COVER
Patriarch Ignatius with His Grace Thomas (Joseph), Bishop of Pittsburgh and the Diocese of the East; His Grace Mark (Maymon), Bishop of Toledo and the Diocese of the Midwest; and His Grace Alexander (Mufarij), Bishop of Ottawa and the Diocese of Eastern Canada and Upstate New York.

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Letters to the editor are welcome and should include the author's full name and parish. Submissions for "Communities in Action" must be approved by the local pastor. Both may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All submissions, in hard copy, on disk or e-mailed, should be double-spaced for editing purposes.

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There are only a few experiences in my life which stand out as being life-changing: being crowned in marriage to my wife, the births and adoption of our children, and my ordination to the priesthood. Today, I must add to that list witnessing the consecration of our three new bishops and hearing their confessions of faith. With this experience at the Patriarchal Cathedral in Damascus, my own faith been has renewed, and I have a deeper understanding of a mystery of our faith. The faith of our fathers is indeed a revelation of God's own unity, as well as God's visible action of salvation. Through the apostolic authority given every bishop, the unity of the faith is safeguarded and the action of Christ's ministry is manifested. In the consecration of a bishop, the Church empowers men to champion the faith. She vests them with apostolic confidence and power. She tests their faith and then sends them out to proclaim the truth in ways that only God knows will be required. She gives them a balance of authority and obedience.

My heart was pounding as Archimandrite Thomas proclaimed the faith of the Seven Holy and Ecumenical Councils, which were convened for the protection and safeguarding of all of the Orthodox dogmas of the Church. Electricity pulsed through my body as Archimandrite Mark promised to keep the faith of the Church fathers, accepting what they accepted, and rejecting what they rejected, explaining God's revelations of being one and in three persons. My eyes filled as Archimandrite Alexander (Rafeek) defended human personhood, made in the image of God, as he explained the use of the holy icons in the Church. I experienced an epiphany of sorts as I recognized that these bishops, who will maintain the unity of their dioceses by their lives and work, will also maintain the unity of the one Church. This unity of all of Christ's churches is accomplished through the obedience of these bishops to the scriptures, the canons, the Councils, their Patriarch, their Metropolitan Archbishop and their archdiocesan synod. Our God has revealed himself, and it is in the person of each of God's consecrated bishops that the Holy Spirit delivers mankind to God and God to His people.

A primary function of the bishop is to preach the truth, correctly “dividing” the word of truth from that which is false and outside of the truth. Therefore, the consecration of the bishops began after the entrance with the holy gospel and before the reading of the gospel. What was most exciting for me was to witness how the Church empowered these men to become champions of the faith. As they proclaimed the faith of the scriptures and the Church Councils, and as they affirmed the dogma of ancient and God-given formulations, they took their places among the great champions of Orthodox Christianity. They became one with the apostles and church leaders of every generation as they proclaimed the faith of our fathers. These bishops will also forever be in the company of the living church fathers, the Orthodox bishops and priests represented by our Patriarch Ignatius and twelve consecrating bishops, as well as the seven priests of our Archdiocese who were present, as they promised to be obedient to their Patriarch, their Metropolitan Archbishop and their archdiocesan synod.

Their consecrations were witnessed by a cathedral overflowing with Orthodox faithful and clergy, an assembly which proclaimed for each of the three, “He is worthy.” The faith proclaimed by these new champions of the faith is both the God-given faith of our fathers and the personal experience and faith expressed by each. Each of our new bishops publicly promised to remain within this faith and to keep the flock entrusted to him within it. Each of these champions was empowered to reveal God's action of loosing and binding sins. Each was empowered to teach what God Himself reveals. The champions of this holy day are many in number. The challenge to meet the needs of the faithful of the Archdiocese of North America while maintaining the unity of Orthodox Christianity for all of the Antiochian Orthodox throughout the world was a task requiring the wisdom of Solomon and the intervention of the Holy Spirit. The Antiochian Orthodox Church in North America needs unity on its own shores while maintaining unity with her Mother Church. This needed to be accomplished within a God-given ancient order that was designed for a different time with different challenges. Those champions of the Church who navigated us through formerly uncharted waters included our father Patriarch Ignatius IV, our father Metropolitan Philip, as well as Bishop Antoun, the members of the Holy Synod of Antioch, and our Holy Archdiocesan Synod, including our newly-consecrated bishops themselves. At times the task may have seemed impossible, but these champions persisted until the Holy Spirit delivered His truth.

