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Orthodoxy and the West

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THE TERM 'WEST' USUALLY CARRIES DIVERSE CONNOTATIONS. It certainly means something more than a geographical region, and even something more than a particular cultural phenomenon. It signifies a unique development and differentiation in theology and spirituality as compared to the theology and the spirituality of the Christian East. We usually locate the most important part of this differentiation in the area of ecclesiology.

Yet, apart from the specific connotations of the term 'West', and even apart from the theological and confessional development which it signifies, I think that today we are compelled to search for an original meaning in this word. It is more clearly apparent in our days than in previous times that the terms 'West' and 'Western man' represent a basic human 'stance' or attitude toward the world and toward history, a stance which has developed during recent centuries, growing out of the liberal spirit of the Renaissance and the rise of the positive sciences and technology. Its presuppositions, however, go back to previous centuries and to the mental and social structures of the medieval West. Before proceeding with anything else, then, it is necessary first of all to define, even briefly, the structure of this stance, its historical consequences and the factors which led up to it.

The presuppositions of modern technology and, consequently, of the radical changes in social and political institutions—the whole transition from an agrarian to modern industrial society are often traced to Descartes and to the pre-eminence assigned to the syllogistic capacity of man as subject. This defines the historical and objective context of the stance which we seek to define. However, the pre-eminence assigned to the syllogistic power and to rationalistic and analytical methodology has its roots in much older times. Heidegger has assured us that

Descartes represents the natural end result of Western scholasticism.¹ Again, Erwin Panofsky, in his very interesting study

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Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism,² has shown how gothic architecture is the technological counter-part of scholastic thought, a prototype of the application of the analytical structure of scholasticism in the area of technological endeavour. This application becomes the point of departure for the subsequent development of technology. Paradoxical though this may seem, it is by no means arbitrary to link the rise of technology with theology.

The theological presuppositions behind modern technology are not limited to the analytical methodology of Western scholasticism. Scholastic methodology betrays a much deeper cause man's claim by intellectual effort to secure mastery over the whole realm of accessible truth, and his tendency to define and distinguish the boundaries between man's capacities and the transcendent reality of God. Aquinas's definition of theology is well known:

Nevertheless sacred teaching also makes use of human reasoning, not indeed to prove the faith (for that would do away with the merit of believing) but to render manifest some of the things which are delivered in this teaching.³

This 'rendering manifest' or explanation of revealed truth through the power of the intellect, and the rigorous use of reason within the framework of revealed truth, emphatically set a boundary between man and God, between the syllogistic capacity of the subject and the 'incomprehensible reality of God. In the end the boundary is set between the divine and the human nature, a consequence which neglects the unity of the two natures into one person, that is to say, the possibility of personal participation in, and not merely logical 'clarification' of, the divine truth concerning God. The analytical scholastic methodology represents, then, a deeper stance which is essentially anthropocentric: the disposition of man to master what truth is accessible to him and to master it as an individual, as a subject and as possessor of the syllogistic capacity. The immediate sphere of empirical truth which is open to him, the first revelation which he must 'render manifest', is the reality of the physical world, the created cosmos. Man in the Western scholastic tradition does not participate personally in the truth of

¹ "Everyone who is acquainted with the middle ages sees that Descartes is "dependent" upon medieval scholasticism and employs its terminology" (Being and Time, London 1962, p. 46; in the original, Sein und Zeit, ed. 3, 1931, p. 25). See also the Roman Catholic philosopher P. Hirschberger in Geschichte der Philosophie 11 (Freiburg, ed. 6, 1963), p. 104.

² (1951), ed. 2, Cleveland 1964.

³ Summa Theol. 1, q. 1, art. 8, ad 2; 'Utitur tamen sacra doctrina etiam ratione humana, non quidem ad probandam fidem, quia per hoc tolleretur meritum fidei, sed ad manifestandum. aliqua quae traduntur in hac doctrina.'

the cosmos. He does not seek to bring out the meaning, the logos of things, the disclosure of the personal activity of God

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in the cosmos, but seeks with his individualistic intellect to dominate the reality of the physical world. This stance truly forms the foundation of the entire phenomenon of modern technology.

