastic typika is the patronage of Empress Theodora Palaiologina, wife of Michael VIII Palaiologos (1258–1282), whose building activities flowered when she was dowager empress. She restored the convent of Lips in Constantinople, adding the “south” church onto the three-hundred-year old Church of the Theotokos to house the tombs of her family, since the imperial mausoleum inside the Church of the Holy Apostles had been demolished during the Latin occupation. Of special interest is the benefaction of a twelve-bed women’s hospital Empress Theodora built next to the convent, leaving

careful instructions for the details of its appointment.⁵¹ This typikon is fascinating particularly in disclosing the spiritual origin of the empress's impulse to fund the restoration: "the wealth I have received from God I have dedicated to him and to our common Mistress, the Mother of God, in expiation of my sins in this life; may these gifts be found acceptable by God the Almighty, so that he may have mercy on me at the Day of Judgment and give me a share of his blessings...may you mention me constantly in both your common and private prayers to God."⁵² For the churches she restored, Empress Theodora received praise in an *enkomion*, asking that God bless "the Pious and Christ-loving empress who out of love for God restored this church and many others which were ruined and who built others from the foundations..."⁵³

These examples offer a glimpse of the impact imperial women had on Byzantine philanthropy from its earliest centuries. On balance, it may be that several generations of patristic teaching helped clarify the connection between poverty and merit before God, and the need for a generous Christian response to the needs of the poor. This evidence shows that Byzantine empresses did make significant contributions at a time when systems for supplying basic social services were yet underdeveloped. In their Greek-influenced culture, in which women were often regarded as invisible components of society and identified primarily with the home front, this data illustrates how they did make a difference, especially in times of critical need, such as earthquake, famine, and political catastrophe. In monastic typika in particular, imperial women, whose accomplishments may often have been under-reported, were able to make valuable contributions to the textual record. They reveal a more complete picture of several of the Byzantine empresses whose Christian response to the love of God for humankind inspired them to embark upon philanthropic building projects benefiting Byzantine society.

⁵¹ Alice-Mary Talbot, "The Byzantine Family and the Monastery," in *Women and Religious Life in Byzantium* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2001), 124.

⁵² "Lips: Typikon of Theodora Palaiologina for the Convent of Lips in Constantinople" in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 1281.

⁵³ Alice-Mary Talbot, "Old Wine in New Bottles" in *Women and Religious Life in Byzantium*, 19.

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Russian Monasticism and Social Engagement: The Case of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra in the Nineteenth Century

Scott M. Kenworthy

A common stereotype has it that the Orthodox Church is “otherworldly” and unengaged in this world, particularly as contrasted with the social engagement of Western Christianity. According to this image, the Orthodox Church is (and has historically been) preoccupied with liturgy and ritual, on the one hand, and contemplative prayer and mysticism, on the other, and therefore has not actively sought to ameliorate the conditions of those in need. Although this depiction is not entirely inaccurate, particularly as pertains to the Orthodox Church in recent centuries, it is my argument that this lack of social engagement is not somehow “essential” to the nature of the Orthodox Church, but rather specific to particular historical circumstances. According to Demetrios Constantelos, philanthropy was a central ideal for Byzantine Orthodoxy; the Church both taught the importance of charity at the individual level, and engaged in philanthropy at the public, institutional level. It was only the Turkish conquest that forced the Church to reduce its sphere of activity to liturgy and prayer and gave it an “otherworldly” focus.¹ Similarly, as I have argued elsewhere, the Russian Orthodox Church underwent a comparable process: the medieval Russian Church both preached charity and operated philanthropic institutions; secularizing rulers of the eighteenth century sought to restrict the Church’s activities to the “spiritual” realm, a trend that was dramatically reinforced by Soviet rule.²

¹ Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Poverty, Society and Philanthropy in the Late Mediaeval Greek World* (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1992), esp. 134; also Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, 2nd rev. ed. (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1991).

² Scott M. Kenworthy, “To Save the World or to Renounce It: Modes of Moral Action in Russian

This essay examines the social engagement of Russian Orthodox monasticism in the nineteenth century, with a focus on the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra. I pay particular attention to the efforts of the prior of Trinity-Sergius, Archimandrite Antonii (Medvedev, prior 1831-1877), and his cooperation with Filaret (Drozdov), Metropolitan of Moscow (1821-1867).³ When Antonii became prior of Trinity-Sergius in 1831, the philanthropic activities of Trinity-Sergius were indeed very modest, and his vision of a socially engaged monastery had to work against the prevailing “otherworldly” self-conception of the monastery and the Church at the time, including that of Metropolitan Filaret. Although in the early twentieth century Church and monastic leaders would see a conflict between contemplation and social action, this was not the case with Archimandrite Antonii.⁴ As a disciple of Serafim of Sarov, Antonii played a critical role in promoting hesychasm and contemplative spirituality, particularly by founding Gethsemane Skete. For Antonii, therefore, there was no contradiction between contemplation and social action – rather, the two were complementary. Over the course of his forty-five year tenure as prior of the Lavra, he would revolutionize its social role, providing an example for other monasteries to follow. The increased social activism of Trinity-Sergius under Antonii’s leadership indicated transformations that would take place within both the attitudes and activities of the Russian Church, particularly after the mid-nineteenth century. No doubt it was for such significant accomplishments that the Russian Orthodox Church canonized Antonii as a saint in 1998.⁵

Orthodoxy,” in *Religion, Morality, and Community in Post-Soviet Societies*, ed. Mark Steinberg and Catherine Wanner (Washington and Bloomington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Indiana University Press, 2008), 21-54.

³ For Antonii, Filaret and Trinity-Sergius in the nineteenth century, see Scott M. Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia: Trinity-Sergius, Monasticism and Society after 1825* (Washington and New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁴ See Kenworthy, “To Save the World or to Renounce It”, and *Heart of Russia*, chapter 6.

⁵ See Patriarch Aleksii II, “Slovo Sviateishego Patriarkha Aleksiiia v den’ proslavleniia v like meshtimnykh Radonezhskikh sviatykh namestnika Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry arkhimandrita Antoniiia (Medvedeva),” *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, no. 12 (1998).

The Russian Church and Philanthropy

Although observers at the time, and historians since, have dismissed the social contributions of Orthodox monasteries in the nineteenth century, little research has actually been conducted on the philanthropic activities of the Russian Church on the whole, let alone those of monasteries.⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century, however, one quarter of philanthropic societies in Russia were operated by the Orthodox Church, and all levels of the Church were engaged in philanthropic activities, from the Holy Synod and individual hierarchs to monasteries and women's religious communities, brotherhoods, and parishes. Far more research needs to be conducted before an accurate picture of the Church's involvement in society – from ministering to the poor to operating schools – can be properly assessed.⁷

In medieval Russia, the Church was the primary source of institutionalized charity. Peter the Great's affect on the social involvement of the Church (and monasteries in particular) was contradictory. On the one hand, he regarded monasticism, particularly in its contemplative and eremitical forms, as socially useless and sought to make monasteries more "useful" by establishing almshouses or forcing them to give shelter to retired or wounded soldiers. On the other hand, he wanted to restrict the Church's sphere of activities to the "spiritual" in order to remove its interference in secular matters that were, in his conception, the proper sphere of the state. Catherine the Great's confiscation of the Church's land in 1764 decisively eliminated the Church's ability to offer extensive, institutionalized assistance to

⁶ [D. I. Rostislavov], *Opyt issledovaniia ob imushchestvakh i dokhodakh nashikh monastyrei* (Saint Petersburg, 1876), 355-79, for negative perception. For more recent research, see: P. N. Zyrianov, *Russkie monastyri i monashestvo v XIX i nachale XX veka* (Moscow: Verbum-M., 2002); D. A. Pashentsev, "Blagotvoritel'naia deiatel'nost' russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi v vtoroi polovine xix-nachale xx veka," Kand. Diss. (Moscow State Social University, 1995); Brenda Meehan, "From Contemplative Practice to Charitable Activity: Russian Women's Religious Communities and the Development of Charitable Work, 1861-1917," in K.D. McCarthy (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power* (New Brunswick, 1990), 142-56.

⁷ On education, see S. N. Poltorak (ed.), *Prosveshchenie na Rusi, v Rossii: Materialy deviatnadsatoi Vserossiiskoi zaochnoi nauchnoi konferentsii* (St. Petersburg: Nestor, 2000); G. N. Minenko (ed.), *Problemy sotsial'nogo sluzheniia i obrazovatel'noi deiatel'nosti Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi: Materialy mezhtsional'noi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 2002); L. V. Skvortsov et al (eds.), *Religiia i obrazovanie: Sbornik obzorov i referatov* (Moscow: INION RAN, 2002).

the poor, although the state never effectively responded by providing its own forms of support, relying instead on the system of serfdom to care for the needy. As a result of the reforms of Peter and Catherine, however, the Church itself came to regard its proper sphere of activity as pertaining primarily to prayer and ritual, especially from the mid-eighteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century. Although the state did not provide any systematic poor relief after the abolition of serfdom, it did begin to encourage local initiatives beginning with the Great Reforms in the 1860s and 1870s. From that time until the Revolution of 1917 both the Church's conception of its social role and the range of its social activities transformed dramatically, and it contributed significantly to a need that the state failed to provide for.⁸

Eighteenth-century reforms, particularly Catherine the Great's secularization of Church lands, affected monasticism such that prevailing mentalities accepted that it was not the role of monasteries to be socially engaged and also that they were unable to do so because they lacked the financial resources. Although Catherine the Great herself supported the establishment of the first almshouses at the Trinity-Sergius Lavra with the support of Metropolitan Platon (Levshin) in 1768, these were supported in part by state subsidies and were relatively small-scale operations that provided mostly for the Lavra's own employees.⁹

⁸ G. L. Freeze, "Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985): 82-102; Gregory L. Freeze, "The Disintegration of Traditional Communities: The Parish in Eighteenth-Century Russia," *Journal of Modern History* 48 (1976): 32-50; Adele Lindenmeyr, *Poverty is Not a Vice: Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Scott M. Kenworthy, "An Orthodox Social Gospel in Late-Imperial Russia," *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe* 1 (May 2006): 1-29, <http://rs.as.wvu.edu/contents1.htm>; Simon Dixon, "The Church's Social Role in St. Petersburg, 1880-1914," in *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Geoffrey Hosking (London: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 167-92; Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); Page Herrlinger, *Working souls: Russian Orthodoxy and Factory Labor in St. Petersburg, 1881-1917* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2007).

⁹ There was one almshouse for twenty-five men and one outside the monastery for twenty-five women. On its establishment, see Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnykh aktov [hereafter RGADA], fond 1204 (Trinity-Sergius Lavra), opis' 1, delo 259. Hereafter notation follows standard archival abbreviations: f. [fond, collection], op. [opis', inventory], d. [delo, file], l. [list', folium], ll. [listi, leaves], ob. [oborot, verso].

Archimandrite Antonii worked to transform the prevailing attitude in Russian monasticism. He endeavored to expand Trinity-Sergius's charitable activities soon after becoming prior of the monastery, although he had to do so against both the inertia of the monastery and even the reluctance of Metropolitan Filaret. In one early instance, Antonii sought to distribute food to local inhabitants following the previous year's crop failures and rising prices. Filaret responded in an extremely revealing letter of January 1833: "God bless your care for the poor people of God, Father Prior. It is good that you even awaken my laziness to zeal." But Filaret also expressed his reservations about Antonii's efforts and repeated "what I have always said" (indicating that Filaret and Antonii had already discussed these issues before), namely that "the government takes care, acts, and uses much money. Therefore it thinks what is necessary to do and what is not possible to do further." He added that, "others will say that there is bread, and that everything will pass of its own, just like the cholera passed." He concluded that "our means in relationship to the social situation is only prayer."¹⁰

Filaret's response to Antonii's efforts is indicative of the internalization by the Church's leaders of the "otherworldly" conception of the Church's role that prevailed in the first half of the nineteenth century. He clearly felt that it was not the Church's role to alleviate the conditions of the poor because that was the state's role. The state both had the financial means and the knowledge to address what needed to be done, and also knew where the limits were. It was up to the government to respond in times of need, whereas Filaret advocated a passive response for the Church – arguing that such things as food shortages and epidemics "pass" of their own and also that the Church's only proper response was that of prayer. However, Filaret's admission that Antonii was "awakening" him to zeal was prophetic, as Antonii would indeed succeed in transforming Filaret's attitudes regarding the Church's "relationship to the social situation."

¹⁰ Letter of January 22, 1833, in Filaret (Drozdov), *Pis'ma k Prepodobnomu Antoniiu namestniku Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry, 1831–1867* [hereafter *Pis'ma*], 3 vols. (Sergiev Posad: Trinity-Sergius Lavra, 2007), vol. 1, 54.

The following winter Antonii asked Filaret permission for the monastery to purchase extra flour so that it could provide for the poor, and especially the monastery's employees, when bread ran out the following spring. He wrote that he was "thinking about feeding the workers with the remainder of the brother's *trapeza* [refectory] together with the pilgrims and the poor."¹¹ By this point, Antonii had succeeded in changing Filaret's opinion, for Filaret responded that he had been considering the same course of action and recommended purchasing even more flour than Antonii had asked for.¹² Thus Filaret was now advocating a more active role for the Church to take in the face of poverty.

Assistance to Pilgrims

Antonii's letter indicates that his efforts were directed not only to meet a temporary situation that concerned only the Lavra's own employees, but that he was already engaging in providing more regular meals for "the pilgrims and the poor." Although in the earliest stages he was only distributing to the poor and to poor pilgrims food that was left over from the monks' own refectory, Antonii soon established a separate refectory specifically for the pilgrims that began to provide them with free meals on great feast days and then, within a few years, offered free meals to pilgrims on a daily basis. St. Sergius of Radonezh, the fourteenth-century founder of the monastery, had commanded his disciples to care for pilgrims to the monastery, but it had ceased to provide such a service by the eighteenth century and its leadership had come to believe that it was beyond its means at the time Antonii became prior. Antonii was able to challenge the monastery's conception of its limitations. Within a few years after Antonii established the tradition, Filaret had come to embrace Antonii's efforts as fulfilling St. Sergius's command when he wrote that it gladdened him that feeding the pilgrims brought them consolation: "May the Saint bless this, and may he not leave us without brotherly love."¹³ In addition to providing for pilgrims,

¹¹ Antonii's letter to Filaret, December 11, 1833, in *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 420.

¹² *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 70.

¹³ *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 148 (no date for the letter, but evidently written mid-1837).

the monastery also continued to feed local poor people during times of need. Although Filaret accepted Antonii's institution of feeding poor pilgrims, he opposed Antonii's proposal to formally establish permanent poor relief, claiming they did not "have the right" to and that it would involve the monastery in too many complications.¹⁴ The rigid government control in that age prevented such initiative. Only after Filaret's death would Antonii establish a refectory several times a year for the poor, which he did in honor of Filaret.¹⁵

The institution of offering daily meals to poor pilgrims continued to grow in importance in subsequent decades as their numbers increased dramatically – encouraged, no doubt, in part because the support monasteries offered made pilgrimage possible. Forty years later, in 1876, Antonii reported that, "every day after the late Liturgy and the evening service there is established an afternoon and evening *trapeza*, and the greater part of the pilgrims take advantage of this."¹⁶ By 1859, the monastery estimated that it was offering such meals to 200,000 pilgrims a year; by the 1880s, that number had doubled and certainly continued to rise thereafter.¹⁷ The Lavra thus offered a service of profound significance, despite the money and effort that it cost the monastery.

Archimandrite Antonii continued to build upon this foundation, diversifying the services the monastery offered to poor pilgrims. In particular, the monastery began not only to feed, but also offer shelter the pilgrims by establishing two hostels, one within the monastery for men and one outside the monastery for women, that offered shelter for up to several thousand people a day in the 1870s.¹⁸ As the number of

¹⁴ Filaret's letters to Antonii, March 22 and July 30, 1840, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 210 and 219; see also 212, 216.

¹⁵ See RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 10893.

¹⁶ See Antonii's report on the Lavra's charitable institutions (no date, probably 1876), RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735, l. 141 ob.

¹⁷ RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 9107, l. 1 (report for 1859); Nikon (Rozhdestvenskii), *Chem zhiva nasha russkaia pravoslavnaia dusha* (Saint Petersburg, 1909; reprinted Saint Petersburg, 1995), 11. Rostislavov estimated 300,000; Rostislavov, *Opyt*, 105.

¹⁸ See Antonii's reports in RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735, ll. 141–42, 156–58.

pilgrims continued to rise, Trinity-Sergius also had to expand its ability to offer these services. In addition to the expansion of the hostel and other services for women (considered further below), the monastery converted a building donated by the Rumiantsev family in Sergiev Posad into a new hostel for male pilgrims in 1878.¹⁹ Even this was not enough to accommodate the ever-growing number of pilgrims, however, and in 1892 Archimandrite Pavel (Glebov, prior 1891-1904) built a monumental three-story stone hostel in honor of the five-hundred anniversary of the death of St. Sergius.²⁰

Finally, Trinity-Sergius also offered medical assistance to its pilgrims. When the monastery renovated the hospital for the monks in 1834, it opened a wing with 100 beds for pilgrims that also accommodated local inhabitants as well, as there was still no hospital in Sergiev Posad. Archimandrite Antonii reported that patients were administered with the “spiritual doctoring” of Confession and Communion as well as medical healing. There was a special wing for those suffering from terminal diseases, and the monastery would also bury in its own cemetery those who died in its hospital; those who died in its hospitals were counted among the brotherhood and prayed for accordingly.²¹ In the 1890s, Archimandrite Pavel – no doubt much inspired by Antonii’s example of expanding Trinity-Sergius’s philanthropic institutions – constructed a massive hospital-almshouse complex for pilgrims on the west side of the monastery.²² In short, the monastery began to feed, shelter, and offer medical assistance to those who came to the monastery beginning in the 1830s, and continually expanded these services to keep pace with the rise of pilgrimage.

¹⁹ Report of the Governing Council of the Lavra to Metropolitan Innokentii, December 4, 1878, *ibid.*, d. 12621, l. 1; report of December 20, 1878, l. 12

²⁰ RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 14259, ll. 6–7. On the celebration, see Scott M. Kenworthy, “Memory Eternal: The Five Hundred Year Jubilee of St. Sergius of Radonezh, 1892,” in *The Trinity-Sergius Lavra in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Vladimir Tsurikov (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2005), 24-55.

²¹ Antonii’s report on the Lavra’s charitable institutions, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735, l. 141 ob-142.

²² RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 14639. Today the building houses the theological seminary.

Education

The Trinity-Sergius Lavra offered assistance not only to those who came to the monastery, but also extended its social activism to serve the local community. In addition to the almshouse and hospital mentioned above, the monastery became particularly active in education and care for children. In 1838, Trinity-Sergius established the first popular elementary school (*nardnoe uchilishche*) in Sergiev Posad. Archimandrite Antonii evidently proposed the idea in 1836, but Metropolitan Filaret opposed it because he did not want the monastery's school subject to the unavoidable control and intrusion of the Ministry of Education — as, indeed, Filaret generally opposed the meddling of the state in the Church's affairs in the restrictive era of Nicholas I (1825-1855). In a typical fashion, Filaret suggested an alternative to get around this bureaucratic intrusion, namely that they establish a school for clergy children (which would thus be under the direct control of the Church) and allow some non-clergy children to attend.²³ In February 1837, Filaret wrote to Antonii that an opportunity had arisen for him to propose to the Holy Synod a school that could operate without the state's interference. Precisely at that time, Nicholas I and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were discussing ways to combat the spread of the Old Belief and other schismatic groups through church-run schools.²⁴ Filaret seized this as an opportunity to bring a general proposal before the Holy Synod, which resulted in a Synodal decree encouraging all monasteries in the Russian Church to establish schools for children of employees of the monastery and, where means permitted, for other children from the neighboring settlements.²⁵

²³ Filaret's letter to Antonii, December 30, 1836, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 142–43. On Filaret's relationship to the state, see Gregory L. Freeze, "Skeptical Reformer, Staunch Tserkovnik: Metropolitan Philaret and the Great Reforms," in *Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, 1782–1867: Perspectives on the Man, His Works, and His Times* (Jordanville, N.Y.: Variable Press, 2003), ed. Vladimir Tsurikov, 151–91; and John D. Basil, *Church and State in Late Imperial Russia: Critics of the Synodal System of Church Government (1861–1914)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 7–19.

²⁴ Filaret's letter to Antonii, February 3, 1837, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 145 (see also the following letter); Secret Synodal ukaz to Metropolitan Filaret, October 29, 1836, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 5108, ll. 21–23.

²⁵ Filaret's letters to Antonii, April 10, 1837 and May 4, 1837, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 146–47; Synodal ukaz to Metropolitan Serafim of Saint Petersburg, May 12, 1837, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 5108, ll. 2–3.

Thus, Antonii's project of establishing a school for ordinary children at Trinity-Sergius propelled Filaret, despite his initial reluctance, to take advantage of an opportunity in the Holy Synod to bring into being the type of school that they wished to establish (for the general public, but without government interference). Moreover, Antonii's idea ultimately resulted in a Synodal decree that addressed the entire empire – although it would only be in the post-Reform era that monastery-operated schools would proliferate more widely. Although the Synodal decree, following the state's lead, focused particularly on combating the Old Belief, this aspect does not appear in Filaret's correspondence with Antonii, and the reasons Trinity-Sergius gave in its own documents for establishing the school focused on “disposing [children] at an early age to piety and morality and confirming them in Orthodoxy,” without any mention of combating schism.²⁶ This episode is very important because it demonstrates that the Church was not merely a department of the state that passively implemented what the latter dictated. On the contrary, even in the restrictive age of Nicholas I, when initiative “from below” was anything but encouraged, someone like Antonii could propose a project — one that had to seize upon an opening created by the state, to be sure — that would find support in the Holy Synod and implementation as Antonii himself originally envisioned. Antonii and Filaret were not simply instruments fulfilling the state's designs; rather, they were using the state (and, indeed, the Church bureaucracy) to fulfill their own intentions to serve the people.

As Antonii intended, the school served not only those within the monastery's sphere (children of its employees), but extended out to the community to include Sergiev Posad residents, particularly orphans and the poor, where there was no school for the general public. Despite the Synodal decree in May 1837, it was not until spring of the following year that Trinity-Sergius received full permission to establish the school. Indeed, the fate of this school concerned the highest level of Church leadership, and the busy Metropolitan of Moscow was intimately involved in the smallest details. The Synod evidently debated aspects

²⁶ Regulations for the school (1838), RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 5108, l. 25; see also the report of the Governing Council to Metropolitan Filaret, February 26, 1838, ll. 4-6.

of the school in its meetings (in particular, some opposed Antonii's plan to have the pupils live inside the monastery itself).²⁷ Moreover, Filaret discussed the minutiae of the school's operation with Antonii, from the number of students to admit (as usual, Antonii was more ambitious and Filaret tried to restrain him), to what the students would study, to punishment for disobedient students and rewards for good students.²⁸

The Lavra opened the school, together with an orphanage inside the monastery to shelter those students who had no home, in the fall of 1838. As teachers, it appointed monks who had graduated from the seminary. The monastery not only offered the education free of charge, it also provided the textbooks and other supplies and even food and clothing. The Lavra originally planned to have one hundred students and offer a two-year course of study, but in response to local demand, it quickly expanded the school to a three-year course with twice as many pupils from a variety of social classes from the town of Sergiev Posad and the surrounding villages.²⁹ The first-year curriculum included the study of prayers, the Creed, and reading; the second year focused on the basic catechism, learning to read the Bible and saints' lives, and basic mathematics and writing. In the third year, the students studied the full catechism as well as Russian grammar and history, arithmetic, and geography. In addition to classroom studies, the school provided practical instruction in the Lavra's various workshops, including painting, handicrafts, metalworking, and woodworking.³⁰ By 1864, the school consisted of 6 teachers and 215 students, of whom 172 were supported by the monastery and studied at its expense whereas

²⁷ Filaret's letters to Antonii, February 3 and April 10, 1838, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 168, 170.

²⁸ Filaret's letter to Antonii, November 20, 1838, *Pis'ma*, vol. 1, 182.

²⁹ Report of the Governing Council to Filaret, February 26, 1838, *RGADA*, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 5108, ll. 4–6. See also regulations of the school, *ibid.*, ll. 25–26, and d. 5108a; for the 1840s, see d. 6400. In 1847, out of 210 students, 30 were children of the Lavra's employees (so-called *shtatnosluzhiteli*, former Church peasants from the Lavra's land before secularization of 1764); from Sergiev Posad, 20 were from merchant families, 56 from petit-bourgeois (*meshchane*) families (the majority estate in the town, consisting of poor craftsmen etc.), and 31 peasants. From the surrounding villages, 12 were petit bourgeois, 41 peasants, 12 were children of retired soldiers, 6 were children of clergy, and 2 were children of government officials (Report to the Moscow Ecclesiastical Consistory, July 13, 1847, d. 6400, l. 9).

³⁰ *Pervonachal'noe narodnoe uchilishche v Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavre* (Moscow, 1850), 5–6.

43 received support from their families. A decade later the number of students reached the 330s with a greater percentage receiving support from their families.³¹ The monastery was therefore providing a service that responded to a great need in the local community.

In the 1860s, the school for boys was transferred to the Home for the Poor, and after Archimandrite Antonii's death in 1877 the Home for the Poor passed out of direct control of the monastery (see below) and with it the monastery's direct involvement in education for a few decades. Even after that, however, the monastery sheltered and supported many orphaned boys who became part of a boys' choir that it established in the 1860s. By the early twentieth century, the choir included some forty boys, to whom the monastery offered education both in church singing and in literacy. In 1901, Trinity-Sergius decided to establish a formal school to regularize instruction and support for the boys with a permanent teacher.³² The school was originally founded as a one-year parish school, but in 1907 expanded to a two-year course to provide the students with a more advanced education.³³ The orphans came from various parts of Russia, and many of their fathers had been killed in the Russo-Japanese war. Many remained in the Lavra after finishing school to learn iconography or a trade in one of the Lavra's workshops or its typography.³⁴ The leading initiator of the Lavra's activity in this regard was the treasurer, Archimandrite Nikon (Rozhdestvenskii), who not only actively participated in the foundation of the school for the choirboys, but also initiated the establishment of village parish schools in the region that were supported by the Lavra. Thus, in 1901 Trinity-Sergius and Archimandrite Nikon established the Krestovskaia parish school for both boys and girls in a building that belonged to the Lavra; in 1904, the Lavra founded and constructed a schoolhouse for another parish school in the village of Naugol'na. Both schools, run by monks from the monastery,

³¹ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv [hereafter RGIA] f. 796 (Holy Synod), op. 146, d. 214, ll. 2-3 (for 1864); RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12235, ll. 1-10 (reports for 1874-1876).

³² Report of the Governing Council to Metropolitan Vladimir, July 9, 1901, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 15955, l. 3.

³³ Report of the Governing Council to Metropolitan Vladimir, August 21, 1907, *ibid.* d. 17124, l. 2; see the plan for the lessons, l. 3.

³⁴ Report to the Council of Moscow Diocesan Schools, December 31, 1907, *ibid.*, l. 8.

had about forty students from local peasant families and provided not only a free education but also food and clothing.³⁵ Since the students came from peasant households and returned to their homes to help with the fieldwork, the Council of Moscow Diocesan Schools recommended that the Lavra teach agronomy as well.³⁶ In short, providing education became a very important means for the monastery to extend its social service beyond the monastery walls to the poor in the local community, and by the early twentieth century these services extended even beyond the local community of Sergiev Posad to include surrounding villages.

Assistance for Women: The Home for the Poor

The most impressive philanthropic institution established by Archimandrite Antonii was the Home for the Poor (*Dom Prizreniia*), which was located outside the monastery to serve both poor local women and female pilgrims. The opportunity for this arose when a fire burned the Lavra's hotel in Sergiev Posad and the neighboring home of Countess Tatishcheva in 1833. As the monastery had recently built a new hotel, Antonii decided to turn this property into a hostel for female pilgrims. Countess Tatishcheva donated her own property for the same purpose, and two other aristocratic women — Anna Lunina and the great benefactress of the Church, Countess Anna Orlova-Chesmenskaia, donated large sums of money to the construction.³⁷ The Home for the Poor opened in 1840; aside from the hostel for female pilgrims, the almshouse for women was relocated there and a hospital and church were added. In the 1860s, the complex was expanded; it had a capacity for 250 women who were there on a long-term or permanent basis in the hospital and almshouse, and the hostel could shelter up to 2000 pilgrims a night. The boys' school was also relocated to the Home and educated over 200 students in the 1860s and over 300 students in the 1870s, as mentioned above. The boys' school continued to be

³⁵ See the reports to the Council of Moscow Diocesan Schools from 1907 in *ibid.*, ll. 10, 12.

³⁶ The reports cited above (*ibid.*, ll. 10, 12) state that the students returned to their homes to participate in the fieldwork; for the circular from the Council of Moscow Diocesan Schools (November 3, 1908), see *ibid.*, d. 15955, ll. 23-23ob; it is unclear whether or not agronomy was added to the parish school curriculum.

³⁷ See RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 5474 for details.

operated by monks, who also served as teachers. Antonii administered the rest of the complex with a supervisor and an aristocratic woman, both appointed by the monastery. Unlike the Lavra's philanthropic institutions directed toward men, where the brothers themselves served the people, the monks did not minister to women directly except in a spiritual capacity as confessors and priests.³⁸

In 1867, shortly after Metropolitan Filaret's death, Archimandrite Antonii opened an orphanage and school for girls in the Home for the Poor. He later explained to Filaret's successor, Metropolitan Innokentii (Veniaminov, 1797-1879) that "women who come on pilgrimage, falling ill, enter the hospital of the Home for the Poor built and supported by the Community of Saint Sergius. Some of the poor who arrive with young children also die from [their] illnesses, leaving orphaned poor and homeless children. By order of the supervisor of the Home for the Poor, some — after contact with relatives — return to their families, but others have no one to turn to and hence, for humanitarian reasons, must remain in the Home."³⁹ Antonii claimed that Filaret himself blessed the project and had donated 1000 rubles in support. As earlier with the school for boys, this was the first school for girls in Sergiev Posad and local demand caused Antonii to expand his original project to include daughters of the town's residents. When the school opened, it included 17 girls who lived in the Home and another 16 pupils who lived at home. The girls were taught reading and writing, basic mathematics, religious subjects, as well as practical skills in handicrafts and needlework.⁴⁰

In establishing a school for girls in the 1860s, as in establishing a school for ordinary boys in the 1830s, Trinity-Sergius was ahead of its time. Although Antonii's initiatives in philanthropy eventually won Filaret's support, Innokentii strongly objected to the girls' school.

³⁸ *Aleksandro-Mariinskii dom prizreniia pri Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi lavre: istoricheskii ocherk* (Moscow, 1892); RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, dd. 12283, 12735. Files such as d. 11838 include information about all the permanent residents of the Home.

³⁹ Report of Archimandrite Antonii to Metropolitan Innokentii, January 27, 1869, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 10892, l. 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 1-3.

In a memorandum to the Holy Synod written after Antonii's death in 1877, Innokentii asserted that, despite Antonii's claim, there was in fact no evidence that Filaret had given his permission for the school's establishment. Further, Innokentii wrote that he himself allowed Antonii to continue the school in 1869, when Antonii first reported to him about it, but that he told Antonii that it was inappropriate for a men's monastery to continue to operate a school for girls. Antonii evidently ignored this advice and the school continued.⁴¹ Indeed, the school expanded dramatically, so that it educated 400 girls between 1870 and 1875, about one-quarter of whom lived in the orphanage and were supported by monastery.⁴²

In March 1876, with his health declining, Antonii decided to transfer the Home for the Poor from the domain of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra and place it under the guardianship of the empress.⁴³ The transfer took place after his death in 1877, and the institution was renamed the Aleksandro-Mariinskii Home for the Poor. Evidently, Antonii made this decision without consulting Metropolitan Innokentii, who was clearly unhappy with the move and perhaps even wished to reverse it, although this was prevented by his death in 1879. Indeed, it is possible that Antonii initiated this transfer precisely because he knew that Innokentii would close the girls' school, and perhaps even feared that Innokentii would close or curb the entire institution.⁴⁴ The charter for the Home was drawn up by the chief procurator of the Holy Synod, D. A. Tolstoy, and was confirmed by the Holy Synod in 1879. Although no longer directly subordinate to Trinity-Sergius, the monastery continued to support the Home financially, donating 21,387 rubles annually (still covering most of its expenses of approximately 27,500 rubles in the 1890s). Moreover, new buildings were added and most divisions of the Home (except for

⁴¹ Memorandum about the Home for the Poor, RGIA f. 797, op. 96, d. 57, ll. 9-21, esp. ll. 11-12. This document is without date and attribution of authorship, but it is clear it came from Metropolitan Innokentii at some point between Antonii's death and Innokentii's (1877-1879). See also RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735, ll. 107-20.

⁴² Antonii's report, March 3, 1876, RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735, l. 156 ob.

⁴³ RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 12735 on the transfer, esp. Antonii's proposal to the Governing Council, l. 136.

⁴⁴ There are hints of this in Innokentii's report: RGIA f. 797, op. 96, d. 57, l. 14 ob-15.

the boys' school) continued to expand. In 1892, for example, the Home consisted of the girls' school with 35 girls who lived in the orphanage and an additional 92 girls from the town; the boys' school with 50 boys who lived in the orphanage and an additional 75 from the town; the hospital had received 96 women and distributed free medicine to 3,419 women and children; the almshouse sheltered 65 elderly women; and the pilgrims' hostel took in nearly 63,000 women.⁴⁵ In short, Trinity-Sergius sought to address the needs of poor female pilgrims who came to the monastery by offering them shelter, medical assistance, and caring for their orphaned children, but as it established philanthropic institutions to meet these needs, such institutions broadened their vision to include the needs of local poor as well.

Conclusions

The charitable activities of Trinity-Sergius not only provided services to those who came to the monastery itself or the local community, they also extended beyond to include financial support for poor churches and victims of war and disaster both locally and throughout Russia. Far from being so “otherworldly” and unresponsive to events affecting the nation, the monastery assisted those affected by the social turmoil of the 1905 Revolution, helping those affected by the railway strike (since the town received fewer visitors), and providing 23,735 lunches and 14,350 dinners to poor residents over two months in the winter of 1905-1906.⁴⁶ According to a report of 1906, Trinity-Sergius and its dependency Gethsemane Skete spent 81,810 rubles on charity that year, a substantial proportion of the monastery's budget.⁴⁷ During World War I, Trinity-Sergius established an infirmary for wounded soldiers, gave shelter and support to refugees from the occupied territories, and donated large sums of money to assist victims of war.⁴⁸ On the whole, therefore, Trinity-Sergius actively engaged in

⁴⁵ *Otchet o sostoianii nakhodiashchegosia pod vysochaishim eia imperatorskago velichestva gosudaryni imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny pokrovitel'stvom Aleksandro-Mariinskago Doma Prizreniia za 1891 god* (Sergiev Posad, 1892).

⁴⁶ RGADA, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 16739.

⁴⁷ Report on expenses for philanthropy in 1906, *ibid.*, d. 25108, ll. 2-3. The report estimated twenty-three percent for expenses on philanthropy. See also Kenworthy, *Heart of Russia*, 261.

⁴⁸ Scott M. Kenworthy, “The Mobilization of Piety: Monasticism and the Great War in Russia, 1914-

a wide array of philanthropic activities, providing services such as an almshouse for the elderly poor both of Sergiev Posad and other regions as well as a hospital for both local residents and pilgrims, a hostel for pilgrims, and educational institutions for both orphans who lived in the monastery and poor children of the surrounding region.

Trinity-Sergius was certainly on the leading edge of expanding monasteries' charitable involvement in nineteenth-century Russia. Particularly in the post-Reform period, other monasteries also began to operate charitable institutions. The number of hospitals and almshouses operated by monasteries increased from 56 in 1840 to 295 in 1900, with the most intensive growth coming after 1880. Such institutions continued to proliferate, reaching 403 by 1914 — about 40 percent of all monastic institutions. Moreover, in 1840 private individuals or societies supported half of the hospitals and almshouses located on monastery property; by 1914, these non-monastic sources accounted for a mere 6.9 percent of the funding. Whereas earlier some authorities, both monastic and diocesan, regarded charitable institutions as an undue burden, after mid-century both the government and the Holy Synod encouraged monastic charitable activities, although it is clear that in most cases the initiative came from the individual monasteries themselves.⁴⁹

In addition to hospitals and almshouses, monasteries also operated schools both for children of the clerical estate and the general public. Unfortunately, the data on these monastic schools are fragmentary and incomplete. In 1870, out of the 71 monasteries in the Moscow diocese, 8 operated almshouses which supported 84 men and 226 women; Trinity-Sergius apparently operated the only monastic school in the diocese. In 1910, the monasteries in the diocese operated 15 almshouses (7 for men, 8 for women) and 12 hospitals (4 for men, 8 for women), which served a total of 593 people. The Moscow monasteries also ran 46 schools (25 operated by men's monasteries, 21 by women's), with

1916," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 52 (2004): 388-401.

⁴⁹ Zyrianov, *Russkie monastyri*, 132–37; 208–10; the Synod, for example, issued circular decrees encouraging the formation of schools for girls (especially girls of the clerical estate) in convents in 1867-68 (RGIA f. 796, op. 148, d. 1556).

1,234 boys and 807 girls.⁵⁰ Although convents and women's religious communities were generally more active in philanthropic work, it should be noted that men's monasteries in Moscow diocese operated nearly as many almshouses and educated even more children.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the example of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra in the nineteenth century. To begin with, it is evident that the monastery was actively engaged in philanthropic activities, and that these activities touched hundreds of thousands of poor pilgrims that came to the monastery every year and also made a significant contribution to the local community. It is therefore clear that Russian Orthodoxy cannot simply be described as "otherworldly," ignoring the earthly problems of its flock. One should therefore be very cautious about making any essentialist, generalized statements about the Orthodox Church's reputed 'otherworldliness' and non-engagement with the world. Rather, one should look to particular historical circumstances to understand the Church's relationship to the world in any given age. In the case of the Orthodox Church in Imperial Russia (1700-1917), it was at least partially state policy that resulted in the Orthodox Church adopting a passive attitude toward social action. Although Peter the Great wanted the Church to be "useful" and did not discourage philanthropy, the more important impact of his reforms was to remove the Church from engagement with the world because that, in his view, was "secular," and therefore the domain of the state. This tendency was reinforced by Catherine's reforms. The result was that from roughly the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, Church leaders themselves had come to accept this notion of the Church's 'otherworldly' sphere of activity.

But it is equally clear that engagement in social action was a tradition that had been broken at least since the time of Peter the Great and that had to be recovered through effort and experimentation — much as the

⁵⁰ RGIA f. 796, op. 442, d. 380, ll. 6-8 (annual report for 1870), and d. 2399, l. 11 (annual report for 1910). In 1895, there were 18 almshouses (7 for men, 11 for women) that supported 305 people (76 men and 229 women), and 14 hospitals (2 for men, 12 for women) that supported 185 people, out of a total of 73 monasteries (46 men's, 27 women's); there were 17 schools (13 for boys, 4 for girls), with a total of 654 participants (d. 1569, ll. 8-9).