I thank God for allowing me to live at a time when I could witness such champions of the Church discerning and delivering our faith. After a period of some disillusionment concerning Orthodox unity in America, I am now genuinely optimistic about the future. I have witnessed first-hand that what is impossible for man is possible for God. I have witnessed both the building of champions and champions in action. Look for more about this historic event in the life of our Antiochian Orthodox Church in future issues of The WORD.
INTRODUCTION

On a recent Sunday, the parish priest touched on an intriguing topic in his homily: the fact that many students find that higher learning brings with it troubling doubts about the claims of Christianity. Is it possible that students can get educated right out of their faith?

It is a fact that atheism is a growing cultural phenomenon. It is also a fact that many of the leading figures in such highly regarded fields as science and philosophy are atheists. And, regrettably, it is also a fact that many Christians are not prepared to justify their faith, while others are silenced by legalities, such as the hypersensitivity that the culture in the United States currently has in regard to the issue of the separation of Church and State.
This hypersensitivity to the separation of Church and State (which, by the way, was instituted in order to secure the freedom of religion, not freedom from religion) has an influence over the content of a student’s education in, for example, the following way: a teacher at a state-supported college or university has to think twice before presenting a theistic interpretation of things, while an atheistic interpretation is sure to pass any legal test. In the grand scheme of things, this means that atheistic points of view are bound to get more “air time” in the course of a given student’s education at such an institution. In turn, students, who are often naively unaware of the influences at work “behind the scenes” of their education, naturally get the impression that the atheistic point of view is the dominant one. In order to appear “educated” and to “fit in” with the intellectual class, astute students will begin to mimic or adopt the speech habits and points of view of their teachers. As a result, that which begins as an anomaly gathers strength and numbers as it goes forward.

What can happen (and, in fact, has happened) is that a generation of believers can, in this way, cultivate a generation of non-believers. Already, it has become something of a cultural “badge of honor” in “intellectual” circles to boldly proclaim one’s atheism, while, in these same circles, adherence to faith is regarded as an embarrassment: a childish, unexamined allegiance to an “ignorant,” “medieval” or “primitive” mindset. Yet, very few of today’s atheists know why they are atheists. They just know it’s cool.

The current “coolness” of atheism points to an important fact about intellectual disciplines, a fact that few students ever become aware of: there are fads, phases, fashions, and trends in intellectual disciplines, just like there are in clothing, children’s toys, architectural styles, and a host of other things. If you enter the wrong institution at the wrong time, you will be sold, with all the confidence and self-assurance that a Ph.D. can muster, the fad of the day. Students naturally trust their teachers, but the result is that there are a large number of people walking around in the world who have every confidence in the education they have received, and yet what they actually have is nothing more than the intellectual equivalent of pet rocks in their heads.

This is not a new problem. Over two thousand years ago, Plato wrote in his Protagoras that getting an education meant nothing less than entrusting your soul to someone, and you should not entrust your soul to just anyone (Protagoras 312c-313b). Plato was aware of the paradox: you need to be wise in order to select a teacher, but you need a teacher in order to become wise. Education, then, should not be thought of as a linear process (get your degree and get out) but a circular one, in which students continually challenge and reassess the assumptions, theories, interpretations, and conclusions that they themselves embraced, and that their classmates embraced, the last time around.

This is a model of learning that the modern world both accepts and rejects. It accepts it in regard to research, but rejects it in regard to education. The researcher is full of question. The teacher is full of answers. The result is that most students are fed a false sense of certainty in the course of their education, because most students are not really exposed to the research process. Students walk away on graduation day thinking they know when, in fact, they possess little more than conjectures. And these conjectures, as I noted above, are often driven by fads.

