

Critical Examination of the Applications of Theology

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NOTE 1, from Endnotes: The subject of this paper was not chosen by me but given to me. As will become clear from the study of this paper the critical examination of theology, is both presupposed by and identical with «the critical examination of the applications of theology».

Testing the authenticity of theology and applying theology are two aspects of an identical process since only he who acquires and possesses the true application of theology acquires and possesses true and authentic theology. Purification, illumination and *theoria* are both the testing and the application of theology, i.e. 1) learning to distinguish between the energies of the Holy Spirit and of creatures, especially of demonic powers, and 2) participating in the former, too, and avoiding the third i.e. demonic or abnormal influences on one's personality and thought process.

For documentation of the theses presented in this study I refer generally to the following selection of my studies: *Tò Προπατορικὸν Ἄμάρημα*, Athens 1957; *Ἡ Δογματικὴ καὶ Συμβολικὴ Θεολογία τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Vol I. Thessaloniki 1973; *Ρωμηοσύνη, Ρωμανία, Ρουμέλη*, Thessaloniki 1975; *The Filioque*, in *Κληρονομία*, Thessaloniki vol. 7, no 2. July 1975, pp. 285-314; «The Christology of St. John of Damascus», in *Papers, Dialogue Eastern and Oriental churches*, edited by Metropolitan Methodius of Aksum. Athens 1976, pp. 46-52.

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The subject before us presupposes an interdependence between the theoretical aspects of any scientific discipline and its practical application either to the needs of man or to the testing and promoting of the theoretical aspects themselves of the science in question. We have here both research for the uncovering of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, which may in time prove useful, as well as research into a scientific discipline which has

applicability to the needs of society in general and to man in particular already known.

Modern scientific method has developed a combination of imaginatively putting forth theoretical hypotheses and subjecting these to the critical test of repetitive experimentation to see under what combination of arrangements of elements and of their circumstances theoretically predicted results arise. This in combination with the development of instruments capable of detecting, measuring, and analysing not only things before us, but also objects millions of miles away is staggering to those trying to keep informed.

However, the methods used so successfully in the realm of the physical and biological structure of the universe have not met with the same success in other research endeavors such as history, sociology, political science. Economics, psychology, paedagogy, religion and most theologies.

Almost all theologies have been swept away together with almost all philosophies by the modern critical mind which can no longer allow authority to speculation unless transformed into tested axioms which in turn are always left open to further testing and modification.

Even the very idea of unchanging and immutable truths supposedly hidden within, or underlying, or transcending the structure of observable and measurable or invisible and unmeasurable reality, so dear to philosophical and theological systems in the Latin and Protestant tradition, has been seriously weakened by the overwhelming evidence that all things, even though subject to a continu-

ous and repetitive pattern, are in a steady state of change, development, and transformation.

There is a touch of humor in listening to those religious groups who formerly spoke so much about the value of those things which do

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not change and perish, now speak continuously of change and its wonders and value, even in bringing divided Christians into an always changing and developing unity.

We take up our subject having in mind the critical examination used in fields of research in general, the subject of this Conference and the title of this subsection, «Theology in the Renewal of the Life of the Church»².

In any case we cannot discuss our subject concerning applied theology unless we determine what the theology is that we are applying. Therefore a critical examination cannot be limited to the application, but must begin with the Theology itself which is being applied.

A. CRITICAL EXAMINATION

The first question one must ask is, *can any existing method of research and testing used in the scientific and sociological disciplines in use today be applied to Orthodox Theology and its applications?*

The answer to this question depends on what the subject matter and purpose of Orthodox Theology are and how they are applied.

Here we immediately meet with the question concerning the nature of theology and the application of criteria to test its authenticity.

1) Is Theology authoritatively revealed in such wise that it cannot be questioned and subjected to critical testing by methods in use in other disciplines?

2) Or is it a putting forth of speculative hypotheses which can be tested scientifically by methods in use and accepted as dogmatic axioms?

3) Or is Theology a combination of authoritatively revealed dogmatic axioms which can be searched out by reason for a progressively better and fuller understanding?

² Strictly speaking we cannot talk of the renewal of the life of the Church, since 1) the Church is the Body of Christ in Whom and in Which the faithful dwell and by Whom and by Which the member of the Church are interpenetrated since Pentecost and since 2) the life of the Church is the glory of the Holy Spirit in this human nature of Christ the Logos. Therefore, neither the Church nor Her Life can be renewed. Only Her members are renewed.

In all three possibilities the question of revelation itself presents serious problems for the application of research and testing methods known and used in research today. The reason for this is that whatever is accepted as revelation is itself the criterion and cannot itself be subject to critical examination and evaluation by methods in use for attaining to knowledge by means of research, unless what is finally known belongs to the same species of knowledge. Then what is considered by some as revealed dogmas and axioms in one age can be either rejected by critical examination in a subsequent age, whether the devotees of these dogmas like it or not, or else they finally end up supported by the result of research. The last presupposes that an item of revelatory experience has been found to be true by scientific or sociological research.

I. a. Since the critical examination of the applications of Theology is directly dependent on what one means by revelation, it may be useful to point out generally what has happened to those Latin

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and Protestant theological traditions which either identified the germ of revelation or the whole of revelation with the Bible.

It seems that it was inevitable that these Latin and Protestant traditions were destined to the rude awakening brought upon them by the whole development of their own Biblical criticism based on historical research 1) for the reconstruction of the life situation within which each part of the Bible was written, 2) for the examination of the literary and kerygmatic forms and methods used and their comparison with extra-biblical data, and 3) for the comparison of the Biblical ideas with extra thought patterns and beliefs in order to determine degrees of interdependence.

It is my personal opinion that the results, although devastating for the Latin and Protestant traditions have been a very valuable catharsis and should constitute a valuable lesson to those Orthodox who abandoned the Patristic tradition and either themselves have identified revelation with the Bible or believe that the Fathers identify revelation with the Bible.

To the first group belong the modern «Orthodox» fundamentalists who go by the name «conservatives» and to the second belong the modern «Orthodox» anti-fundamentalists who may go by the name «liberals». It is noteworthy that these distinctions are not founded on the Patristic tradition since the Fathers are not fundamentalists.

b. 1) The Latin and Protestant position that the Bible is the Word of God, or revelation, stems primarily

from Augustine who believed that God appears to the prophets by means of creatures which God brings into existence in order that by means of them He may be seen and heard³.

Once He is thus seen and heard He then returns those created means of such revelation to non-existence. This revelation by means of seen and heard symbols coming into and passing out of existence and reaching the intellect of the prophet and apostle by means of sense experience is the lowest form of revelation⁴.

2) The higher form of revelation is the direct injection into the prophetic and apostolic mind of the concept, idea, or teaching God wants revealed⁵.

3) Besides these two forms of revelation there is also vision or experience of the divine «essence»(?) by means of the soul's transcending all physical and sensory limitations of space and time by means of non-discursive ecstasy. Such an experience, however, does not necessarily identify itself with revelation unless ideas and concepts concerning God are conveyed to the intellect for passing on to others. However this is not what happens in such ecstasies which are associated usually with complete loss of contact with space and time and therefore the experiential contents of these. In any case this ecstatic intuition is supposedly an experience of the intellect aided by grace and liberated from space and time, to wit from physical and sensory limitations, and is from the Patristic viewpoint demonic⁶.

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Latins and Protestants generally agreed on items 1) and 2) but not in every case on item 3) which was associated with monastic contemplation rejected generally by Protestantism and always by the Orthodox.

What is of immediate interest in regards to items 1) and 2) is that they trapped the Latin and Protestant traditions into the fundamentalistic positions which modern Protestant and Latin Biblical criticism has been busy for many years, testing and literally destroying.

There is no doubt but that the weakest part of Biblical fundamentalism is the idea that the Bible is not only divinely inspired, but also a book dictated by God in order to be His revelation to man.

Thus the whole Bible became one big revealed axiom which was valid as criterion not only on questions concerning God and His relation to the world through Christ and the Holy Spirit but also on questions concerning the structure of the universe, the process of development in nature, and the history of man.

