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**LIFE IN CHRIST**

**LIFE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Discussion Paper by Costa Carras

An introductory note from the author:

This paper was originally delivered on 23 May, 2009 at the Episcopal Vicariate of Great Britain and Ireland conference at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, near St Albans, and revised to take into account questions asked and discussions after the original presentation. The subject of the conference was 'Life in Christ'. This paper reflects the influence over many years of the Ecumenical Patriarch Vartholomaios, Metropolitan John of Pergamon and Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, whose memory the Vicariate honours. In preparing it I also made use of "The Healing Word" by Bishop Basil of Amphipolis and had the benefit of several extended communications from Dr Jamie Moran, who co-chaired the subsequent discussion group. One of the points raised in discussion was that in at least some Orthodox dioceses wine but not oil may be consumed on Good Saturday. The unexpected and significant distinction with Saturdays in Great Lent is not however affected.

PART ONE

During the controversies between Eastern and Western Christians that led to the Schism one of the non-dogmatic differences discussed was the then Roman custom, long since abandoned, of abstaining from certain foods on Saturdays. The Eastern tradition, by contrast, saw Saturday as a feast day, on which, even during Great Lent, wine and oil were and are permitted. There was, and there remains, just one exception, a day when, according to Greek custom at least, wine and oil may not be consumed, namely Great and Holy Saturday. But why?

When many years ago I first asked the reason, I was told that Vespers and the Liturgy of St Basil on Saturday morning, though including the Resurrection narrative according to Matthew, was not to be taken as a commemoration of the announcement to the myrrh-bearing women and through them to the Apostles early on Sunday. We fast until the time when the Resurrection became known to them. This indeed explains not feasting until after Paschal Matins and the Liturgy early on Sunday. It seemed to me however to provide a very unsatisfactory explanation of the tradition of not partaking of oil and wine – in contrast to all the preceding Saturdays of Lent – on what is unquestionably a day of liturgical joy.

I do not assert that the alternative explanation I shall now outline is canonically correct: there are many possible explanations, one of which is that we remain in awe and silence before the ultimate mystery of our Lord's death and descent into Hades. My purpose is, rather, to lead into my first, much wider, theme, namely the argument that to speak of Life in Christ without speaking of Life in the Holy Spirit, at the least risks some distortion in our understanding the earthly mission of Christ Himself and, more seriously, ensures distortion of the nature of God's call to each one of us in the Church and the world.

So let us return to the Vespers and Liturgy of St Basil on the morning of Good Saturday. The Old Testament readings include the whole Book of Jonah and the account of the Three

Youths in the Fiery Furnace from the Book of Daniel (3:1-23). Jonah's three days in the whale are considered a prefiguring of Christ's three days in the tomb and Descent into Hades. The sixth of the nine canticles sung at Matins derives from his song of deliverance. A further two of these nine canticles, the seventh and the eighth, represent the hymns of the Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace: their miraculous salvation provides yet another analogy to Christ's Resurrection.

Yet these are not the only messages transmitted to us in these readings. Jonah was a servant of the Lord who initially refused the Lord's call to preach repentance to Nineveh – instead he took a ship to Tarsus, that is, the opposite direction. Even after his miraculous escape from the whale he proved badly mistaken in his interpretation of the vocation entrusted to him. He accurately and obediently preached forthcoming judgement and disaster as a result of the people of Nineveh's sin, but his own pride became involved with his preaching and prediction. He did not understand the Lord preferred repentance and mercy – and that even the most seemingly unavoidable disasters may never be fulfilled if human beings turn existentially towards God.

Similarly, the Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace give us an analogy not just with Jesus but with us. It is a message of faith and fortitude under pressure or persecution, at a time when there can be no pride in external success. There could be no such pride for the Jewish people in exile in Babylon or later in subjection to the Hellenic Seleucid Dynasty that ruled when the Book of Daniel was composed. All too frequently this has been the situation in the history of the Church.

The message to us becomes all the more trenchant, as in place of the Trisagion we chant 'Those who are baptized into Christ have put on Christ'. Suddenly we recall, if we had forgotten, as many of us customarily do, that in the primitive and early Church this was one of the few days on which adults were baptized. The message we now receive is that our relationship with Christ after Baptism is far closer than most of us would usually, outside the Liturgy at least, care to consider. For if all those baptized into Christ have 'put on Christ' we are nothing less than Christ's continuing presence in the world. And Christ's Baptism provided the earliest New Testament revelation of the Holy Trinity with God the Father blessing His Son and sending upon Him His Holy Spirit.

The passage from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans (Rom 6:3-11) which immediately follows sharpens the message. Baptism into Christ represents a death to the self-centred manner of life we human beings, unbaptized but also baptized, customarily follow. The purpose of baptism is the gift of a newness of life, a life of freedom from sin and union with God in Christ.