The trend toward atheism is just such a fad. Where did it originate? Where does it find its legitimacy? Shall we look to Nietzsche’s proclamation that “God is Dead”? Or to Marx’s charge that “Religion is the opiate of the masses”? Or to Kant’s “disproof” of Anselm’s proof of the existence of God? Does science itself compel us to abandon faith? Is there something prior to all this? Let’s consider each of these possibilities.

**IS GOD DEAD?**

Nietzsche’s proclamation is nothing but a bald assertion. If you read Nietzsche’s book where this claim appears (for example, The Joyous Science §108 and Thus Spoke Zarathustra §3), you will find that he has no argument to support this claim. In fact, the claim is his starting point, not a conclusion he reaches. All we have, then, is his assertion. Why should anyone believe it? And yet, why do so many believe it?

Perhaps it is because assertion has power. Asserting something does not make it true, but assertion can often be done in such a way that it carries the weight of conviction. Assertions can compel us to take a drastic action. They can convince us to risk our lives. They can even convince us to lose our souls. In the end, however, assertions are less substantial than the wind. Let us be wiser than to place our souls at risk by accepting assertions at face value.

An additional element that plays an important role in the adoption of such fads is charisma. By “charisma” I mean all the attributes which make the proponents of the fad into people that their audience wants to believe. These factors can range from personal attributes to presentation techniques. As any salesman can attest, charisma alone can sell just about
anything, but, without charisma, most efforts will fail.

Yet, sometimes the contrary of charisma is the deciding factor. In such cases, it is not the appeal of the proponent, but the appeal of the message that wins the audience. The proponent is saying things that the audience already wants to hear. Some people are terrified by the thought of judgment and an afterlife, and so are happy to listen to those who say they have nothing to fear. Some people want to regard themselves as the supreme being, and so are happy to listen to those who say they have no divine competition. And some people have found that usurping religious authorities is the route to fame, wealth, and power, and so are happy to listen to those who help them achieve their goals. Those who surrender to fear, pride, greed and other sins are sure to be eager to hear what pleases them, but this eagerness cannot make false things true.

When an academic fad has nothing to recommend it beyond assertions and vague impressions, it is likely that the personalities of the proponents, their presentation techniques, or the hidden agendas of those who adhere to the proponent are what keep it moving forward. When something as important as faith in Christ is at stake, it is extremely important to detect the difference between true substance and a good sales pitch.

Today’s students, however, are often unprepared to make such a distinction, and, to some extent, they are being trained to be unable to make it. Entire industries (fast food, junk food, advertising … ) rely on this inability for their existence. It is in the interest of these industries and those closely connected to them — in particular the media (where most students get a daily injection of “extracurricular education”), but also most colleges and universities (which rely heavily on corporate donations and guidance) — to foster this ignorance. Many students, then, are not even given a fighting chance because the very institutions that promise to help them are, in fact, working against their best interests.

In such a world, it is important for students to keep in touch with and make good use of the guidance of those who do not have these secular conflicts of interest. It is important, then, for students to maintain their ties to their families, friends, parishes, and priests as they move forward into an adult understanding of life through education. These ties provide the balance and wisdom that most students need when the assertions and demands of the secular world mislead and create confusion.

**IS RELIGION THE OPIATE OF THE MASSES?**

What of Marx’s charge that, “religion is the opiate of the masses”? Marx wrote:

> The foundation of irreligious criticism is: Man makes religion, religion does not make man.

Religion is, indeed, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself, or has already lost himself again. But, man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man — state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d’honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, it solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion.

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. (Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Introduction ¶3-5)

We see at the beginning of this quote the assertion that serves as the foundation for Marx’s view: “Man makes religion, religion does not make man.” Underpinning this assertion is the idea that the content of religion reflects a human fantasy: the dream of being magical, invincible, immortal, and so forth. On this view, religion must be false because what it offers is too good to be true.

We are often told, “If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.” There is, however, an important difference between this saying and Marx’s position, and it is signaled by the word “probably.” The popular saying advises caution. Marx advises rejection. If we apply the popular saying to the claims of religion, we might end up in a state of doubt. If we follow Marx’s lead, we end up in a state of despair: we abandon all hope that the claims of religion are true.
Yet who is Marx that we should be willing to sell our souls in order to follow him into the abyss? Does his analysis of religion in the second paragraph quoted above even make sense? For example, does the history of the rise of Christianity in the shadow of the Roman Empire suggest that Christianity is the \textit{product} of state and society? Is religion “the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form,” or does that definition apply better to science? Has the case been made that “the human essence has not acquired any true reality,” that the world is “heartless” and “soulless,” or are these just additional assertions, perhaps even the result of Marx’s despair?

