

Is There Grace in the Moscow Patriarchate?
And Other Related Points of Confusion Generated by Soviet Propaganda

Part I

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The purpose of this article is to address a number of related questions and topics regularly demonstrated to be of concern to people previously from the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), currently in the Moscow Patriarchate, or, as is the case today, people formerly within the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) and, since 2007, unconditionally joined to the Moscow Patriarchate by Metropolitan Laurus (ROCOR-MP). The common thread of these three groups is their relationship to the Moscow Patriarchate.

Let us begin with the most important question: Is there Grace in the Moscow Patriarchate? That is how the question is usually posed. However, since as Orthodox Christians we confess that the “Holy Spirit is everywhere present and fillest all things,” the question needs to be refined more specifically in order to reach a more specific answer. What the above mentioned groups of people mean to say is: Is there Grace in the mysteries of the Moscow Patriarchate? To be sure, this question does not originate from our contemporary post-Soviet society. This question has been repeatedly asked for almost seven decades. Although rarely do events occur without substantial preparation, if one was to ascribe an official point at which this question became of paramount importance, it would have to be 1943; the year Stalin officially “blessed” Metropolitan Sergei to become patriarch, thus forming the MP.

From the time of the Bolshevik revolution the Russian Orthodox Church suffered extremely brutal persecutions at the hands of the Communist regime. However, there was never any question about Grace. The Russian Orthodox Church was an established and well-recognized local Church for centuries. All other local Orthodox Churches recognized the Russian Orthodox Church as legitimate and with Grace. Shortly after the revolution, the newly elected Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Tikhon, foreseeing the danger awaiting the Russian Orthodox Church within the newly forming Soviet Union, issued his now famous ukase (Ukase No. 362) establishing the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. Here too, all other local Orthodox Churches recognized the ROCOR as legitimate and with Grace.

With the onset of persecutions against the Church, Metropolitan Sergei came forward to compromise with the God-hating regime. The majority of hierarchs, clergy and laity was against this compromise, and begged Metropolitan Sergei to reconsider. This majority was imprisoned, tortured and martyred. In order to survive, these faithful confessors of the Russian Orthodox Church went into the catacombs. There can be no doubt that the Russian Orthodox Church continued to exist, and continued to be with Grace, within the borders of the former Russian Empire, albeit with little external structure in the catacombs.

Metropolitan Sergei continued compromising with the God-hating regime in exchange for its recognition of his leadership. During his Soviet-permitted tenure, he presided over

the destruction of churches and monasteries, and the torture and martyrdom of millions of people. To the rest of the world, he denied the existence of any persecutions. By 1943, there were few clergy left alive or in freedom. Similarly, there were few open churches and monasteries. Stalin rewarded Metropolitan Sergei for his loyalty by making him Patriarch. The Moscow Patriarchate was officially born.

Founded upon compromise and collaboration with an illegitimate, God-hating regime (officially called Sergianism), and established through the blood-soaked hands of a madman leading this regime, the question regarding Grace in the Moscow Patriarchate was legitimately raised.

Professor I. M. Andreyev (1894-1976) was a noted authority regarding the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, particularly for the period ranging from just before the Bolshevik Revolution through World War II. Professor Andreyev held three doctorate degrees: medicine, literature, and philosophy. He was a confessor of the Faith, who was present with the Petrograd delegation which went before Metropolitan Sergei begging him to renounce his collaboration with the Soviet government. He was sentenced to the Solovki prison camp. He managed to escape from the Soviet Union, and spent the last years of his life writing and teaching at the Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, NY. In 1948, Professor Andreyev published one of his works, "Is the Grace of God Present in the Soviet Church?" Having lived through this horrific period, he writes with first-hand information, and is a source by himself. This work is highly recommended reading, and by itself, is more than sufficient to answer the title of this present article: "Is There Grace in the Moscow Patriarchate?"

Nonetheless, even as this became a question of major concern in 1943 when Stalin "blessed" Metropolitan Sergei to become patriarch, the question continues to be asked by both clergy and laity of the Moscow Patriarchate to this day. Apparently, these people continue to have their doubts. In 1948, Professor Andreyev tried to help such people by writing, "And can an Orthodox Christian approach the Holy Chalice with doubt?"

And today, has anything changed? Indeed, much has changed since 1948. Unfortunately, for the Moscow Patriarchate, this change has been for the worse. After World War II, Stalin intensified his persecution of the Church. Simultaneously, the Moscow Patriarchate announced to the rest of the world that there were no persecutions. Having eliminated virtually all dissent, the Soviet regime began building its own church. All new clergy were required to take an oath of allegiance to the Soviet Government (much like entering the Soviet Army). All clergy were vetted and required approval from the Commission on the Affairs of Cults under the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee (established in 1929). Of course, the heresy of Sergianism (subjugation of the church to the government) was already in full force. To make matters even worse, the Moscow Patriarchate has embraced the heresy of Ecumenism, and today is seeking union with the Pope of Rome.

Given the changes since 1948 which have led to the present-day state of the MP, instead of pursuing the question of whether or not the Moscow Patriarchate has Grace in its

mysteries, let us consider the possibility that even here, we are asking the wrong question.

Why? – Primarily because the Orthodox Church has no “meter” for Grace. Instead, the Orthodox Church has its Holy Canons. The canons define what is inside the Church, and what is outside the Church. The canons define heresy. The Moscow Patriarchate espouses the heresies of Ecumenism and Sergianism. We know that those who are in heresy are not inside the Church.

As for Grace, we know that the Holy Spirit will go and act as the Holy Spirit wills. The Holy Spirit is not bound by the formulas and desires of mankind. We know that God will not be mocked. We know that God is where He is “worshiped in spirit and in truth.”

There are some who say that MP mysteries are effective for those who believe they are so, and not so much for others. This is Protestantism, where the individual has his own personal relationship with his Saviour, regardless of the faith of the priest or bishop (or minister) leading him in prayer. Hence, we see the reason for the thousands of Protestant sects.