Russian Church is endeavoring to recover such traditions in the post-Soviet era. This process in the modern age (either in the nineteenth century or the twenty-first) inevitably entails the transformation of those traditions and differences of opinion as to how to actualize them, as the tensions between Antonii and Filaret or Antonii and Innokentii demonstrate. Although the reforms of Peter I and Catherine II did have an effect on the structure of the Church and the mentalities of its leadership, they did not simply turn the Church into a department of state, as is usually assumed. The usual narrative of the Church in Imperial Russia maintains that the state initiated and the Church merely implemented. But the case of Trinity-Sergius demonstrates that the figures such as Archimandrite Antonii were able to move and act as independent agents in pursuit of their own vision of social engagement. The state's restrictiveness, especially in the era of Nicholas I, acted more to deter such initiative rather than create or direct it. Nevertheless, Antonii was able to bring his vision to fruition, and in the process change attitudes within the hierarchy (at least of Metropolitan Filaret) and have an impact even at the level of the Holy Synod.

Thus, by the mid-nineteenth century, attitudes within the Church were beginning to change, which coincided with major changes in the Russian state and its relationship to society that opened the door for much greater social involvement by the Church. The charitable efforts of Trinity-Sergius were not only insular, directed toward those who belonged to or came to the monastery, but were responsive enough to the needs of the local community to expand its philanthropic institutions to address those needs. Moreover, the monastery was attuned not only to the local community but also to the national one. In fact, throughout the long nineteenth century, the Trinity-Sergius Lavra, as other local monastic and church communities, actively contributed to the fledgling development of civil society in late Imperial Russia by such charitable activities that were initiated from below rather dictated from above, whether from the Church or state bureaucracy. Far more research is needed before a more complete understanding of the role of the Orthodox Church in pre-revolutionary Russian society can be reached.

The Marian Dimension of Mother Maria's Orthodox Social Christianity

Natalia Ermolaev

Elizaveta Iurievna Skobtsova (1891-1945), familiar to many by her monastic name “Mother Maria,” has in recent years become an exemplar of modern Orthodox social engagement. Often hailed as Orthodoxy’s Dorothy Day, Skobtsova is known for the network of shelters, soup kitchens and medical facilities she opened for impoverished Russian émigrés in Paris during the 1930s. Perhaps her most radical work was in the French Resistance movement, where her assistance to French Jews led to her arrest by the Nazis and deportation to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Many have read about Mother Maria’s dramatic life and times in the excellent biography by the priest and Slavist Sergei Hackel, whose *Pearl of Great Price: The Life of Mother Maria Skobtsova* has been translated into many languages and was republished numerous times since its first appearance in 1965.¹ Mother Maria’s memory has been kept alive by a most diverse group of devotees, including the Holocaust Memorial Authority Yad Vashem, Soviet pop culture, and, the Eastern Orthodox Church, which canonized her as a saint in 2004.²

Resources related to Mother Maria’s social initiatives have flourished in recent years. The most notable examples in English

¹ Sergei Hackel, *A Pearl of Great Price* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981).

² Among Jewish admirers, see for example, Mordechai Paldiel’s *Saving The Jews: Amazing Stories of Men and Women who Defied the “Final Solution* (Rockville, MD: Schreiber Publishing, 2000). In the Soviet Union, Mother Maria was hailed as an anti-fascist hero, as *Mat’ Mariia* was directed by Sergei Kolosov (Russia: Mosfilm, 1982). Kolosov wrote the screenplay with Elena Mikulina, author of the novel *Mat’ Mariia: roman* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1983). The canonization of Skobtsova and her collaborators was most avidly promoted in *Vestnik russkogo studencheskogo khristianskogo dvizheniia* (also called *Le Messenger*), the mouthpiece of the Russian Student Christian Movement (*Russkoe studencheskoe khristianskoe dvizhenie*; ACER-MJO in French), the most important social-benevolent and religious organization of the Paris Orthodox emigration. See in particular *Vestnik* issues no.176 (1997), no. 181 (2000), and no. 182 (2001).

include the sociologist Fr. Michael Plekon's probing analyses of Mother Maria's writings and activities, and Jim Forest's numerous essays and resources for the Orthodox Peace Fellowship.³ In this article, I would like to add to the existing corpus of scholarship on Skobtsova's social work by investigating the figure of Mary, the Mother of God, in her texts and life. I suggest that the Mother of God was the essential link between Skobtsova's theological ideas and the practical employment of these ideas. Understanding the role of Mary will provide a deeper understanding of Skobtsova's vision of social Christianity, while at the same time revealing her unique contribution to modern Orthodox Mariology.

Godmotherhood as a Social Principle

I will begin by laying out the basic theoretical framework of Skobtsova's social vision. As she writes in her well-known essays of the 1930s, such as "The Second Gospel Commandment" and "The Mysticism of Human Communion," her point of departure is Christ's two commandments in Matthew 22:37-39 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Together they form what she refers to as the "bi-une commandment."⁴ The first Gospel commandment calls on the individual to strive for knowledge of God; it outlines the believer's personal spiritual responsibility. The second Gospel commandment calls for love of the other; it is the foundation for Christian collective life. Only through observance of both, Skobtsova emphasizes, the first *and* the second Gospel commandments in tandem, do we fulfill Christ's main directive.

³ See Michael Plekon's chapters on Skobtsova in his *Living Icons: Persons of Faith in the Eastern Church* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002) and his commentary to the chapter on Skobtsova in *The Teachings of Modern Christianity on Law, Politics, and Human Nature*, ed. Frank S. Alexander and John Witte, Jr. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 233-294. Jim Forest, founder of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship and editor of the journal *In Communion*, has contributed many articles on Skobtsova's life and works. See his website at <http://incommunion.org> (accessed April 10, 2010).

⁴ Elizaveta Skobtsova, "The Second Gospel Commandment," 47. Unless otherwise noted, citations here are to the English translations by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, published in *Mother Maria Skobtsova: Essential Writings*, part of the Orbis Modern Spiritual Masters Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003).

By emphasizing the importance of the second Gospel commandment, Mother Maria felt that she was filling a gap in the Eastern Christian theological tradition. She notes that from the Patristic era onward, with the rise of ascetic spirituality, Eastern writers concerned themselves almost exclusively with the inner, personal spiritual pursuit. Only in nineteenth century Russia, Skobtsova argues, did social engagement finally receive proper attention in Orthodox discourse. She turns to her predecessors in modern Russian religious thought, and suggests that Alexei Khomiakov's notion of *sobornost'* (conciliarity or collectivity), Vladimir Solovyov's doctrine of *Bogochelovechestvo* (Godmanhood, or the Humanity of God), and Fyodor Dostoevsky's call to take responsibility for the other are all, at their core, dedicated to exploring the dogmatic, moral, philosophical, and social ramifications of the second Gospel commandment.⁵

But the important thinkers who preceded her, Skobtsova claims, never provided the guidelines to put these principles into effect. This became her mission: "It is our duty," she writes,

to bring these theoretical ideas and philosophical systems, the ideas of *sobornost'* and Godmanhood...into practical use – for our own personal spiritual routes, for our innermost and inward lives, as well as for our external endeavors.⁶

As she writes time and again, theological principles must be applied not only to our internal spiritual practice, but also to our outward lives. This means effecting practical change in society around us. "There is no doubt," she insists, "that the Christian is called to social work: to organize a better life for the workers, to take care of the elderly, to build hospitals, to take care of children, to fight against exploitation, injustice, need and lawlessness."⁷ For Skobtsova, social engagement is an essential way to fulfill the second Gospel commandment.

⁵ Ibid., 59.

⁶ Ibid., 59-60.

⁷ Ibid., 54.

Mother Maria was certainly not the first to insist that the Church take active part in community outreach. By the time she was publishing her essays, all of the Christian denominations (including the Russian Orthodox Church) had been developing large-scale social initiatives. While Skobtsova lauds the efforts of the Catholic *Rerum Novarum* and Protestant Social Christianity movements, she argues that they lack a fundamental element. The Western Churches base their social programs on “rationalistic humanism,” she writes, and simply apply Christian principles to secular society.⁸ In doing so, they disregard the mystical and eschatological foundation of Christianity that sees life as constant movement toward union with God, the pursuit of *theosis* (deification). The aim of real social Christianity cannot simply be improving the lot of the least fortunate – it must be to transfigure life. We transfigure life through authentic interaction with the other, she writes, our goal must be the “mysticism of human communion” (*mistika chelovekoobshcheniia*). True relationships with the other, especially with those in need, make us see the Incarnated Christ in each person; thus communion with fellow humanity is at the same time communion with God. “Only mystical human communion,” Mother Maria insists, can be the true spiritual basis for Christian activism, “for the kind of social Christianity that has not yet been born, a Christianity that addresses the world.”⁹

How do we form these transfigurative relationships? What sort of interaction leads to “mystical human communion?” Love, of course – but Mother Maria has a particular type of love in mind. Love is not, she writes, sentimental care or appreciation of others from a distance. She does not refer to the warm emotional attachment we have to our nearest and dearest. We must love our neighbor in a radically engaged and selfless way. She calls for active love (*deiatel'naia liubov'*), a dramatic even fierce compassion for the other. Her choice of language and imagery conveys the dynamic tenor of this ethos. We must transform our spiritual generosity into a weapon of love, she writes, become an

⁸ Elizaveta Skobtsova, “The Mysticism of Human Communion,” 75-76.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

instrument in God's hands, a warrior in his army. Armed with true spiritual love, she writes, we are like David, "with nothing but the name of God, rushing into battle with Goliath."¹⁰ Christian love is not meek and passive; you reach mystical communion with the other when you lay your soul bare, feel your heart pierced by the sword of compassion and bleed for your neighbor.

This brings us to the role of Mary in Skobtsova's social vision. The Mother of God is *the* model of this radical, transformative love for the other, she is "the great symbol of any genuine relationship among people."¹¹ And most specifically for Skobtsova, the Mother of God standing at the cross reveals the core of the Christian social ethos. Skobtsova develops the Marian dimension of her social Christianity most thoroughly in her 1939 article "On the Imitation of the Mother of God" (*O podrazhanii Bogomateri*). The essay begins with a provocative critique of contemporary Christian culture. She notes that in both Western and Eastern Christianity has developed a highly individualistic, self-centered spiritual orientation. Even one of the faith's central tenets – the imitation of Christ – is often misapplied and actually fosters this individualistic spirituality. Though essential for the religious life, Skobtsova makes the astute observation that the personal quest to reach God may lead a person to isolation, withdrawal from society and the rejection of family, friends, and community. The unintended result has become an overemphasis on "my cross, which defines my personal route to God, my personal following of Christ's path."¹² In contemporary Christian culture, she observes, what should be collective experience has become personal, "Our Father," has become "My Father," "Give us this day our daily bread" is "Give me this day my daily bread."¹³ "There is no room for the Church," she writes, "for *sobornost*", for the Divine-human perception of the whole Christianprocess."¹⁴ Christian culture is just as individualistic and

¹⁰ Skobtsova, "Second Gospel Commandment," 57.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹² Elizaveta Skobtsova, "On the Imitation of the Mother of God," 65.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

fragmented as modern secular society, “deprived of all true mystical roots,” and thus is spiritually stagnant.¹⁵

Skobtsova’s solution, as the article’s title suggests, is to complement the imitation of Christ with the imitation of Mary. While we follow the path of the Godman (*Bogochelovek*), we must also embark on the route of the Godmother (*Bogomater’*). In other words, we must fulfill the first Gospel commandment by emulating Christ’s self-sacrifice, as well as the second by imitating his mother’s compassion at the foot of the cross. The world will move closer to God when Christians supplement the quest for *Bogochelovechestvo* with the engagement of *Bogomaterinstvo* (Godmotherhood).¹⁶

What exactly does Skobtsova mean by imitating the Mother of God? How can people emulate her Godmotherhood? Many of the traditional attributes that Christianity applies to the Mother of God – silence, obedience, and meekness – are not the Marian traits Skobtsova has in mind. She doesn’t envision the Mother of God at the cross as the stoic, motionless mourner we see in conventional Orthodox iconography, nor is she the emotionally rapt mother known in Catholicism as the Mater Dolorosa. While Skobtsova’s writings echo Russian folk or popular piety, where Mary is often rendered as spirited or even headstrong, Skobtsova’s mourning mother never veers from the firm ground of scripture.¹⁷ Her Marian touchstone is the “double-edged sword” (*oboitudoostryi mech’*), the “cross and sword” motif based on Symeon’s prophecy in Luke 2:22-40. As the Gospel states, when Mary brought her infant Jesus to the temple, the elder Symeon foretold her maternal suffering at the crucifixion with the words, “a sword shall pierce your heart also.” According to the exegetical tradition, the cross of Christ is

¹⁵ Ibid., 66.

¹⁶ Skobtsova borrows the term from Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, who nominalized Mary’s traditional title of *Bogomater’* (Mother of God) as “Godmotherhood” (*Bogomaterinstvo*). See his use of this term in his Marian treatise, *The Burning Bush: On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God*, trans. T. Allan Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

¹⁷ On Mary in the Russian folk tradition, see Joanna Hubbs’ *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

the sword that pierces his mother's heart; Symeon's prophesy prepares Mary for the deep maternal anguish that awaits her, but also indicates her participation in her Son's mission.

Skobtsova reads this conventional exegesis in a social dimension. The unity of the sword and cross, for her, represents the indivisibility of the first and second Gospel commandments, the necessary integration of personal and collective spiritual pursuits, of private and social life. Skobtsova insists that Mary's suffering wasn't just her own. Godmotherhood teaches an inherently public lesson. Just as Christ's self-sacrifice gave the world a new moral code, so did Mary's suffering at the foot of the cross. "The two-edged sword," she writes, "...teaches us all something and obliges us to something."¹⁸ At Golgotha, Mary gave humanity a new task by demonstrating how to act toward fellow man: "It is precisely on the route of Godmotherhood," she writes, "that we must find the justification and substantiation of all our hopes, find the religious and mystical meaning of true human communion."¹⁹ Mary's sword of compassion teaches us how to truly love our neighbor; thus it must be the main tool for creating relationships and ordering the community.

The first step in putting Godmotherhood into practice, Skobtsova writes, is to understand Mary's experience at the crucifixion. Mary felt *with* – not *for* – her son. She underscores the Mother of God's participation with Christ on the lexical level by using the prefix "co-" (so in Russian; *sin* in Greek):

He endures voluntary suffering on the cross – she involuntarily co-suffers with Him. He bears the sins of the world – she collaborates with him. She co-participates, she co-feels, co-experiences. His flesh is crucified – she is co-crucified.²⁰

¹⁸ Skobtsova, "On the Imitation of the Mother of God," 67.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 68.

While Christ is the model of passion, his mother is the model of *compassion*. At Golgotha, Mary fully transcended herself and felt her son's pain. When Christ took on the sins of the world, so did she; when his body was broken, so was hers. Mary united herself with her son's fate on behalf of, with, and for him. She annihilated her own will and became entirely receptive to the other. Her son's cross pierced her heart like a sword and gave birth to true compassion.

As Skobtsova describes, Mary was no indifferent bystander at her son's death; her maternal love was dramatic and even violent. She was like a warrior poised for battle, wielding her sword of compassion. Mary, Skobtsova writes, was able to say "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord," even in the direst circumstances, "when dripping with blood, even when feeling the sword piercing [her] heart."²¹ Despite her own immense pain, she found the fortitude to endure the sufferings of another.

Skobtsova insists that this radically engaged love is the core of the second Gospel commandment. We must not abandon our neighbor when he or she imitates Christ, rather we must accept their cross like Mary did, willingly participate in another's Golgotha "by opening our own heart to the stroke of the double-edged sword."²² This is "the true measure of love," she insists, "the limit to which the human soul should aspire."²³ Only when we take up our neighbor's cross "is it possible to talk about proper relations to another."²⁴

Who is called to imitate the Mother of God? In no way does Skobtsova limit the Godmotherly impulse to women. She borrows her mentor Fr. Sergii Bulgakov's theological anthropology, arguing that each human soul unites the image of both Christ and Mary, we are "a diptych of the Mother of God with her Child," the *Bogochelovek*

²¹ Ibid., 72.

²² Ibid., 71

²³ Ibid., 72.

²⁴ Ibid.

and the *Bogomater*.²⁵ Thus all human beings –female *and* male – are essentially bound to both Christ and Mary, and must engage both: “The Son of God and his Mother – these are the age-old archetypes, symbols by which the soul orients itself on its religious paths.”²⁶ Imitating Mary is just as fundamental to human nature as imitating Christ: “It is completely natural for humanity to strive to realize in itself the image of the Mother of God in human Godmotherhood.”²⁷

The Marian ethic, Skobtsova believes, has the potential to transfigure the community because it brings people into communion with each other, and thus into communion with God. Expanding the traditional association of the Mother of God and the church, she suggests that Mary’s active material compassion binds the *ecclesia* together.²⁸ Since the crucifixion, Mary has co-suffered with her children, the ecclesial community, and to this day the Marian church continuously recapitulates the drama of Golgotha:

As the Mother of Godmanhood – the church – is pierced even now by the suffering of this body of Christ, the suffering of each member of this Body. In other words, all the countless crosses that mankind takes on its shoulders to follow Christ also become countless swords eternally piercing her maternal heart. She continues to co-participate, co-suffer with each human soul, as then on Golgotha.²⁹

In compassionate acts, the church, the collective, and Mary become one: “Godmotherhood – in Her and with Her – belongs to the whole church. The Mother Church – in Her and with Her – participates in

²⁵ Ibid., 69.

²⁶ Ibid., 70.

²⁷ Elizaveta Skobtsova, “Pochitanie Bogomateri,” cited from the collection of her essays published in *Zhatva dukha: Religiozno-filosofskie sochineniia* [Harvest of the spirit: religious-philosophical essays], ed. A.N. Shustov (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 2004), 186.

²⁸ Skobtsova, “On the Imitation,” 69.

²⁹ Ibid.

Godmotherhood.”³⁰ The entire community participates in the Son’s self-sacrifice and the Mother’s compassion. Every person who imitates Mary takes part in her work, and re-defines the community as a tight-knit mystical family. Each individual maternally embraces all of society: “the human soul thereby adopts the whole body of Christ for itself, the whole of Godmanhood, and every man individually.”³¹ When you love somebody in a Godmotherly way, Skobtsova writes, you don’t just recognize the divine image in the other, you give birth to Christ within yourself.

Skobtsova firmly believed that the Godmotherly impulse must be applied not just within one’s family or ecclesial community. When we treat all people with Marian compassion, we engage in the “churching of life” (*otserkovlenie zhyzni*), bringing a glimmer of the divine into everyday existence. We begin to recognize people as “living icons” that decorate the temple of creation, and the “entire world as one church, adorned by icons which must be venerated, which must be honored and loved.” By reaching out to those in need with true compassion, we enact “true and profound divine service” (*podlinnoe i glubinnoe bogoslužhenie*) and participate in what Mother Maria called “liturgy outside the church” (*vnekhramovaia liturgiia*).³² For Skobtsova, social outreach is not philanthropy, it is a mystical project that builds “collective life.”³³ Good works do not only improve material conditions, she writes, they create a mystical family where the social order moves closer to God.

In her essays of the 1930s, Skobtsova proposes that Mother of God embodies the foundation of the Christian social ethos – love for the other. Mary is also a vivid example of this love put into practice. With her attention to Mother of God at the cross, Skobtsova’s writings provide the faithful not only a conceptual framework, but also a model

³⁰ Skobtsova, “Pochitanie Bogomateri,” 186.

³¹ Skobtsova, “On the Imitation,” 71.

³² Skobtsova, “The Mysticism of Human Communion,” 79-80.

³³ Elizaveta Skobtsova, “Pravoslavnoe delo,” cited from *Zhatva dukha*, 363.

to follow, a blueprint for bringing this radical compassion in their own lives.

Skobtsova's Godmotherly Route

Skobtsova was herself a prime exemplar of Godmotherhood in practice. The figure of the suffering mother, in fact, had a profound personal resonance for her. When she emigrated to Paris in 1924, she was joined by her second husband, Daniil, and three children, the teenaged Gaiana, and toddlers Yura, and Nastya. Just as the family was becoming accustomed to difficult émigré life, Nastya contracted meningitis. By the time she was hospitalized in the Pasteur Institute, her condition was irreversible, and the four-year-old died in March of 1926. Nastya's death was a turning point in Skobtsova's life and religious development. The trauma of losing a child made her see maternity in broader, spiritual terms. She was catalyzed into action. As she recalled to a friend:

I became aware of a new and special, broad-reaching and all-embracing motherhood. I returned from the cemetery a different person. I saw a new road before me and a new meaning of life. And I had to incarnate that feeling in my life.³⁴

After Nastya's death, Skobtsova followed the example of the Mother of God and transformed her maternal anguish into active love for those around her. She propelled herself into social work, volunteering at various Russian aid organizations. Within a few years, she felt the need to formalize her social-maternal activities, and decided the best way to do this was through the church. She had been separated from her husband for several years already, and after he agreed to an ecclesiastical divorce, Skobtsova was tonsured as a nun and took the name "Maria."

She immediately took the honorific "Mother" and fervently began her life of maternal monasticism. Mother Maria's first order of business as a nun was to lease a large house at 9 villa de Saxe in

³⁴ Hackel, *Pearl of Great Price*, 16.

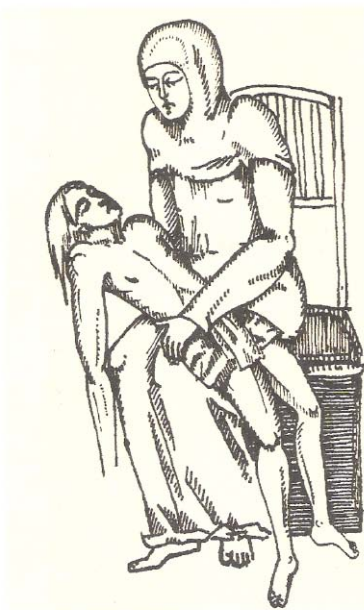
Paris' seventh *arrondissement* which she turned it into a boarding house for unemployed and needy women. Within a few years the space was too small for the many who flocked there, and Skobtsova managed to procure the building at 77 rue de Lourmel in the fifteenth *arrondissement*. At "Lourmel," as it was called, Mother Maria reached out to her community on a larger scale. Within months, several dozen women and even entire families resided there. The Lourmel family included prostitutes, drug addicts, alcoholics, and those with physical and mental handicaps. Approximately 120 dinners were served there on a daily basis. In addition, Skobtsova organized frequent religious-cultural seminars, meetings, and conferences. The Lourmel chapel, decorated by icons painted by Skobtsova herself, held daily services.

About two years after starting the Lourmel community, Skobtsova realized that her efforts could be expanded even further. She procured funds from a variety of sources, including Anglican, ecumenical, and international agencies such as the YMCA and the League of Nations. In September of 1935, she initiated one of the most effective social welfare services of the Russian emigration, "Orthodox Action" (*Pravoslavnoe delo*), an organization of "practical Christian work."³⁵ Skobtsova and her team of volunteers opened at least three more boarding houses, including one for families and another for single men, as well as soup kitchens, infirmaries, and a nursing home. When a wealthy Russian donated a spacious country house in the Paris suburb of Noisy-le-Grand, Orthodox Action turned it into a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients.

Mother Maria's children Gaiana and Yura were part of her ever-growing spiritual family, and could often be found at Lourmel, participating in its daily activities. In the mid-1930s, Skobtsova was devastated by another personal maternal tragedy. Gaiana, who was in her early twenties at the time, was swept up in the wave of pro-Soviet sentiment and returned to the USSR. Less than a year later, in June 1936, Skobtsova received a letter notifying her that Gaiana had died from typhus.

³⁵ Orthodox Action put out two almanacs in the late 1930s, *Pravoslavnoe Delo. Sbornik I and Sbornik II*.

The following year, Skobtsova published a book of 83 religious poems, which, while praising God, also provide starkly honest insight into her difficult spiritual pursuit.³⁶ The themes of maternal loss, Marian compassion, and social engagement intertwine in many of these lyrics. A notable example is the poem “I won’t keep anything” (*Ne budu nichego berech’*)³⁷, accompanied by a sketch that poignantly conveys how she perceived her maternal work:



76. РИСУНОК В КНИГЕ «СТИХИ»
Бумара, тушь. 1937

In this sketch of Mary holding her dead son, Skobtsova depicts the moment when the sword of compassion pierces the Mother’s heart.³⁸ This *pietà* composition, like Michelangelo’s famous sculpture in St.

³⁶ Elizaveta Skobtsova, *Stikhi* [Poems] (Berlin: Petropolis Press, 1937).

³⁷ Cited here from *Ravnina russkaia: stikhotvoreniia i poemy, p’esy-misterii, khudozhestvennaia i avtobiograficheskaia proza, pis’ma* (The Russian plain: poems, mystery-plays, prose and autobiographical fiction, letters), ed. A.N. Shustov (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 2001), 151.

³⁸ Sketch reprinted in Ksenia Krivosheina’s *Krasota spasaiushchaia. Mat’ Mariia (Skobtsova): Zhivopis’, grafika, vyshivka* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 2004), 191.

Peter's Basilica, shows Mary out of proportion, much larger than Jesus who lies in her arms. But the subject of Skobtsova's drawing is not only the Mother of God and her child. The female figure is clearly a reference to Skobtsova herself – a woman dressed in simple monastic robes, barefoot, sitting on plain chair. By casting herself in the Marian role, Skobtsova underscores that she is striving to imitate the Mother of God and see all of the dying “children” who come to her at Lourmel as the suffering Christ.

Skobtsova, who understood the deep sadness of losing her children, found comfort and hope in the figure of the mourning Mother of God. By imitating Mary, Skobtsova felt she was incarnating Godmotherly compassion into everyday life, transforming pain into joy, ugliness into beauty, material poverty into mystical bounty. In her maternal outreach to those in need, Skobtsova strove for communion with those around her, which, she believed, was necessary for communion with God.

Our Mother of Ravensbrück

The maternal ethos Skobtsova embodied in her social outreach of the 1930s reached its dramatic climax during World War II. Though most of her work was directed towards aiding displaced Russian émigrés, her efforts were not limited to her compatriots or co-religionists. In the tense years leading up to the war, Skobtsova and her close circle of friends – which included the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, literary critic Ilya Bunakov-Fondaminsky, and historian George Fedotov – were vocal critics of totalitarian state socialism and fascism alike.³⁹ This group was profoundly opposed to Hitler and his policies, and rejected his anti-Semitic philosophy on religious grounds. The Nazi occupation of France propelled Mother Maria into action, and she eagerly joined the Resistance movement.

As the persecution of Jews increased, Skobtsova decided it was her Christian duty to co-suffer with them. She opened the doors of

³⁹ Skobtsova expressed her political views in essays and lectures such as “Rasizm i religiiia” [Racism and Religion], *Russkie zapiski* 11 (1938): 150-157, and “Razmyshleniia o sud'bakh Evropy i Azii” [Reflections on the Fate of Europe and Asia] (unpublished lecture, 1941), printed in *Zhatva dukha*.

Lourmel and the sanatorium at Noisy, which were soon packed with Jewish individuals and families.⁴⁰ In the summer of 1942, close to twelve thousand Jews (mostly women and children) were arrested and herded into the sports stadium Vélodrome d'Hiver before being sent on to concentration camps at Drancy or Auschwitz. The Vél d'Hiv, as it was called, happened to be located just a few blocks from Lourmel. Dressed in her monastic garb, Skobtsova was able to convince the guards to allow her into the stadium. She spent days ministering to the prisoners, bringing them food and clothing and providing moral support. Legend has it that she smuggled several Jewish children out of Vél d'Hiv to safety in a garbage can.⁴¹

Mother Maria's house at Lourmel functioned as a point on the "underground railroad" of the French Resistance until early 1943, when word of her activities was leaked to the Gestapo. German officers came to Lourmel on February 8, 1943 and arrested Skobtsova and her collaborators, including her son Yura. Skobtsova was sent to Ravensbrück, a concentration camp for women, some fifty miles outside of Berlin.⁴²

Survivors recall Skobtsova's calmness, perseverance, and even good cheer during the two years she was at Ravensbrück. She continued her maternal service even in these most extreme circumstances. She refused to let the humiliation, disease, and degraded moral atmosphere of camp life shake her faith. Her obligation was the same as it had been at Lourmel – to enact Marian love and create community with those around her. Survivors recall Skobtsova going out of her way to minister to the other women and build friendships across ethnic, national, and religious lines. One described the familial feeling she

⁴⁰ On Skobtsova's work in the Resistance, see Krivosheina, *Krasota spasaiushchaia*, 109, Hackel, *Pearl of Great Price*, chapters 8 and 9 and Georgii Benevich's article, "The Saving of the Jews: The Case of Mother Maria (Skobtsova)," *Religion in Eastern Europe* 20, no. 1 (2000): 1-19.

⁴¹ Hackel describes this episode in *Pearl of Great Price*, 114-115. It has recently been made the subject of the children's book *Silent as a Stone: Mother Maria of Paris and the Trash Can Rescue* by Jim Forrest and Dasha Pancheshnaya (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2007).

⁴² Arrested with Skobtsova were her collaborators Fyodor Pyanov, Fr. Dimitrii Klepinin and Yura Skobtsov, who were sent to Buchenwald. See Hackel, *Pearl of Great Price*, 127-128.

cultivated among the inmates: “We were all cut off from our families, and somehow she provided us with a family.”⁴³ Others remember her maternal care, how she embraced them “like children”⁴⁴ and shared her meager food and clothing rations with those more needy than she. To boost morale, she led discussion groups on the Bible, history and literature. She encouraged her fellow inmates to look ahead, to dream of the future. In order to bring some beauty into the ugliness of camp life, she embroidered and wrote poetry.⁴⁵

By the winter of 1944-45, the extreme conditions had worn Mother Maria down. E.A. Novikova, a Ravensbrück survivor, saw Skobtsova work on her last creative endeavor, an embroidered icon. Though the original is lost, Novikova described it to the artist S.A. Raevsky-Otsup, who rendered the following reproduction:⁴⁶



⁴³ Solange Périchon, cited in Hackel, *Pearl of Great Price*, 131.

⁴⁴ Rosane Lascroux, cited in Hackel, *Pear of Great Price*, 137.

⁴⁵ Skobtsova is believed to have composed at least two poems in the camps, but neither survived. Her embroidery of the liberation of the camp by the British army, stitched on a handkerchief, remained intact. See Krivosheina, *Krasota spasaiushchaia*, 165.

⁴⁶ Image from website <http://www.mere-marie.com/224.htm>

The composition – Mary holding the infant Christ, already crucified – is unusual for the canon of Orthodox iconography. But it is entirely fitting for Skobtsova’s *oeuvre*. In its subject matter, the icon is a meditation on maternal suffering and compassion, the central themes of Skobtsova’s life and work.

The interplay here between iconographer and her text, and, consequently, the icon and its viewer is complex. While icons are traditionally painted (or “written”) anonymously, the established authorship of Skobtsova’s icon adds significant depth to its religious message. With its self-referential quality, the icon recapitulates Mother Maria’s own biography and spiritual path. As a deeply personal image, it reminds the viewer of Skobtsova’s maternal mourning at the loss of her children. It also tells the story of her life in emigration, her struggle to follow Mary’s footsteps by ministering to the “children” of her community. Finally, it mirrors her compassionate outreach to fellow inmates at Ravensbrück. Individual biography and the divine narrative are intertwined. In meditating on this icon, the viewer sees its divine prototype – the Mother of God – but also acknowledges the face of its human author, the real woman who strove to imitate the Mother of God in all circumstances.

Several survivors have recalled that as Skobtsova was becoming physically weaker, she made the ultimate sacrifice for her neighbor by volunteering to take the place of another, healthier, woman who was next on the extermination list. As the Ravensbrück records indicate, Elizaveta Skobtsova died in the gas chamber on March 31, 1945, and, according to the Orthodox Church, received the crown of martyrdom.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have tried to show that in Skobtsova’s vision of social Orthodoxy, the Mother of God plays a pivotal role as the link between the conceptual and practical levels, theory and practice, ideas and life. Her descriptions of spirited, engaged, and active Marian compassion infuse her religious teachings with relevance and applicability for the modern believer. By imitating Godmotherhood

in her own life, Skobtsova demonstrated how self-sacrificial, compassionate love could be reached in the most quotidian to the most historically cataclysmic circumstances. Thus, together with her key formulations “second Gospel commandment” and “mysticism of human communion,” Skobtsova’s notion of Godmotherhood must be recognized as an essential contribution to the modern Orthodox corpus on social engagement.

Charity and the Two Economies

Edward Epsen

At the outset my hope is that the reader will already see some connection between the terms of my title, between ‘charity’ and ‘economy’.¹ If not, it is probably because in our own culture, the term ‘charity’ has been reduced so as to be a synonym of what used to be called ‘almsgiving’. For us, charity usually means the donation of money either directly to an individual one encounters on the street or to an organization, cause, endowment, scholarship fund, or special collection. In this sense, there is only a rather loose connection between charity and economy. In an abstract way, both involve the transfer of money, and indeed “charitable giving” has a fixed place in our modern economy, as it is the principal means of sustenance for mendicants and non-profits, just as it is an accounting necessity for businesses and wealthy individuals.

A Christian will recognize that along with this usage of the term ‘charity’ there is a specifically Christian one of wider scope that refers to the supreme virtue and is synonymous with love, pity, or compassion in English, *agape* in Koine Greek, *caritas* in Latin, *pieta* in Italian. Though wider in scope, this sense of the term does not seem to be any more closely connected with economy; probably, the point of contact between charity in this sense and economy will be thought to pass through the narrower sense of charity as almsgiving. This is a mistake. And it is here my purpose to highlight and correct it in a way that I hope will make a special appeal to Orthodox Christians.

I intend to give an argument from Orthodox theology for the proposition that the motivations for promoting social welfare directly are at the same time motivations for promoting it indirectly through righteous living or what we might call “true economy”; in fact it is characteristic of righteous or true economy that it promotes social

¹ The title is inspired by an essay of Wendell Berry, “Two Economies” in *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, ed. Normal Wirzba (Washington D.C: Counterpoint, 2002).

welfare; and, in fact, does so very much indirectly through a social responsibility that originates in ecological responsibility² and is executed by economic decisions.

Consider first the divine law, as presented in the Old Testament scriptures. Among the many hundreds of laws, there is the category of laws that have to do with social relationships in the covenant community. Not only does the Lord command his people to love their neighbor, but to make certain concrete provisions of charity towards them, especially towards the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner—who we might contemporize by calling “the homeless”. In so commanding, the Lord requests that Israel practice at the level of its own economy what he himself demonstrably does in his divine economy, to care for and minister to the needs of creatures.³ Many of these requested provisions are charitable in a manner that is indirect; they are not all concerned merely with tithing the first fruits of the harvest,⁴ but with economic practices that promote the fertility of the land with which the Jews—as all nations—are in mutual dependence but which they do not possess, so that harvests will continue.⁵ We know that there was to be a five-year waiting period for tree fruit,⁶ that breeding female animals were not to be hunted,⁷ that tilled land, vineyards, and orchards were to be rested

² As with moral responsibility generally, these are conditions to be satisfied only by persons. Despite current fashion, it is a category mistake to talk of socially or ecologically responsible institutions or states.

³ It is one of the major lessons of the Old Testament that righteousness is not a birthright or even defined by one’s character or accomplishments but something that comes about through a man’s being pleasing to God in his ever-changing relationship with him. This is a matter of having fear and trust enough in his wisdom do what he wills. Yet much of the content of what he wills is economic conditions for human communities. Man’s relationship with God is always immediate, but it extends to other men in its receptive scope and influence. Putting this together, we can say that aspects of human economy that resemble the divine economy are clues to its righteousness and to ours when we participate in them.

⁴ Lev 23: 9-14, Deut 26:5-10

⁵ The Lord, himself, makes the connection between preservation of the conditions of fertility and the welfare of the community. Preserved fertility is ensured by caring for the land as a husband cares for a spouse with whom he is in mutual dependence. “The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you” (Lev 25:6).

⁶ Lev 19:23-25

⁷ Deut 22:6-7

every seven years,⁸ along with a remittance of all debts and a release of all slaves,⁹ while every fiftieth year the land itself was to be returned to its original owner.¹⁰ All such provisions serve to emphasize the covenantal nature of the promised land; it follows that all wealth, or the product of the land, was similarly covenantal, not to be accumulated as if possessed, but enjoyed through sharing and sacrificial thanksgiving.

It is clear that the covenant laws are crafted so as to turn the various Hebrew social groups into a community, their unity brought about by being graciously appointed to find pleasure in the Lord's sight by trusting in the wisdom of his laws, trusting in his divine economy by learning themselves to take pleasure in doing their Lord's will. The bond of the covenantal community, the mark of its faith, is the status of those who are least among it. The Lord declares to his people¹¹ that if his laws are kept, no one will be poor. The connection between the content of the laws and the condition of poverty is neither accidental nor inscrutable. Poverty results from radical inequality in the distribution of land resources and the wealth produced from them. But in the covenant community land cannot be purchased, only leased for a generation.¹² Excessive amounts of land cannot be leased because money cannot be borrowed except on the basis of strict need.¹³ Nor can leases become too expensive, since rents are to be charged according to their use value, which is capped by the year of jubilee;¹⁴ similarly, no one can charge too much for his products, because prices are regulated by the numbers of years that remain until the sabbatical year on the seller's land lease.¹⁵ No one can become rich through war since war is either unholy or what is taken in it belongs to the Lord.¹⁶ And finally,

⁸ Lev 25:1-5

⁹ Deut 15:1-18

¹⁰ Lev 25:8-12

¹¹ Deut 15:4-6

¹² "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine" (Lev 25:23).

¹³ Deut 15:4-10

¹⁴ Lev 27:16-17

¹⁵ Lev 25:14-16

¹⁶ Jos 6:17-19

no one can become rich through charging interest on loans to gentiles since this is forbidden.¹⁷ These laws serve to balance the distribution of resources; together with the social laws that call for direct forms of charity such as tithing and labor assistance, they ensure that poverty is only possible if the covenant is broken.

Certainly the Old Testament scriptures abound with these and other moral injunctions for righteous living. As modern Orthodox Christians, however, we may feel removed from these injunctions not only by their date and cultural alterity,¹⁸ but on certain (dubious) theological grounds. With Galatians 2:16 in mind, we may easily deemphasize their importance and are content with the contrast this attitude poses to Calvinist error.¹⁹ But this is to forget Romans 2 and 7²⁰ and to give in to the heresy of antinomianism, or the belief that because of the Christian dispensation, compliance with the moral law is no longer required of us. Like any compelling lie, the heresy is partially true. What is true is that through the incarnation of Christ, God has revealed a new relationship between himself and man, one that, through grace, transcends the letter of the moral law; in so doing, the incarnation reveals the Spirit of the law, that the end or satisfaction of the law is simply the condition experienced by someone who has decided fully and with pure motive to participate with loving praise in the dispensation itself, the work of gift-making and thanksgiving between all persons. Just as smoke is not the cause but a sign of fire, so obedience to the law is not the cause of salvation, but a sure sign of being saved.²¹

¹⁷ In addressing the need for direct charity, the Lord has already commanded lending freely and without interest to the poor, as well as selling to him at no profit (Lev. 25:36-37).

¹⁸ I have heard it remarked that scholars are of the opinion that these economic laws were never practiced by the Jews themselves. There is at least evidence for this in the Scriptures themselves, which goes on to chronicle the precipitous downfall of Israel, as a result of their transgression. Far from sanctioning our own dismissal of these laws, the fate of Israel is a credit to their wisdom.

¹⁹ Here I mean the doctrine of justification through works.

²⁰ Not to mention Mt 5:17-20.