There can be no doubt that Marx was a charismatic proponent of his views. His critique of class structure and some of the movements it has inspired have helped many to live a better life. It may even be the case that certain religious \textit{institutions} deserved to be targeted and attacked for endorsing and supporting the status quo. Yet there is an important difference between attacking a religious institution and attacking religion itself. In promoting an atheistic world view (man creates religion), Marx throws the baby (religious belief) out with the bath water (support for certain corrupt religious institutions). We must bear in mind that it can be the case that some solutions are worse than the problem they are seeking to address (for example, cutting off your head in order to cure a headache). We must make wise decisions about important issues, and not merely do what is expedient or popular, or what is advocated by someone with a lot of charisma.
Despite his charisma, then, Marx's case is weakened by what looks like a lack of clarity of thought. The wise will not follow him into the abyss. Nevertheless, the underlying thought that the claims of Christianity are too good to be true is sufficient to raise doubt. As an intellectual exercise, doubt may be a useful tool in helping one discover more about the Christian faith, but one has to be careful about an attitude that one makes one's own for daily living. Christ in numerous places underscores the importance of faith and the crippling or dangerous effects of doubt. While the full implications of these teachings may be a matter of divine mystery, we can easily see how doubt has these same effects in other areas of life. If, for example, a batter in a baseball game doubts that he can hit the ball, his chances of hitting the ball decrease. If a receiver in a football game doubts that he can catch the ball, he is almost sure to drop it. If a salesman doubts that he can make a sale, he probably won't. If a student doubts that she can pass a test, she probably will do poorly. Doubt undermines confidence, but confidence is an important component of successful action. The action that we are seeking to accomplish through faith is the salvation of our souls; we must not allow doubt to cause us to fail.

To those who are in a position of religious doubt, this exhortation to faith may not seem sufficient. They wonder, "how can we know that this is the right thing to do? How can we trust in this without further proof?" Yet how do people trust Marx and Nietzsche and a host of others who gain their following with nothing but empty words? The fact is that it happens all the time: people give their trust without reason, evidence, or cause. This is the way the world works. The question rather should be this: why, when it comes to saving their own souls, do people, who are otherwise so trusting, suddenly become so suspicious? The apostle Thomas looked for evidence and proof. Jesus presented it to him and said, "Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29).

Yet this very episode points out that Christianity has as its basis much more than mere assertions, and much more than blind faith. We have the testimony of eyewitnesses — and not merely gullible eyewitnesses, but skeptical ones like Thomas and St. Paul — and they had the proofs of the miracles, teachings, and resurrection of Christ. This is as solid a foundation as most of us ever bother to look for when making important decisions. This much is sufficient to establish a fact for news reporters, historians, and parties in a court of law. What does it say about us if we insist on having further proof? What are we looking for? What would satisfy us? Yes, we have not seen, so do we dare to base our faith on trust? Do we dare to be blessed? Is it so difficult to embrace hope?

Indeed, there comes a time when thinking and worrying about things must be set aside. When, for example, God told Moses to go to Egypt, Moses started to think too much and so raised objections (I don't know how to talk, What will I say? Maybe Aaron would be a better choice). God's answer was, in effect, "Set aside all those thoughts and concerns, and just go and do it. Have confidence, I will be there for you." Moses had the strength of mind to silence his doubts, even though what God requested looked, from a human perspective, to be not only impossible, but downright crazy. Most of us are not called upon to demonstrate our faith to the same extent that Moses was, but would it not gladden the hearts of the entire heavenly host if we could say in our prayers, "I am ready to face the tests of faith that Moses faced:"?