Let us ask ourselves, do the Protestants have Grace in their rituals? Most non-ecumenical Orthodox would quickly respond in the negative. But why? – How can this be proven? As we know, the reasons are many. They have no hierarchy, no priests, nor any apostolic succession. They do not recognize the Holy Theotokos and all the saints in a proper manner, etc. How do we come to such answers? What do we rely on to prove and support our logic? We seek the counsel of Holy Scripture and the Holy Canons. Here too, the answer does not come forward in terms of Grace, but in terms of heresy and canonicity.

Although there are many sincere people, as previously mentioned, who seek an answer concerning Grace in the mysteries of the MP, we must invariably come to the conclusion that this is the wrong question and the wrong approach. We must clearly recognize that the deceivers within the MP would like nothing more than for this debate to limit itself to the arena of only Grace, disregarding canon law. They understand that if we have no metrics for Grace, we cannot fully prove that Grace is not there. That is their point. Of course, the opposite is similarly true, and does not provide for even a tie, since the argument is clearly and artificially restricted by ignoring canon law. Nonetheless, the deceivers would gladly accept a lack of decision, rather than otherwise.

In pursuit of the correct question, and to provide for an informed answer, it is necessary to at least briefly revisit the history of this tragic period in order to bring into focus what transpired with the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Nation. We need to revisit the circumstances surrounding the illegitimate take-over of the government, the church, and the soul of this nation. To look upon the institution of the Moscow Patriarchate today, with its shining cupolas, its beautiful singing, and its magnificent vestments and services, one can almost no longer hear the groans and cries of the suffering Russian martyrs to this very day. Could the MP have absolved itself of its wholesale betrayal of

these saints by performing a glorification for them, or were such glorifications performed using the more chilling Soviet logic; “dead men don’t talk”? We should remember, perestroika came with no apologies, not to mention forgiveness.

Let us begin with a review of the rise and fall of the Soviet Empire during the 20th century, its leaders, and their impact on the Church. Moreover, given the momentous capitulation of Metropolitan Sergei in accepting Stalin’s offer and “blessing” for him to become patriarch, let us look at the Moscow Patriarchate from the perspective of the Church that Stalin built.

By itself, to entertain the concept of “the church that Stalin built” might seem to imply that Stalin actually achieved certain accomplishments valued by civilization during his lifetime. However, to the contrary, it is the purpose of this article to reveal how Stalin, having embraced the dark powers of evil early in his life, paralleled the behavior of the enemy of mankind, Satan, with his every action.

Before the harsh and seemingly endless societal winter imposed by the illegitimate Bolshevik regime, toward the end of the 19th century, Russia, along with most of Europe, enjoyed a relatively good standard of living when compared to the rest of the world. Financially, it was third in the world in per capita wealth. An increasingly greater amount of people were receiving an education. Serfdom, as throughout the rest of Europe, was becoming a condition of the past. Unlike the United States during relatively the same period, Russian society never accepted, nor suffered, the evils of slavery. With an educated citizenry, the Russian nation was on its way to developing a representative government around its monarchy. The Church was reestablishing its Patriarch, missing since the position was taken away by Peter I. Of course, there were also causes for concern. Liberal factions were unsatisfied with any government involving a monarchy. Although Alexander II had extended many concessions to these liberal factions, and was moving at an accelerated pace towards a more representative government, they still assassinated him.

During this period of transitional development, the God-hating Bolsheviks began their attack on Russia’s social infrastructure. Having been indoctrinated with western secular ideology seeped in socialism, they considered themselves intellectually and morally superior. They were well-prepared and organized. Their funding came from the West, where they often retreated for refuge, education, and reorganization with the intent of soon returning for more revolutionary work. It would be naïve to accept the Soviet propaganda that simple peasants organized their shovels, rakes, and axes to overthrow the Empire. Even as we find today, people had to work for a living. The average person had no time, money or desire for a revolution.

These well-schooled revolutionaries conducted a systematic psychological onslaught directed at various levels of Russian society. Whenever their funding ran low, they

would rob banks. When exposed and punished for their criminal actions, the liberal press (as it still does to this day) would predictably engage by exaggerating the circumstances to create the most possible sympathy and support for the criminal; trying to make him a hero at the expense of people and laws working to maintain social decency.

As an example, one such attack was aimed at the simple faithful, with the hope of destabilizing the Church. With impunity, these socialists tempted the faithful, saying, “Look, your churches are laden with gold and silver, while you have such poverty and beggars outside their doors.” Unfortunately, neither the Church nor the Monarchy was prepared to conduct the psychological warfare necessary to contain and eliminate the virus infused into the body of its society. The battle for the mind of the Russian Nation began, and then quickly it was turned towards its soul. Soon, the very Faith of the nation was to become challenged.

This is but a glimpse of one aspect of a much more complicated arena of events preplanned to violently unfold. Yet, this glimpse is important in that it serves to expose the very core, the darkness of the Soviet regime. It serves to underscore the fact that everything said, everything promised, everything done by this God-hating regime was an enormous lie aimed at seizing illegitimate control of the Russian Nation, while simultaneously destroying Christ’s Holy Church. For during Stalin’s time, what happened to the poor? The churches and monasteries were plundered and destroyed. The gold and silver was taken and used to exclusively adorn the glory of the God-hating regime. And again, what happened to the poor? They were not to be seen begging at the demolished or desecrated churches and monasteries any longer. They were nowhere to be found. However, the Regime knew where they were. So that they not besmirch the glory of the Soviet Union with their unsightly existence, they were unceremoniously gathered by the authorities and sent away to their elimination.

Another area which needs to be addressed and set aright is the repetitive propaganda attacking the integrity of the Russian monarchs. The Soviets promote self-serving stories about self-centered and careless czars needlessly punishing people for little or no offenses. They forever remind all who will listen of the soldiers who opened fire on a crowd of innocent protesting people, etc. Of course, some of these accounts are not proud moments of Russian history. On the other hand, these accounts are presented to us in a discolored and exaggerated form by Soviet apparatchiks intent on exalting themselves at the expense of honest Russian history.

For the sake of our discussion, let us allow for every point made by these propagandists in each of such accounts. Then, using the figures provided by these same Soviet “historians,” let us produce a sum of all the executions and imprisonments of each and every individual, whether correctly or erroneously judged, which was ordered by the government of all the Russian monarchs, from Vladimir to Nicholas II.

