Popes and Patriarchs

An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims

by Michael Whelton

Whelton, M. (2006). *Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims*. Ancient Faith Publishing.
Exported from Verbum, 5:48 PM June 30, 2025.

ANCIENT FAITH PUBLISHING

Chesterton, Indiana

Popes and Patriarchs:

An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims

© Copyright 2006 by Michael Whelton

All Rights Reserved

Published by Ancient Faith Publishing

(formerly known as Conciliar Press)

P.O. Box 748

Chesterton, Indiana 46304

ISBN 978-1-888212-78-5

All scriptural quotations are from the Douay-Rheims

Whelton, M. (2006). *Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims*. Ancient Faith Publishing.

version unless otherwise noted.

to Marguerite

for her constant support and encouragement

Contents

Introduction

Part One

A Personal Journey

Chapter I

My Anglican Beginnings

Chapter II

The Roman Catholic Church

Roman Fever

The Aftermath of Vatican II

Ecclesiastical Darwin

Illicit to Licit

A Transcendental Vision

Chapter III

The Orthodox Church

Glad Recognition of the Long Lost

We Become Orthodox

Chapter IV

The Landscape Is Different

Augustinianism—The Great Divide

The Primacy of Love

Whelton, M. (2006). *Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims*. Ancient Faith Publishing.
Exported from Verbum, 5:48 PM June 30, 2025.

Scholasticism and Rationalism

The Loss of Christian Hellenism

Part Two

An Orthodox Perspective on Papal Claims

Chapter V

The Petrine Question

The Primacy of St. Peter: A Study in Contrast

Pope Leo Misquotes St. Augustine

Pope Leo Misquotes St. Cyprian

Pope Leo Refutes Conciliar Ecclesiology

Pope Leo Denies the Evolution of Papal Supremacy

Chapter VI

The Papacy Asserts Its Claims

A Widening Gulf

The Papacy and the Ecumenical Councils

A Theory of Global Sovereignty

Papal Infallibility

Summation

Chapter VII

The Eastern Fathers and the Papacy

St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom: Who Is He?

The Facts—A Closer Look

An Orthodox Perspective

St. Basil the Great

Pope Damasus: Birth of the Imperial Papacy

St. Basil Rejects Rome's Candidate

St. Basil and the Arian Heresy

St. Basil and the Westerners

St. Maximus the Confessor

Faulty Translation

What Synods? What Councils?

Chapter VIII

Saint Photius

The Council of 861

Bulgaria and *Filioque*

Rome Demands an Apology

Chapter IX

Forgeries

The Donation of Constantine

The Decretals of Pseudo-Isidore

Chapter X

Frequently Asked Questions from Roman Catholics

Index

Bibliography

Introduction

IT IS TEN YEARS SINCE MY WIFE AND I left the Roman Catholic Church and were received into the Orthodox Church; it is six years since I wrote my first book, *Two Paths: Papal Monarchy—Collegial Tradition*. During that time I have come to feel that another book challenging the claims of the Roman Catholic Church from an Orthodox perspective would prove to be useful to Roman Catholics and Orthodox alike. There is a lot of

fresh material in this book, especially regarding the Eastern saints and the papacy. Some in the Roman Catholic Church still insist that these giant saints of the Orthodox Church recognized the supreme universal jurisdiction of Rome—obviously a crucial issue in Roman Catholic and Orthodox dialogue.

It took an enormous amount of time and effort in reading and research before my family severed our ties with Rome. I hope this book will aid in some small way in lightening the burden of those who are seriously looking at the Orthodox Church. At all times I have attempted to use the best of contemporary scholarship. Much of this book focuses on the claim of the papacy to supreme universal jurisdiction, because this is

the *raison d'etre* of the Roman Catholic Church—on this issue she stands or falls. The amount of coverage devoted to this subject is also a reflection of my own interest and concern, since allegiance to the papacy was a major stumbling block to my family in entering the Orthodox Church. Crucial to our change of heart was discovering the way Rome was viewed by the early Church, and her position relative to that of the other patriarchates in the Ecumenical Councils. The papal claims, of course, ultimately rest on the early Church's understanding of the role of St. Peter and the meaning of Matthew 16:18, which we will discuss in Chapter V.

Even though Roman Catholic claims are critiqued from an Orthodox perspective in this

book, please do not take this as a display of rancorous dislike—nothing could be further from the truth. While much of my family had to part company with Rome, many of our dear friends and relatives remain within her fold. Her contributions to Western European civilization are enormous, and the haunting beauty of her ruined abbeys and monasteries still dotting the countryside of my native Protestant England is a reminder of a once-united Catholic Europe.

Rather, I am filled with infinite sadness at the path Rome felt compelled to take and the divisions she left in her wake. I have often wondered whether the West might have successfully preserved the collegial tradition, and thus her unity with the Eastern half of the Church, if Rome had

been only one of several patriarchal sees in the West. The additional sees might have acted as a brake on the development of a papal monarchy with its enormous centralized power, and thus also averted the Protestant revolt. Instead, the rising floodwaters of Europe's spiritual disaffection lapped around the feet of powerful, overconfident Renaissance popes, too removed from their people to notice the danger.

In the last chapter of *Two Paths*, I mused about the possibility of an eventual reunion between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. My musings at that time led me to pessimistic conclusions, which the passage of time has unfortunately not erased. However, my pessimism is guarded because I pray that this

scandal of schism will be healed. As a Christian, I recognize that one of the great lessons of history is that while many things are probable, nothing is inevitable; and with God, of course, everything is possible.

In human terms, the much-hoped-for reunion between our two churches can only be achieved by frankly and charitably discussing our differences. For over a thousand years, our churches enjoyed a common history, and this long-shared memory could provide the building blocks for eventual unification. It is the aim of this book to aid this process in some small way by focusing on the claims of the Roman Catholic Church, especially her claims of supreme universal jurisdiction—a jurisdiction, she insists,

under which the Orthodox Church falls.

The Orthodox response to these claims includes the historical record of the giant Eastern saints in their relationship to the Church of Rome. My aim is to state the Orthodox case both frankly and charitably. At times this is difficult to achieve, and if I happen to bruise some feelings in the following pages, please be assured that it is not my intention.

Part One

A Personal Journey

Chapter I

My Anglican Beginnings

PEOPLE COME TO THEIR CHRISTIAN FAITH IN NUMEROUS WAYS. For some it is an immediate "Damascus Road" experience, usually precipitated by a major event in their lives, while for others it is a lifelong journey of turning their lives toward Christ. Then there are those like my evangelical friend who can tell me the time, date, and place they became Christian and received guaranteed salvation: "I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior at 1:30 P.M. on April 26, 1985, at the corner of Georgia and Hastings Streets, and from that moment I was saved."

