

The Influential Nature of Orthodoxy Endangers Christians

By Richard Bennett and Stuart Quint

The December 2006 issue of *Christianity Today* poses the question, “Will the 21st Be the Orthodox Century?”¹ It highlights the growing interest among Christians in the doctrines of Eastern Orthodoxy. Some people in the West have even been converting to Orthodoxy. For example, Peter Gillquist and a number of former Campus Crusade leaders organized churches into a new denomination called The Evangelical Orthodox Church. This denomination grew to 2,000 members in the US and Canada and later merged with The Antiochian Orthodox Church.²

One reason for this interest in Orthodoxy has been the growing fascination with mysticism and ancient tradition, both of which have permeated Western societies. Increasing numbers of Christians are coming into contact with Eastern Orthodox mysticism via the Emergent Church movement. The shallow regard to God and His Word in many churches lures Westerners to seek a more meaningful level of spirituality and mystery. Some mistakenly find allure in the rites and mysticism of Eastern Orthodoxy.

However, many Western believers are unaware of the implications of Orthodoxy. They ignore the oppression that Orthodoxy holds over nations it dominates in Russia, Romania, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and elsewhere. On an individual level, instead of being taught the simple and pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, people practice empty ritual and works in hopes that God might bless them in their lives, but without any hope or certainty of it. On a national level, corruption and lawlessness abound as consequences for a society where heartfelt worship is replaced by ritual enforced by manmade tradition and the hierarchy of the church.

Sadly, the Orthodox Church in these countries not only refuses the true Gospel of Christ herself, but she also exerts great effort to prevent other people from seeing the Gospel. People who repent and believe in Jesus Christ often suffer scorn and even persecution from family and government. Pre-Communist Russia under the czars strongly persecuted Christians with fines, loss of employment and property, prison, exile, and even removal of their children from their parents.³ Some countries consider born-again Christians as “dangerous cults.” They fine and imprison those who wish to spread the Gospel among their Orthodox friends. Greece and Serbia are two modern examples.^{4 5} Other countries in Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Africa are following their lead.⁶ The Eastern Orthodox Church fears

¹ Bradley Nassif, “Will the 21st Be the Orthodox Century?”, *Christianity Today*, December 2006 issue from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/december/30.40.html> .

² See book review by Dr. Robert N. Wilkin of Peter E. Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox: A Journey to the Ancient Christian Faith* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Inc., 1989). <http://www.faithalone.org/journal/bookreviews/gillquist.htm>

³ Sobering accounts from the archives of the Most Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Duma, amongst other sources: Aleksandr Bulgakov, *The Holy Inquisition in Russia until 1917*, (Moscow, Russia: Tavitha, 2006).

⁴ The Greek Constitution forbids “proselytizing” of “Orthodox” believers and threatens prosecution with prison and fines: <http://agis10.tripod.com/id16.html> .

⁵ Serbian law passed in 2006 refuses to recognize open freedom of religion to all peaceful groups, particularly evangelical churches, even those that have been there for centuries. See <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/july/7.16.html> .

⁶ Newer examples include Uzbekistan (“The government and its authorities are exerting all efforts to make the Russian Orthodox Church the sole “Christian” representative on the territory of Uzbekistan and to force other Christian denominations to cease to exist.” http://www.krinica.org/1/562_1.shtml);

Belarus (new law codifies Orthodoxy as “dominant” religion in Constitution and represses freedom of religion: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/23/world/new-belarus-law-codifies-rising-religious-repression.html>);

Russia (Justice Ministry naming Orthodox chauvinists hostile to the Gospel of Christ to dictate who constitutes a “cult” in Russia:

<http://74.125.95.132/search?q=cache:wK1CWVsF3EAJ:www.christiantelegraph.com/issue5494.html+Orthodoxy+Alexander+Dvorkin&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox-a>).

the Gospel of Christ and hinders it, falling under what Jesus said to the Pharisees, “*For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*”⁷

While Christian circles make popular the issue of evangelism of Asia and Islamic countries, they often neglect vast nations under the veil of Orthodoxy. Despite a misinformed notion that people in Orthodox cultures have no need for the Gospel of Christ, the truth of God’s Scriptures demonstrates their need is just as great as for men dead in sins in other countries. Indeed, Eastern Orthodoxy falls well short of biblical orthodoxy. This makes it essential to address the issue of why and how should we spread the Gospel among these millions of people living apart from the freedom of grace in Jesus Christ.