The amazing thing is that within the Latin and Protestant traditions the Bible is still equated with revelation by those who are still believers in a more or less traditional sense in spite of modern critical research. The reason for this is that the only understanding of revelation that the Latins and Protestants know is revelation of concepts which can be understood by a faithful and graced intellect.

c. In order to round out these observations concerning the use of critical examination within the Latin and Protestant traditions we should keep in mind the following general historical trends in the development of authoritative criteria for the interpretation of Scripture and the promulgation of credal, confessional and dogmatic formulas.

Once the equation of the Bible with revelation is accepted it becomes inevitable that an authority for the proper dogmatic or confessional interpretation of the Bible must be found to co-exist in history with the Bible.

The determination of the nature and limits of this authority is automatically governed by the fact that within this frame of reference revelation has already been identified or reduced to revelation of verbal and iconic symbols concerning God and His relation to the world and man through Christ and the Holy Spirit. The reason for this revelation of words and iconic symbols is unavoidably assumed to be both the duty and ability of man to understand by faith and grace the meaning of these words and images.

This means that revelation is directed at man's existing abilities to understand by means of faith and grace, but also that revelation itself is a given quantity in completed form which can be quantitatively possessed by both individual believers and the collective body of the Church and even by heretics and non-believers.

This is why the American and British Bible Societies are so intent

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on passing out a Bible to everyone in the world. They are actually disseminating God's revelation to man with the conviction that those who are predestined to salvation will be inspired by the Holy Spirit to read this revelation by means of faith and understand.

³ *De Trinitate* II. 6 (11)-18(35).

⁴ See my study «Notes on the Palamite Controversy» in the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, VI, 2 (1960-61), IX, 2 (1963-64).

⁵ *Ibid* VI. 2(1960-61).

⁶ *Ibid* IX. 2(1963-64).

Until the time of the Protestant Reformation the Latins generally accepted Augustine's belief that the Church is a society of predestined faithful who have been given the gift of understanding revelation in the Bible, having accepted this revelation by faith. For Augustine the final authority for the interpretation of the given revelation is the Church.

However, the Church for Augustine does not have from the beginning a full understanding of the teachings of Christ. Just as the individual believers must first accept dogma by faith on the authority of the Church and then make an effort to build up an understanding of this faith, so in a similar manner the Church also increases Her own understanding of revelation with the passage of time.

Underlying this concept of revelation and its understanding by individual believers and the Church, which became the backbone of the Franco-Latin tradition, especially in support of the Filioque, is the belief that God gave the Bible and the Holy Spirit to the Church in such wise that the Church has revelation in a book and acquires understanding from the Holy Spirit Who teaches the Church and Her believers how to understand this Book.

Thus for Augustine Christ's promise that He will give to the Apostles the gift of the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from the Father and Who will guide the Apostles themselves into «all the truth» is transformed into a promise that the Holy Spirit will lead not only the faithful in general into all the truth, but also the Church Herself into all the truth.

Thus some 350 years after Pentecost, to wit in the year 393 Augustine makes the following remarkably naive statement in his lecture to the bishops of the Roman Province of Africa assembled at Carthage: «With respect to the Holy Spirit, however, there has not been yet, on the part of learned and distinguished investigators of the Scriptures, a discussion of the subject full enough or careful enough to make it possible for us to obtain an intelligent conception of what constitutes His special individuality (*proprium*)»⁷.

For Augustine, as is well known, one first accepts the Bible and dogmas by faith and by the authority of the Church and then one makes every effort to understand intellectually.

But according to Augustine one who becomes reconciled with and a friend of God does not only come to know the acts and glory of God intellectually, but «all

the secret things of God», including the very substance of God.

Augustine states his position very clearly, «And inasmuch as, being reconciled and called back into friendship through love, we shall be able to become acquainted with all the secret things of God, for this

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reason, it is said of the Holy Spirit that 'He shall-lead you into all truth'⁸.

What Augustine means by such language is made very clear by what he says elsewhere several years later. «I will not be slow to search out the *substance* of God, whether through His scripture or through the creature»⁹. This searching out the substance of God by means of the Scriptures and philosophy remained Augustine's consistent theological method and became the central core of the Frankish theological tradition which is now commonly called scholastic theology.

The whole Augustinian approach to the Bible and theology presupposes the existence of uncreated universals and therefore a real similarity between God and His creatures or between the uncreated and the created, in such wise that both belong to a single system of truth which can be conceived by the human intellect, especially when receiving revelation, and which can therefore be adequately expressed in concept bearing words and images.

The first devastating blow against this approach was dealt by the new followers of Aristotle in the Frankish kingdom of the 13th century giving rise to the Thomistic synthesis between Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine to which was added a Frankish distortion of Dionysius the Areopagite and of John of Damascus.

The strange thing is that the Franks were not in a position to realise that both Dionysius the Areopagite and John of Damascus agree fully with the earlier Fathers that there are no uncreated universals of which creatures could be copies since there is no similarity whatever between the created and the uncreated. The reason for this is that the Franks elevated Augustine to the position of the greatest Father of the Church and the best exponent of the Patristic tradition, whose theology is supposed to be not only the same as that of the other Fathers, but also the best example of Patristic Theology. This being so for the Frankish theological imagination, there can be no contradiction between Augustine and the other Fathers

⁷ *De Fide et Symbolo* 19.

⁸ *Ibid* 19.

⁹ *De Trinitate* II, pref.

of the Church. Therefore, since Augustine accepts the Platonic universals, so must all the Fathers.

The next devastating attack on the Platonic basis of the Augustinian Frankish tradition came from the Nominalists, then from Martin Luther, and finally the complete destruction of this basis came about at the end of the last century with the collapse of traditional understandings of philosophy. The accumulation of so much evidence by modern science that there is no evidence for the existence of immutable and changeless natures and forms and species anywhere has left a tremendous doubt about the possibility of the existence of immutable archetypes of which the things of the universe are supposed to be copies. This in turn has led to a general collapse of the old Latin and Protestant belief in the existence of truth, law and moral norms in

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immutable forms which can act the part of criteria in the human thinking process. Even the old confidence of the Nominalists and of Luther that the Bible itself is the immutable truth, law and moral norm revealed by God has evaporated under the pressures of Biblical criticism.

d. Perhaps the most serious problem faced by the Latin and Protestant tradition is that the identification of revelation with the Bible set up the Bible not only as the criterion par excellence of the Church's teaching, but also put the Bible over and above the prophets and Apostles themselves. The prophets and Apostles are not themselves infallible teachers concerning God and His will and relation to the world in Christ by the Holy Spirit, but the means and instruments by which God Himself infallibly teaches what He wants in concept-bearing words and images. Inspiration is thus not a continuous spiritual state of the prophet and apostle, but a state limited in time to the duration of the event by which God passes on the concrete revelation of concepts and concept-bearing words and images to humanity by means of a prophet or Apostle. Thus the prophet and Apostle is inspired during the revelatory experience of receiving and writing down the word of God. It is even possible that the one receiving and writing does not fully understand exactly what he is receiving and writing and it is perhaps for this reason that Augustine and his followers seem to be actually saying that the Church understands better than the recipients of revelation themselves the meaning of Scripture with the passage of time.

In any case within the context of such presuppositions the prophet and Apostle can also be in a state of error or lack of correct or full understanding when not in the inspirational state of receiving and writing or conveying the word of God.

It is difficult to see how speculation over the meaning of revelation can be avoided within such context. One can imagine that a tradition of interpretation can be passed on from the prophets and Apostles together with the Bible. But unless this interpretative tradition had built into it some guarantee of infallible interpretative inspiration there would be no guarantee of correct understanding. Latin and Protestant traditions have understood such guarantee to be the Holy Spirit given to the Church by God through Christ, with the former ending up believing that the Latin Pope of Rome is the center of such guarantee and with the latter generally believing that the Holy Spirit inspires individuals and groups of individuals by more noninstitutionalized means than Popes and Councils of bishops.