²¹ It is similarly true that love for one's neighbor cannot be the cause of one's love for God, since the former is not possible without the latter; though love for one's neighbor is a sure sign of one's love for God. In application to our own case, since we neither love God nor our neighbor, it is helpful to note that in a manner parallel to the larger relation between salvation and law obedience, attempts to love one's neighbor (say, by forgiving his offense) motivated by a desire to please God can reciprocally strengthen one's love for both.

We cannot, then, dismiss the continued relevance of divine law in guiding us into the deified state that was the law's original purpose. And we know that the law—old and new—enjoins us to practice charity towards our neighbor. But we should also know that as we progress in this practice, as our love deepens and our capacity for it expands, so too does our conception of neighbor. Eventually, it comes to include our enemies; the Samaritan was charitable to the highway victim despite the latter's being Judean. But charity and neighborhood do not stop there. In fullness they extend to all persons, most of whom we will never meet in this world because of their distance from us in space and time. In his *Unspoken Sermons*, George Macdonald talks about the progressive deepening of the moral law within the structure of the Gospel teachings. In the first formulation, which repeats the Old Testament law,²² we are commanded to love our neighbor as our self;²³ then we are told to love our enemies;²⁴ finally we are taught to love one another "as I have loved you",²⁵ that is to say, with the highest love whereby one is willing to lay down one's life for one's enemies. But Christ not only laid down his life for his enemies, he laid down his life for us, that is, for people he had never met in his time on earth, never known with his human intellect. By doing so, he instituted the promise of our intellect overcoming the bounds of earthly life so as to know, by name and face, the full community of souls in the next. The moral law, therefore, enjoins us to show charity to those whom we have never met and this is perhaps the hardest kind of charity, harder than charity towards enemies, which is already harder than charity towards those we like or regard as friends.

The reason charity to the unknown is so hard is that it demands faith in the next life. Even charity to one's enemies can offer an earthly reward. But charity to the unknown, in places and times you cannot reach, can only be meaningful if, like you, those people and those times

²² Lev 19:18

²³ Mt 22:39

²⁴ Lk 6:27

²⁵ Jn 13:34

are drawn to a source of permanence beyond themselves. You cannot care about history in a personal way or the fate of the human race after you and everybody you know are dead unless you have a vision of eternity, in which every passing quality of the cosmos, down to the last detail, is preserved and invigorated.

How, then, does one practice charity to the unknown? Do not the very limitations that make so many unknown to us also keep us from being able to care for them? There would be no injunction unless it were possible to fulfill it. If we reflect, we notice that the created world is ordered so that human beings and the rest of creation are fixed in a network of mutual receptivities and influences. Our everyday acts of living, no matter how subtle, are preconditioned by the status of nature and the lives of other people (at a bare minimum, the lives of our parents); and every act of living either directly alters the state nature is in and the lives of others, or contains such an influence that unfolds through several intermediary effects. Collectively, we call these acts of living ‘economy’. We can practice the deepest form of charity through economy if we understand the created order by which these effects are transmitted and, so understanding, organize our patterns of interacting with that order so that every good produced and service performed becomes a transformation of the raw gifts of creation into a eucharistic antitype, an offering to God of his own gifts mingled with human labor, on behalf of all and for all, so that he may be in all and all in him.

The natural as well as the social preconditions and influences of how we take our living in the world are determined by what we call “laws of nature” and their logical consequences. They determine the order and sequential pattern of what we will experience given the choices we make. The interpretation we give to these patterns of experience is that of an external physical world, complete with the individual essences of everything from trees and rocks to water and wine. In this way, the laws of nature, or better, the “laws of experience”, are regular and universal; they hold across time and space, as well as across scale. For example, the law of nature we call the “law of gravitation” is a regularity holding not only for the fall of the rock that I drop, but for the

fall of the moon towards the earth and the fall of the earth towards the sun. The order of the natural laws encompasses ascending scales not only individually but collectively, so that the laws of perspective apply to individual experience, holding, that if I move farther away from an object it will appear smaller to me, while the laws of trade apply to collective social experience, holding that if a society exports only the goods with the lowest opportunity costs then it will increase the surplus of all goods and associated production profits. The laws of trade and the laws of perspective are not related as logical consequences but they are consistent with each other and encompassed within the coherent order of human experience. Human experience is ordered so that both sets of laws (and many others) pertain to it at the same time. In this way, the laws are mutually implicative—they “take each other into consideration”, so to speak.

Despite their regularity, however, the laws of nature that govern human experience, or what the Fathers called the *logoi* of creation, do not have the status of logical necessities. It is very easy for us to imagine their violation. I can easily imagine dropping a rock and finding that it floats up and away, that two billiard balls pass through each other instead of colliding, or that red and yellow should combine to make green instead of orange. In fact, the scriptures, with their descriptions of miracles, give us accounts of actual violations of the laws of nature, not merely imagined ones. The lesson to be learned is that the laws of nature are regular but arbitrary, rather than necessary. What a peculiar group of attributes is possessed by these laws! They are like a kind of riddle. They relate sets of possible experiences into sequences and are expressed as subjunctive conditionals, e.g. “if this set of experiences were to obtain, then this set of experiences would obtain”; and they are regular, universal, mutually implicative, and arbitrary. In the neo-Platonist tradition of the early Byzantine Fathers,²⁶ a particular answer began to develop in solution of this riddle. Interestingly, the most explicit statement of the answer is found in the early modern West. George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, wrote that the patterns of

²⁶ See, e.g., Maximus the Confessor, *Gnostic Chapters* I.67, PG 90.1108B.

experience have the attributes they do precisely because they are a medium of communication—that is to say, a language—between God and men²⁷. The laws that govern the pattern of human experience and constitute what we interpret as the created world are regular, universal, mutually implicative and arbitrary because they are a language in which God speaks to us. This is an aspect of what is sometimes called natural revelation, that God makes himself and his purposes known to us through the operations of nature, the very content of experience, as well as through the connections between waking experiences that make them coherent and maximally consistent, helping us to separate them out from dream and fantasy.

On this view the order of creation down to the last law is merely the manifestation of what God wills with regard to human experience. That what we experience is regular and universal is a manifestation of his providence, since these features allow us to plan for the future and bring benefit into our lives by conforming our actions with what we expect. That the laws of nature are arbitrary is a clue to their utter dependence on divine volition; they have no authority, no source of necessity, on their own but utterly manifest the will of God. Their arbitrariness is also a clue to their status as instrument of communication. It is perhaps one of the functions of the miracles recorded in Scripture that they highlight the contingent regularity of experiential patterns. Just as the word ‘tree’, with its four letters and single syllable could easily refer to something that does not have leaves and roots,²⁸ so too day does not have to be followed by night or Spring by Summer.²⁹ Miracles make us aware of the amazing regularities which we normally take for granted but which, much more so than the miracles, call out for explanation.³⁰ Regularities in experience point to a governing power

²⁷ See *Alciphron*, Fourth Dialogue, X-XII. For a contemporary Orthodox affirmation, see Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 17-23.

²⁸ Since the word bears no resemblance to its object and its referential connection with it is grounded in custom, and thus ultimately in the will of its speakers and their common knowledge of that will.

²⁹ Fantasy stories are a source of evidence for the coherence of these and other imagined possible alternatives to the actual created regularities.

³⁰ This point and its connection with natural theology have been made with great articulation by John Foster in *The Divine Lawmaker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

beyond experience as their ground and sustaining cause; but the arbitrariness and mutual implicativity of the regularities points to the fact that this power must be free, providential and spiritual (that is, mental, possessing will and intellect), possessed of wise intentions, and indeed intentions that relate all of the physical world to human beings, in a manner very much like that in which a speaker relates words to objects by making his referential intentions known to his interlocutor.

The world is a visible language in which God speaks to us. One event of experience points to another that God wills to follow it, as a word points to the object it refers to. It is a familiar theme in the theology of the Church Fathers that persons, places, and events in Scripture are types of later ones. This is to say that certain events in the Old Testament are words spoken by the breath of God, which can only be understood when the later events they refer to come to pass and reveal their full meaning. God is the master of time and orders the events of history so that, through the gradual unfolding of events in the passage of time, human beings may be spoken to in a way that reveals the divine speaker and his intentions at the level of human experience. Of the many signs and miracles of scripture, some reveal not only God's purposes, but his purposes with respect to the very order of nature, the language with which he speaks to us. That is, some instances of God's supernatural speech through the language of experienced events are on the subject of that very language itself. One episode in particular is noteworthy in regard to our effort to understand how the created order is intended to transmit indirect influences of economic activity for the purpose of realizing a broad, systemic charity. This is the act, attested to in the Gospels,³¹ of Christ walking on the surface of the stormy Sea of Galilee. The miraculous episode is a sign that reveals two lessons to man: first, that the person of Christ not only possesses certain supernatural powers but that he is essentially supernatural because he is nature's author and all natural operations are utterly contingent on his will—this miracle directly relates him to elemental forces as their

³¹ Mt 14:25-33, *inter alia*.

sovereign,³² identifying him with the Lord praised in Psalm 103; and second, through the outstretched arms inviting Peter to meet him on the water's surface, that man himself, as the one for whom the natural order comes into being, is called to participate in the transcendence of that order.³³ This act speaks to the plan for man's deification, but in a very specific way: that man should be become deified and achieve nature-transcendence by using the supernatural language of nature-crafting to express his commitment to this plan with reverential thanks. Calling Peter to walk out across the white-capped lake tells us of an attribute possessed by the natural order that is new to our list and is one more indication of its status as means of communication: the order of the natural world is dynamically open-ended. It is meant to be used as a medium of communication between God and men, and being so used, to change in a manner that reflects the changes in the relationships between God and men. Between two long-time friends who have lived in the same region and community, their conversations with each other take place in a language that is quite different from other forms of communication, being full of mutually familiar names, of people, places, and events. So too with the language of the natural and social order, its words change to reflect the growing fraternity and familiarity among its speakers.

The open-endedness of the language of experienced events is already dynamic in that it is shaped by changes in the relationships it serves, since these relationships—between God and men and between men themselves—are always changing however subtly, at any given time becoming closer or more distanced. But the language has a special dynamism because of its purposive role in the divine economy. The new kingdom of Christ, the new age, the eschaton, is a kingdom that

³² The episode of the wedding feast at Cana (Jn 2:1-12), the first of the seven signs recorded in the Gospel of John, also teaches this lesson, because it reveals that Jesus can transmute the essences of created things. He can do this because he is the Logos, the unifying wisdom which directs the principles of created things, according to which each object, really a collection of sensible appearances, unfolds before human perception with the particular qualities and in the particular sequence that it does. It is by such principles, which ground the sensible qualities and their sequential presentation, that we identify a material object as this or that, as water or wine.

³³ Or to achieve what Staniloae calls "the defeat of this automatism of repetition..." (25).

will be fully present for us when heaven and earth have passed away; however, it will not simply replace heaven and earth after a clean break. Rather, the Holy Spirit is at work in this world now, and is gradually filling up our lives, consecrating the works of our hands and mouths as we invoke him to do so. With each consecration he folds us that much more into the new kingdom and makes the materials of our world that much more spiritualized.³⁴ This does not mean that earthly things somehow become airy or invisible—quite the opposite; it means that material things—of which our own bodies are our first foothold for influence—become more intimately known in their concrete, sensible particularity, that their status as gifts become marked with eucharistic blessings, as their place in the exchange of economic transactions becomes transparent, so that a meal, an article of clothing, a utensil, or a building, becomes something for which we can give thanks and praise, because we know where it comes from and we understand the delightful energy embodied in it. It is because the logoi of creation have been established as a medium of communication that is meant to be participated in and changed in this way by human beings that the potential exists for realizing the deepest kind of charity, the indirect charity which can overcome barriers of ignorance and distance in space and time, as a community organizes itself to receive and transmit charitable influence through the operations of the created world, effecting communities in different countries and different generations. In regard to this organization, the social consequences of the laws of nature as illumined by the covenant laws found in scripture are still relevant.

Our conference takes its title from the line spoken by the goats in the last judgment parable, “Lord, when did we see you hungry?”³⁵ Given the nature of the logoi of creation and their (potentially indirect) social consequences, one implication of the parable is that we may care for or harm another, cause them to be hungry or sick rather than well-

³⁴ On the theme of the open-endedness of nature in the dialogue between God and man, see Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, Volume II. *The World: Creation and Deification* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005), 45-65.

³⁵ Mt 25:44

fed, through unseen consequences of daily living. In the parable, the goats do not understand that judgment depends upon how their actions effected “the least of these”, those who seemed the least important. Who could seem less important than those who are unknown to us? The goats mistakenly believe that it is only charitable acts towards those they encounter that make a difference. But if a man lives such a life that he never encounters a person who is homeless or hungry and so is never put in a position where he must show charity to such a person, does this mean the he lives righteously by default? Does the rich man who wears a robe and feasts sumptuously all day meet his obligations towards his fellow man just because his mansion has insulated him from hearing the cries of Lazarus at his gate? No. Like the sinners of Sardis in the Book of Revelation, he is judged by what he failed to do.

Yet what accounts for the goats difficulty in understanding the transmissive network of unseen influences between nature and society? This is a problem of daily living, a problem of economic decisions.

The logoi of creation communicate divine intentions to man, inviting him to communicate with God through the same means. Their whole character reflects this end. The Christian call to charity in the deepest sense, charity to the unknown other, of which the goats are guilty of failure in the last judgment, is a call to economy. It is our human economy, our system of receiving, modifying, and redistributing divine gifts,³⁶ which has the potential either to reveal the giftly nature of what ends up in our homes, on our backs, and on our tables, or, instead, to conceal this giftly nature, rejecting it in favor of the lie that food is made in grocery stores, clothing in department stores, and that our places of work and our homes are just places where we make money and entertain ourselves. The last judgment parable is meant to scare us away from this lie, to entice us to practice charity by choosing modes of living that reveal the divinely created constraints on human wealth creation, and to use those constraints with an artifice directed at spiritualizing the conditions in which others practice their own modes

³⁶ Which we more commonly describe as our system of producing and distributing goods and services.

of charitable living, drawing ever larger spheres of people and places into our neighborhood, our domain of familiarity and fellowship.

This is so far something Man has failed to achieve. Until Man achieves it collectively he has not achieved it at all. We have what we call “economies”, of nations, regions, and towns, but these are not similar to, nor do they cooperate with, the divine economy. And this is their failure. All human economies depend upon, interact with, and ultimately determine the form of creation; therefore, human economy takes place within divine economy. Human activities of production and consumption are an exchange of human action with the raw inputs of land and resources, which are the divine gifts of creation, as well as with the conditions that determine their continuation, the physical, chemical and biological forces, the network pattern of influences and receptivities that the fathers called *logoi*, and which we have seen are a perceptible language in which God provides for and communicates his intentions to man. In producing and consuming we interact with these conditions and natural resources and so communicate our response; each act of daily living is significant in this regard. We know that nature is not a fortuitous aggregation of atoms in a void, nor some third entity independent of God and man, but rather part of the divine creation, the revelation of the divine Person to man. This means that all human interaction with nature, especially the activity that we call economic, is either consecrating or desecrating. If it is reverential and eucharistic, if it acknowledges the “truth” about nature, that nature does not belong to man, but that man, nature and all of creation belong to God, if it acknowledges the charismatic goodness of creation and responds to that goodness by making it into a work of loving sacrifice and praise, then it is a practice of true economy. Such interaction is true economy because it cooperates with divine economy, the ancient plan for man’s deification and the deification of nature through him. The world is set up so that man cannot help but interact with nature. Nature is both the dust from which he is made and the house of which he is called to be the *oikonomos*, the faithful steward, the intelligent governor. This relationship is part of the divine economy and therefore permanent. It is not severed or abolished by man’s failure to act in the right capacity.

It is not as if during man's struggles and conflicts that nature somehow lies waiting until he rises to the challenge only then becomes subject to his influences.³⁷ Because the purpose of nature is to serve as a medium of communication between God and man, it is a constant record of the status of that communication, a record of the status of man's spiritual condition, good or ill.³⁸

The word 'economy' has a rich tradition in Orthodoxy Christianity. Sometimes it is contrasted with theology, which is the study of God in himself, his attributes and nature considered on their own, while economy is the study of God's plan with respect to creation. But as a technical term of Orthodoxy, 'economy' is usually associated with the pastoral decisions of clergy. What distinguishes such decisions of "household management"³⁹ is that they are wise or judicious given a certain end. In this case, the ultimate end is the very same end as that of the divine economy, namely the deification of the created world. So understood, such economy is constitutive of the mystical life not only of the clerical members of the earthly church, but indeed of each individual member. Just as with the deepening of the conception of charity, the extended conception of household management pertaining to laity has its mode in "human economy" in the vulgar sense of the term, the way in which one takes one's living in the world and the systemic pattern of conditioning that such individual actions collectively bring about.

To focus on this notion of human economy from an Orthodox perspective is to consider economic actions—the buying and selling of goods and services, the application of labor, the use of land and

³⁷ This is most obvious with respect to the items in the natural environment we call "our bodies". As with every other thing in the environment, man's body is a temple of which he is the priest. When he sins, he desecrates nature; and when he desecrates nature he sins. This is a simple corollary to the concomitance that attends the relation between the deification of man and the world in divine economy.

³⁸ This is why, as Paul says in Romans 8:22, because of man's fall all creation fell with him and still groans in travail.

³⁹ As the Greek *oikonomia* is literally translated. In this form, we recognize its connection with the term 'ecology', which shares the same root word meaning "home". Ecology is what I referred to above as the order of the "home" (i.e., creation), the system of logoi, which determine the content and sequential pattern of what we may experience; economy is then the rule or governance of this home as exercised in the first place by God or secondarily by man.

resources—according to the revealed standard of righteousness and ultimately to assess their fitness with the divine plan of deification. As with hesychastic prayer, such a viewpoint deepens our understanding of theoria and spiritual striving because it makes concrete the manner in which the soul cooperates with divine energies; the viewpoint clarifies the fact that human economic decisions are always free responses to divine gift-giving that either are or are not eucharistic.

We know from Scripture that parallel to the true nature of righteousness and the manner of its revelation, in which self-righteousness is precluded, there is the contrast between ownership and stewardship in the way human beings relate to the resources of creation, land, energy, and their affordances. If the proper formula for righteousness precludes any possibility of self-righteousness on the part of a human being, so too does stewardship preclude ownership. In this way, economy as stewardship is seen to be the gracious counterpart to divine economy; as God gives freely of his energies for the purpose of man's deification—and the world through him—so man's deification is brought about through the seal of his own spiritualizing transmission of those energies, consecrating the raw inputs of creation, including his own body and mind, into concrete forms of theandric co-creation, realizing the hidden potentialities in the ancient divine economy. A lover delights in his love's pleasure, and it is for his good pleasure that the deified man returns the Lord's freely given lovingkindness with freely given lovingthanks.

God's Philanthropia and Human Disease: Theory of Neoplasia and the Orthodox Understanding of Original Sin as a Guide for Ethical Questions Involving Genetic Manipulation

Andrei I. Holodny

One of the difficult and thorny questions that a person can face both theologically and strictly on a person level is the suffering and dying of children. How can a benevolent and omnipotent God allow such a vast injustice toward innocents? What does the suffering of children say about our universe, her laws and the Creator of these laws? What should be the response of humankind toward such suffering? With the advent of powerful new technologies, especially those involving genetic manipulations, these questions have become much less theoretical and much more practical and acute. In this article is an attempt to outline certain points of contact between natural scientists and physicians, on the one hand, and theologians and pastors on the other. Because neoplastic diseases are my area of endeavor, I focus on childhood cancers. However, almost everything I have to say, both in terms of science and theology, can be applied to other childhood maladies, especially congenital and inherited diseases.

The scientific study of people and the diseases that afflict them has led to a number of interesting discoveries. One of these is that neoplasia in human is an inevitable outcome of the laws of our universe. A statement such as this has significant theological consequences.

But first, what is cancer? Cancer is the unregulated, abnormal and disorderly growth of cells in an organ. When an organism is first developing in the womb, it is made up of undifferentiated, pluripotential cells; in other words, cells that do not yet have a specific function and have the potential of developing into any cell or organ in the body. Differentiation and growth of the organism is extremely complex and, normally, is very strictly controlled. For example, the liver grows to an appropriate size and shape and then stops growing. Similarly, the majority of hepatocytes (cells in the liver) are very specific cells, which perform a very specific function, and are found in the liver only. The same is true for all other organs. Malignant cells grow unchecked and cease to look like the parent cells from which they came.¹ This is known as dedifferentiation.

The DNA molecule in every cell controls differentiation and the production of proteins, which basically account for what a cell looks like and what it does. Mutations (changes in the DNA molecule) cause cancers. What causes mutations? According to statistical mechanics and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, complicated physical process (such as weather patterns or nuclear decay) cannot be predicted with certainty and that unforeseen results occur. These laws also apply to the DNA molecule. The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that in all reactions in which there is an exchange of energy, the entropy (or randomness) of the system increases. This means that every thermodynamic system progressively becomes more random, more chaotic, and less orderly in time. We see this every day: Weeds overgrow a beautiful garden if it is left untended. The same process occurs with DNA.

Replication of the DNA molecule and its support mechanisms is an exceedingly complicated process. One can only imagine how difficult it is to maintain the integrity of the DNA molecule, the length of which in every cell of our body is a number of centimeters. DNA is subject to the same thermodynamic laws as everything else in the universe.

¹ Vincent T. Devita, Hellman, Samuel (eds). *Cancer Principles and Practice of Oncology*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. 2000

Over time, decay and errors occur inevitably. Therefore, DNA is not static but constantly undergoing changes, which are known as mutations. In one sense, this set-up is beneficial to humankind in that it allows for genetic diversity and the development of certain positive traits. However, mutations also allow for the development of cancers. Therefore, as long as the Second law of Thermodynamics holds, mutations (or mistakes) in DNA are inevitable.

It follows that neoplasia is an inevitable outcome of the laws of the universe in which we live. This is a stunning and horrible conclusion, which inevitably leads to a myriad of important theological considerations; for example, the relationship of God to the universe that God created, or the role of humanity in this universe to change the created world through intellect.

What then is the relationship between disease and sin? Occasionally, diseases can be viewed as related to specific behaviors, which communities might judge as personal sins. For example, smoking leads to lung cancer,² tongue cancer,³ esophageal cancer⁴ and many others. On other occasions, cancers can arise from collective sin, or what can broadly be termed sins of society, such as chemical or nuclear pollution. For example, there was a marked increase in cancer of the thyroid after the Chernobyl accident.⁵

But what of childhood cancers? Certainly the child is not blamable. Very often these are due to spontaneous mutations, which just happen. As we have seen above, these cancers occur because of the fundamental laws that govern our universe. “Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents” (John 9:3).

² E.L. Wynder, S.D. Stellman, “Impact of long-term filter cigarette usage on lung and larynx cancer risk. A case-control study,” *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* (1979) 62:471.

³ M.R. Spitz, et al., Squamous cell carcinoma of the upper aerodigestive tract: a case-comparative analysis. *Cancer* (1988) 61:203.

⁴ X. Castellsague, et al., “Independent and joint effects of tobacco smoking and alcohol drinking on the risk of esophageal cancer in men and women,” *International Journal of Cancer* (1999) 82:657.

⁵ D. Williams, “Radiation carcinogenesis: lessons from Chernobyl,” *Oncogene*, (2008, Dec) 27 Suppl 2:S9-18.

This concept has a direct parallel in Orthodox theology, specifically in the understanding of the consequences of original sin. The Orthodox Tradition stresses that following original sin, the universe underwent a fundamental change that affected both humanity as well as the universe as a whole. Thus original sin had not only spiritual consequences but physical consequences as well. The universe became subject to decay and remains so to this day. St. Paul teaches that, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption [or in the language of physics, entropy, AH] into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Romans 8:20-22). This theological concept is proven (and I do not use this term lightly) to be true by physicists and is known as the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

For humankind, following original sin, death, disease and decay were introduced. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). St. Maximus the Confessor teaches that, “prior to the fall, the human body was immortal, not prone to disease and lacking the slow wittedness and inertia which is its current state.”⁶ Returning to neoplastic diseases, they occur as the result of physical laws, which according to Scripture, are a consequence of sin. However, this condition of sin is only a temporary situation and will be fundamentally different following the Second Coming.

In the Orthodox Tradition, the resurrection of humanity will not only be spiritual but also have a physical component. We, Orthodox, believe that we will be resurrected in the flesh; however, this flesh will be unlike our current bodies. The resurrected bodies will not be subject to disease: “where there is no disease, nor sorrow, but eternal life” (from the Orthodox Funeral service). This future existence is foreseen by the prophet Isaiah, who says “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame

⁶ Socinennya Episcopa Ignatii Brianchaninova: *Slovo O Smerti*, (Moscow, 1991) 7-8.

shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah 35:5,6).

In addition, our bodies will not be subject to decay. “The Body of Christ did not experience decay” (Troparion of Good Friday, tone 2). In the language of physics, the Second Law of Thermodynamics will not apply. The entropy (or randomness or chaos) in the universe will no longer inevitably increase. Therefore, because the physical laws, which give rise to the inevitability of neoplastic diseases, will no longer be in effect, cancer will no longer occur. Rather, the universe will be guided by new laws: “Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (Revelation 21:5).

The goal of human existence is to achieve the heavenly state, *theosis*, to become like God (not in essence but by Grace). A foreshadowing of the future life is already seen in the lives of the saints. Many saints approached the Kingdom of God not only spiritually but also physically. This is exemplified in the uncorrupted relics of the saints, which demonstrates that by the grace of God one can overcome decay in this life also.

The analogy of the struggle against disease and spiritual warfare against sin here is striking. Prior to the death and resurrection of Our LORD Jesus Christ, it was not possible to achieve salvation, or the Kingdom of Heaven; just as it is now impossible to achieve salvation by one’s own power, without Christ, irrespective of how hard one tries, or how holy one becomes. After the resurrection of humankind and through the grace of God, the Kingdom of Heaven will open to those who labored to achieve sanctity: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Similarly, we cannot eliminate death and disease by science or technology alone. As we have seen, in order to do this would require the changing of the laws of physics. In spite of medical technological advances, in spite of the fact that 50 percent of all cancers are cured, in the end science and technology loses—always. Every single one of my patients will die, if not of the disease against which we are currently

struggling, then from the next. Yet as an Orthodox physician, I always seek to heal the sick, even while knowing that the true cure can come only after the resurrection of the dead and after the laws of physics, medicine, and biology are no more.

An interesting corollary to this discussion is the support for the Orthodox concept of inner struggle from hard science. In terms of quantum mechanics, statistical mechanics, and thermodynamics, our universe is indeterministic. This means that fundamentally it is impossible to predict the physical future of the universe. These indeterministic laws of physics are also manifest in biology, including human biology. It would seem reasonable to think that human free will, and perhaps even our consciousness, are the result of (or are at least in concert with) these same indeterministic qualities of our universe. Therefore, both cancer (and the suffering it brings), as well as my free choice, are both ontologically linked in the set up of the laws that govern this universe. Hence, the same set of laws that allow for genetic mutation, allow me to choose sin or holiness, to do good or evil. Dostoyevsky once said that, “Because everyone is guilty for everyone else.” (*Brothers Karamazov*). It now appears that these words now not only have a moral foundation but also a scientific foundation. Turning this idea around, it appears that the laws of the universe, which allow for my personal consciousness and freedom, also compel humanity to struggle to overcome the other consequences of these laws; namely disease and death.

When taking into account the physical consequences of sin, the question arises, can humans fight against sin using physical methods or are we limited to “spiritual” methods? At first glance, one may be tempted to say, no. After all, the holy apostle Paul avers that “we struggle not against flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12).

However, this first impression would be incorrect, especially in our Orthodox Tradition: endless fasts, standing in Church for hours, long prayers, prostrations, not to mention the teachings of the hesychasts on breathing techniques during the Jesus prayer. Our unseen warfare has a

very real physical component. This is seen time and time again in the Orthodox Tradition. For example—our liturgy. Everything in the service serves to focus the attention of those in Church on God, on prayer (e.g., the chanting of the service, the iconography, and the smell of incense). These material cues emphasize the hesychastic idea of the unity of humanity as a spiritual and physical being in prayer and life itself.

What do the present arguments have to say about the use of technology? Does this mean that we can fight against sin by technological methods, for example the technology of genetic manipulation, genetic engineering, or stem cell research? As a scientist-physician, in general, it seems to me that technological advances are not inherently good or evil. Yet their application can be either good or evil. Technology when applied to the human condition acquires an ethical dimension. This applies from the most basic to the most advanced. A knife can be used to perform an operation or can be used to rob or kill someone. Nuclear energy can be used to make bombs or medical scanners, radiation therapy, and nuclear medicine.

However, the advent of advanced scientific methods of disease therapy and diagnosis leads to a plethora of new ethical dilemmas. Having established that genetic mutations that lead to cancer are the result of the physical laws of our universe, we return to the question of genetic manipulation. Who decides, or how are we to decide, what is “abnormal,” what defects or abnormalities are to be treated and what methods are permissible (or should be used) in such treatment.

For me, attempts at building of ethical systems based on biology (or even evolutionary theory) have honestly been unconvincing.⁷ Where is a physician or scientist to turn? What can we as Orthodox Christians

⁷ For examples of these types of ethical systems, see Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Idem, *The Writings on an Ethical Life: The Essential Singer*, (New York, NY: Ecco Press, 2000); Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer (eds), *Bioethics: An Anthology*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999); Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company, 1992); Idem, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster 1996); Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1990); Dawkins, Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, *The Extended Phenotype: The Long Reach of the Gene*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

offer that will be understandable and compelling to physicians, scientists, and lawmakers, who compose the legal framework of our country.

As individual Christians, we must strive for the Christianization all aspects of our lives. Christ and His love should permeate not only our personal life but also our professional life, family life, art, culture, and science and technology. No sphere of human endeavor is outside of Christianity. Hence, science and technology have to be permeated by Christianity, by Christ's love.

In demonstrating the similarity (in some cases striking similarity) between what on the surface may be considered completely unrelated disciplines (i.e., current understanding of the biology of neoplastic diseases, the laws of physics and patristic concepts of original sin), I hoped to demonstrate the convergence of these seemingly dissimilar disciplines. Noting the inefficacy of ethical systems based solely on the sciences, it follows that cooperation between theologians and scientists is not only warranted but also necessary.

A short article such as this is much too short to for a detailed discussion on the specifics of genetic manipulation; nevertheless, some specific recommendations can be made, based on the material presented. Objections have been raised to genetic manipulation as human meddling in God's creation, as an assault on what it is to be human, but that is far from the case. On the contrary, genetic mutations that lead to cancer as well as congenital malformations are the result of sin: our own personal sins, the sins of humankind as a whole and Original Sin. As scientists, physicians, and Christians we follow Christ's example of healing ministry: "Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them" (Matthew 15:30).

Christ called disease and infirmity the work of the enemy of humankind. Speaking of the woman with severe kyphosis, the LORD said that she was "a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound

for eighteen long years” and that she should “be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her” (Luke 13:16). We must delve into the secrets of the Universe, not only the Spiritual but also the physical Universe. Humankind must use its God-given intellect and talents to create the harmony of health from the chaos of cancer. Christ teaches us, “these signs will accompany those who believe: ... they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well” (Mark 16:17-18). If we are believers, we must do likewise.

Seeking Justice and Promoting Human Rights: Orthodox Theological Imperatives or Afterthoughts?

Antonios Kireopoulos

The 2009 Sophia Institute conference seeks to explore Orthodoxy's contribution to the Church's social witness in the world. This witness—in different contexts wrought by the vagaries of history—has been mixed. Certainly the Church has historically affirmed the scriptural injunction to feed the poor, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and visit the imprisoned (Matthew 25:31–46). Is this affirmation at the heart of the Church's life?

Indeed, the Church is widely known by Christians of other traditions for its ascetic piety, liturgical beauty, and iconographic art. Its monasteries are sought-after refuges for spiritual retreat. Its churches are models of architectural wonder. Its Eucharistic fellowship is praised for its reflection of divine community (and derided by some for its perceived ecumenical exclusivity). However, is it known today for its witness in the world of *philanthropia* (collectively and generally understood here as justice for the oppressed)?

Certainly, examples both historic and contemporary abound with regard to what is essentially a question of loving one's neighbor. Patristic literature – St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom come to mind – is filled with sermons on the responsibilities of the wealthy when it comes to the poor.¹ (St. Nicholas, whose modern, secular incarnation will be visiting children around the world three

¹ See, for example: St. Basil the Great, *On Social Justice*, trans. C. Paul Schroeder (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009); St. John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, trans. Catherine Roth (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984).

weeks hence, is remembered for his charity toward those in need.) In addition, the landscape of Byzantium was dotted here and there with church-run hospitals, hospices, and orphanages.² Further, Greek history and hagiography is filled with examples of laity and clergy literally dying to liberate their country from the yoke of Turkish oppression.³ Recent Russian history is replete with examples of Russian faithful ministering to others during the decades of totalitarian oppression. Today's Albania is a testament to the attention paid by the Orthodox Church to the material and educational needs of that country's people.

On the one hand, there is a tradition within Orthodoxy of social welfare, but is this tradition writ large? In other words, in the mindset of Orthodox Christians, is this tradition with a small "t" of *philanthropia* part-and-parcel definitive of the Church's tradition with a large "T"? Is social welfare—in all of its manifestations—an inherent part of its being? After all, at least with reference to St. John Chrysostom's treatment of poverty and justice, Fr. Georges Florovksy notes that, "one may contend that in practice very little came out of this vigorous social preaching."⁴

This question, then, of whether social welfare is at the heart of the Church's being, is not a contrived question. In his recitation of the Prophet Isaiah at the outset of his ministry, Jesus' identity as the promised savior is made manifest in just these terms: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim

² See Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Poverty, Society and Philanthropy in the Late Mediaeval Greek World* (New Rochelle: Aristide D. Caratzas, Publisher, 1992).

³ Anastasios Yannoulatos refers to this history: "During this period the Church not only acted as an advocate of human rights for the subjugated peoples but also defended and consoled them when those rights were cruelly violated...During these tragic years the clergy constantly supported the people by defending their rights and attempting to organize the Christian community on the basis of equality, dignity, and brotherhood." See *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 65. He also shows how in Greece this inspiration was enshrined in the constitution and subsequent documents following independence (66–7).

⁴ Georges Florovsky, *Christianity and Culture*, Volume 2 in the Collected Works of Georges Florovsky (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974), 134.

the year of the LORD's favor'...Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:18-21, NRSV). And yet, the Orthodox, as followers of this same Christ, today seem almost eager to be identified by other terms, almost in opposition to social justice, which is often dismissively assigned as the identifying characteristic of some Protestant communities and some streams of Roman Catholicism.

Thus the question: Is the seeking of justice (and thus the promotion of human rights, whether understood by their secular construct or informed by Christian theology), an Orthodox theological imperative or merely an afterthought appended to what is considered a loftier set of Christian convictions?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

We are gathered during the Sophia Institute annual meeting in a place famous for its theological engagement with the world. Perhaps no other figure in the history of Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York is better known than Reinhold Niebuhr. In September 1948, Niebuhr gave an address at the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam. This assembly was almost immediately after a world war, which would become emblematic of the worst of crimes against humanity (the Holocaust). Niebuhr anticipated the international community's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that coming December:

The Christian Faith is, of course, unable to promise, as do secular creeds, some final historical redemption from all social evil. The revelation of God's judgment and mercy in Christ negated both the pre-Christian and the post-Christian expectations of an earthly paradise; and has taught us to look "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). The Kingdom of God always impinges upon history and reminds us of the indeterminate possibilities of a more perfect brotherhood in every historic community. But the sufferings of Christ also remain a permanent judgment upon the continued fragmentary and corrupted character of

all our historic achievements. They are completed only as the divine mercy, mediated in Christ, purges and completes them. Our final hope is in “the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.” Applied to our present situation, these words speak to us. On the one hand, we must strive to reform and reconstruct our historic communities so that they will achieve *a tolerable peace and justice*. On the other hand, we know, as Christians, that sinful corruptions will be found in even the highest human achievements. *We ought as Christians to strive more earnestly, and not less, toward the peace of nations. We ought not to be indifferent to the problem of what technical-political instruments are best suited to maintain a tolerable peace and to express humanity’s obligation to our neighbors.*⁵

In this passage, Niebuhr does not jump on a post-war bandwagon of optimism. He admonishes the Church to seek *a tolerable peace*. Up to that point, the century had experienced the Armenian Genocide, an earlier world war, a great depression, and totalitarian communist oppression. No doubt in Niebuhr’s mind was the process unfolding across town from this seminary, a process that was seeking to establish a standard against which future crimes against humanity could be measured. Perfect? No. An instrument, as he said, “suited to maintain a tolerable peace and to express [one’s] obligation to his [or her] neighbor”? Yes.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights enumerates basic principles, which if upheld would go a long way toward ensuring a greater measure of justice in the world. Still, justice would not be guaranteed for all; the history of the world demonstrates that human beings give in to sin regularly, and this sin includes the worst kinds of violence committed against one another. Also, there is no guarantee that these principles would be carried out equitably; the powerful have since the beginning of the world dictated how justice should be meted

⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr, Address, in *Man’s Disorder and God’s Design* (New York: Harber, 1949), 21-27, as excerpted in *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. Michael Kinamon and Brian E. Cope (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 281 (emphasis added).

out. However, as a set of principles, they provide a guide for social interaction, and interaction among nations, which would lessen the amount of pain human beings inflict upon one another. To cast them in religious terms, the principles are like the plumb line in the Book of Amos (7:7-9), against which the LORD promised to measure the injustices committed in ancient Israel.

The types of rights included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are the right to life, liberty, and security; the right not to be enslaved, tortured, or arrested arbitrarily; the right to privacy, freedom of movement, and asylum; the right not to be deprived of nationality, of property, or of marriage and family; the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of opinion and expression, and of peaceful assembly; and the right to work, to rest, and to education. These rights and others carefully written into the declaration seek to define – naively perhaps, but not without warrant – what makes for the conditions for individual men and women, not so much to reach their full potential as human beings created in the image and likeness of God – this is a theological task – but to enable the conditions that will allow people to maximize their full potential as political beings in this world.⁶ Here I would also especially point out the issue of gender equality and persistent gender discrimination.

The theotic and the political intersect in the interaction of human beings with one another. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has commented on this interaction. As he writes: “[H]umanity derives its source and existence from God, whose image within human beings constitutes the essence and depth of freedom while at the same time planting the seeds for social justice within the world.”⁷ Given this intersection, the question at hand is if, and how, religious communities—and specifically here in the context of this conference, the Orthodox Church—should promote human rights. For as Bartholomew further

⁶ This distinction is not lost on Yannoulatos. For him, human rights have to do, not so much with the theological as with one’s place vis-à-vis the state (51).

⁷ Bartholomew I, *Encountering the Mystery: Understanding Orthodox Christianity Today* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 124.

writes, “As Orthodox Christians we are called to support and stand up for the innocent and defenseless victims of religious oppression, racism, and intolerance. Ultimately, we are called to work for peace in every part of our world...We must remind people of the significance of tolerance, which is ultimately grounded in respect for the sanctity of freedom and the sacredness of human justice.”⁸

This sensibility certainly influenced the drafting of the declaration. While mostly Protestant influence might have been evident in this process, it is significant to note that one of the members of the drafting committee was an Orthodox academic and statesman from Lebanon, a “theologically informed” philosophy professor by the name of Charles Malik.⁹ Encouraged in this task by the Churches’ Commission on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches (which he would later join as a commissioner), a task not incidentally supported by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, known then as the Federal Council of Churches, Professor Malik would later reflect – at a conference held by the CCIA here at Union Theological Seminary – on “the spiritual implications of the Human Rights Covenant.”¹⁰

Admittedly, the Orthodox influence on this drafting may not have been too profound, or it may have been. There would be no doubt that the presence of an Orthodox person on the drafting committee represented an ecumenically ideal choice for those church leaders eager to influence the progress of the task at hand. In any event, it can be safely asserted that the ecumenical community was united in its desire to leave its imprint on the final document.¹¹ As a historian of this ecumenical effort has noted:

⁸ Bartholomew I, 135.