What is Orthodoxy?

“Orthodoxy” comes from two Greek words that mean “right praise,” or “right worship.” One can also translate the word as “right belief.”⁸ Orthodox churches are organized under autonomous national groups, or patriarchates. Estimates of members range up to 300 million people.⁹ Large groups are found in Russia, Ethiopia, Romania, Greece, and Serbia. Orthodox churches also exist in the Mideast, India, and the West. Most Orthodox Church members arise from familial and ethnic ties, though some converts exist.

Although Orthodoxy claims its origins from the first apostles, its actual start came after the Roman Emperor Constantine in the Fourth Century A.D. founded the state church for the empire. The political capital was moved from Rome to Constantinople. This city also became a seat of religious power for the Patriarch of Constantinople, though other cities also had patriarchs of influence. In 1054 A.D., the rivalry between the bishop of Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople triggered a split between the Roman Catholic Church of the West and the Orthodox Church of the East. Unlike Catholicism, Orthodoxy officially does not have a “Pope,” though the Patriarch of Constantinople claims premier status among equals of other branches of Orthodoxy. The Moscow Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church disputes his primacy, however.¹⁰

Orthodoxy’s Claim to Authority: Does It Measure Up?

The Orthodox Church claims its origin from the church founded by the first apostles of Jesus Christ. Frangopoulos states: “Moreover, she [the Orthodox Church] is called Apostolic because she preserves and proclaims to all the Apostolic Faith and Confession and because her pastors and ministers, Bishops and Presbyters, all her clergy possess Apostolic Succession and administration.”¹¹ Eastern Orthodoxy, however, is not the only church to say it comes

Ethiopia is an African example where Orthodox persecute those holding to the Biblical Gospel of Christ. (http://oduk.infogateway.org/profile_ethiopia.php).

See also <http://www.christianpersecution.info/news/terrified-ethiopian-christian-women-in-besieged-evangelical-church-investigators-say/>).

⁷ Matthew 23:13

⁸ The Greek word glorified (dokeo - to glorify) originally meant to appear or to seem. As the noun glory (Greek - doxa), the term’s root meant opinion - that is, how a person or thing appears to the one observing it. Originally the Greek words dokeo and doxa were neutral, used in reference to both good and bad opinions, but eventually they came to be used especially and then exclusively in reference to good opinions.

⁹ http://orthodoxwiki.org/Orthodox_Church

¹⁰ “The patriarch of Moscow does not recognize the patriarch of Constantinople as “*primus inter pares*” [first among equals], a title traditionally attributed to him by other Orthodox Churches. This has given rise to historical disagreements and misunderstandings.” Interview with Bishop Hilarion of Moscow Patriarchate of Russian Orthodox Church – cited in http://directionstoorthodoxy.org/n/moscow_patriarchate_disagrees_with_constantinoples_special_posit.html

¹¹ Athanasios Frangopoulos, *Our Orthodox Christian Faith* (Athens: The Brotherhood of Theologians “O Sotir”, 1988), p. 197.

from Christ's church of the New Testament. Roman Catholicism makes the same claim. Yet, a church can only claim direct connection to Christ's church of the New Testament to the extent that it conforms to the church of the Holy Scriptures. Thus the leadership structure of Orthodoxy needs to be examined in light of God's Word.

The Orthodox Church has an intricate hierarchy of priests, monks, bishops, patriarchs, and others. Orthodoxy ascribes great authority to the function of the Orthodox priest. Nicholas Elias writes:

“The blessing of the priest has a marvelous efficacy as being an exercise of the mysterious power with which he is invested.... The priest changes bread and wine ... into the Body and Blood of Christ.... He bestows special sanctity upon the Christians and upon the objects blest.... The hand of the priest is, therefore, an instrument of imparting Divine Grace. For this reason Orthodox Christians throughout the centuries customarily kiss the hand of their priest.”¹²