At this point it should be pointed out that one finds difficulty differentiating Russian Orthodox deviations from the Patristic tradition since Peter the Great, if not earlier, from the above described general Latin and Protestant approaches except that the Ecumenical Council was set up as the final and highest authority of Biblical dogmatic and

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moral teaching. Although the shape of such an approach is to be found in tradition, its Russian form is more similar to the fundamentalist Western Counciliar theories of the 14th-16th centuries.

It seems quite clear that the Latin and Protestant identification of revelation with the Bible invaded the Kingdom of Greece in the last century with the descent of Russian theology and thence found its way into the Four Patriarchates of the Romans of New Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, because of the general weakening of Patristic monasticism brought about by the desire to imitate post Peter the Great Czarist Russian Orthodoxy which became very European and therefore very modern, very rich, very powerful and very attractive.

e. In any case from the viewpoint of scientific research method the Latin and Protestant identification of revelation with the Bible can be tested and proven by observing repetitions in current human experience of men today receiving revelations in words and images from God. It is claimed by some that Mohammed was such an example and one may find others. But Latins and Protestants generally deny the possibility of such revelations claiming that the Bible is a unique and unrepeatable event.

This means that we have nothing to test and prove in terms of current religious or revelatory experience, unless the «Pentecostal» speaking in tongues now

current in the Latin and Protestant Churches can be tested for similarity or identity with spiritual and revelatory experiences recorded within the Bible.

Given the uniqueness and unrepitative nature claimed for the Bible by Latins and Protestants, there is also the approach of comparison of Biblical data with extra-Biblical and extra-Judaean data to see how unique the Bible is and to see if perhaps the Biblical writers have been influenced by their environment rather than directly by God as claimed and to what degree.

It seems that this latter approach has been the dominant one in European and American Biblical studies, especially since the early part of the last century.

It is my personal opinion that the general results have been quite devastating for the Augustinian Frankish tradition whence both the Latin and Protestant traditions stem. On the one hand Augustine is no longer simply quoted in order to prove points, but is himself questioned. He is no longer regarded automatically as the one who understood the Bible better than all other Fathers. And not only has the scholastic tradition collapsed, but the authority of such Reformers as Martin Luther and John Calvin has been weakened also.

It seems almost as though the tradition of the Latin and Protestant systematic theologian giving guidelines has been replaced by a new tradition of the Protestant Biblical scholar giving guidelines with the Latin Biblical scholars now following from behind and some Orthodox Biblical scholars following rather by means of smell than by means of vision and understanding.

II. a. The very idea that the Bible can be identified with revelation is not only ridiculous from the Patristic viewpoint, but is clearly a heresy. The Bible is not revelation, but about revelation. The Bible is the unique criteria for authentic revelation but revelation is certainly not restricted even in time to the Bible. Pentecost is the final and highest form of revelation when the Holy Spirit led the Apostles into all the truth as promised by Christ, but Pentecost is not an once-in-history event, but an ongoing experience and sharing within the Church in the glorification of and by Christ bestowed as a gift upon those who have reached various levels of perfection, having passed from purification to illumination and culminating in the higher forms of *theoria**, to wit *theosis* or glorification.

* [*Theoria* (Gr. Θεωρία) or 'contemplation' is the perception or vision of the *nous*, through which one attains spiritual knowledge (γνώσις—*gnosis*— or the immediate spiritual perception inspired by God. It may be contrasted with the practice of the virtues (πρακτική—*praktiki*) which designates the more external aspect of the ascetic life— purification and the keeping of the commandments— but which is an

In other words the Pentecostal experience of the Apostles is handed down by Christ as the central core of tradition from one age to another in such wise that the Orthodox Church does have in her midst living witnesses to and of glorification in Christ who therefore have a full understanding of the revelation of the glory of God in Christ in both the Old and New Testament.

The Bible itself is not the uncreated glory of God in Christ nor His glorified humanity and therefore the Bible is not revelation. The Bible is not, for example, Pentecost, but about Pentecost. However, the glorification of the prophets, Apostles, and saints in the humanity of Christ is Pentecost at varying levels and therefore is revelation. Pentecost is for man the final form of glorification in Christ, but not only a past experience, but rather a continuing experience within the Church which includes words and images and, at the same time transcends words and images. To wit it includes the body, the intellect and the noetic faculty, but at the same time transcends these completely. This is why the aspect of the Pentecostal experience which transcends words, images, body, and intellect, cannot be either conceived or expressed in words. Therefore, the most important aspect of Pentecostal revelation cannot be identified with the Bible which is made up of concept-bearing words and images. This is why the Pentecostal experience itself is contained in the Bible, but at the same time transcends the Bible since the Bible is not itself the Pentecostal revelation of the glory of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.

To put the subject in schematic form from the viewpoint of catechetical method found clearly in the Bible itself¹⁰ and used till today in the Church, we would simply point out that concept-bearing words and images are used by the prophets, Apostles, and the incarnated Logos Himself for instructing those at the levels of purification and illumination. To those outside of the inner circle of those being illuminated, to wit to those being cleansed or in need of cleansing, Christ preaches the coming of the rule (Βασιλεία) of God in parables, since seeing they cannot yet see and hearing they cannot yet

indispensable prerequisite of contemplation/*theoria*. Depending on the level of personal spiritual growth, contemplation/*theoria* has two main stages: it may be either of the inner essences or principles of created beings (of things as God sees them) (*theoria physiki* / θεωρία φυσική or 'natural contemplation') or, at a higher stage, of God Himself (*theoria theologiki* / θεωρία θεολογική or 'theological contemplation'). (The note and the one below on the term *nous* are adapted from the Glossary in GEH Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (trs.), *The Philokalia, The Complete Text, Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain & St Markarios of Corinth* (Faber & Faber, London: 4 vols, 1983-98).—ed.]

¹⁰ See my study «Justin Martyr and the Fourth Gospel», in the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* IV, 2 (1958-59) 115-139.

understand. This is so because the rule (Βασιλεία) of God takes over within

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the noetic faculty of man in the measure that the influence of the devil is being expelled.

As the influence of the devil is being expelled and the rule (Βασιλεία) or grace of Christ is taking over, the noetic faculty begins to become liberated from slavery to the intellect, the body, and the environment and thus one passes from the level of purification to that of illumination. At this level one attains to a clear understanding of what the concept-bearing words and images of the Bible are meant to convey and at the same time understands clearly what they are not meant to convey.

Concept-bearing words and images concerning God and His relation to the world in Christ and by the Holy Spirit are expressions of revelation which are intended for those who are passing through the stage of purification and are reaching into the higher stages of illumination. However, the revelation of the glory of God in Christ and the Holy Spirit transcends illumination which is *knowledge about* the Father Son, and Holy Spirit, but not yet *knowledge of* the Holy Trinity in the ascended and glorified humanity of Christ in and after Pentecost.

The ascended and glorified humanity of the Logos dwelling in and bearing the Father and the Holy Spirit transcends the ability of concept-bearing words and images to convey. This is so because man can neither conceive nor express the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of the Logos. But man glorified by and in the human nature of Christ can experience all the truth revealed in Pentecost with an experience above experience, a seeing above seeing, a hearing above hearing, a feeling above feeling, a tasting above tasting, a smelling above smelling, a knowledge above knowledge, and an understanding above understanding.

It is exactly because the Pentecostal revelation cannot be revealed in created words and images, or concepts that Christ told His Apostles, who had now become His friends by reaching the stage of illumination that «I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you. A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me. (John 16. 12-17).