⁹ John S. Nurser, *For All Peoples and All Nations: The Ecumenical Church and Human Rights* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 43f, 159 (n. 58).

¹⁰ Nurser, 169.

¹¹ This is Nurser’s conclusion as well, where he states (28): “The Federal Council of Churches (FCC) and the YMCA were determined not to allow the end of hostilities to diminish their commitment to questions of global order...The churches were ‘dedicated to the progressive realization of the dignity and worth of man’ and to ‘the world-wide achievement of man’s individual freedom, under God, to think, to believe, and to act responsibly according to the dictates of his own conscience.’”

The Protestant, Anglican, and, to an extent, Orthodox ecumenical movement contributed enormously to the events that led up to the United Nations General Assembly proclaiming in December 1948 that its Universal Declaration of Human Rights was defining, with unparalleled authority, what had in its 1945 founding charter been left indeterminate. This declaration was deemed to be what the states that ratified the charter had in mind as the constituting ‘soul’ of the new order of international affairs they created.¹²

This commitment of the ecumenical community was in ample evidence some four decades later when the WCC held a critical convocation on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation in Seoul, Korea, in 1990. There, the delegates affirmed their belief, based on Exodus 3:7b, that “there is an inseparable relationship between justice and human rights, [and that] human rights have their source in God’s justice which relates to an enslaved, marginalized, suffering people in concrete acts of deliverance from oppression.” Also affirming that human rights referred not only to individual rights but also to “collective, social, economic and cultural rights of peoples,” they went on to assert that “human rights are God-given and that their promotion and protection are essential for freedom, justice and peace”; that they would “resist all structures and systems that violate human rights and deny the opportunity for the realization of the full potential of individuals and peoples”; and that they would commit themselves “to actions of solidarity with organizations and movements working for the promotion and protection of human rights...through effective instruments.”¹³

A quote just above says that the Orthodox joined their ecumenical partners in contributing to the general human rights framework only “to an extent.” In fact, if we note the view of Metropolitan Gennadios

¹² Nurser, 173.

¹³ *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation*, ed. D. Preman Niles (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992) ((WCC World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), Seoul, 1990), 175–6.

Limouris, who at the time worked in Faith and Order Commission of the WCC, the extent of Orthodox affirmation in the later Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation statement was less than overwhelming. Commenting on that statement, while noting that “the justice of God calls for a word from the church,” his observation was that “the conversations at Seoul, as well as its main results, have been criticized not only by Orthodox participants but also by Protestant theologians. There was a general feeling that the convocation was not well prepared; that Seoul’s theology was irrelevant and its resolutions, reflections and affirmations were mainly based on the horizontal secularized ethic of classical humanism.”¹⁴

Limouris’ observation seems to reflect a wider Orthodox assessment of human rights instruments, and even more fundamentally of their foundation. His statement that “Seoul’s theology was irrelevant” is not a casual critique. Is such a dismissive position justified? It is to this critique that we turn next.

Some Orthodox Views of the Human Rights Construct

The Apparent Absence of Human Rights from the Sources. Of the several arguments of Orthodox commentators on human rights, the one perhaps most often heard is that the idea of human rights is not to be found in the sources, namely the patristic sources. If it is something we should consider so important to our faith, this argument goes, why is there such scant evidence of it in our history?

Even one such as Florovsky laments this seeming lapse in the historical record. After emphatically stating that “Christianity is a social religion,” and after highlighting Orthodoxy’s affirmation of the equality of persons and its defense of the marginalized, he asks: “Why then was there so little social action in the East and the whole richness of social ideas left without an adequate embodiment?” Indeed, to Florovsky, this apparent lapse in the Church’s witness cuts to its very being. This leads him to say, “If the church, as an institution, cannot adopt the way of an

¹⁴ Gennadios Limouris, in *Between the Flood and the Rainbow*, 111.

open social action, Christians cannot dispense with their civic duties, for theirs is an enormous contribution to make ‘in the material sphere,’ exactly *as* Christians.”¹⁵ It must be stated that Florovsky’s observations do not form a negative critique of human rights. They do give support to those who would dismiss human rights based on an apparent omission in the sources.

Christos Yannaras goes back even further than the patristic sources. He questions, why, if human rights is so important a principle, it isn’t found enshrined in the political construct of ancient Greece or the legal codes of ancient Rome. For Yannaras, the concept of the Greek city and the system of Roman law were the epitome of human social development, at least when it came to regulating human interaction and guiding citizens to fulfill their potential as members of those respective societies.¹⁶ As the inheritor of both Greek and Roman achievements, Byzantium, and thus the Church, further developed these high points into a principle based on love for the other as members of the Church. “Being a participant and a member of the body of the Church,” he writes, “means that one only exists in order to love and be loved—therefore, far from any expectation of self-protection through a legislation which would be ‘mandatory for all.’”¹⁷ Although academically we might follow this line of reasoning, we would nonetheless have to conclude that it offers little in the way of how to deal with the reality of suffering in our midst. For even members of the Church have been known to oppress others, including those with whom they would otherwise commune on Sunday mornings.

To be sure, Yannaras does see a measure of achievement in the articulation of human rights as such. His real complaint, however, is that this achievement “has not realized the depths as found in the Greek city and the Byzantine community.”¹⁸ He sees the insertion of

¹⁵ Florovsky, 131-142.

¹⁶ Christos Yannaras, “Human Rights and the Orthodox Church,” Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, October 4, 2002.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

individualism as defined by the Enlightenment in what should have otherwise been a legitimate development as a real abortion of what would have been a genuine achievement. We will turn to the critique based on Enlightenment philosophy in a moment. For now it is instructive to underscore Yannaras' belief that the 18th century's misstep was the abandonment of its Greek, Roman, and Byzantine heritage.

The assumption that human rights, as a concept, are not found in Orthodoxy's early sources is contradicted by the work of Fr. John McGuckin. He, too, like Yannaras, sees the link between the Roman legal codes and Byzantium's legal systems. This not only results in a direct move from West to East but also implies a resonance between later, Western philosophical ideas about individual rights and early, Eastern theological claims.¹⁹ Unlike Yannaras, McGuckin does not find a disconnect when moving from Byzantium to the Western European context, which brought forth human rights principles.

To support this contention, he cites the body of Eastern Church canon law, in which he finds ample evidence of early human rights sensibilities. About canon law, he finds that they:

[M]anifest on every page a code of governance that protects, defends, and orders the Orthodox Christian community.... These canons are...regarded by all the Orthodox as a fundamental part of what is called the 'Holy Tradition' of the Church.... This development and flourishing of Canon Law in the East... is a major rebuttal of the idea that Orthodoxy is not concerned with the rights of the individual, or that Orthodoxy can hardly conceive of the concept of the individual as such, only the collective. It is equally a defense of the fundamental Orthodox understanding that rights of persons cannot be separated from duties and responsibilities.²⁰

¹⁹ John A. McGuckin, "The Issue of Human Rights in Byzantium and the Orthodox Christian Tradition," in *Christianity and Human Rights*, ed. J. Witte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming - 2011), 4.

²⁰ McGuckin, 5. Susan Holman finds similar sensibilities in the specific human rights-type language

If this is indeed true, then the argument that there is no line to trace from the modern human rights conception to Orthodox sources becomes a bit tenuous. McGuckin is more pointed in his criticism of this line of thinking. “It is thus,” he writes, “wholly disingenuous to speak of Human Rights issues as if somehow they are not part of the fundamental fabric of Orthodoxy’s ancient constitution.” He continues:

Why then do many Orthodox do just that in contemporary arguments about human rights? I suspect that it is because there is a set of miscommunications about what one is actually speaking of; and my diagnosis is that it is the Orthodox who need to clarify their language most, and more than that, clarify their true historical and philosophical tradition; recognize that it is profound: a force that civilized Europe and gave a model of rule by Christian Law that was once the envy of tribes that still made up the violent fringes of western Europe.²¹

McGuckin’s research into the sources of Orthodoxy has been instrumental in laying the foundation for the task of recognizing in our own theological heritage a consistent understanding of human rights. But before we can move forward with this task, we need first to tackle the next critique, namely the influence of the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment and Its Humanistic Influences

The Enlightenment serves as a target for many an Orthodox arrow, particularly shot by those who suspiciously regard anything that is not readily perceived as handed down through the Tradition of the Church. On the one hand, given that Enlightenment thinking above all gave space for people to question the status quo, which from then on in the West served as a methodology for all manner of inquiry, it is no wonder that it is met with skepticism by churches whose cultures

used in early Eastern Christian homiletic texts, as in: S.R. Holman, “Healing the world with righteousness: The language of social justice in early Christian homilies,” in *Charity and Giving in Monotheistic Religions*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients, ed. Miriam Frenkel and Yaacov Lev (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 89–110.

²¹ McGuckin, 6.

never underwent this tectonic shift directly. On the other hand, one must wonder how some Orthodox believers, especially those living in the West, who operate according to this methodology in every other aspect of their lives, genuinely disregard it when it comes to religious thinking. Is this a legitimate position some two hundred plus years later?

Granted, the Orthodox Church is preeminently communal: grounded in a Trinitarian conception of God, whose perichoretic relationship definitively characterizes its oneness of being; composed of countless members who together make up the one body of Christ; gathered in Eucharistic fellowship to partake of divine life as one, holy, catholic and apostolic community. But does such an emphasis on community preclude any consideration of the individuals—*as* individuals—who compose the Church and society? Does the Orthodox theology of personhood, rooted in the creation of human beings in the image and likeness of God and transformed by the experience of the divine-human person of Jesus Christ, say something to this situation?

Archbishop Hilarion Alfeyev gives voice to the extreme criticism within Orthodoxy of Enlightenment thinking. Not uncommonly, he sees its humanist influence, here understood as exclusively secular and atheistic, destructive of the appropriate understanding of the human person as created by God. This critique then allows for a harsh view of human rights, which thus do not require a divine starting point.

Alfeyev starts by affirming this divine reference point for humanity: “Christianity and secular humanism attach principally different meanings to the ideas of the dignity and freedom of the individual. In the religious tradition the notion of the dignity and freedom of the person directly follows from the concept of his or her divine origin.”²² It is when he compares this view with the secular humanist view that his argument takes shape. He writes,

²² Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Witness Today* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2006), 232.

Thus Christianity, just as secular humanism, speaks of the dignity and freedom of the person, but unlike the latter it insists that the principle of freedom must be balanced by the principle of personal spiritual and moral responsibility before God and other people. Of course, the idea of responsibility is also present in humanism, but with the absence of absolute moral norms this principle simply denotes the limitation of one person's freedom by the freedom of other people. From the standpoint of atheistic humanism, the realization of the potential of freedom is nothing other than the person's unhindered realization of all his desires and aspirations, except for those, which hinder the realization of similar desires of other people, as well as the realization of those rights of his that do not violate the rights of others. This gives rise to the relativistic interpretation of all moral norms and spiritual values. Nothing is a norm and value by itself if the only criterion is the person's free will.²³

In short, moral principles proposed explicitly devoid of divine origin are too flawed to be of truly positive use.

With regard to human rights, Alfeyev points out that this secular view of the human person led to both human rights principles and the horrific acts against which they were directed. This is more than irony; for Alfeyev, this amounts to a questioning of the entire human rights enterprise. For example,

Humanism of the second half of the 20th century, expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, arose as a reaction to the barbaric acts, which fill the conscience of mankind with indignation, i.e. in reaction to the crimes of Nazism. However, humanists refuse to see the connection between these crimes and the anthropological theories born in the atheistic minds of the French enlighteners of the 18th century and developed by 19th century materialists. Humanists refuse to admit that the

²³ Alfeyev, 233.

‘humanization’ of morality through the rejection of religious norms was the main cause of the monstrosities of the French revolutionaries and later of the communists and Nazis.²⁴

This, in itself, is not an indictment of human rights as such. However, it clears the way for perspectives such as those that dismiss human rights as nothing more than demands made upon society in service of humanity’s self-centeredness.²⁵

McGuckin sees in this objection a reaction to a perceived “‘pushing’ of a secularist, non-Christian moral agenda’ and not a negative assessment of human rights per se.²⁶ Rather than dwell on this perception, McGuckin takes a more nuanced view of the Enlightenment’s human rights legacy. Indeed, he sees a direct link between earlier theological principles articulated by the Church and the Enlightenment theories that succeeded them. In fact, in response to Yannaras’ assertion that eighteenth-century Western European thinkers somehow abandoned what was clearly their inheritance from Byzantium and earlier, McGuckin argues that:

Orthodoxy brought to the European mind the understanding that personhood was vested with divine potency...It was therefore Orthodox philosophical theology that historically brought the very term of person and individual from the margins of irrelevance to the central stage of anthropological philosophy...It is the theological stance underpinning all Orthodox theology, the deification of the human race by the grace of divine incarnation within it, which is the root of how Christian-inspired philosophers of a later age could declare: “We hold these truths to be self evident,” and go on to cite the

²⁴ Alfeyev, 236.

²⁵ See, for example, Yannaras: “...Religious individualism preceded the egocentrism of a *religionized*...Christianity and became the cast of the absolute importance of individual rights in modernity... when the tyranny of metaphysics was rejected, the aim of the individual metaphysical salvation was replaced by the aim of a secularized (legal) protection.”

²⁶ McGuckin, 11.

inalienable dignity of the human person as one of the ‘obvious’ things they took as axiomatic.²⁷

What we can take from this argument is that, if at the heart of human rights constructs is the individual human person, this very notion indicates a positive inheritance from what came before. Though rejected by some Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers, nonetheless, this inheritance defined the human person precisely as one invested with a God-given inviolable dignity.

Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos is also not so harsh on the human rights inheritance of the Enlightenment. They may be secular in their construct, but to him this doesn’t mean that the principles aren’t in themselves based on Christian principles. With regard to the human rights documents, he finds that they “express faith in individual freedom, in equality for all without exception, and in human dignity.”²⁸ In this statement, like McGuckin, he notes some affinity with Orthodox theological understanding. We can parse his language here: freedom, equality and human dignity are part of the Orthodox heritage; what is not part of this same heritage is faith in the concepts themselves rather than in the God in whom they find their meaning. However, it is not Yannoulatos’ brief to disparage by highlighting difference; it is rather to build on what is in common. He writes:

Orthodox thought is not always in full agreement with everything that has been characterized from time to time as ‘human rights.’ On the basic core concepts – freedom, equality, and human dignity – there is of course immediate agreement and absolute affirmation. Most of the ideas expressed about human rights are accepted by Orthodox thinking as *corollaries* of its own views on humanity.²⁹

²⁷ McGuckin, 6

²⁸ Yannoulatos, 50.

²⁹ Yannoulatos, 51, emphasis added.

This approach is a rather helpful way to look at this situation. To disparage the Enlightenment's outcomes is a self-defeating exercise. To appreciate them as corollaries opens up the possibility for creative engagement as the human rights experiment moves forward.

Yannoulatos, like McGuckin, considers rights as corollaries to Orthodox convictions because, as he argues, the former are derived from the latter. To wit:

The roots from which the 'tree' of human rights has sprung are clearly older and more complex than the documents that are usually mentioned. These roots are connected to religious beliefs and basic concepts found in the major religions. To be more specific, the western world indisputably owes a great deal to the Gospel, and it was the spirit of inquiry inspired by Greek thought that enabled the seeds of the gospel to grow during the Renaissance.³⁰

One further word is necessary on this critique of human rights coming out of the Enlightenment experience. And this is the anticipatory anxiety characteristic of those who seem perched on the proverbial slippery slope. Individualists "demands" made in the name of rights continue to evolve, this argument goes, and next on the list is the issue of sexual orientation. Never mind about basic discrimination. What about same-sex marriage and the ordination of openly homosexual clergy?

The front of this aspect of the culture war is in Europe and the United States. In the US, we see religious leaders from Evangelical, Catholic, and Orthodox communities taking a stand against this issue (as well as abortion), in such statements as the "Manhattan Declaration" issued recently. They did so in the name of one particular human right: religious freedom. The crux of the statement is this: no civil law will force religious communities to make accommodation for what they see

³⁰ Yannoulatos,53.

as contrary to fundamental religious principles. Never mind that civil law makes provision for matters religious conscience.

In Europe, there is a similar war going on. One who has enjoined this battle is Alfeyev. But his argument that “contemporary humanists... continue to insist on the incompatibility of Christianity with progress, of faith with reason, and of religion with science” and of traditional values with civilization,³¹ leads him to conclude that, if Europe gives in to same-sex marriage, and thus affirms homosexuality alongside heterosexuality, what will stop it from sanctioning pedophilia?³² This line of thinking is of questionable value.

In the matter of same-sex marriage, if indeed we understand rights to be a matter between the individual and the state, is this necessarily a threat to the Church and all other organized religion? Might it not be a better use of moral and material resources not to inveigh against this social trend but to invest “marriage” with the meaning that, as an evangelistic witness, offers an alternative way of looking at marriage? In other words, the civil law will not force churches to marry homosexual couples. Thus an opportunity exists to witness to what the Church considers the ideal of marriage.

Questioning the Universality of Human Rights

A third critique of the human rights architecture is that, despite its claim, it is not universal. According to this argument, human rights as such are a Western innovation, and one that cannot be presumed to apply in other contexts: In Arab countries, human rights may be seen by many as fundamentally anti-Islam; in Asian countries, human rights might be opposed by groups driven by specifically Asian culturally-determined rights; in African countries, they might be considered by some a manifestation of western colonial imperialism. In countries with a predominantly Orthodox cultural mindset, they are often deemed ‘foreign’.

³¹ Alfeyev, 237, 243.

³² Alfeyev, 242.

Coupled to this critique is the emphasis on collective rights as determined by one particular society. The Russian Orthodox Church makes this argument in its “Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights” (2008):

Human rights should not contradict love for one’s homeland and neighbors...the love of a person for his family and other loved ones cannot but spread to his people and the country in which he lives. It is not accidental that the Orthodox tradition traces patriotism back to the words of Christ the Savior Himself: *‘Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends’* (Jn. 15:13)...Actions aimed at respect for human rights and improvement of social and economic relations and institutions will not be truly successful if the religious and cultural traditions of countries and nations are ignored. Some civilizations ought not to impose their own way of life on other civilizations under the pretext of human rights protection. The human rights activity should not be put at the service of interests of particular countries. The struggle for human rights becomes fruitful only if it contributes to the spiritual and material welfare of both the individual and society.³³

This statement was adopted in a context where the Orthodox Church suffers from the onslaught of other religious groups, most notably and reprehensively other Christian groups that aggressively proselytize in the name of mission. However, such a situation requires an intentional ecumenical conversation about what can be termed “ecumenical charity” among sibling communities, not a backlash against the right to freedom of religious expression, which is enabled by such a statement. Elizabeth Prodromou gives support for this alternative approach:

³³ Russian Orthodox Church, “The Russian Orthodox Church’s Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights” (www.mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights/introduction), III.4. Another example: “The rights of an individual should not be destructive for the unique way of life and traditions of the family and for various religious, national and social communities. God has laid down in human nature the desire of a human being to share in communal life...In the fulfillment of God’s will for the unity of the human race, an important role belongs to various forms of communal life realized in national, public and social associations, while it is in the Church, the divine-human organism, that God’s commandment of love for God and the neighbor is fully revealed...” IV.9.

[A] loose consensus has begun to emerge across religious traditions...that proselytism has proven to be a demonstrated threat to religious freedom. Consequently, there is growing evidence that religions have begun to turn to the state to mobilize its power against proselytizing groups, but this resort to state power to prevent proselytism has led frequently to infringements on religious freedom that, presumably, would be preventable by rigorous international human rights architectures...

Although existing human rights architectures offer clarity in identifying illegitimate means and objectives as intrinsic to improper proselytism, the theological bases of support for rejecting improper proselytism as “a corruption or deformation of [true evangelism]” remain strikingly underdeveloped.³⁴

Does this critique of human rights as definitively non-universal hold up? Or is it best to conclude that such a critique itself opens up the way to injustice? Scott Appleby is helpful as we try to answer these questions:

Conceding the inviolability of “culture”...runs the risk of naively accepting as normative values that are promoted only by a cultural elite. Frequently, such values are contested by other members of society – or would be contested if marginalized people and groups were allowed to speak and organize politically. Failing to challenge “cultural values” therefore might mean obscuring and thus perpetuating social inequities and injustices. Ultimately, capitulation to the politics of cultural relativism in such cases means abandoning persons who have been silenced and rendered powerless by the culture in question.³⁵

³⁴ Elizabeth H. Prodromou, “Beyond the Dickensian Paradoxes of Human Rights: Reconceptualizing Proselytism, Rediscovering Evangelism,” in *Violence and Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Conversation*, ed. Emmanuel Clapsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, and Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 228-230.

³⁵ R. Scott Appleby, “Serving Two Masters? Affirming Religious Belief and Human Rights in a Pluralistic World,” in *The Sacred and the Sovereign: Religion and International Politics*, ed. John D. Carlson

If we go specifically to the Russian Orthodox situation and its struggles in balancing the ideal of religious freedom and religious interlopers – and yes, some of these missionary groups do deserve a measure of disdain for their uncharitable practices – where the “inviolability of culture” has taken hold and commonly accepted human rights principles are rejected because “religious and cultural traditions are [thought to be] ignored” by them, we find just how problematic this critique is. To some it might seem quasi-philistic: theological rebuttals of human rights in support of a national church. To others it might seem troublesome because its equal application in other contexts, for example Turkey, would enable harm to the local Orthodox presence, in this case the Ecumenical Patriarchate. To others it would defend rather indefensible repressive practices, such as in Saudi Arabia, where a publicly identifiable church is not allowed. To others it would mostly seem to dampen the Church’s inherent evangelistic witness.³⁶ How could a church justify any missionary activity if it thinks that other cultures, and hence their predominant religious landscape, is inviolable? If this were the case, if retroactively applied, even Sts. Cyril and Methodios would have been prohibited from evangelizing the Slavs. On this score, it would be good to remember Fr. John Meyendorff’s comment that “one cannot defend human rights on a selective basis.”³⁷

A Constructive Orthodox Approach to Human Rights

These critiques of human rights principles and structures have been made by contemporary Orthodox Christian believers, despite the fact that the Tradition of the Church testifies to an affinity with their intent and substance. The fact that this testimony has been obscured is the problem that we Orthodox now have to overcome if we are to be serious interlocutors in the contemporary discussion of how to deal pragmatically with the horrible abuses that human beings undergo on a daily basis. And the Orthodox are indeed called to be interlocutors in this debate, by all potential partners who look to the Church for

and Erik C. Owens (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 177–78.

³⁶ See McGuckin, 10.

³⁷ John Meyendorff, *Witness to the World* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), 114.

theological wisdom and solidarity in the search for justice.

One observer describes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in a manner that can apply to any of the subsequent pertinent documents as well: “[T]his is not to make anything so vague and utopian as a statement of aspirations and ideals; it is to indict, from the perspective of justice and morality, all governments that restrain [people’s] freedom.”³⁸ To this we can add that it is an indictment against not only governments but groups and individuals as well. How are the Orthodox to contribute to this discussion?

Perhaps the most constructive approach is that of Yannoulatos, who urges the Orthodox community to engage in this discussion with an intention to expand and invest their meaning with theological weight, despite the initial difference in language (how we talk about rights). “In general,” he writes, “Orthodox thought considers the current discussion on human rights to be extremely important, but ultimately sees it as the prelude to a discussion of humanity’s much more intrinsic ‘rights.’... Declarations remain confined to descriptive legal definitions of human rights; at the same time, however, they reflect hope and express a moral judgment.”³⁹ Aware that “in an era such as ours, in which there is a great diversity of ideological views, it will clearly be impossible to reach philosophical and religious agreement on these immense issues,” he advises us to “simply note here that to the Orthodox way of thinking... the formulations that have been put into writing in existing declarations constitute a starting point...”⁴⁰

If this is the starting point, where do we go from here? First, there should be no hesitation to engage in the conversation. Indeed, if the Church is to be a beacon for justice as testified in our scriptures, we must remember that in the view of the Fathers, equality “lies at the

³⁸ Maurice Cranston, “What are Human Rights,” in *The Human Rights Reader*, ed. Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (New York: Meridian, 1979), 24. Cranston also points out that ‘to establish a that a thing is a right is to distinguish it from a privilege’ (24).

³⁹ Yannoulatos, 57.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

very essence of human nature, and they are unconditional when they call any departure from equality a form of injustice.”⁴¹ Facing down injustice requires courage.

Second, we must for the sake of the timid among us, reclaim boldly this tradition of seeking justice within our history. “It remains, as an extremely pressing agenda,” writes McGuckin, “to require the Orthodox world, and especially its most visible leaders, to reflect much more on the profundities of the deep Orthodox tradition of human rights philosophy; not to dismiss the language simply as an alien concept from the West.”⁴² He goes on: “There is a great need for Orthodoxy to clarify and re-pristiniate its ancient deep traditions. It will find there beautiful things; things that put it squarely on the side of the liberation of humanity from oppressive forces; for it is the servant of the kenotic Christ who came to set the world free, not to enslave it. Only then can it hope to dialogue on equal terms with the raucous voices of western secularism that now (temporarily) command the stage.”⁴³

Third, we have to articulate the theology that undergirds our engagement. If it is true, as Bartholomew has said, that “human rights... must be understood in a way that conforms to the right-eousness of God [and that] human freedom and rights are ultimately informed by divine justice, truth, and love,”⁴⁴ then we must not dismiss human rights as a modern, non-Orthodox construction, but show precisely how they are “informed by divine justice, truth and love.” This might be done, as noted earlier, through the Orthodox theology of personhood or through a reflection on the perichoretic relationship within the Triune God. However this task is undertaken, a start has already been made. The Third Pre-Council Pan-Orthodox Conference in 1986 made the following declaration on justice and human rights: “Since we continuously declare the incarnation of God and the deification of

⁴¹ Yannoulatos, 62.

⁴² McGuckin, 13.

⁴³ McGuckin, 13; cf. Alfeyev, 237–38.

⁴⁴ Bartholomew I, 126.

humanity, we defend human rights for every human being and every people. Since we live with the divine gift of freedom through Christ's work of redemption, we are able to reveal to the fullest the universal value that freedom has for every human being and every people."⁴⁵

Conclusion: Theological Imperatives or Afterthoughts?

As in the past, in today's world we are faced with horrors beyond belief. Human trafficking for sexual and other forms of slavery; torture as a form of interrogation; child soldiers; female genital mutilation; rape as a weapon in war; genocide: all of these violations of human rights and more take place on a daily basis; a majority of these and others have taken place on traditionally Orthodox soil. Are the Orthodox obligated to take a stand against these crimes?: How do we answer our question, are the promotion of human rights and the seeking of justice Orthodox theological imperatives, or are they merely afterthoughts?

It is clear, as in Yannoulatos, that "Orthodox thinking views human 'rights' in conjunction with God's 'rights': with the justice, the truth, and the love of God, who has laid down institutions, obligations, and principles that provide humanity with the most fertile ground for the fruition of human rights."⁴⁶ If so, then it would appear that we are compelled, as Orthodox, even as we seek to inform them with more theological heft, to promote human rights. This, I think, is what the Russian Orthodox Church, despite its concerns, intends when it states that "motivated by the church teaching on human dignity, freedom and rights, Christians are called to take ethically guided social action..."⁴⁷

As Orthodox, we like to find precedents in our history to help us address contemporary issues. In the matter of human rights, we have such building blocks. As Orthodox, we also know that, as we apply theological articulation to new demands made upon us, we can be creative even as we importantly stay consistent with our theological

⁴⁵ As footnoted by Yannoulatos, 68.

⁴⁶ Yannoulatos, 74.

⁴⁷ Russian Orthodox Church "Basic Teaching," V.4.

heritage. Although there is nothing new about violence, oppression, and discrimination in the world, the human rights construct is a relatively new phenomenon, one that makes its demands upon us for theological reflection.

In this article, I have made the case that the promotion of human rights is a necessary, urgent task. More than this, it *is* a theological imperative. If, as followers of the crucified and risen Christ, we wish to find ourselves on the side of divine justice, we need to work for justice in this world, so that all people may have the opportunity to believe.

The Russian Orthodox Church on Human Rights

Sergey Trostyanskiy

The Russian Church in its official teaching on human dignity, freedom, and rights has recently proposed that human rights “cannot be superior to the values of the spiritual world.”¹ Thus, “it is inadmissible and dangerous to interpret human rights as the ultimate and universal foundation of societal life to which religious views and practice should be subjected.”² Human rights should not subjugate any religious values and norms, but be subject to them. Thus, human rights are denied a status of the ultimate authority and are given a subordinate status in the social contract of the Russian Church.

Taking into account this attitude toward human rights and the overall hostility of the Russian Church toward the secular values of contemporary society, many people have questioned the validity of this proposal. Others have objected to its terms on the basis of its religious origin, since religions are considered to be largely responsible for centuries of political turmoil in Europe arising from the wars of faith. How then should we understand the proposal? Is it a negation of the notion of human rights, or a partial affirmation of it?

The questions to be addressed here are the following: What is it that is designated as human rights? Do human rights have a reasonable degree of actuality? What are their essence/nature, content, ontological status? Does the notion of human rights have a universal validity? Is the notion of rights incompatible with the Christian concept of person? Finally, how should we understand what the Russian Church proposed in this statement in light of the Orthodox concept of person? In this article I use Kantian ethics as a framework to grasp the most basic features of the notion of rights.

¹ *The Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights*. <http://www.mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights/> (5 April 2010).

² *Ibid.*

The English philosopher John Locke introduced the philosophical notion of human rights in the eighteenth century with his *Two Treatises on Government*. He proposed that human rights are of natural origin and arise out of natural laws; thus they comprise the natural conditions of humanity. Among the major rights Locke listed were the proprietary ones of life, possessions, and security. This notion of human rights that assumes the communication of ideas of rights and equality was extremely influential and laid the ground for many subsequent social movements and declarations made by different states and international institutions.

Roughly speaking, human rights in Locke represent natural conditions of humanity; they are rooted in human existence as such. Locke remains to be one of the major authorities in this matter, and his language of natural rights, although heavily criticized, remains viable even now.

If human rights belong to humanity by nature, if they are predicated on a subject as its essential property, they should constitute an actuality of a subject. In this case, a subject should have the power to exercise these universal rights. Moreover, because there is a communion of ideas as the idea of rights communicates with the idea of equality, subjects of these equal rights have to possess equal powers to exercise these rights. However, the actual state of affairs cannot validate that the notion of human rights at the present stage has any degree of actuality. This conclusion does not mean that in particular societies particular rights are not actualized (being promulgated as civil laws), but the generic notion of human rights seems to be far from being in a state of actuality as a cosmopolitan law. Kant defined cosmopolitan rights (backed up by cosmopolitan laws) by saying that: This right, in so far as it relates to a possible union of all nations, in respect of certain laws universally regulating their intercourse with each other, may be called “cosmopolitical right”.³ I will expand on this subject later in this article.

³ Kant, Immanuel. *The Science of Right*. Translated by W. Hastie, (Edinburgh. T&T Clark. 1887), 227.

For now I should say that even if some declarations can be considered as universal, international legislative decrees, it is clear that there is no power that can implement them as such. Thus they cannot achieve the status of coercive force. Using the language of contemporary semantics, the notion of human rights, thus, signifies, but fails to refer to, a particular subject.

Is it possible in this light to speak of human rights as essential universals? Do they belong to the realm of beings at all? Traditionally, it is assumed that essential universals can be observed in particular beings. In other words, essential universals, as manifested in historical forms, should be approachable by the faculties of sense perception, imagination, and reasoning. However, a simple observation can lead one to an affirmation that there is no objective reality that stands behind this notion. Is it then just an abstraction, completely void of any positive content and not represented by any actual beings of which the notion of human rights might be predicated?

Now the question arises: how should we classify the notion of human rights? Is it a historically generated concept, void of a positive content? Is it an essential universal, an idea that appeared to the human consciousness at a certain historical period? Is it, rather, an ideal?

In this context it is worthwhile to make a distinction between concepts, ideas, and ideals. *Concept* can be understood as an abstraction, void of a positive content. There might be no object that it can denote. It in no way represents essential universal beings or any things that can be placed in a classification of *ta onta* (beings). It is a human invention, an abstraction made to facilitate research (which is its ultimate end). In contrast, *idea* always has a concrete object that reflects it; it is an essential universal being, full of a positive content, the *logos* of things that unfolds itself in history. Speaking of ideas, I should note that an ideal is a matter of human intentionality, it might not reflect being. Kant defined it in the following way: “Human reason contains not only ideas, but ideals, which possess, not, like those of Plato, creative, but certainly practical power—as regulative principles, and form the basis

of the perfectibility of certain actions.”⁴

How then should we classify the notion of human rights? I think that the notion of human rights does not stand for *ta onta*, which is for existent entities, but rather constitutes a matter of human intentionality. The notion of human rights does not constitute any natural conditions of human life but, rather, it is an ideal of practical reason, which functions as an imperative for will and thus prescribes what has to be done. In other words, it prescribes final ends toward which our free will should be directed. The reality is measured against these ideals. Yet, as Kant pointed out,

Although we cannot concede objective reality to these ideals, they are not to be considered as chimeras; on the contrary, they provide reason with a standard, which enables it to estimate, by comparison, the degree of incompleteness in the objects presented to it.⁵

It is clear from the passage that the reality of ideals cannot be tied to beings but, instead, should be attributed to human intentionality, which prescribes behavioral patterns and functions as a criterion that allows one to estimate the degree of actuality of things subjected to human volition. However, the distinctive feature of ideals (as compared to ideas), the thing that places them into a different category, can be described as a limited capacity of actualization. Thus, whereas an idea can be fully actualized, there is something in an ideal that prevents it from full actualization. Kant phrased it in a following way:

To aim at realizing the ideal in an example in the world of experience—to describe, for instance, the character of the perfectly wise man in a romance—is impracticable. Even more, there is something absurd in the attempt; and the result must be little edifying, as the natural limitations, which are continually breaking

⁴ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Edited by Vasilis Politis. Everman. J.M. Dent, (London. Charles E. Tuttle. Vermont. 1993), 395

⁵ *Ibid.*

in upon the perfection and completeness of the idea, destroy the illusion in the story and throw an air of suspicion even on what is good in the idea, which hence appears fictitious and unreal.⁶

Thus, an ideal never possesses a reasonable degree of actuality in the real world. Speaking of actuality, I should point out that if a movement (an act) contains in itself its end, then one can say that such movement has a degree of actuality. Thus, if an acting person attempts to exercise a particular right and has a necessary power (or potential) to do it, assuming that nothing prevents him or her from doing it, then such act will definitely contain in itself at least a certain degree of completeness and thus of actuality (taking into account that in order to achieve an end a person might need to do a successive number of acts each of which might have a certain degree of actuality and all of them are necessary steps to achieve the end). Here the difference in degree of actuality might be associated also with the difference in acting capacity, in power to exercise rights (thus, there are some who have a full power, some who have limited power, and some without any power); nevertheless, in this case one can speak of a reasonable degree of actuality of an act in general. In the ideal of human rights the communion of the ideas of rights and equality entails a necessity of equal powers to exercise rights in order to actualize the ideal of rights, to make it real. This unfortunate stumbling block, however, prevents one from an affirmation of actuality of the notion of human rights.

In this context, the very fact of military conflicts immediately denies the basic rights of life, security, and possessions of the population exposed to these conflicts. Since the entire world is subjected to military conflicts, to speak of equal rights of human beings is unreasonable. Thus, the degree of actuality of the notion of rights never extends beyond particular societies, which by implication negates the communion between the ideas of rights and equality, and thus suspends the notion of its actuality and universal applicability. In this sense it is impossible to ascribe an essential being to it. It seems that there might

⁶ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Edited by Vasilis Politis. Everman. J.M. Dent, (London. Charles E. Tuttle. Vermont. 1993), 395-396

not be any definite object behind an ideal.⁷

The ideal of human rights is in no way transcendental (in a sense that it is ingrained into human consciousness or is innate to it), nor is it taken from an empirical reality. It is a product of human intentionality, which has its historical origin. It is a historically generated ideal. It had emerged by the eighteenth century. In order for it to be actualized in reality, the ideal of rights and the ideal of its equality ought to be backed up by equality of powers, which allow these rights to be executed. Is that task in any way visible in the realm of historical reality? It seems that most human beings are now striving for it, without being able to make it real because, using Kantian language, the natural limitations creep in and corrupt the product, which never achieves its degree of perfection.

The question of universality or universal applicability of human rights poses another problem. If human rights are of natural origin, universal essentials, which are properties of human nature, then the universality of human rights is secured. However, if the notion of human rights is an ideal, the question of who internalizes this ideal arises and its universality can be measured on this basis. Here we are no longer in the realm of a natural law. Rather, it is a question of moral law, a law of causality of free agents.

Here reason changes the transcendent use of reason into immanent use so that reason is itself, by means of ideas, an efficient cause in the field of experience. Here the problematic notion of freedom (as posited by speculative reason) obtains

⁷ Here one might question whether this distinction is artificial as ideas of practical reason and ideals are apparently the same. The Kantian example of the distinction between the idea of wisdom and the ideal of a wise man does not give much clarity on the subject. The distinction seems to point out to the fact that the idea of wisdom stands for the universal while the ideal of a wise man for a particular. Kant explained it using a juxtaposition of *in concreto* and *in individuo*. However, if the idea of wisdom or of virtue can be presented to imagination *in individuo* (in an example of a wise or virtuous person) and thus the ideal here can be fully determined by idea alone, the notion of human rights could hardly take such determination for the reason of its complexity (as the idea of rights here communicates with the idea of equality); thus we cannot speak of an ideal of 'an equal and rightful person'. Nevertheless, the notion of human rights, in all its complexity, is an ideal. Moreover, the idea of human rights embraces the entire humanity, which again can hardly be presented to imagination in an individual form.

objective reality, though practical only.⁸

Human consciousness takes an idea as a regulative principle for itself and thus an idea becomes an ideal. As Kant notes,

Being necessary conditions of that which it commands to be made an object, they acquire objective reality: that is, we learn from it that they have objects, without being able to point out how the conception of them is related to an object, and this too, is still not a cognition of these objects; for we cannot thereby form any synthetical judgment about them, nor determine their application theoretically.⁹

Thus, an ideal entails a possibility of a socially constructed (objective) reality, made by human beings, or actualized by them in a particular historical environment (which is always contingent).

An ideal is properly attributed to the sphere of ethics. However, the concept of rights has a different origin. We speak of the concept of rights as a juridical principle, as distinguished from philanthropic or ethical principles. It is clear, however, that as ethical principle it might not acquire a full degree of actuality, while, as a juridical principle, it must do so. Nevertheless, speaking of the notion of human right, it is clear that as of today, it does not have any juridical authority as such (an international law); rather, some particular rights are reflected in the legal decrees of particular countries. On the level of international law, however, human rights do not have an obligatory function but suggest a following of minimal requirements. Such is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which prescribes minimal standards to avoid what is terrible rather than to achieve the best. For this reason some scholars define them as negative rights. Thus, if the notion of human rights remains purely ethical ideal it cannot possess universality; it can acquire a universal status only by the universal legal decrees. However, there are no such

⁸ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott. (Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1909), 117.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 40

decrees known to us as of today. Declarations cannot be considered as that which has a legal status. Thus, the question of universality of the concept of human rights cannot be answered affirmatively. It might only have a relative degree of universality or universal applicability, accepted by some (may be by the majority) but not by all.