This call by the Apostle is at once given flesh and blood in what are perhaps the most dramatic verses of the whole Orthodox liturgical year, the moment that, psychologically at least, some of us feel to be the moment of Resurrection, when *we* call on God to rise and judge the earth, as the heir who will inherit from among all nations. The meaning of this inheritance is not concealed: as the verses which follow the initial cry indicate. It is a promise of true justice in the place of human law, a demand for assistance to the destitute and the poor, a prediction the very foundations of the earth will be shaken as a consequence of human folly and an understanding that human beings are both sons of God and yet subject to the laws of nature and of history. In short this is a moment when theological truth reaches out to take in the fullness of human experience.

It is in this wider context that we now hear the first Gospel account of the Resurrection (Matthew 28). Our natural response is to affirm that all is completed – all has been accomplished. Where Christ is concerned, the Son of Man and Son of God, it is indeed true. He has in His Passion and Resurrection revealed humanity in the fullness of the human potential and simultaneously God in the fullness of His kenotic, that is, self-emptying,

communion with humankind. Common to both is self-giving love that expresses itself equally in Eucharistic joy, and in service to the point of self-sacrifice. Unique to God is that it is He who has taken the initiative, that it is He who by doing so has shown us our full human potentiality and that He has done so not from a position of untouchable and undisturbed power but out of purposeful and passionate engagement with our world in the vulnerability of human weakness. This is the most fundamental existential change and achievement in history, a change that has opened a road to union between the divine and the human, which it was His intention should be manifested in Christ's extended Body, the Church.

For us however what has occurred is but a beginning, although an absolutely crucial and decisive beginning. The world we experience around us continues to adhere to its former pattern, where the self-assertion of group and individual in relation to other groups and individuals is central to competitive and often antagonistic existence. Injustice and evil continue to flourish like the green bay tree. And death is not a whit less in evidence than before Christ's Resurrection. No wonder many people consider our message too unreal and too irrelevant to what takes place in our world to be either true or significant.

Their criticism has merit but on reflection many would acknowledge that in some respects at least the Paschal message has changed the world. The response numerous human beings have made over the centuries to the Son of God's assumption of our human condition and His overcoming of death through an act of painful but intended self-sacrifice has indeed served to carry on His work and witness, and has over time initiated fundamentally new approaches in the relationship between human beings. Equally certainly however we cannot but feel the burden of our collective and individual failures in relation to the vision given us in the readings of Good Saturday. For the road to union between the divine and the human in the Church requires of us, as its members, a readiness for self-giving analogous to that of Christ, and this is anything but easy, usually requiring long and conscious preparation. There is thus good reason to abstain from oil and wine on that, and that only, Saturday. It is the Saturday not only of God's sabbatical rest but of our own sabbatical rest, after witnessing His Passion, while standing in awe of His descent to Hades, and before representing the crucified and resurrected Christ to the world, in our renewed role as having 'put on Christ'.

The challenge we face is the evident fact that the risk God took in Creation has not yet been finally proven justified. We do not and cannot know whether, still less in what way, it will ultimately be justified among humankind as in Creation as a whole. The issue is open: it is certain however the nature of our own responses will be critical not only to our life as Christians but, to a small degree at least, to the final outcome. Thus on Good Saturday we are living symbolically in a moment both of completed joy where Christ has ensured that time has flowed into eternity, to use Metropolitan Anthony's phrase, and simultaneously of commitment to open-ended and on-going struggle which will lead to our own differing passion weeks, on the pattern or perhaps even in participation of Christ's, involving failure, defeat and suffering as surely as joy and fulfillment. We have taken on the role of Christ in relation to the world, and what is complete in His action and mission is far from complete in ours.

Now let us move beyond Good Saturday. Clearly what I have said thus far emphasizes the importance of our life in Christ, the theme of our conference. Christ, the Son of Man and Son of God, provides us with a renewed deep structure for our existence in the world, one which brings together joyful thanksgiving with self-offering, that, for the world unusual, combination which characterizes Jesus' mission. Yet it is the only existentially healthy way that one may live a life of service, of self-offering and even, as in His instance, of sacrifice. For any form of moral or ritual imposition will tend to repress rather than inspire: what is worse, it may well impair our integrity as human beings. That is the great danger of even a willing acceptance, far more so the imposition, of any moral law, however educationally necessary. In contrast joyful thanksgiving as the basis for service and self-offering coheres

precisely with that integrity which was fundamental to Christ's action in the world and which will be critical to our witness in it, as having been baptized into Him and hence having 'put on Christ', that is become His ongoing presence.

So far nothing I have said would suggest that speaking of 'Life in the Holy Spirit' might add anything significant to speaking of 'Life in Christ'. What difference, if any, does it make to our understanding of the mission of Christ Himself? And what difference to understanding of our own?

