

HOW ORTHODOX AND NON-ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS DIFFER

Two Separate Models of Spirituality and Salvation

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I. Orthodoxy, Non-Traditionalist Orthodoxy, and Non-Orthodox Christianity

It is difficult, in trying to explain to non-Orthodox (heterodox) Western Christians how Orthodoxy and Western Christianity differ, without first explaining why, in the Orthodox world, there is an internal division between so-called traditionalist and non-traditionalist Orthodox (or ecumenists and anti-ecumenists, a distinction that I will address subsequently). I shall, therefore, try to address that very complex issue, before presenting a model for understanding the things that separate Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians.

Traditionalists often, though not exclusively, operate under the banner of the Old Calendar (more precisely, the Church or Festal Calendar) and resistance to the adoption of the Papal or so-called “Revised Julian Calendar” by some Orthodox, and almost all Orthodox in America, in the twentieth century. Non-traditionalists have abandoned many of the traditions of Orthodoxy, sometimes the Church Calendar—for which reason they are, in that instance, called “New Calendarists”—and sometimes, though holding to the Church Calendar, other traditions, such as traditional forms of clerical dress, fasting, and worship, emphasis on monasticism, and so on. Between the traditionalists and non-traditionalists there are varying degrees of interaction, variously marked by brotherly toleration of differences in practice and belief and, unfortunately, shockingly opprobrious hostility and enmity.

This division in Orthodoxy not only makes it difficult to explain how Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christianity differ, but occasions immense confusion, since the non-traditionalist Orthodox, and especially in America, have adopted many of the traditions, much of the language, and a great deal of the ethos of Western Christianity, creating a sort of ethnically-centered but hybrid Orthodoxy. This trend has resulted in what often becomes a postiche Orthodoxy that makes of our hierarchical structure something akin to that of Roman Catholicism, placing order over prophecy, an emphasis which is alien to the ethos of Orthodoxy, or that draws on Protestant Evangelical ideas of salvation and notions of piety alien to the Hesychastic, or mystical, traditions of Orthodoxy. The conversion to the various national jurisdictions of Orthodox in America (Greek, Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Antiochian, etc.) of many Roman Catholics and Protestants, including an entire Protestant Evangelical sect, some years ago, to one of the more innovative non-traditional jurisdictions, has reinforced this trend. There has thus arisen, in Orthodoxy in the West, the idea that communion with some Patriarchate, “one of the plurality of Popes in Eastern Christianity,” as a Roman Catholic convert recently put it, defines proper Orthodoxy; or, by way of Protestant Evangelical Christian converts, the idea that Orthodoxy is not really as far from a Reformed understanding of Christ and the Church as it actually is.

Such confusion is further complicated by the participation, beginning more than a half century ago, of Orthodox in the ecumenical movement. The original Orthodox ecumenists—the late Father Georges Florovsky, one of the founders of the World Council of Churches and a bril-

liant theologian, is probably the most distinguished example that one can cite—saw in this movement an opportunity for the Orthodox world to witness to the Church’s historical primacy and to the traditions of the undivided Christendom that it claims to have preserved. Whereas these original ecumenists felt, whether rightly or wrongly, that their participation in the ecumenical movement might, within the context of theological encounters and dialogue, draw Western Christians to Orthodoxy as a valid historical criterion for Christian unity, standing, as it does, somewhere between the Western Papal and Reformed confessions, this expectation slowly faded. Orthodox ecumenists began, over time, to speak in the language of ecumenical compromise, accepting a dialogue that turned to the similarities between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox and downplayed the uniqueness of the Orthodox Faith. Beginning with the abandonment of the Orthodox Calendar, supposedly in service to astronomical exactitude (which has nothing to do with liturgical time) but in fact as a first step towards accommodating to the non-Orthodox Christian world, and a corresponding relinquishment of spiritual traditions peculiar to Orthodoxy, the concessions made by the Orthodox became so egregious that even such veteran ecumenists as Father Florovsky came to disavow its course. At the same time, the Orthodox traditionalists have reacted to ecumenism with understandable perturbation, accounting for their stand as anti-ecumenists against the Orthodox ecumenists, a distinction to which I referred above.