We can be confident that the number, the total sum, would pale in its insignificance when compared to the mass annihilation of innocent Russian people conducted by Stalin alone, not to mention Lenin, Khrushchev and others of this dark dynasty. If we add the atrocities of all the leaders of this blood-soaked and illegitimate Soviet lineage, we will find that the Russian nation has lived through the darkest, cruelest, and most sorrowful century (the 20th century) in the history of all of mankind.

So, what were the so-called accomplishments of this hapless man, Stalin, who was perhaps the most evil, and God-hating tyrant to ever be unleashed upon mankind in all of history? There were no accomplishments in the positive sense to be had. Instead, one may call them anti-accomplishments.

Some might ask, why state the obvious? Because time has the tendency to erase memories, and on occasion, put certain events in a different light, or at least, out of focus. The atrocities committed against humanity and the Church, the torture and annihilation of tens of millions of people some 70 years ago might not appear quite so tragic to a fifteen-year-old today, as it might have been to a child who just lost his family to such slaughter at that time.

Furthermore, in the West, many youths, and adults, know nothing about Stalin. At best, some confuse him with Hitler, an evil monster in his own right. In Russia, people whose families were affected by persecution, torture, forced starvation, and endless murder of innocent souls were afraid to speak about it, even to their own children. Such was the dread and horror forced upon all by that God-hating regime. The Soviet school books certainly would only present Lenin and Stalin in a most favorable light. And, how many stories have we heard about a teacher standing before her classroom of schoolchildren, while holding up an icon or cross and asking, "Has anyone ever seen anything like this before?" And, the simple children would say, "Yes, my parents have that at home." Soon thereafter, there would be a knock on the door at night. The apartment would be searched by agents of the Regime, and if religious items were found, the parents would suffer the loss of their jobs, or perhaps worse, they would be given a sentence in Siberia and be called an "enemy of the people." Out of such fear, believers began to hide their faith even from their children. These children, if they are still alive, are now grandparents and great-grandparents. In all too many cases, the truth about the persecutions, about the tortures, the truth about all the murders, the truth about Stalin, was not fully passed on. Their children, for the most part, are misinformed about their past, and uncertain about their future.

How do we know this? Given the economic instability of the post-Soviet times, some people in Russia have resorted to yearning for the not too distant semblance of security provided by Stalin; who ironically himself was an insecure tyrant. Today, there are some

who actually wish to glorify Stalin as a saint. Of course, this says very much about the successful brainwashing undertaken by the God-less Regime of the last 90 years.

Then, there are those glorifying the Soviet Union's WW II victory over Hitler. True, there is a sincere and loving, albeit misplaced, nostalgia to honor the sacrifices of their grandparents. However, the success of a deranged tyrant and his God-hating regime, while simultaneously persecuting his own people, over another deranged monster is hardly an event worthy of celebration. One must only consider the world-wide danger which began at the moment the West rewarded Stalin for his participation in WW II. By recognizing his Communist regime, Roosevelt and Churchill allowed Stalin to tighten his bloody grip of persecution over the Russian people within the Iron Curtain. While some were marching, celebrating their victory in Red Square, their brothers and sisters were languishing in rotten prisons, suffering torture, or perhaps also marching, but to their death. For the rest of the world, Stalin's empowerment plunged it into a nuclear arms race and the beginning of the Cold War.

There are some, nonetheless, who will insist that conquering Hitler's Germany was important and necessary to keep the Germans from occupying and ruling Russia. Through this achievement they say, the Motherland had been preserved, and Russia continued to be ruled by Russians. Of course, one can only theorize regarding a world in which Hitler might have prevailed. Most will agree that such a result would be horrible for humanity. At the same time, we must not allow ourselves to repeat the propaganda prepared for us by the Soviets to deflect our minds away from the reality of the situation, and towards Stalin's "heroic victory."

Let us consider those times. Stalin's regime was yet quite fragile. While instilling fear in many, he endeared very few. Meanwhile, the White Army was still a threat. Although Stalin's tenure was already longer than Lenin's, he continued lock-step with the same vision established by his mentor. Stalin spent most of his time destroying the ways of life and government developed over nearly 1,000 years of Russian civilization. He had imposed his personal rise to power through the murder of millions of people. He had stolen the Nation's wealth, from individuals, churches, and government. Moreover, he had stolen the entire Nation through his (and Lenin's) illegitimate seizure of its leadership. Given the full-time commitment required by such an agenda, Stalin had little time, nor perhaps interest, for diplomacy; domestic or international. Stalin's foreign policy reflected his bludgeoning "leadership" style.

Hitler had a well-disciplined and experienced army, a virtual fighting machine. Stalin had murdered many, if not most, of Russia's most experienced, capable and educated people. These were people who knew how to operate the country; from its industry, to its military, to its government. Stalin replaced them with his own thugs, criminals and cowards who obeyed him out of fear for their lives. When Hitler first attacked the Soviet

Union, he made significant inroads into the country, and seized a number of major cities. At first, many Russians viewed him as a possible liberator. Even as many refused to work in Stalin's collective farms, here too, people refused to fight. Many surrendered at the first possibility. As many World War II Russian refugees have said, only after learning what was happening to the Russian prisoners of war in Germany did the Russian people decide that it was best to fight. Simultaneously, Stalin, fearing that he would be overrun, began to open churches and easing the persecution of Christians. Only then, in spite of its inexperience in the battlefield and technological inferiority, did the Red Army begin to have success. Here too, however, this came at the expense of many lives.

And so, what is there to celebrate? Was Russia really preserved? Perhaps to some this is a small technicality, but the Russian Empire had been usurped by illegitimate forces and foreign interests to become the Soviet Union. That battle was already lost. The Motherland had fallen into the hands of the enemy of God and His people. It must be remembered that the White Army was still trying to take back Russia. Unfortunately, the West had other interests, and clearly did not support the movements of General Vlasov, or those before him. Regrettably, the victory over Hitler did not preserve Russia; rather it solidified the concept of a new Soviet Union with unanimous recognition from the West. Stalin is shown together with Roosevelt and Churchill at Yalta, all grinning over their success. The persecutions resumed with a vengeance.