Let us take first Christ's mission to the world. The Gospel message is clear that He was born into it as the Son and Word of God. The action of God's Holy Spirit is indeed a prerequisite of the Incarnation, for it was His Holy Spirit God the Father sent on Mary through which she became 'Mother of God'. Was not then this divine self-offering, or '*kenosis*' in the Greek phrase, adequate for Christ's mission in the world? Strangely at first sight, although clearly adequate for the Son's Incarnation and presence in the world, He did not feel it was adequate for His mission to the excluded sinners of the people of Israel and, through them, to all other human beings excluded from a living communion with God.

This indeed is how His apostles attained their, and our, first earthly vision of the Holy Trinity. Jesus, although as a person in uninterrupted communion with His Father, knew, as Metropolitan Anthony used to say, that our common human nature is not. Consequently He Himself sought out the baptism of John and it is as a result of that, to many at first sight surprising act, that we hear the Father acknowledge Him as Son and we see the Holy Spirit hover over Him, enabling and empowering Him for His mission. In a moment of blinding revelation we witness both the god-bearing potentiality even of the weak and finite human nature the Son of God chose to share with us and the manner of the Trinitarian God's action in the world. It is the Father who ever initiates, it is the Son who reveals the deep structure of human potentiality, in an intimate combination of joyful thanksgiving and self-offering, it is the Holy Spirit which inspires the passionate life in pursuit of existential truth within a communion of persons where the truth is spoken in love, anchoring such lives and such a community eschatologically, beyond space and time.

It is notable from the Last Supper discourse in John's Gospel that the Apostles would have been more content had Christ assured them He would remain with them rather than He send them the Holy Spirit. Our own attitude is not so very different, and with some reason. How much more comfortable to live with the embodied truth regarding the universe and human existence. Life however is not at all comforting. This dialogue between Jesus and his disciples in particular was taking place just before an ugly betrayal, a sham trial, a condemnation inspired by *raison d'etat*, harsh torture and a cruel death. So it was significant that Jesus should just at that point have spoken of the Spirit as the Comforter, the Comforter indeed precisely because he does not comfort us in relation to the world but in relation to God, giving us the courage to confront the world and to bear witness, offered with integrity, aimed at the coming of God's Kingdom.

I hope we are beginning to glimpse how critical to life in Christ is life in the Holy Spirit. Without the Father sending the Holy Spirit, the Son of God and Logos of the universe would not have put on man. Equally once incarnate, He did not initiate His public mission, a mission which through the excluded of the people of Israel has opened the possibility of salvation and of redemption to the excluded of every place and time in history, until He found that symbolic moment, that moment of acknowledgement of the truth as to the human condition, when the Father would choose to send the Holy Spirit upon Him. Without the Holy Spirit again, the disciples would have formed a united and redeemed group of friends and disciples after the Resurrection but would have lacked the fire and passion to witness effectively to the fundamental truth Jesus had already called on them to proclaim. The always risk-fraught combination of thankful communion in truth and the passionate pursuit of truth is the mark of

the presence of the Holy Spirit. At our – admittedly rare – best, it has therefore been the mark of the Church.

Now too we can perhaps begin to see why, if giving less than justice to the role of the Holy Spirit may somewhat, if not seriously, distort our understanding of Christ's mission in the world, it is disastrous in relation to our own mission, as having 'put on' Christ. The obvious difference is that we each of us, unlike Jesus, bear, not just the weakness of human nature, but the weight of our individual and personal sins resulting from the many failures in our relationships with God, other human beings and the created world around us. For us therefore life in the Holy Spirit has two aspects rather than one: before we can be enabled for any mission in Christ's name we must first have moved beyond the change initiated but not completed in Baptism, to the paradox of an ongoing experience of death for the self-centred "old man" and a conscious adoption of the Eucharistic and self-giving 'new man' who has put on Christ.

No-one who has even considered embarking on a Christian life will be unaware of the multiple imperfections we all carry within us. If and when we actually embark on such a life we soon learn to identify – more rapidly it is true in others than in ourselves! – the tell-tale marks of a lack of integrity by which Christian beliefs, principles or values are frequently invoked to cover attitudes and motivations that often partially, and sometimes wholly, diverge from the costly existential stance that was Christ's. Integrity is one of the greatest and hence one of the most difficult Christian virtues precisely because it is so easy for a Christian to forget the necessary and ongoing battle in the depth of our being, out of understandable zeal whether to spread the Gospel or otherwise to press forward what we perceive as God's work, without the necessary spiritual preparation. Sobriety and guarding the mind, by which I mean not only our fantasies but our motivations, is therefore a critical contribution that the Orthodox tradition has made over the centuries to an understanding of life in the Holy Spirit. It has in no way lost its value today. Equally certainly however, it is not the whole of life in the Holy Spirit and can also be distorted by a lack of integrity, in this instance the very human motivation of fear of the dangers that inevitably flow from existential commitment in the arena of engaged living.