By way of the ecumenical movement, non-traditional Orthodox embraced, aside from innovation, fearful ecclesiastical compromises in the covetable quest for Christian unity, which they unfortunately pursued in a precarious manner inconsistent with the salutary methodologies for healing schism and division traditionally put forth by the Orthodox Church Fathers. Succumbing to the lure of union by way of overlooking significant theological and spiritual differences between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox, these ecumenists fell victim to a self-fulfilling prophecy: “If we accommodate to non-Orthodox Christian views, setting aside our differences, we will accomplish the reunion of Christians.” In so doing, they set aside the self-definition of the Orthodox Church as the “criterion” of Truth, instead of making temporary pastoral compromises (acting by “economy”) for the sake of unity, and jettisoned some of the essential teachings and rudimentary spiritual foundations of Orthodox spirituality. Though fortunately expressed only as personal opinions and not set forth as doctrine and a matter of Faith at a theological level, several Orthodox ecumenists, as well as high-placed Hierarchs, have of late even come to *question* the primacy of Orthodoxy, dismissing the idea as a “medieval artifact”; indeed, a few of them have set it aside as an impediment to Christian unity.

As Orthodox ecumenists have espoused this warped ecumenical “ecclesiology” and engaged in ecumenical diplomacy, giving up and losing more and more of what the Church has preserved, they have of course gained converts from non-Orthodox confessions, since the latter have been required to relinquish less and less in returning to what they have come to appreciate as “historical” Christianity, but what is *in fact* an Orthodoxy in enfeebled form. This kind of political ecumenism has further separated Orthodox traditionalists and non-traditionalists and has ushered in an erosion of genuine Orthodox traditions. This has included such accommodations as the so-called Western Rite, endangering the integrity and unity in worship of the Orthodox Church, which developed from a common embryo in the ancient Church that was distorted by, and lost in, schism. In the case of the Western Rite, this divisive deviation is justified by an appeal to charismatic figures (at times, individual Saints), temporary acts of pastoral “economy” (*οἰκονομία*), and the principles of ecumenism, which have displaced the indispensable authority of consistency in Holy Tradition (the action of God in History), the sovereignty of the Patristic consensus over the

individual witness of the Fathers and Saints, and the permanency of ἀκρίβεια (or exactitude in the Faith) over the impermanent expedience of economy.

Oddly enough, despite the disunity among Orthodox themselves—once more, often expressed in deplorable odium and execration—ecumenism and its desire for Christian institutional unity “beyond dogma” have become entrenched in the public life of the Orthodox Church. This current was reinforced in the West last century by a growing awareness of Orthodoxy, a perquisite of ecumenism that was also early on recognized by the atheistic Communist régimes in Eastern Europe. While violently and ruthlessly persecuting and reviling their native Orthodox populations, they allowed, for reasons of propaganda, the free participation of select Orthodox Hierarchs in the international ecumenical movement: hypocrisy that both impugns the probity of the ecumenical organizations that knew and remained silent about this fact and taints the post-Communist actions and policies of ecumenist Hierarchs who collaborated with their former Communist handlers. In some ways, ecumenism and its principles have become more important than the traditions in which Orthodox have always sought and maintained their oneness. This fact is clearly illustrated by the change in the Church Calendar, which interestingly coincided with the rise of Communism in Eastern Europe. Originally developed to standardize Feasts, the celebration of Pascha (Easter), and the liturgical practices of the early Christians, it was the first victim of Orthodox ecumenism. Unity in Orthodox worship and confession gave way to *religious internationalism* and ecumenism—to concerns that contravene Orthodoxy’s very self-definition.