As I grew up in England, there was never a

time when I did not believe in God or was not aware of His presence. As a young boy, I sensed the world filled with the grandeur of God; His existence and moral order were things I never had to wrestle with. This was rather odd since I came from a warm, loving, nonreligious home where my mother and father never spoke of Christ or attended church. It wasn't that they were anti-religion; they were simply completely indifferent to it. They did, however, have me baptized in an Anglican church shortly after I was born. The Anglican Church (*Anglican* is the Latin term for England) has its origins in the sixteenth-century Reformation, when King Henry VIII repudiated the authority of the papacy and declared himself head of the Church

of England (known in the United States as the Episcopal Church).

At the age of ten, I started to attend an Anglican church and soon became a choirboy. I loved singing from the old carved oak choir stalls, which on sunny days would be bathed in colorful hues from the stained glass windows. It was in the liturgy that I was able to give expression to the religious impulses I inwardly felt. One of my favorite hymns was William Blake's "And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time," because it appealed to my sense of patriotism and the goal of re-establishing Christian civilization in England:

> And did those feet in ancient time
> Walk upon England's mountains green?
> And was the Holy Lamb of God

On England's pleasant pastures seen?

I will not cease from mental fight:
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

On my twelfth birthday, being at a loss as to what to buy me, my parents gave me five shillings. With this I bought a small illustrated Bible, which I promptly showed my parents, thanking them. My mother could scarcely conceal her surprise at what she considered a rather odd choice.

By the time I reached my teens, I learned that the Anglican Church was legally forbidden to manage her own affairs. The queen, with a great deal of input from the prime minister, appointed

all the bishops, and any revisions to the liturgy had to have the approval of Parliament—a ludicrous situation when one reflects that the British Parliament consists of, in addition to Anglicans, atheists, agnostics, Methodists, Baptists, Jews, and Muslims.

The inconsistencies within the Anglican Communion were beginning to bother me. For instance, the so-called "high" Anglicans would affirm the Virgin Birth and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, while the "low" or evangelical Anglicans would deny them. They would point to this grab-bag of orthodoxy and heresy as evidence of their wonderful inclusiveness. My ties with the Anglican Church were beginning to unravel, mainly due to these theological

inconsistencies, which led to an embarrassing lack of doctrinal cohesion.

This position of so-called "inclusiveness" back in the 1950s and 1960s was perceived by many in the British Isles as slightly preposterous. Sadly, the Anglican Church lost respect, influence, and relevance, becoming the target of much satire and the butt of many jokes. One comedian declared, "In England we have a wonderful institution called the Anglican Church, and no one from Joseph Stalin to Mao Tse Tung can say with any certainty that he is not a member."

The Anglican Church is now wrestling with the issue of homosexual clergy and declining church attendance, as Britain's influential maga-

zine, *The Economist*, attests:

> Disagreement over the ordination of homosexuals (in Britain and America) and women have set the Anglican church's liberal and conservative wings at odds. Yet given that Anglicanism is founded on ambiguity, it is unlikely that the 77m-strong worldwide Anglican communion, of which Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is head, will be torn apart.
>
> A far greater threat to the Church of England is instead posed by steadily falling church attendance, which is draining coffers and has led to the demolition or conversion of thousands of churches. (To reverse the trend, the church is importing

> missionaries from the developing world.) Britain's cathedrals, which have survived by redefining themselves as cultural and educational centres, now worry about being victims of their own success. (*The Economist*, August 17, 2004)[1]

From our frequent trips to England, we can certainly attest to the closing and demolition of churches, as we have seen churches converted into antique shops, libraries, and community resource centers. From 1989 to 2000, Anglican church attendance in England plummeted twenty-three percent. Today, 995,700 Anglicans worship on Sundays out of a population of just over 49,000,000—about two percent of the

[1] www.economist.com/research

Whelton, M. (2006). *Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims*. Ancient Faith Publishing.

population.[2] When I look at this painful scene of religious collapse, I am reminded of the Lamentations of Jeremiah:

> How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow: … there is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her: all her friends have despised her, and are become her enemies…. All her gates are broken down: her priests sigh. (Lamentations 1:1, 2, 4)

The loss of the Anglican Church as a majestic, moral force in English life is poetically expressed

[2] *America: The National Catholic Weekly*, February 19, 2000, Vol. 182, No. 5.

by Brian Wicker:

> What was before a narrow, deep, and clearly marked gully cut by a powerful and awe-inspiring torrent across the English landscape, has now become a much wider, gentler and shallower river with ill-defined banks and far less impressive scenery. This river is much more comfortable to row a boat in, but a good deal less exciting than the old stream was.... You will find yourselves boating with a crowd of other people who have come out for a lazy Sunday's enjoyment and from whom you are practically indistinguishable.[3]

[3] Brian Wicker, "More Civilized, Less Interesting," *Commonweal*, March 9, 1973, p. 8.

Whelton, M. (2006). *Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims*. Ancient Faith Publishing.

A few years ago while on one of our trips to England, my wife and I wandered into Salisbury Cathedral during Evensong. It is a beautiful, giant thirteenth-century structure that rises above the countryside of Wiltshire, and the full cathedral choir was singing when we entered. One of the world's most enduring traditions, English choral singing is renowned for its clarity and purity, and in this cavernous cathedral we were treated to a classic example of it. The exquisite soprano voices of the young boys with their purity of diction soared and floated above the full male choir, while the golden glow of the setting sun filtered through the windows. As an ex-Anglican, I found it tugging at my heart-strings. Sadly, there were not many people to

witness it—a handful of regulars and some tourists.

The church spires and towers rising over the towns and villages of England played an important role in defining English culture—in fact it would not be England without them. The decline of the Anglican Church is one of the great tragedies of modern England, and the country is a great deal poorer because of it.

To me, by contrast, the Roman Catholic Church appeared to be an unassailable citadel of certitude: an uncompromising bastion of Christian orthodoxy. On the eve of my family's departure for Canada, I had contracted what Anglicans term "Roman Fever."

Chapter II

The Roman Catholic Church

Roman Fever

While the Catholic Church in the British Isles is fairly small, the ghost of Catholicism still haunts the nation. The great cathedrals of Canterbury, York, Winchester, Salisbury, and Durham, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were all built by the Catholic Church. Some of the districts of London bear in their names the imprint of a Catholic past (Blackfriars, Marylebone, Whitechapel, Covent Garden).

However, it was only when we arrived in Toronto, Canada, that I started seriously to con-

sider converting. Many Anglicans, disappointed with the liberal trend of their own church, have been attracted to the seemingly conservative doctrinal stance of the Roman Catholic Church. Victorian England's John Henry Newman was one of the great figures of the Anglican Church who crossed the Tiber to Rome. Many bright young men followed him, giving English Catholicism much-needed intellectual credibility, since it had always been looked down on as a church of Irish laborers and domestic servants.