The service of Vespers that follows the Pentecostal liturgy indeed, which features our kneeling three times to pray to God in acknowledgement of our weakness and sin, takes this tendency to a point where the historical experience of Pentecost and its prophetic antecedents are almost totally overlaid by concern with our own salvation and that of the departed. Prayer to God for forgiveness of our sins is a clear and constant necessity. It can however allow the awareness of the gifts the Holy Spirit pours out on us, which had featured prominently in the text of Vespers for Pentecost itself a day earlier, to be overshadowed. These are the gifts that will allow us to carry forward Christ's redemptive work in the world. For as we grow in stature in the Holy Spirit our personal salvation should become gradually less important to us, while our calling as having "put on Christ" to work for the world's redemption should become ever more central.

This work is so significant, and so close to the historical reality of Pentecost as described in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that it cannot but have remained a significant part of the Church's tradition of worship. 'The Holy Spirit' says one of the Troparia for Vespers before Pentecost, 'gives every gift. It pours forth prophecies, perfects priests, taught the illiterate wisdom, showed forth fishermen as theologians and constitutes the Church as an institution ...' The Orthodox tradition is notable for its emphasis on the full divinity of the Holy Spirit as one of the persons of the Trinity. The problem therefore is not that there is some error in understanding of the Holy Spirit; but that there has grown up a one-sided emphasis on an undoubtedly critical portion of our life in the Holy Spirit, the need for sobriety, together with the need to identify and to question our own motivations, to the

detriment of another even more critical aspect, that of the passionate commitment to represent Christ in and to the world.

Is the attention I have been giving to our tradition of worship excessive? No, and for two reasons. First, in Orthodoxy worship is an important reflection of truth. Thus in his work *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil of Caesarea, arguing for the full divinity of the Holy Spirit, calls as a powerful witness for his theological faith the tradition of the worshipping Church, more specifically the central hymn of Vespers – ‘Φως Ιλαρόν’ or ‘Joyful Light’ – a hymn composed, Basil tells us, by the martyr-saint Athenogenes and addressed to ‘Father, Son and the Holy Spirit of God’. Secondly, where there are developments in theological understanding these will in turn ultimately affect our worship. Neither of these observations are any less relevant in our own day.

In the instance of Pentecost it is the Old Testament and New Testament readings for the feast itself that redress the otherwise perhaps excessive shift in a salvationist rather than redemptive direction resulting in all likelihood from the monastic context in which our tradition of worship has been formed. The readings at Vespers for Pentecost are as valuable as the account of the event itself in the Acts of the Apostles which is read at the Liturgy. The passage from Numbers (11:16-29) tells us of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the seventy elders of Israel chosen by Moses, leading them to prophesy. Two of the seventy were not at the Tabernacle at the time, yet the Holy Spirit came on them also and they too prophesied. Joshua protested, asking Moses to stop them, but Moses refused. Who but God is to set limits to the action of His Spirit? And what servant of God would not wish to see all his people thus inspired to prophecy?

When on one occasion I was invited to a synagogue on the Jewish Pentecost, I discovered that for modern Judaism at least Pentecost commemorates the giving of the Law. This of course represents a most significant difference of understanding, how great a difference being at once emphasized by the second Old Testament reading, the well known prophecy of Joel (2:22-32) promising that at some time to come God will pour out His Holy Spirit on all human beings so that the sons and daughters of those whom he is addressing will themselves prophesy. And the third reading from Ezekiel (36:24-28) predicts the return of the exiled people of Israel from Babylon and God’s gift to them of a new heart and a new spirit, a human heart and spirit to replace that of stone, stone being of course the material of the Tablets on which the Commandments were engraved.

We have here one of the fundamental differences between Judaism as we know it today and the Christian faith as it emerged from the Judaic tradition. The central feature of Pentecost for us is not the giving of the Law but the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This endows us with a renewed humanity, involving a communion of persons chosen neither by nature nor by us but by God, with a passionate commitment to advancing God’s work and truth. Not just Luke’s account in Acts but the experience of the primitive Church show these prophecies as being imperfectly but also powerfully fulfilled. There are moments, as for instance in the Book of Revelation, a Book never read in Church in the Eastern tradition, when passionate Pentecostal zeal may seriously distort the existential witness of Christ. In general however we have received from the primitive and early Church, and this under the most difficult of circumstances, a tradition of mission towards and for the world which joins zeal, passion and enthusiasm with loyalty to that combination of thanksgiving and self-offering in total integrity that we have witnessed in Christ. We need to bring alive this crucial element in our Tradition.