More subtly, ecumenism has drawn Roman Catholic proselytes to what they see as a more “open” branch of Catholicism: a corrected Catholicism to which they can more comfortably convert, now that the ecumenical spirit of the Second Vatican Council has granted “ecclesial” status to the Orthodox. Protestant converts have found in Orthodoxy a sense of historical authenticity, as Orthodox have abandoned with ever greater dispatch their understanding of spiritual primacy and the plethora of traditions that have always been a benchmark of Orthodox authenticity. As Orthodox ecumenists have begun to speak of “officialdom,” “canonicity” (which actually means adherence to the spiritual life and traditions that gave birth to the canons), and truth beyond the dogmas and beliefs of the Faith, Orthodoxy is often presented in a deformed way. Its adherents frequently seek something foreign to it. And its Hierarchs and Church leaders strive for worldly recognition, organizational unity, and various ends expressed in clearly non-Orthodox ecumenical jargon. Orthodox *enthusiastically* abandon with greater and greater momentum the humble other-worldliness that is at the core of the Faith and which has always separated it, in terms of its essential character, from non-Orthodox Christianity as such.

In *deliberately* adopting a foreign ethos and the aspirations of ecumenism, Orthodox have come to misunderstand the spiritual language of the Church, which is informed by genuine spiritual experience and, as one Church Father calls it, “a theology of facts.” In misusing the term “unity” and not defining it in an Orthodox way, they have sidestepped the impediment to political and superficial unity that a genuine understanding of the word, not to mention spiritual facts, entails. Moreover, misrepresenting their Faith and preaching an *ersatz* Orthodoxy, not a few Churchmen, instead of teaching the true goal of Orthodoxy—the abrogation of man’s scandalous separation from God by our deification in Christ—speak only of union with the non-Orthodox, decrying the scandal of *organizational disunity*. Instead of curing heresy, a spiritual disease, they speak of “dwelling together” with the ill. They disallow any diagnosis, and thus therapy, of those beset by spiritual infirmities, acting as though a physician should ignore contagion as an assault against those who, however unwillingly, spread disease. The non-traditional members of the Or-

thodox Church, a Church that believes that man must be healed and transformed by spiritual practice, asceticism, the Mysteries (sacraments) of the Church, and union with Christ before he can truly dwell together with others in salutary fraternity, have been led to adopt a religious vocabulary unknown to the Fathers and Holy Tradition. They have substituted for the bread and salt of Orthodoxy a bland mess of pottage.

So it is, ultimately, that the very nature and aims of the Orthodox Church and of its dogma, doctrine, and spirituality have been sacrificed on a model of Christianity that is not consistent with the Faith and with the traditions that Orthodox have preserved from the very times of the Apostles. More often than not, though with notable and comforting exceptions, Orthodox writers and theologians either speak abstractly and intellectually about something that they have never experienced, or, as I have noted, use language about Orthodoxy with a meaning drawn from the non-Orthodox. In consequence, we have come to the point that, as Bishop Photii, the erudite and gifted Chief Hierarch of the traditionalist Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, has opined, we are seeing today the creation of something that, though perhaps in some ways externally Orthodox, is incongruous with Orthodoxy. Non-traditional Orthodox (who often claim that such an appellation is imprecise, since “all Orthodoxy is traditional”—an anserine view that must be put aside for what it is), His Eminence further observes, cannot be trusted to provide a proper paradigm for Orthodoxy. Thus it is that I have introduced my following comments with a very necessary excursus on traditionalist and non-traditionalist Orthodoxy.

II. *Definitions and Contrasting Terms and Concepts*

In presenting my model of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christianity, it behooves me to define the terms and concepts that constitute my contrasting paradigms of spirituality and salvation. I will do so in a very basic way that does not pretend to be exhaustive. I am, I should also stress, *not writing theologically here*, but in a practical way and from the standpoint of the *psychology of religious belief and practice*. I will offer a definition of Orthodoxy and a few contrasting statements, in order to distinguish Orthodox thought on various matters from western thought. By no means do I wish to suggest that my statements about western doctrine preclude the presence of certain elements of Orthodox thought in Western Christianity, or to argue that my portrayal of Orthodox belief is any more than a tentative distillation taken from the consensus of the Fathers. Some of my observations about Orthodox doctrine, in fact, may seem stark and displeasing to those Orthodox readers who have not carefully studied the Fathers and who are familiar only with a formal or Scholastic Orthodox theology (another western hybrid that does disservice to the Church). It will no doubt seem jolting to converts to ecumenical Orthodoxy. Be that as it may, none of my observations is deliberately meant to provoke controversy.