In contrast to Augustine, the Fathers of the Church both inherited and witness to the tradition and present fact that Christ's promise that the Holy Spirit will lead the Apostles «into all the truth» was fulfilled on Pentecost.

b. It is important to keep in mind that unlike the Latin and

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Protestant traditions revelation is not itself the conveying of concept-bearing words and images which are the means used by the recipients of revelation for expressing God's actions and will to their followers not yet glorified. Biblical concepts, therefore, are the preparatory stage of revelation only. Even all the created words of Christ recorded in the Bible are such a preparatory stage of receiving the uncreated words of God which are unspoken words, ἄρρητα ῥήματα. That the Holy Spirit leads the Apostles into all the truth does not mean that some concepts about God and His relation to man and the world in Christ by the Holy Spirit had been revealed before Pentecost and that on Pentecost all concepts not yet revealed are now revealed. If this were the case then the theology of the Fathers and the Councils can be no more and no less than deviations from the complete truth revealed on Pentecost. As we have already seen, the Augustinian tradition (for which revelation is only the conveying of concepts and immutable ideas to the intellect) applies the promise of Christ in question to the Holy Spirit's supposed work of leading individuals and the Church to a better and fuller understanding of what has been revealed. In this way the work of the fathers and Councils is somewhat justified. This is the line adopted by the Franks which continues to dominate Latin theological understanding till today.

From this viewpoint the Protestant *sola scriptura* tradition is more similar to the Patristic tradition, but differs radically from the Fathers in identifying this *scriptura* with the word of God and revelation, as we already indicated.

c. Since we have been developing our theme on the basis of the assumption that the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and in the continuing life of the Church reveals to the friends of Christ the uncreated glory and rule of God through the humanity of Christ dwelling within themselves, it may be appropriate to examine a classical example of the Patristic tradition in order to see clearly the relation between the continuing living tradition of personal experience of glorification and Orthodox dogma as well as how the key to opening the Bible's secrets works. It is obvious that without knowledge of this key and its proper use the Bible remains a hidden mystery even to

Biblical scholars who know and use every research device being used and tested by those outside the fold of spiritual life as experienced by the Fathers.

Even from a purely scientific research position, it stands to reason that the best way to understand revelations of the glory of God in the Bible is to find whether there continues to exist such a tradition today in order to compare the one with the other and perhaps thus uncover the meanings and purposes of terms used in expressing these revelations in the Bible, the Fathers, the Councils, and the lives of the Saints.

At this point one could use the official decisions and documents produced by the Councils of Constantinople / New Rome during the 14th

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century in order to point out the official teaching of the Church on the questions before us. I am sure that some would doubt whether this would be a very critical and scholarly approach to the subject in hand. Cultural inferiority complexes have led some Orthodox to believe that it is an act of humility to adopt Protestant and Latin research methods and an act of pride to follow only the Fathers in interpreting the Bible as required by the Orthodox tradition generally and the Councils especially.

Thus we would cite as a classical example of Patristic theological or Biblical method St. Gregory the Theologian who when read within the context of the Orthodox tradition is not at all speaking about a speculating systematic theologian who is trying to understand a revelation given in the distant past, but rather of revelation which is not different from but identical with understanding and not only in the distant past but a present reality, and not only the experience of others but also his own experience.

We quote the following: «Not to all, oh such ones, does it belong to philosophize about God, not to all; the matter is not thus cheap and low; And I will add, neither always, neither with everyone, neither about everything, but there is a when and a with whom, and an on what. Not to all, because it belongs to those who have been examined and have advanced to *theoria*, and before these, [who] have purified or are at the very least purifying the soul and body»¹¹.

So the theologian for St. Gregory is he who has reached *theoria*, a term which is dominant in the Gospel of John, and used by Christ in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit in leading the Apostles into all the truth. «...He taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you. A

little while, and ye have *theoria* of me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me». On and after Pentecost the Holy Spirit reveals to the friends of God both what Christ has from the Father and also Christ the Logos Himself in and through His humanity. These friends of Christ are our theologians par excellence because they share in this Pentecostal experience in which revelation and understanding are identical.

However, it must also be pointed out that upon reaching this *theoria* the friends of God are not only united to the glory of the Holy Trinity in the humanity of the Logos, but also to each other. *Theoria* is therefore the highest form of unity in the glory of the humanity of Christ with each other. It is understood, therefore, that those who have this common experience have the same knowledge of God and therefore, the same theology about God. It goes without saying that only one who actually is graced with this revelation of God's glory in Christ by the Holy Spirit knows the identical or same experience of others and understands the linguistic and iconic symbols used by those glorified to express this glorification and uses these symbols himself.

This unity in the truth of the glory of the Holy Trinity with each

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other, to wit this unity in *theosis* or glorification in which those thus glorified have the same faith and understanding of faith based on the same experience of *theosis* of glorification, is the very core and summit of Christ's teaching and action brought to their highest consummation in Pentecost.

«Sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth. As Thou sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world: and on their behalf I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for them only, but also for those who believe in me by their word, that all may be one, as Thou, Father, in me and I in Thee, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that Thou sent me. And I have given them the glory that Thou gavest me, that they may be one as We are one: I in them and Thou in me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that Thou sent me and loved them as Thou loved me. Father I want that those whom Thou gavest me may be also *with me where I am, that they may have theoria of my glory*, which Thou gavest me, since Thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. Oh just Father, the world also did not know Thee, but I knew Thee, and these (disciples) have learned that Thou has sent me. And I have made known to them Thy name and I will make known, that the love with

¹¹ *Theological Orations* 1.3.

which Thou lovest me may be in them as I in them» (John 17, 17-26).

This is obviously not a prayer for Church unity in the future, but the unity in the glory of Christ given to the Apostles and the faithful on Pentecost. The *theoria* or vision of the glory of the Father in Christ by the Holy Spirit is not only a futuristic promise but a present reality consummated in Pentecost and continued in the lives of the Saints. According to St. Gregory the Theologian it is this *theoria* which makes a person a theologian and causes identity in teaching among the theologians of the Church from the Prophets to the Apostles and Saints of the Church.

d. Having this in mind one begins to realize the unity and identity of spiritual experience and doctrine among the Prophets, Apostles, and Saints or to put it into terms used in today's dogmatic manuals, the unity and identity of revelation and dogma and their clear distinction from rational speculation.

Also one sees a clear distinction between the revelation of nonconceptual or supra-conceptual truth to those divinized or glorified in Christ and the formulation of this revelatory experience into dogmatic axioms or credal statements cast into terms made necessary not by speculative endeavor to understand intellectually the supra-rational mysteries revealed, but by a concrete heresy appearing in a concrete historical situation requiring the formulation of an expression of supra-rational truth in terms understandable within the life situation created by the heresy in question.

This clearly means that the formulation of doctrinal and credal

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statements and the development of an adequate terminology into which these statements are cast are not a result of the Church's arriving at a better and more complete understanding of revelation by means of the efforts of speculating theologians intellectually investigating a supposedly deeper meaning of revelation not fully and completely understood by former theologians.

Also one sees clearly the identity of revelation and the ability to theologize correctly about revelation with the spiritual life and perfection in Christ since illumination presupposes purification, since *theoria* presupposes illumination, since *theoria* is revelation of the glory or truth in Christ, and since this is what constitutes the one able to philosophize correctly concerning God, according to St. Gregory the Theologian.

e. It cannot be overemphasised that both Orthodox and Arians fully agreed with the inherited Biblical and Patristic tradition that only God knows His own essence, to wit He Who knows the divine nature is Himself God by nature, Thus, in order to prove that the Logos is a creature, the Arians argued that the Logos does not know the essence of the Father, nor for that matter His own essence. The Orthodox argued that the Logos does know the essence of the Father, which is His own, and therefore the Logos is uncreated.

The Eunomians threw a monkey wrench into the agreed rules for proving points with their shocking claim that not only does the Logos know the uncreated essence of God, but man also can know this essence. Therefore, the Logos does not have to be uncreated because He knows this uncreated essence.

Against the Arian and Orthodox position that creatures cannot know the divine uncreated essence, but may know the uncreated energy or will of God in its multiple but indivisible manifestations, the Eunomians argued that the divine essence and uncreated energy are identical so that to know the one is to know the other.

Strangely, Augustine adopted these Eunomian positions, to wit that man can know the divine essence and that in God there can be no real distinction between uncreated substance and uncreated energy. Therefore when the Franks appeared in the East with these positions they were accused of being Eunomians.

