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## **From Recent Correspondence – November-December 2020**

*by Father Andrew*

Covid

Q: If you are offered vaccination, will you have it?

A: Now that nearly a million people in the UK have had the vaccination, yes I will have it. I have no fear for myself, especially as I had covid last February (just a bad cold with loss of sense and smell for a couple of weeks), but I feel personally that it is a question of responsibility towards others. This is a purely personal view and I cast absolutely no aspersions on those who do not want the vaccination because of fears about long-term consequences or other reasons. And I do not suggest at all that they are being irresponsible in rejecting the vaccine! I will certainly accept it and I recommend it, though everyone is of course free to choose.

Divisions, Schisms and Heresies

Q: What is a division inside the Church? Why is a division not a schism?

A: I can answer because there is the case of my own part of the Russian Church, the Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). It is very interesting because the events here are current and I have lived through them and seen them and knew and know the people and psychologies involved on both sides. This was not a schism, let alone a heresy, but a division. A division is the stage before a schism and, unlike a schism, may be perfectly justified – providing it is for a positive cause and is therefore temporary. It happens in cases where pious clergy and people are unjustly persecuted by their own bishops, who represent not Christ, but, for example, in our own case, the Soviet atheist State which demanded through certain bishop-citizens that we tell lies. We refused. That was honourable.

Other cases of division are caused by other bishops who also obey purely secular, State interests, or simply their own vices, practising harsh injustices and displaying profoundly anti-Christian conduct. And this can happen and does happen. Tragically, quite often, and

in all the Local Churches. Bishops choose to persecute the persecuted and protect the persecutors. We have experienced that.

Outside the Church, history gives another obvious example with the 'Church of England', with the creation of Methodism and any number of other Protestant sects. These were established by those who were persecuted by Church of England bishops, who were merely venal State employees and not Christians at all. But their divisions became permanent and so schisms, some of which then developed into heresies.

Thus, our particular division outside Russia was created by the persecution of the Soviet State. However, from the 1960s on, our division showed signs among a 'super-correct' few of developing into a schism of the Donatist style, a schism of the self-righteous and self-justifying pride of the Pharisees (backed by CIA funding they justified themselves by accusing others of 'Sergianism'). Such a schism did not happen among over 95% of ROCOR because when the Soviet State collapsed, the vast majority of the Church Outside Russia only wanted to reunite with the Church inside Russia, as soon as it had been freed. We the majority had never had any hidden agendas; we had belonged to ROCOR only because there was 'nowhere else to go', in the words of the ever-memorable Archbishop Antony of Geneva. Our home had always been the Russian Church, and nowhere else, and especially not some pseudo-Orthodox pharisaic sect or a sub-department of some foreign political party.

The tiny minority which rejected our profound unity with the rest of the Russian Church were often of right-wing Protestant origin. They lapsed from the Church immediately, into multiple tiny Donatist schisms, one tiny fragment of which is now developing a new heresy. In other words, we can see in a concrete and contemporary case, how a division may then develop into a schism and how a schism may then develop into a heresy.

Q: What is the difference between a schism and a heresy?

A: A heresy is always the intensification or dogmatization and justification of a schism.

Schisms, which sometimes develop into heresies, always happen because of pride, either personal pride, or else collective, racial pride. The greater the pride, the more likely a heresy is to develop.

We have personal pride in the schisms and then heresies of Arius, Nestorius, Donatus or the Old Ritualist Archpriest Avvakum. We have collective, nationalist, racial pride in the

cases of the schisms and then heresies of the Copts, the Armenians, the Roman Catholics, the Protestants, or the present Ukrainian and Phanariot schisms. The Ukrainian schism says: 'Glory to the Ukraine', not 'Glory to God'. That is a heresy. The Phanariot schism is interesting because we see how racial pride is now developing into the Greek phyletist heresy with the new and still developing dogma of Phanariot Papism, with its 'first among equals' 'because we are Greeks' now developing into 'first without equals' 'because we are Greeks'. This is extraordinarily primitive and has been copied from the Pharisees, whose racism Christ so often denounced.

However, schisms and heresies can be provoked by the other side. For example, the Copts were provoked by Greek racism, the Protestants by Catholic persecution, Archpriest Avvakum by the persecution of the Russian State, the Greek old calendarists by Greek State persecution. Persecution always creates the martyr complex and so deepens a schism and makes a heresy more likely.

