

About the Spiritual and Moral Significance of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia - Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco (1960)

<http://www.orthodox.net/articles/rocor-by-st-john-maximovich.html>

Note: What St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco wrote concerning the Russian Orthodox Church and its diaspora & schisms can now apply to the circumstances of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church concerning its more recent diaspora & schisms.

Retrieved 4/16/2016

All the parts of the universal Church have one common goal -- the preaching of the word of God, the preparation of people that they might become capable of being members of the Body of Christ and having become such, more and more, more sincerely and strongly would become one with the divine salvific life of the Body of Christ, for in that is the salvation of people.

In the achievement of this common goal every local Church has its significance.

To every people, through God's providence, unique gifts are given.

Every Church fulfills its mission, in keeping with these gifts. For this reason every people, or combination of related peoples, has its own Church, and such a division of ecclesiastical authority furthers the activity of preaching.

For this reason the Orthodox Church allows the establishment of new local Churches and so, new centers of preaching. In this manner arose both the Russian and Slavic Churches.

Thus, every people has its own unique characteristics of the spirit, and this is the basis for the formation of local national Churches.

All of them together comprise One Universal Church and they all bring into it these unique characteristics and gifts, just as good servants bring the fruits of those talents that God has given them. In this manner is formed the pleasing to God amalgamation of spiritual sounds and colors with which the Church that unites all peoples to the glory of God, is decorated.

This beauty the earth brings to heaven as a sweet-smelling censer.

Into this beauty the Russian Church, as well, brings its colors and its sounds: let us compare the severe at times strictness of the righteous ones of the East with the compunctionate spirit of Russian saints.

Being scattered around the whole world, we preserve the expressions of our spirit, which are given to us by God. This calls us to preserve unity with the Church, to which God appointed activity among us, our spiritual nourishment and development, the support of our spiritual zeal,

the development of our talents. For this reason, scattered across the entire world, we established our Russian churches and all together we comprise one Russian Church Outside of Russia.

The spiritual manifestations of the Church are the same in all people, but their appearances -- colors and sounds -- are different. The differentiation of ways to serve and spiritual gifts was pleasing to the Creator of all -- God the Savior. We know and sense spiritual benefits and feel joy when we see how different people of different characters and gifts give glory to the one God. For this reason, for example, being led by true ecclesiastical understanding and feeling, the Serbian Church with joy took in the Russian Church, thus giving witness to the spiritual benefits of its existence in its midst.

Our Russian Church Outside of Russia is the free part of the Russian Church. Its unity is witnessed also in the fact that the mercy of God, which was shown in our Homeland in the self-renovation of icons, did not limit this manifestation to the borders of Russia but has manifested itself also in diasporan Russia, in Russian churches among Russian Orthodox people of the diaspora.

Spiritually the Russian Church is indivisible: it is always one and the same Russian Church, wherever we might be.

Being a part of the Russian Church, we cannot be in communion with the ecclesiastical authorities which are in submission and subjugation to a power which is inimical to the Church. To be in a position of such subjugation and dependence -- is a situation that would be spiritually sick: because for Church authority it is against its nature to be in dependence to an authority that sets as its goal the destruction of the Church and of faith in God itself. And those who are found in such subjugation cannot not feel, cannot recognize the sickness of such a condition: some, in whom their consciences are alive, are suffering; others, with burnt-out consciences, accept this situation.

Ecclesiastical authority in Russia is found in such a position that we cannot separate and understand what is done by it freely and what is done under duress. The ecclesiastical authority in Russia is an image of captivity and spiritual powerlessness: there is neither freedom of will nor freedom of action.

We have no one to be in communion with: there is no free ecclesiastical authority!

The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia for this reason is not administratively tied to such an authority. But we are united spiritually with the holy Russian Church, because we are a part of the Russian Church.

We should not think that on our homeland everyone is spiritually downtrodden by the authority that exists there. We believe in the opposite. We do not interrogate hearts, which are known to God alone, but we know that there, there is no freedom of conscience and will; that there, closed-in-ness has taken root. There is no social intercommunication. There, people cannot choose the path of their lives, following their hearts. There, one finds the situation about which the Prophet Micah prophesied: There an individual "does not trust in his friends, does not put confidence in

his guides," "and the members of his household are his enemies" (Micah 7:5-6), The atheistic power influences people in a destructive way. It subjugates to itself not only the body, but it also captures the soul. It depersonalizes people, and their sincere and open Russian souls become distorted.

We, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, preserve our unity, while being in communion with all Churches with which it is possible to be in communion with.

Being scattered around the entire world we do not submit to the local Churches--not because we are inimically disposed to them, but because we cherish our holy Russian Church and the characteristics of the Russian soul. Our ecclesiastical unity is expressed in our submission to a single ecclesiastical authority for the entire diaspora, and this unity preserves the Russian people in the diaspora in faithfulness to the podvig that has been placed upon them by God.

1960