By the time my family arrived in Toronto, I was reading a good deal of church history and philosophy from a Roman Catholic viewpoint and was gradually becoming convinced that this was *the* Church of Jesus Christ. The idea of an

authoritative papacy that could trace a succession of bishops back to St. Peter was especially attractive. The same mass recited in Latin throughout the world, to me, gave the Roman Catholic Church credibility as a truly universal church.

Eventually, I decided to take a much closer look, and a Catholic friend of mine took me to a popular Catholic young adults' club. As a non-Catholic I was allowed one visit, and only if I was accompanied by a Catholic member. This club meeting was held in the basement of a church, and there was a long line of people gradually threading their way downstairs. The reason for the lineup was that the parish priest who ran the youth group was questioning some of the youth

whom he did not recognize. Back in the 1950s and early ’60s, religion was still important, and denominational distinctions were fairly sharp. This was a club for Roman Catholic young adults, and the priest was determined to keep it that way. His vetting was thorough, as the fellow just ahead of me discovered:

“Good evening, and what is your name?”

“Robert Simmons, Father.”

“This is your first time here?”

“Yes, Father.”

“What is your parish?”

“Immaculate Conception, Father.”

“Who is your parish priest?”

“Father John Kelly, Father.”

The priest, still not thoroughly convinced,

said, “Recite the Hail Mary.” The red-faced young fellow, after blustering his way through it, gained entrance.

Upon being vouched for by my Catholic friend, I entered the club hall and a whole new life—I met Marguerite, my future wife.

Within a short time I was taking religious instruction, and was received into the Roman Catholic Church at Easter 1961. In contrast to the almost nervous uncertainty of the Anglican Church, I was attracted to Roman Catholicism’s sense of permanence in her doctrine and the certitude and confidence she radiated. I felt this was the kind of firm self-assurance that Christianity should project to society. It was only when we became Orthodox that I realized

Rome's permanence of doctrine was more apparent than real.

The Aftermath of Vatican II

THE FOLLOWING YEAR, THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL was convened (1962–1965) and our religious life underwent seismic upheavals. The new mass that was introduced was now celebrated in English rather than Latin, which while taking some time to get used to was, we ultimately thought, a good idea. The new prayers, however, were insipid and pedestrian, diluting the sacrificial reality of the mass—especially when compared to the poetic majesty of the old ones, which were solidly affirming yet reminded us that we had a soul we could lose.

Moreover, the priest now faced the people like a master of ceremonies, which was a major departure from liturgical tradition.

Christianity is, and always has been, a liturgical religion. The celebration of the Eucharist is the central focus of our spiritual lives. The ancient law of the Church is *lex orandi, lex credendi*—the law of prayer is the law of belief. This recognizes that there is an implicit theology in the way we pray, for how a person prays shows what the person believes. Dramatically change the liturgy, and the person's underlying beliefs will change with it.

This is why the Roman Catholic Church used to, and thank God, the Orthodox Church still does, insist on strictly maintaining an

unchanged liturgy . The Orthodox Church has been accused of being overly zealous regarding even minute changes in her liturgical practices. However, she has a two-thousand-year vision which recognizes that even small liturgical changes can lead to unforeseen and unintended changes in belief. This is a wisdom the Roman Catholic Church has forgotten, as one of her foremost liturgical scholars, Monsignor Klaus Gamber, laments:

> The liturgical reform welcomed with so much idealism and hope by many priests and lay people alike has turned out to be a liturgical destruction of startling proportions—a debacle worsening with each passing year. Instead of the hoped-for renewal

of the Church and of Catholic life, we are now witnessing a dismantling of the traditional values and piety on which our faith rests. Instead of a fruitful renewal of the liturgy, what we see is the destruction of the forms of the Mass which had developed organically during the course of many centuries.

Added to this state of affairs, is the shocking assimilation of Protestant ideas brought into the Church under the guise of the misunderstood term ecumenism, with a resulting growing estrangement from the ancient Churches of the East, that is, a turning away from the common tradition that has been shared by the East and the West

up to this point in our history.[4]

The Protestant ideas that appalled Gamber had, as he well knew, originated with the then-reigning pontiff Pope Paul VI. This was revealed in a nationally broadcast radio program, *Ici Lumiere 101*, in France on December 13, 1993. Appearing on the program were Eyves Chiron, author of the book, *Paul VI, le pape ecartele*, and Jean Guitton, a member of the French Academy and close friend of Paul VI. During the radio interview, the following conversation took place regarding the new mass:

[4] Msr. Klaus Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy* (San Juan Capistrano, CA: Una Voce Press; Harrison, NY: Foundation for Catholic Reform, 1993), p. 9.

GUITTON: … but I can only repeat that Paul VI did all that he could to bring the Catholic Mass away from the tradition of the Council of Trent towards the Protestants' Lord's Supper.... In other words, we see in Paul VI an ecumenical intention to wipe out or at least to correct or soften everything that is too Catholic in the Mass and to bring the Catholic Mass, again I say, as close as possible to the Calvinist liturgy.

CHIRON: Clearly that is a revolution in the Church.

GUITTON; Clearly so.[5]

In the years following the council, it was

[5] *The Latin Mass*, Vol. 4, No. l, Winter 1995 (Fort Collins, CO: Foundation for Catholic Reform).

abundantly clear that the Roman Catholic Church had lost her way. The celebration of the mass, her very heart, had changed beyond recognition. For many, the church they loved had passed from view. One heart-wrenching letter I read (I believe it was in *Time* magazine) said, "I hope I die soon so that I can die a Catholic."

It is interesting that it was not the laity, but the priesthood who were most enthusiastic for the liturgical changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. The priesthood displayed equal enthusiasm for the council's resolve that the church should actively involve itself in the affairs of the world. However, it is now evident that this ironic strategy of opposing secularism by embracing secular culture backfired, as

vocations to the priesthood and religious life went into a steep decline, accompanied by wholesale defections. Fordham University's Michael W. Cuneo comments on this failed strategy:

> By according positive religious significance to worldly affairs—by sanctifying, in a way, the secular order—the council implicitly raised doubts concerning the purpose and value of an expressly religious vocation.... If only indirectly, however, the council removed much of this luster from the religious vocation. If the secular world is alive with redemptive possibility and, as the council also taught, political and scientific activity is a conveyance of faith, what is

then the point of subjecting oneself to the rigors of asceticism?[6]

Another development we found disturbing was the notion of being liberated from tradition. The idea was that we have now "come of age" and are able to make our own decisions, especially regarding fasting. The prohibition of meat on Fridays (the Wednesday fast had long disappeared) was removed and replaced with some form of self-denial, mortification, and prayers—the form to be decided by the individual. The Lenten fast, with the exception of Ash

[6] Michael Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 16.

