

The Inward Mission of Our Church: Bringing About Orthodoxy

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It is very, very difficult indeed for infinite and eternal life to make its way into the human soul--so narrow--and even into the narrower human body. Held behind bars, the inhabitants of this earth suspiciously stand their ground against anything coming from without. Cast into this prison of time and space they are unable--from atavism or perhaps from inertia--to bear being penetrated by something outlasting time, outlying space, something that surpasses these and is eternal. Such an invasion is considered to be aggression toward them, and they respond with war. A man, given the fact that he is being corrupted by the "moth" of time, does not like the intrusion of eternity into his life and is not easily able to adapt himself to it. He often considers this intrusion to be sheer unforgivable insolence. At certain times, he might become a hardened rebel against eternity because in the face of it he perceives his own minuteness; at other times, he even experiences fierce hatred toward it because he views it through such a human prism, one that is all too earthbound, all too worldly. Plunged bodily into matter, bound by the force of gravity to time and space, and having his spirit quite divorced from eternity, the world-weary man takes no pleasure in those arduous expeditions toward the eternal, toward what lies beyond. The chasm existing between time and eternity is quite unbridgable for him because he lacks the strength and ability needed to get across it. Thoroughly besieged by death, he covers with scorn all those who say to him, "Man is immortal; he is eternal." Immortal in just what respect? In his mortal body? In what respect eternal? With respect to his feeble spirit?

In order for a person to be immortal he must, at the very core of his sense of self, feel himself immortal. For him to be eternal, in his center of consciousness of self he must know himself eternal. Without doing this, for him both immortality and eternity alike will be conditions imposed from the outside. And if at one time man did have this sense of immortality and awareness of eternity, he had it so long ago that it has since wasted away under the weight of death. And waste away it really has; we learn this from the whole mysterious makeup of human beings. Our whole problem lies in how we might rekindle that extinguished feeling, how we might revive the wasted-away awareness. Human beings are not in a position to do this; nor, indeed, are the "transcendent gods" of philosophy. It is something to be done by God, who incarnated His immortal Self inside man's sense of himself and incarnated His eternal Self within man's self-awareness. Christ did precisely this when He was made man and became God-man. Only in Christ, in Him alone, did man feel himself immortal and know himself eternal. Christ God-man, in His Person, bridged that chasm between time and eternity and restored relations between them. For this reason only he who is organically made one with Christ God-man, one with His Body, the Church, can be the one to feel himself really immortal and know himself in truth to be eternal. Whereby, for man and humanity, Christ composes the one and only passage and transition from time to eternity. This is why in the Church, the Orthodox Church, Christ became and remained the one and only way and the single guide from the former to the latter, from the sense of one's own mortality to the sense of one's immortality, from self-awareness of what is transient to self-awareness of what is eternal and without dimension.