Another piece of propaganda regularly repeated is that we must rejoice over the Soviet Union's WWII victory, "Russia remained under Russian rule." Is that so? Indeed, it did not fall to the Germans. However, fall into foreign hands it already had. The so-called revolution was not masterminded nor funded by the Russian people. The peasants did not take-over the rule of the land. The overthrow of the Russian Empire was funded by the West. Marxism, socialism, communism were all ideologies fomented in Europe, and looking for a nation within which to set-up a socio-political experiment. So, whose rule was Russia under both before and after Hitler's demise? Indeed, the new Regime spoke the language of the land, but its soul was from a foreign place.

For Russia to ever be free again, and return to self-governance, its people must be ever vigilant and cognizant of the ongoing psychological onslaught, which began at the end of the 19th century. To date, this has not stopped, nor even slowed.

The psychological propaganda machine tells us to celebrate Stalin's victory over Hitler. Yet, celebrating this victory only serves to legitimize the Soviet regime, betray Russia's own history, and betray the millions of new martyrs and other innocent Russian people who suffered and lost their lives at the pleasure of a God-hating regime. Perhaps we may now come to an understanding that this celebration is an anti-celebration?

Is it that most do not know, and the others have forgotten? Do we not see all the wounds and scars throughout the countryside and within Russian society today? Yet, why do we

not ask the proper questions? Who did this, and why? Is it possible that nobody actually cares?

Russia, as a nation, will never recover, neither physically, nor psychologically, nor spiritually, until it comes to grips with its past. The wounds will not heal until they are uncovered and brought to light. The Russian people need to know the names and sentences of the persecuted. They need to know the names of the traitors who betrayed the persecuted. They need to know the names of the persecutors. Only then will it be possible to correct the path of the past and restore an honorable, dignified and legitimate government led by people who truly “love God above all else, and their neighbor as themselves.”

By some accounts, 90 million people were annihilated by the Communist regime. By other accounts, 40 million people were slaughtered. In either case, this is no small number. Only God knows for sure the exact number of souls who were persecuted, tortured, and prematurely sent to their graves. If we were to contemplate the significance of these numbers for a moment, we soon see that everyone who is of Russian descent, and is alive today, has at least one relative who suffered from the Soviet God-hating regime.

The present-day regime in Russia, which “converted to Democracy” in 1991 is operated by the very same people who participated in the previous regime. There was no purge, no confession, and no repentance. Lenin and Stalin remain as their parents. They all know what happened. They are hoping for time to take away any and all attention from them. Then, the grand theft will be complete. They will have usurped a legitimate government and the soul of a once great nation, and no one will remember why or how. This has already happened in the West.

The regime knows all-too-well who the persecuted were, and why they were persecuted. It knows all of the traitors. And, it knows very well the identity of each persecutor responsible for these atrocities. If the Russian people do not fully understand and learn their past history, it is doubtful that they will ever recover, and probable that they may come to repeat it.

Part II

Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili was born on the 18th of December, 1879, in Gori, Georgia. At that time, Georgia was a part of the Russian empire. His father was a cobbler. Iosif grew up in modest circumstances. He was the youngest and only surviving child of four. Some accounts of his childhood state that his father would often be drunk. During such drinking binges, Iosif's father would beat him mercilessly, and for prolonged periods. Many noted that the boy would not cry, but endure the beatings with increasing anger.

When Iosif became of age, his mother arranged for him to attend a theological seminary with a full scholarship. Instead of profiting from such generosity offered to his family, Iosif did not seriously study the courses offered by the seminary. Contrary to the desires of those wishing for his success, he began to read Marxist literature. This eventually led to his dismissal from seminary. He never graduated from any educational institution. Instead, he devoted his time to the revolutionary movement against the Russian monarchy. After leaving the seminary, he spent the next 15 years as an activist, and on a number of occasions, he was arrested and exiled to Siberia. Apparently at some point, young Iosif viewed his family name, Dzhugashvili, as a hindrance to his quest for power and glory. He somewhat foretold his intentions by changing it to Stalin, implying a "man of steel." In short, Iosif Stalin grew up to be an uneducated, angry, aggressive and God-hating malcontent with an extreme disdain for Russia and its heritage. Of course, these anti-qualities naturally evolved into a miserable existence of fear and paranoia. After rising to power through eliminating anyone who might have even appeared to pose a threat to his desires, he spent the rest of his life fearing assassination and executing anyone whom he suspected of betrayal.

Unlike Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili, Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov was the third of five children of a well-to-do Russian family. His father had an honourable position with the government in education. The Ulyanov family was well-respected in their town of Simbirsk, along the Volga River. However, Vladimir, who was 9 years older than Stalin, also felt obliged to later change his family name. He took on the surname Lenin. Apparently, much like the demons driving their lives, they both felt the need to present themselves as someone who they were not.

Despite the Ulyanov family's good social standing, Vladimir's brother, Alexander, also fell under the influence of the darkness of those times. Alexander was discovered to be a member of a revolutionary organization called Narodnaia Volia. Along with other members of his group, he was charged, convicted, and executed for his attempt to assassinate Emperor Alexander III. According to sources, his guilt was not disputable.

Vladimir Ilich, along with his followers, used this tragedy as a justification for his political aspirations. As is the repeating theme throughout the history of fallen human nature, the more egregious the sin, the more the unrepentant sinner seeks to blame others for his actions. Such spiritual depravity led Lenin to his miserable reign of terror, soaked in bloody atrocities against the Russian nation. It must never be forgotten that it was

Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov-Lenin who ordered the merciless execution of the entire Royal Family.

Today, there is little doubt that Lenin's rise to power was funded by special interest groups from the West. His famous arrival into Russia from Germany in a "sealed train" just at the proper revolutionary moment has become common knowledge. Yet somehow, the communist psychological propaganda had its lasting effects. The concept that the "Russian Revolution" was a revolution of the Russian people still lingers in the minds of contemporary society, both in the West and in Russia itself. It is important to remember that it was Lenin who coined the descriptor "useful idiots" in reference to his Russian and non-Russian collaborators. These few words speak loudly to the attitude Lenin held toward the people and the government he was about to usurp.