Wednesday and Good Friday, suffered the same fate. The editor of a local Roman Catholic newspaper here in British Columbia advised his readers in the Lenten edition that for Lent he was going to spend less time watching TV and more time talking to his wife.

Today, for the average layperson in the Roman Catholic Church, fasting is largely unknown. Even the twelve-hour fast before communion has been reduced to one hour—a time span so short as to be meaningless. To date the only church in Christendom that has retained the traditional fasts from meat, dairy products, fish, wine, and oil on Wednesdays, Fridays, and in Great Lent is the Orthodox Church.

The old adage that when you ask for a great

amount you get everything, but when you ask for little you get nothing, is recognized by Roman Catholic historian James Hitchcock when he offers this insight regarding his church's rejection of much of her tradition following the Second Vatican Council:

> Within a few years of the Council the battles of Catholic liberalism had become largely rear-guard struggles, warning against "rigidity," for example, when the real danger was excessive malleability, compulsively struggling to ward off any possible return to the settled conditions of preconciliar Church life. Yet the attack on preconciliar "rigidity" was possible precisely because this rigidity, compared with

previous ages had already been significantly lessened. In the postconciliar Church the burdens of authority and tradition are hateful to many people not because they are so heavy but because they now carry only a small portion of their former weight. It is vestigial authority which is the most hateful, because it is too weak to give shape and direction to the community and therefore seems arbitrary and anachronistic.[7]

The thirty years following the council (1965–1995) were extremely painful for us as traditional Catholics—a pain still felt by those who

[7] James Hitchcock, *Catholicism and Modernity* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), p. 34.

remain in her fold. During those years, some twenty-five million Roman Catholics left the church in North America. Whenever we raised doubts about the direction the church was taking, we were advised by our priests that the church in her two-thousand-year history has weathered many crises and has always pulled through. In spite of these assurances, we had our doubts, for it was obvious that there was a new and foreign spirit in the church, reflected in her liturgy and other practices. It was just as obvious that these changes had the sanction of popes and a major council. They were systematic and permeated the entire church—they were here to stay. As faithful Catholics, we persisted in our faith and offered up our Sunday dose of cogni-

tive dissonance, a feeling of alienation from the church's liturgy.

Ecclesiastical Darwin

FOR THOSE ROMAN CATHOLICS WHO REALIZE that something is wrong in their church but are unable to articulate or pinpoint the causes, the following analysis may be helpful. One cannot discuss the vast changes that took place in the Roman Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council without addressing the considerable influence of the French Jesuit, Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, an evolutionist for whom evolution is infallible and the only constant is change. Instead of a fixed, unchanging deposit of faith, de Chardin teaches that human beings

are continually evolving in their spiritual understanding: "For hundreds of centuries (up to yesterday, one might say) men have lived as children, without understanding the mystery of their birth or the secret of the obscure urges which sometimes reach them in great waves from the deep places of the world."[8]

For de Chardin, it was only from this point, understanding humanity's evolutionary origins, that humanity could truly grow up and shed its childish notions. The words "up until yesterday" refer to the advent of Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution. The "obscure urges ... from the deep places of the world" have their origins

[8] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1962), p. 32.

not in the mystical beckoning of God, but rather in the primordial soup from which de Chardin believes we emerged.

This newfound knowledge was, for de Chardin, to have profound effects on the faith of the Church. It was something she would have to accommodate herself to, resulting in "the laying of new foundations to which the old Church is gradually being moved."[9] The seismic shifts in the Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council and the constant changes and innovations in the mass have their underpinnings in the thought of this Jesuit priest. Although he died eight years before the opening

[9] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Mankind* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 23.

of the council, his influence was considerable, as Professor Wolfgang Smith attests:

> [The writings of Chardin] struck on the eve of the Second Vatican Council, with an impact that could be felt around the world. Translated before long into twenty-seven languages, the posthumous treatises of the controversial Jesuit have exerted an inestimable influence.
>
> Today, of course the rage has abated. The picture has changed: by now Teilhard's ideas (which in the sixties had appeared so revolutionary) have become almost commonplace, and in their essentials seem to be accepted in many quarters as an unquestionable truth.[10]

De Chardin's was an influence that destroyed the faith of many Roman Catholics, including, sadly, some of our family members who were enthralled with his ideas. They would pass on his books and were nonplussed not only at our lack of enthusiasm but at our open disapproval of his ideas and style. My wife and I found de Chardin's writing woolly, obscure, and lacking in clarity—a French theologian described his writing as containing a certain amount of "Gallic waffle."

With his invented words (such as *Noosphere*, *Christogenesis*, *pleromization*, *cosmogenesis*, and dozens more), de Chardin explained Christian-

[10] Wolfgang Smith, *Teilhardism and the New Religion* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1988), p. xiii.

ity as part of the evolutionary process—not as a fixed deposit of faith, but rather as a system that was evolving into greater complexity and higher levels of consciousness. The end goal of this process of evolution is the immersing of humanity as a collective mind and heart in what he called the "Omega Point" (Christ). Man is in a constant state of "becoming," in which our simpler, immature understandings of reality must constantly give way to more mature, sophisticated perceptions made possible by an ever-expanding consciousness.

Many people found de Chardin's ideas irresistible, especially those who chafed under the constraints of fixed Christian dogma. De Chardin's idea that we are constantly shedding

simple, immature ideas on our journey to more sophisticated understandings has resulted in patronizing, condescending attitudes towards popular Roman Catholic piety. Simple, faithful people who found comfort and solace in the pious practices of the faith of their fathers were now looked upon as backward and dull-witted, even dangerous, reactionary obstacles to the natural evolution of enlightened Catholicism.

De Chardin's books were censured by his Jesuit superiors and were "the object of two critical documents from the Holy See, in 1952 and 1967, which stated that his writings abound 'in such ambiguities and indeed serious errors as to offend Catholic doctrine.' "[11] But de Chardin's

[11] John A. Hardon, S.J., ed., *Pocket Catholic Dictionary*

ideas survived his critics, however lofty, and came to permeate the post-conciliar church, as we shall see.

Fellow Jesuit Fr. Malachi Martin describes de Chardin as "tall, aristocratic in his bearing, distinguished in appearance, quick-witted, with an intensity of tone … high intellectualism, stature with powerful secular figures, a definite touch of poetry and mysticism, a streak of persecution by men of lesser stature, a spirit of independence from Rome and of revolution for the sake of principle, and worldly-wise associations that gave him 'class' and a certain degree of 'star' quality—internationalism."[12]

(Garden City, NY: Image Books, Division of Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1985).