The concept of man as an individual thinking monad, as 'a creature endowed with reason' (*animal rationale*), coincides with the broader ontological character of medieval and (excepting Heidegger) modern Western thought. This is an ontology of ontic categories, that is, an ontology which examines all that exists and grasps its truth in terms of concepts, positing a close relationship between the object of thought and its concept (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*). Directly or indirectly this ontological way of thinking identifies existence and thought (*cogito ergo sum*) and posits the question concerning the principle of existence, concerning Being, as a question about the cause of things. Being is that which causes things to exist. This formulation alone is sufficient to indicate the ontic context of Being, the understanding of Being as a thing. Being, as the specific end result of the causal reference of things, is also an ontic category, a being among other beings, although qualitatively higher,⁴ and the cause both of itself and of all other beings. The whole theocentric world-view of the Western cultural tradition is based on this ontic understanding of Being. God is the Supreme Divine Being, the First Cause (*causa prima*) in the scheme of cosmology, and the evaluative principle of Ethics.

The direct result of this ontological way of thinking, which formed the rational basis of all Christian apologetics, in the 'banishment' of God, as it is rightly called, from the cosmos and his transference to the 'heavens', a realm which is beyond those regions accessible to experience. This Being, which is God, is separated from the sphere of human experience by the kind of boundary which separates the known and the unknown, the empirically existing and the empirically non-existing, sensible reality and conceptual understanding. Man is free to dominate nature and history.

The result, historically, is a deep wedge between religion and life, a kind of 'spiritual schizophrenia' which basically characterizes the Western stance toward the world and history. On the one hand there stands life, its needs and demands, the obligation of the individual to organize it and to actualize its potential, the urge of the individual to transform dynamically his place in history. On the other hand there stands religion, the intervention of the transcendent into daily life, an interven-

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⁴ On *akrotaton, theion, genos timiotaton* (Aristotle).

tion foreign to life, which can find only logical and psychological echoes in man. The expression of the logical and psychological need of religion in the West takes place through no other forms than symbols. Religious life is cut off from daily experience and the direct, empirical utilization of the world. The only experiential possibility that remains is a kind of psychological refuge in a mysticism of symbols and the logical demonstration of abstract metaphysical truths. Christianity in the West is not a new utilization of the world, but rather a utilization of symbols, an effort logically and psychologically to relate to the transcendent unknown by means of allegories and ideas. Moreover, these symbols as much as possible are 'spiritualized' and made immaterial in the Eucharist, which is a concrete act of direct utilization of the cosmos, the material elements are set aside as if they must necessarily be spiritualized. The wine is altogether excluded from the elements of communion and the bread ceases to be the bread of the daily life of man: it is lost, is unleavened and a shadow of its essence, a spiritualized symbol and not the bread which sustains man. The religious life of the West constitutes a 'sprinkling' of external, additive elements, rather than an immersion into the elements of the world, a kind of death which anticipates resurrection. It is typical that in the horizontal layout of the medieval European city religion breaks in from on high in a vertical fashion, expressed by gothic architecture which thus embodies the authority of the transcendent within human life. Such an authority dependent on logical and psychological categories cannot but provoke rebellion on man's part. From within a gothic cathedral one can well understand and justify every form of rebellion of European man against religious authority from the Reformation and the Renaissance to Freudianism and Marxism. Man would endanger the possibility of maintaining his own humanity if he tolerated the authority of a God who confronts him with such shattering magnitudes, despite the fact that only symbols express it.

Rebellion against the transcendent is an essential aspect of the stance which the West developed over against the world and history. It is an integral presupposition of this stance and a most consistent result of the dividing boundary set up between human capacity and divine authority.

The philosophical genius of Kant, within the presuppositions of Protestant pietism, endeavoured to bridge the gap and opposition between the transcendent and the worldly, between religion and life. The bridge is built on the ground of ethical purposiveness. God is not defined in terms of logic, but of ethical neces-

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sity. He constitutes an empirical truth insofar as he is related to the inherent ethical demand of human conscience. God becomes the empirical starting-point of pure reason for the definition of the First Cause and the end purpose of the ethical act. The divine is interpreted in terms of ethical obligation. The stance of individualism and ethicism first developed in Western scholasticism was completed by the ontological starting-point of Kant who thus, simultaneously,