I hope the first part of my argument is now clear. The Christian life is a death of the old man and a grafting into the eucharistic and sacrificial life of Christ which, as we have seen, are intimately connected. It is not only that however: it is also a risk-fraught dependence on inspiration by the Holy Spirit that must both fill us with a desire to represent Christ in the

world at the very limit of our possibilities and yet simultaneously guard us against the distortion flowing from non-Christian motivations, whether held by a group or by any one of us as an individual. This makes all too clear the innate difficulty and ongoing challenge of the spiritual life to which we are all called in the communion of the Church. It also points however to the even greater danger of attempting to avoid this innate difficulty, as did Jonah when he fled to Tarsus from the face of the Lord.

## PART TWO

My second theme may already have become evident to you from my references to the Old Testament. It will surprise no Trinitarian Christian that the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets. In parallel to this we can probably see the sacrificial law associated with the Tabernacle and the Temple as a prefiguring of the coming of Christ, the great High Priest.

It is more controversial in practice to press the process further back, to the Creation of our universe. Such an exercise is however, it must be emphasized, not at all controversial in principle. We have all read the Preface to John's Gospel with its proclamation of the Logos as God, without whom nothing was created that has been created. Similar concepts feature in other religious traditions, some of which indeed have divinized natural forces while others have developed an impressive empathy with nature. In our own tradition we are all aware of the opening of the Book of Genesis according to which God created heaven and earth and His Spirit moved on the face of the waters. We all repeat the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed with its proclamation of belief in one Lord Jesus Christ, 'through whom all things were made'. The same Creed speaks of the Holy Spirit as 'giving life' and our service books for Matins on Sundays give meaning to this phrase in the verses chanted just before the Gospel of the Resurrection. Let me take a few examples:

On Sundays of the Second Tone we chant: 'The Holy Spirit ... gives strength to all created beings and maintains them in the Father and through the Son'.

On Sundays in the Third Tone: 'In the Holy Spirit ... all things live and move', and again: 'The Holy Spirit gives substance to all creation: let us worship Him as God with the Father and the Word', and again: 'From the Holy Spirit ... comes grace and life to all creation: to Him, as to the Father and the Son, praise is given'.

On Sundays in the Fourth Tone: 'From the Holy Spirit spring forth the streams of grace that water all of creation, giving it life'.

On Sundays in the Fifth Tone: 'To the Holy Spirit, speaking of God, let us say: you are God, life, eros, light, nous, you are goodness, you rule unto all ages', and again: 'In the Holy Spirit is the principle of life (ζωαρχική αξία). From the Holy Spirit every living being draws life, as from the Father and the Word'.

Enough has been said to indicate that, here as elsewhere, our tradition of worship acknowledges and indeed proclaims that all three divine persons in the Holy Trinity are involved in the process of creation, just as all three are intimately, always jointly but distinctively, involved first in the history of the Old and then in the New Covenant. It is only through the New Covenant however that we are gradually led into all truth, including this very understanding.

There are three reasons however why this type of approach causes some Orthodox Christians difficulty. The intellectual and scientific background to Jewish and early Christian theology was inevitably very different from our own. It was easy to conceive of God creating in the manner of a craftsman and philosophically respectable in the Hellenic world to think of objects being patterned on an ideal prototype, which might then be viewed as their essence.

It was indeed also possible to think of natural forms as capable of evolving. Nobody however could have heard of evolution by means of natural selection, a nineteenth century scientific development.

Fortunately in the contemporary Orthodox Christian encounter with environmental thinking, Metropolitan John of Pergamon has argued powerfully that the biological theory of natural selection, which anchors human beings firmly in the evolving natural and animal world, in fact underlines and strengthens the Orthodox Christian view of human beings as priests of creation and Jesus as the great High Priest who came to unite what had been separated by human sin. Our quintessential sin indeed has been setting ourselves rather than God at the centre of all things, behaving selfishly both to our fellow human beings and to all other natural species, whom we have increasingly come to think of as merely instruments to meet our perceived needs. We forget that our priestly role does not lie in abstracting ourselves from the material, an attitude John of Damascus attacked most effectively when defending the veneration of icons in the eighth century, but in transforming and ordering the material world and then offering it to God.

The achievements of the renewed Orthodox theology of creation in our times have already been notable. At the cost – for some Orthodox Christians at least – of giving up a view of Creation based on the ancient model of the craftsman, it has made clear both how central is the role of Christ and how central is our human role in having “put on Christ” in relation to the environmental problematic of our age. As has been said by the Ecumenical Patriarch Vartholomaios, it is now clear why and how we can sin not just against God or other human beings, but against nature. It has given renewed meaning to the Orthodox tradition of moderate asceticism, starting from the traditional spheres of food and drink and extending now to the use of energy, water and other natural resources, which of course bear an immediate relationship both to the natural world and to the environmental crises of our age.