These Augustinian positions in the hands of the Franks transformed the purpose of theology as a guide toward *theoria* of the glory of God in the humanity of Christ into a study or searching out of the divine substance and in this respect the scholastic tradition (in the minds of the Franks) far surpassed the tradition of the Latin-speaking and Greek-speaking Roman Fathers who, as we saw, consistently taught that not only man but even the angels neither know, nor will ever know the divine essence which is known only to the Holy Trinity.

f. In contrast to the Augustinian and Eunomian approach of the Franks to language and concepts concerning God, we have the

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patristic position expressed by St. Gregory the Theologian against the Eunomians.

Plato had claimed that it is difficult to conceive God, but to define or express Him in words is an impossibility.

St. Gregory disagrees with this and emphasizes that «it is impossible to express Him, and yet more impossible to conceive Him. For that which may be con-

ceived may perhaps be made clear by language, if not fairly well, at any rate imperfectly...»¹².

The most important element in Patristic epistemology is that the partial knowability of the divine actions or energies and the absolute and radical unknowability and incommunicability of the divine essence is not a result of philosophical or theological speculation, as it is in Paul of Samosata, Arianism and Nestorianism¹³, but of the personal experience of revelation or participation in the uncreated glory of God by means of illumination and *theoria*. Dialectical speculation can never become the source of authoritative teaching as though the Church, whether by means of a Pope, or Councils, or Protestant Biblical scholars, could transform research into dogma, as believed by the Franks and their successors.

The authority for Christian truth is not the written words of the Bible themselves, which cannot *in themselves* either express God or convey an adequate concept concerning God, but rather the individual Apostle, Prophet and Saint who is glorified in Christ and united in this experience of glory to all the friends of God of all ages.

Thus the Bible, the writings of the Fathers and the decisions of Councils are not revelation, but about revelation. Revelation itself transcends words and concepts although it inspires those participating in divine glory to express accurately and unerringly what is inexpressible in words and concepts. Suffice it that under the guidance of the Saints, who know by experience, the faithful know or should know that God is not to be identified with Biblical words and concepts which point to Him albeit infallibly when studied under the guidance of those having reached *theoria*. The faithful know very well that it is a heresy to believe that Biblical concepts expressed in words could be penetrated by the believing intellect for the acquiring of an intellectual comprehension of God under the guidance of the Fathers. Biblical knowledge concerning God leads to supra-noetic, supra-intellectual, and supra-sentient knowledge of God which is both contained in the Bible, but at the same time is above the expressions concerning God in the Bible.

Having all that has been pointed out in this paper thus far in mind, we return to St. Gregory the Theologian in order to point out the fact that he does not only use Biblical texts to prove points, nor does he restrict himself to the revelatory experience of the Prophets, Apostles, and Saints in order to set out the theologi-

cal foundations for confuting the Arians, Eunomians and Macedonians, but he also uses

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his own experience of this same revelation of divine glory in the humanity of the Logos, exactly as is done by other Fathers of the Church.

«What is this that has happened to me, O friends, and initiates, and fellow-lovers of the truth? I was running to lay hold of God, and thus I went up into the Mount, and passed through the Cloud, and was found within, away from matter and material things and as far as I could I withdrew within myself. And then when I looked I scarce saw the back parts of God; *and this because I was sheltered by the Rock, the Word that was made flesh for us*. And when I looked a little closer, I saw, *not the first and unmingled nature, known to itself—to the Trinity I mean*; not that which abideth within the first veil, and is hidden by the Cherubim; but only that (nature), which at last even reaches to us. And that is, as I know,' the majesty (μεγαλειότης) or as Holy David calls it, the magnitude (μεγαλοπρεπεία) which is manifested in the creatures, which it has produced and governs, For these are the back parts of God, which are after Him, as tokens of Himself...»¹⁴.

g. The tradition of this distinction between the first nature and the uncreated glory of God, the first known only to God and the other to those to whom God reveals Himself is to be found not only in the Bible and the Orthodox Fathers but also in Paul of Samosata, the Arians, and the Nestorians as already pointed out. These three have a common philosophical approach according to which God is related to creatures only by will or energy and never by nature since natural relations mean necessary relations which would reduce God to a system of emanations. Paul of Samosata and the Nestorians argued that in Christ God is united to humanity not by nature, but by will. The Arians argued that God is related to the hypostatic Logos not by nature, but by will, whereas because the Logos derives His existence from non-being by the will of the father, and therefore is created, passible, and changeable in nature, He is united by nature, to wit by a necessity imposed by God, to His truncated human nature.

Against these positions the Orthodox Fathers argued that in Christ the Logos is united to His humanity by nature or hypostatically and the Father generates His Son by nature, the will not being in contradiction to what belongs to God by nature. Thus God generates the Logos and projects the Holy Spirit by nature from His own

¹² *Ibid* 11.14.

¹³ [This note, the first of two numbered 13, is missing in original.]

¹⁴ *Ibid* 11.3.

hypostasis and the Holy Trinity by will creates creatures from non-being and by will is related to creatures with the exception of the Logos who unites Himself hypostatically to His own humanity¹⁵.

h. At this point we must touch upon the most important and most central aspect of Biblical and Patristic Theology which since Augustine has been completely ignored by the Francolatin and Protestant traditions, and even by the modern Orthodox under the influence of post-medieval Russian theology.

Because Augustine transformed the doctrine of the Holy Trinity

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into a speculative exercise of philosophical and theological research in an attempt to understand this mystery rationally, the simplicity and schematic and Biblical nature of the doctrine was lost sight of by those just mentioned.

Thus the history of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity has been reduced to searching out the development of such concepts and terminology as led to phrases like Three Persons or Hypostases, one essence or nature, *homoousios*, personal or hypostatic properties, manners of existence, one will, one energy, one divinity, etc.

For the Fathers, the Arians and the Eunomians. however, the doctrine of the Trinity and Christology is identical to the appearance of the Logos in His glory to the Prophets, Apostles, and Saints. The Logos is not an abstract concept conveyed by means of revealed words, created beings, or concepts, but is always identified with the concrete Angel of God, Lord of Glory, Angel of Great Council, Lord Sabaoth and Wisdom of God who Himself appeared to the prophets of the Old Testament and became Christ by His own birth as man from the Virgin Theotokos. No one ever doubted and all firmly believed in this identity of the Logos with this concrete Individual who revealed in Himself the invisible God of the Old Testament to the Prophets with the peculiar exception of Augustine who in this regard is influenced by the gnostic and Manichaeian traditions.

The controversy between the Orthodox and Arians/Eunomians was not about Who the Logos is in the Old and New Testament. They agreed that the Logos is He Who appeared to the Prophets and Who was born as man from the Virgin. They differed over what the Logos is and what His relation is to the Father.

The Orthodox insisted that the Prophets saw the Logos as uncreated, impassible and unchangeable having always existed from the Father Who by nature generates the Logos from Himself before the ages.

The Arians/Eunomians insisted that the Prophets saw the Logos as created, passible, and changeable deriving His existence from non-being before the ages by the will of God.

Thus the basic question between Orthodox and heretics was, did the Prophets and Apostles see in God's uncreated glory a created, passible, and changeable Logos or an uncreated, impassible, and unchangeable Logos, a Logos Who is God by nature and therefore has all the energies and powers of God by nature, or a God by grace, who has some but not all the energies of the Father and then only by grace and not by nature since he does not have the same essence or nature, but a different or created one.

Both Orthodox and Arians/Eunomians agreed in principle that if the Logos has every power and energy of the Father by nature then He is uncreated. If not He is a creature.

Since the Bible is a witness of Whom and What the Prophets and

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Apostles saw in the glory of the Father, the Bible itself, although itself not revelation, will reveal whether or not the Logos has all the energies and powers of the Father by nature. Thus we will know whether the Prophets and Apostles saw a created or an uncreated Logos, *homoousios* with the Father or not.

One can see clearly how for the Fathers the consubstantiality of the Logos with the Father is not only the experience of the Apostles and Saints, but also of the Prophets. The difference being that the Prophets in *theoria* saw God in the Logos or Angel without flesh by the Spirit, whereby the Apostles received the same revelation, but in and by the humanity of the Logos born as man from the Theotokos and having thus become consubstantial with us while being consubstantial with the Father.