The question of the content of human rights poses another difficulty. What Locke defined as rights (life, possessions, and security) seems to be unacceptable these days in its scope. Contemporary society seems to intend to make it more and more inclusive, adding to the existent list of rights, yet new rights. There are numbers of classifications of human rights that seem to compete with each other. The major issues are associated with minorities (sexual, ethnic), women, children, and other issues.

It seems to me that the ideal of human rights itself does not provoke as much irritation to Orthodoxy (except for its secular language and individualistic orientation) as the question of its content. The Church strongly opposes any attempts to justify rights (of ordination to the priesthood) of sexual minorities and women, and other issues. This opposition is necessitated by the policies of the Russian Church, which do not allow for the ordination of sexual minorities and women to the priesthood. Overall, I should say that as of today, there is no agreement on the matter of the content of the concept of human rights. This ideal remains ambiguous and open-ended. Thus it is always possible to accept a general notion of rights without accepting some parts of its content.

Now I can assume that the key message implied in the notion of human rights refers to dignity and freedom of a human person. John McGuckin¹⁰ noted that the development of the semantics of personhood is one of the greatest achievements of Orthodoxy, which replaced the ancient understanding of individual human being as a representative of a species of humanity, and affirmed an absolute value of each

¹⁰ McGuckin, John. *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus. An Intellectual Biography*. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. (Crestwood, New York. 2001).

individual human being as possessing the divine capacities (capacities of Deification - Theosis). Taking into account that the ideal of human rights is a child of the eighteenth century, and thus may be considered as a certain novelty, I can pose a question whether it is compatible with the Orthodox theological concept of person in general and with Orthodox ethics in particular.

First of all, we can easily dispose any version of the notion that claims human rights to be natural conditions of humanity, as it seems philosophically invalid. However, speaking of the notion of human rights as an ideal, as a certain combination of ethical imperatives that arise out of a certain apprehension of a human person as an image of the divine (or, using secular language, as something which is of an absolute value), it seems that this ideal can indeed fit into the Orthodox understanding of person.

It seems, however, that it is impossible to establish proper boundaries of the notion of human rights (delineating its content) and thus make it a well-defined concept. Therefore, I will not attempt to speak of it as of something definite, something that has its proper boundaries (and thus refers to a particular subject), but rather assume its significance, though in its loose sense.

Speaking of the Orthodox concept of person, this is an extremely complex subject, which cannot be fully exposed in the scope of this article. However, here are some key points of this concept. In Orthodox thought a human being is said to be made as an image of God. Moreover, human beings possess a capacity of deification, of becoming gods as a consequence of the assumption of human nature by Christ. As Irenaeus and Athanasius expressed it: 'He became man so that we all can become gods.' In addition, human beings are said to be co-creators, participants in the divine creative powers. Ultimately, this capacity is associated with human intentionality, with a power of creating a new, socially constructed reality that does not follow natural patterns but rather has its own teleology as it is posited by consciousness. Here, the subject of a free volition and intentionality is a crucial matter that

allows for an understanding of the Orthodox concept of person. Here in hypostatic being, ideas or *logoi*, essential universals that represent actuality of being as nature and serve as prototypes of created things, are no longer external objective realities, which set up natural patterns for the created universe. Here, they become internalized, transformed into internal realities of a person, his or her ideas, making him or her an image of God the creator. Here, again, reason changes its transcendent use into an immanent use so that reason is itself, by means of ideas, a cause in the field of experience. What is more, human beings have the capacity of generating new mental patterns, ideals which they attempt to actualize in socially constructed reality. This is the way human beings participate in creation.

In this sense, the notion of human rights as an ideal that sets a practical goal of transformation of societal reality (toward its humanization) is compatible with the Christian concept of person and poses no challenge to Orthodoxy; rather, it expresses the very core of the Orthodox concept of person. There is, however, one significant difference: namely that the Orthodox concept of person places a complete actualization of the person (total degree of actuality) in the Kingdom of God while the ideal of human rights locates it in the world of occurrences, of contingent matters, which entails an impossibility of its complete perfection, or, in other words, its low degree of actuality.

Under certain circumstances, the ideal of human rights can be debased and misused. Kant once said that “all practical principles which presuppose an object of the faculty of desire as the ground of determination of the will are empirical, and can furnish no practical laws.”¹¹

Thus whenever a particular interest of a particular group is attached to an ideal, any particular wish or desire rather than a pure form of moral imperative, it immediately loses its purity and becomes subjected to various types of corruption. Anyone can use human rights language while pursuing his or her particular interests, or group interests. In this case, the

¹¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott. (Longmans, Green and Co., London), 1909, 16

ideal of human rights becomes a means of achieving particular unrelated (to the ideal of human rights) goals or securing particular interests, which have nothing in common with the ideal itself. Thus, the ideal becomes inflated, loaded with other unrelated attachments and thus debased.

The Russian Church uses an example (among other examples) of proselytism, which finds its apparent justification in the right of religious freedom, but in reality represents an ideological agenda, totally alien to the notion of human rights. Thus the use of the notion of human rights by one group of Christians as a means of achieving certain missionary activities among another group of Christians whose churches participate in the World Council of Churches and whose baptismal, eucharistic, and ministerial practices are affirmed as valid, ultimately defeats the purpose of the ideal of human rights, inflates it, and finally creates a very suspicion of the language of rights.

On the contrary, if it remains subjected to some higher spiritual values there is less chance that it can be misused; rather it can help to facilitate an achievement of some higher religious goals, the sanctification of humanity, let us say, its deification, and so on. In this case, the ideal of human rights can receive definite boundaries and a definite content. Moreover, what is more important, human rights acquire a proper ontological status as essential universals, ideas of the Divine mind, and thus acquire universal validity and applicability. In my opinion, this is how we should understand the entire message of the Russian Church on the subject of human rights—not as a complete rejection of this ideal, but as its gradual internalization, an adjustment of this ideal to the doctrinal foundation of Orthodoxy. It is as a movement toward the incorporation of the ideal purified from all unrelated interests (attachments) into the Orthodox philosophy of person.

An understanding of the message of the Russian Church on the subject of human rights that insists on the total rejection of the notion of rights by the Russian Church is thus incorrect. Any attempts to justify such position by making references to the rejection of particular elements of the content of the notion of human rights (say, the rights

of sexual minorities, in whatever way a particular person understands this issue, or to any particularities of the notion of rights), are based on invalid reasoning. The question of content, which is open-ended, refers to that which reflects cultural particularities¹² and thus cannot be universally accepted by all, while nothing can prevent all (or most of all) to accept an ideal as such (and the most commonly accepted elements of its content), as an ethical regulative principle.

Thus, the proper reading of the message of the Russian Church regarding human rights takes into account the compatibility of the Orthodox concept of person and the notion of rights. Such reading affirms the notion of human rights as an ethical regulative principle that should direct human will in social interactions. In addition, being subjected to higher religious values, this ideal is affirmed as being capable of facilitating an achievement of the ultimate ends of Orthodoxy (such as the sanctification of humanity, its deification, and its other religious values). Therefore, there is nothing that can prevent an Orthodox Christian from the complete acceptance of the ideal of rights in so far as this ideal functions as a regulative principle of social interactions and promotes ideas of human dignity and freedom.

Further Reading:

The Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights. <http://www.mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights/> (5 April 2010)

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason.* Edited by Vasilis Politis. Everyman. J.M. Dent. London. Charles E. Tuttle. Vermont. 1993

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason.* Translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott. Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1909

Kant, Immanuel. *The Science of Right.* Translated by W. Hastie. Edinburgh. T&T Clark. 1887

McGuckin, John. *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus. An Intellectual Biography.* St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. Crestwood, New York. 2001

¹² These cultural particularities are, nevertheless, subjects of change.

Going Away Hungry: The Economics of Eucharistic Worthiness¹

David J. Dunn

“The liturgy of the Eucharist...is the journey of the Church into the dimension of the Kingdom.”²

– Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

Introducing the topic of this essay is best done by recounting the otherworldly experience of my first Pascha. As a Protestant enquirer into the Orthodox Faith, I was experienced in the all-venerable potluck meal often attached to church services, but the Orthodox Paschal Feast was something else entirely. After standing for hours in a seemingly endless church service, one that began in somber tones and ended in exuberance, I could not help but see the morning meal that followed within the context of that liturgy. In the earliest years of Christianity, the Eucharist often preceded table fellowship. Likewise, our midnight Eucharist seemed to have extended itself into the basketfuls of meat and cheese and wine at the tables in the parish hall. As a teetotaling Protestant, the liberating moderate Christian ‘wine-induced merriment’ I witnessed that night reminded me of the words of Christ at the Last Supper, when he promised to drink of the “fruit of the vine” with his disciples when he had come into his Kingdom (Luke 22.18). Seeing the joy-filled body of Christ gathered together so early in the morning, one might have thought the Kingdom had already come.

If Father Schmemmann is right, then the Kingdom had certainly come. When we pray “Thy Kingdom come” before receiving Communion, we

¹ I am grateful to Joshua Davis for helpful feedback on early drafts of this essay.

² Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s, 1973), 26.

do not pray for the Kingdom to come sometime in the future. Nor do we pray for it to merely come spiritually into our hearts. The Kingdom is not spiritual; rather, it has bodies in it! So we pray “Thy Kingdom come” here, now, upon us, and in making “this bread the precious Body of thy Christ,” make us one with him. Though the Kingdom is not the church, for the church has sinners in it, the Kingdom makes us the church. In spite of our visible imperfections, nonetheless, the Kingdom reveals us to be the body of Christ. This study examines the economic implications of what it means for the Eucharist to make the Kingdom present us as the body of Christ. Because the present space affords no time for an exhaustive study of this topic, this study focuses specifically on the economics of the Kingdom within the context of Eucharistic preparation and Eucharistic worthiness.

When it comes to our preparation to receive, mostly we tend to think about individual, spiritual disciplines like fasting, confession, and prayer, while at the same time acknowledging that none of us is really worthy to receive the body and blood of Christ, but by the grace of God, if our hearts are right, the Eucharist is efficacious. Yet, when we look at where we get this concept of worthiness from in Scripture, it has almost nothing to do with individual, spiritual preparation. Preparation is less about what we do prior to Communion than what happens before, during, and after it. In Scripture, Eucharistic worthiness is corporate, bodily, and economic. Thus, it is from this biblical perspective that this study advances what is a rather strong claim: If our Communion does not contribute to economic equity in the body of Christ, it violates the reality that the Eucharist makes present in the church, and is, therefore, a scandal.

I know that the language of scandal is bold, perhaps even offensive, but in using this word I go no further than the Apostle Paul, who said the same thing about the Corinthians’ Eucharist. The Apostle Paul asserted that when Christians gather for Communion, it is “not...the Lord’s Supper” they eat, but “judgment.”³ So, this present thesis develops by

³ See 1 Corinthians 11.17-34, esp. 20 and 29.

exegeting this passage of Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, setting it in the context of his view of the church as the continuation of Jesus' ministry and evidence of the dawning of the Kingdom of God. The second section will present a standard claim that the Kingdom Jesus preached and embodied fundamentally involved a new economic order. The final section unpacks the liturgical and practical implications of Paul's condemnation for our context by exploring what it means for the Eucharist to make that new order present among us.

Eucharistic Worthiness in the Corinthian Church

Perhaps, no other passage of Scripture has contributed more to pious anxiety than what the Apostle Paul wrote about the Eucharist in his first letter to the Corinthians, "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment upon himself (1 Cor. 11.29)." Paul threatens with serious consequences those who commune unworthily. They will be chastened with disease and possibly even death, which he indicates is a sign of divine grace, so that the unworthy communicant may turn and repent and not be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:30-32). Therefore, Paul writes, "let a man examine himself" prior to Communion, so as not to partake unworthily (1 Cor. 11:28). In the medieval period, Paul's admonitions to self-examination and threats of death and hell contributed to the infrequent Communion that in some places continues today.⁴ After all, given the risks involved in partaking of the body and blood of Christ, it seems reasonable even for the pious to want to be safe rather than sorry.

This anxiety probably owes much to the church fathers' interpretations of this passage. The extant interpretations universally focus on the need for the individual Christian to approach the cup of Christ in fear and trembling. Ambrosiaster said, "Paul teaches that one

⁴ According to *The Faith Communities Today and the Cooperative Congregations Study Project*, though priests report that the majority of their parishioners commune weekly, nearly a third commune only once per month (21%) or on major holidays (9%). It is worth noting that these figures are only priests' estimates and do not account for individual variation within congregations. Eleni Makris, "Learning About Ourselves: A Snapshot of the Orthodox Church in the Twenty-First Century," in *Thinking through Faith: New Perspectives from Orthodox Christian Scholars*, ed. Aristotle Papanikolaou and Elizabeth H. Prodromou, The Zacchaeus Venture Series (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's 2008), 352.

should come to Communion with a reverent mind and with fear, so that the mind will understand that it must revere the one whose body it is coming to consume.” Saint John Chrysostom, a devoted student of the writings of Paul, said that before the Eucharist one should be emptied of “profane lusts” like “those of the body, of money, of anger, of malice, and so on.” Therefore, “In your conscience, where no one is present except God...judge yourself, examine your sins...Correct your mistakes, and in this way, with a clean conscience, touch the sacred table and participate in the holy sacrifice.” Likewise, Saint Augustine says that to commune unworthily is to receive the body of Christ “in mockery (and) contempt.”⁵

Augustine’s forerunner, Cyprian of Carthage, interpreted reception of the Eucharist in light of the Decian persecution. Though not commenting specifically on this passage, like those church fathers quoted above, he links Eucharistic unworthiness to the personal sins one brings to the altar (in his context the sin of apostasy). Thus, in *On the Lapsed*, Cyprian recounts the fates of a number of unworthy communicants. One man received the body of Christ only to open his hands and find a cinder. When another woman who had secretly sacrificed tried to swallow the Eucharist, she immediately fell into convulsions. Perhaps, the most shocking story Cyprian tells, he claims to have witnessed himself. Unbeknownst to her parents, an infant had previously been given bread mixed with the leftover wine of a pagan libation. When the child was later given Communion, she cried and vomited it out because, Cyprian says, “In a profane body and mouth the Eucharist could not remain; the draught sanctified in the blood of the Lord burst forth from the polluted stomach.”⁶

Thus, the fathers and mothers of the church seem to be in rare, universal agreement that personal sins are what make one unworthy to commune. It is understandable, given their contexts, that they would stress this individualistic understanding of worthiness. Cyprian had

⁵ Gerald Bray, ed. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: 1-2 Corinthians*, ed. Thomas C. Oden, vol. New Testament VII (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1999), 112.

⁶ Cyprian, “On the Lapsed,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*(Albany, OR: AGES, 1997), 25-26.

to deal with the problem of apostasy and the threat that it created to his own authority, so he had reason to stress that private apostasy had public consequences.⁷ Facing more than a little marginal Christianity in an officially Christian empire, it is understandable why other fathers would have stressed self-examination and individual moral purity prior to receiving the body and blood of the Lord. Nor were they wrong to do so! I am not arguing that we should dispense with the prerequisites of fasting, confession, prayer and other spiritual disciplines prior to communing. Only, in saying that, we need to understand that this is not what Paul primarily meant by eating unworthily.

A rhetorical analysis of 1 Corinthians 11, that examines individual passages in light of the arc of the argument of epistle itself, suggests that Paul was less concerned with individual piety prior to Communion than he was with how members of the Christian community treated each other before, during, and after it. Because the modern Bible has chapters and verses (and now often “subject headings”), it is easy to isolate individual passages from one another.⁸ Nonetheless, 1 Corinthians 11.27-34 picks up on a theme that appears at least as early as chapter 6 and continues into chapter 12 (and probably through the rest of the epistle). In chapter 11, Paul defines eating unworthily as failing to discern the Lord’s body (1 Cor. 11:29). The question is which body?

Body language first appears in chapter 6, when Paul argues that the Corinthian who sleeps with a prostitute somehow unites the whole church to her. He asks, “Shall I...take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not (1 Cor. 11:15)!”⁹ A man (in this case) who sins with a prostitute sins “against his own body,” which implies at first glance that such a person harms himself. True as that may be, such a conclusion makes little sense in light of Paul’s previous point that sleeping with a prostitute actually harms the whole church,

⁷ J. Patout Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 25-50, 78-99, 132-50.

⁸ I am indebted to David Dault for his emerging work on how the material construction of Scripture shapes our interpretations of it. David Dault, “The Covert Magisterium: Theology, Textuality, and the Question of Scripture” (Doctoral Dissertation, Vanderbilt, 2009).

⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations are from the NKJV.

especially after he asks the following rhetorical question, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own (1 Cor. 11:18-19)?” English translations with their singular “you” imply that our individual bodies are individual temples, but in the Greek the you (*ouk oidate*) is plural. The meaning of this verse, which is consistent with Paul’s point about individual sins having corporate consequences, is that the Corinthians collectively share a body. Thus, to correct this translation (with the slightly more advanced lexicon of the American South), Paul’s point is that, “y’alls body is the temple of the Holy Spirit...”¹⁰ The body the “John” harms is the church body. Thus, Paul has already introduced a theme that he makes explicit in 1 Corinthians 12.27, where he says, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” (Though it may only be a coincidence, it is interesting that the word for members is the same in both chapter 6 and 12.) In both cases, Paul dealt with practical issues, prostitution and factionalism (see 1.10-17 & 3.1-17), theologically, by stressing the point of ecclesial unity as one body. Indeed, this is how Paul deals with nearly every practical concern of the Corinthian church, from one Christian suing another, to an incestuous relationship between stepson and stepmother, propriety in worship, and even the resurrection of the dead.¹¹ Paul seems to locate the solution to all of these concerns in being united together by love in the one body of Christ.

If that is true, then it seems incredible to think that Paul is saying personal sin makes an individual unworthy to receive Communion. The body the Corinthians are to discern in 11.29 is certainly the body of the historical Jesus, made present in the bread and wine (thus verses 23-26), but for Paul the historical body is not separate from the ecclesial body. The body of Christ, which the Corinthians have failed to discern, is also themselves.¹² Otherwise, Paul’s condemnation of the Corinthian’s

¹⁰ A similar point is made in 1 Cor. 3.16 when Paul asks “Do you not know that you are the temple of God?” Again, the Greek *ouk oidate* is plural.

¹¹ 1 Cor. 6.1-11, 5.1-8, 14, 15.

¹² This point is debated among biblical commentators. Alan Johnson believes that the body the Corinthians are to discern is only the body of the saving Christ, not necessarily “mystically present” in the

behavior in verses 17-21 makes no sense. Unlike Chrysostom, Augustine, and Cyprian, Paul does not accuse the Corinthians of eating unworthily because of a lack of personal spiritual preparation. To see what he condemns we should examine this passage in its entirety.

Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

Paul says nothing about fasting, confession, and prayer in this passage. The sins of the Corinthian church are much more serious than that, they are so serious that they actually nullify the Lord's Supper. Those who commit this sin do not "eat the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. 11:21); they may eat a meal, but it is not a Eucharist. For Paul, the sin that nullifies Communion and makes it "not...the Lord's Supper" is economic. He says "there are divisions among you," and because of

elements, but the "saving significance" of Jesus himself. Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, ed. Grant R. Osborne, The I.V.P. New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 210. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, on the other hand, argues that the discernment is individual reflection upon one's worthiness to partake. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven: Yale, 2008), 446. I lack Fitzmyer's expertise, but this interpretation seems completely at odds with the point of the passage. Paul Sampley seems to me to offer the best reading when he says, "[I]n Paul's thought the body of Christ can never be separated from the members who by God's grace are incorporated into it. So 'discerning the body' is Paul's shorthand way of talking about an individual's assessment of two distinguishable but inseparable matters: how well one's life relates to Christ and how well one's love ties one to others who, though many, are one body in Christ." Johnson is partly correct, so is Fitzmyer, insofar as any act of worship involves some personal reflection. But if we are to take 12.27 seriously, the "historical" Christ cannot be separated from the "ecclesial" Christ in Paul's theology. J. Paul Sampley, "1 Corinthians," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 936.

these divisions, there is no Eucharist happening. What kinds of divisions are these that would nullify the church's Sacrament? Unlike previous chapters in 1 Corinthians, these divisions have nothing to do with who baptized, who is sleeping with, or who is suing whom. Rather, Paul goes on to point out that "one is hungry and another is drunk." Modern biblical scholars have surmised that at this point in church history, when the Eucharist was part of a larger meal that usually took place in the evenings, it was difficult for poor laborers to make it to church on time. When they finally arrived, they found that the wealthy Christians that did not have to work long hours had already eaten all the food. Consequently, the poor left the church still hungry after a long day's work whereas the rich left drunk.¹³

If Paul equated unworthy Communion with a lack of individual, spiritual discipline, either he says nothing about it, or whatever he did say the church did not deem important enough to include in the New Testament. For him, to say the church is the body of Christ is no metaphor. It was the ascended Christ extended into this world through his people, whom Paul expected to embody the new economic order of Christ's Kingdom, a Kingdom already dawning, of which the church was proof. Thus, the church was to be a different kind of community, one characterized by economic justice. To commune unworthily was to partake in a way that violated the new economy of the Kingdom of God.

The Economy of the Kingdom of God

In his epistle to the Galatians (Gal. 1.12), Paul says that he received the Gospel by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ, so it is safe to say that when Paul expected the Corinthians to treat the poor with dignity, he was probably on to something. The coming reign of God was a concept that predated the earthly ministry of Jesus. For a Jew of Paul's day, the Kingdom of God was a messianic concept that involved more than overthrowing Roman rule and reestablishing an independent nation of Israel. It also implied the establishment of a certain kind of society. In

¹³ See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 531-69. Also Sampley, 934. Fitzmyer, 434-35. Johnson, 205-06.

keeping with the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament, social and economic justice would especially characterize the New Israel. Thus the prophet Amos condemned the “religious feasts” and “assemblies” of the “house of Israel,” and instead said, “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream” (Amos 5.21-25).¹⁴ The death and resurrection of Jesus required his earliest followers to reevaluate their understanding of how the Kingdom of God would be established. As Wolfhart Pannenberg points out, they would have viewed the resurrection of Christ as the beginning of that Kingdom, which is why Paul called Jesus “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15.21).¹⁵ That Kingdom was yet to be imposed upon the world from above, but was being pre-established (in a sense) in the church below. We might say that the river of justice and righteousness had already begun to flow from the side of Christ, in this case back into his body: the church.

Thus the Kingdom of God was indissolubly bound up with social, economic justice in the here and now. Indeed, the Methodist theologian, M. Douglas Meeks, has persuasively shown that the entire history of the Old Testament can be read in theological socio-economic terms, and that the story of God (so to speak) can be read as one of economic solidarity with the poor. Both Meeks and the Anabaptist, John Howard Yoder, have highlighted many of the economic implications of the Gospel itself. I am highly indebted to them for the following observations, which help us to make sense of Paul’s condemnation of the Corinthians, because the Kingdom of God Jesus preached – and he embodied – was very much about eating, particularly who ate and who went hungry. Indeed, though it is often overlooked, Jesus’ ministry elevated economics as a fundamental indicator of the advent of the Kingdom.¹⁶

¹⁴ For what remains one of the best synopses of the prophetic emphasis on social justice in the Old Testament, see John G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*(Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 71-124.

¹⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 350.

¹⁶ M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy*(Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), esp. 75ff. John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2nd ed.(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 21-75. Also John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices*

The Gospel of Luke (which, it is interesting to note, tradition says was written by the physician-disciple of Paul) regularly accentuates the theme of poverty. According to the Magnificat, Mary the Theotokos understood what was happening to her quite obviously in economic terms. She “magnifies the Lord” because “He has put down the mighty from their thrones, // And exalted the lowly. // He has filled the hungry with good things, // And the rich he has sent away empty” (Luke 1.46, 52-53). The Incarnation of the Word was to bring not just an inversion of social values but also the very structures of society itself. The lower, laboring classes will be placed on top at the expense of those who have made their wealth out of them. This song surely includes Jesus himself, whose poverty Luke also takes pains to stress. When Mary made her way to the Temple for the dedication of her Son, and to make an offering for her “cleansing” in keeping with the Levitical code, she offered the sacrifice for poor people, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,” (Luke 2.24) which Leviticus states is for those who are “unable to afford a lamb (Luke 12.8).”

Though one may overlook it, Jesus declared whom his ministry was principally for, and it was not only for us. After being tempted in the desert, Jesus entered the public sphere, beginning with his hometown, and announced himself, declaring (Luke 4.18-19),

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

Some see this “acceptable year” as a reference to the Old Testament Jubilee, a year of debt-forgiveness that was probably never observed

of the Christian Community before the Watching World(Schottdale, PA: Herald, 1992), 18.

in Israel, but nonetheless reveals the economic intentions of the God who commanded it.¹⁷ But even if it is not the case that Jesus declared a Jubilee, the passage has a great deal to say about the economy of the Kingdom. In the first place, the good news he preached was specifically for the poor. This is consistent with the song of his Mother. Therefore, it is in this context that we must interpret the subsequent lines of the proclamation. Most captives at the time were either political prisoners or in debtor's prison. It is only by a most incredible self-mollifying stretch of the imagination that we could possibly read this liberty and poverty in purely spiritual terms. The poor, the captive, and the oppressed are, for Jesus, one-in-the-same.

Not only was Jesus a poor man, who preached to the poor, but also he intentionally identified with them in his public ministry. As the adopted Son of a carpenter (according to Matthew 13.55 and Mark 6.3, who may have been more like a skilled laborer than a woodworker¹⁸) Jesus told parables that had situations and characters with which the poor could most easily identify. Jesus talks about sowing and harvesting and herding, of a woman who turns her house upside down to find just one lost coin, of a beggar whose wounds the dogs licked, of a widow who could not get justice, and of man with more debt than he could ever hope to repay.¹⁹ All but one of the apostles of Jesus made his living by the sweat of his brow (and the exception, Matthew, disenfranchised himself to follow Jesus). We also often focus on how Jesus was an itinerant preacher, but what that really means is that Jesus was homeless, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head (Luke 9.58)."

And this, Jesus said, is what the kingdom looks like. The kingdom of God belongs to the poor (Luke 6.20). It is recognized where the sick are healed (Luke 10.9) and where demons are cast out (Luke 11.20).

¹⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans., Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 119-22. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 21ff. Yoder, *Body Politics*, 17.

¹⁸ Richard A. Batey, *Jesus and the Forgotten City: New Light on Sepphoris and the Urban World of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 65-82.

¹⁹ See Luke 8.4-15, 15.1-9, 16.19-31, 18.1-8, Matt 18.21-3.

The Kingdom of God goes where Jesus goes. Thus, Christ admonished his disciples not to look for the Kingdom of God here and there but within them – “For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17.21). Though we often take this in a spiritual sense, as if the Kingdom were in our hearts, the genitive preposition should more properly be rendered “in the midst of” or “among.” The Kingdom of God is not “inside” each individual, but in the midst of us, wherever “two or three are gathered (Matt 18.20).” The kingdom of God is among us because Jesus is with us!

The Kingdom’s Economy in the Church’s Eucharist

The conviction that the Kingdom of God is present wherever believers gather under Christ is at the heart of an Orthodox theological understanding of Eucharistic liturgy. It is also why Paul saw the church as a sign of the dawning of that Kingdom, and why he expected an economic reordering of the Corinthian’s assembly, because economic justice is what the Kingdom of God was all about. Nonetheless, the question remains as to why he went so far as to say that showing even passive contempt for the poor nullified the Corinthians’ Eucharist? The answer to this question brings us back to the quote from Father Schmemmann that opened this essay, a statement worth repeating. “The liturgy of the Eucharist,” he said, “is the journey of the Church into the dimension of the Kingdom.” Paul had not worked out anything like a modern understanding of the presence of the Kingdom in the liturgy. But he did understand that the church itself was the site of the Kingdom’s proleptic unfolding – that the Kingdom had already begun, and the church was the proof! The Eucharist was a fundamentally economic feast because it was the Sacrament of the church’s constitution as that prolepsis, something that we eat and drink “until he (the Lord Jesus) comes.”

Father Schmemmann has employed the mixed metaphors of liturgical cycles constituting a linear journey to explain how the Kingdom of God made present in the sacrament that is the church becomes an integrating reference point for the life of the believer, in contradistinction to the disintegrating rush of modern life and its secular Gnosticism that wants to spiritualize the materials by which we, as material beings, construct

meaning for ourselves, turning them into mere symbols. There is an almost epectastic implication in Schmemmann's liturgiology, that reconciles the otherwise disparate metaphors of linearity and circularity, reminiscent of the never-completed, yet infinitely satisfying journey into the infinite God one finds in Gregory of Nyssa's theology.²⁰ For Father Schmemmann the Eucharistic "to and fro" that characterizes Orthodox liturgical life leads us evermore into the Kingdom of God because when we receive the Eucharist, kiss the chalice, and step away from the priest, we have already, in stepping away, taken our first step back to the Eucharist again; we have begun our journey back into communion with each other. The church does not lead us into an alternate reality that magically appears in the Eucharist, but calls a new world order to happen in the midst of us by presenting him who is the fulfillment of that Kingdom in the Eucharist as us, the body of Christ. "Thus" Schmemmann says, "the kingdom of God is the content of the Christian faith, the goal, the meaning and the content of the Christian life."²¹ The Kingdom becomes that goal, meaning, and content inasmuch as we are reordered, not by the hustle and bustle of our fast-paced, consumerist society (whose hurried pace often keeps us too distracted to consider the needs of its victims) but by the new economy of the Kingdom of God proleptically incarnate in our ecclesial body.

Thus, organizing life around the Eucharist is a journey into the presence of the Kingdom of God not only symbolically but also actually, because it is organizing life around each other; it is a journey into communion with each other. Though we Orthodox tend to adhere to a Cyrillian or Nyssen understanding of the Eucharist,²² whereby our individual bodies are transformed according to the new prototype

²⁰ See Gregory Nyssen, *The Life of Moses*, trans., Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1978), par. 219-55.

²¹ Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, trans., Paul Kachur (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's, 1987), 40.

²² Gregory Nyssen, "An Addresss on Religious Instruction," in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy and Cyril C. Richardson, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), par. 37. Cyril of Alexandria, "Interpretation or Comment on the Gospel According to John", Calvin College http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/cyrl_on_john_10_book10.htm (accessed 19 March 2010). See also Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, trans., John A. McGuckin, Popular Patristics (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's, 1995), 131-32.

of the resurrected Christ, the Eucharistic theology of the admittedly controversial Saint Augustine accurately describes our theology as well. “Be what you can see (on the altar),” Augustine said, “and receive what you are.”²³ Augustine identified the Eucharist with the one body of the people receiving.²⁴ For both Augustine and Paul the Eucharist was the sacrament of the unity of the church. In partaking of the Eucharistic body of Christ, the Spirit by whom “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts (Rom 5.5),” joins the ecclesial body of Christ to the heavenly body of Christ (its Head, seated at the right hand of the Father).²⁵ It is no different when we Orthodox offer these gifts “on behalf of all and for all.” We are giving what we have and who we are to God, not individually, but corporately, and we are receiving “these holy gifts” back transformed, including us. In receiving back these gifts – both the offerings and the ones making the offerings – which, by the power of the Holy Spirit called down in the epiclesis, have been transformed into Christ himself, we are united to God and to each other through them. This point of view is not necessarily at odds with a more Nyssan and Cyrilian understanding of the Eucharist. After all, being Orthodox we relish in holding together seeming contradictions, for in both cases there is the outrageous and even scandalous expectation that in consuming we become what we consume: the body of Christ.

The Kingdom is the content of the church because we encounter it in that body. If we systemically preserve the economic divisions that characterize this fallen world, we violate the communion that Communion is all about. This is not intended to suggest that looking through this “glass darkly” the church could fully realize the Kingdom of God. Though the church may journey into the dimension of the Kingdom, it is a journey of fits and starts. Nonetheless, this recognition has implications for how we conceive of our practice of the Eucharist

²³ Augustine, *Essential Sermons*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans., Edmund O.P. Hill, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century (Hyde Park, NY: : New City Press, 2007), Sermon 272. See also 229N.

²⁴ Why he did not reach the same economic conclusion as Paul is something of a mystery, but can probably be attributed, again, to the times in which he was living.

²⁵ J. Patout Burns, “The Eucharist as the Foundation of Christian Unity in North African Theology,” *Augustinian Studies* 32, no. (2001).

and our “worthiness” (or “unworthiness”) to receive it. Paul did not condemn the Corinthians’ Eucharist as “not...the Lord’s Supper” because they showed outward contempt for the poor. That would too easily excuse most of us. He condemned them for acting as if the poor were not there, for ignoring them completely, and thus ensuring that they did not have what they needed. Unworthy Communion is feasting with Christ, yet allowing our sister or brother to starve at home. If our step away from the chalice is the beginning of our next step toward it, then our preparation must involve not only what we do before Communion, but also afterwards. Because good theology is lived theology, let me briefly speak in practical terms. Eucharistic worthiness requires opening our tables to those who have nothing good to eat. Both at home and at church the Eucharist is not a Eucharist if the poor are not specifically invited to share in the abundance of the Kingdom present among us. Eucharistic worthiness also requires we confess our apathy and pray for deliverance from it, that we ask God to make us see the poor among us and then to act upon that revelation. And when we fast, perhaps we should fast in the most ancient way recommended by the pastor of Hermas,²⁶ whereby we take what we will not eat and share it with those who fast every day. Thus, when it comes to Eucharistic worthiness, let us heed the prophet Isaiah (58.6-7).

Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
...to share your bread with the hungry,
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;
When you see the naked, that you cover him,
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

Eucharistic preparation is not simply a negative discipline whereby we hedge back the world to focus on Christ. It is a positive discipline that bring us into encounters with Christ in the least of these by actively disenfranchising ourselves of our own excess in order to favor those whom Christ favors, and thus to show that we stand with those whom the good news of the Kingdom of God is all about.

²⁶ See “The Pastor of Hermas,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1998), Similitude V.3.

Ecumenical Diaconical Work as a Cultural Contribution to the Humanization of our Contemporary Society

Daniel Munteanu

The Liturgical Dimension of Diaconical Work

“All diaconical work goes out from the altar.” This famous sentence of Wilhelm Löhe, who was a “liturgical personality” and an “anima naturaliter liturgica,”¹ expresses the ecumenical truth about the internal connection between the liturgy and the diaconical work.² The WCC plenary assembly of Vancouver in 1983 defined the diaconical work as a “liturgy after the liturgy.”³ The social welfare work belongs to the being of the Church as a sharing, curative, and reconciling ministry of the Church.⁴

Not only in the Protestant but also in the Catholic⁵ and Orthodox⁶

¹ Hans Kressel, Wilhelm Löhe als Liturg und Liturgiker, Neuendettelsau 1952, 11ff.

² Ulrike Suhr, Gottesdienst und Diakonie, in: Hans-Christoph Schmidt-Lauber, Michael Meyer-Blanck, Karl-Heinrich Bieritz (ed.), Handbuch der Liturgik, Göttingen 2003, 673f.

³ See Theoder Strohm, Diakonie an der Schwelle zum neuen Jahrtausend. Die gemeinsame Zukunft im Dienste der Menschheit und der Schöpfung, in: idem (ed.), Diakonie an der Schwelle zum neuen Jahrtausend. Ökumenische Beiträge zur weltweiten und interdisziplinären Verständigung, Heidelberg 2000, 19; see R. Turre, Diakonische Einsichten. Theologische Impulse und ethische Reflexionen, Stuttgart 2001, 49; he describes the diaconical work as „Liturgy after Liturgy“.

⁴ Theoder Strohm, Diakonie an der Schwelle zum neuen Jahrtausend, 19.

⁵ See M. Heimbach-Steins, G. Steins, Die Einheit von Liturgie und Diakonie in der Feier der österlichen Tage, in: BiLi 73, 2000, 60-68; see J. Ratzinger, Eucharistie – Mitte der Kirche, München 1978; see Freiburger Materialdienst für die Gemeindepastoral, Gottesdienst und Menschendienst. Kirche als eucharistische und diakonische Gemeinschaft, 3/2003 (<http://www.seelsorgeamt-freiburg.de/download/MD2003-3.pdf>)

⁶ See Ion Bria, Die Liturgie nach der Liturgie, in: K. Raiser (Ed.), Ökumenische Diakonie – eine Option für das Leben. Beiträge aus der Arbeit des ÖRK zur theologischen Begründung ökumenischer Diakonie, Frankfurt am Main 1988, 138f; see Alexandros Papaderos, Die liturgische Diakonie, in: K. Raiser (ed.), Ökumenische Diakonie, 104ff; see D. Stăniloae, Spiritualitate și comuniune în liturghia ortodoxă, București 2004.

understandings, the authentic diaconical work is based on the eucharistic dynamism of the restoration of human dignity. Social welfare work as a struggle for justice and human dignity has its roots in the eucharistic spirituality that understands the human as a being, which is appointed to the everlasting community with God. Diaconical work has a liturgical dimension because any support of the human being is an expression of God's love in bodily and spiritual needs. True diaconical work is a liturgical service because the charity shows a correlative to God's love (1 Jn 4:12). The diaconical work is a form of action, as well as concretion of the faith. "Allowance to the person is service. It is an expression of the faith in God who has turned to the people in Jesus Christ. The Church serves this God in liturgy (service), martyria (testimony), koinonia (communion) and diaconical work (service to the next)."⁷

The concept of deacon (*diakonos*) found its primary meaning in the language of liturgy because it was used primarily for the service at the table (i.e., mainly for serving and worrying about the poor).⁸ The Church appeared from the beginning as a "service" in the word and "service" for the poor. The meaning of social-welfare work hangs together inseparably with the message of Christ, who put the service for fellow human in the centre of his sermon: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). The fact that the broadcasting of the Son dealt with allowance to the people, in particular to the poor, sick, and oppressed, shows during the foot washing (Jn 13:4f). The message of love reveals the value of the service: "Whoever wants to be great among you, should be your servant" (Mark 10:43f; Mark 9:35).

In what does the liturgical dimension of diaconical work consist now? The caritative and social office of the Church cannot be

⁷ Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben. Grundlagen, Aufgaben und Zukunftsperspektiven der Diakonie. Eine evangelische Denkschrift, 1998, 17.

⁸ See P. Müller, "Diakonie", in: LKStKR, Bd. 1, 2000, 416-419; see Gottfried Hammann, Die Geschichte der christlichen Diakonie. Praktizierte Nächstenliebe von der Antike bis zur Reformationzeit, Göttingen 2003, 21.

separated from the liturgy, as long as every Christian mercy has an *epicleptic dimension*. The inspiration of Christian diaconical work, or the determining sign of the diaconical identity,⁹ lies not only in the “cultural memory” with the commands of Christ (in the anamnesis), but also in the ability of Christian action with the Spirit of Christ. “The real reason behind liturgical diaconical work is the Holy Spirit, Inspirator, bearer and preserver of the really Christian Dieneis, according to the model of Christ.”¹⁰

Diaconical work as an exercise of the service in the need of the destitute is called Service of Christ and Praising of God. Diaconical work reflects the “kingdom of heaven as kingdom of charity”¹¹ and is at the same time an expression of the liturgical anticipation of God’s eschatological coming. This anticipation happens by the Holy Spirit, who helps people to overcome the sinful self-centering, solipsism, and egoism. The reason diaconical work never leads to narcissistic imagination and self-admiration lies in the fact that every diaconical work occurs through the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is effective in every act of love: love of neighbors, creation, and God. The Christian as a deacon sees the other with the eyes of the everlasting love of God and recognizes the dignity as a subject on which this love of God is oriented. Christian diaconical work is not only christocentric¹² but also pneumatocentric.¹³ It assumes, therefore, not only pneumatology, but also certain anthropology.