Q: What was the Old Ritualist/Old Believer Schism really about?

A: As regards the extreme Old Ritualists (I prefer to call them thus rather than Old Believers, since the belief never changed – all Orthodox are Old Believers), these are basically Russian Protestants, who match, sociologically, the Western Protestants 150 years before them. Their mercantile money-making had to be justified. Here is their heresy. And again we see racial pride, ignorance and ritualism, phariseeism and puritanism, exactly as with the extreme Protestants. It is no surprise that many of the Old Ritualists actually and suicidally supported the 1917 Revolution, which wiped most of them out, just as it wiped out most Bolsheviks. They died by their own hand.

### The Catholic Schism

Q: As far as I know from seminary articles on the Schism from the Church in 1054, in England, France, and Germany they served on leavened bread for a long time after the Schism. Do you know anything about this? Moreover, Grand Duke Vladimir Monomakh, having married the daughter of the King of England, Gytha, was surprised that there were already some disagreements in the Church. This only confirms that the act itself was more of an intentional political phenomenon. East-West relations at that time remained united, and the "differences" themselves remained "unnoticed" for a long time for the sake of unity, and did not suddenly arise in 1054.

What about Catholic people in a village in the south of France, where they have been living for generations and do not want to emigrate anywhere, who do not "look at the horizon",

but have been going to pray in one local Church for 500-700 years? Are they Christians or “apostates” (rhetorically)? Do they live “the old way”? Do they have to “understand” anything? Do we have the right to “pity” them without fear of humiliating them? What if our distant relatives are among them?

A: Of course we always distinguish between institutions and people. Roman Catholicism is clearly a heresy, and was so from the start, but as for individual Roman Catholics, that is quite different. I would not call them heretics, as a heretic must be conscious of what he is promulgating. The average Catholic has never even heard of the filioque, but, on the other hand, most Catholic clergy are heretics because they have heard of it and still accept it. I have met individual Catholics who are basically Orthodox, though they have never realised it. Here we follow the wisdom of the old proverb: ‘A fish rots from the head’, in Russian: ‘Рыба гниет/воняет с головы’.

As regards ‘the 1054 Schism’ in general, it is vital to understand that this is NOT a date, but a process. There were people around Charlemagne who at the end of the eighth century had already undergone ‘1054’. On the other hand, there are Catholics today, true, perhaps not many, who have still not been affected by 1054 – for them it has not yet happened. And in general the final implications or end-results of 1054 are still in 2020 unfolding, for example, in LGBT. As an example, it is true to say that some had begun using unleavened bread before 1054, others continued using leavened bread afterwards.

In many places 1054 did not happen until the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. For example, it was then that the First Crusade began and that Anselm wrote the first defence of the filioque: ‘Against the Greeks’. That was the end for them. They were apostates and heretics. But even today, the average Catholic has never heard of the filioque or of the heretic Anselm and considers that the Crusades were totally wrong. There may not be much difference between them and us Orthodox. I have always considered Catholics as ex-Orthodox, but in fact many of them are more Orthodox than ‘ex’.

You asked me about the fate of Catholics from the south of France. That is interesting because my matushka has Catholic relatives who live precisely in the south of France. I pray for them all at every proskomidia and have done for the last 36 years, though obviously I do not take out particles for them. At every proskomidia, I also pray for various Non-Orthodox people, for example, for ‘William’. This is Shakespeare. Will he find salvation? I do not know. But I calculate that probably no-one else anywhere in the world prays for him. Therefore I must do it. I hope that in Russia priests pray for the tragic Alexander (Pushkin), killed in a sinful duel.

## The Phanariot Schism

Q: Will the Ukrainian Schism spread worldwide or will it peter out once Patriarch Bartholomew is dead?

A: It is now clear – it was not clear at first – that this is both a political and dogmatic schism and does not depend on individual personalities. The present schismatic Patriarch is supported by others, perhaps even worse than himself. The schism can only end once the USA has lost its Superpower status and has been humiliated and its empire with its dollar-power has fallen. When there are no more planeloads of dollars to hand out, it will lose its influence. Then the American-backed Galician separatists who seized power anti-democratically and violently in Kiev in 2014 (with Lithuanian sniper-mercenaries murdering Ukrainians from the roof of the US Embassy) will fall. And that may happen much sooner than many think. For ‘those who sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind’.