summarized the inevitable development in the West both of Christianity and also of every anti-Christian movement. After him, even the most radical opponents of the Western metaphysical tradition from Marx to Sartre (with perhaps the unique exception of Heidegger), have remained in bondage to the ethical understanding of the problem of ontology. And, as regards Christian life, we are living today within the very broad scope implied by the term 'West' and the fullest possible application of Kant's views. Christianity for the most part is an individualistic ethic—the most perfect, of course, as compared with previous ethics—which finds its high point in the command to 'love one another', that is to say, in the individual's obligation to show altruism, brotherhood and impeccable social relations. I think that today ethicism is the final and definitive stage in the development of the general stance of Western man. Its significance is felt above all within those Christian Churches in which ethicism has been able to eliminate the primacy of personal experience of truth, that is to say, the primacy of dogma. Through various forms of pietism ethicism has been able to give a similar stamp to all Churches and confessions, irrespective even of their fundamental dogmatic differences. The Truth of the Church, the dogmas, remain dead theoretical principles without the least consequence in the realm of practical piety of the faithful. This is the reason why it is often said that what separates the various Christian Churches today seems to be a kind of historical residue of irrelevant and scholastic forms, namely, dogmas. In contradistinction to dogmas men present and proclaim the commandment of love, the ethical demand to unite the divided Churches, an attitude completely in line with both the ethical basis of pietism and with the rationalism of Western man. The life of the Church is seen as nothing other than one of social ethics common to all confessions. On the basis of the common pietistic spirit, the unity of the Churches has in principle already become a fact, Kant is the forerunner of this unity and the forerunner of the oecumenical movement.

Let us summarize the basic elements of the stance of Western

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man in face of the world and history. These are the following: the priority of the conceptual explication of revealed truth—the dividing boundary between the transcendent and the world—the will to dominate nature and history; the banishment of God to an empirically unreachable realm; the separation of religion from life and the reduction of religion to symbols; the elimination of ontology, that is to say, dogma, and its substitution by Ethics. Today certainly we witness a radical restructuring of Western culture, a process in which every traditional life-form of Western societies is questioned. This matter constitutes a large subject in itself and needs separate study. It is too early to draw conclusions as to whether and to what extent the contemporary powerful questioning of traditional political, religious and social schemata is really altering the original and more fundamental stance of Western man in face of the world and history. Undoubtedly we find ourselves facing a new morality which is daily gaining ground among the most alert and inquiring men of our times. This is a morality of dynamic historical

action against all forms of human oppression which, either openly or under a specious guise, deny man's personality. It seeks to establish a new ontological understanding of human existence as the dynamic self-realization of freedom arising out of historical action. Certainly here is a morality objectively and socially more genuine than that which Western Christianity has developed. Still, the question remains as to whether or not the new morality is basically moving away from the ontological basis upon which the stance of Western man with regard to the world and history has been built. In terms of what signs may already have appeared, one can discern in the new morality the same confidence in the possibilities of individual achievement, the same utopian persistence in seeking to master nature and history, the same ignorance of the ontological basis of evil and the irrational in the historical process. Theologically, these tendencies mark an absence of the realism expressed by the theological truth of Eastern Orthodoxy concerning man and the world, an absence which seems to leave even the noblest of ethical endeavours hanging in the air or seems to bind them tragically to the irrational in history,

However, apart from the cultural changes and ethical transformations in the West, the final and most compelling embodiment of the stance of Western man is the development of technology. Technology embodies both tangibly and specifically all of the stages of Western man's religious development: The priority of the mind, the dividing boundary between the

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transcendent and the worldly, and the reduction of the personal relation with the world to an attitude of dominance by man over nature and history. Technology, which today determines man's relation to the world and defines his place in history, is the most typical consequence of the fundamental stance or ethos of Western man. This is true of technology both as a phenomenon of man's organic separation from the total cycle of life and as a phenomenon of the entanglement of history in the net of impersonal forces (such as economics and militarism) which can never accept the premise of the uniqueness of personal human existence. This problem certainly is not the growth and development of technology as such. No matter how far technology develops, it never ceases to be a utilization of the world which is necessary, legitimate, and commendable. The problem arises from the moment this utilization of the world serves exclusively the runaway autonomy of man, the callous separation of man from the cycle of life, the denial of the personal dimension and the desire to dominate the world individualistically. The absolute importance assigned to technology expresses an attitude of a particular kind of utilization of the world; a utilization which does not view the created order as the handiwork of a personal God, nor seeks to bring out the meaning of things (the *logos*) and the disclosure of the uncreated divine energies in the world; but a utilization which presupposes the autonomy of man's needs and desires and man's arbitrary dominance over the physical world.