Following Lenin's illegitimate takeover of the Russian Government, he immediately began his Red Terror, a purge of all those who loved their country and the Church. Most importantly, he began to dismember the Church. Lenin understood very well that if the Russian Orthodox Church remained intact, the soul of the Russian nation would live on, regardless of the ruthless repression of any regime. (Let us remember that it was the Church that provided for the Russian people to overthrow the Tartar yoke.) Lenin attacked the entire Church, from the hierarchy to the laity. Although it came to pass after his death, Lenin's efforts started the process for the eventual elimination of the newly elected Patriarch Tikhon, whose voice held a legitimate authority with the Russian people. The process begun by Lenin enabled Stalin to empower the compromising and collaborating Metropolitan Sergei, who allowed for the interests of the God-hating regime to be one with the interests of the Church. With this irreconcilable and traitorous proclamation, Metropolitan Sergei opened the flood-gates for the martyrdom of millions of Orthodox Christians.

Today, we hear that Metropolitan Sergei did this in order to preserve the Church. He is being portrayed as a type of hero. There is even a movement underway to glorify him as a saint. If by this action he preserved the Church, then what does the Catacomb Church represent? Furthermore, what was the mission of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia? If Metropolitan Sergei preserved the Church, then for what did the Russian New Martyrs suffer? If Metropolitan Sergei preserved the Church, should it be considered that the Russian New Martyrs died in vain? This was such a polarizing event; it could not be had both ways. It must be said, the intentions at that time are now quite clear. Lenin and Stalin wished to annihilate the Church. The Catacomb Church and the ROCOR worked and struggled to preserve the Church. Metropolitan Sergei wished to work a compromise in order to save lives, including his own. Except for his own temporal life, he clearly failed in all other respects. The fact remains: in matters of Faith, there is no compromise.

Perhaps it may be argued that Metropolitan Sergei meant well and was acting in good faith. It may similarly be argued with some success that he was more concerned about his own self-preservation and future aspirations. At this point, such arguments are moot. Decisions and actions have consequences. History has shown that by his decisions and

actions at that time, Metropolitan Sergei took the first steps in the wholesale betrayal of the Russian Orthodox Church together with its faithful. Dreadful persecutions began, and the Russian Orthodox Church, from hierarchs to laity, went into the catacombs to preserve itself. Metropolitan Sergei, along with a diminishing number of supporters, was left with emptying church buildings, rapidly being pillaged and demolished. His tenure as leader of the Moscow Patriarchate would have him and his bishops preside over the devastation and destruction of countless monasteries, cathedrals, and churches. Metropolitan Sergei and his bishops presided over the worst period of persecution of Christians in all of history. Never before has it occurred that so-called Orthodox pastors would collaborate in such shameless wholesale destruction of churches, and betrayal of the faithful flock, all the while witnessing to the contrary. Their silence was deafening. Their compliance with the God-hating Soviet regime was damning. Their witness to the rest of the world was decisively traitorous. Over these years, their cowardice and fear of their master Stalin would have them repeatedly make official statements denying any persecution.

Lenin's Red Terror exacted its toll on Russia. By the time of the Bolshevik victory in 1921, the country lay in absolute ruin. The economy was virtually destroyed. Lenin introduced draconian laws aimed at eliminating any and all opposition. He decreed that no dissension would be tolerated. Quickly, the utopian dream of Communism became that which it is only capable of being; a cruel, dictatorial, God-hating regime.

After suffering several strokes, Lenin died in 1924. During his rather short tenure as God-hater and ruthless persecutor of Christians, and the Russian nation at-large, Lenin left a demolished nation with a usurped and less than stable, illegitimate government.

Here, Stalin, who was already part of Lenin's blood-thirsty regime, saw his opportunity. Eliminating both friends and competition, Stalin rose to power in much the same spirit as his predecessor. He intensified his persecution of the Christians and sought to subjugate the Church under his own authority with even more brutality than Lenin had achieved. Lenin, in his few short years of power, murdered hundreds of thousands of innocent Christians, including most honorable and prominent Russians whom he feared. On the other hand, Stalin had the time, the desire, and the ability to murder millions of Christians, along with anyone else he feared or disliked. He was extremely paranoid, trusting very few people. It is said that Stalin ordered the destruction of the Church of our Savior as a priority for fear that a sniper might reach him in the Kremlin from the bell tower of the church.

While Lenin master-minded the entrenchment of his illegitimate communist government on Russian soil, Stalin continued the draconian policies of Lenin with a fierce satanic zeal. He intensified the terror, and the radical economic policies. He reinforced the purpose and principles of the revolution with a cold-blooded fervor, which surpassed Lenin's ruthless atrocities. There are those who use Stalin's ruthlessness to enhance Lenin as a greater and more humane leader. Let us make no such mistake here. We are only observing different shades of evil. The instruments used by Stalin to carry out his wicked and torturous policies, from the centralized and all-controlling Communist party,

to the fierce and brutal secret police, had all been established by Lenin, and implemented during Lenin's reign. Stalin becomes a darker shade of evil than Lenin only by default. Stalin had more time to execute the work of the Anti-Christ.

World War II found Stalin weak and unprepared. Having literally annihilated all who had the ability to think and produce within the former Russian Empire, from merchants, to professors, to generals, over the span of two decades, Stalin had relatively few competent people to advise him in foreign affairs, or to skillfully execute foreign policy, from the embassies to the battle front. Given his own lack of education and culture, coupled with having spent two decades bludgeoning the Russian nation into submission through persecution and fear, Stalin was far from even having an effective foreign policy. His problem was even further compounded when we take into account that most of the remaining, living population still remembered the more prosperous, prerevolutionary times.

On the 21st of June, 1941, German troops crossed the border into the U.S.S.R. and quickly moved into the Soviet heartland. Stalin is reported to have become extremely distraught and began to panic. He is said to have fallen into a state of shock. For more than a week, he appeared to be paralyzed. Meanwhile, the German Army moved even further into the Soviet Union. It quickly became clear that the Soviet Army was falling back in disorder.