It is very important to emphasise the fact that both Orthodox and Arians/Eunomians use both the Old and New Testaments indiscriminately. The argumentation is very simple. They make a list of all the powers and energies of the Father recorded in the Bible. They do the same for the Logos/Angel of Glory. Then they compare them to see if they are identical or not. The important thing is for them to be not similar, but identical.

¹⁵ See my study «The Debate over the Christology of Theodore Mopsuestill and some suggestions for a fresh approach», in the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, V, 2 (1959-60) 140-185.

Parallel to this, both Arians and Orthodox agree against the Sabellians and Samosatenes that the Father and Son have individual hypostatic properties and manners of existence which are not common, although they do not agree on what these are.

When the controversy is extended to the Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit the exact same method of theologizing is used.

Whatever powers and energies the Father and Son have in common the Holy Spirit must also have both in common and by nature in order to be God by nature.

Patristic theological method is clearly non-speculative, it is authoritatively experiential, it is not abstract, it is simple and schematic.

Stated simply the whole doctrine of the Holy Trinity may be reduced schematically to two simple statements:

1) What is common in the Holy Trinity, i.e. essence, will, energy and power, is common to and identical in all Three Hypostases.

2) What is Hypostatic, or hypostatic property, or manner of existence is radically individual and incommunicable and belongs to One Person or Hypostasis only.

Thus we have τὰ κοινά and τὰ ἀκοινώνητα, what is common and what is uncommunicably individual.

Having this in mind one realizes why the Romans did not take the Frankish *filioque* very seriously as a theological position, especially as one which was supposed to improve the Creed of the Second Ecumenical Council. ~d why they made fun with syllogistic jokes until the Franks were able to conquer East Romania and back up their fan-

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tastic theologial claims with an unbelievable self-confidence and a sharp sword.

i. In any case the argumentative process of Patristic theological method is always parallel to and checked by the experience of *theoria* of the glory of God in the humanity of Christ. This experience verifies and certifies the proper interpretation of the Bible's witness

1) to the revelatory encounter between the Logos and His friends the Prophets and Apostles in whom He comes and dwells with the Father in the Holy Spirit and reveals uncreated unspoken words which transcend concepts and

2) to the uncreatedness of the Logos and the Holy Spirit and Their oneness in nature with the Father

and the identity of Their uncreated glory, rule, grace, will, etc, and

3) to the incommunicability of the hypostatic properties, including the incommunicability of the incarnation of the Logos, and the unending eternity of the humanity of the Logos, in which the Holy Spirit builds up the Church since Pentecost till the consummation.

The revelatory experience of the glory of God also certifies the Biblical teaching that there is absolutely no similarity between the uncreated and the created. This means that there can be no uncreated universals of which creatures are supposedly copies. Each individual creature is dependent upon the uncreated glory of God which is on the one hand absolutely simple yet is divided indivisibly among and within individual creatures and all of God is present in each and every energy simultaneously while God is also by will everywhere present and at the same time by nature everywhere absent, except for the Logos, hypostatic union with His human nature.

The Holy Spirit led the Prophets into the Truth and the Apostles into all the Truth on Pentecost, not by the revelation of concept-bearing rational truths not known before, but by the experience of the new presence of the humanity of Christ which, constituted and constitutes the Church victorious over death and the power of the devil that death may no longer prevail against the Church as was the case in the Old Testament. Thus all of Christ and not part of Him is present in each friend of God not only according to the uncreated rule (βασιλεία), glory or divinity, but also according to the created humanity of Christ.

From the viewpoint of the concept-transcending uncreated reality of God the Prophets and Apostles experienced the same glorification in the Logos/Christ. It is, therefore, from the viewpoint of the Incarnation, the Death, the Resurrection, and the Ascension of Christ and His new presence in the Spirit on Pentecost establishing the Church as His Body that the Apostles and all those who after them share in *theoria* that *all the Truth* is revealed by the Holy Spirit. Since Pentecost every incident of the glorification of a Saint, in other words, of a Saint having vision of God's uncreated glory in the humanity of Christ as Its source, is an extension of, Pentecost at various levels of intensity.

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This experience includes all of man, but at the same time transcends all of man including man's intellect. Thus the experience remains a mystery to the intellect having *theoria* and cannot be conveyed intellectually to another. Thus language can point to but cannot con-

vey this experience. The spiritual father can guide to but cannot produce *theoria* which is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

When therefore the Fathers add terms to the Biblical language in use concerning God and His relation to the world, like *hypostasis*, *ousia*, *physis*, *homoousios*, union by nature, union by will, etc., they are not doing this because they are improving current understanding as over against a former age. Pentecost cannot be improved upon either as revelation or understanding which for the Fathers are the same, as we saw. All they are doing is defending the living tradition of Pentecostal experience which transcends words in the language of their time because a concrete heresy is leading the faithful away from and not to this experience which, means spiritual death to those led astray.

For the Fathers authority is not only the Bible, but the Bible plus those glorified, to wit the Prophets, Apostles, and Saints. The Bible as a book is not in itself either inspired or infallible. It becomes inspired and infallible within the communion of Saints who have the experience of divine glory described in, but not conveyed by, the Bible. To those outside of the living tradition of *theoria* the Bible is a Book which does not unlock its mysteries.

I cannot see how one can avoid the conclusion that this is in perfect accord with the understanding of the scientific methods in use today, Every science has its own language which can be understood only by those initiated into the speciality in question, by those who are already specialists, How can one begin understanding what *theoria* means if he is not in touch with the living tradition of *theoria*? And the living tradition of *theoria* is not made up of books about *theoria* only, but of those who have *theoria* and therefore know both what these books are about and how to teach others to read them. The Bible is such a book, the writings of the Fathers are such books, and the decisions of the Councils belong also to this class of documents since they are produced by the Fathers working collectively.

B. APPLICATIONS OF THEOLOGY

Having begun rather with a general examination of how an Orthodox may apply criteria for determining the nature of authentic theology, we can now make a general survey of the applications of this theology. This can be divided into two groups of applications, I) to the internal life of the Church and II) to the relations of the Church to society and the world at large.

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It must be born in mind that basically the *learning* and *application* of this *theoria*-based theology is identical.

I. a. The criteria for the application of theology are automatically determined by the nature and the purpose of theology as thus far explained. We should complete in as simple terms as possible what has thus far been said.

All men have been created and destined for the perfection associated with vision of the glory of God. In other words all will be saved, but not all will be glorified in *theoria*. This is so because there are those who will reach the perfection of eternal damnation and those who will eternally advance to higher stages of perfection in *theoria*. Those damned will see the uncreated glory of God as eternal fire and outer darkness, God Himself being a consuming fire to those who love not, and those eternally perfected will see the same glory of God as light. Within this context the whole structure of rewards and punishments as understood by Augustine and his followers in the Latin and Protestant tradition is unfounded and meaningless.

Thus one clearly understands that all men will come to know the truth in Christ, but not all will participate in the glory of God in Christ.

b. From the viewpoint of God there is no difference between eternal damnation and eternal glorification in the sense that God loves those in both categories equally.

Heaven and hell are on the one hand the same thing, but from the viewpoint of the creature, especially of man and angels, they are radically different. The difference is due to the creature's willingness or unwillingness to develop from lower to higher stages of love which seeks not its own. One can understand from this why the Augustinian doctrine of predestination and irresistible grace is nothing but childish nonsense.

It follows from this that any theology, philosophy and ideology which does not seek the transformation of self-centered, individualistic, and selfish love into the love which does not seek its own is a false guide and spiritually dangerous for those who believe in it.

It also follows that any theology, philosophy and ideology which only seeks such a transformation of selfish love into selfless love, but does not succeed in implanting this love in its adherents and does not know how to do so must also be judged as a fraud.

In contrast to this the Orthodox tradition not only seeks this transformation, but also both knows how to bring it about and does bring it about.