From another perspective, one could say that the stance implied by the terms 'West' and 'Western man', and embodied by technology, stands exactly at the opposite end from that kind of stance with regard to the world and history which is presupposed by the experience and thought of the Eastern Orthodox Church. If we accept that, as the Orthodox Church teaches, man's relation to God is not simply an intellectual and ethical relation, but a relation entirely and realistically based on the acceptance and use of created things, that is to say, on a eucharistic-liturgical utilization of the world, then it is technology, with its particular stance and character, which constitutes the basic theological problem in the encounter between Orthodoxy and the West. This encounter takes place first of all on the level of the reality of an Orthodox Christian's contemporary life, before it takes place on the level of abstract theological dialogue or inter-church relations. Technology imposes on the Orthodox Christian a certain stance in life. To the degree that the Orthodox Christian is a contemporary man

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and shares the circumstances of life created by technology, he is compelled to adopt also the stance in face of the world and history which religious life in the West has developed.

Orthodox theology and spirituality, based on a personal relation with the world and a eucharistic-liturgical utilization of the world, seems to realize itself completely within the sphere of an agrarian society. In an agrarian society man's relation to the world, just like his relation to God, was a matter of direct experience and not the result of abstract intellectual discourse. This was true not only of the labourer, but also of the craftsman and the merchant. They all lived by immediate use of the material world and their lives were but a study of nature and of the total cosmic process. Theirs was a life lived in harmony with the cosmos, linked organically with the universal life-cycle of birth, growth, fruition, decay and death, the change of seasons, the forces of the earth, and in touch with the personal dimension of the cosmos.

Contemporary man participates quite indirectly in the lifecycle of the cosmos. In a megalopolis today life is cut off from nature, narrowly isolated in its own cycle, restricted within the circumstances imposed by technology. Man knows the use of machines, but not that of the world. He does not know that bread and wine sum up life and that they represent the labour and concern of an entire year with four seasons, with sowing, growth, fruition, and the anxiety about wind and storm. For him, the prayers of the Church are echoes of another experience: 'And as this bread was scattered upon the mountains and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy Kingdom.'⁵ Such imagery is undoubtedly poetic and beautiful, but in no way relevant to the life of contemporary man. His bread is antiseptically packaged in cellophane, placed for purchase in glass display cases of stores next to tinned

⁵ *Didache* 9, 4.

goods and shaving articles. Bread for him no longer has the same central significance, since other foods claim first priority. Consequently, the only path open to him for understanding the Eucharist of the Church and the eucharistic utilization of the world is through the mind. Still, he may understand what occurs in the Eucharist and accept the stance in life which the Church represents, but he truly experiences neither.

Let me repeat again that technology as such does not preclude the eucharistic utilization of the world. The manufacture of a refrigerator or the assembling of an internal combustion engine could possibly be just as much a eucharistic act as the act of

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sowing or harvesting. The Orthodox experience of man's relation to the world could today bring out the humanizing character of economics, the prophetic dimension of science, the priestly character of politics, the revelational character of art, the sacramental character of love. But all these presuppose a particular human stance as regards the physical world and a utilization of the world radically different from that implied by technology.

This, I think, is the central theological problem in the relations between Orthodoxy and the West.

The encounter of Orthodoxy with the West during the last two centuries occurred almost exclusively in the realm of Russian Orthodox theology and tradition. Greek Orthodox theology, since the eighteenth and even seventeenth centuries, but especially since the establishment of modern Greece as a free nation, certainly has encountered the West, yet not so much to hold dialogue with it and to strengthen it with a strong Orthodox consciousness, as to accept its influence passively and uncritically. Often it has absorbed, even unchanged, the criteria, the methodology and many particular viewpoints of Western theology.

The encounter of Greek Orthodox theology in recent times with the West is a subject worthy of study in itself. Here it can be touched only briefly, even though it represents an essential aspect of our topic. One could say that, from the last centuries of Turkish occupation until today, Greek intellectuals have shown an unbounded and almost child-like admiration of all the developments of Western rationalism. Emerging from the intellectual darkness of Ottoman oppression, the Greeks looked to the West as a beacon of civilization and science. Whatever ideas of progress they were able to conceive were automatically patterned on Western models. During the last centuries of Ottoman rule Church intellectuals such as, for example, Vikentios Damodos, Nikiphoros Theotokis, Evgenios Voulgaris, Neophytos Vamvas and others endeavoured to bring about a religious rebirth among the enslaved Greek people, bringing into the sphere of Greek life and thought the problematics of Western Christianity. In their works and sermons one can find unchanged many typical ideas of pietism, natural theology, the religion of feeling, 'Christianity as culture' (Kulturchristentum), and in general of Western theology as it was under the influence of the Enlightenment.