A. *Orthodoxy* (Gr., ὀρθοδοξία). The etymology of this word is more complex and controversial than most think. It is made up of two Greek words, ὀρθός and δόξα. The first word, *orthos*, means “right,” “correct,” or “straight.” While the second word, *doxa*, means “glory,” it has also been used in historical forms of Greek to express thought, belief, opinion and even anticipation. Orthodoxy, therefore, refers to correct belief, correct thought or thinking, and, by extension—as the Church Fathers often use it—rightness of confession or faith. Although amateur etymologists, who do not understand or take into account the development of the Greek language, often overlook or deny this fact, it also means rightness or correctness in worship, by virtue of its modern meaning of “glory”; i.e., the proper way to glorify (or worship) God.

B. Anthropology. The Orthodox Church believes that man was created in the image of God; i.e., with divine qualities and, originally, with a will aligned to the Will of God. As a result of the Fall, through disobedience and the exercise of their will, which they placed in discord with the Will of God, human beings took on a distorted view of life, introducing illness, death, and separation from their true nature. They assumed a fallen, imperfect nature bereft of the glory and perfection that they enjoyed in Paradise, in communion with God.

In contradistinction to Western Christian anthropology, Orthodox do not believe that man exists in a fallen state of doleful depravity, but that he has been made ill by sin. Therefore, he preserves, even in his post-Lapsarian condition, a receptiveness to God that has been distorted and that hides his true nature. Within men and women, there exists a faculty for contact with God, a spiritual mind, or the *νοῦς* (*nous*), which, though darkened, can be illumined. Even though man gave himself over to Satan, the Evil One—a spiritual being that seeks to separate him from God and thus to pollute and defile human nature—humans still sense their potential for perfection.

C. Cosmology. The Orthodox Church believes that the fall of man affected the entire universe and that we understand and see the world around us in a distorted way, disfigured and subject to decay and evil. Nonetheless, unlike some Western Christians, it does not believe that the world is evil, but that evil derives from how an individual perceives and responds to his fallen environment. The Resurrection of Christ potentially restored man and the world to pre-Lapsarian glory (and greater glory). Indeed, both the deification of man and the spiritualization of the world and matter lie at the core of the loftiest goals of Orthodoxy.

D. Theology. While Western ideas of God as a Prime Mover, as well as anthropomorphic images of God, can be found in some Church writings, the view of God in the consensus of the Fathers is, in keeping with Orthodoxy's apophatic tradition, that He both *is and is not* (that He encompasses existence and being as we understand them, but that He also transcends all that is and encompasses all that is not); that He is wholly unknown, incomprehensible, and ineffable in His Essence, but that He can be understood in His Energies. Orthodox do not believe that God is a vengeful, angry, or jealous God. He does not reward and punish. These are human attributions to God and the result of our desire to describe what cannot be described.

E. Soteriology. Seeking, as the Old Testament narrative attests, to draw man back to Himself, and man having failed to respond fully to Him (except in the persons of the Prophets and "Seers of God"), God became Man Himself, though as Perfect Man and the Archetype of what human beings can be, while remaining Perfect God. In Christ, God took on human form and flesh to save man, dying and resurrecting from the dead in order to free man from illness and death. He did this not just as an atonement for man's sin, as Western Christian soteriology holds, but in order to transform and deify, once again, the very flesh of humankind: giving men and women the potential of restoration to their state in Paradise. As the ancient Fathers of the Church taught, "Christ became man that man might become Divine." He restored Adam, "making Adam God" by His Grace and in His Energies (though naturally not God in His inconceivable Essence).

Christ also put forth, in His earthly life and ministry, a perfect example of the kind of life by which man might overcome sin here on earth. He instituted the Mysteries of the Church (transforming pagan theophagy, for example, into the greatest of the Christian Mysteries, the Eucharist), by which humans, infused with Grace (and, in the Eucharist, the very Body and Blood of Christ: the Medicine of Immortality), are cured of sin—immunized against it, while still in the flesh, though still subject to it, should they return to sin—and transformed. Salvation, or *θέωσις*

(*theosis*), the deification of man, unlike the Western Christian idea of restoration and salvation as a propitiation for sin, involves a literal process of union with Christ in earthly life, wherein we become small “Jesus Christs” within Jesus Christ. Men and women are reconciled to God by union with His Energies, becoming literally children of God by adoption.