⁹ Karl-Fritz Daiber, *Diakonie und kirchliche Identität. Studien zur diakonischen Praxis in der Volkirche*, Hannover 1988.

¹⁰ Alexandros K. Papaderos, *Aspekte orthodoxer Sozialethik*, in: Ingeborg Gabriel, idem, Ulrich H. J. Körtner, *Perspektiven ökumenischer Sozialethik. Der Auftrag der Kirchen im größeren Europa*, Mainz 2006, 69.

¹¹ Gottfried Hammann, *Die Geschichte der christlichen Diakonie. Praktizierte Nächstenliebe von der Antike bis zur Reformationszeit*, Göttingen 2003, 241.

¹² See Paul Philippi, *Christozentrische Diakonie. Ein theologischer Entwurf*, Stuttgart 1963.

¹³ See Henning Schröer, *Von der “christozentrischen Diakonie” zur diakonischen Geistesgegenwart*, in: Theodor Schober (ed.), *Grenzüberschreitende Diakonie. Paul Philippi zum 60. Geburtstag*, Stuttgart 1984, 71ff.

Homo Diaconus—Christian Anthropology as Base of Diaconical Work

A well understood diaconical work is not founded on compassion, but on the trust in the indestructible value of every human being. If the human being is *imago Dei*,¹⁴ (i.e., image of the imperishable beauty of God), help to a person in need encloses a recognition of their universal, permanent human dignity and at the same time makes a direct contribution to the restoration of the image of God. However, this restoration is not referring to the image of God in the disabled persons, the oppressed, and the neglected of society, but concerns rather the image in the deacon who ministers.

If one human being serves another, the minister is treating the other in accordance with the self's own dignity. If a person resists this, on account of egoism, inattentiveness or disinterest, then his or her own image of God suffers damage. A human being cannot lose their image of God because this means an ontological orientation towards God's community. Nevertheless, humans can stain the beauty of the image of God through sins, and thereby close themselves voluntarily to the inviting love of God.

Every act of diaconical work has also an aesthetic dimension. The acceptance of the other through service and by being willing to help means a restoration of the aesthetic order of inter-human communication. The practice of diaconical work as a practice of sharing and healing in solidarity with the poor, aims at the restoration of community (*koinonia*).¹⁵ Diaconical work as a service for Christ who meets us in the poor is at the same time an effort toward the preservation of one's own dignity and dynamism for the realization of humankind.

Psalm 8 especially underlines the divine beauty and dignity of every human being:

What is man that you are mindful of him,

¹⁴ See D. Balfour, Saint Gregory the Sinaite: Discourse on the transfiguration, San Bernardino California 1986, 41.

¹⁵ Martin Robra, Diakonie im ökumenischen Dialog, in: Günter Ruddat, Gerhard K. Schäfer (ed.), Diakonisches Kompendium, Göttingen 2005, 145

and the son of man that you care for him?
Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet.

The recognition of the universality of human dignity, which forms the basis of the diaconical work, helps overcome discrimination, patriarchalism, and racism in society.¹⁶ Regardless of sex or race, every human being carries the imperishable beauty of the Trinitarian God in the self. Every person is a revelation and a “grammar of the possible self-statement of God.”¹⁷

True diaconical work is integral. It treats not only bodily pains and needs of a person but also aims at an integral healing of the human being. The love of God for humankind and the love of humans for God reveal a freeing and healing potential for broken human relations.¹⁸

The Christian world view is affected by the paradigm of the creative love of God. God loves the world with the love that is in God. Divine love as a foundation of eschatological joy shows a transforming dynamism. God’s love, light, and truth transform humans, and make them receptive to the suffering of the other: “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezechiel 36, 26). There is no true diaconical work without a heart of flesh (i.e., a sensitive or sharing heart). The sense of Christ’s incarnation lies not only in the apotheosis, but also in the humanization of human beings. True human being — “*ecce homo*” (Jn 19:5)— is an existence rooted in charity, social justice, and peace.

¹⁶ See Beate Hofmann, *Feministische Spiritualität. Entdeckung bei der Begegnungen zweier Frauenkulturen*, in: idem, Michael Schibilsky (ed.), *Spiritualität in der Diakonie. Anstöße zur Erneuerung christlicher Kernkompetenz*, Stuttgart 2001, 27-45.

¹⁷ K. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens. Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums*, Freiburg Basel Wien 1976, 221.

¹⁸ Peter Zimmerling, *Evangelische Spiritualität: Wurzeln und Zugänge*, Göttingen 2003, 124.

Dumitru Stăniloae showed that true love means to forget one's self for others (involving a real and deep kenosis).¹⁹ Today one can speak about the need of an ecumenical kenosis, for without the renunciation of triumphalism, no authentic communication can occur. One cannot be "orthodox" without perceiving the presence of Christ by the Holy Spirit in all human beings.

This perception encloses a refusal of any marginalization of people who are physically or spiritually disabled. "Disability can entail not only economic lack of rights, but also the impoverishment of relations and the loss of opportunities. People with disabilities are often victims of discriminatory trends in the society."²⁰

The fifth meeting of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi maintained, "If the churches search and wish the authentic unity, they must be open for all people."²¹

In a society affected by social Darwinism, the human dignity of poor and disabled persons will be denied. The mission of the Church consists in acting for the inviolable dignity of every human being. The value of a society depends on its social level, on its humanism.

Diaconical Work as a "Signature of Christianity"²²

Diaconical work, as defined as the "being and sign of Church's life,"²³ has an ecumenical dimension²⁴ because it crosses the confessional

¹⁹ D. Munteanu, *Der tröstende Geist der Liebe. Zu einer ökumenischen Lehre vom Heiligen Geist über die trinitarischen Theologien von J. Moltmann und D. Stăniloae*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2003.

²⁰ <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/ccdocuments2003.nsf/index/plen-1.1-ge.html>.

²¹ Theodor Schober, *Diakonie und Theologie bedingen einander*, in: Jürgen Moltmann, *Diakonie im Horizont des Reiches Gottes: Schritte zum Diakonatum aller Gläubigen*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1984, 7ff.

²² See Gerhard K. Schäfer, *Evangelisch-theologische Konzeptionen und Diskussionslinien der Diakonie*, in: Günter Ruddat, Gerhard K. Schäfer (ed.), *Diakonisches Kompendium*, 93.

²³ Karin Löber, Armin Zielke (ed.), *Diakonie - was ist das? : Diakonie als Wesens- und Lebensäußerung der Kirche. Referate im Rahmen der 13. Jahrestagung des Diakonischen Werkes der Selbständigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche (DW-SELK) am 28. März 2003, Oberursel 2003*.

²⁴ Siehe R. Turre, *Diakonik. Grundlegung und Gestaltung der Diakonie*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1991, 126-136.

borders by putting charity into practice. In common responsibility for the poor, Christian engagement can be co-ordinated ecumenically. On the horizon of charity, confessional walls collapse. The spirit of love who blows wherever he wishes cannot be limited. The Spirit encourages excess of particulars and allows interconfessional and international cooperations. Today ecumenical diaconical work²⁵ is called not only to increased sensitivity and recognition of the diaconical work of the other but also perhaps towards a liturgical opening up to the presence of God's Spirit manifested in every work of charity.

If the Orthodox Church appears today as ready to learn from the diaconical experiences and values of its Western brothers and sisters, she thereby admits indirectly that all diaconical work is carried and inspired by God's Spirit. All diaconical work is an expression of God's love, "who poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5, 5). In this recognition of the universal presence of the Holy Spirit, I see the essential bridge toward a convergence of the churches: "*Ubi Spiritus Sanctus, ibi ecclesia.*" (Where the Holy Spirit is, there is the Church).

Diaconical work always has a cultural meaning when it becomes a life style.²⁶ As a "Signature of Christianity" it contributes to the renewal of our culture. The *Charta Oecumenica — Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation of the Churches in Europe* points to the meaning of diaconical work: "On account of our Christian faith we exert ourselves for human and social Europe in which human rights and basic values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation, and solidarity are effective. We stress reverence for life, the value of marriage and family, prioritizing action for the poor, and the willingness to forgive all in mercy."²⁷

²⁵ About the concept of ecumenical diacony see K. Raiser (ed.), *Ökumenische Diakonie – eine Option für das Leben. Beiträge aus der Arbeit des ÖRK zur theologischen Begründung ökumenischer Diakonie*, Frankfurt am Main 1988.

²⁶ See Elisabeth Eicher-Dröge, *Im Dialog mit Kirche und Welt?* Berlin Hamburg Münster 2004, 253f: speaks about "cultural diakonia".

²⁷ <http://www.cec-kek.org/Deutsch/ChartafinG.htm>.

Ecumenical diaconical work is therefore a sign of the Christian's world responsibility. *The Magna Charta* of diaconical work as presented in Matthew 25 serves as an orientation for the Christian mission in today's world. A culture inspired by diaconical work of charity, service, and reconciliation influences and changes the face of our culture. Today, the credibility of Christianity depends upon willingness to engage in diaconical work ecumenically.

Christian diaconical work contributes to the correction of the inhuman forms of society and is therefore an anticipation of an eschatological justice. The work of the Holy Spirit makes us more sensitive to injustice and urges us to improve the protection of the poor and to increase the social extent of justice.²⁸

Christian diaconical work is always realized on the horizon of God's kingdom because it is determined by hope and by the anticipation of this kingdom. It remains a "messianic fragment,"²⁹ which maintains the eschatological moment in history.

Even so, the theological consultation of Neuendettelsau dismissed the *Charta Oecumenica Diaconica*. The document it issued has a historical, theological, and cultural meaning for the dialogue of the Romanian-Orthodox and the Protestant-Lutheran churches. Although the diaconical work has never really been a subject of inter-church disputation,³⁰ today the rediscovery of the ecumenical dimension of diaconical work has a great contribution to make towards restoring the unity of the body of Christ. The *Charta Oecumenica Diaconica* argues that there is "*no consensus fidelium*, without having consensus with the poor, sick, and the disadvantaged, who are in need and stand powerless in society."³¹

²⁸ See Michael Welker, *Kirche im Pluralismus*, Gütersloh 1995, 37-57.

²⁹ Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *Phantasie für das Reich Gottes. Die Theologie Jürgen Moltmanns. Eine Einführung*, Gütersloh 2000, 101; see Gerhard K. Schäfer, *Evangelisch-theologische Konzeptionen und Diskussionslinien der Diakonie*, in: Günter Ruddat, Gerhard K. Schäfer (ed.), *Diakonisches Kompendium*, 119.

³⁰ See D. Munteanu, *Dimensiunea ecumenică a teologiei Părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae*, in: I. Tulcan, C. Ioja (ed.), *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă la începutul celui de al III-lea mileniu*, Arad 2006, 336f.

³¹ See http://ack-nuernberg.de/website/uploads/charta_oecumenica_diaconica.pdf.

The Political Diaconical Work of the Church

The diaconical work of the Church is always diaconical engagement within society.³² The *Charta Oecumenica Diaconica* expresses this truth, when it describes Christian diaconical work as public diaconia: “The churches take their social political responsibility”³³ through diaconical work.

The conditions of society determine the concrete development of diaconical work.³⁴ Christian testimony cannot be isolated in a spirituality that is separated from the world in which the person lives and works. That is why socio-political engagement shows no divergence with the spirituality of a community but rather shows its real appropriation. If the human being is an “*animal rationale et sociale*,” its religiousness must also have an historical and social character. Political engagement can create new basic conditions, useful for the development and the practice of authentic diaconical spirituality. Therefore, Christian diaconical work always has a political dimension, as long as the message of the Gospel aims at the renewal of the whole human being.³⁵ This work should transform the society of all human beings through the strength of Christ’s love. Diaconical work understood as an “interpreted Bible”³⁶ is the seed of hope for a society transformed in and through love.³⁷ The transforming strength of diaconical work has its roots in the omnipotence of Christ and in *missio Dei*. The dynamism of Christian diaconical work cannot be limited as long as it is a sphere of a divine activity, namely an energy of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of cosmic renewal and eschatological community in God’s Kingdom.

³² See Olaf Meyer, “Politische” und “Gesellschaftliche Diakonie” in der neueren theologischen Diskussion, Göttingen 1974.

³³ See http://ack-nuernberg.de/website/uploads/charta_oecumenica_diaconica.pdf.

³⁴ See Karl-Fritz Daiber, *Diakonie und kirchliche Identität. Studien zur diakonischen Praxis in der Volkskirche*, Hannover 1988, 75.

³⁵ Tullio Vinay, *Die politische Diakonie der Kirche*, Tübingen 1987, 1.

³⁶ R. Turre, *Diakonische Einsichten. Theologische Impulse und ethische Reflexionen*, 11.

³⁷ See Jürgen Moltmann, *Diakonie im Horizont des Reiches Gottes*, 41.

The *Charter Oecumenica Diaconica* emphasizes the liturgical-epiclestical dimension of each act of diaconical work: “Christian diaconical work is liturgical and lives through the epiclesis of the Holy Spirit,” so that there is no ecumenical diaconical work without ecumenical spirituality.³⁸

The Gospel did not intend to be an abstract theory but a life in communion, which is affected by divine mercy. Communion with God as a spring of kenotic love enables sensitivity and action towards alleviating any form of human suffering.

Such a renewal or freeing of society from sinful structures, which support suffering and need in the world, can occur only if we are ready to take on political responsibility. In our contemporary pluralistic and globalized world, no true diaconical work can be pursued on a local level without considering international problems. Global responsibility and international interlinking determines the face of adequate Christian and ecumenical diaconical work. Diaconical work permeates all areas of human life and is as varied as are human beings and their problems. The Church takes on its responsibility for the poor and weak through its diaconical work, while it contributes to the political restructuring of the society for the purposes of social justice.³⁹

If politics is the “art of the impossible,” political diaconical work makes possible in the history the “impossible” of the eschatological life; namely through the work and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. The Church must not be shy before politics, if it takes seriously its responsibility and mission concerning diaconical work. By engaging politics, it can lend to the society a Christian, human, heart. The *Charta Oecumenica Diaconica* emphasizes the political relevance of an ecumenical diaconical work when it concludes that ecumenical diaconical work contributes to the renewal of social culture, and works particularly hard “in responsibility (...) for a humane society.”⁴⁰

³⁸ See http://ack-nuernberg.de/website/uploads/charta_oecumenica_diaconica.pdf.

³⁹ Gerald Kruhöffler, *Grundlinien des Glaubens. Ein biblisch-theologischer Leitfaden*, Bd. 1, 3rd revised and extended edition Göttingen 2002, 255f.

⁴⁰ See http://ack-nuernberg.de/website/uploads/charta_oecumenica_diaconica.pdf.

Diaconical Work as Praxis Pietatis or as a Living Spirituality

The fifth plenary assembly of the WCC in Nairobi (1975) underlined the significance of spirituality for diaconical work: “We long for a new spirituality which penetrates our planning, thinking and action.”⁴¹ Every Christian is a bearer of Christ through baptism (of the divine and diaconical love). Diaconical work is, therefore, not a function of the Church but rather its very being. One cannot separate Christian identity from Christian practice. That’s why *lex orandi, lex credendi and lex agendi* belong inseparably together. One cannot be Christian without being engaged in the spreading out of diaconical love.

Moreover, Christian diaconical work contributes to a culture of charity and is a sign of the liveliness of Christ’s Church. Not only diaconical work is ecumenical but also ecumenism is based on diaconical work. There is not only a diaconical ecumenism but also an ecumenism of diaconical work.⁴² The renewal of social welfare work is an “ecumenical task,”⁴³ and at the same time, a great opportunity for renewing ecumenism. Diaconical work contributes to the overcoming of confessional borders and to promoting action in communion of one serving Church.⁴⁴

The social responsibility of faith becomes clear if one also notes that diaconical work is connected with theological anthropology. Because God, in Jesus Christ and in his Holy Spirit, is open to the world, social responsibility belongs to the essence of the Christian faith demanding that it be open to the world and to all human beings in their concrete needs.⁴⁵

⁴¹ See Bernward Wolf, *Diakonische Identität und Spiritualität*, in: Beate Hofmann, Michael Schibilsky (ed.), *Spiritualität in der Diakonie. Anstöße zur Erneuerung christlicher Kernkompetenz*, 68.

⁴² Reinhard Turre, *Diakonie. Grundlegung und Gestaltung der Diakonie*, 127

⁴³ Elsie A. McKee, Risto A. Ahonen, *Erneuerung des Diakonats als ökumenische Aufgabe*, Heidelberg 1996.

⁴⁴ Theodor Schober, Hermann Kunst, Hand Thimme, *Oekumene – Gemeinschaft einer dienenden Kirche. Lernen Verstehen Wagen*, Stuttgart 1983.

⁴⁵ Sozialwort des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen in Österreich.

E. Levinas understood diaconical work as a responsibility for others.⁴⁶ Responsibility for others is perceived only in the cultural space of diaconical work. That is why the culture of diaconical work belongs in the centre of ecumenical anthropology. This anthropology contributes to the preservation of human dignity and of social rights. In the broader sense, one can speak of a direct contribution of ecumenical diaconical work to the social face of the entire world.

A culture of diaconical work makes decisions about the future ability of Christianity. Diaconical work is not only a service in justice but also a symbol of justice and peace. It has a social dimension because justice is possible only in a social space. Ecumenical diaconical work, therefore, offers an important foundation for the equality of all human beings as creatures of God and enables more justice.

Christ became human so that human beings might become more human (that is the true image of God), released from the hell of egoism and alienation. A human being is fulfilled, then, only in communion namely through kenotic love. Without love and communion there is no authentic diaconical work. The diaconical appeal hangs together with the task of the human being to be or to become a spring of Trinitarian love. Therefore, diaconical work forms the heart of Christian spirituality and constitutes the eschatological hope for a society transformed through God's love, which affects and works in us.⁴⁷

Today diaconical work occurs in global responsibility as a serving solidarity and as protest of faith against the suppression of human rights. It is a curative service, a participation in the process toward the new creation, an anticipation of new life, of the new eschatological communion. It is oriented not only toward overcoming human suffering but also toward the kingdom of God as the real future of our entire cosmos.

⁴⁶ Tamar Kron, Cornelia Muth, Hearing Levinas and the Revelation of Responsibility, in: Sybille Fritsch-Oppermann (ed.), *Das Antlitz des "Anderen". Emmanuel Lévinas' Philosophie und Hermeneutik als Anfrage an Ethik, Theologie und inrerreligiösen Dialog*, Rehburg-Loccum 2000, (185-196).

⁴⁷ J. Moltmann, *Diakonie im Horizont des Reiches Gottes*, 41.

The human being in Christian diaconical work has an inviolable and eternal dignity. A Christian anthropology inspired by diaconical work understands love and philanthropy as having the highest value. One does not start any more with the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* but instead assumes *amo ergo sum*. The perception of the other in its mysterious dimension has salutary effects for inter-human communication and communion. That is why ecumenical diaconical work contributes to the therapy of the society. “Particularly in the ecumenical debate the Church has been also understood as a healing community. (...) Only a healthy communion can also be a curative community.”⁴⁸

Charta Oecumenica Diaconica points out the fact that the healing of society and ecumenical spirituality are interdependent: “In the Spirit of ecumenical solidarity we commit ourselves to do common work for the development of social forces, which lives from the dynamism of the divine love (Jn 15:12–13).”⁴⁹

The Public Relevance of Ecumenical Diaconical Work

Ecumenical diaconical work is social diaconical work. Christian diaconical work influences culture through a different understanding of human beings. Through diaconical work as an “enterprise of mercy,”⁵⁰ one sees the person not only as a destitute being but also as a deacon, that is, as a caretaker in an act of mercy. Diaconical work forms not only a bridge to the ecumenism of practical Christianity, but is itself a form of the living ecumenical unity of the Church. In diaconical work the lost unity of the Church is recovered, and that unity discloses a confessing Church which expresses itself in love for the person as *imago Dei*.

Ecumenical diaconical work understood as a “grammar of attention” contributes to the transformation of the social state because it promotes a culture of help, respect, solidarity and equal rights. By doing this it contributes to the “regeneration of society’s moral resources” and

⁴⁸ R. Turre, *Diakonische Einsichten. Theologische Impulse und ethische Reflexionen*, 69.

⁴⁹ See http://ack-nuernberg.de/website/uploads/charta_oecumenica_diaconica.pdf.

⁵⁰ *Idem*, 217.

offers a value orientation for the purposes of a culture of responsibility towards the other. It reveals the sense and the depth of human life when it describes the very Christian existence as a diaconical existence.

Ecumenical diaconical work has a cultural importance, because it deeply influences the humanization of culture. It can be understood in my opinion as an epicentre of Christian-humanistic impulses for contemporary culture. Ecumenical diaconical work is also connected with the efforts to build a new ecumenical theology. Culture has been understood as essentially a care for the soul (*cultura animi*). That is why ecumenical culture deals with what is a basic aspect of care, namely healing (*cura, curatio*).⁵¹ The care that concerns itself with an ecumenical civilization process supports a culture of strangers and intercultural communication.⁵²

Ecumenical diaconical work contributes to public cultural impulses of Christian faith and theology. Each person as a social creature lives in society and is responsible for its design. The language of Christian theology influences public discourse and public history.⁵³ Christian theology aims at not only a private spirituality but also a change of the world through communion with God. To incarnate God's love in the world means to contribute to the world; the concrete structures and internal mechanisms of the world's history are affected by the principle of love. Ecumenical diaconical work as a contribution to culture encourages ecumenical action. Each human being becomes active in its social and confessional system, by transcending the borders of any confessional world view, and adopting a paradigm of communication and humanitarianism. Social communication can be deepened and formed anew by an ecumenical culture, which recognizes the uniqueness of each human being.

⁵¹ Armin Klein, Kulturpolitik, 37.

⁵² See Christian Wehlte, Die Kultur des Fremden, in: Wolfdiertich Schmied-Kowarzik (ed.), Verstehen und Verständigung, Würzburg 2002, (36-48); see Raúl Fomet-Betancourt, Hermeneutik und Politik des Fremden. Ein philosophischer Beitrag zur Herausforderung des Zusammenlebens in multikulturellen Gesellschaften, in: W. Schmied-Kowarzik (Ed.), Verstehen und Verständigung, (49-59).

⁵³ Mike Higton, Christ, Providence and History: Hans W. Frei's Public Theology, London 2004, 1f.

Culture and Social Structure

Social action belongs in cultural anthropology. Clifford Geertz understands cultural research as the real object of “informal logic of the actual life.”⁵⁴ Culture is not only a symbolic system without meaning for action, as long as culture and social structure show the same phenomena in different perspectives. Culture is a “system of meaning and symbols by means of whose social interaction takes place,” while social structure is “the very social interaction system itself” (Geertz, 1987, 99).⁵⁵ Geertz defines culture as a fabric of meaning⁵⁶ in which humans are attached by intertextual connections.⁵⁷

For Geertz religion is a cultural system,⁵⁸ a fabric of meaning that can be understood only interpretatively.⁵⁹ Religion is not interesting from a sociological point of view because it expresses the social order, but especially because it influences it.⁶⁰ The human being simultaneously lives in a culture and creates culture. The transformative strength of humankind is oriented not only outwardly but also can and should begin with its own culturalization (metanoia). A human being’s mind can change, can be reborn, and become a “New Creation” (2 Cor. 5, 17) through the inhabitation of God. In today’s cultural multi-dimensionality an ecumenical diaconical work can point to an internal matrix of sensible communication and justify work for a symphony of cultures.

⁵⁴ Ingo Mörth, Gerhard Fröhlich, geertz@symbolische-anthropologie.moderne Auf Spurensuche nach der “informellen Logik tatsächlichen Lebens”, in: Gerhard Fröhlich, Ingo Mörth (ed.), *Symbolische Anthropologie der Moderne. Kulturanalysen nach Clifford Geertz*, Frankfurt am Main 1998, (7-50), 13f.

⁵⁵ Ingo Mörth, Gerhard Fröhlich, geertz@symbolische-anthropologie.moderne Auf Spurensuche nach der “informellen Logik tatsächlichen Lebens,” 14.

⁵⁶ C. Geertz, *Dichte Beschreibung. Beitrag zum Verstehen kultureller Systeme*, Frankfurt am Main 7. Aufl. 2001, 9.

⁵⁷ Florian Steger, *Einleitung Kultur: ein Netz von Bedeutungen*, in: idem (ed.), *Kultur: ein Netz von Bedeutungen. Analysen zur symbolischen Kulturanthropologie*, Würzburg 2002, 22.

⁵⁸ See Clifford Geertz, *Religion als kulturelles System*, 1966; see Franz-Peter Burkhard, *Anthropologie der Religion*, E.B. Tylor, B. Malinowski, C. Lévi-Strauss, C. Geertz, Dettelbach 2005, 115ff.

⁵⁹ Carola Lipp, *Politische Kultur oder das Politische und Gesellschaftliche in der Kultur*, in: Wolfgang Hardtwig, Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Ed.), *Kulturgeschichte heute*, Göttingen 1996, 96f.

⁶⁰ Hans G. Kippenberg, *Religionssoziologie*, 27, in: TRE 27.

Ecumenical Diaconical Work as a Contribution to a Culture of Reconciliation

The paradigm of soteriology means not only *theosis* but also the reconciliation of human beings with God, of humans with each other and with the whole creation. Welfare as restoration of communion supposes reconciliation. It is the essential condition of salutary communication. Ecumenical diaconical work that lives from the paradigm of reconciliation between different denominations or traditions contributes to a theoretical differentiation of the concept of reconciliation, as well as to a culture of reconciliation. Human beings are reconciled with the creator through Jesus Christ. They are also called to take initiative and to participate in the divine and creative dynamism of reconciliation. One speaks about reconciled life as a life in and for reconciliation. In addition, ecumenical diaconical work shows humans to be conciliatory beings. The relevance to society of an ecumenical diaconical work as the basis of a culture of reconciliation lies in the political and economic implications of reconciliation. Without a culture of reconciliation there is no salutary peace and no justice in society. Actually, in this cultural dimension lies the social relevance of theological diaconical work, which has implications for the politics of liberation and justice.⁶¹

Reconciliation is the key to resolving internal human conflicts. The strength of reconciliation transforms human beings, and the whole of society, by giving a healing dynamic; moving from confrontation to salutary union in love, justice and peace.⁶² Ecumenical diaconical work can serve in this regard as a bridge between theology and society. In addition, the paradigm of reconciliation is a synthesis between an empirical Christian anthropology and ethics in favor of a creative dynamism of enduring dialogue. “The value of the idea of reconciliation is precisely that it serves as a medium for dynamic dialogue by virtue of its social, psychological, and theological meanings.”⁶³

⁶¹ R. Paul Olson, *The Reconciled Life: A Critical Theory of Counseling*, Westport 1997, 8.

⁶² *Idem*, 11.

⁶³ *Idem*, 15.

Diaconical work in a Christian sense means service for fellow humankind, compassion, love, and realization of koinonia through the kenosis of love. In the spirit of diaconical work the human being forgets one's self and puts the love of Christ in the center. This dynamism has a conciliatory dimension because it opens space for the reconciliation.⁶⁴ In this sense Christian diaconical work becomes diaconical work of reconciliation (see I Cor. 5.19) with direct consequences for a culture of peace, help, recognition and reconciliation. Accordingly the humanization of society through Christian ecumenical diaconical work is ever based on a culture of human dignity, and is witnessed in the way in which it encourages a process of social change toward social justice, freedom, and equality. This is the program of Philanthropia that offers its challenge to our world today.

⁶⁴ Theoder Strohm, *Diakonie an der Schwelle zum neuen Jahrtausend*, 20f.

The *Diakonia* of Liturgy: Diakonia as Philanthropia

Teva Regule

I would like to begin with a question: What is liturgy? I do not ask this rhetorically, but in the hope that we can begin to think more deeply about the question. As many of us know, the word *leitourgia* comes from *leitōs* (which is derived from *leōs/laos*; the people) and *ergo/erxo* (to do). It is popularly defined as “the work of the people.” More precisely, though, its meaning has evolved over time. In the ancient Greek secular sense, it meant the public work of a person. In the Septuagint, it was used for the public service of the temple and came to be associated with the function of the priest. In the Christian sense, it means the work of Christ the High Priest for the people. By extension, it is the work of the Body of Christ – the people of God – for all the people and the world. Liturgy is a communal celebration. Our relationship with Christ and the other – our concern for, love of, and service to the other; our *diakonia* – is constitutive of what it means to gather in liturgy. This article will focus on these aspects of our liturgical celebration as well as highlight ways we can connect the cult with the service to the other outside our ritual celebration. The latter aspect will focus primarily on the philanthropic dimension of the diaconate.

The human person is seen as created in the image of God and called to grow into that likeness. Our model for being is the Triune God - a community of persons in shared love. As Christians, we grow into God’s likeness through our relationship with Christ and our incorporation into the mystical Body of Christ. Therefore, as Mark McIntosh, a theologian known for his work on mystical theology, says, “becoming who one most truly is takes place by means of relationships, by means of love for the other – both divine and human.”¹ Our participation in the community is how and where we learn about ourselves, where we

¹ McIntosh, Mark, *Mystical Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 211.

cease to be individuals and become persons in relation to others. It is through these relationships that we have the opportunity to know God not only in a cognitive sense, but also through an encounter of the heart. Origen says more succinctly that communion with God is obtained by the “paths of charity and love.”²

In the Liturgy, we begin by praying for all in what is now called the Great or Peace Litany. We begin the litany by invoking a state of peace, through the words of the deacon, “In Peace, let us pray to the Lord.” Peace is an important theme and even a precondition of the Eucharistic celebration. It prepares the Church to offer and receive the Eucharist. We are to be in peace, the state of wholeness and integration within ourselves and with one another. As Bishop Kallistos Ware explains further, “we are to banish from within ourselves, feelings of resentment and hostility toward others; bitterness, rancor, inner grumbling, or divisiveness.”³ Failure to forgive may be the greatest hindrance to knowing God. This peace, however, is something that does not come from our own doing but comes only from God, “For the peace from above and for the salvation of our souls. . . .” (This is behind the ambiguous meaning of the Greek text of the opening first phrase of the Litany —that could be translated as “In the peace of the Lord, let us be in need,” just as well as “In the peace of the Lord, let us pray”). Finally, this peace is not only inward looking but also looks to embrace all - for the “peace in the whole world. . . unity of all. . . travelers. . . for the sick, the suffering, the captives.”⁴ It is important to note that “captives” does not just refer to those held captive in a military situation, but refers to those who are captive to anything. When we are held captive, we are unable to exercise our free will, a unique capacity of the image of God in human beings. As Don Saliers, a Methodist liturgical theologian reminds us, “Praying for others requires looking clearly and honestly

² Louth, Andrew, *The Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 58.

³ Ware, Bishop Kallistos, *In Peace Let us Pray to the Lord: Peace and Healing in the Divine Liturgy*, <http://www.incommunion.org/ka14.htm>, April 1999.

⁴ Quotes from *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom* (Grass Lake, Mich.: Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, 1975), pp. 33-35. Henceforth: *The Divine Liturgy*.

at the world as it is, and entails awareness of the suffering of others.”⁵ Solidarity with the other is constitutive of the *diakonia* of liturgy.

Peace with other believers should have primacy over duties in worship. As Christ commands in Matthew 5:23-4, “when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first, be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”⁶ *The Didache*⁷ also emphasizes this precondition of the communal sacrament, “Let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join you until they be reconciled, so that your sacrifice may be undefiled.”⁸

In the early Church, the Prayer of the Faithful of the Great or Peace litany was said immediately prior to the Kiss of Peace. The Kiss of Peace signified membership in the communion of believers. It was part of the baptismal rite and reception of converts into the faith. The Prayer of the Faithful in the *Apostolic Constitutions*⁹ incorporates this, “...and let the deacon say to all, salute one another with the holy kiss....”¹⁰ In our ritual action of the Kiss (or handshake) of Peace we actualize the love of God between one another. Each is our brother or our sister. Through the Risen Christ, we can move beyond our divisions within society, whether ethnic, racial, gender, or cultural, and assume a Christian identity. Our differences are transcended in the unity of the Body of Christ. As Vladimir Lossky, a noted theologian of the Russian-French emigration, writes:

The fullness of nature demands the perfect unity of
humanity, one body that is realized in the Church.... Within

⁵ E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill, eds., *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before Go: Essays in Honor of Don Saliers*, (Collegeville, Minn.: Order of St. Benedict), 21. Henceforth: *Liturgy and the Moral Self*.

⁶ Matthew 5: 23-4, NRSV.

⁷ The *Didache* is a 2nd c. church document outlining early church liturgies and ethics.

⁸ *Didache* 14:2.

⁹ The *Apostolic Constitutions* is a 4th-5th century document of Syrian origin that outlines early church ethics and liturgics.

¹⁰ *Apostolic Constitutions*, Book VIII, 11.

the unity of the common nature the persons are not parts, but each a whole, finding accomplishment of its fullness in union with God.¹¹

The Kiss of Peace has remained an integral expression of forgiveness, reconciliation, and unity throughout the development of the Liturgy. In our current liturgical situation, the practice of exchanging the Kiss of Peace varies. In some places, it is relegated to a clerical act and only exchanged when clerics concelebrate. In others, the congregation is invited to participate. I would argue that in order for all to experience its power, everyone must exchange the Kiss of Peace. True *diakonia* can only be exercised by the power of God's love and mercy. The Kiss proclaims this divine love. It is the basis for and nourishes a *diakonia* of liturgy.

In the 2nd century writings of Justin the Martyr in which he describes the practices of Christians to pagan Roman society, the Kiss is followed by the offering or sacrifice. He says, "Having ended the prayers (common prayers for the newly baptized, the faithful, and all everywhere) we salute one another with a kiss. Then there is brought to the President of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water."¹² However, the biblical concept of sacrifice not only includes the cultic expression of worship, but also our service to the other, our *diakonia*. Justin Martyr reports that all early Christians contributed to the offering, each one depositing their contribution with the president of the assembly. The president would then use the offerings to take care of "the orphans and widows, and those who are in need because of sickness or other cause, and the captives, and the strangers who sojourn among us..."¹³ The practice of contributing to the offering was the responsibility of every Christian. Hippolytus calls attention to the first time that the newly baptized perform this act, on the day of their

¹¹ Lossky, Vladimir, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: SVS Press, 1976), 241.

¹² Martyr, Justin the, *Apology 65* accessed via <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.lxv.html>.

¹³ Martyr, Justin the, *Apology 67* in Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church*, (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1980), 9.

initiation. He says, “Those to be baptized will bring nothing with them except what each one brings for the Eucharist. For it is fitting that those who become worthy of doing so should provide the gifts on that same occasion.”¹⁴ In Africa, the donation of bread and wine by the faithful gave rise to a liturgical act. A procession of the faithful bringing their offerings would begin the Eucharistic celebration. Even today in some African-American congregations, the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with, as witnessed by one of my professors, “every member, old and young, women, men, and children, coming up the main aisle to deposit their donations in a large basket at the foot of the altar (and) the elders and children (following) with the bread and wine.”¹⁵ A similar ceremony exists today in the present Coptic rite where, prior to the Eucharist, a number of large loaves are presented to the celebrant, one of which is chosen to be consecrated. The remaining loaves are distributed after the service. In the East, the gifts of the faithful were deposited in the *Skeuophylakion* (outer area) prior to the celebration of the liturgy. The deacons would then select the portion to be offered to God and carry it to the altar area at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful, what we now know as the Great Entrance. The remaining gifts would be blessed and then be distributed to the poor, the orphans, widows or anyone in need. This was the responsibility of the bishop and usually done by the deacon (or deaconess) as the agent of the bishop. A remnant of this practice has survived in our liturgical practice. At present, the *Antidoron* (“in place of the gift”) is blessed at the end of the Anaphora and distributed to the gathering at the end of the service. The *diakonia* of the offering connects our service to God with our service to our neighbor. It is constitutive of our liturgical celebration. I recommend that it be renewed more fully in our modern liturgical practice. I will offer some practical suggestions for doing so at the conclusion of this article.

¹⁴ Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 20 in Robert Cabie, *The Church at Prayer: The Eucharist*, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1986), 82.

¹⁵ Morrill, Bruce T., *Holy Communion as Public Act: Ethics and Liturgical Participation*, unpublished, 12.

In the Eucharistic Prayer (i.e. the Anaphora) that follows the presentation of the gifts, we learn about God and all God has done for us. In response, we give God thanks. Saliers says, “The focal point (of this narrative) remains God’s gracious turning toward humankind. The human response of worship articulates a glorification of God in and through all that is human.”¹⁶ Our *diakonia* of praise glorifies God and shows our love of neighbor. It is connected in the meal and offering associated with it.

The Church is in the world to serve the community, to draw us closer to God and one another. The link between worship and service is crucial to what it means to gather as Church in liturgy. Liturgically, as we have seen, it is the deacon’s function to bring the people together and unite them in corporate prayer. Properly, it is also the function of the deacon to distribute the gifts, both to those gathered and the community at large. It is in our service to the other that we are united with them. Our *diakonia* of service to the other connects them to us and, by extension, to the assembly.

We are to follow the biblical injunction, “love one another as I have loved you.”¹⁷ While we are given the opportunity to enter into this love at every Eucharistic celebration, how we experience God’s peace and love are conditioned by the community’s response to God’s invitation. In as much as we can give ourselves over to the other, we can participate in and enter into this love. The more we enter into God’s love, the more we become who we are called to be, both as persons and as community.

The more we enter into God’s love, in a dimension beyond space and time, the more we experience the fullness of God’s community, not only the living, but also with those faithful who have lived in the past and those who will live in the future. At the end of the Anaphora, we pray for those who have gone before us and are experiencing the true

¹⁶ *Liturgy and the Moral Self*, 34.

¹⁷ John 15:12, NRSV.

light, "...the Theotokos, the ... forerunner and baptizer John; for the ... apostles... and for all your holy ones..."¹⁸ We also pray and ask God to remember – memory eternal – “all of those who have fallen asleep in the hope of resurrection and everlasting life...”¹⁹ Our *diakonia* transcends time. At this point in the service, we have just consecrated the gifts, the Body and Blood of Christ. It is a reminder that we all have life in Christ. As we continue to pray in the Anaphora, we pray for and remember all of the living in the hope that they will join with us in God’s love. In the liturgy of Basil we pray, “Remember, Lord ...those who do good works...remember the poor...nurture the infants; instruct the youth; strengthen the aged; give courage to the fainthearted; reunite those separated...”²⁰ Our *diakonia* transcends space.

As Alexander Schmemmann writes, “The content of Christ’s Eucharist is Love, and only through love can we enter into it and made its partakers.”²¹ Our Eucharistic celebration can be an intimate experience of God’s love, but it is also a work. It is the *diakonia* of liturgy.

I would like to conclude with a few practical recommendations for integrating a fuller expression of *diakonia* into our present-day liturgical celebration.