With the establishment of a university in the free Greek nation and the rise of academic theology, the influence of Western theology increased and dominated. In the university

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theology took on the form of an autonomous science organized according to Western prototypes alone. From the beginning Greek Orthodox academic theology was a mixture of pietism and rationalism. Theology, organized on conceptual, demonstrative and apologetic models, was sharply separated from the life and piety of the Church. Formally it did not cease to be Orthodox, obedient to the letter of dogmatic formulations. However, the separation of dogmatic formulations from the experience and spirituality of the Church, accompanied by a uncritical acceptance of the spirit and methodology of Western theology, was precisely the most serious betrayal of the character of Orthodox theology. The dogmatic works of Z. Rosis and K. Dyovouniotis, the patrology of D. Balanos, the Old Testament introduction of P. Bratsiotis and the Church History of V. Stephanidis are typical examples of this peculiar 'encounter' of Greek Orthodox theology with the West.

Certainly there were also reactions. The names of Papoulakos and Papadiamantis are worthy of mention here, but these men did not come from the same academic milieu and were not able to influence it. Moreover, the clergy and people, however steadfast they remained to the traditions, were at a very low level of education and unable to challenge the intellectuals trained in the West. Official Greek Orthodox theology and church life today are still dominated by the theological perspective of the dogmatic works of C. Androutsos and P. Trembelas. The works of both men represent typical examples of Western criteria imposed on Orthodox dogmatic theology. The views of Androutsos and Trembelas regarding ecclesiology and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as well as Christology and Soteriology are different from those of the West only in the letter of dogmatic formulation. But as regards presuppositions, criteria and theological mentality they are one. Both of these Greek scholars begin with a theological gnoseology which is exclusively based on the individual's rational comprehension and religious feeling; no hint of apophaticism, no suggestion of personal participation in revealed truth is to be found in their works. They do not know the distinction between the Essence and Energies of God, the qualitative difference which distinguishes Orthodox theology from every other theology and spirituality, and both are entirely silent as regards the ascetic and mystical tradition of the Fathers of the East. On the other hand full endorsement is given to the scholastic ontic conception of God, the Western juridical understanding of the relations between God and man, the theory of satisfaction of divine justice through the death of Christ on the

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Cross, the juridical understanding of the transmission of original sin, autonomy of the laity and other similar Western ideas.

On the level of academic theology Androutsos and Trembelas express the broadest inroads of Western rationalism and pietism into the sphere of Greek Orthodox theology. On the level of lay piety similar inroads initiated a wide pietistic movement, from the beginning of this century, known as 'Zoe' (Life), although later the movement experienced various changes both in form and name. The pietistic movement of 'Zoe' eliminated even the last possibility of substantial dialogue in Greece between Orthodoxy and the West, the possibility, namely, which was inherent in lay spirituality and piety. 'Zoe' gained ground quickly among those of the bourgeoisie who admired everything European. It imposed religious forms purely Western, an ethicism built on rationalism, an understanding of faith which was entirely conceptual and based on apologetic and utilitarian premises. As a movement it became independent of the life of the parish and of the local bishop, separating piety from church life and limiting it to individual ethical behaviour. It established a kind of independent lay worship, a kind of Protestant 'service of the Word' (Wortgottesdienst), with scriptural readings, Protestant hymns, and extemporaneous prayers. Other expressions of the movement include the following: translation of many Western handbooks on spiritual life, the replacement of Orthodox iconography with Western religious art, polemics against monasticism and the Holy Mountain, and the introduction of 'orders' on Western models.

The scientific rationalism of academic theology, on the one hand, and the pietism of 'Zoe', on the other, created a setting within the Orthodox Church in Greece which hardly favoured substantial dialogue with the West. Today, certainly, there are hopeful signs among the new generation of theologians-signs which, however, do not change the overall climate. There are also hopeful signs within the broader sphere of the intellectual and artistic world of Greece, that is, among the representatives of Greek thought and art, who show special interest in the study and revitalization of the Orthodox tradition of spirituality.