By salvation, then, the Orthodox mean that the human being acquires, thereby, the Holy Spirit and union with Christ by Grace, being enlightened and taking on the Mind of Christ. One participates in the life of God Himself, rising up to Christ, the Archetype of the human Icon. Sin is cured, the human is healed. Even though, as noted above, one united to Christ is subject to sin while in the flesh, he nonetheless lives in direct communion with God, his human will aligned with God’s Will and his normal human activity changed by the purpose and focus of his earthly life: synergy with God.

One so deified in Christ becomes a Saint. Among these, certain exemplars are recognized by the Church and are set before us to inspire us to holiness. When we venerate them and ask for their intercessions towards our salvation, our efforts in so doing are wholly Christocentric, as are our entreaties to the greatest of the Saints, who surpasses all other human beings, the *Theotokos*, or Mother of God. We strive, by her intercessions, to give birth to Christ in a spiritual way, as she alone did in a bodily way. Thus, Orthodox Mariology is also always Christocentric.

F. Heaven and Hell. Heaven, or that state after death in which we eternally dwell as new creatures, in communion with God and restored to our true nature, is not, as in much of Western Christianity, simply a state of bliss given as a reward for righteous living. It is an inexpressible place of joy into which we enter by virtue of our spiritual transformation on earth. Nor is Hell, in Orthodox teaching, a place of *vengeful* punishment. It is that place into which we eternally enter when we have failed to rise above the sad plight of the fallen human or to respond to the love of God. There we dwell, as the Fathers teach, in a great effulgence of God’s love, though unable to respond to it. We fall to the terror and burning punishment of Gehenna and unrequited love, not by the Will of God, Who wishes the death of no sinner, but by our own will. And the punishment that we feel is imposed on us by our own unwillingness to heed God in this life, and not by God.

G. Scripture. The Bible is not the sole *source* of our Faith, as various Western denominations teach; nor does it contain the Glory of God. It infallibly describes God in His Glory and the spiritual life that we are called, as “living Gospels” and “embodied Scripture,” to emulate. We are people of the book *and* the book. The Bible grew out of the experience of the early Christians, which predated it. This experience, according to a famous Patristic axiom, was given by Christ Himself, preached by the Apostles, and preserved by the Fathers. The Bible and Holy Tradition, or the handing down of the spiritual experience of the Church, are thus equal in authority. They are one in Source. The Bible came out of the Church and describes its Holy Traditions: its living spiritual experience in Christ. The centrality of Scripture in the Orthodox Church (the Liturgies themselves are largely paraphrases of Scripture) negates the Reformed slogan “*sola Scriptura*.” The early Church and the Fathers never separated Scripture from its historical roots within the very life and experience of the Church. Such an idea is a form of idolatry: *Bibliolatry*.

H. The Church. The Church is not just an organization, and its description as the Body of Christ is not metaphorical, as Western Christianity understands it. It is a mystical reality, the pillar and ground of Truth, and literally, in its Eucharistic dimensions and as a gathering of those Who are striving to become, or who have become, one with Christ, His Body. The Orthodox believe that Christ established one Catholic (universal) Church and that it is preserved, in its institutional ex-

pression, as that gathering in which all share a common experience, believe what has always been believed, and preserve that belief among themselves, guarding what has been passed down to them in theological fact and in common confession. What has been passed down is catholic (which is a Greek word that describes, again, precisely the commonality of Christian confession and experience) and is contained wholly within the Orthodox Church.