This also means that the Orthodox who are not aware of this do not belong to this Orthodox tradition by way of awareness and understanding, but rather follow from behind by way of smell, i.e. instinctively,

c. The pivotal point in Orthodox theology for the attainment of

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selfless love is the twofold struggle 1) to be united to each other in the uncreated glory of the humanity of the Logos in the state of *theoria* reached by passing the state of illumination and 2) to defeat the devil in all stages of perfection beginning with purification. The successful outcome of this struggle presupposes a willingness to learn to distinguish between the energies of the devil and the energies of the Holy Spirit from a spiritual father who has reached at least illumination if not *theoria* and thus has the gift of the discernment of spirits.

Since it is only the energies or the glory or the rule of God that man can come to know and since these can be discerned only by learning to distinguish them from the energies of creatures and especially of the devil, this means that an Orthodox theologian and spiritual father is the same thing. One cannot be a theologian without being a spiritual father and one cannot be a spiritual father without being a theologian.

d. However, when the Bible and the Tradition speak about illumination, what is being illumined and by what is it being illumined?

The Fathers speak about the darkening of the *nous** of Adam and his descendants. Augustine and the Frankish tradition understood this to mean that the intellect of Adam had immediate vision of increased universals or ideas in the divine substance and therefore had all knowledge, meaning knowledge of all things in their essence and source. Thus by means of the fall man was cut off from this knowledge and became ignorant.

In view of the astounding advances of modern science it would be difficult to maintain such a viewpoint.

Man's intellect seems unlimited in its capacity of uncovering and learning the mysteries of the universe, even when this ability seems to reveal continuously how much more there is to learn.

In any case it does not seem to be the intellect that was damaged by the fall.

For the Fathers of the Church the *nous* is not usually identified with the intellect, but is a distinct and separate faculty of the soul which has become in actuality inoperative by its confusion with the intellect and its enslavement to the intellect, the body, and the outside environment. Having lost its normal communion with God and thus being at varying degrees of abnormality, it has become a slave, whereas its purpose is 1) to be completely free in the Spirit from outside influences and 2) to influence the intellect, the body, and the environment without itself being influenced by anything but the grace or energy of God¹⁶.

Illumination and the beginning of *theoria*, therefore, are the liberation of this noetic faculty from all outside influence by its occupying itself with the unceasing memory of God, or unceasing prayer. This state is a gift of God to which a spiritual father who has the gift is capable of leading his spiritual children.

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It is by the liberation of this noetic faculty by unceasing memory of God that self-love and pride are uprooted from the personality and replaced by humility and selfless love.

e. Those who belong to this tradition believe that these stages of illumination and *theoria* are the methods used by Christ in guiding not only the Apostles but also the prophets.

* [The *nous* (Gr. νοῦς) is the highest faculty in a human being, through which— provided it is purified— s/he knows God and created things by means of direct apprehension or spiritual perception. Unlike the *dianoia* or reason, from which it must be carefully distinguished, the *nous* does not function by formulating abstract concepts and then arguing on this basis to a conclusion reached through deductive reasoning, but understands divine truth by means of immediate experience, intuition or 'simple cognition' (the term used by St Isaac the Syrian). The *nous* dwells in the 'depths of the soul'; it constitutes the innermost aspect of the heart (St Diadochos). The *nous* is the organ of contemplation (*theoria*), the 'eye of the heart' (*Makarion Homilies*). Accordingly, its manner of knowing (*noēsis/vōnēsis*) is not by abstract concepts or visual images, but by the apprehension of spiritual realities in a direct manner. See note above on *theoria*. The reader should beware of a complication of terminology introduced by the fact that the English translators of the *Philokalia* have chosen 'intellect' to translate *nous* (following the *intellectus* of Scholastic usage), whereas by 'intellect', Romanides, who was writing before the *Philokalia* was translated means *dianoia* or 'reason'. —ed.]

¹⁶ See my studies «Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics, part I» in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, IX, 2 (1963-1964) 225-236; «The Christological Teaching of St. John of Damascus», in *Papers, Dialogue Eastern and Oriental Churches*, edited by Metropolitan Methodius of Aksum. Athens 1976, pp. 46-52. It is important to point out that the terms are interchangeable and in themselves unimportant. The important thing is the process whereby unceasing prayer and the normal thinking functions operate simultaneously and that noetic prayer operates even during sleep. Failure to understand this distinction between the intellect and the noetic faculty has led some to mistakenly propose the existence of two patristic spiritualities in Eastern Christendom, one based on the Platonic type ecstasy of the intellect and another based on the inclusion of discursive thought and the body in the highest form of spiritual life. What they do not realize is that when the Fathers speak of the noetic faculty as becoming completely disengaged from all influences from outside and emptied of all thoughts, ideas, etc., and as being occupied only with prayer, they are not speaking about the intellect at all, but about the noetic faculty. No Father, not even Dionysius the Areopagite, belongs to the Platonic tradition of spirituality. See my study mentioned at the beginning of this footnote.

In any case it must be pointed out that a scientific research method in use today would require the verification of the existence of this noetic faculty in man and a determination of the conditions under which it operates as a distinct function distinguishable from the intellect.

Also one can suppose that this faculty can be set in some sort of operation by even a non-Christian or non-Orthodox spiritual exercise, in which case one would have to determine the differences. From the viewpoint of the tradition the noetic faculty may be set in motion or at least is kept inoperative by demonic influences.

However, when activated by the Holy Spirit the noetic faculty has unceasing memory of God in the Lord of Glory Who is Christ Incarnate. This is a state of liberation from demonic influences and unity in Christ in which the whole person, body and soul, is kept from error and gifted with inspiration in such wise that he does not confuse the energies of God with the energies of creatures and especially of the devil.

To be kept from error and gifted with inspiration does not mean in this case that such a person attains to an unerring knowledge concerning created truth in its scientific details, but only in its relation of dependence to uncreated truth which is the glory of the humanity of Christ in the communion of saints.

A person in *theoria* and thus inspired does not become an unerring scientist, or scholar, but an unerring theologian. He does not make mistakes when speaking about God and His relations but this does not make him a scientist, or a historian, let alone an unerring one.

It is within such a context that we understand the inerrancy of the Bible, of the Fathers, and of the Councils of Fathers.

It stands to reason that a gathering of bishops some with noetic prayer (unceasing memory of God) and the rest struggling for noetic prayer, would certainly be a gathering of bishops who knew accurately the faith of the Church.

f. In any case, since 1) noetic prayer is a tradition to which one can belong only by having a spiritual father who has *theoria*, and since 2) this tradition of *theoria* produces not just words about piety but actual living examples of piety or love which does not seek its own, and since 3) the similarity if not identity of this living piety with that of the Bible is so obvious, it stands to reason that modern Orthodox Theologians (to use the title rather loosely from the patristic viewpoint) must study the theological method used in becoming a theologian in

the traditional sense, in order to see whether the methods now in use to produce theologians are really effective or for that matter even relevant to any real need of man.

This would be the case not only in the production of an Orthodox theologian specializing in dogmatic theology, but especially in the field of Biblical interpretation.

It is obvious that the Church's injunction that the Bible should be studied and interpreted under the guidance of the Fathers of the Church is a very scientific approach since it is much more likely that the saints who have *theoria* understand the prophets and the Apostles who had and have *theoria*, where[as] Latins and Protestants, who have lost the tradition of *theoria*, do not understand *theoria* in the Bible and certainly mislead the Orthodox who have trust in them.

g. The alternative to tracing noetic prayer or unceasing memory of God as the culmination of illumination and as the beginnings of *theoria* to the apostolic and prophetic tradition is either to find another theological and spiritual method which can defeat the devil and produce *theoria* supposedly more like that of the Bible, or prove that there is no such tradition after Pentecost.

Another alternative to identifying noetic prayer with Biblical piety would be to prove that the noetic faculty must remain rather inoperative in the attainment of Christian perfection, supposedly because it has nothing to do with the teaching and practice of the Prophets, Apostles, and Christ.

Another alternative would be to prove that the noetic faculty does not exist as distinct from the intellect. However, the only way this can be proven is to demonstrate that noetic prayer both does not exist and is impossible.