It is well known that similar broad intellectual circles of this kind were responsible for the development of substantial dialogue between Russian Orthodox theology and the West. Russian Orthodox theology, too, went through a period of scholasticism. But it must be acknowledged that it soon overcame it. Western influences are not totally absent from Russian theologians as well as, more generally, of Russian phil-

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osophy. It is in any case noteworthy that in Russia during the nineteenth century substantial dialogue with the West was inaugurated not by men who uncritically admired and wanted to imitate the West, not by 'Westerners', but by their opponents, the Slavophiles. The Slavophiles had a deep interest in the encounter with the West and were 'Slavophiles' precisely in relation to the West: the journal published by Kireevski's group ca. 1832 was entitled *The European*. Both Kireevski and Khomiakov, as well as other and less known Slavophiles such as Aksakov and Samarin, nurtured a deep love for the West and laboured with the ideal of bringing about a

synthesis of Western civilization and the fundamental principles of Russian Orthodox spirituality. The Slavophiles believed that Orthodoxy contained answers to the problems and to the impasse of the West, but answers embodied in the experiential theology of the people and the living tradition of the Church.

There is no need to examine further the historical development of the Slavophile movement, which is well known. What should concern us is the contemporary encounter of Russian Orthodox theology with the West, that is, the theology of the Russian diaspora after the Revolution. The presence both of Russian theologians as well as, more generally, of Russian philosophers and intellectuals in the West, was in a way a continuation of the Slavophile movement, a continuation of the clear and eager disposition to hold dialogue with the West and to present Orthodox teaching as the solution to Western theological and cultural problems that seemed to have reached an impasse. The basic Orthodox theological points advocated by these Russian theologians and intellectuals in this dialogue represent four large areas of Orthodox thought: (1) the apophatic and mystical character of Orthodox theology; (2) the 'ethical' and practical piety rooted in the ascetic tradition (Philokalia); (3) the eucharistic dimensions of ecclesiology, and (4) the revitalization of the theology of icons. The particular emphasis given to the study of the theology of St Gregory Palamas, and the attention drawn to its significance regarding the different developments of the Western from the Eastern tradition, stamped the whole 'school' of Russian theology in the diaspora as 'Neo-Palamite'.

There is no need here to emphasize the significance of Neo-Palamite theology in the encounter of Orthodoxy with the West in our times. It is well known that within a few decades Europe's view of Orthodoxy has radically changed and one can observe an astonishing interest in the study of the sources of Orthodox

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theology and tradition, among both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians. This constitutes a substantial dialogue which not only has an awakening effect on Western theology, but also creates significant stimuli for Orthodox theology, guiding Orthodox theology toward greater theological self-awareness. Moreover, let the writer acknowledge for reasons of personal indebtedness that a not insignificant number of Greek Orthodox theologians maintain our theological identity, despite our unfavourably scholastic and ethically orientated theological training, thanks to the contact with the Russian theology of the diaspora....

Nevertheless, as regards the topic of this article, especially in the terms outlined in its first part, it can well be asked what particular 'stance' the theology of the Russian diaspora expresses in relation to the established stance of Western man today. Neo-Palamite theology certainly and perhaps exclusively is a theology of dialogue, a theology of 'relation' and finally a theology, if not of concepts, of at least a certain structure. The original effort of the Slavophiles to offer the West 'keys' to the solution of its problems, while themselves sharing, however, the total cultural

stance of the West, seems to be continued in Russian theology today. The difference is that the Slavophiles had behind them the experimental theology of the Russian people still unaffected by the stance of the West and the style of life imposed by technology. This living dimension served as a guarantee of the synthesis which the Slavophiles sought on a theoretical level and on the basis of certain viewpoints. Today all Orthodox lands, whether socialist or not, find themselves both definitely and integrally linked to the cultural milieu of Western technology and to the style of life which technology imposes. Thus contemporary Neo-Palamite theology does not seem to express a concrete historical experience of the Church (as the theology of the Trinitarian and Christological controversies and the Palamite theology of the fourteenth century did). It does not seem to represent an existing stance in life different from that of Western man. Its distinctive categories are certainly not abstract, but represent the experience of many centuries of Orthodox tradition. However, this experience is brought into a dialogue which is basically abstract and theoretical, since those engaged in it all share the same stance of Western man and do not represent today different historical realities. This is the reason why even the theology of the Russian diaspora gives occasionally the impression of being the theology of an 'intelligentsia', rather than a theology of the Church.