Whelton, M. (2006). *Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims*. Ancient Faith Publishing.

Teilhard de Chardin saw evolution as the socialization of mankind: a cultural convergence toward a single society. “Evolution has gone as far as it can to perfect human beings physically: its next step will be social. Teilhard saw such evolution already in progress; through technology, urbanization, and modern communications, more and more links are being established between different people’s politics, economics, and habits of thought in an apparently geometric progression.”[13]

His extravagant speculations (literally his

[12] Malachi Martin, *The Jesuits* (New York: The Linden Press, Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 285–286.

[13] “Teilhard de Chardin,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 21, S.V.

theory based on a theory) led him and his readers further away from orthodox Christianity, as his comments on original sin demonstrate. He writes that original sin "represents a survival of obsolete static views into our now evolutionary way of thinking. Fundamentally, in fact, the idea of Fall is no more than an attempt to explain evil in a fixed universe."[14] For de Chardin, evil and original sin are nothing more than growing pains within an evolving cosmic process.

Not all Roman Catholics accepted de Chardin's evolutionary views. One of the Roman Catholic Church's great scholars, Cardinal Jour-

[14] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), p. 80.

net, denounced de Chardin's works as heretical: "It must be accepted or rejected as a whole; but it contradicts Christianity.... If one accepts de Chardin's explanations one must reject the Christian notion of Creation, Spirit, God, Evil, Original Sin, the Cross, the Resurrection, Divine Love, etc."[15]

In spite of de Chardin's ideas being officially censured, by the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1960, Fr. Malachi Martin states that "his name and theories were bathed in a vogue that could not be breached by mere ecclesiastical documents.... This man's influence on Jesuit

[15] Cardinal Journet, *Nova et Vetera*, October–December 1962. Cited in http://www.wandea.org.pl/teilhard-chardin.htm

Whelton, M. (2006). *Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims*. Ancient Faith Publishing.

thinking and on Catholic theologians as well as on the thought processes of Christians in general has been and still is colossal."[16] Martin's observations are thoroughly supported by none other than then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Faith (now Pope Benedict XVI), when he writes:

> The impetus given by Teilhard de Chardin exerted a wide influence [on the Council]. With daring vision it incorporated the historical movements of Christianity into the great cosmic process of evolution from Alpha to Omega.... That means evolution takes place now in the form of technical and scientific development in which, ulti-

[16] Martin, op. cit., pp. 293, 302.

mately, matter and spirit, individual and society, will produce a comprehensive whole, a divine world. The Council's 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World' took the cue; Teilhard's slogan "Christianity means more progress, more technology," became a stimulus in which the Council Fathers from rich and poor countries alike found a concrete hope.[17]

Here are some of the ideas of Teilhard de Chardin woven into the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The following is taken from the document mentioned by Cardinal

[17] Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), p. 334.

Ratzinger, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes—Joys and Hopes)* as it discusses human history: "Thus the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one." There is a footnote attached to this statement that admits its Teilhardian origin: "The reference to dynamic evolutionary forces here is perhaps one reason why some critics early objected to the influence of the thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin on the document."[18] Their objections are well founded, because this passage is pregnant with dangerous inferences for a church that is supposed to have a timeless sense

[18] Walter M. Abbott, S.J., gen. ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 204.

of itself.

With an evolutionary concept of reality, *change* is the only constant. Enduring, fixed distinctions in the life of the Church have to give way to liturgical innovations; all the latest insights have equal validity to long-held practices. Roman Catholics who have wondered about all the ongoing changes in their church need look no further: the genesis lies in passages such as these.

Elsewhere in *Gaudium et Spes*, we find the firm imprint of de Chardin: "Modern man is on the road to a more thorough development of his own personality, and to a growing discovery and vindication of his rights."[19] Lastly, "The Church

[19] Op. cit., p. 240.

further recognizes … an evolution toward unity, a process of wholesome socialization and of association in civic and economic realms."[20]

The ideas of this Jesuit mystic penetrated to the very heart of the Roman Catholic Church—to the Offertory Prayers of the Mass. For the sake of brevity, the old Offertory Prayer is here set opposite the new:

We offer Thee the chalice of salvation, O Lord, beseeching Thy mercy that it may be as a sweet fragrance before Thy divine majesty for the salva-	Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of

[20] Op. cit., p. 242.

tion of us and the whole world.

human hands. It will become our spiritual drink.

Prominent Roman Catholic theologian, Fr. J.P.R. Tillard, O.P., enthusiastically explains:

> The bread which is broken, a sign of brotherhood in the midst of the faithful, is also the fruit of many efforts. The bread and wine of our Eucharist, which we break and share among us, are not simply grains of wheat or bunches of grapes which are picked and placed side by side. The bread is the wheat of creation, the wine the vine of creation, but transformed by human efforts, already changed in themselves by the work of man. This work, of course, is

> dominated by the desire of profit; but is also a labor of love. Teilhard de Chardin has admirably shown how in the Eucharist bread and wine *the human effort itself becomes in a certain way the matter of the sacrament*.[21] (my emphasis)

However, liturgist Michael Davies is much closer to the mark when he writes:

> It hardly needs pointing out that the propitiatory nature of the Mass is made explicit in the traditional prayer but ignored in the new one. In the new Offertory Prayers

[21] *Emmanuel*, May 1975, p. 210, cited in Michael Davies, *Liturgical Revolution: Pope Paul's New Mass* (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 1992), p. 340.

> there is not a word which so much as hints that the Divine Victim is offered at Mass.... These new prayers are fully compatible with the Teilhardian theory that human effort, the work of human hands, becomes in a certain way the matter of the sacrament. We thus have a rite that is not simply compatible with Protestantism but with the Cult of Man.[22]

The pastoral failure of the new mass with its destruction of traditional symbolism, reduced mystical and dramatic ritual, and ongoing change is most obviously manifest in the massive drop in mass attendance.

This evolutionary sense of changing reality in

[22] Davies, *Liturgical Revolution*, pp. 321–322.

the life of the Roman Catholic Church is in complete contradiction to the view held in the Orthodox Church, as stated by one of her notable theologians, Georges Florovsky: "In the life and existence of the Church time is mysteriously overcome and mastered; time, so to speak, *stands still*."[23] The mystical timelessness of the Orthodox Church could not be better expressed.