All Orthodox believe that they commune in the Church with those on earth and with those in the other life, both now and in the unity of eschatological time: the eternal now. Those who fall away from that unity are considered heretics, from a Greek word meaning to “choose”; i.e., they are those who exercise their personal will and choose to deviate from the commonality of Orthodoxy. When they persist in such belief, the Church excises them from the Body, lest they infect others with their spiritual disease (a malady akin to the cause of the Fall). While some Fathers of the Church have reviled heretics when they deliberately or tenaciously exposed others to their spiritual illness, the consensus of the Greek Fathers is that, while one may condemn heresy, it is inappropriate to condemn or harm a wrong believer. For this reason, the mistreatment of heretics, while not unknown, is extremely rare in Orthodox history. It is also unsanctioned.

The Western Christian idea of the ascendancy of the personal will or conscience in matters of Faith, let alone the personal interpretation of the Bible, is foreign to traditional Orthodoxy, where humility, submission, and obedience to the common conscience of the Church proscribe such things. Furthermore, the catholicity of the Orthodox Church, by virtue of its approbation of things always believed and preserved in the experience of the People of God, makes such Reformed concepts unacceptable and as alien as the Roman Catholic idea of the dominance of one Bishop over another in matters of faith and doctrine. The faithful and the Bishops (whom the faithful can remove) obey what those united in Christ and Orthodoxy have received and preserved. The Bishops derive their authority from, and come forth from, the People of God. Every believer and every Bishop is, in the local Orthodox Church, united by a commonality of experience shared with all other local *Orthodox* Churches and perpetuated equally by all.

I. *Baptism.* In the Orthodox Church, while Baptism is, as in the West, a rite of entry into the Body of Christ (the Church), that aspect of the Mystery of Baptism is a matter of secondary importance. It is primarily a Mystery by which the *nous* is enlightened (hence it is also called *φωτισμός*, or enlightenment). Through the miraculous waters of Baptism, the spiritual mind is rekindled and the body is quite literally washed clean and sealed by Chrismation (anointing with Holy Oil, or Chrism) with the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that Orthodox Baptism is properly done by full, threefold immersion and is exclusive to the Orthodox Church—a therapeutic purification that comes from, and belongs specifically to, Orthodoxy and its confession. Offensive to, and ignored by, some, this dogma is central to Orthodox teaching. In fact, there is nothing offensive in stating what something actually is and how it is understood.

J. *Canonicity.* Under Western influence and its legalistic system, canonicity has come to be interpreted in a manner quite foreign to Orthodoxy. It is often attached to the question of ecclesiological authenticity, as though Apostolic Succession (which has both historical *and* spiritual dimensions, weighted in the direction of the latter) were a juridical issue or related to administrative canons. In fact, canonicity, in its purest definition, describes Orthodoxy as it is practiced in conformity to rules and canons that emerge from its spiritual traditions, always placing prophecy (the spirit) over order (the law). Indeed, what is canonical, in the Orthodox Church, is that which organically fits the preservation of Church tradition and the goals of human deification.

III. *The Orthodox and Non-Orthodox: Two Contrasting Spiritual Paradigms*

Needless to say, just as the Orthodox world has generated many theological doctrines that, singly considered, do not adequately express the wholeness of its tradition, so Western Christianity, which is divided by confession and administration between Roman Catholicism (the Latin Church) and many different Protestant denominations, cannot be adequately summarized in a list of attributes that fairly represents its diversity. While Orthodoxy, despite its divisions, rests on the criteria of Holy Tradition and the ascendancy of the prophetic spirit in determining what is authentically—genuinely—Orthodox, and thus maintains an internal unity of confession and witness despite certain temporary disputes, Western Christianity has been decisively divided by ecclesiological, theological, administrative, and spiritual differences for almost five centuries. Thus, if any summary of Eastern Orthodox spirituality is by nature inadequate, any attempt to summarize the beliefs of the many Western denominations cannot but be both inadequate *and artificial*.