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Certain erroneous paths taken by Bulgakov with his sophiology. Cal views and by Berdiaev with his arbitrary philosophical concepts cannot be used as criteria to evaluate and to assess all of Russian theology in modern times, but they do emphatically indicate the possible consequences and the extreme development of this direction in theology.

The origins of this tendency must, perhaps, be sought in times much older than those of the Slavophile movement and in a realm deeper than Russian spirituality. I should like to clarify my statement with a concrete example, that is, with a comparison of the difference in Byzantine or post-Byzantine iconography in its Greek and, on the other hand, Russian styles. A Russian Orthodox icon is certainly a beginning of a dialogue with the West within the framework of the Western religious stance. It is not easy to interpret verbally the distinctive variation which marks Russian iconography. One has but to place a Russian next to a Greek icon in order to grasp my point: the beginning of the dialogue with the West, in the instance of Russian iconography, is marked in principle by a dematerialization very different from the transfiguration of the created world that distinguishes Byzantine iconography. The tendency towards dematerialization is genuinely present in the Western religious and theological stance; is found a beautiful expression in gothic architecture. In Russian icons the aesthetic expression of spiritualization is to be seen in their particular decorative iconographic style. The lines and folds of the garments, for example, are purely decorative and stylistic, as— if there were no body behind them. The body has been spiritualized. In contrast, similar lines and folds in a Greek icon cover and at the same time reveal a concrete body, one which is certainly transfigured and not carnal, but

nevertheless a real body, not a symbol of one. It is not fortuitous that the dialogue of contemporary Russian theology with the West often begins through the enthusiasm of Westerners for Russian icons. In the realm of Russian iconography one can discern the general direction of contemporary Russian theology— what I endeavoured to define above as ‘a dialogue within the framework of the Western religious stances’. I insist on this because the icon expresses precisely the distinctiveness of the dialectical character of Russian theology with respect to the West. There are areas in which this dialogue has turned into an absolute dominance of Western mentality and Western criteria-over Russian Church architecture, for example. In this field one could explore the final consequences of the theological developments which con-

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cern us, and perhaps also the problem of the relationship of these developments with such events as the astonishing success of Bolshevism in Orthodox Russia and the remarkable technological progress in that land merely within fifty years.

These observations are by no means intended to cast doubt on, or to suggest lack of appreciation for, contemporary Russian Orthodox theology. Its role in history has been positively appreciated. The above comments pose but a question (perhaps also a deeper feeling) about whether this type of theology has not completed a certain circle, a special historical purpose, and whether the time has not now at last come to take the next step. What is this next step? One cannot expect, of course, to determine it in one paper or even in one conference. The next step in the direction which Orthodox theology has followed could well be the main subject of an Orthodox (Oecumenical Council; this would be more worthy of such a gathering than, for example, problems of the calendar and of fasting.

From the standpoint of Orthodox theologians and their contribution to theology, the presupposition for the next step seems to be the need to transcend the dialectical character of Orthodox theology with respect to the West. We today inevitably participate in the broader cultural development of Western societies, in the atmosphere created by technology in the broader stance of Western man in face of the world and history. We do our theology within this framework. But the substantial encounter with this stance cannot take place except outside its own framework. Such an exodus, even for us Orthodox who are today linked definitely and integrally to the cultural milieu of the West, can occur in only one direction: that of the eschaton. And the eschaton for Orthodoxy is the continuous building-up of the Church, the fulfilment of the perspectives of history by the reality of the ‘little leaven’, the only reality which can illuminate the historical process and give meaning to the irrationality of our confused times.

The turn of Orthodox theology toward the eschatological reality of the Church signifies a return to the eschatological self-understanding of Orthodoxy itself in the concrete historical setting of space and time. It is the only possibility of preparing for a historical embodiment of the Orthodox

consciousness and for a real change in our contemporary stance as regards the world and history. If we continue to theologize dialectically with the West, we shall perhaps come in a short time to represent no more than an interesting, somewhat exotic, aspect of the Western theoretical worldview, or a narrowly confessional

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doctrine which belongs to the sphere of 'archaeology of ideas'. This is, I believe, where the oecumenical dialogue is inevitably leading us; all of us have, I think, personal experience, at conferences and encounters, of the fact that Orthodox views ring out beautifully as poetical notes, deeply moving but completely utopian, having no actual reality within our own Churches today.