I would go further than this and argue that the nature of the environmental crisis is bringing in its wake an existential justification of Christian faith, unprecedented in recent centuries. For the very success of enlightenment thinking and of the scientific attitude to life, which initially helped mould enlightenment thought and later promoted it throughout the world, is bringing us to the point of some clear existential dilemmas, dilemmas that can perhaps best be expressed in terms of the concept of an impossible trinity, or, in other words, three consequences that, quite demonstrably, cannot all three be achieved or maintained simultaneously.

Let me make myself clearer. The notable success of the well-known series of technological revolutions combined with developments in economic theory and political organization since the eighteenth century have provided the tools that make it possible for the vast majority of human beings hitherto excluded from prosperity, most notably the populations of China and India, to achieve the same standard of living as that already enjoyed in North America, Europe and Japan. This means populations treble or quadruple those in areas already enjoying relative prosperity will fairly soon be able, in economic and technological terms, to enjoy a comparable standard of living, adding a proportional burden on the natural environment. What then are the three situations that demonstrably cannot co-exist? The first is the continuation of our present manner of life (that is in North America, Europe and Japan) without reducing the burden *we* place on the environment. The second is the acquisition and maintenance of an equivalent manner of life among populations that are treble or quadruple in number to those that already enjoy the benefits of prosperity. The third is the avoidance of catastrophic consequences flowing from the sum of burdens placed by greatly increased human economic activity on the natural environment. Even if any two of the above three were simultaneously attainable, we can now be absolutely certain that all three cannot.

The contemporary mind is trained to think in terms of technological or economic or regulatory solutions even to such fundamental problems. All three will undoubtedly be critical in terms of policy formulation. None will be achieved however, one may safely predict, unless there is, underlying them all, an existential change, a radical move away from the establishment world view held since the eighteenth century enlightenment. Here each individual has been the centre of their world, each working out his or her own happiness. Now we are challenged to respond to a situation where Jesus' golden rule is becoming the basis of our world's very survival: each human being's actions interact with the actions of every other human being and we cannot afford but to act in relation to others in the same way as we wish them to do to us. Here the natural world has been an object to be used, not to say exploited, at will for our own gratification. Now we are called to evaluate, both in qualitative and in quantitative terms, the implications of any action we may take in relation to creation. Here human beings have been part of an ongoing wave of triumphalist improvement interspersed by horrific breakdowns. Now we are called to face the implications of an ultimate human failure.

This may lead us either to a generalized despair, foreshadowed indeed by certain forms of modern and contemporary art, or alternatively to some form of organized hatred of particular groups of outsiders, on the pattern set by past and present mass movements, political, social and increasingly religious, that share a common spiritual distortion, the unwillingness or inability to hold in check violent emotion, or, in terms of traditional ascetic thought, to guard the mind.

There is no justification for adopting an easy optimism in secular terms. We are living through a constant intensification of the environmental crisis simultaneously with the discrediting of an American economic model that for many years pursued growth through high consumption and increase of debt. This is now clearly shown to have been a disaster both for the US and the world. And yet it is clear that despite an altered rhetoric this old model is deeply rooted in political preferences, in the pattern of industrial production, in town and country planning and in the lifestyle of ordinary people alike. If its ideological roots reach back to the eighteenth century, this particular form of social organization, already evident in the 1950s, evolved towards its mature form during the early years of the Reagan Presidency in the 1980s. To move towards a model that would instead pursue world growth by creating international credit through multilateral institutions chiefly for the benefit of poorer developing countries while accepting that any income growth in wealthy nations must be closely connected with improvements in productivity, is not a change being encouraged, even in such a crisis, by political and economic leaderships. In the absence of such an alteration of course, the two dangers I have pointed to gain in credibility.

It is not the task of Orthodox as Orthodox to recommend alternative policies, though such is the task of individual orthodox active in politics, journalism and economic life. It is the task of Orthodox as Orthodox to recommend an alternative attitude to life, which would underlie and underpin alternative policies and would represent a redemptive alternative to the recent attitude of life based on the effective assertion of a right to ever-increasing consumption by the already wealthy nations.

An alternative attitude to life would involve the gradual recovery and extension of a moderately ascetic and simultaneously brotherly approach both to our fellow human beings and to the created world around us. Our hope should be that as a result of our own witness and that of other Christians the concept of human beings as priests of creation, on the model of Jesus, the Great High Priest, committed to the Golden Rule He enunciated, may gradually spread out like ripples from a stone thrown into a pool, with the difference the ripples in this instance would strengthen as they expanded, for the power that moves them will be no physical force, but the Holy Spirit.

In such an eventuality, not we may well agree the most likely in human terms, but also that towards which we, as having 'put on' Christ, and as being alive in the sober passion of the Holy Spirit are called to work, rests the best hope for humankind within God's creation. It is a challenge worthy of our tradition precisely because it is self-evidently beyond our natural powers.