Contrast Orthodoxy with what God's Word says about priests. In fact, we find no evidence of a special class of priests holding “mysterious power” that “bestows special sanctity” by “imparting Divine Grace.” The only One who can give “Divine Grace” is the Divine Jesus Christ Himself. Indeed, every member of the body of Christ receives grace from Him, “*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*”¹³ Further there is **only one High Priest** with such power, **Jesus Christ**,¹⁴ who presides over an entire church of priests, all of whom are believers. It is these alone who comprise the members of His body, or His church.¹⁵ In other words, **every believer in Christ is a priest**. Some have special roles to equip the saints to build up the whole church, but that does not mean these leaders have special mystical powers.¹⁶

Orthodox Sacraments versus Biblical Reconciliation to the All-Holy God

The Orthodox Church has seven sacraments which it calls “Holy Mysteries”. These include: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, priesthood, marriage and unction.¹⁷ Every Orthodox believer must receive the first four in order to join the church. Frangopoulos writes, “If he is not baptized, and chrismated (confirmed), if he doesn't communicate [i.e. have communion] frequently and confess his sins, he does not receive grace and does not become a Christian.”¹⁸ A. M. Coniaris corroborates this view when he states, “In Christ, God does just this. He brings God's grace and power to each one of us. The means He uses to do this are the Sacraments, which are like seven power lines from God's Niagara to each Christian.”¹⁹

¹² Nicholas Elias, *The Divine Liturgy Explained: A Guide for Orthodox Christian Worshippers* (Athens, Greece: Astir, 1984), pp. 86-7.

¹³ Ephesians 4:7

¹⁴ Hebrews 9:11-12

¹⁵ I Peter 2:9-10

¹⁶ Ephesians 4:11-13

¹⁷ “There are at least 7 sacraments in the Orthodox Church.”

http://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/Orthodox_Church/The_Sacraments.shtml

¹⁸ Frangopolous, p. 205.

¹⁹ “It is an exhilarating experience to stand at the brink of Niagara Falls watching that tremendous water-power thundering over the cliff, knowing that millions of kilowatt—hours of electric power are right in front of us. Exhilarating yet sad if none of it lights our way in darkness; none of it heats our homes in the cold. But when the power of the Falls is channeled to where we need it: to light up our darkness, to dispel the damp cold from our homes. What a difference it makes! In Christ, God does just this. He brings God's grace and power to each one of us. The means He uses to do this are the Sacraments, which are like seven power lines from God's Niagara to each Christian.” A.M. Coniaris, *Introducing the Orthodox Church: Its Faith and Life*, (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing, 1982).

Thus like Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy teaches that the sacraments actually convey the power. Rather than sacraments being merely symbolic, the Orthodox regard them as the actual, literal means by which God conveys “grace and power.” Orthodoxy holds that if one does not receive these sacraments, one does not receive the grace and power of God! Furthermore, it teaches that an individual believer receives the sacraments only through an authorized representative of the “Church.” Otherwise, he receives no help from God. In contrast, according to the Holy Scriptures God recognizes only two sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These two sacraments are really ordinances symbolic of the spiritual reality in the life of a true believer in Christ. They do not confer any special “grace and power of God.”

Orthodoxy also shows the critical role it places on the priesthood and the seven sacraments. They are alleged to be vital for a person to maintain a right relationship with the All Holy God. Orthodoxy teaches that man can only receive mercy from God through faith and good deeds in his life, “The primary conditions for our justification are our faith in Christ the Savior and the good works that spring from our virtues and our holy life.”²⁰ Yet God in the Holy Scriptures defines a right relationship with Himself in a different order. We can only stand righteously before the one and only All Holy God on the terms He prescribes. By His undeserved and unilateral mercy for us sinful people, we turn to Him in faith alone for the salvation that He alone gives, by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, based on Christ’s death and resurrection for His own. Thus we believe on Him alone, “*For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*”²¹ Here we see that “good works” are not the “cause” of being right with God, but rather a consequence of the salvation a believer receives in Christ Jesus, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*”²² In other words, God’s mercy, not man’s works, saves a person. As a result of God’s mercy, a believer can reflect a virtuous life as he or she is enabled by Christ’s salvation to walk in good works. Furthermore, no human being can earn God’s favor through his or her own “good works.” Before the all holy God, “*all our righteous works are as filthy rags,*”²³ for “*there is none righteous, no, not one.*”²⁴