Finally, we can address the famous claim that religion is the opium of the masses. In order for this to be both true and a case for atheism, Marx would have to demonstrate not merely that religion is sometimes used to keep the "masses" calm, but also that religion is only such a tool and nothing more. Many things can serve as opiates of the masses: video games, sitcoms, movies, sporting events, clearance sales, pay raises, you name it. That religion is sometimes used to keep the peace should surprise no one, but has Marx made the case that this is the only purpose and reason for the existence of religion? Indeed, can anyone make that case? Think about how religion has functioned in your life; has every religious occasion been designed to sedate you and to do nothing else? When viewed in light of the actual facts of real life, Marx's claim is revealed as shallow and false.

Perhaps we should have expected as much from what is little more than a slogan intended to rouse the masses to action. What appeals to crowds and mobs is not deep thought and meticulous argumentation, but something that seems impressive, and invites an emotional response. When students first meet philosophy, they often desire to see some intellectual sparks flying, and to demonstrate that they can "keep up" with the latest developments in thought. What such students need to realize is that these same desires can ensnare them into becoming an adherent of what amounts to nothing more than a passing intellectual fad. The goal of a good philosophical education is not to be fooled, but to become wise, yet only those students who have the stomach to endure the drier tasks not only of following intricate arguments, but also of uncovering and assessing assumptions, will ever be in a position to become wise. Students, then,
should bear in mind that it is often the case that what is most attractive about a field is what is least essential to it.

**HAS KANT PROVEN THAT GOD DOES NOT EXIST?**

What, next, of Kant? Here we are entering into some lofty intellectual territory, so a few words of introduction are appropriate. In order to talk about Kant, we must first talk about Hume. Kant was jarred into philosophical speculation by Hume, who found it difficult to locate the link of necessity that bound causes to their effects. Hume could see that causes preceded their effects, but he would not grasp how they were necessarily linked. He might speculate, for example, that it just might happen once that a cause (such as a bat hitting a ball squarely) would not be followed by its effect (the ball flying away) but, instead, the situation would just be done with (for example, the ball just sticks to the bat, even though there is no glue). Kant viewed this as a challenge to the possibility of science. That is, if causes were not necessarily linked to their effects, then the whole edifice of science would collapse like a house of cards in a room full of rambunctious children.

In order to “save” science, Kant came up with a wild scheme. In his view, everything that we experience is a mental construct. The “outside” world that we perceive is a three-dimensional illusion created by our own brains, which, perhaps, are influenced by something that is truly outside of us, but we have no real access to that world. As a consequence of this contorted view of things, just about every word in the dictionary has to be redefined, and every aspect of experience has to be reinterpreted. Kant saw this as a way to save science because science now was to be understood not as the study of the world outside of us (which has now been defined as inaccessible), but as the study of the rules which our brains use when constructing the illusory world of our personal experience.

In such a scheme of things, each of us is the creator of his own world. Further, it is our brains which design for us our own conception of ourselves, so that we create ourselves as well. And further still, it is our brains which decide what gets called “real” and what gets called a “dream,” “illusion,” or “mirage.” Consequently, “existence” is not a property of a thing, but a predicate (since, ultimately, everything is an illusion cooked up by our brains). Our brains, incidentally, cannot now be said to exist because they transcend the meaning of the term (as it is now confined to applying to things within the illusory world). Kant does not go so far as to assert that nothing actually exists, but his system clearly points to that conclusion.

One should not wonder, then, that Kant finds little room for God in all of this. If God is outside of us, we have no access to Him, and the term “existence” can not apply to Him. If He is within us, He is our creation. Of course, we also have no true access to other people, but only to illusory others which we create for ourselves in the grand video game that our brains present to us as life. To put it briefly: Kant’s world is a lonely, illusory, Godless hell, but at least science works there.

Saint Anselm, who lived almost a thousand years ago, had a proof for the existence of God that went something like this:

Think of the most fully existing thing imaginable. Now, in regard to it, ask yourself this: does it actually exist, or is it just an imaginary thing? Surely if it is just imaginary, then it would be inferior to an actually existing such thing. The task, however, was to think of that which existed most fully, so it cannot be imaginary. Consequently, the most fully existing thing (i.e., God) exists.