It took Stalin two weeks to muster the strength to make a statement regarding the war. On the 3rd of July, 1941, he made a national radio address calling for national unity in the face of this crisis. Only in August did he officially assume the supreme command of the Red Army.

Although Stalin eventually did step-up to lead, not much changed. It soon became apparent that Stalin's leadership was not saving his reign and regime. The Soviet Army was ill-prepared. The Soviet equipment was outdated. The leadership of the Soviet Army, after the purges and persecutions, was completely inexperienced. By many accounts, the Russian people themselves were not motivated to defend this blood-thirsty regime. By autumn of 1941, the German Army had occupied the Ukraine, the Crimea and the Baltic States. Leningrad and Sevastopol were under siege. Moscow was also under the threat of being taken. Stalin contemplated fleeing Moscow.

To add to the demoralization of his troops, Stalin's war tactics reflected his already well-known brutality. Instead of caring for the soldiers giving their lives for his defense, as a true leader would, Stalin, even now, brought his fear to the battle field. As a countermeasure to his own retreating troops, Stalin implemented a second front behind the actual front of soldiers fighting the Germans. The second front of Soviet soldiers was commanded to shoot any of their fellow soldiers retreating from the field of battle with the Germans. Stalin is reported to have said that the Soviet soldier should fear retreat far more than the German Army.

As anecdotal evidence coming from refugees after the war, any Soviet soldier having been detached from his regiment, and found returning to rejoin his fellow soldiers, was immediately viewed with suspicion as being a spy, and was in danger of being exiled to Siberia. If he returned without his weapon, it was even worse for him.

Prior to the German invasion, reportedly only four bishops remained who were not exiled, imprisoned or martyred. Similarly, of the 50,000 Russian Orthodox priests in 1918, only 500 remained alive by 1935.

Only after feeling the immediate threat of a German conquest, did Stalin resort to his sly scheme of scaling back his militant campaign of Red Terror against the Church. On September 4th, 1943, Stalin gave permission to open the Moscow Theological Seminary and Academy, to release certain imprisoned clerics, to return certain church property, and to restore the position of Patriarch. In return, the remaining bishops promised their loyalty and assistance to the Soviet regime. It is during this well-known event that Stalin, together with his illegitimate Soviet government, severed an already lifeless branch from the Church, calling it the Moscow Patriarchate. Through this final act of compromise and betrayal, the newly formed Moscow Patriarchate was placed completely under the control of the Soviet secret services to the extent that the remaining priests and bishops became de facto agents of the KGB.

With the “blessing” of Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili-Stalin, Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) was elected Patriarch on September 8, 1943. His election, of course, was unopposed. He was “enthroned” on September 12, 1943. On May 15, 1944, eight months later, he died at the age of 76. Such was his reward for his loyalty and assistance to the God-hating Soviet regime. Having preserved only the outward appearance of apostolic succession, it is to this dark and traitorous moment that the clergy of today’s Moscow Patriarchate trace their own lineage, and outward appearance of apostolic succession.

Whether or not Stalin’s sly scheme of establishing the MP led to the ultimate defeat of the German Army, it is difficult to tell. Of course, the argument may certainly be made. However, that does not fall within the scope of this article.

On the other hand, God only knows what might have happened if Metropolitan Sergei resisted temptation, stood his ground, and while refusing Stalin his “blessing,” anathematized the Soviet regime. What might have happened to the yet weak and unstable Soviet Union? Where would Russia be today? What remains clear is that God allowed Metropolitan Sergius one last chance; rise to become a witness for the Truth, or capitulate and forever accept the consequences. If there was ever a final moment of choice, this was it. Quite unfortunately, Metropolitan Sergei chose the low road to a dishonorable earthly recognition. By his action of yet another compromise, he betrayed God, the Church and his people in a final and most profound manner. By his action of yet another compromise, Metropolitan Sergei helped Stalin build what appears to be a church structure. However, in reality, Metropolitan Sergei officially succumbed to being a mere member within a department of this God-hating regime, Stalin’s anti-church.

Of course, Hitler was eventually defeated, and the West once more was able to assist the entrenchment of communism in the East. Apparently, Stalin learned to charm the likes of Roosevelt and Churchill, who were only too happy to appease his bloodthirsty desires. For what amounted to be Stalin's smiles and empty reassuring statements, Roosevelt and Churchill gave him what remained of Eastern Europe, and then graciously added half of Germany. Through their actions, Roosevelt and Churchill confirmed Stalin's regime and "legitimacy" in the eyes of the world. In the eyes of the persecuted and tortured martyrs, they can only be viewed as guilty co-conspirators.

Following his meetings with the leaders of the West, Stalin returned to his Soviet Union and increased his persecutions to their previous horrific levels, but now with the recognition of "World War II Hero" by the West, and subsequently, the uncontested brutal dictator of the new emboldened Soviet Empire. As his military parades were marching victoriously through Red Square, millions of Christians once again resumed their march – to torture and martyrdom.

Returning to the original point of this article, today, the faithful clergy of the original ROCOR, often encounter both clergy and laity from the Moscow Patriarchate inquiring whether or not we think the Moscow Patriarchate has Grace. In and of itself, the question coming from these people is revealing. If they were secure about their church position, why would they need to ask? If they were to honestly and objectively trace their "apostolic succession" to the dark compromises and final betrayal of Metropolitan Sergei, and then ultimately to the lifeless, dark, cold and rotten tomb of Stalin for his "blessing," what question can there be regarding Grace? The obvious question should be, "Is the Moscow Patriarchate a church?" Perhaps it is the anti-Church?

As a conclusion to this article, Parts I & II, it is most appropriate to recall the words of our Holy Hierarch, Metropolitan Philaret of New York. The following excerpt is taken from his first Sorrowful Epistle published on 14/27 July, 1969.

...The late Patriarch Sergius and the present Patriarch Alexis were elected in violation of the rules which were instituted by the All-Russian Church Council of 1917 at the restoration of the Patriarchate. Both were chosen according to the instructions of Stalin, the fiercest persecutor of the Church in history.

