

## 294. Aug. 5/18, 1980B Hieromartyr Fabian of Rome

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Michael,

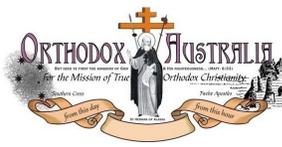
May the blessing of the Lord be with you!

Thank you for your long and informative letter on the Seattle conference and your own ideas on Fr. Dimitry Dudko. We were not at all offended by anything you wrote there; in our opinion it is quite possible to have differences of opinion on such subjects and still be of basically one mind in the Orthodox Faith which we share.

Our difference with Fr. Nektas, therefore, is not primarily on such particular points as whether Fr. Dimitry Dudko is a “ecumenist” or what our precise attitude should be with regard to the Moscow Patriarchate. The basic problem, I think, is that Fr. Nektas (and whoever else thinks as he does) thinks and publicly states that only his opinion is acceptable and Orthodox, and if you disagree with him you are not quite Orthodox or (even more strongly) you are “unprincipled and irresponsible” (a charge which, in his open letter to Fr. Herman, he not only does not apologize for, but even repeats more strongly). Where this attitude prevails, there can hardly be peace in the Church, and the unity in confession of the Orthodox Faith beings to crumble. This attitude we cannot help but protest against; I believe it can only end in some form of sectarianism, dividing one from one's brothers in the faith who in all sincerity disagree over such matters of personal opinion.

The whole question of the Moscow Patriarchate is, I think, a little more subtle' and complex than the position you have set forth (either the Patriarchate or the Catacomb Church). We will be publishing in The Orthodox Word some texts from and about the Catacomb Church which I hope will make this a little clearer. In the meantime, we are sending you Fr. Roman Lukianovs open letter to Frs. Nektas Palassis and George Macris, which sets forth rather well the thinking of our bishops and clergy of the Russian Church Abroad on this subject (although, of course, it is not a complete view of the subject). We ourselves do pray at the Liturgy for Metropolitan Theodosius (assuming he is still alive), but I can understand why our bishops would rather not make an official proclamation about this. It is also possible to make a false idealization of the Catacomb Church; they also have their weaknesses underground, and the “answer” to this question will hardly come before the fall of the Communist regime and the restoration of some kind of normality to [the] Russian Church situation.

Another point: on Fr. Dimitry Dudko, on Blessed Augustine, and on numerous other subjects, a disturbing thing to us (and to many) is that Fr. Nektas and those with him are not very traditional in their thinking—i.e., their opinions are formed not as handed down by their fathers in the Faith (whom



they consider hopelessly deformed by “Western” or “Catholic influence”), but by a group of them thinking it out, researching it, looking it up in ancient books, etc. This isn’t the way the Faith has been handed down in the past. To take an example: the place to look for the Church’s opinion on Blessed Augustine, I think, is not the official calendars of saints (which have always been very incomplete, and still are), but the actual opinions of Orthodox Fathers. This is what I tried to do in my article on Blessed Augustine, and I think the opinion set forth there will stand no matter how many “ancient calendars” Bl. Augustine fails to appear on. Similarly, the Church’s teaching should not have to be “looked up” in theological dictionaries, as Fr. Nektas states he did, and the concept of “toll-houses” is not discredited merely because this word appears only a few times in such dictionaries; if one is going to discuss this issue, he should surely have its basic outlines in mind before he looks up any specific references to it, and should be able to recall some of the numerous references in the Philokalia and other such books, which often discuss the reality without mentioning the word. I hate to think that our rich Orthodox theological tradition is now going to have to pass through the spectacles of such abstract “scholars,” whose “research” only proves they aren’t too much at home in the subject to begin with.

A final point: what Fr. Nektas is doing, I think, is not so much “fanaticism” as what should be called “correctness disease”: basing his Orthodoxy on formally “correct” statements without taking into consideration the whole context of these statements. I personally think that one of the aspects of Antichrist’s rule will be such formal “correctness” (probably even his “icons” will be in good Byzantine style!) but without the heart of Orthodoxy—love, compassion, self-distrust, humility, Christ Himself. All these “definitions” Fr. Nektas would like to make about the church situation today and the people in it are not what we need in the face of the frightful worldliness and indifference to Christ which is so strong in our midst. Our bishops do give us basic direction (don’t participate in the WCC, no direct communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, etc.), but placing so many dots over is and crossing so many t’s—I think does more harm than good. In the present case, it has certainly stirred up a lot of disturbance in the Church (our own two bishops and Vladika Laurus approved Fr. Herman’s letter to Fr. Nektas and thanked him for it, as did a number of priests, and Vladika Laurus also withdrew his monastery’s lecturer at the conference).

We just finished a very successful Pilgrimage and courses, with seven baptisms of adult catechumens and much interest shown in the lectures and courses. The atmosphere in favor of Orthodoxy has changed greatly in recent years. May God grant us to be able to give what these seekers need!

With love in Christ,  
Unworthy Hieromonk Seraphim

P.s. Enclosed is a petition drawn up after one of the talks at our Pilgrimage. You can gather signatures yourself if you want, and send them to the Synod (75 East 93rd St., N.Y.C., 10029).

P.p.s. Another difference we have with Fr. Nektas: we think issues like the “Shroud of Turin”



should be freely discussed in the Church press, with pro's and con's weighed and individual Orthodox Christians free to think and act about it as they wish. But Fr. Nektas wants to suppress any discussion of it, since it's "obviously a demonic fraud," and anyone who discusses it openly or sympathetically is considered "Roman Catholic." I think this is hopelessly narrow and unnecessary and smells a little of "papalism."

P.p.s.s. We haven't seen the latest Orthodox Monitor, but of course do not sympathize with concelebrations with the Metropolia, etc. Sadly, there is a "reaction to the left" going on among such of our clergy owing to the "over-rightness" of Fr. Nektas and a few others. Neither bodes well for the future. How difficult it is to stay on the "middle, royal path."