

Dear Fr. Valery,

Forgive me, who know you only by reputation (they say you are a fine pastor with the most magnificent church in the Church Abroad), for writing to you “out of the blue” like this. I was sent a copy of your letter to Metropolitan Ilarion, and immediately felt that someone had to reply to it - and publicly. For it contains a misunderstanding which, if allowed to go uncorrected, could lead many onto the wrong path.

You write: “My heart is pained for the many clergy and believing children of the Church Abroad who today are not in communion of prayer with us, but who would have returned at that moment when the Moscow Patriarchate would have found it possible to leave the ecumenical World Council of Churches...”

Are you saying that the only obstacle to union with the MP is its membership of the WCC? I thought I must be mistaken, but looking through the rest of your letter I found no mention of sergianism, the root sin of the MP, the sin that created the MP. Moreover, you speak of ecumenism as “*the only* obstacle whose removal is vitally important and obligatory for the reunion of the broken families and divided parishes of the Church Abroad” (my italics).

Of course, the renunciation of ecumenism is indeed “vitally important and obligatory”. But to concentrate on ecumenism while not even mentioning the force behind it - sergianism - is to put the cart before the horse. Let me explain what I mean with an example from my personal experience.

Back in the 1970s, when I was still in the MP, my spiritual father was Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom). It was he who, together with Metropolitan Nicodemus, the KGB general (Agent “Sviatoslav”) of sorry memory, led the MP into the WCC at the General Assembly in New Delhi in 1961. At one point our English parish asked him to renounce his ecumenical activities. He said that he was not able to because he was “under orders” to continue them. Later I discovered who precisely was giving him the orders. Some Italian parishes in Sardinia came under his omophorion when he was exarch for Western Europe. However, these former papists in their zeal for Orthodoxy began to attack the Pope. Then Metropolitan Anthony (as he told me personally) received a phone call from Metropolitan Juvenaly of Tula (Agent “Adamant”). “*Drop your Italian parishes*”, said Juvenaly. “We are having negotiations with the Pope over the uniate question, and he has laid it down as a condition of the success of the negotiations that you drop these parishes.” So he dropped them... (They joined the Nestorians, but later came under Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili.)*

Do you see that the ecumenism of the MP is a product of its enslavement to the God-fighting Soviet regime - in other words, of sergianism? In 1948 the MP condemned ecumenism; in 1958-61 it embraced it. This volte-face had nothing to do with the personal convictions of the hierarchs, and everything to do with their spineless subjection to the God-hating atheists. So it makes no sense to plead for the abandonment of ecumenism when its root and source, sergianism, is still flourishing. If you cut off the top of a weed but leave its root in the ground, it simply grows up again...

“But,” you may object, “sergianism is not relevant now that the USSR is no more, and the hierarchs are no longer in subjection to the KGB.” For reasons I will explain later, I do not believe for one moment that the KGB no longer controls the MP. But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that you are right.

Then we must conclude that the MP hierarchs are ecumenists “not out of fear, but for conscience's sake”. This only makes their sin deeper - and the chances of getting them to renounce it even smaller. Was Judas justified after he went back to the high priests and threw down the money in the temple? Not at all. He no longer feared the high priests, or wanted their money, and was heartily disgusted with himself, but he did not repent - and so was condemned. In the same way, the MP hierarchs have not repented of their cooperation with the atheists, and so are still condemned. They have not repented of Sergius' declaration (they are preparing to glorify him), or of the thousands of True Orthodox clergy they sent to their deaths by labelling them “counter-revolutionaries”, or of calling the Tsar-Martyr “Bloody Nicholas” for generations, or of their cooperation in the destruction of thousands of churches and monasteries, or of their obscene praises of the biggest murderer in history, Joseph Stalin, or of their praises of the revolution and “Leninist norms”, or of helping to export that revolution to other countries, causing the murder, both spiritual and physical, of millions more people, or of destroying most of the Russian Church Abroad...