Partly the inevitable fall of the USA will come about because of the incompetence of its elite, partly because of the scourge of God, covid. Thus, its administration is running out of steam and its plots, in Eastern Europe, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Georgia, in Syria, in the Yemen, in the Ukraine, in Belarus, in the war with Azerbaijan and now in its schemes in Moldova, are failing. That the atheist criminals in the US State Department and abortionists like Biden and Son are so desperate to promote the idea that a flockless bishop in a Turkish city could be the leader of World Orthodoxy would be laughable, if there were not a few deluded or bribed people to take it seriously.

However, the Phanariot schism (unlike the Ukrainian schism) is permanent and also worldwide. Both sides of the schismatic Westernised coin, both the nationalists (phyletists, whether Greek, Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian, Serbian or other), pharisees and ritualists, as well as their opposite numbers, the careerists, liberals and modernists, are all falling. Good riddance, as they have all long been compromising our witness to real Christianity.

This includes the schismatics of the Local Churches, which, with a few exceptions, have as a whole remained Orthodox. Thus, the renegade drug-dealing (yes, really), careerist former Russian Bishop Flavian (Maxim Mitrofanov), now defrocked and living in London after his interview on Radio Liberty (where else?), as well as other Kochetkov types inside Russia, and the two notorious pervert Russian Bishops Ignaty, and in Bosnia Herzegovina the Serbian Bishop Dimitry (Radzhenovich), who on 4 December nearly set fire to his own church through his lack of faith, as well as in Cyprus schismatic bishops, in Alexandria the schismatic Patriarch and his yes-men adepts, in Greece the schismatic Archbishop of Athens and his equally unprincipled careerist supporters, are out.

The Church is being cleansed. This cleansing is long, long overdue. Covid has had the effect of revealing the truth about each, about those who are traitors, cowards and deceivers because, despite their outward rite, they have no faith, as well as revealing the truth about those who are Orthodox and do not fear death and martyrdom, but only fear God.

Thus, only recently the Synod of the ROC defrocked Sergei Romanov, whom I met in 2018 at the Central Urals Convent, and it is now about to defrock Protodeacon Andrei Kurayev. I have not met him, but met many just like him in the old Paris group, many of whom were also schismatics (and freemasons) and have remained so. Both these cases are also a cleansing.

The first was an extremist of the right, an ignorant man, uncanonically ordained, who called people to suicide for Russia (not for Christ). The other was an extremist of the left, a liberal who had only the disrespectful pride of the modernist in his soul for the Church, because She does not reflect the values of his narcissistic self. Although his pride may yet result in a schism by his joining the Phanar, there is still hope that he may repent. Extremes cannot survive. Such people always destroy themselves through their passions.

Q: Since the Patriarchate of Constantinople has fallen into schism and is out of communion with the rest of the Orthodox Church, what should our attitude be to laypeople of the Patriarchate of Constantinople?

A: We should welcome them with open arms as refugees from the schism created by their still unrepentant bishops and give them confession and communion. As for repentant bishops and priests, they should be welcomed back into the Church by concelebration. Just because the father has put himself in prison, we do not punish the children.

Salvation

Q: Who will be saved? I am thinking especially about Old Ritualists and Catholics. Most of them did not choose to be outside the Church, that was simply the way their parents brought them up. And what about suicides? Can priests take out particles for any of them at the proskomidia? And what is the fate of those who died unjustly, even if they were outside the Church, like Richard III?

A: This is the old question of all us ex-seminarians: What will happen to the Amazon Indians who have never heard of Christ? Nearly 2,000 years ago the Apostle Paul said that such will be judged according to their conscience, in other words, according to what is the

content of their hearts. We also have the story in the Life of St Gregory the Dialogist, who drew the pagan Emperor Trajan out of hell through his prayers. All is possible and God is Merciful. But He is also Righteous.

As regards prayer, there is private prayer and there is public prayer. In public prayer we commemorate only Orthodox. In private prayer we pray for everyone. Parishioners constantly ask me if they can pray for a Non-Orthodox person and I always say: 'Not only you can, but you must.' Who else will pray for them? And I tell them to go and light a candle. I remember 45 years ago one elderly Russian aristocratic émigré who always used to light a candle for 'the servant of God Alexander'. This was Alexander Fleming who had discovered penicillin. That had saved her life in the early 1950s.