Can you imagine a Bishop of Rome chosen according to the instructions of Nero? But Stalin was many times worse.

The hierarchs selected by Stalin had to promise their obedience to an atheistic Government whose aim, according to the Communist program, is the annihilation of Religion. The present Patriarch Alexis wrote to Stalin immediately after the death of his predecessor that he would observe fidelity to his Government: "Acting fully in concert with the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church and also with the Holy Synod instituted by the late Patriarch, I will be secure from mistakes and wrong actions." Everybody knows that "mistakes and wrong actions" in the language of the Moscow masters means any violation of the instructions given by the Communist authorities. We can pity an unfortunate old man, but we cannot recognize him as the Head of the Russian Church, of which we regard ourselves an inseparable part. Both to Patriarch Alexis and his collaborators the sanctions of the XXX Apostolic Canon and Canon III of the Seventh Ecumenical Council can be doubly applied: "If any bishop, making use of the secular powers, shall by their means obtain jurisdiction over any church, he shall be

deposed, and also excommunicated, together with all who remain in communion with him."

Bishop Nikodim of Dalmatia, in his commentary on the XXX Apostolic Canon, says: "If the Church condemned the unlawful influence of civil authorities on the appointment of a bishop at a time when the Rulers were Christians, how much the more so, consequently, she had to condemn it when they were heathens." What is there to say, therefore, when a Patriarch and Bishops are installed by the open and militant enemies of their religion?

When one part of the Russian Episcopate, together with the late Patriarch (at that time Metropolitan) Sergius, took the course of agreeing with the enemies of the Church in 1927, a large (and the most respected) part of that Episcopate, with Metropolitan Joseph of Leningrad and the first candidate of Patriarch Tikhon for the office of locum tenens, Metropolitan Cyrill of Kazan, did not agree to go along with him, preferring banishment and martyrdom. Metropolitan Joseph by that time had already come to the conclusion that, in the face of a Government which openly had as its goal the destruction of Religion by the use of any available means, the legal existence of a Church Administration becomes practically impossible without entailing compromises which are too great and too sinful. He therefore started secret ordinations of Bishops and priests, in that way organizing the Catacomb Church which still exists in hiding.

The atheists seldom mention the Catacomb Church, being afraid of giving her too much publicity. Only very rarely in the Soviet Press is the news of some trial of her members mentioned. Information about her, however, is given in manuals for anti-religious workers in the U.S.S.R. For instance, the basic information about this Church, under the name of "The True Orthodox Church," is given in a manual with the title of Slovar Ateista ("The Atheist's Dictionary"), published in Moscow in 1964.

With no open churches, in secret meetings similar to the catacomb meetings of the early Christians, these confessors of the Faith perform their services unseen by the outer world. They are the true representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, whose greatness will become known to the world only after the downfall of the Communist power...

Metropolitan PHILARET

Today, much more is known regarding the Catacomb Church. It has endured a great deal of suffering through decades of persecution. Indeed, gone are the brilliant golden cupolas, the expensive vestments, and the magnificent choirs. Both its clergy and laity are often poor, and lack education. Externally, scattered and often still in hiding, it is difficult to recognize the glorious golden years of the Russian Orthodox Church. And yet, within these same Catacombs we find the very strength, spirit and Faith of its martyred founders; Patriarch Tikhon, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan, etc. The prophetic words of our holy Hierarch and Metropolitan Philaret ring loud and true; it is these catacomb confessors who "are the true representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, whose greatness will become known to the world only after the downfall of the Communist power."

In spite of decades of persecution, and in spite of the more recent infiltration and final subjugation of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia by agents of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Soviet Government, the Russian Orthodox Church inside of Russia has survived within the catacombs. May God bless and enlighten the Faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church toward its full restoration.

Part III

Upon realizing the presence of heresy (Sergianism and Ecumenism) within the Moscow Patriarchate, and at least entertaining the argument that the MP may not even be a church, people begin to question: how is this possible? The MP is so large. The MP has so many beautiful historic church buildings. There are so many innocent and good people within it. This or that priest is such a good person. What are all these people expected to do, especially if they do not understand? Are these people then abandoned by God? How is it that God would not save these people?

Regarding the beautiful and historic buildings and their many icons, these were established by our holy ancestors, many of whose relics also lie within these holy edifices. All of this belongs to the Russian people. Much like when Germany invaded and occupied a good portion of Russia in WWII, the land did not become German. So too, when the Bolsheviks invaded Holy Russia, the churches did not become Soviet. We must view them as being under the occupation of a foreign invader. For nothing can be more foreign to the Church than a God-hating regime intent on its annihilation – one way or another.

When we consider contemporary Russian people, who have suffered from spiritual deprivation coupled with a psychological and physical onslaught aimed at abolishing their faith and replacing it with the “Soviet Man,” we must certainly do so with care and compassion. The Soviet Regime’s propaganda machine has done much to misinform, disillusion, and remove any ember of faith within the soul of Russian society. Nonetheless, people still strove to commune with their Creator and find inner peace. Even under the most adverse of conditions, they still looked to the Church. Seeing this, the Soviet Regime did the unthinkable. It created what is now called the Moscow Patriarchate. Who could imagine that unbelievers and God-haters could pretend to be Orthodox clergy concerned for the well-being of Christian souls? And yet, viewed from the unbeliever’s perspective, is this not the ultimate coup? How many accounts have we heard of people becoming spiritually hardened and losing their faith through the actions and daily behavior of Soviet clergy? Let us consider that such “clergy” are not pastors caring for the salvation of their flock, but rather “controllers of the masses” continuing the work of their master, Stalin.

Are all MP clergy lock-step agents of the Soviet Regime? Most likely, not all of them are so, and this is not due to any weakness or oversight, but rather by design. “Honest” clergy who do not see or participate in the over-all plan are allowed and even desirable, as long as they function within the boundaries established by their hierarchy. They help “legitimize” the MP on the parish level. How often do we hear MP parishioners say they are completely disgusted with their Patriarch Cyril, saying he is certainly rotten to the core, but their parish priest is so wonderful? Thus, they remain as members of the MP, claiming to pray in church on their own, avoiding the undesirable bishop or priest. Such a position by itself is entirely revealing. People who are satisfied with such a condition immediately display two alarming points: 1) their lack of Orthodox education (i.e., by

adopting a Protestant mentality), 2) their clergy's complacency in allowing a Protestant mind-set within an "Orthodox" environment.