Authority of Eastern Orthodoxy Conflicts with God’s Holy Scriptures

Orthodoxy ascribes its authority on questions of belief and practice to Holy Scripture and “Holy Tradition”. Bishop Kallistos Ware writes:

“But to an Orthodox Christian, Tradition means something more concrete and specific than this. It means the books of the Bible; it means the Creed; it means the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils and the writings of the Fathers; it means the Canons, the Service Books, the Holy Icons—in fact, the whole system of doctrine, Church government, worship, and art which Orthodoxy has articulated over the ages.”²⁵

Essentially Orthodoxy places God’s Written Word under the authority of Tradition. Orthodoxy also requires its adherents to trust that those in charge know what other tradition God has entrusted to man, even though there is no evidence for this ‘oral teaching of Christ and the apostles’.”

And yet, how striking it is that Jesus Christ Himself consistently condemns manmade traditions as a basis of knowing God’s will for us to live! “*Howbeit in vain do they worship*

²⁰ Frangopoulos, p. 183.

²¹ Ephesians 2:8-9

²² Ephesians 2:10

²³ Isaiah 64:6

²⁴ Romans 3:10

²⁵ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church: New Edition*, (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 196.

me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."²⁶ May it never be that someone wastes his life in manmade religion governed by "the commandments of men" as Jesus calls them. Manmade tradition not based on God's Word leads one to violate God's very commandments and worship "in vain." Such worship offends God and draws His wrath, not His blessing. The Apostle Paul states, "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*"²⁷ In the area of tradition, the Holy Scriptures make no reference at all to something that the Lord did not see fit to reveal to us through His unfailing Word.

One of the sources of Orthodox "tradition", Basil of Caesarea, an "early church father", claims to submit his authority to that of God's Holy Scriptures.²⁸ He defended the basis for his beliefs and teaching,

"What then? After all these efforts were they tired? Did they leave off? Not at all. They are charging me with innovation... Their complaint is that their custom does not accept this, and that Scripture does not agree. What is my reply?...Therefore let God-inspired Scripture decide between us...."²⁹

So we see that at least one of the church fathers claims that Scripture alone is his ultimate source of truth. We see no allusion to tradition apart from the written revelation of God. In fact, we see Basil condemning manmade "custom" or "tradition." Basil reflects the view of the overwhelming majority of church fathers who claimed to rely on the same Holy Scriptures we can read today.

The Foundational Ritual of Orthodoxy Denies God's Unique Glory

Icons represent one core aspect of Orthodoxy that illustrates not only the overt violation of God's direct Holy Scriptures, but also shows the inconsistency of the Orthodox definition for "Holy Tradition."³⁰ Icons present three types of problems when we set aside the sole reliable and unchanging authority of Holy Scriptures, the Word of God, in favor of unstable and unreliable manmade tradition:

1. Contradicting traditions: Which council was right? It is the one that upholds God's written Word. Orthodoxy places great emphasis on ecumenical church councils, which involve a gathering of many church leaders to discuss matters of doctrine and practice.³¹ After many examples of condemnation of their use, the church council at Constantinople (A.D. 754) decreed their removal from churches and religious life. Also known as the Iconoclast Council, it received warm support from the Byzantine Emperor Leo and many laypeople. Upon the death of Leo, his wife Irene seized power and convoked the Second Council of Nicea (also known as the Seventh Ecumenical Council) in A.D. 787. This

²⁶ Mark 7:7-9

²⁷ Colossians 2:8

²⁸ As with any person, the "church fathers" were men capable of teaching error if they strayed from God's infallible Word. Basil allegedly supported the use of icons, which the Scriptures condemn. Even the apostle Peter erred against God's Word by avoiding the company of Gentile Christians. Paul rebuked Peter (Galatians 2:11-16). Therefore, we need to be careful to scrutinize anyone's teaching, including that of the church fathers, in light of the Scriptures.

²⁹ Basil, *Letter 189*, 3 from <http://www.bible.ca/catholic-vs-orthodox.htm>.

³⁰ For more information about icons, including numerous quotes condemning their use from Holy Scriptures and opposition to their use from a number of "Church Fathers" such as Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, see http://www.bereanbeacon.org/eastern_orthodoxy/Icons_Visions_of_a_Spiritual_World.pdf.