But noetic prayer does exist and the noetic faculty is therefore a reality.

But certainly the noetic faculty is not an invention of the Fathers. It is part of human nature. All human beings have a noetic faculty, but not all are aware of its existence.

h. In the patristic tradition this unawareness of the existence of the noetic faculty is due to the fall and is participation in the fall of human nature.

Anyone with some feeling for modern scientific method can immediately recognize the tremendous power of this position. It explains why the Fathers of the

Church never had the Augustinian and Franco-Latin obsession with the ridiculous myth of inherited guilt.

If the fall of man is the darkening of the noetic faculty, then liberation is its purification, illumination, and glorification, which is a transformation and change in the way man functions which can be tested and studied now. When comparing the state of darkness and slavery of the noetic faculty with its state of illumination and glorification one realizes why the Fathers never dealt with original sin within

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the Platonic framework of Augustine. According to the Fathers each person in imitation of Adam allows his noetic faculty to become confused with his intellect, passions and environment.

This understanding of the fall coupled with the Orthodox understanding of perfection in Christ by means of the illumination and glorification of the noetic faculty is a phenomenon observable not only by so-called theologians, but also by such scientists as psychologists and psychiatrists. However, neither the theologian, nor the psychologist, nor the psychiatrist can fully learn of the existence of the noetic faculty except from the tradition of Patristic theology and spiritual life.

Furthermore the only complete method by which a research scientist can put the noetic faculty into operation in order to observe its proper and natural function in the state of illumination and glorification is to get his own to function, but this he can do only by correct faith and submission to the spiritual guidance of a spiritual father who has the noetic prayer from his spiritual father.

i. However, here we come upon the most complex and difficult problem of modern Orthodox theology. Those Orthodox who are saturated with cultural inferiority complexes cannot learn patristic theology. This is so because patristic theology requires obedience to be learned since it is a tradition of a method of warfare against the devil for perfection. It can be learned only from those who are victorious by the grace of God.

Since a heretic is a person who does not possess this method it is impossible to learn it from a heretic.

When a person who calls himself Orthodox does not possess this method it is impossible to learn it from him either.

j. The works of the Fathers contain clear cut methods of testing the authenticity of spiritual experience at each level of perfection. These methods are not speculative. They are authoritative and one can see how

they are at the same time dependent on Orthodox dogma and the basis of Orthodox dogma.

Vision of divine glory, for example, is tested by the fact that there is no similarity between the created and the uncreated. Therefore, if the light seen has colour, shape and dimension it is not [un]created since the uncreated glory of Christ can also be called by the opposite of light, i.e. darkness, not because it is darkness, but because it transcends both categories of light and darkness. Orthodox apophatic theology is not a philosophy, but a result of *theoria*. Because *theoria* exists in the Old Testament also, so this theology is already that of the Prophets.

When a vision contains the appearance of light or a being of light which has colour, shape, and dimension, then this being takes a position only outside, beside, and opposite the one aware of its presence,

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This is so because the devil cannot unite himself to man by *κράσις* or saturation of interpenetration, but only by *συζυγία* or correlation or yoking.

In the experience of glorification one experiences himself and everything, around him interpenetrated and saturated by the uncreated glory emanating from the humanity of Christ dwelling in himself and others.

It is interesting that some psychiatrists have been recently studying the phenomenon of a being of light appearing to those passing to the state of death and medically being pronounced dead, but subsequently returning back to life.

k) We end this section by pointing out that all men regardless of nationality, race, and colour have the noetic faculty and therefore the possibility of reaching illumination by means of purification and then if God pleases they may experience glorification at its varying degrees.

In any case the varying levels of *theoria* are the highest experiences of Orthodox spiritual life and theology.

Such a spiritual life and theology is neither Greek, nor Russian, nor Bulgarian, nor Serbian, etc., but rather prophetic, apostolic, or simply christian.

In the light of this one may put the question, what is «Russian Spirituality», and why is it presented as something higher than or simply different from other Orthodox spiritualities?

II. It seems that once Orthodox theologians come to the realization that the highest form of theology is *theoria*, which is the ongoing tradition of Pentecost in histo-

ry, then they can properly take up positions for examining this tradition in its historical setting in order to evaluate correctly the applications of this theology to the relations of the Church to society and the world at large.

a. The most powerful element in this understanding of theology before us is that its bearer is liberated from enslavement to his environment, not by means of escape from it, but by the liberation of the noetic faculty from influence and domination by the intellect, the passions and the environment in such wise that the intellect, the passions and the environment are transformed by those who have reached illumination and *theoria*.

It is quite obvious that Christ prayed for the union of the Apostles and their followers in the vision of the glory of the Father in Himself by the Holy Spirit «in order that the world may believe» that the Father sent Him.

The world does not believe because of Christians in general, since they are many times no better and even worse than members of other religions. Because of such Christians many people cannot see the sense in taking Christianity seriously, even though they may accept Christ as a great religious leader and moral teacher.

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It is only because of Christians in the states of illumination and *theoria* that the world believes that the Father sent His Son. One can readily examine how those in *theoria* influence their environment by studying the cult of Saints especially centered in their icons and relics.

b) Having this tradition of *theoria* in mind one begins to realise that there are many idols and myths which have invaded modern Orthodox understanding of history by means of the official Russian tradition which after Peter the Great betrayed the Orthodox Civilization of New Rome and joined the Feudal Civilization of Frankish Europe. The unceasing tradition of *theoria* means that as long as this tradition continues the Patristic tradition continues, meaning simply that the central core of the Orthodox tradition continues.

At the time of the fall of New Rome this tradition was very strong among the Romans of the Patriarchates of New Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

However, soon after the foundation of the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Church of Moskovy officially condemned hesychasm, to wit the Trans-Volga Elders, known as Non-Possessors, and supported a type of monasticism which is foreign to the tradition of *theoria* and more like the feudal monastic establishments of feudal Europe.

Yet there is a tendency to picture the Roman Orthodox under Arabic and Turkish occupation as second-rate Orthodox Christians, and Russian Orthodoxy as the best example of everything Orthodox.

It seems rather that Churches with a strong tradition of *theoria* are no better of worse than the other Churches with a strong tradition of *theoria*. Since *theoria* is the same wherever it is found, so the piety, spiritual life and theology is the same also.

In any case it is clear that once the Filioque controversy broke out between Franks and Romans, the Franks automatically were forced to terminate the Patristic tradition since the Roman Fathers after St. John Damascus actively wrote against and condemned the Frankish Filioque.

It is necessary to study and get a clear picture of when and why the Russians followed the Franks in terminating the Patristic tradition. It is this Russian tradition which was taken to the new kingdom of Greece with the establishment of the Theological School of the University of Athens.

It is very significant that the Council of 1368 in Constantinople New Rome declared that St. Gregory Palamas is a Father of the Church like the other great Fathers and excommunicates all who disagree. What this Council was actually doing is condemning those who agreed with the Franks who believed that their scholastic theology is better than Patristic theology which for the Franks ended in the 8th century.

c. It is also very clear that the Orthodox tradition of *theoria* has

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no room whatsoever for the Latin distinction between the so-called active life and the so-called contemplative life. Both these parts of the life of celibacy of the Latin tradition of monasticism and orders are foreign to Orthodoxy.

The reason is obvious. When the noetic faculty attains to and contains the unceasing memory of God alone, the intellect, the memory, the body, and the passions continue to function, with the difference that instead of being dominated by the environment they are dominated by the noetic faculty which is completely liberated.

Because love in this state is not selfish but selfless the individual in this stage of perfection does not love God alone, but also all men and creation. He is even willing to forego his own salvation for that of others.

This means that true glorification extends from the noetic faculty and saturates the soul and body and

sanctifies the environment, i.e, social and material creation.

The Orthodox warrior does not seek escape from the material world, but the sanctification of the material world by its liberation from the devil and his followers. However, he first learns how to win battles from those who have become experts in this warfare and then he teaches others.

This is what the Critical Examination of the Applications of Theology seems to be all about.