It is precisely because doctrine and theology are woven into the very fabric of her worship that the Orthodox Church "often attributes to minute points of ritual an importance which astonishes Western Christians.... If worship is the faith in action, then liturgical changes can-

[23] Georges Florovsky, *Collected Works* (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1972), p. 45. Cited in Smith, op. cit., p. 230.

not be lightly regarded."[24]

It would be hard to find a greater, more eloquent tribute to our Liturgy than that given by former Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, when he writes that the Orthodox Church "does not see liturgy as developing or growing in history, but only the reflection of the eternal liturgy, whose light, through the sacred celebration, illumines our changing times with its unchanging beauty and grandeur."[25]

Illicit to Licit

[24] Daniel B. Clendenin, ed., *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), p. 13.

[25] *The Latin Mass*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Jan/Feb. 1993, p. 21.

THE YEARS AFTER VATICAN II BROUGHT MORE CHANGES in the Catholic Church. These changes have led further and further away from the traditional liturgy—changes such as communion in the hand, laypeople distributing communion, guitar groups singing Protestant-style hymns from a hymnbook appropriately entitled "Glory and Praise," and altar girls in increasing numbers (even though at the time of Vatican II they were still forbidden). When people complained, they were reminded that altar girls were a common sight in Rome, which of course is the pope's own diocese.

The question of course is, if you have a lone authoritative figure like the pope exercising supreme universal jurisdiction, then how do you

get away with illicit practices such as the use of altar girls or communion in the hand (both of which were practiced for a long time before official permission was granted)? The answer is that you do not confront an authority figure head-on seeking permission for a practice that he has already forbidden; more subtle tactics are called for.

The most favored tactic in the Catholic Church is to conduct an end run around the forbidden statute by quietly allowing, in this case, communion in the hand or altar girls. This artfully plays on the widely established principle that change precedes what ultimately becomes law. When the illicit practice is well proliferated, the bishops will then appeal to the pope: “Holy

Father, these practices are so widespread and firmly entrenched, we ask that your Holiness bestow his blessing." If he doesn't bestow his blessing, he faces the real risk of seeing his authority eroded by being ignored. Permission is usually granted.

This evolution of church doctrine and practice by manipulation of the pope has been going on for centuries. This is what happened with the *filioque* issue in the eleventh century. *Filioque* refers to the inclusion in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of the statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father "and the Son"—*filioque* in Latin. The Roman Catholic Church forbade the use of this addition for 500 years, until around 1014, when Rome accepted

it into her liturgy. Most scholars agree that by then it was so firmly entrenched in the West that Rome capitulated. Such tactics are far less successful in a church governed by general councils.

Today, Rome officially sanctions communion in the hand and altar girls as she does liturgical dance. To appreciate the magnitude of the *volte-face* involved in two of these practices, one only has to read the official statements banning them. The first one, addressing the issue of altar girls, is taken from the official Vatican journal *Notitiae*:

> [The] general discipline of the Church [against female altar servers] has been set in stone by canon 44 of the Collection of Laodicea which dates generally from the

> end of the 4th century and which has figured in almost all canonical collections of East and West.[26]

On the issue of liturgical dance, Rome was equally emphatic in its condemnation when the *Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship*, responding to a question on this issue, quoted from its official journal *Notitiae* on January 8, 1982, as follows:

> Hence it is not possible to introduce something of that sort in the liturgical celebrations: It would mean to bring into the liturgy one of the most desacralized and

[26] Cited in *The Latin Mass*, Vol. 4, no. 4, Fall 1995, p. 44.

> desacralizing elements; and this would be seen as introducing an atmosphere of profanity.... Nor is it acceptable to introduce into the Liturgy the so-called artistic ballet because it would reduce the liturgy to mere entertainment. (*Notitiae*, XI, 1975, pp. 202–205)

Liturgical dance is now officially accepted in the Roman Catholic Church as prescribed in article 42 of the Vatican document, *The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*. In this document, written in Latin, approval is explicitly given to hand clapping (*manuum percussio*) and rhythmic swaying of the body (*fluctuationes rhythmicae*)—expressions whose absurdity underlines the inappropriate nature of the con-

cessions made.

A Transcendental Vision

ALL THESE ABUSES AND INNOVATIONS are symptomatic of a church in decline. Since the closing of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, the graphs plotting the decline in vocations to the priesthood, nuns, religious brothers, monks, mass attendance, baptisms, confirmations—any significant statistic—continue to plunge. It is a bleak future devoid of any reasonable hope that this precipitous decline can be arrested. As devout, traditional Catholics, we endured because we were enveloped in that transcendental vision most Roman Catholics have of the church and her two-thousand-year history,

which has been sustained by Christ's promise to St. Peter: "And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). This promise was given, we believed, only to the true church—the Roman Catholic Church.

It is this transcendental vision of the church that kept us within the fold for so long, as it continues to do for many of our traditional Roman Catholic friends. They remain agonizing stoically in a church that is continually moving further away from them, because they cannot imagine themselves anywhere else. There is a saying in the Roman Catholic Church that Rome turns on those who love her the most—for

example, the Knights Templars in the Middle Ages, the Jesuit Order in the eighteenth century, and the millions of agonizing traditional Catholics in our own day.

This transcendental vision of loyalty is poignantly and eloquently expressed by Roman Catholic author Anne Roche Muggeridge in her book, *The Desolate City:*

> Catholicism is not just a religion: it is a country of the heart and of the mind. No matter how resolutely they turn their backs on it, people born within it never quite shed their accents. And there are a great many who cannot emigrate, no matter how uninviting living conditions become. We may freeze within it; we would die outside

it.[27]

My wife and I have encountered this mindset several times when people, discovering that we are ex-Roman Catholics, respond: "Oh, once Catholic, always Catholic." There is unquestionably a certain strength in this rigid, unswerving loyalty to a particular church—a rigidity also found among Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. For many Roman Catholics, it is a rigid loyalty based on culture and unexamined assumptions. In this instance, the old saying certainly applies: "It isn't what you know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know that

[27] Anne Roche Muggeridge, *The Desolate City: The Catholic Church in Ruins* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), p. 7.

isn't so."

Of course, the obvious question is, as loyal Roman Catholics with a transcendental vision of our church, how did we make the break that some still find impossible? The answer to that question is that ultimately, our loyalty has always been to the *One True Church founded by Christ*. That church we firmly believed was the Roman Catholic Church—until we encountered the Orthodox Church.

Chapter III

The Orthodox Church

Glad Recognition of the Long Lost

THE FIRST TIME MY WIFE AND I ENTERED an Orthodox church, we were in southern Greece. It was a picturesque little town of dazzling white homes with window boxes spilling over with red geraniums, and a peacock blue sea stretching into the distance. We entered the little basilica-style church and were greeted with a lingering fragrance of incense, while a myriad of colorful icons and murals of ancient saints gazed from the shadowy walls. The beautiful iconostasis, together with the gold altar furnishings and numerous standing candelabra with their flickering candles, created an incredible scene of visual richness. We couldn't help contrasting this scene with the Frank Lloyd Wright glass-and-cedar

churches at home, with their Calvinistic astringency of bare walls and potted plants.