³¹ For more information on the Seven Ecumenical Councils that form a major source of Eastern Orthodox doctrine, please see http://www.bereanbeacon.org/eastern_orthodoxy/The_Seven_Pillars_of_Orthodoxy.pdf.

council revoked the rulings of the Iconoclast Council by mandating the use of icons in the Byzantine Orthodox Church.

2. Icons violate the Second Commandment that bans visual representations of God, including Jesus Christ. This is also known as “idolatry.” The Scripture makes clear that God hates idolatry and forbids a representation in art of what is divine.³² Making images to represent God corrupts those who use them.³³ Images teach lies about God.³⁴ God cannot be represented in art and all who practice idolatry are commanded to repent.³⁵ Just as in the Old Testament, so also in the New Testament does the Holy Spirit warn true believers, “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*”³⁶

Frangopoulos explains, “Hence we have the Saints as our intercessors before the Lord and as help in our needs; we have them, their holy icons, and their holy relics as examples of virtue and sanctity. This is why we honor them and celebrate their memory, and invoke them in our prayers, in our supplications and in our Liturgies.” Many icons are not just pictures of saints. In fact, the Second Council of Nicaea mandated the depiction of “...the figure of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, of the honorable Angels, of all Saints and of all pious people.”³⁷ There even exists an icon attempting to picture God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit visually.³⁸

3. Icons in Orthodoxy deny Christ as the sole intercessor for man before God. Orthodoxy imposes extra mediators in prayer between man and God. God’s Word forbids such practices. Yet Frangopoulos contends:

“We especially turn to the Church Triumphant in heaven: the Church of our Saints and we commemorate them and especially ‘our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary’. We commemorate them and ascribe glory and honour to their holy personages and their sacred memories, and we ask their prayers before God on our behalf and their supplications and aid in the many needs of our lives. With special faith and devoutness we honour the Most Holy Theotokos, the Mother of our Lord, and we ask her protection and her speedy overshadowing and aid. We recourse to the wonder-working Saints - Holy men and women - for our spiritual and bodily needs, since God granted to them the gift of performing miracles and of the miraculous healing of many spiritual and physical maladies.”³⁹

Contrast the answer of Holy Scripture as the Apostle Paul answers the question of how many mediators exist between believers and God: ONE! “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*”⁴⁰

³² Exodus 20:4-6

³³ Deuteronomy 4:13-16

³⁴ Habakkuk 2:18-20

³⁵ Acts 17:29-30

³⁶ I John 5:21

³⁷ “The Seven Ecumenical Councils, the Decree of the Holy, Great, Ecumenical Synod” cited in Henry R. Percival, Philip Schaff, and Henry Wace, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 14* (Albany: AGES Software, 1997), p.1032.

³⁸ “The Holy Trinity” by the Russian artist Andrey Rublev. Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1994), p. 198-201.

³⁹ Frangopoulos, p. 243.

⁴⁰ I Timothy 2:5-6

Another problem with praying to dead saints and Mary through icons is that it violates God's Word forbidding living people to communicate with the dead: "*There shall not be found among you...a consulter with familiar spirits or a necromancer.*"⁴¹ *For all that do these things are an abomination before the Lord.*"⁴² The imposition of these "middlemen" by Eastern Orthodoxy neglects yet another vital truth: neither Mary nor the saints can hear such prayers! Prayer using icons presumes that somewhere in the expanse of the spiritual world that Mary and the saints have the same capacity to hear prayers that only God does. In other words, Mary and the saints allegedly have the gift of all-powerful hearing! Such a presumption is absurd and an offense to God, the only One who sees and hears all!⁴³ Only God is worthy of our veneration and adoration, "*I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images!*"⁴⁴

Eastern Orthodoxy Provides No Assurance of Eternal Life

The logical yet tragic conclusion of Orthodoxy is that it provides no assurance that all these rituals and religious activity will even bring eternal life or peace with God! The practice of "memorial services" for the dead is not to be confused with what Biblical Christians call "funerals." Orthodox "memorials for the dead" serve a very different purpose.⁴⁵ Seraphim Rose, an Orthodox priest, explains,

