



322. Jan. 15/28, 1982 St. Paul of Thebes

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Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Father George [Maoris],

CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST! I trust you had a good Christmas season. Ours was very festive and joyous, with tremendous Christmas weather—two feet of snow and crystal-cold weather.

This is an attempt to reply briefly to your letter of Nov. 10/Oct. 29 and keep open our correspondence.

Perhaps our new Orthodox Word (no. 98), together with the “Decision” of the Synod there printed, have made clear enough our position. Personally, I continue to regard the article on Archimandrite Tavrion as beneficial and especially needed and timely today. The increase of defections of priests from our Synod who think they are “more Orthodox” than our bishops points up the need more than ever to make known our bishops’ sober and moderate stand towards the Moscow Patriarchate and some other jurisdictions; Fr. Gleb and others are leaving because they were misinformed about our bishops’ stand in the first place, and because they lack precisely that Orthodox spirit and heart which Elder Tavrion exemplifies.

I think a basic problem is that some, perhaps you also, are reading into our bishops’ statements positions which simply aren’t there—dotting the I’s, so to speak, which our bishops haven’t dotted. The statement against Moscow’s giving communion to Roman Catholics, for example, despite its mention of “heresy,” is by no means a statement that the Moscow Patriarchate is now a heretical organization, without grace, etc. (ask our bishops, they should tell you). Nor is the recent statement of the Sobor that the Moscow Patriarchate with all its acts is “uncanonical and null and void” a statement that goes any further than Metr. Cyril’s statement years ago (see OW, p. 126)—yes, we accept no acts of the Moscow Patriarchate as binding on us (leaving a final decision on them to the future free All-Russian Council); but that says nothing against the grace which (I think you will find our bishops agreeing, though not officially) believers receive in the Sacraments in Russia, nor against the continued support which we show for the “dissident” priests in Russia (see our own Archbishop Anthony’s Christmas Epistle this year).

The very fact that the church situation in Russia is not final and awaits a final definition only in a free Russia (which let us pray for) renders the quoting of canons about “schism” and “heresy” unconvincing to us and many others. If and when our bishops themselves quote these canons and make the final proclamation about the Moscow Patriarchate which up to now they have deliberately avoided—then we will be convinced. Until then, this quoting of canons will only encourage more of our “super-correct” people to go into schism. The fact that you are so certain about some of these



issues, while others of us think there is much matter for opinion and interpretation in them, is probably one of the chief causes of our disagreement.

It was Fr. Herman's turn to go to Oregon last weekend, and my next trip is still some time off, but I do hope to meet you. Asking your prayers,

With love in Christ,
Unworthy Hieromonk Seraphim