There are two other reasons many Orthodox Christians prefer to avoid or forget this challenge and it is with these I shall close. One is the insidious belief in a perfected Church as a refuge from the torturing uncertainties of living in our world, the contemporary environmental crisis providing but one, if important, example. A 'perfected' Church however, unlike a 'holy' Church, is a contradiction in terms. The holiness of the Church derives from the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit and our relationship with them and with God the Father. The alleged 'perfection' of the Church ignores its members' – effectively our own – evident human imperfections which are all too easily read, if we should only care to read, on the pages of history. Similarly its alleged changelessness ignores the many evident changes over time, some for the worse, some for the better, because inspired by the Holy Spirit through a renewed understanding of God's work for our redemption. Adherence to ideas such as that of a perfected or changeless Church is not just unhistorical but breeds both bad faith, the polar opposite of Christian integrity, and fear, the opposite of trust in God. We should indeed by no means despise a subsidiary role of the Church community as a clutch of security for the weak and the fearful, even when such fear initially reveals itself by unwillingness to accept suggestions for change to supposedly 'perfected' forms, suggestions, that is, for renewal based on a return to the main line of Tradition. As I have already said, however, the Holy Spirit does not act as Comforter in relation to any institution that exists in the world but only in relation to God, so any clutch of security should be acceptable to us in the longer term solely if it proves capable of transformation into a flowering almond branch of redemption, and this can only be achieved through an ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit.

The second reason many Orthodox Christians wish to avoid this challenge is as dangerous. Where the passion inspired by the Holy Spirit and manifested in Christ's mission, as witnessed for instance by His cleansing of the Temple (John 2:13-17), has cooled in human breasts it is often not just passion as a positive force but the ascetic guard against the negative self-centred passions that is gradually allowed to drop. So has it been within Orthodoxy in the last two centuries as secularism has been anathematized and simultaneously implemented in the form of nationalism or, in its milder form, ethnocentrism. There are several ways in which this has been disastrous for the Church's witness to the world and one in which it has been positive, but of course it is the single positive which is regularly repeated and the negatives we tend to forget.

The positive has been the close connection between ethnic and Orthodox spiritual tradition among some peoples. This connection is valuable within the geographical bounds of any country so long as a high proportion of the population itself considers its Orthodox faith to be an existential commitment and not only part of its historical background. Otherwise any theoretical advantage in enabling easier acceptance of the Christian message is more than counterbalanced by the self-satisfaction and lack of respect for other peoples it so readily encourages. Strangely the connection between particular ethnic traditions and Orthodoxy is most valuable as a force for enabling human solidarity and also for transmitting some part of a cultural tradition, among the numerous diasporas of Orthodox Christian peoples in the modern world.

It is hard to know which of the negatives is most serious. One is that it reduces us from the 'new man' that has put on Christ and is inspired by the Holy Spirit, if not to speak in tongues, at the least to speak across linguistic barriers, into prisoners of a modern form of ethnocentric Judaism, from which the primitive Church, despite the immense power of the Judaic tradition, rapidly moved away.

In consequence our message to the world is frequently unrelated to most of what I have written in discussing my first theme, but closely related to the needs and demands at best of a particular ethnic or national community, at worst of a particular state, not to mention those communities' or states' extensions, whether in the near or far abroad. These communities are neither pentecostal or ascetic: they are natural communities claiming supernatural sanction, and they represent a tragic commentary on the all too common view of the Orthodox Church as perfected and immutable, when in fact this supposed immutability represents a cancellation of the main line of the Church's Tradition in favour of the dominance of the nation-state, or at best of various ethnic and linguistic traditions as recommended by ... well, who else than the secular enlightenment of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries?!

Finally, our relationship with non-Christians is seriously distorted. I have said that we do not and cannot know whether, and still less in what way, the risk God took in Creation, will ultimately be justified and that our own response will be, to a great or lesser extent, critical. I have also pointed to the structural nature of the environmental challenge in particular. While I have argued that this challenge in fact validates the essence of Christian ethical and social witness stemming from Jesus Himself, no-one can possibly imagine that we can await the conversion of all human beings to true belief before confronting it. We are therefore called to give new emphasis to the original manifestation of God as Trinity in Creation, a manifestation which however we can only begin to interpret by way of our own participation in the fullness of God's self-revelation to humankind, through His action that instituted a new and universal covenant.

For most of those who believe, God created our universe in what was, par excellence, an act of stupendous power. So it is. I would however add that the Creation was also God's first act of kenosis, for by creating the possibility of extension and sequence in the form of space-time within a system involving regularity and natural laws He made His omnipotence inapplicable in principle to our universe and effectively undertook to act towards that autonomous Creation in such a way as to make it possible for it eventually to flow, in response to His Son's Incarnation, back towards Him and into eternity. This certainly would help explain the always Trinitarian action of God in history, the further kenosis involved in choosing one, weak, people among many peoples to serve as His own and the ultimate kenosis of choosing the excluded from among all peoples and associating with their exclusion to the point of accepting death for them. It is within and through this last and ultimate kenosis that God's power is manifested in weakness, in works of healing and of authority over physical and spiritual forces, culminating in the ultimate and fundamental manifestation of glorification achieved through ultimate weakness, the Crucifixion and Resurrection.