Here was a more ancient, sensual, mystical Christianity that had no misgivings about communicating the world of the sacred through the media of visual beauty and the wonderful fragrance of incense. As we stood in this church, we felt a vague, indefinable impression of something authentic, an intuitive recognition of a truth. The words of John Keats immediately came to mind: "I can never feel certain of any truth but from a clear perception of its beauty."[28]

Here in the silence of this little Orthodox church came what Robert Frost calls the "sur-

[28] John Keats, Letter to George and Georgiana Keats, 16 Dec. 1818–4 Jan. 1819.

prise of remembering something we didn't know we knew" and the "glad recognition of the long lost."[29] In contrast to our own aesthetically barren post-Vatican II churches, with their "kindergarten" felt banners hanging in and around the sanctuaries, here the spiritual world was presented to us in a lavish, unself-conscious display of beauty reflecting the glory of God's creation. We took the memory of this little Orthodox church home with us and stored it away, as one would store a favorite souvenir in a drawer—to be taken out once in a while and gazed at. As the years rolled on, we took it out more frequently.

In 1992, my wife enrolled in a course on iconography conducted by a Russian icon mas-

[29] Robert Frost, *The Figure a Poem Makes* (1939).

Whelton, M. (2006). *Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims*. Ancient Faith Publishing.

ter. There we met a number of Orthodox Christians, with whom we had numerous discussions about the differences between our two churches. In spite of all the difficulties we were experiencing, we still felt that the Roman Catholic Church was *the* Church of Jesus Christ, and that the Orthodox Church should come back to the true fold. Besides, we wondered how they could possibly manage their affairs and maintain cohesion without an authority figure like the pope. But then we had to grudgingly admit that in spite of this deficiency, the Orthodox had done a much better job at bearing faithful witness to the Christian liturgical tradition.

Through the iconography course, we came into contact with a couple of Orthodox priests,

who lent us some books by Orthodox historians. This was the first time we had read history from an Orthodox perspective, a perspective as ancient as Rome's. After all, there was only one church for the first thousand years of Christian history. These Orthodox historians contradicted beliefs and assumptions concerning the papacy and church government that we held as Roman Catholics. We spent two years in solid research, carefully checking their views and conclusions against primary sources and against the writings of noted secular historians from leading universities, whom we found agreeing with the Orthodox on the essential points. These and my own findings will be discussed at length in the following chapters.

We Become Orthodox

DURING THE TWO YEARS WE SPENT INVESTIGATING the Orthodox Church, we would occasionally attend the liturgy at a Russian church, only to walk out halfway through due to our sense of alienation. The liturgy was beautiful, yes, but the old Slavonic in the Russian church was difficult to connect with. Furthermore, the heavy ethnic ambience made us feel awkward and out of place.

We also struggled with the emotional desire to stay with the familiar, our relatives, friends, and acquaintances who were interconnected with our Roman Catholic church life. More than once we prayed for a good argument to stay where we were. In fact, at one point we felt so

emotionally drained, we decided to give up the "Orthodox project" entirely. The ensuing relief, however, was short-lived, as the case for the Orthodox Church was too strong to ignore—there was no peace in "opting out."

My wife and I have met converts from other faiths to the Orthodox Church who had a much easier time of it. They paid a couple of visits to our church and became catechumens because they liked all or some of the following: the ambience, the priest, the sermons, the incense, the choir, the parishioners, and so forth. Considering what my wife and I went through, I envy them.

In spite of our struggle, what kept bringing us back to Orthodoxy? The answer is somewhat

ironic. While the Orthodox Church has always emphasized the mystical over the rational, it was the rational Orthodox arguments, for which there was no satisfactory Roman Catholic response, that wore down our emotional desire to stay where we were. Perhaps it is precisely because reason has never held an ultimate position in the theology of the Orthodox Church that the reasons for Orthodoxy are so unassailable. The rational apology for Orthodoxy is not based on the changing fads of human reason. Rather, it is based on the unchanging mystical life of holy men and women who for two thousand years have proved, not in theory but in practice, that the "faith once and for all delivered" to the Church is the only sane path of salvation.

Consequently, our trips to the Russian church became more frequent, and after getting to know the priest and some of the parishioners, we started to attend regularly. We began staying for the coffee hour and met a few English-speaking converts. Some of the old Russians we befriended had fled the Revolution with their families as children and had been members of the church for over seventy years. Amazingly, they still retained the courteous demeanor and refined manners of old Europe. One old gentleman, when walking with his father, had seen the Tsar Nicholas and his son Tsarevich Alexis in Yekaterinburg just before their execution. Even though they have now passed on, these are people we are very grateful to have known—there is

always a warm glow in our hearts when they come to mind.

Some of our Roman Catholic friends thought our conversion to Orthodoxy was easy. They complained, “You didn’t like the new mass so you jumped ship.” Nothing could be further from the truth. We had tolerated the new mass for thirty years and were prepared to endure it for another thirty. In spite of our anguish over the state of the Roman Catholic Church, the leave-taking was painful and difficult.

After much soul-searching and prayer, we were received into the Orthodox Church by chrismation on Lazarus Saturday, 1995. The question that many people might wish to ask is, “How has it been since? Are you glad you made

the move?" The answer is an unqualified yes. There is now an enormous spiritual peace in our family.

Chapter IV

The Landscape Is Different

> *In Orthodoxy, however, it is not merely the answers that are different—the questions themselves are not the same as in the West.*[30]

Augustinianism—The Great Divide

[30] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 9.

WHEN WE BEGAN TO LOOK CLOSELY at the Orthodox Church, we realized very quickly that the religious landscape is different. The concept of a faith based on a legal relationship with God that permeates the Western churches is absent. The Orthodox Church has an entirely different perspective. Instead of being based on justification and the justice of God, the Orthodox Church's central theology is based on His love and the beauty and goodness of His creation. Therefore, as theologian Ernst Benz observes, "the major themes of the Orthodox faith are the apotheosis, sanctification, rebirth, re-creation and transfiguration of man; and not only man, but also the whole universe—for the Eastern Church has a characteristically cosmic approach."[31]

As Professor Benz points out, the legalistic attitude that developed in the Western Church had its origins both in the ancient Romans' relationship with their gods and in "the interpretation of redemption given by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans."[32] Paul was writing to Jewish Christians who were well versed in the Mosaic Law, which revealed God's righteousness; St. Paul was therefore addressing their concerns about God's justice and their duties towards Him.