In England today, Orthodox make up exactly only 1% of the population and I am talking about all Orthodox, both practising and nominal. So what? Does that mean we cannot do anything? Do people really think that the apostles did not pray for everyone? There were only 11 of them at one point. How did they convert the world? Read the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles! Millions were converted through the apostles directly and indirectly. We can do the same.

Mixed marriages have always been very common here, including in the first post-1917 emigration – there were and are so few Orthodox. Moreover, most of our Orthodox Russian speakers today, mainly from the Ukraine, are women who entered into internet marriages to come and escape the poverty and corruption of the countries of the post-Soviet Soviet Union, not to mention escaping alcoholic Russian men. They want their children to be baptised and their husbands to join the Church. (Some of these do join and some don't). Of course these women pray for their husbands. Therefore, outside Russia our commemoration books officially contain two sections, one for Orthodox, one for Non-Orthodox.

I do the proskomidia, taking out particles only for Orthodox. But I also stand before the table and pray for the Non-Orthodox, without taking our particles for them, as that would be theologically illiterate (they are outside the Church and so remain outside the chalice). Does my prayer help them? I hope so. God is merciful.

Most Orthodox are Orthodox, simply because they were born in a certain country. The same is true for Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Hindus etc. And the same is true for the Old Ritualists. Like the children of Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons, they belong to this sect because their parents belonged to it. They live in a ghetto and psychologically it is very difficult to escape such manipulative sects because they are made to feel guilty if they

disobey. What of their salvation?

All I can say is: God is Merciful. One who has left the Old Ritualists, repenting for them, can and must pray for his parents and ancestors. What will God's judgement be? We must be humble and accept that we do not and cannot know, at least until the Last Judgement. Speculations are a waste of time. We must concentrate on our own salvation, which we can do something about. I would not take out particles for Old Ritualists and other Non-Orthodox at the proskomidia, because they were not in communion with the Church in this life, but I certainly pray for them.

Similarly with suicides. We have to pray for them in our private prayer. As you know, the Church has always made a sharp distinction between the few who commit suicide because they hate God and the vast majority who have lost their minds. What will happen to them? We do not know. But God is Merciful. This is our only hope. Our prayer is so feeble. All we can do is rely on Divine Mercy. Some suicides are martyrs. I have no doubt of this.

As regards those who died unjustly, like Richard III, I think we can have even greater hope in God's Mercy. They are Non-Orthodox martyrs. God always recognises sacrifices, whoever makes them. But again, I only take out particles at the proskomidia for Orthodox. Otherwise, we disobey the Church in our presumption and pride. God knows, not us.

Let us recall the saints of the Old Testament and the Holy Innocents slaughtered by Herod. None of them was baptised. But they found salvation and were freed from hell by Christ on Great Saturday. And let us recall the good thief, who repented just before the end and was promised Paradise that very day. He was not baptised, except, like so many martyrs, in his blood.

#### Pastoral Practice

Q: Do you practise frequent communion in your church? Is frequency of communion normal? And how frequent should confession be?

A: Yes, we do definitely practise frequent communion in our church, but we also practise more or less weekly confession, which we can do as we have two or three priests confessing and one priest in the altar.

The old State Church mentality was 'confession and communion once a year because you have to'. This was the nominalist mentality that brought about both the atheist revolution in



Russia and the modern apostasy in Greece. The now very old-fashioned 1960s modernist mentality (the Protestant Schmemmann, Archbp Leo of Finland, Greek Orthodox in the USA etc) is 'obligatory communion every time but confession once a lifetime and only if you insist'.

The mentality of these modernists is that the Eucharist, holy communion, is somehow magical, it is at the centre of the Church. That is not the case. Christ is the Head of the Church and it is repentance that takes us to Christ. It can be said therefore that repentance is at the centre of the Church. When there is no more repentance, then the Church on earth will no longer exist.

The Orthodox view is frequent confession and frequent communion. It is not one versus the other, it is both together. Otherwise the medicine does not work. This is a virtuous circle. The faithful should try and have confession and communion at least twice a month. Communion at every liturgy is more difficult and of course younger women cannot have communion every Sunday in any case.