"In the Orthodox doctrine, on the other hand, which St. Mark teaches, the faithful who have died with small sins unconfessed, or who have not brought forth fruits of repentance for sins they have confessed, are cleansed of these sins either in the trial of death itself with its fear, or after death, when they are confined (but not permanently) in hell, by the prayers and Liturgies of the Church and good deeds performed for them by the faithful."⁴⁶

Further, Eastern Orthodoxy teaches that after a person dies, his or her soul goes on a journey of forty days. According to St. John Maximovich, Bishop of Shanghai and San Francisco, the soul passes through various "toll houses" staffed by demons that test that soul's ability to resist some type of temptation.⁴⁷ If the tortured soul withstands one test, it moves onto another "toll house" for another test, and so forth. If the soul passes all the tests, it receives eternal life. If it fails, it goes nowhere unless the departed soul receives enough aid from the living church for God to grant it mercy. Such assistance consists of prayers and good deeds done on that departed soul's behalf.

But what if the soul does not receive the prayers and charity of others? The soul goes to Hell! One writer describes an elderly Russian widow who is absolutely despondent, without hope.⁴⁸ Why? She has no friends or family who will pray for her soul to go to Heaven and not slip into Hell. Neither does she have the money to give to the local priest so he will conduct memorial services for her soul. There exist thousands like this woman in Russia. She has few or no friends, no money, no hope! Orthodoxy orphans them as forlorn "baptized Orthodox servants of God." But God through the Holy Scriptures presents the true salvation freely given and eternal. Jesus Christ states, "*Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth my*

⁴¹ A necromancer is one who consults with spirits of the dead.

⁴² Deuteronomy 18:10

⁴³ "*The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.*" Psalm 33:13

⁴⁴ Isaiah 42:8

⁴⁵ Eastern Orthodox "memorials for the dead" are called "panikhidi" in Russian and "mnemosyna."

⁴⁶ http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/death/stmark_purg.aspx

⁴⁷ <http://www.orthodox.net/articles/life-after-death-john-maximovitch.html>

⁴⁸ Anonymous, *Ancient of Days or Entrenched in a Lie? Why I Never Became Russian Orthodox* (unpublished manuscript) (<http://svetpisaniva.ru/index.php?id=29>)

word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death into life.”⁴⁹

Humanity’s greatest problem is that we have offended the Holy God, who can tolerate no sin. Our thoughts and behavior rebel against God’s goodness. There is no good work that we can perform that God will accept as a perfect sacrifice. Jesus Christ God’s Son came to this Earth, lived the perfect life, and gave His life as an atonement for sins. A person comes into Christ and inherits eternal life not by his efforts, but by simply repenting of his sinful life and believing in the One Whom God sent, *“For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

Conclusion

The Orthodox Church makes a startlingly bold claim to preserve the “pure apostolic faith.” However, the light of God’s Holy Scripture exposes the core teachings of Eastern Orthodoxy as false. Eastern Orthodoxy merely preserves the tradition which men have developed within Orthodoxy, and not those things which God has explicitly revealed in His Word. Eastern Orthodoxy in its sacramental system, its doctrine of salvation, and its understanding of Scripture falls short of God’s inerrant Word. The Orthodox Church’s priests with their sacraments and icons formally and explicitly contradict the Scriptures. Their teaching is all the more to be condemned because it leads millions into despair and ultimately to eternal damnation.

Jesus Christ the Lord had done all that was necessary to put away the sins of His people. He has provided for them both the forgiveness for their sins and His own perfect standing before God. *“It is finished!”* He declared. Finished was the believer’s slavery to sin and the true moral guilt that attends his sin! Paid in full was the price of the believer’s redemption! Performed perfectly were all the requirements of God’s law! In a word, complete satisfaction had been made to God for the believer.

Holy God is merciful to all who call upon Him in truth. Therefore, repent and believe on the Eternal Lord Jesus Christ. *“...if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”⁵⁰* This is the living way. It is spiritual death to attempt to come to God through any earthly priest. The way to the Eternal Father is through the Eternal High Priest alone. Those who believe on Him have everlasting life, which is in Him alone. He says, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”⁵¹* ♦

Permission is given to copy and distribute this article.

Our MP3s are easily downloaded and our DVDs seen on Sermon Audio at: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/go/212>

Our website is: <http://www.bereanbeacon.org>

⁴⁹ John 5:24

⁵⁰ Romans 10:9-10

⁵¹ John 14:6