And yet, many, inside and outside the MP, continue to wonder how such a number of people, who simply do not understand, or have nowhere else to go, not be in the Church. If so many remain confused, is it their fault? How can we judge their condition so harshly? Certainly, those who design to lead astray, commit the greater sin. However, ours is not to judge, but to discern. We must leave their judgement up to God. We are, however, responsible for establishing clarity. We are responsible for our purity of Faith and for continuing within the True Church without compromise. Here again, we may draw closer to the correct answer by asking the correct question; where is the proof that God will save people found in heresy, or outside of the Church, regardless of their number?

We know that God is all-merciful to an extent that we cannot fathom. Each person relies entirely upon God's mercy for salvation, for he knows that by himself, he can do nothing. At the same time, we know that salvation is through the Church. We know that "God is where He is worshipped in Spirit and in Truth." We know that we must come to know our Saviour in order to be saved. Knowing that God is all-merciful is a fact founded upon Holy Scripture and supported by the teachings of the Church Fathers and councils.

When men attempt to foretell God's decisions and actions, or attempt to enslave the Church to their own needs, views, and purposes by introducing new teachings, these men, through their own will and actions, place themselves outside the Church. Do we have proof that God will nonetheless reward these people, and/or their followers, with His mercy? Or is it that we try to extend God's mercy through our own "humane and just" thinking? By doing this, are we not presupposing God's judgement? Are we not thereby placing our own judgement before and above that of God's? God-willing, we quickly see that even well-intentioned thinking, which nonetheless is based upon emotions, has its root in pride. Even as we humbly understand that God may do whatever He wills, we must see that we blatantly overstep the boundary of pride when we suppose that He will do as we will. We have no proof that God's mercy will extend to those found outside the Church. By basing our conclusion on fact, we come to realize that God provided us with His unwavering Truth for our own good and ultimate salvation.

If being baptized and in the Church, living a discerning Christian life, did not matter regarding our salvation, then the very meaning of life unravels and devolves to the level of Pilate's words: "What is truth?" More specifically, when the New Martyrs of Russia refused to betray the Truth (i.e., their Faith) and refused to recognize the heresy of Sergianism and the newly formed Soviet Church even unto death, did they die in vain? Did it not matter in the very least? If so, what does this say about those who betrayed, and those who persecuted the New Martyrs? Shall we simply call their atrocities "hate crimes," or "crimes against humanity," and yet somehow acknowledge their new-found heresies and institutions as being separately salvific and God-bearing? Allowing such thinking to prevail betrays the very purpose of our being. If the New Martyrs preserved the Faith and the Church of Russia in the Catacombs, then the Soviet Church (Moscow

Patriarchate) is not the Church of Russia, but a newly formed organization founded upon compromise with the God-hating regime. Therefore, its members find themselves outside the Church of Christ, regardless of their level of realization of this fact, or their numbers.

So, the question remains, what happens to the multitude of “innocents” under such conditions? Can we say that they will all be damned? No, we are unable to arrive at such a verdict by the very same reasoning that we cannot say they will be saved because of God’s mercy. However, we can, and must, say that they are not in the Church. Is this cruel? No, to the contrary, it is merciful. Saying anything but the truth to such people, thereby confirming their confusion, is cruel, and sinful on our part. Why? Because of our fear of perhaps offending some, we keep the rest from coming to the True Church. Furthermore, if we do not firmly defend the confession of the New Martyrs, are we not ourselves adopting a position of compromise (i.e., crypto-Ecumenism)? Compromise must not be confused with *oikonomia*. *Oikonomia* is a vehicle where pastoral discretion is used to bring people to salvation (i.e., into the Church) through special dispensation. Compromise is a betrayal of Faith, ultimately admitting to partial truths on both sides of the issue, and proclaiming no one Truth, no True Church, by itself. This drives people away from the Church. This is the central theme of Ecumenism.

Here again, as discussed before, one could become misled by pursuing the wrong question. Why preoccupy ourselves with what may happen to the multitude? Is it the entire multitude for which we show concern, or is it that we know certain dear individuals within that multitude? Is it that such individuals dear to us do not “seek peace and pursue it?” Is it that they prefer a church structure to satisfy certain superficial needs, but lack the fervor (i.e., the “salt”) to question and discern the visible falsehoods standing before them? Is it that they find it easier to follow the multitude than to question its veracity? So, perhaps we should start by specifically asking what happens to such individuals one by one, and by definition, rather than groping to find general answers intended to address specifics of an amorphous, and in certain respects, undefinable collection of people. Does not the Shepherd care for even one sheep gone astray? And, does He not care for each of us and judge each of us as an individual? We are not judged “en mass.” We are judged according to how we have individually used the “talents” given to us. Indeed, He loves each and every one of us more than we love ourselves. And collectively, He loves all of His creation more than we can comprehend, let alone what we can claim to be concerned with.

Now, we know that in the last times love for God will wax cold. How and why could the world end if not because most will apostatize? Is it possible that none of those we find dear will be among those in apostasy? Do we think that no one will be placed on His left on that Day of Judgement as He foretells? Do we suppose that none to His right will have any dear ones standing to His left? How does this happen? Is not our Savior all love and all merciful? Indeed, but in His love for all of us, He does not force any of us to love Him. We have that great freedom of choice. We can choose to love Him, or not. Those on His left are found there through their own choice during their lifetime. It is not

that He has not, or cannot, extend mercy to these people. Rather, it is they that have come to reject His mercy.

There is but one Church of Christ. We know that salvation is to be found within it. Regardless of how one might desire it otherwise, we may not assert that somehow salvation can be found outside the Church. Such judgement belongs to God alone. The real question now begins to finally crystalize; what can we do to help our dear brothers and sisters come to a knowledge of the Truth? What we can do is pray for their enlightenment and salvation, while at the same time provide a Christian example ourselves so that others may follow.