How can there be any union with the MP before they have repented of these evil deeds? And how can that union take

place in any other way than by the MP repenting before the True Church and being received by the True Church?

If we follow the logic of your argument, then all the New Martyrs before about the year 1961, the entry of the MP into the WCC, were schismatics; for they rejected the MP, not because of ecumenism, which did not yet exist there at that time, but because of sergianism. The same applies to ROCOR, which broke communion with Sergius in 1927 precisely because of sergianism. We reject the MP because of sergianism in the first place, because it made itself into a tool of the God-fighting communists: ecumenism came later as a consequence, as the icing on the poisonous cake of apostasy...

But let us now turn to the argument that the issue of sergianism is now irrelevant, because the Soviet Union passed away in 1991... This must be a first in Church history: that a group of heretical churchmen are deemed to have stopped practising their heresy, not because of any change of heart or behaviour on their part, but because of a change of political regime! Since when can any political change be considered equivalent to the abandonment by heretics of their heresy?!

In fact, of course, from a spiritual, ecclesiastical point of view there has been no change for the better in the MP, but rather a distinct change for the worse. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s the MP has waged a relentless war against ROCOR, the Catacomb Church and in general against any Orthodox group that refuses to submit to it. Vile, lying propaganda, the seizing of churches and monasteries, the physical intimidation (and more) of clergy and believers, has continued unabated. And worst of all, the justification of sergianism goes on.

Consider the following evidence of sergianism in just one year:

In May, 2004, at a liturgy in Butovo in the presence of Metropolitan Laurus, Patriarch Alexis said: "We pay a tribute of respect and thankful remembrance to his Holiness Patriarch Sergius for the fact that he, in the most terrible and difficult of conditions of the Church's existence in the 1930s of the 20th century led the ship of the Church and preserved the Russian Church amidst the stormy waves of the sea of life."(1)

On November 1, 2004 Patriarch Alexis, according to "Edinoe otechestvo" "emphasised that it is wrong to judge Metropolitan Sergius and his actions".(2) For, as he said on November 9, 2001: "This was a clever step by which Metropolitan Sergius tried to save the church and clergy."(3) *A clever step?!*

On January 24, 2005 Metropolitan Cyril (Gundiaev) of Smolensk, head of the MP's Department of Foreign Relations, confirmed that the MP does not condemn sergianism: "We recognize that the model of Church-State relations [in the Soviet period] did not correspond to tradition. But we are not condemning those who realized this model, because there was no other way of preserving the Church. The Church behaved in the only way she could at that time. There was another path into the catacombs, but there could be no catacombs in the Soviet space..."(4) No catacombs, but there was the Catacomb Church. However, the sergianists have no time or respect for the Catacomb Church...

In February, 2005, there was a "Worldwide Russian People's Council" in Moscow, to which several guests from ROCOR (L) were invited. As Laurence A. Uzzell, president of International Religious Freedom Watch wrote for The Moscow Times: "The speeches at that gathering, devoted to celebrating the Soviet victory in World War II and linking it to the Kremlin's current policies, suggest that the domestic church [the MP] is counting on Russian nationalism to woo the émigrés. Especially striking is the distinctively Soviet flavor of that nationalism. The main speeches failed to mention the victory's dark sides, for example the imposition of totalitarian atheism on traditionally Christian societies such as Romania and Bulgaria. Patriarch Alexey II made the incredible statement that the victory 'brought the Orthodox peoples of Europe closer and raised the authority of the Russian Church'. If one had no information, one would think that the establishment of Communist Party governments in the newly conquered countries were purely voluntary - and that what followed was unfettered religious freedom... Sergianism is clearly still thriving, despite the Moscow Patriarchate's occasional abstract statements asserting its right to criticize the state. The Patriarchate's leaders still openly celebrate Patriarch Sergei's memory, with some even favoring his canonization as a saint. With rare exceptions, they still issue commentaries on President Vladimir Putin's policies, which read like government press releases. They seem sure that this issue will not be a deal-breaker in their quest for reunion with the émigrés. Putin's Kremlin will be hoping that they are right."(5) Unfortunately, they were right: sergianism was no longer a "deal-breaker" for ROCOR.