Moreover, if the distance between the various Protestant denominations, in terms of confession and practice, is not always significant, the divergence between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in these areas is sometimes immense. Some of the Churches that emerged out of the Reformation have maintained remnants of the hierarchical structure, monasticism, and sacramental and liturgical traditions of the Latin Church (the Anglican or Episcopalian community, as well as the more traditional Lutheran communities in Western Europe, for example). Most Reformed groups, however, place very little emphasis on hierarchy and liturgy in their confession and practice of Christianity. It would be impossible, therefore, to capture in the generalizations that appear in the Non-Orthodox, or Western Christian, model of spirituality that follows an evenhanded picture of Western Christian spirituality. I have tried to address this problem by referring, in some cases, to specific exceptions applicable to the Latin Church and, by inference, Anglicanism and the more traditional Reformed groups.

I would also like to reiterate a point that I made earlier: I am not writing, here, about theology, specific confessional issues, and the technicalities of the *lex orandi* and formal practices of either the Orthodox or Non-Orthodox Churches. I am addressing matters of *religious psychology* and aspects of the global expression of the *human spiritual impulse*. Whatever offense and outrage that my generalizations and universalizations may evoke in some, I believe that any fair and objective observer, looking beyond the deficits that naturally accrue to universalizing, will find many salient characteristics in my list of differences in the spiritual approaches and experiences of Orthodox and heterodox Christianity intuitively true. It will be immediately obvious, too, that in terms of religious conceptualization, the Orthodox Faith, according to the model that follows, moves from an emphasis on concrete fundamentals and practice to a more abstract and “noetic” (spiritual, mystical) view of religion as a transcendent experiential encounter with what is often called the “otherly” in the study of religious phenomenology. The model of heterodox Christianity that I have set forth, contrarily, moves from a very personal, emotional response to religion and its concerns, resulting in the end in what I characterize as a certain rigidity and fundamentalism: a literal understanding of the Bible, God, and even salvation that is focused on concrete cognitions rather than noetic experiences. Needless to say, not all Orthodox achieve the mystical ends of their Faith, just as the religious lives and traditions of many non-Orthodox rise above concrete concepts and emotion-laden religious experiences. The purpose of my models, again, is not to rule out the exception, but to contrast global aspects of what in theory and stated aims separates Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christianity.

An Orthodox Spiritual Model

ineffable, mystical, inner spirituality
in synergy and communion with God

↑

emptying of self; emotions, intellect, and
will aligned with God's Will

↑

even in the flesh, a life of sanctity,
subject to, but inoculated against, sin

↑

joyful communion with God and man,
passivity towards adversity, illness,
and earthly imperfections

↑

salvation in *theosis* or deification:
union with the Energies of God

↑

freedom in spirit and transcendence of
the fundamentals of Faith by
fulfilling and living them

↑

success in the control and cleansing of
thoughts, senses, and passions

↑

acquisition of humility,
obedience, repentance, and love;
nostalgia for God and for
freedom from sin

↑

ascetic labors to control thoughts and to
cleanse the senses and overcome passions

↑

transformative control of the senses in
Mysteriological and Eucharistic
communion with God

↑

Bible, Church, Tradition: indispensable
means for spiritual life

↑

catholicity in historical continuity
with Christ and the Apostles

↑

experience of God and spiritual life in
right worship, belief, and thought
of ancient provenance

A Western Christian Spiritual Model

salvation as a gift from God, excusing man
from human depravity and sin

↑

obedience to the laws of God brings
success and earthly blessings

↑

God reveals Himself in right doctrine,
right belief, and right confession

↑

human works thought to provide no
access to transforming Grace—except for
good works in the Latin Church

↑

Bible becomes the ultimate authority in the
Church—or the Bible and tradition in the
teaching magisterium of the Papacy
in the Latin Church

↑

human freedom in Christ achieved by
accepting Him as a personal Savior
and believing in Him

↑

catholicity found outside historical
and dogmatic dimensions and according
to personal experience or interpretation
—except in the Latin Church, where
tradition resides in the Papacy

↑

except for the Latin Church, an initial
encounter with religion through church
communities having their roots in the
sixteenth-century Reformation and
not in ancient Christian centers

↑

a resolute commitment to the ascendancy
of personal conscience, interpretation,
and freedom—or to ecclesiastical
authority in the Latin Church

↑

discovery of God by an emotional
event, often marked, in Protestantism,
by an initial conversion experience,
self-reliance, and firm affirmations
of personal salvation