St. Paul's doctrine of justification as found in Romans did not become a dominant theme in the Eastern Church, which maintained a balance

[31] Ernst Benz, *The Eastern Orthodox Church* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963), p. 48.

[32] Op. cit., p. 43.

between St. Paul and the mysticism of the Gospel of St. John—hence, "There is little emphasis upon justification."[33] It was St. Augustine who took Paul's doctrine of justification and created and defined a legal relationship between God and man. Thenceforth, in the Western Christian tradition, man's redemption and salvation would be defined in legal terms of responsibilities and duties toward, and punishments administered by, an exacting, strictly just God. The famous Orthodox theologian St. John of Damascus (c. 700–750) "does not even mention the idea of justification. So the Orthodox Church was never prompted to assert that the necessity for God's incarnation arose logically

[33] Op. cit., p. 48.

out of the doctrine of satisfaction:[34] the very groundwork for such a doctrine was lacking."[35]

Given the Western Church's somewhat gloomy doctrine of original sin, it is understandable that people took such a morbid interest in their obligations. In fact, it was a lawyer, Tertullian, who first defined the Western doctrine of original sin in the second century, and Augustine who elaborated it into a whole scheme of redemption and salvation. Augustine argued that the human race is under "a harsh necessity" of committing sin, and that "man's

[34] Satisfaction is the doctrine that the sufferings and death of Christ satisfied the requirements of God's justice. (Benz, p. 46.)

[35] Benz, op. cit., p. 51.

nature was overcome by the fault into which it fell, *and so came to lack freedom*."[36] This pessimistic view flowed from the belief that the human race was not only wounded by Adam's fall, but also *inherited his guilt* and thus was deprived of God's grace. Therefore, as Augustine explained, unbaptized infants who die "shall not have life, but the wrath of God abideth on them. Whence could this result to those who clearly have no sins of their own, if they are not held to be obnoxious to original sin?"[37]

[36] "On the Perfection of Man's Righteousness," iv (9), as quoted in Ware, op. cit., p. 228.

[37] "A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants," Book 1, ch. 28, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series (Pe-

Augustine taught that original sin is only transmitted through lust. While he admitted that the sexual act between husband and wife (providing it is only for procreation) is perfectly legitimate, "yet it cannot be effected without the ardor of lust." As Augustine explains:

> Wherefore the devil holds infants guilty who are born, not of the good by which marriage is good, but of the evil of concupiscence, which, indeed, marriage uses aright, but at which even marriage has occasion to feel shame. Marriage is itself "honorable in all" the goods which properly appertain to it; but even when it has its "bed undefiled" (not only by fornication

abody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), Vol. 5, p. 275.

Whelton, M. (2006). *Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims*. Ancient Faith Publishing.

and adultery, which are damnable disgraces, but also by any of those excesses of cohabitation such as do not arise from any prevailing desire of children, but from an overbearing lust of pleasure, which are venial sins in man and wife), yet, whenever it comes to the actual process of generation, the very embrace which is lawful and honorable cannot be effected without the ardor of lust … and that on this very account it produces shame.… Now from this concupiscence whatever comes into being by natural birth is bound by original sin.[38]

The teaching of Augustine that unbaptized

[38] Op. cit., ch. 27, pp. 274–275.

babies incur the wrath of God and damnation is so harsh that it violated even Medieval Europe's sense of justice. Therefore, St. Thomas Aquinas introduced Limbo (*Limbus Infantum* or *Puerum*) into Roman Catholic theology, as a place where infants are consigned who die without actual sin (personal sin), but who did not have their original sin washed away by baptism. While Limbo is not hell, its inhabitants are nevertheless for eternity "excluded from the full blessedness of the beatific vision."[39] This teaching was declared *de fide* by the Second Council of Lyons (1274) and confirmed by the Council of Florence (1439).

By contrast, the Orthodox Church has never held the view that unbaptized infants "because

[39] Hardon, op. cit., p. 228.

tainted with original guilt, are consigned by the just God to the everlasting flames of Hell."[40] As a result, the Orthodox Church has never had the necessity for a place like Limbo. Furthermore, the Orthodox Church has a broader view of sex in marriage. It has not dogmatized Augustine's view that sexual intimacy between husband and wife should only be for the procreation of children, thus denying any emotional, loving value in marital intimacy—a view that dominated the Western Church until the late nineteenth century.

Unfortunately for the early Western Church, Augustine was the only major theologian they had. In the Eastern Church, by contrast, there

[40] Ware, op. cit., p. 229.

were many; thus the Orthodox theology of the East, especially concerning salvation, was more balanced. As far as the Orthodox Church is concerned, there is no inherited guilt. As Father John Meyendorff comments, "There is no question, in patristic theology, of an inherited guilt transmitted to the human race through the sin of Adam. What is inherited by the entire human nature is slavery to death and corruption.... Instead of the Augustinian idea of the inherited guilt—only personal sins can produce guilt—the Fathers spoke of a *personal* power of death and corruption, that of the Devil, from which Christ came to liberate man, 'trampling down death by death.' "[41]

[41] John Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church*

Thus the Orthodox Church's view of man's condition is more optimistic, for it teaches that the image of God in man is "distorted by sin, but never destroyed". In the words of a hymn sung by the Orthodox at the Funeral Service for the laity: 'I am the image of Thine inexpressible glory, even though I bear the wounds of sin.' And because he still retains the image of God, man still retains free will, although sin restricts his scope."[42]

It is this more optimistic view of the human condition that allows the Orthodox Church to venerate as saints those just men and women of

(Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), p. 72.

[42] Ware, op. cit., p. 229.

the Old Testament who, without receiving the grace of baptism, were still capable of performing works pleasing to God.

Augustine's highly individualistic theology did not go unchallenged in the Western Church. St. Vincent of Lerins, in his celebrated *Commonitorium*, took strong exception to the dominant influence of Augustinian thought, which appeared to overwhelm and submerge the theological thought of his contemporaries. Only that doctrine is binding, St. Vincent wrote, which is held "everywhere, always and by all" (*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum*). He forcefully reminds those who pleaded that Augustine only "developed" dogma, that dogma can only mature—not change into

something else. It, therefore, "must truly be a development, and not a transformation of the faith. Understanding, knowledge, and wisdom must grow and develop in the same dogma, the same sense, the same meaning,"[43] and always adhering to the trifold dictum of *universality, antiquity, and consent*.

The Council of Orange (529), in its Canons 1–8, approved Augustine's doctrine of original sin, that is, that freedom is "vitiated" in the children of Adam "and needs grace even to obtain the 'beginning of faith' [*initium fidei*], or the desire to be saved. By itself, fallen nature is not capable of any good work deserving salvation."[44]

[43] St. Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium*.

[44] John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divi-*