To put it in different terms, the love the three persons of the Holy Trinity show to one another in eternity is so unbounded that they could even choose, beyond their eternal communion, to create a universe *ex nihilo*, out of sheer nothingness, intending to bring creatures so created into communion with them, and to do this despite the cost to God of the autonomy of the created universe. This cost is manifested both in the deep structure of the universe, with its underlying system of universal law that initially appears to be inspired by no existential commitment whatever – unless and until we acknowledge the Incarnation of God's Son and Word, the Son of Man who broke the wall of division – and also in the immense variety of its living forms, which again however initially seem to be operating on no other principle than that of pursuing life for its own sake, until we reach the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, when existential commitment to God and one another becomes manifest as God's ultimate purpose. Thus Creation represented the inception of a consciously, constantly and incontrovertibly risk-bearing enterprise, a dynamic and ongoing enterprise of the Trinitarian God in which we as Christians have been called to participate.

Through the centuries, fellow human beings of many faiths and of none have, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes consciously, borne their part of this risk and attempted to penetrate the mystery they acknowledged as surrounding human existence. Clouds cover the peaks of human experience, as on the pattern of the cloud on Sinai in which Moses was spoken to by God or on Hebron or Tabor where Peter, James and John experienced Jesus' Transfiguration. It should not therefore be difficult to acknowledge that although we resolutely affirm the peak that Orthodox Christians climb is that which when the clouds finally lift, will give human beings, from the highest point, the clearest and broadest picture of our human condition and its potentiality to bear the divine within the human, it remains entirely possible that particular human beings of other persuasions than ours may have advanced further up lower mountains they in good faith but mistakenly believed to be the most elevated, than many of us have ascended towards the highest peak. An acknowledgement of Trinitarian faith in relation to Creation therefore leads us to a simultaneous readiness to engage with other traditions that embody an honest problematic concerning human existence within that same creation.

Where do we stand in this respect today? There are many ongoing dialogues, some genuine and productive, others little more than an exercise in public relations. I shall end with an example from my personal experience, knowing well just how minor it is compared with many others that you might be offered. For over a decade now I have been involved in an attempt by a European NGO first to study, then to improve, history teaching in Southeast Europe, which is just one part of the world where history teaching, created in the context of the late enlightenment recommendation of the nation state, has over time been subverted from an engine aimed initially at the strengthening and sometimes the creation of national identity, into an engine of distaste and, wherever the need is so perceived, of aggression against others.

After for many years studying practice on the ground, we set ourselves to provide some supplementary history material for secondary schools in every country of the region from Slovenia to Cyprus. About sixty historians and educationalists took part and as you might expect a plurality at least were agnostic secularists, more or less combative depending on the country from which they came. Quite rightly most saw official religion in countries of the region as a force currently exploited more to foster division than reconciliation. The final result of our efforts, four workbooks containing source material on the Ottoman Empire, on Nations and States, on the Balkan Wars and on the Second World War, although far from perfect, is in my judgement a work not only balanced but insightful and challenging for young people of the ages to whom it is addressed. They also succeed, in my view, in opening new perspectives for young people on the very varied religious scenes of Southeastern European History, in a generally balanced manner.

What you may well find of interest are the varied reactions to this initiative within Orthodoxy, mainly it must be said in Greek-speaking Orthodoxy. Two diametrically opposite responses came, symbolically, from the Patriarch of Constantinople and the then Archbishop of Athens. Patriarch Vartholomaios, having received the four workbooks, sent a warm letter of welcome to their first public presentation, which was of the Serbian-language edition in Belgrade. The late Archbishop of Athens, in contrast, delivered a public lecture in Thessaloniki attacking the workbooks as subversive of traditional Greek history teaching. It was indeed almost his last public act: on the very day we were to issue our already prepared response he entered hospital with what, sadly, turned out to be terminal cancer.

Thus we can say neither that this particular challenge has been successfully met by Orthodox Christians, nor equally certainly, that it has been failed. What we can say is that there will be ever more such challenges in the future.

'Life in the Holy Spirit' is then, I hope to have shown, a subject that opens us into the depths of our theological and spiritual tradition, but simultaneously sets us, both as individual Christians who have 'put on Christ' and as the Body of the Church, practical challenges and

dilemmas, for every one of us different challenges and dilemmas, in the here and now. To the degree we measure up to them we may perhaps find ourselves better prepared next Great and Holy Saturday, when we call out to God to rise and judge the world, also to bear our own witness from experience that His is indeed the inheritance from among all nations.