The return to the eschatological consciousness of Orthodoxy within the concrete historical setting of space and time is not a matter of necessity brought about by fear concerning the future of Orthodox theology. This return is necessitated by the contemporary historical reality of our Orthodox Churches. We have come to theologize apart from our Churches. Our theology seems threatened with isolation among an 'intelligentsia' because it is abstract, lacking a contemporary historical body to revitalize its truths. We must dare to, ask ourselves to what extent our 'eucharistic ecclesiology' and Philokalia ethics are actualities today in the sphere of industrial societies and in the style of life imposed on us both individually and corporately by technology. We must dare to ask ourselves of what consequence our genuinely Orthodox theological categories are for the life of our Churches. Within the society of the contemporary megalopolis the reality of the local parish as conceived by Orthodox theology has not only changed; it seems altogether absent. This matter is most serious because it directly concerns the existence of the Church as such, prior to all organizational patterns and institutions. It is also equally distressing to consider the ecclesiology represented by the bishops of our Churches or the factors which really determine our inter-relations as Orthodox.

The eschatological self-understanding of Orthodoxy cannot become a matter of experience except within the concrete contemporary historical reality. For the first time in history each of the Orthodox Churches is not identified with a particular people. The ethnic boundaries have largely broken down, however much we may insist in defending them with a kind of sentimental naivete. Even within the so-called Orthodox lands we do not have the capacity to create an all-ethnic cultural milieu. We belong to or find ourselves cast into broader cultural currents. Today more than at any other time our personal existence must be anchored in the local parish. The truth of the Church, the reality of salvation, the abolishment of sin and death, the victory over the irrational in life and history-all these for us Orthodox derive from the local parish, the actualization of the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of the Father, the Son and

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the Holy Spirit. The liturgical unity of the faithful has to be the starting-point of all the things for which we hope: the transformation of the impersonal life of the masses into a communion of persons, the authentic and genuine (rather than the merely theoretical and legal) observance of social justice the deliverance of work from the bondage of mere need and its transformation into an engagement of personal involvement and fellowship. Only the life of the parish can give a priestly dimension to politics, a prophetic spirit to science, a philanthropic concern to economics, a sacramental character to love. Apart from the local parish all of these are but an abstraction, naive idealism, sentimental utopianism. But within the parish there is historical actualization, realistic hope, dynamic manifestation.

The eschatological self-understanding of Orthodox theology cannot be actualized outside of the setting of the local parish. It is to this setting that the dialogue must return, leaving aside the challenge of the West. The role of Orthodox theology within the historical and cultural milieu of the West is to draw attention to the eschatological witness of the Church as embodied in the parish. However, I fear that we are far from taking such a course. Orthodox Church life and theology show very few signs on which to base hope for the future. Our parishes today represent largely a socio-religious (sometimes an ethnic and chauvinistic) phenomenon rather than the eschatological dimension. We are bound to purposes so worldly that we have no place for the slightest eschatological vision. The return of Orthodoxy to its eschatological self-understanding which is to be embodied in the parish would signify radical changes or even the giving up of ingrained viewpoints to which all Churches are tragically tied— both in the sphere of the oecumenical dialogue where people look naively toward the ‘union’ of Churches, as well as in the realm of politics of inter-Orthodox relations. I express what is, perhaps, the tragic personal problem of every Orthodox theologian. For we certainly experience as a personal problem the tragedy of the paradoxical contrast between theological truth and the historical reality of the Church. We stand defenceless before both the battery of arguments of Western secularism and the direct historical impact of all forms of socialism. When we have nothing positive to offer except a romantic theory concerning the ontological transformation of man, it makes no sense to expose the utopian character of those arguments and systems.

During this tragic period of the life of the Church, the only consolation or antidote for the absence of the eschatological

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experience in the Church would be the presence of individual gifts of the Holy Spirit: the gift of prophecy, the gift of theological teaching, the gift of tongues, that is to say, the revelational manifestations of art, the gift of encouragement and consolation, the gift of loving-kindness and sympathy towards man. Embodied in individual persons, every gift would serve as a sign of the Church’s path through the dry desert of its secularization on the way to the resurrection of the New City for which we long. Outside and all around these individual gifts there would exist only

desert-the triumph of the irrational in the world and in history, the lordship of the powers of this age, the transformation of the Church into a decaying institution of social conventionality; in other words, the experience of the Crucifixion of Christ, the victory of the elemental spirits of the world, the darkness of time between the sixth and the ninth hour. And blessed is he who will not be scandalized waiting for the new revelation of the Spirit, that is, the final Pentecost of the Church.

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