In May, 2005 Patriarch Alexis wrote a congratulatory epistle to the president of Vietnam on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the communist victory in the Vietnam War. He called it a "glorious anniversary" and said that it opened up new horizons for the Vietnamese people.(6)

Nothing much has changed, has it? And how could it, when, as is affirmed by many sources, the KGB-FSB is now more powerful than ever, occupying 40% of all government posts, and the whole of the hierarchy of the MP? Some say this is "old news" and ignore it. But how can we ignore the fact that the MP is led by unrepentant members of the organization that has done more to destroy the Orthodox Church than any other organization in history (with the possible exception of the Jewish rabbinate), and of which its former head, Vladimir Putin once said: "There is no such thing as an ex-chekist"? How can we ignore the fact, moreover, that, as former KGB Lieutenant-Colonel Constantine Preobrazhensky writes, "absolutely all [my italics] the bishops and the overwhelming majority of the priests worked with the KGB."(7)

Let us suppose, Fr. Valery, that by a miracle the MP renounces the WCC. Presumably you will then change the semi-communication you now have with the MP (that is, everything except commemoration of the Patriarch) for full-blooded membership. And then what will happen?

First, a number of those who are with you now will leave you and join the True Orthodox Church. This will undoubtedly sadden you; for as you movingly write: "If the good pastor leaves his whole flock for the salvation of one lost sheep, one cannot imagine that the leadership of the Church could simply leave a multitude of its children who have departed for ideological reasons to the whim of destiny." And yet it is not those who *leave* you then whom you will have to answer for, for they will have saved themselves. It is those who *follow you* that you will have to answer for at the Last Judgement. For they will have followed you into the abyss of the Church's condemnation - that condemnation which falls on sergianism and all the sergianists.

But that will be only the beginning. Your magnificent church will then become - not immediately, of course, but eventually - one of the KGB-FSB's listening posts in the United States. For that is what every major MP church abroad has become. Thus for example the MP cathedral in London which I used to visit became - as the former MI5 officer Michael Wright revealed (in a book banned in Britain but published in Australia) - the main "dropping off" point for KGB agents in London. And it will happen to your church - unless you resist, in which case you will be removed.

You are now on the very brink of spiritual death, for you and for your flock, Fr. Valery. Step back while you still have time! The temporary fig-leaf which the MP gave you in the form of non-commemoration of the Patriarch is now being removed, and is being replaced by the garments of skin given to those who have been expelled from the Paradise of the Church. Flee, casting your garment behind you, as did Joseph the Fair! Otherwise you will become like the fig-tree without fruit that was cursed by the Lord, or the salt that has lost its savour - good for nothing, except to be cast out and trampled on by men...

Yours in Christ,

Vladimir Moss

Footnotes

1 Ridiger, in A. Soldatov, "Sergij premudrij nam put' ozaril", Vertograd-Inform, № 461, 21 May, 2004, p. 4 ®.

2 "Chto 'soglasovano' sovместnaia komissia MP i RPTs (L)" (What the Joint Commission of the MP and the ROCOR (L) Agreed Upon), <http://www.russia-talk.com/otkliki/ot-402.htm>, 3 November, 2004 ®.

3 <http://www.ripnet.org/besieged/rparocora.htm?>

4 Gundiaev, in Vertograd-Inform, № 504, February 2, 2005 ®.

5 Uzzell, "Reaching for Religious Reunion", Moscow Times, March 31, 2005, p. 8; Tserkovnie Novosti (Church News), May, 2005 ®.

6 http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/

features/2007/01/04/feature-02

7 Preobrazhensky, KGB v russoj emigratsii (The KGB in the Russian emigration), New York: Liberty Publishing House, 2006, p. 41 ®.