Use the built-in variability of the petitions in the Litany (e.g. of Fervent Supplication) to pray for specific, timely life situations.

Encourage the exchange of the Kiss of Peace among the entire congregation.

¹⁸ *The Divine Liturgy*, 89.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 90.

²⁰ *The Divine Liturgy of Our Father Among the Saints Basil the Great* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Press, 1988), 32-3.

²¹ Schmemmann, Alexander, *For the Life of the World*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), 36.

Set aside 10% (at least) of the collection (usually taken after the offering of the Gifts) for the poor/need. This can then be given to any number of local and/or national charitable organizations.

Include the *Antidoron* in the procession of the Gifts. (The baskets of bread could be carried after the Gifts and left outside the altar area. They could then be given to the priest for the blessing at the end of the Anaphora (the usual time for the blessing in the Byzantine tradition) and set outside the altar area for distribution after communion.)

(Finally,) Include any other offerings (memorial breads, fruit at Transfiguration, offerings for the food pantry, food from which one is fasting, etc.) at the end of the procession and bless as one does the *Antidoron* (described above) and then distribute to those in need.

Saints or Communists?

Educating Orthodox Christian Youth for Love of the Neighbor

Ann Bezzerides

Introduction

For the Christian religious education of Orthodox youth, specifically high school and college students,¹ there is a growing focus on love of and service to the needy neighbor.² This focus is long in coming: the Orthodox churches in the United States have generally not been known for their social outreach to those outside their own ethnicity and a good place to change this is through educating our youth.³ This focus is also much needed among a population of youth in America who have been called “Generation Me”⁴ and who might not naturally look outward in their spiritual pilgrimage.

¹ Here I focus on the education outside the home—on more “formal” educational structures attempted by local and national ministries of the Orthodox Church in the United States.

² On a national level, examples include the service components of the St. Vladimir’s Youth Summer institute (1998-2004); Orthodox Youth Outreach, now renamed Youth Equipped to Serve and under the auspices of FOCUS North America; “Stage 3” of the Cross Road summer institute at Hellenic College (2004-); and the “Just Love” and “Pilgrimage for Justice” initiatives (2008-2009) of the North American college campus ministry Orthodox Christian Fellowship. For my terminology for this paper, I cannot find a term for “love of and service to the needy neighbor” that I like more than this one for the purposes of Christian education, cumbersome though it may be. Options include: social concern, social compassion, social action, social outreach, social justice, etc. Generally, I am concerned that each turns an attitude and action (loving and serving) into an abstraction. I am also aware that “needy neighbor” may sound pejorative, especially to those in Social Science fields. I utilize it because my chief audience is Orthodox Christian religious educators, and this is the best shorthand way I can think of to push us beyond thinking solely of the neighbor as part of one’s natural community to the one who is sick, in prison, naked, hungry (Matt. 25:31-46).

³ In a study in 2000 administered by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research from 2000 which compared the beliefs, practices, and vitality across Jewish, Christian, and Muslim congregations in America, the Orthodox Churches ranked lowest in terms of community outreach (prison ministry, social advocacy, day care, etc.) and lowest in working for social justice. See David A. Roozen, “Meet Your Neighbors: Interfaith Facts,” in *Faith Communities Today* (Hartford: Hartford Seminary, 2003), 4, 8, figure 9.

⁴ Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

Education for love of the neighbor may seem an innocuous enterprise. But those who have wrestled with issues of “social compassion” (to use the term of this conference/volume) know it is not so simple in theory, practice, or history. It is directly related to a basic dilemma Christians must wrestle with today as they seek to help the needy neighbor: we are called to feed the poor, yes. Are we also called to ask why the poor are hungry? Roman Catholic Archbishop Don Helder Camara, a Brazilian theologian and activist, famously stated his predicament in this regard: “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.” The first approach is often identified as “charity,” and is seen as direct, immediate action to a person or group in need, as giving someone a fish. The second approach, asking why the poor have no food, is often termed “justice,” and is seen as working for structural change in society, as teaching someone how to fish.⁵

On the ecumenical scene, Christian educators are increasingly attracted to the language and educational methods of two important movements with regard to teaching the needy neighbor to fish: social justice and liberation theology.⁶ Protestant and Catholic youth ministries have drawn on both and developed some provocative, persuasive, and engaging ways of educating. In the public sphere, secular education has also taken up the charge to educate for social justice. Attracted by the vibrancy, creativity, and promise of significant impact in such curriculum, Orthodox educators and ministries are beginning to adopt such ideas and programs.⁷

⁵ For the charity/justice distinction, see Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, The Classroom Edition ed. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 9 ff. He likens it to what Martin Luther King, Jr., often called “a hand up rather than a handout.”

⁶ An example of Liberation theology influencing Christian education theory is articulated by Frank Marangos, “Liberation Theology and Christian Education Theory,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 29, no. 4 (1984). Marangos’ work is well-intentioned, but does not take into account the larger historical picture of Orthodoxy’s interactions with the ideas of liberation theology which radically shapes an Orthodox Christian’s reception of the theologies of liberation—e.g. as discussed in Olivier-Maurice Clement, “Orthodox Reflections On “Liberation Theology,”” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1985). See also Stephen Hayes, “Orthodoxy and Liberation Theology,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, no. 73 (1990).

⁷ In fact, much of Orthodox parish education draws on Protestant and Catholic curriculum.

There has been, however, little good critical reflection on how these ways of educating are appropriate for our life and faith as Orthodox Christians. Indeed, as Orthodox educators forge new territory in our educational ministry in the United States, we are largely unaware of the extensive and diverse histories of social justice and liberation theology, and the extent to which each movement carries with it underpinnings related to political philosophy, economic theory, and social welfare policy. Orthodox theologians in the United States have not, by and large, entered the *recent* theological conversations on either social justice or liberation theology. There is no extant body of Orthodox writings that wrestles with these topics in a way that might be readily applicable to the task of educators.⁸ In the mid to late twentieth century, however, Orthodox thinkers abroad grappled with such ideas as they related to Marxism and Communism and tried to “discern the spirits.”⁹ We can retrieve some of their insights for benefit today.

This paper aims to introduce Orthodox Christian educators to the language and issues of social justice and liberation theology, suggest some of the contours of their import for and impact on education, and

⁸ Two potential exceptions: (1) the last printed issue of the Orthodox Journal *The Handmaiden* that focuses on social ministry and outreach and has articles that could be effectively use for parish/youth education. It has a lively short article by Father Michael Plekon, “Towards a Theology of Social Ministry,” where he argues, “To love and care for the neighbor is not an activist extra, a socially aware add-on to essential Christianity. Rather, it is... the essence of Christianity.” Michael Plekon, “Towards a Theology of Social Ministry,” *The Handmaiden* 13, no. 3 (2009): 14. Plekon does argue in his last point that “We need to demand of other institutions in our society that they become compassionate to those who suffer—those of the government at every level, and also schools, hospitals, and especially the churches and other communities of faith” and suggests some organizations that are doing this important work, but he does not probe the complexities of this involvement. Plekon, “Towards a Theology of Social Ministry,” 19. (2) John McGuckin includes a short but important section on “The Poor at the Rich Man’s Gate,” in his book *Orthodoxy and the Contemporary World*. He addresses the tension between being consonant with tradition and newness of the severity of the circumstances of the hungry and dying, as well as the need for the leaders of Orthodoxy to address this need. “There is nothing new in the history of Christianity; but the pressing need for its renewal and reappropriation in the church to hasten to meet the needs of the hungry and dying is something new, and the world leaders of Orthodoxy will be increasingly assessed in terms of their fidelity to this vocation and duty. It is a pressing duty of the leadership of every priest at local level.” John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Pub. Ltd., 2008), 401.

⁹ Clement, “Orthodox Reflections On “Liberation Theology”,” 69. See also Helene Iswolsky, “Social Justice in Russian-Orthodox Thought,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 7, no. 1 (1970). Hayes, “Orthodoxy and Liberation Theology.”

then share some reflections for our Orthodox educational task. After foregrounding my own context and aims, I will briefly define, as best as possible, “social justice” and “liberation theology,” make some notes about their intersection with the field of education, and share some responses by Orthodox Christians (including my own). Finally, I will make some suggestions about how these might influence praxis today. I am struck that this is, on the one hand, trying to do too much for one paper, and on the other, not accomplishing enough. There are ample Orthodox theological resources and historical trajectories that I have not begun to plumb for their wisdom. I expect and hope that what I sketch here will energize others to theologically engage the issues at hand and further the contributions in the areas of theology and praxis.

Such understanding and critical reflection on the part of Christian educators is not a luxury or a solely academic pursuit. Without it, (a) we risk polarizing some Orthodox Christians who would viscerally react to any justice-related language or ideology, usually because of their own knowledge, education and direct experience with these movements. These factions might say, in fact, that we are teaching our youth to become communists, when our goal is to invite them to be saints.¹⁰ (b) We risk distorting our faith through the educational practices themselves. In the long run, an uncritical acceptance of educational models or practices may profoundly damage this immensely important movement towards love of and service to the needy neighbor for Orthodox Christian youth. And (c) we risk missing out on an opportunity to bring the Orthodox faith and tradition into conversation with social justice and liberation theology, and to create distinctly Orthodox

¹⁰ One interesting example of this polarization is the use of the legacy of Mother Maria Skobotsova, an ascetic in France during World War II, in Orthodox efforts towards social action. On one hand, her legacy stands as a powerful witness to those who censured her for being involved with street refugees although she was a consecrated nun. In her words: “At the Last Judgment I will not be asked whether I satisfactorily practiced asceticism, nor how many prostrations and bows I have made before the holy table. I will be asked whether I fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and the prisoner in jail. That is all I will be asked.” On the other hand, some of the aspects of her theology (her Mariology, specifically) and her life (her own experiences as a mother) have been seen as too problematical to be seen as a model. Perhaps Orthodoxy needs such radical models to push the church in appropriate directions, but perhaps in being extreme such models force some Orthodox to be entrenched in perspectives that allow for ignoring the needy neighbor. I think for the education of youth, a balanced approach is pivotal.

practices that fit both our contemporary context and are faithful to the Tradition. What is an Orthodox Christian way of educating for love of neighbor? Critical, scholarly and faithful reflection is necessary for our educational ministry today.

Foregrounding: Context and Aims

My primary interest is in the Christian religious education of Orthodox youth, specifically teenagers and college students. My academic and administrative focus has been exposing students to patristic-worthy proclamation of the Gospel and introduction to theological inquiry within the context of an Orthodox liturgical life and a mentoring community.¹¹ My intuition is that unless we get our teaching and preaching right, so that students actually know what the Christian gospel is, our outreach and service will be for the wrong reasons. Nevertheless, it is clear to me that Christian education is incomplete without good experience in and reflection on love of the needy neighbor. In the last decade, I have had direct decision-making involvement in two programs for Orthodox high school youth from across the nation hosted at Orthodox seminaries. These issues are not theological abstractions for me; they are real, practical matters.

The educator's question is how to proceed with education for love of neighbor. What should we teach, and how should we teach it? It is one thing for us as Orthodox Christians to have theological positions on social ministry, action, and *philanthropia*. But teaching these concepts well, to high school students, in church-related settings, where attendance is usually not required, is another matter entirely. When we set out to teach this love-of-neighbor well, we often look for creative ways to make it "stick" with our youth. The educational wisdom of our time challenges the value of classroom learning for such an area: we will not simply talk about care for the needy neighbor in Sunday school classrooms for fifteen minutes, we will creatively restructure our parish education so

¹¹ Orthodox Christians are sometimes accused of being too dependent on the patristic period for their theological insights. I speak of "patristic-worthy proclamation of the Gospel" here not to narrow the Orthodox foundation, but to call the Orthodox to a vision and proclamation of the Gospel that is as powerful, persuasive, and engaging, using and adapting all the best education of the time, as it was in the homilies of the great patristic teachers.

that love of neighbor is, in education speak, “caught not taught.”

Ah, but how? What does it look like? In parishes, for example, is it enough to host canned food drives and fundraisers for local charities? Should we be introducing youth to the very face of the needy neighbor, and if so, how? What is our curriculum surrounding this? On another level, when we encourage youth to take time to travel on short-term mission trips such as those to Project Mexico or a Real Break trip through Orthodox Christian Fellowship, what are the assumptions about the importance of these trips? What is the curriculum that helps students process their experience? To what extent do we challenge the social, political, and economic structures that surround the situations of poverty at home and abroad? It has been my experience that when Orthodox educators do ask youth to seriously examine the structures of poverty, oppression, and injustice, then accusations are not far behind that we are educating our youth to, indeed, become communists. Whether or not these accusations are warranted is debatable. What is for certain is that in the praxis we choose, the theology becomes alive, amplified and real. And in the words of my colleague, Tony Vrame, “the educational agenda we espouse will lead to a changed Orthodox Christianity.”¹² So we must carefully choose that “agenda.”

I am haunted by a critique launched first by Orthodox educators and theologians Alexander Schmemmann, Sophie Koulomzin, and George Nicozisin: when Orthodox began educating in America we uncritically adopted Protestant and Catholic models of educating often to the detriment of an “authentically Orthodox Christian” way of educating, and/or in a way that has different foundational understandings of the faith that are contrary to Orthodox Christianity.¹³ It is essential that

¹² Anton C. Vrame, “Lift up Your Hearts, Open Your Minds: The Challenge of Orthodox Higher Education,” in *Conference on Orthodoxy & The University* (Brookline, MA: Office of Vocation & Ministry, Hellenic College, 2009).

¹³ See Alexander Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life: Lectures and Essays on Christian Development through Liturgical Experience* (New York: Department of Religious Education, Orthodox Church in America, 1974; reprint, 1993); Sophie Koulomzin, *Our Church and Our Children* (Crestwood: SVS Press, 2004; reprint, with a foreword and study guide by Ann Mitsakos Bezzerides); George Nicozisin, *The Road to Orthodox Phronema: Christian Education in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America* (Brookline, MA: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, Department of Religious Education, 1977). Examples of this include: adopting the Sunday School model of educating youth and creating the “Orthodox Catechism” modeled on the scholastic catechisms of

educators develop the critical faculties to assess the extent to which the educational programs we design or adopt are faithful to the Orthodox Christian tradition.

Social Justice

Defining Social Justice

The term “social justice” is used in many diverse ways. Indeed, as Jesuit theologian Thomas Massaro puts it:

Depending on who is consulted, the simple question “What is social justice?” might prompt answers that are abstract and theoretical, on one hand, or vividly concrete, on the other hand. Philosophers and economists might emphasize formulas and syllogisms for ensuring that each member of society receives the due amount of rewards and burdens. An average person on the street might be more inclined to list a bundle of indignities and hardships that nobody would have to undergo in a world that was more just.¹⁴

In the realm of political philosophy, according to the volume on social justice from the Blackwell Readings in Philosophy series, “Issues of social justice, in the broadest sense, arise when decisions affect the distribution of benefits and burdens between different individuals or groups.”¹⁵ These issues have interested past philosophers such as Locke and Hume, who both view justice in terms of respect for private property, and have dominated the study of political philosophy since the 1971 publication of John Rawl’s *Justice as Fairness*; for Rawls, principles of social justice “regulate the choice of a political

the Catholic church. In my research on our educating in faith of Orthodox youth in particular, I’ve discovered that we have the tendency to get excited about Protestant or Catholic models a decade or so after they are *au current*, just as they are being critiqued from within their own contexts. Yet we fail to pay attention to the critiques.

¹⁴ Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, 1.

¹⁵ Matthew Clayton and Andrew Williams, *Social Justice*, Blackwell Readings in Philosophy (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 1.

constitution and the elements of the economic and social system.”¹⁶ In the political arena, “social justice” is one of the four pillars of the Green Party.¹⁷ It is also the name of an Israeli political party.¹⁸

Social justice is also considered to be an inherent part of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). The Jesuit Luigi Taparelli, in the 1840s, coined the term based on the teachings of Thomas Aquinas.¹⁹ Catholic Social Teaching “refers to a broad collection of documents that have emerged either from the Vatican or from regional bishops’ conferences.” They are official documents that address social issues “such as transnational justice, health care, poverty relief, living wages, farmer and farm worker relief, antinuclear proliferation, and economic inequities in the world.”²⁰ These documents “claim that Christ himself had given the mission of social justice to the apostles, and thus, by extension, to the church, through his teachings about ushering in the kingdom of God.”²¹ The term “social justice” also appears throughout the Compendium of Social Doctrine, issued by the Pontifical Council of the Catholic Church. The Compendium views social justice as the proper answer to important social questions and as directly related to the understanding of the common good.²²

¹⁶ John Rawls, “On Justice as Fairness,” in *Social Justice*, ed. Matthew Clayton and Andrew Williams (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004: 1999), 50.

¹⁷ Along with Ecological Wisdom, Grassroots Democracy, and Nonviolence. See for example: <http://www.gpop.org/index.php?option/content/task/view/id/21>

¹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Justice_%28political_party%29

¹⁹ http://www.acton.org/publications/mandm/mandm_article_62.php

²⁰ Brian Matz, “Patristic Texts in Catholic Social Thought,” in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, ed. Susan R. Holman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2008), 288.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² “*This social doctrine also entails a duty to denounce*, when sin is present: the sin of injustice and violence that in different ways moves through society and is embodied in it [120]. By denunciation, the Church’s social doctrine becomes judge and defender of unrecognized and violated rights, especially those of the poor, the least and the weak [121]. The more these rights are ignored or trampled, the greater becomes the extent of violence and injustice, involving entire categories of people and large geographical areas of the world, thus giving rise to *social questions*, that is, to abuses and imbalances that lead to social upheaval. A large part of the Church’s social teaching is solicited and determined by important social questions, to which *social justice* is the proper answer.” For common good: “*Everyone also has the right to enjoy the conditions of social life that are brought about by the quest for the common good.* The teaching of Pope Pius XI is still relevant: ‘the distribution of created goods, which, as every discerning person knows, is labouring today under the gravest evils due to the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered propertyless, must be effec-

There is much said and written on the intersection of Roman Catholicism and social justice, but on the general landscape of American Catholicism vis-à-vis social justice, the topic has been somewhat divisive:

Many conservative and neo-conservative Roman Catholics have objected strenuously to the recent social teachings of the United States bishops but seem to have no problem with the official church teaching on sexual ethics. On the other hand, liberal Catholics have applauded the recent social teachings while often dissenting from the sexual teachings.²³

It is a division very much real in American Catholicism, and often plays out in political leanings.²⁴

Social Justice in Education

While social justice in education has perhaps had its most significant impact within Jesuit education, it is a significant trend today across secular education at the primary and secondary, college and graduate levels. The University of Massachusetts-Amherst offers a Social Justice Education graduate program of study that focuses on social diversity and social justice education particularly as they apply to formal

tively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, that is, social justice' [354]. (167)" http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

²³ Charles Curran, "Catholic Social and Sexual Teaching: A Methodological Comparison," *Theology Today* 44, no. 4 (1988): 425-6.

²⁴ Erika Bachiochi argues: "Among the intellectual class of Catholics in America, one tends to hear two distinctive and mutually critical voices: that of liberal, progressive, or 'social justice' Catholics on the one hand, and conservative, traditional, or 'right-wing' Catholics on the other. Liberal Catholics praise the Church for her positions on war and peace, her privileged care or 'preferential option' for the poor, and her strong opposition to the death penalty. They disfavor and even scorn the Church's teachings on sexuality, tend to downplay her teachings on abortion and euthanasia—and vote Democrat. Conservative Catholics, on the other hand, adhere to and often defend the Church's sexual teachings, and are ardently and actively pro-life. They tend to hold a special contempt for the social justice teachings of the Church *as expressed by* U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, view the free market much more favorably than do their liberal counterparts—and vote Republican. Conservative Catholics deride liberal Catholics for their 'cafeteria Catholicism,' while liberal Catholics disdain conservatives for their apparent lack of faithfulness to what the prior take to be the Church's central mission of promoting peace, social justice and charity to the poor." Erika Bachiochi, "Reflections on the Kinship between Catholic Sexual and Social Teaching," in *Women, Sex and the Church: A Case for Catholic Teaching*, ed. Erika Bachiochi (Pauline Books & Media, 2010).

educational systems, kindergarten through higher education.²⁵ Curricula for public high school teachers include such questions as: “How many of our graduates...had the knowledge and understanding of poverty that would even begin to prepare them to serve this population?” “How do you turn the situation in the Delta from a lesson about social *in*justice to a lesson about social justice?” The European Conference on Educational Research created a network specifically on Social Justice and Intercultural Education that brings together researchers “interested in exploring contested issues concerning justice, ethnicity, social inequality, gender, and equity.”²⁶ In the fall of 2009, Harvard University piloted the online presentation of one of the most popular courses in Harvard’s history, “Justice with Michael Sandel.” Sandel, a professor of political philosophy, frames his course around the topic, “What’s the right thing to do?”²⁷ Much of justice education today does not imply or discuss religious perspective whatsoever; indeed, a recent article in the *Journal of College & Character* felt the need to make the argument that “religious differences and interfaith conflict *are* important topics for discussion on college campuses and should be considered within the context of social justice education.”²⁸

Reflection on Orthodox Christian Use of “Social Justice”

For our Orthodox context, I think it is important that if we use the term “social justice,” we do so with a sound awareness of its historical context and current scholarly and educational usage. As the Massaro quote illustrates, the Orthodox are not alone in having a multiplicity of operative definitions of social justice. In Orthodox circles I have heard it used most often to refer to any kind of social issues or social action

²⁵ <http://www.umass.edu/sje/> Many colleges are now offering programs in “Justice Studies” such as James Madison University, Kent State University, University of New Hampshire, Tufts University, etc.

²⁶ <http://www.eera-ecer.eu/networks/network7/>

²⁷ Sandel challenges students and viewers with difficult moral dilemmas and asks their opinion about the right thing to do. He then asks them to examine our answers in the light of new scenarios such as affirmative action, same-sex marriage, patriotism and rights. <http://www.justiceharvard.org/>

²⁸ Nancy J. Evans, “Addressing Religious Difference in Social Justice Education,” *Journal of College & Character* 11, no. 2 (2010): 1.

and outreach.²⁹ Yet, we must resist this as irresponsible. Orthodox theologians and scholars have much accumulated wisdom of the ages to apply to social issues and justice. This, combined with new good scholarship across the disciplines, promises that Orthodox Christians can have much to say and do about the topic of social justice in our day. But there is a difference, in my mind, between social issues, or even “justice,” and “social justice.” “Social justice” is a term with a complex history, and thus we must engage it responsibly on a theological and scholarly level. We should not, however, summarily adopt it for our educational practices for our youth work in the Church.

To speak directly to the use of the term “social justice” for the education of Orthodox youth, three things cause concern at this point. First, its array of possible definitions, which find their home in places that range from political philosophy to Christ’s very teaching. A team of researchers at the University of Portland studied this variety of definitions and note that “specific concepts and values associated with social justice tend to be inconsistently articulated” and that “diverse possible definitions for social justice seem to underlie some controversies surrounding the concept.”³⁰ They explain:

Recently, for example, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) abandoned its requirement that students demonstrate a commitment to social justice because of criticism that it was promoting a particular political agenda. In a related commentary the president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (F.I.R.E.) noted, “While nearly all of us believe in something that we could define as social justice, there is a problem: What does ‘social justice’ actually mean? Vague, subjective, and politicized evaluation standards are dangerous” (Lukianoff, 2007, p. B8).³¹

²⁹ I was especially disheartened by the decision to anachronistically title a St Vladimir’s Seminary Press publication of St. Basil’s writings, “*On Social Justice*.”

³⁰ Andrew M. Guest et al., “Concepts of Social Justice as a Cultural Consensus: Starting Pints for College Students of Different Political Persuasions,” *Journal of College & Character* X, no. 6 (2009): 1.

³¹ Ibid.

The reasons cited by that organization lead me to my second concern: the political nature of social justice. While not all definitions of social justice relate directly to political agendas, enough do to make it problematic for an Orthodox educational context. Orthodox Christians are far from being a united front politically, and “social justice” could be a polarizing force in ministry, as it has been within American Catholicism, forcing a reaction among some, perhaps many, that would jeopardize movement toward true love of neighbor.³²

My third concern stems from an Orthodox skepticism of social action movements that we find scattered throughout Orthodox writings.³³ For example, we find in the writings of St. Ambrose of Optina, a nineteenth century Russian elder:

The desire to toil for the good of mankind appears very admirable, but is misplaced. In [a word], everybody wants to labour for the good of close ones, ignoring or paying very little attention to the necessity of first shunning sin themselves and then worrying about others. The broad schemes of the modern

³² For background in the relationship between Orthodox Christians and Politics see Emmanuel Clapsis, “Politics and Christian Faith,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 37, no. 1-2 (1992). “Church leaders as representative persons cannot simply speak as individuals, and this means that they must avoid narrow partisan positions on political issues. If the clergy do have a role in politics, it is not to leap into the arena themselves, but to make their people sensitive to what enhances and what diminishes a truly human life.” Clapsis, “Politics and Christian Faith,” 102.

³³ In a 1970 editorial in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Helene Iswolsky reports on the Russian Orthodox church’s skepticism towards turning a long history of social ethics into a ‘closed system’: “What is the contribution of the Russian-Orthodox Church to the search for the solution of the social problems in our modern world? In order to answer this question it is important first of all to note that though Russian-Orthodoxy has a long tradition of social ethics, it has no special analysis of them for the magisterium; they are so to say taken for granted, as an inseparable part of the evangelical message. This was the point made by Metropolitan Nikodim (Director of Foreign Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate). Speaking at the Geneva Conference of Church and Society, the Metropolitan discussed the relevance of dialogue concerning social problems. He mentioned on this subject the Papal Encyclicals, notably ‘Mater and Magistra’ which stresses that social teaching is part of the Christian life. Though agreeing with this position, Nikodim made an important distinction, by saying that for Orthodoxy it is more appropriate to speak of *Christian thought* rather than of Christian teaching insofar as social justice is concerned. For, as the Metropolitan explained, Orthodoxy is aware that the Divine commandment is ‘exceedingly broad’ (psalm 118,96) and does not seek to transform moral theology and especially its part concerning social problems, into a ‘closed system. Orthodoxy transfers the center of its interest and its spiritual energy to direct practical action in the concrete conditions of living social reality.” Iswolsky, “Social Justice in Russian-Orthodox Thought,” citing *Zhurnal Moskovskoy Patriarkhisy* (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), No. 9 (1966), 73-74.

generation about grand activities for the good of all mankind has the appearance that... someone, not having finished an educational course, wishing that he could be a professor and instructor in a university. However on the other hand, to think that if we cannot move humanity forward then we shouldn't labour at all, is the other extreme. Every Christian is obliged to toil according to his capacity and position for the good of others, so that everything is timely and orderly, and that the fruit of our labors are presented to God and His holy will.³⁴

If we translate Ambrose's critique into contemporary terms, one might make a parallel to the college campus devoted to social justice, with its students committed to justice-related concerns for their careers, all the while participating in an array of the usual social campus offerings: casual sex, ample alcohol, and an egocentric internet presence, to cite a mild scenario. This parallel and paradox are not unfamiliar to religiously-oriented Orthodox Christian youth who read and are spiritually formed by writings such as those of St. Ambrose, and who viscerally respond to the language and agenda of social justice.³⁵ The term "social justice" has, in fact, been a divisive term when used in Orthodox college campus ministry. Finally, if Aquinas' theological insights indeed underlie thinking about social justice, this may itself cause Orthodox theologians concern, for such theologians often regard Aquinas as responsible for the over-emphasis on Scholastic theology in the Middle Ages.

For all these reasons, I believe that while Orthodox scholars and theologians, particularly on the university and seminary levels, should engage issues of social justice, Orthodox educators should refrain from using the term "social justice" for our educational endeavors to educate Orthodox youth for love of neighbor. After turning now to liberation

³⁴ http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/ambrose_e.htm#n21

³⁵ A recent study of religiously-active Orthodox Christian college students conducted through the Office of Vocation & Ministry at Hellenic College and Orthodox Christian Fellowship found strong voices among the students that questioned the Orthodox nature of social justice initiatives. The topic of "social justice" was indeed divisive for these college students.

theology, I will conclude with some distinctive elements of love-of-neighbor that can shape an Orthodox Christian educational approach.

Liberation Theology

In liberation theology, the issues of social justice dynamically meet Christian theology. The “theology of liberation” emerged within the wider context of Catholic Social Teaching and many theologians of liberation are Roman Catholic;³⁶ however, the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, while affirming that “The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and a force for liberation” is itself highly critical of certain aspects of liberation theology, as I mention below. According to Christopher Rowland in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (2007), the theology of liberation is not so much a new theology as a new way of *doing* theology, with the following constitutive elements: (1) It is rooted in ordinary people’s everyday experience of poverty; (2) It relies heavily on Scripture to interpret that experience, particularly those texts which start from a situation of oppression and vulnerability;³⁷ (3) In many parts of the world, it has deep roots within the life of the Roman Catholic Church; (4) It has flourished in the meetings of groups within urban or rural settings, worshipping and reflecting on Scripture and joining in common projects for human welfare in health and education; and (5), it is a theology that engages the whole person in the midst of a life of struggle and

³⁶ “Liberation theology has emerged within the wider context of Catholic social teaching and, in particular, the significant development of Roman Catholic theology based on the Second Vatican Council, and the encyclicals associated with it. The decisions taken by the Latin American bishops at their epoch-making meeting at Medellin, affirmed at Puebla, with the explicit commitment to take a ‘preferential option for the poor’ and reaffirmed at the most recent conference of Latin American bishops at Santo Domingo, have offered a foundation for those Christians committed to the betterment of the poor enabling them to see their task as an integral part of the Church’s vocation to evangelisation.” Christopher Rowland, “Introduction: The Theology of Liberation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland (Cambridge Collections Online: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5.

³⁷ Rowland furthers that “What some liberation theologians are claiming is that the vantage point of the poor is particularly, and especially, the vantage point of the crucified God and can act as a criterion for theological reflection, biblical exegesis, and the life of the Church. The poor are the means whereby the Church can learn to discern the truth, direction and content of its mission, and they can assure the Church of being the place where the Lord is to be found.” Christopher Rowland, “Introduction: The Theology of Liberation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland (Cambridge Collections Online: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7. Rowland is citing Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Church of the Poor* (London: SCM, 1985), 222.

deprivation, rather than being handed down to them by ecclesiastical or theological experts.³⁸

Rowland describes the work of liberation theologians in the following way:

However sophisticated the books and articles form the liberation theologians may seem to be, it is their experience and that of those with whom they work that is the motor which drives their theology. The struggle for the survival of millions linked with Christian social teaching prompted priests and religious to think again about their vocation. In so doing, they have learnt afresh from the poor as they have lived and worked with them. In a situation where hundreds of thousands of peasants were driven off the land their families have farmed for generations, because of international demand for economic growth to service foreign debt, and where many have drifted to the shanty towns which have sprung up on the periphery of large cities, liberation theology has flourished. So the starting place is not detached reflection on Scripture and tradition but the present life of the shanty towns and land struggles, the lack of basic amenities, the carelessness about the welfare of human persons, the death squads and the shattered lives of refugees.³⁹

In the words of Gustavo Gutierrez, perhaps the most well known voice of liberation theology, “the question in Latin America will not be how to speak of God in a world come of age, but rather how to proclaim God as Father in a world that is inhumane. What can it mean to tell a non-person that he or she is God’s child?”⁴⁰ To summarize its theological emphasis, in liberation theology the salvation or liberation wrought by Christ is examined primarily in terms of a communal or collective liberation: the aspirations of oppressed peoples and social

³⁸ Rowland, “Introduction: The Theology of Liberation,” 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

classes; an understanding of history in which the human being is seen as assuming conscious responsibility for human destiny; and Christ liberating the human race from sin, which is the root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression.⁴¹

Whereas Latin America is often seen as the starting place of liberation theology, related movements have emerged in different parts of the world that suggest it is now most appropriate to speak of liberation *theologies*. In the United States there is a multiplicity of liberation theologies: Black Theology, Latino/Hispanic Theology, Latina Theology, Asian American Theology, Native American Theology, Gay and Lesbian Theology, Feminist Theology, Womanist Theology, Asian American Feminist Theology, and Native Feminist Theology.⁴² The common point of these theologies is that “the perspective of the poor and the marginalized offers another story, an alternative to that told by the wielders of economic power.”⁴³

Within the Roman Catholic Church itself, liberation theology has faced significant criticism and in 1984 issued a statement titled, “Instruction on certain aspects of the ‘theology of liberation’” which discusses “the deviations, and risks of deviation, damaging to the faith and to Christian living, that are brought about by certain forms of liberation theology.”⁴⁴ Members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, in a recent survey of biblical hermeneutics “discern a danger that those engaged in liberation theology might be too one-sided, and find themselves engaged in social and political action which is not the main task of the exegete.”⁴⁵ A primary critique is that liberation theologians often draw on Marxist analysis of social reality as a frame of reference,

⁴¹ Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology : Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Religious Movement in Latin America--and Beyond* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987).

⁴² Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Anthony B. Pinn, *Liberation Theologies in the United States: An Introduction* (New York: NYU Press, 2010).

⁴³ Rowland, “Introduction: The Theology of Liberation,” 6.

⁴⁴ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “Instruction on Certain Aspects of The “Theology of Liberation,”” (Vatican: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1984). See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

and emphasize a hope for God's reign on earth "to the detriment of the more transcendent dimensions of scriptural eschatology."⁴⁶ Indeed, the 1984 statement provides a salient review and critique of the wedding of the theology of liberation with "Marxist analysis."⁴⁷ Orthodox theologians and educators ought to take the time to study these Vatican texts before moving forward with any appropriation of liberation theology, for they embody important theological critiques from the experience of the Roman Catholic Church.

Liberation Theology in Christian Education

Within Christian education, liberation theology has had a significant impact not simply on the content of *what* is taught (as might be the case, for example, with themes of social justice), but on the very manner and method of education. Among grassroots groups struggling with poverty:

The biblical tradition becomes a catalyst for new thought and action related to the circumstances of everyday commitments.... To engage the poor to read the Bible has involved a program of education about the contents of the biblical material, so that it can be a resource for thousands who are illiterate. In such programs full recognition is taken of the value of the experience of life.⁴⁸

Indeed, this experience of poverty and oppression is seen to be "as important a text as the text of Scripture itself." Liberation theologians recognize that this manner of biblical study may seem to be an example of the dangerous reading into the text of the readers' own prejudices,

⁴⁶ Houlden J. L., *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (London SCM Press, 1995). quoted in Rowland, "Introduction: The Theology of Liberation," 9.

⁴⁷ Ratzinger, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of The "Theology of Liberation"," VII. See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html

⁴⁸ Rowland, "Introduction: The Theology of Liberation," 8. Rowland cites Karl Barth: "Why should parallels drawn from the ancient world be of more value for our understanding of the epistle than the situation in which we ourselves actually are and to which we can therefore bear witness?" Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933).

but cite the inevitability that some kind of reading into the text is always at work in biblical interpretation.⁴⁹

Thomas Groome is probably the most well known Christian (Catholic) religious educator for whom liberation theology has profoundly influenced his work. He explains that the most significant influence on him in this regard was Paulo Friere, especially through *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Friere, who critiqued the “banking model” of education (where the teachers deposited education into the students minds), taught illiterate adults in Brazil to read in as little as six weeks by having them start reading from their own contexts, reading the things that were important to them. The agency of the poor through literacy was a lead-in to give people the agency to question their social structures, liberate themselves, and, ideally, liberate their oppressors as well. It was a way of giving critical agency to the disenfranchised, and inviting them to envision a new reality for themselves and their nation. Groome is influenced by both the content of liberation theology—salvation understood as liberation—but also by the educational method that Friere employed, which asks people to turn to their own contexts first, understand them, be “empowered” to do something about them, and then bring this into conversation with existing structures and teaching. This perspective on teaching and learning becomes a template (in more robust form) for all Christian pedagogy for Groome, and this pedagogy has influenced now several generations of Christian religious educators.

Reflection on Orthodox Christianity and Liberation Theology

There are numerous angles from which to reflect on the relationship between Orthodox Christianity and liberation theology: an examination of patristic texts that deal with love of neighbor; the statements of social concern issued from the Clergy-Laity Congresses of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America;⁵⁰ an in-depth study of Orthodox

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ These statements and reflection upon them are collected in the important volume Stanley S. Harakas, *Let Mercy Abound: Social Concern in the Greek Orthodox Church* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1983).

involvement in the World Council of Churches; the 2004 document “Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church,”⁵¹ to name a few possibilities. In this assessment, I will rely on the thinking of Orthodox theologian Olivier Clement who, twenty-five years ago, published an unassuming piece in the “Notes and Comments” section of the St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly titled, “Orthodox Reflections on Liberation Theology.” These reflections, translated from the French, serve to remind us that in the twentieth century, Orthodox Christians in traditionally Orthodox lands faced many of the questions of liberation theology as they reckoned with the ideals and reality of communism.⁵² Clement’s article is worth digesting in full, but I will highlight a few main points lest his work get lost to us today, especially to those of us who are struggling to educate youth for love of neighbor – to be saints, not communists. His insights are critical for our work; they encourage us to approach liberation theology with a cautious openness. They also speak to the need for Orthodox theologians today to contribute to conversations around liberation theology.

Clement reminds us that “These various ‘theologies of liberation’ pose the problem of the contemporary encounter between Christianity and Marxism — or rather, very concretely, the encounter of Christians and Marxists in a ‘Third World’ suffering from the shock of adjustment to modern civilization.” He reminds us that while Marxism holds little interest for anyone in Western Europe anymore, in Latin America, Communism was “at the forefront in a struggle that seeks to oppose a vicious capitalism of foreign origin that works hand in glove with an oligarchy of wealthy land-owners, a combination that in the cruelest way crushes and destroys millions of people. Here its appeal lies in its

⁵¹ <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx>

⁵² In 1990 Stephen Hayes, an Orthodox theologian teaching in South Africa, published a provocative article, “Orthodoxy and Liberation Theology,” which engages liberation theology the most rigorously since Clement. His article tackles some key ontological and political aspects of the relationship between Orthodoxy and liberation theology, while Clement focuses on what might be called more of the spiritual responses to liberation theology. Hayes’ article should be studied in seminary classrooms and among Orthodox Christians struggling to understand the relationship between the Church and the political sphere (including Marxism and Communism), critiques of “western” liberation theologies from an Orthodox perspective, etc.; Clement’s article is more useful for educational purposes for it stresses some foundational spiritual insights inherent in Orthodoxy that can form the basis of love-of-neighbor curriculum. Hayes, “Orthodoxy and Liberation Theology.”

ability to dismantle certain mechanisms of oppression and to unite into a common front those who long for social justice.”⁵³ Clement believes that Christians should concretely collaborate with “open” Marxists “by working for the liberation of the poor and oppressed, as well as by denouncing the short-sighted egotism of the leaders and fashioners of Western economic policy. This they can do by striving, together with such ‘open’ Marxists, to recover and preserve the mystery of man by insisting on the absolute quality of the person, while making clear the emptiness of ideology and its ability to quench the spiritual thirst of the human soul.”⁵⁴

Against proponents of the most perverse form of liberation theology, who use “machine gun theology” in their pursuit of “justice,” he assesses: “It is precisely for this reason that today, more than ever before, Christian people — and this is especially the vocation of the Orthodox — must proclaim, live and radiate the Resurrection of Christ. But we can do so only on the condition that we constantly remind ourselves that witness to the Resurrection demands that we struggle — within ourselves first of all, but also within society and culture — to defeat every form of death, slavery and degradation of human souls and bodies.”⁵⁵ He concludes that *only* non-violent actions can be truly creative over the long run, and break the cycle of oppression. “Such actions are grounded in prayer and the example of contemplatives; they make of ecclesial communion the leaven of human communion. They seek not so much to control the levers of power as to limit that power...they struggle untiringly to pave the way towards realization of a ‘civilization of communion’ and a ‘civilization of love.’”⁵⁶

⁵³ Clement, “Orthodox Reflections On ‘Liberation Theology,’” 64. On this point, Stephen Hayes argues that Orthodoxy’s trouble with this version of a theology of liberation is that it “absolutizes the struggle of the moment and makes it normative, not only for the participants, but for generations to come.” He cites the example from the Greek struggle for liberation where the Greek bishops blessed the cannons of the freedom fighters and the shells that they were firing at the Turkish imperial forces. The bishops were excommunicated by the Patriarch of Constantinople. Hayes, “Orthodoxy and Liberation Theology,” 14.