#### Western Aberrations

Q: If the 'evil empire' (the USSR) fell in 1991, when did the USA become the new evil empire?

A: I think this is a debatable point, as it is more a process than a single event. So, to date it, some people would go right back to the genocide of the American Civil War nearly 160 years ago which centralised the US State, or to that State's imperialist war against Spain in 1898. Others might refer to the barbaric US use of Atomic bombs in 1945 (no other country has dared to use them) or to the still unexplained assassination of Kennedy in 1963 and the barbaric genocide of the Vietnamese people which followed. However, the USSR still existed both in 1945 and after 1963, still enslaving the former Russian Empire and Eastern Europe until 1989.

I think the turning point was precisely 1991. Even before the obvious imminent fall of the USSR in December that year, in summer 1990 the USA had turned its attention to Iraq and the concept of world domination. It seems to me that, spiritually, the demons that had created and then tormented and haunted the USSR for nearly 75 years, fled to Europe and America, Eurosodom and Gomorica, during this period of the early 1990s, seeing the coming fall of their Communist delusion. People had seen through the demonic idolatry of Communism, but most had not yet seen through the equally demonic idolatry of Capitalism. The demons fled there. After all, in 1993, soon after the dissolution of the

Soviet Union, the European Union was formed. However, it is the USA that has always clearly pulled the EU strings, which is a political and military dwarf.

Q: I know the Church is outside politics, or should be, but are there any general political trends among Church people?

A: I think most, if not all, Orthodox are socially conservative. Indeed, it was interesting to note that most Soviet Communists (Orthodox who had lost their Faith) remained in many respects social conservatives. This social conservatism is inevitable, simply because we are Christians. However, being socially conservative does not mean that we are puritans and prudes who condemn the weak for their errors. We are to have compassion for them.

On the other hand, unlike many other social conservatives, Orthodox are not secular conservatives. This is because as Christians we also have a sense of social justice. That is why Orthodox reacted badly to right-wing Fascism, which was always associated with the authoritarian bullying of Catholicism, which largely supported it. Thus, it was in Catholic Poland, including in Western Galicia in the far west Ukraine, and in Catholic Lithuania and Croatia, that the Nazis received the most enthusiastic support for their appalling slaughter of the Jews. The Orthodox did not support this, but had compassion for the ordinary Jews who were victims of the Catholics and ex-Catholic Nazis

All this is of course general and does not mean that we have to vote for any particular political party, especially when all 'mainstream' parties without exception, for example, appear to be in favour of such horrors as abortion.

Q: Why does the Church say about primitive man?

A: He did live in caves wearing animal skins a long time ago – that is what the Book of Genesis, and therefore the Church, says (Genesis 3, 21). As to when this was, no-one knows. As all the experts disagree, I have no idea. I think it was more probably this side of 50,000 years ago, rather than the other side, which is based on the speculations of those who found a few fossilized (monkey?) bones and dared to date them. That is unscientific.

We also know from history that ancient man was clearly not a grunting brute: that is the arrogant superiority complex of Western modernists. Pyramids, ziggurats, Stonehenge and aboriginal rock art prove the sophistication of the ancients. One thing that is certain about ancient man is that he did not have concentration camps, Atomic Bombs, cluster bombs and napalm. He was simply not primitive enough for all that.

Q: What do you think of gay conversion therapy?

A: I really don't understand such secularist and anti-Christian language. It denotes an alien Civilisation to our Christian Civilisation of the Church.

First of all, there is no such thing as 'conversion therapy', there is only repentance. And repentance is always voluntary, never imposed by some institution. We do not believe in institutions. Now repentance comes from prayer, fasting, confession and communion (this presumes of course that the person in question is already a member of the Church of God, and not some pseudo-Christian Western religion). And repentance is open to all, whatever their sin.

Q: Why is fasting important?

A: Today two billion people in the world are obese or overweight: never has there been a time for fasting as now. The Scriptures and the Fathers are clear: in the last times people will eat and never be satisfied (the definition of McDonalds). Vatican II dropped fasting and obesity began (though others, including certain extremist 'Orthodox' modernists did not help in the 1960s). The rejection of fasting always leads to obesity (and an obsession with slimming, gyms, fitness and also sex and sport...): it is a spiritual rule. It happens in decadent monasteries too.