⁵⁴ Clement, “Orthodox Reflections On ‘Liberation Theology,’” 66.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 67-8.

He reminds us that we are not alone in our struggle to “discern the spirits” in liberation theology. He asserts that Orthodox thought “is quite familiar with the various liberation theologies, and [I believe it] has influenced those theologies for the better...” How? “by directing them first of all towards a spiritual liberation of man taken in his totality.” He draws from a range of Orthodox theologians from Russia, Lebanon, Greece, France and Serbia.

Here we find in Clement’s brief thoughts some important emphases that are worth noting. (a) Russian religious philosophers have focused on personhood – personal liberty lived out in communion. (b) Metropolitan George Khodor and participants in the Orthodox Youth Movement of the Patriarchate of Antioch, have developed an attitude of evangelical non-violence that is willing, if necessary, to accept martyrdom.

(c) “Exon” the Greek Christian Socialist Youth, with its master thinker Christos Yannaras, put forth that “ideologies are unable to respond adequately to human needs and situations” and aimed to “create an inter-personal communion... fashioned on the image of the Trinity.”⁵⁷ (d) The French Orthodox reviewer of Yannaras’ book *Orthodoxy and Marxism* explains: “Christians, because they hold to love — and should hold to nothing other than love — pose to the Communists the problem of their ultimate destiny.”⁵⁸ (e) A Serbian Orthodox priest, Fr. Athanasios Jevtic, according to this French reviewer, when invited to participate in discussions about Christianity and Marxism, spoke little and demonstrated that the secret victor on the scene of modern history is “Dovstoevsky’s Christ — our Christ who is deeply humble, deeply silent, deeply loving...”⁵⁹ Clement concludes: “Perhaps there, insofar as Christians have the courage to be what they are called to be, lies the true meaning of ‘liberation theology.’”⁶⁰

In Clement’s synthesis, we have important wisdom that can form

⁵⁷ Ibid., 71.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 72.

the basis of further theological and educational work around social justice and liberation theology: the insistence on the absolute quality of the person; the inability of ideology to quench the human soul; the struggle to witness to the Resurrection first within ourselves but also within society and culture to defeat every form of death, slavery and degradation of human souls and bodies; action grounded in prayer and the example of contemplatives; the value in the limit of power, rather than in controlling the levers of power; the focus on personal liberty lived out in communion; evangelical non-violence that will accept martyrdom if necessary; the question of our ultimate destiny; the place of humility, silence, and love; and indeed, love as central, love as Christ. Clement's synthesis is an important challenge to us today as Orthodox educators to, on the one hand, move forward to advance our love for the neighbor beyond that of fundraisers and canned food drives and, on the other, to do so in a way that is richly contextualized in the cumulative wisdom of our Orthodox spiritual heritage.

Final Reflections for Educators

Orthodox educators are responsible for educating youth so that they may be saints. As such, our challenge is to navigate the murky waters of educational praxis today and discern ways of educating for true love of neighbor that is authentically Orthodox. On a macro level, educators should be aware, first, that social justice and liberation theology, which ask why the poor are hungry and pose a variety of political and economic solutions, so often have political agendas. Orthodox Christian education must tread carefully to avoid couching its love for neighbor in political agendas or ideologies. While our youth ministry must encourage young Orthodox Christians to have “the courage to be what they are called to be,” and in a humble, loving way, work toward the liberation of the poor and oppressed, at the same time, we must “mak[e] clear the emptiness of ideology and its inability to quench the spiritual thirst of the human soul.”

Second, we learn that just because Orthodox Christians in the United States have not yet developed a rigorous literature on social justice and liberation theology, this does not mean our Orthodox

brothers and sisters elsewhere have not been doing significant thinking on this from within their own cultural contexts. This thinking has a lot of wisdom that we must seek to access and learn from.⁶¹

Third, in a spirit of openness, it is worth noting that if Orthodox educators borrow educational curricula and ideas around social justice and liberation theology, then there are questions that we must ask of these curricula, such as: what are the epistemological and anthropological underpinnings, “hidden curriculum” of these curricula? How do these compare and contrast with what our Orthodox understanding? What is missing from a full picture of our need for service? This questioning and appropriation should be done by educators working in cooperation with a community of believers from a variety of Orthodox backgrounds (such as longevity in the Church, jurisdiction, political perspective, educational background, etc.).

On more of a micro level, Clement has honed in on what I believe are some fundamental theological emphases for curricular development. Here are a few additional thoughts along these lines with the hope that they become conversation points for Orthodox educators who seek to encourage youth in their ministry to love the neighbor.

(1) Clement reminds us of the example of contemplatives, grounded in prayer, who are not interested in controlling the levers of power, but of limiting that power.

(2) A significant portion of contemporary educational theory, which is often influenced by liberation theology, focuses on the “empowerment” of learners. Orthodox educators should be wary of emphasis on empowerment in learning for it flies in the face of a

⁶¹ Iswolsky, “Social Justice in Russian-Orthodox Thought.” “And this can be said of the contribution of the Russian-Orthodox theologians now involved in the ecumenical movement and in the discussion of such important themes as ecclesiology, Christian ethics and social justice. They do not offer a ready made system, they make an attentive and respectful study of Western social teachings, before brining their own views into focus. It is the cosmic view of a world which, however sinful it may be, is open to salvation and is awaiting transfiguration.” 94.

fundamental posture of humility required of the believer that pervades the tradition. Educators must work towards developing educational trajectories that will emphasize learners' agency and responsibility, based on a robust Orthodox anthropology, but resist such trajectories that advocate for *controlling* levers of power or developing notions of empowerment that would make it hard for these same youth to understand why we pray before communion in the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom that we are "first among sinners."

(3) Related to this, we see throughout Orthodox spiritual teaching the primacy of repentance as a spiritual imperative for Orthodox Christian life. Social justice and liberation theology locate sin in the economic, political and social structures. Orthodoxy does not exclude this, but asks us to look at the plank in our own eye.⁶²

(4) Our educational emphases will depend directly on our theological emphasis regarding where we locate the kingdom of God: is it ahead of us, an eschatological kingdom, or are we supposed to be co-creators of a reign of God here on earth? Certainly we are continuing the ministry of Christ here on earth, but is it because we are his servants, living in hope for his eschatological kingdom, or is it because we actually are meant to build his kingdom here on earth? Orthodox theology generally gives precedence to the former, and sees grave dangers in the latter. Yes "we struggle — within ourselves first of all, but also within society and culture — to defeat every form of death, slavery and degradation of human souls and bodies" but we do not do this because we are building the kingdom of God on earth. We forge ahead on our spiritual mandate to love the neighbor with a posture of humility.⁶³

⁶² "Personal moral improvement is inseparable from service to society; 'man saves himself by saving others,' but 'he can save others, only if he can save himself.'" Ibid., 92. Quoting Archpriest Liveriy Voronov, Professor at the Leningrad Theological Academy. One only need study the frequency of the theme of personal repentance in the liturgical texts of the Orthodox Church to be struck by its centrality.

⁶³ "This means a return to the early Christian conception of man, converted and perfected in Christ, observing the ascetic rule toward the evil of the world, and at the same time sharing the responsibility for his brother man." Ibid.

(5) Finally, the victor on the scene is Christ, the Son of the living God, the one who “deeply humble, deeply silent, deeply loving,” teaches us to have the courage to be what we are called to be. Any movement towards love of neighbor must be based on Christ’s love.

It is essential that educators develop the critical faculties to assess the extent to which the educational programs we design or adopt are somehow faithful to the Orthodox Christian tradition. As we move ahead in educating Orthodox Christian youth for love of neighbor, these faculties will be badly needed so that we might simultaneously invite our youth to true love of neighbor that is intrinsic to our Christian calling, and do so in a way that invites them to sanctity and holiness of life and is grounded in prayer, humility, peace and non-violence, silence, and love.

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Emmaus House and Orthodoxy: Living with the Poor

Julia Demaree-Raboteau

In 1963, when Patriarch Maximos ordained Father David Kirk in the Melkite Church of Saint Anne in Jerusalem, he said “You are ordained for the Church of God,” and he added the words, “for the poor, and for the unity of Christians.” These words laid the cornerstone for what was to become Father David’s lifelong ministry as an Orthodox priest, of working side by side with the poor in Harlem, until he died in May of 2007. His legacy lives on through the Emmaus House, a house of hospitality for the poor. In conversations with my husband Albert and I during the last two years of his life, Father David shared the hope that his work would continue to grow and develop after his death and that Orthodox Christians would be inspired to take on this kind of ministry in their service to God.

I want to thank The Sophia Institute for inviting me to share a brief history of Father David’s life and work in order to explore ways for Orthodox Christians to take up his challenge to use Emmaus House as a vehicle for helping others. As a youth, Father David was sensitized to racism when he spent two weeks as a high school news reporter collecting data in an all black high school in Alabama. Radicalized by the vast inequities that he witnessed, he wrote William Faulkner and their correspondence helped contain his turbulent thoughts that would have been too dangerous to express openly in the Deep South. He hitchhiked to Birmingham just before the first bus boycott in Montgomery that publicly launched the Civil Rights Movement. He gave up his teaching post, his car and his possessions when Dorothy Day beckoned him to come north to experience her work at the Catholic Worker where he lived while he earned a Master’s degree at Columbia University in Social Thought.

Called to the priesthood, he went to Rome to attend Beda College, and was ordained as a Melkite Catholic priest three years later in Jerusalem. Then, Father David returned to Birmingham, Alabama to fulfill a pastoral internship under Bishop Joseph Raya, a brilliant mentor of courage and wisdom. Father David preached at the 16th street Baptist Church one week before the Ku Klux Klan bombed this African-American church, killing four teen-aged girls. Again Dorothy directed Father David north urging him to go to Harlem in order to define his own way of serving the homeless. In Harlem, he dedicated himself to a ministry called Emmaus House; this ministry consumed him for the rest of his life.

Father David discovered that the homeless youth in the streets of Harlem offered a very different challenge than that posed by the older men and women on the Bowery who were being served by the Catholic Worker. He developed a ministry to empower these youth, who were often addicted, by getting them to take ownership of their lives. In order to live in the Emmaus House community, the youth had to be drug free, work on a new life, get into a discipline, improve their education and pursue a “place of hope” either religious or cultural in nature. Father David challenged their life attitudes, encouraged new skills and deepened their spiritual self worth. All the members within the community made decisions regarding life in the Emmaus House.

In the seventies and eighties, Emmaus House’s major projects included two Community Guesthouses (for overnight guests), a “Ragpickers,” a Thrift Shop, a Traveling Kitchen to feed the poor out on the street, Emmaus Inns to house those with AIDS, Stand-Up Women’s Project for crack addicted women, and a Legal Aid Service that became the Urban Justice Center and Emmaus/Jericho where construction skills were taught. Famous contributors, such as Odetta, Bette Midler, Martin Sheen and Mario Van Peebles gave generously to the Emmaus House. Only once were government funds taken and that contract was broken two months later because it proved counterproductive to the Emmaus House vision. Individual donors and foundation grants supported this thriving community as well. At this time, Emmaus House

was something like an underground version of Saint Basil's "City of Hospitality." During lean times, they adopted the "ragpicker" mentality of begging and doing without, a phrase derived from Abbe Pierre of Emmaus International. Father David's weekly stipend was twenty-four dollars, the same as that of the men and women he lived with.

In the mid-nineties, Father David's health declined and he had to cut back on the scope of his ministry. He sold the hotel-sized building in East Harlem and moved into the brownstone in West Harlem taking a dozen or so residents with him. The work of Emmaus House continued but now the residents, in addition to providing services to the poor, were ministering to him as well, helping him up and down the stairs for his dialysis treatment and to the evening family meals. Many of these same residents kept the ministry going with some supervision for more than two years after he passed in May of 2007. But, both due to a lack of funds and lack of a live-in, full time director, Emmaus House, as envisioned and engendered by Father David, closed its doors June of 2009. This was very painful to the residents, especially since they had bonded together as family. Many of them still stay in touch with each other. One of the members of Emmaus House transitioned into a job at another Christ centered ministry so he could continue to serve the poor.

After a summer of prayer and reflection, Emmaus House reopened its doors on October 29, 2009 with a traveling soup run. When our white van pulled up to a curb near Penn Station, it was recognized at once and subsequently deluged with homeless people. Serving that night was our dedicated and talented cook, an Orthodox priest and one of his altar servers, and a house director. We, in turn, were so happy to see them that we gave out double servings of the hot chicken soup and didn't have enough for all four locations on our run! Heart to heart talks, prayers and clothing distribution followed. It marked a modest beginning and a reunion that filled us with joy and hope. During these four past months of serving, we have been alarmed by the homeless centers that are being closed down in Manhattan, especially since homelessness is sharply increasing in our country. The need for works of mercy has become a mandate.

On the day before he passed, Father David had these words to say to the interviewer from the publication *The Road to Emmaus*, “What I always wanted was a core of deeply religious and committed people, committed to the poor, committed to God, committed to community life. Individuals came, but that solid core never materialized,” and then he added, “To fulfill something like this, you need to have a firmly Orthodox Christian group, with a total life commitment, that believes these things can be done without money. You have to totally put your life into God’s hands. Saint Isaac of Nineveh, who has a very clear view of how to live with the poor, says that to really be of help, your own lifestyle can’t be too distant from theirs. It has to be in solidarity with them.”

And these words bring us to the present moment, to you and to me in today’s world as we wrestle with the question of how live out the teachings in twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew. Are we open to consider his challenge and to receive the vision of his legacy and the gift of his house? The need to help the “material poor” is greater than ever. The need to have a place to address our spiritual poverty is great as well, especially for those of us who have the noose of materialist consumerism hanging around our necks. As the Emmaus House resurrects itself, the following things will form the cornerstone of its ministry. First, the Emmaus House wants to revitalize a small, intentional Christian community to live in the House as a community that prays together and serves the poor within our doors. Secondly, the Emmaus House wants to continue to expand outreach services to the poor, both in the Harlem neighborhood and in their night run. Thirdly, the Emmaus House plans to function as a learning lab for others in the Orthodox community through hosting youth, seminarians, clergy, volunteers, children and lay folk to engage in our ministry. Fourthly, the Emmaus House wants to be open to engaging folks in other religious walks of life. Furthermore, the Emmaus House wants to develop a support network of donors, volunteers and affiliated agencies. Lastly, the Emmaus House aims to fill the “Christ the Homeless” Chapel with prayer services and, if God allows, a priest to serve Divine Liturgy and offer pastoral care. We invite you all to be part of this family ministry.

Call us, pray with us, care with us, and serve with us. Join us in making Emmaus House hospitality a way of life. In serving the poor, we also are served, enabling us to find our spiritual commonality.

Emmaus House can be contacted in the person of its new Director, at Juliademaree@gmail.com

‘Time for the Exchange of Gifts’: Sharing with the Poor in Developing Countries

Sue Lane Talley

This article shares observations of two particular Orthodox missions, conducted by me, my husband, Dana, and my son Jonathan, as well as some reflections on our own personal philosophy, based upon years of domestic and international travel as Orthodox Christians in the music ministry. We have been inspired by the open attitude to the Orthodox concept of mission to the poor, as demonstrated in the leadership of Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos) in Albania, and by some of the modern followers of the V. Rev. Fr. Alexander Men, in Russia. Their love for Orthodox Christianity has been so open-hearted that it has caused some less bold hearts to express concern about the fact that both of these prominent Orthodox evangelists were willing to evaluate and use (when they deemed it appropriate) experiences and wisdom from non-Orthodox sources in their own missionary efforts to bring to bear in their mission useful things, which benefited the poor. Archbishop Anastasios once expressed this principle as follows:

Offering spontaneous, brotherly love to all our ‘neighbors,’ for no other reason than the simple fact that they are human beings, is acknowledged as Christianity’s quintessential message. How do we respond, therefore, to the question, ‘Should we cooperate with individuals from other religious and ideological backgrounds?’ When the purpose is to serve the entire human family by promoting justice, equality, freedom, respect for the human personality, peace, and the welfare of one’s people and nation, our answer must clearly be ‘yes.’¹

¹ Yannoulatos, *Facing the World*, 44

The openness to non-Orthodox missionary experience as manifested by these leaders seemed to me to highlight the truth that prophetic Orthodox Christianity can often see that in all of life, and in other human beings in particular, the image of God is like a fire still burning; all that is good is of God, and lessons are to be learned even through the triumphs and tragedies of Christians outside the visible fold of the Orthodox Church. Does the Orthodox Church in general believe that each culture has some value, hiding or revealing within its best traditions the irresistible image of God? Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos) gives a persuasive answer to this question:

The cornerstone of Christian anthropology remains the belief that God made Adam ‘in the image of God’ (Gen 5:1). Every subsequent biblical view of humanity is built upon this foundation...God is revealed as a *personal* God: an existence whose essence is unity; a sharing between persons; a unity in three and a trinity in one; a perfect *koinonia agapes* (community of love). ‘Likeness’ to God is offered to human beings as a possibility, not as an accomplished fact. It is ultimately achieved through the action of the Holy Spirit.²

The Orthodox approach to a generously wide understanding of mission, which won my heart over thirty years ago, was one of such openness and respect for other Christians—indeed, of other human beings—and the willingness of certain Orthodox Christians in the Russian tradition to build upon common ground, rather than tear down my faith to supplant it with that which was wholly other.

That which was winsome in the Orthodox Tradition I first encountered, is difficult now to put into words. In my coming over into Orthodoxy, I certainly did not capitulate first and foremost to philosophical argument. Perhaps it was a spirit of *syndesmos*, of coming together in faith, rather than of the presentation of incontrovertible evidence that Orthodoxy was “the one true church” that I found so full of irresistible charm.

² Idem, 58.

Why do I feel that this approach, understood as it is by many Christians, is so very Orthodox? I think it is because of the Orthodox teaching on original sin: the understanding that the human person, however humble, is made in the image and likeness of God; an iconic rootedness in God that cannot be broken even by the historical weight of sin and moral failure; something that makes each one a brother or sister of the Son of Man of infinite worth. This approach sets Orthodoxy apart in a fundamental way from many other traditions that stress the more damaging effects of ‘original sin.’ Even so, this more ancient understanding is also shared by other Christians. This approach certainly does not approach humankind first of all as “totally depraved” but as totally precious and with infinite, still discoverable, possibilities. That all human beings sin is not a matter of speculation; but even so, the irrepressible belief in the imperishable image of God within the human person causes Orthodox believers to look at life with a unique, if sober, optimism.

Respect for the image of God in every human person also accords with the spirit of Orthodox mission as I have observed it; indeed in a special way with the teachings of saints, such as Herman of Alaska. That respect is what fueled the missions of Fr. Alexander Men and Archbishop Anastasios, and what touched the hearts of their followers. Love is the key:

With this love, which could be called a sixth sense, the faithful Christian uncovers the deeper reality in things and sees each and every human being as he or she really is: a creation of God, an image of God, a child of God, our sister or our brother. The freedom found in Christian love is a tremendously powerful force. It is not restricted by what other people believe, nor can any obstacle inhibit its initiative.³

Such respect is both contagious and courageous. Is it unique to Orthodoxy? Perhaps not, but belief that the human person, however seemingly insignificant, is made in the image of God, provides the

³ Idem , 62.

Orthodox Christian in particular with a special imperative to share both material and spiritual consolation with our brothers and sisters. The image of God, according to Orthodox theology, is distorted but not destroyed through sin, and is worth uncovering and rediscovering in every person, each of whom is a unique treasure. Belief in the infinite worth of each human person as bearing the image of God was conspicuous in the mission and ministry to the poor, which my husband and I observed at first hand, in our visits in Russia and Albania. Orthodox Christianity teaches us in a particular way (and it is a completely biblical understanding) that the poor in this world's sight are rich in the sight of God. Not only are the poor to be ministered to but they are in a position to minister to us; that all may be shared so that together we may come to understand all the fullness of God. Mission is the 'time to share gifts':

And the time will come when all the different fruits (or gifts) will come together into one stream, in which will be preserved all the best in the spiritual culture of humanity and of each person who is made in the image and likeness of God.⁴

An Account of Our Mission Work

We have met several wonderful and illuminated people on our missionary travels, our Orthodox journey. Others know these great souls more intimately, but I wish only to point to them briefly and hope that each of you may make their better acquaintance. Nevertheless I hope this introduction will provoke further study and participation in the shared ministry to the poor that has been inspired, in recent times, by these two exemplars.

Orthodox service to the poor is not an option. It is part of the dominical command that we "love one another, even as I have loved you". Even as we are endowed with the capability to believe, we are endowed, as members of the Body of Christ, to care for one another with Christ's own love:

⁴ Alexander Men, *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century*, 163.

[I]n each of us Christ can and must be ‘formed’ (Gal. 4:19). Christ is the Head, all believers are His members, and His life is actualized in them. All are called and every one is capable of believing, and of being quickened by faith and baptism to live in Him.⁵

That is the meaning of this entire conference: to live in Him. His shared life is, by definition, a life of sacrifice. Yet it is not only a matter of giving to the poor but also receiving their rich gifts in return with openness. If we live in Christ, we long to share His life with others, and in so doing, we find that there are those who are pressed so strongly by the very necessities of living that they almost do not have the luxury of thinking beyond their own survival. Yet there is miraculous faith among the poor that enriches us all, and, for our own salvation, must enrich us. We give to Christ in the poor from our abundance; in return we receive spiritual life, spiritual food.

Christ came bearing gifts and asked, in return, for our faith, our love, our hospitality. His was not a detached form of giving, which would be impossible of God who is mighty and yet cares intimately for each of us. Of the woman at the well, He asked a drink of water; of Zacchaeus, He asked hospitality; of the rich young ruler, He asked everything. When we go to the poor, we must expect much. The children of God long to serve one another, the poor as much as the comparably rich, sometimes much more so. Blessed are the poor: blessed before all others named in the Beatitudes. If the example of Christ is not only to bless the poor but to receive from those to whom he so freely gave, we ought also to bless the poor and allow them to bless us in return.

Early in life, a woman who had left everything to follow Christ enriched my life. A piano teacher, who had been ordained a “secret nun” in Russia, Galina Michniuk came to America as an assistant to saintly Archbishop John (Shahovskoy). Archbishop John had left Russia with his mother at the time of the Revolution and had ended his

⁵ Florovsky, Georges, *Creation and Redemption*, (Belmont: Nordland Publishing, 1976).

life as Archbishop of the Orthodox Church in America for the Western United States. Michniuk sat upon boxes and boards and charged us practically nothing for piano and art lessons; Archbishop John lived humbly and simply until the day he died, having shared the riches of Orthodoxy with thousands of people, including those in prison-camps in Germany. His vision embraced Christians outside the visible Church and his demeanor was such that one would see in him not an exclusive but an inclusive Orthodoxy. I am thankful to have been introduced, through the gift of music, to Archbishop John, this great man of vision and generosity, and to the Church that he loved and served so well. We were able to share Archbishop John's songs in Russia, particularly one about the death of soldiers, in which he speaks of two soldiers of disparate backgrounds meeting, after death, at the feet of Christ, and finding that they were, after all, brothers in Him. In the beautiful adventure that our Orthodox life has been, our family of three has been able to witness marvelous examples of shared service to the poor and modestly to participate in the efforts they inspired.

The Church under Communism was systematically ravaged and robbed. In Russia, Romania, and other countries, the persecution has been well documented and the evidence archived in films of falling churches, crucified, imprisoned, or exiled clergymen, and many faithful laypeople who shared their fate.

Our musical pilgrimages to Russia and Albania came about because of our profound respect for those who passed Orthodox Christianity on to us and to so many others in the Western hemisphere. We cannot afford to forget the heroism of those who, under circumstances beyond our imagination, kept the faith alive. We cannot fail to acknowledge the sense of unity these great Orthodox believers felt with Christians of other traditions as they clung to one another for their very survival.

Ours is an era in which definitions can and must be made of our distinctive Orthodox heritage; nevertheless, the understanding and love, which prevailed among Christians of many denominations in dire straits, must serve as an example for us and in some way shape

the future of shared mission. Firmness of conviction need not exclude openness of heart. St. Herman of Alaska received wisdom from his “pagan” converts, which strengthened his own Orthodox spiritual understanding, and because of his willingness to share their “story,” he was a mightily effective Orthodox missionary.

Serving the Eastern European Orthodox Church has been a shared ministry, inspired by those who made themselves poor for the sake of the Gospel. We were fortunate to be associated with a church whose spiritual children were those of the late Archbishop John, Christ the Savior Church, here in New York City. The Very Rev. Fr. Michael Meerson, its current Rector, has served immigrant populations for the more than the thirty years, which Dana and I have known him. Within the church were the late Catherine Lvoff and Elizabeth Gargarin, Russian princesses by birth but humble Christian women by choice, who in their turn inspired their friends to send religious books to Russia. Thus both through the Church and through our music, we had a link with the former Soviet countries. When, quite unexpectedly, Russia opened its doors, Fr. Meerson helped us form a small, non-profit organization that, through our concert ministry, allowed us to travel to Russia and, later, to Albania. Father Michael is the spiritual son of the V. Rev. Fr. Alexander Men, about whom much has been said and written, and who, before his martyrdom in 1990, was a harbinger of religious freedom in Russia. Fr. Alexander was never afraid to share ministry with others in his parish, and he inspired similar beliefs in those who honor his memory. His was a particularly gifted ministry to intellectual Russians, and left a rich legacy of writings and thinking to guide the Orthodox Church into the twenty-first century.

After Fr. Men’s death, many of his spiritual children contributed to the rebuilding of the Church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian in Moscow, which had been turned into a printing-shop for atheistic propaganda during Soviet times. Fr. Michael Meerson, Fr. Daniel Hubiak, the Chaplain of St. Catherine’s mission to Moscow (Orthodox Church in America), Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky, and others, acquainted us with Sts. Cosmas and Damian to share concerts with the very musical and

intellectual congregation whom God had called through Fr. Alexander Men. We did so several times, sharing the concert stage with talented professional Russian musicians, such as the jazz trumpeter, Oleg Stepurko, and sometimes with the Rev. Fr. Michael Roshak.

At first, with the permission of the Board of the Orthodox Church in America, Dana and I were allowed to go to the public schools with a Protestant ministry and help distribute thousands of New Testament Scriptures, where we would also sing and play classical and Russian folk music. We also took both Russians and Americans associated with the Protestant mission along to local Orthodox churches. Many of the Protestants with us had never been inside an Orthodox church before, and there were several Russians who recommitted their lives to Christ in Orthodoxy when they saw the life of the Lord so actively present at Sts. Cosmas and Damian. It took vision and courage on the part of our understanding Orthodox pastors to allow us a shared Orthodox-Protestant music-mission in times when some Russian Protestant missionary activity in particular was quite controversial. Nevertheless, the overall benefit far outweighed the risks, as the kind people in non-Orthodox Christian churches, who gave of their abundance in America, knowing that we were going to visit Orthodox Christians and that we would be sharing Christ, themselves learned more about Orthodoxy by direct experience than they could have in any other way, and were blessed in return for their generosity.

With the permission of Fr. Alexander Borisov, we purchased, at cost, almost nine thousand crosses at Sts. Cosmas and Damian and then resold them to various congregations here in America to elicit donations. That opportunity helped Sts. Cosmas and Damian in its rebuilding project, its soup kitchen, and in its sister charities, as through this shared giving, Americans and Russians together were able to raise \$187,000 over the course of five years.

Fr. Michael Meerson, as well as Bishop Seraphim (Sigrist), who came on subsequent visits, spoke to the children at the Moscow Children's Hospital, which was supported by the congregation and

clergy of Sts. Cosmas and Damian and their associates. There, we met children whose illnesses would have meant certain death had it not been for the inspired ministry of the doctors and caregivers at that institution. As a small example, to illustrate the poverty endured even by the physicians, the gloves which are usually thrown away at American hospitals after one use were taken home by the doctors, washed, and used again and again. At the same time, the hospital, by the mid-1990s, had a cure rate even higher than that of other American and European hospitals.

Not all the children at the hospital, where Fr. Men had often gone to bless and bring the Sacraments, survived. Anya Gnovenskaya, a gentle and understanding artist, shared her ministry with many children, from the age of six on up, who did not survive their dread diseases. The children, in turn, found great joy in representing the story of Christ by painting pictures, and many of these were printed in a booklet published through the generosity of American Christians and with the assistance of Fr. Alexander Borisoff, Rector of Sts. Cosmas and Damian Church, and the Rev. George Tschistiakov who was the hospital chaplain. Writing about the paintings in the magazine of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship, *In Communion*, Felix Vetrov stated, “We find these children, in what seems to us a cruel and pitiless world, expressing in line and color a vision of a beautiful and God-centered universe.”

There is much more to tell in the continuing story of Sts. Cosmas and Damian Church and much more of Fr. Alexander Men’s legacy, which continues in his spiritual children and is highlighted at a conference here in the States biennially, organized by Bishop Seraphim (Sigrist), who also takes part in the annual commemoration of Fr. Alexander in Moscow and has poured his love into the Moscow community founded by Fr. Alexander. It is Bishop Seraphim whose characteristic remark, “It is time for the exchange of our gifts,” inspired the title of this article.

In 2005, Dana shared the story of our Albanian experience with the participants in Moscow, who were eager to go and assist their brothers and sisters of Albanian heritage. As artists, Dana and I participated in

the 2009 conference here, speaking of Fr. Alexander's encouragement of the arts as evidence of the creative spirit shared with us by Christ, and sharing a song written by the head of the Conservatory at Wheaton College, Tony Paine. (The conference enjoyed the sponsorship of Nyack College, an Evangelical college in which we teach.) Fr. Alexander blessed his former parishioners to share their gifts in unique ways—gifts that are priestly gifts, in the sense that we are, as believers, priests for the world. However, I must take you to Albania at this time so that we might touch upon the kind invitation given by Archbishop Anastasios to that country, its implementation by Fr. Luke Veronis and Presbytera Faith Veronis and the other wonderful Orthodox workers, who opened the doors for us to share our musical gifts, and the gifts we collected through concerts in this country, with God's people in Albania.

The first public appearance of our Lord commenced with good news for the poor. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," declared Jesus, quoting the Prophet, "because He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor"(Isaiah 61:1). Good news to the poor, first of all, implies the Good News of the Gospel, and by God's grace, the concept of the poor includes all of us. Good news also implies the alleviation of miserable living conditions, the opportunity for the able-bodied poor to make a living, and care given to those who are unable to work.

Jesus Christ was able to win the hearts of the poor and suffering because He voluntarily shared their poverty and suffering. The Archbishop of Albania, Anastasios, is a servant of Christ whose identification with the poor has opened the hearts of his people. The Archbishop came to Albania from a ministry in Africa, deliberately seeking a difficult and impoverished society with which to share his gifts of leadership and ministry. Albania had been ravaged by the paranoid leadership of Enver Hoxha, who had raised over 700,000 machine-gun bunkers over Albanian soil rather than help the people build homes. Upon his death, opposing political forces fought to gain power and control over the lives of those already oppressed. The chaos that prevailed immediately after Hoxha's death subsided momentarily,

only to resurface a few years later when, unable to cope with capitalism, the formerly communist country all but collapsed into civil war. Bullets flew; buildings were destroyed. Hunger, succeeded by greed, once again threatened to completely destroy the lives of the Albanians.

But even as the situation of the country became desperate, the courage and stability of the Orthodox Church in Albania grew. As the poor became even more impoverished, as the nation was flooded with immigrants from the embattled Kosovo area, the Archbishop and the Diocese of Albania reached out to the immigrants (most of whom were Muslim) and invited them into their homes and churches, sharing their very lives and opening their resources to their needs. The Archbishop, as always, included many Orthodox laypeople in the distribution of gifts, the ministry of hospitals, the building of collapsed churches, schools, and hospitals, and in and through all, in the sharing of love.

In Christ, everyone who wants to help the poor can give something of himself or herself. The return of our modest gift is “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over” (Luke 6:28). There is no room for pride or self-seeking in such an offering:

Out of a most untalented person God can produce a gifted one. One need only desire this, have a will aimed in this direction, and that’s all. From the most useless persons it is possible to cultivate very capable ones. In order for people not to think that it’s all their own doing, the Apostle Paul says, ‘Look, are many of you called wise or intelligent?’⁶

Giving concerts in the name of Christ, listening to the remarkable music of the very talented and hard-working musicians in the schools and conservatories of Albania, staying in Albanian homes, and receiving the sacraments of the Albanian Orthodox Church, we had the opportunity to share material gifts from Americans with brothers and sisters in Albania. Gifts ranged from modest financial aid to needed

⁶ Men, Alexander, *About Christ and the Church*, 49.

items, such as a new collection of recorded music for the University of Tirana, sent by the truckload from Methodist Christians in California who had heard about the need through our concerts in their church. Noticing that much of their classical music had been preserved in handwritten copy, we had the privilege of presenting to them printed sheet music as well, including the fine “Liturgy of Peace” by the Orthodox composer, Christopher Kypros. Some of the piano music, such as the first Sonata of the Argentinian composer, Ginastera, was eagerly received because music from any country having diplomatic relations with the United States had been forbidden under Hoxha. We heard the beautiful music of Bach in the conservatory, and found that the story of Bach, and his Christian faith, was completely unknown there. So, by the foresight of our gracious hosts, we were able to bring not only material blessings from other Christians but also the particular gifts God had given us to share.

The most remarkable gift we received, other than the outstanding hospitality of every family that had us in their homes, however poor, was the example of those Orthodox Christians who surrounded the Archbishop and with whom he shared his vision and ministry. Here were people who “having nothing, possessed all things” (2 Cor 6:10).

We can, and will, celebrate the fact that God permits us to share our material gifts and intellectual and artistic talents with the poor, and theirs with us. But there is one quality that characterized both the mission of the Greek Orthodox Church and its associates to Albania and the life and work of Archbishop Anastasios. Without triumphalism, without bitterness, and without rancor toward many who oppose him and oppose the Church, the Archbishop has truly represented the mercy, love, and forgiveness of Christ to those who have been privileged to witness his own tireless service. The destruction of Albania included terrible suffering for its people, and the complete waste of their beautiful land and economic resources. The rebuilding of Albania depends upon a very diverse religious and ethnic population, including Albanians, Greeks, Slavophones, Vlachophones, and others within the Orthodox Church, whose cooperation with one another was very reluctant at first. There

are also many Muslims and a few of Roman Catholics. Mother Teresa of Calcutta was born in Albania, and her Roman Catholic followers contribute to the building of the church in Albania in the meaningful ways that distinguished her ministry among the poorest of the poor. With the assistance of Archbishop Anastasios, Albania has become an example, to many nations with similar diversity, of cooperation among what might otherwise be warring religious and ethnic populations.

Archbishop Anastasios came to the country of Albania when it had nothing and largely because it had nothing. Many outside its well-fortified walls believed the Christian faith to have been all but extinguished under Hoxha, who had not only thrown thousands of priests, both Orthodox and Roman Catholic, in prison, but who tore the Koran out of his own father's hands and threw it on a bonfire, before putting his father to death. The life of the believers who persevered for more than forty "godless" years echoes the miraculous, suffering lives of the early Christian saints. One priest, who was put to hard labor during the day, served Holy Communion by night to the faithful, under the table in various homes and using the tablecloth to hide the service, which was held in whispers. Three holy lay sisters in the faith, whom we met and interviewed, helped bring about the opening of their country by their ministry of prayer during Lent and Advent, when they would hold continuous prayer, day and night, in one of their homes with one sister watching the door, one sister sleeping, and other taking her eight-hour shift to implore God's mercy upon Albania. Their hope and prayer continued not only for forty days but for forty years.

When the blessed time came for the liberation of Albania—a time later complicated by unbelievable civil strife—the three sisters, now in their eighties, set out on foot and by donkey to share the Gospel. And how did they share it? They would stand on street corners and sing. I asked them what they sang, which attracted so many people, and what had drawn crowds of curious children was simply the sung prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come..." After the children had gathered, the sisters would tell them about Christ. And here is the miraculous part: Like the

Albanian youth who had received New Testaments from courageous young people from “Youth with a Mission,” who had braved five miles of mined border to sneak bibles into Albania, the children who heard the women sing wanted to know Christ through baptism. The three sisters asked them to bring their parents, and then brought priests to baptize the excited new converts—thousands of them.

The church grew. The opposition grew, but faith and love have overcome much of the fear that is behind prejudice and hatred. “Perfect love casts out fear.” When Archbishop Anastasios heard that one of the Protestant pastors in the area was discouraged from coming to one of our concerts, he immediately made certain that the pastor was included and honored. We heard later that the chancellor of the Orthodox Diocese, Papa Gjani Trebicka, had received death threats from a group of religious extremists, if the Good Friday outdoor procession was allowed to leave his Orthodox church. Hearing of the danger, the local Protestant pastor brought all of his flock to join with the procession that day so that all might see their unity and to protect the Chancellor personally. Although bullets were later fired into the priest’s home, he was unhurt. Rather than harming the cause of Christ, the extremists permitted another demonstration of the mystical interconnection of all who name the Name of Christ and honor Him as Lord.

One final personal episode will bring my memories of shared ministry to a close. We had the honor of presenting a concert in Durres, attended by members of the city council. Many of these were not Orthodox; some were Muslim, perhaps a few were Roman Catholic; some had not yet received a gift of faith. Dana and I had arranged the song, “Agios o Theos,” from Christopher Kypros’ *Liturgy of Peace*, for accompanied solo voice. How well we remember the emotion when Dana sang the song in Greek. “Sing it again!” cried one of the ladies in the audience. He did so, and then another voice, “Sing it in Albanian!” After a brief conference with Fr. Luke, Dana sang the song in Albania. All in the audience rose and sang it with him, hands joined. Fr. Luke Veronis came and brought his rich gift of preaching to the event.

We came home from Russia and Albania laden with handmade gifts from the people, and the remembrance of hospitality that cost them a great deal. We brought what we could, but we came home with much more. An example of the material gifts is a simple cross made by Papa Gjani Tribecka during times of severe oppression. All he could do to keep the faith alive in the hearts of his people was to secretly mold little crosses in the metal factory where he worked and slip the crosses under the door of the faithful. Making these crosses could have cost him his life.

“Tell everyone to come!” Archbishop Anastasios invited, as he said goodbye to us. He knew the value of personal involvement in mission, and applauded the idea of short-term missionary visits to Albania. The joyful surprise of giving of ourselves to the poor is the joy of sharing the reflected image of Christ within them, and receiving their incomparable gifts to us. This is Philanthropy in action, and central to the spiritual life of Orthodoxy. Mission had proved indeed an inestimable ‘time to share our gifts.’

Notes on Contributors

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