In Kant’s convoluted rearrangement of things, existence is only a predicate, not an actually attribute of things. After all, everything we experience in our lonely little world is just an illusion, so if we say a chair, or book, or shoe exists, we are just reporting something about the mode in which our brains are making this particular illusion appear to us. On such an understanding, there can be no degrees of existence (something having more of it or less) but only the presence or absence of this mode of presentation. That is, our brains either present the book to us as “existing” or as “a dream object” or as “a hallucination,” etc., and that is the end of it.

With such an understanding of the term “existence,” Anselm’s proof collapses, but what on Earth could ever compel us to adopt and crawl into Kant’s hypothesized lonely, illusory view of the world and experience? If we do not enter, the word “existence” retains the meaning it always had, and Anselm’s proof is unaffected.

Here again we hit upon the walls of assertion. Kant cannot prove that the system he has invented describes the way things truly are. This is just his conjecture, which is motivated by his desire to save science. We might well ask if science is worth saving, especially if it means crawling into Kant’s Hell and staying there. We might also ask if this is the only way to save science, a question which Kant was too busy constructing his system to consider.

Unfortunately, many students are never introduced to these questions. The Kantian system is so complex that it
takes all of a teacher's energy and time just to explain it. Additionally, it is probably also fair to say that many who teach it do not understand it themselves, while many of those who do understand it either do not teach it (regarding it as nonsense) or are, for some mystical reason, fans of Kant and so do their best to advocate it. All of these factors tend to lead to the result that teachers usually do not critique Kant's system.

The impression that this naturally leaves on students is that the system is beyond reproach. Unfortunately, then, as time passes, each successive generation of students comes to regard Kant's system as more plausible than the previous generation had regarded it as being. Consequently, that which should have been rejected becomes more and more central to the culture. And, as is generally the case, the naive student has no clue that all of this is going on behind the scenes, and so many of them are led down a false path into a state of non-belief.

**HAS SCIENCE ERADICATED RELIGION?**

Science, which operates in much the same way, also leads many souls astray. Students have to realize that, when they enter into a scientific enterprise, they are adopting certain assumptions and guiding principles. These assumptions and principles are almost never pointed out or discussed, but they influence everything within the sphere of science. Many may be surprised to hear me speak of a “sphere of science,” as if there is something beyond science. Kant would have us believe that there is nothing, or nothing accessible, beyond science, and so this view has wormed its way into our hearts and minds. I have shown that we would do well to disengage ourselves from the Kantian world view, but I can say, in addition, that what lies beyond science is precisely that which science’s questionable assumptions and principles rule out, as the discussion that follows will show.

The three most troubling assumptions or principles that science requires its practitioners to adopt are these:

1. Divine intervention does not happen.
2. Nothing can come into existence from nothingness.
3. There is no such thing as teleology.

We will discuss each of these in turn, as they each reveal important aspects of science that students are often not exposed to. As most readers have probably never even heard of teleology, we can begin with it.

**a. Science: The End of Teleology?**

Over two thousand years ago, Aristotle formulated a categorization of casual explanations, which, to my knowledge, has never been superseded. In it, he identified four types of causes:

1. **The Material Cause**: This is the cause we appeal to when we attribute an effect to a material. For example, we might say that a house burned down because it was made of wood.
2. **The Formal Cause**: This is the cause we appeal to when we attribute an effect to the shape or design of something. One example is when we say that a razor cuts because it is sharp. Another is when we say that a computer program did not work because it contained an error.
3. **The Efficient Cause**: This is the cause we appeal to when we attribute an effect to a physical process, a means, or an agent. Some examples: the tree fell because the wind knocked it over; clouds are caused by evaporation and condensation; Joe moved the book.
4. **The Final Cause (teleology)**: This is the cause we appeal to when we attribute an effect to a motive, purpose, or goal. Some examples: students go to school in order to learn, or in order to get a good job; he kissed her because he loved her; it turned out that way because it was God’s will.

Most explanations on the human level are teleological explanations. And most humans are not satisfied that they have the answer until they get a teleological one. If, for example, a teen explains that she has been out past midnight because the hands of the clock moved faster around the dial than she did in getting home, mom and dad are not likely to be amused. What they really want to know (other than that she has not been harmed) is if she respects their authority. In court, innocence or guilt is often determined by assessing motives. In relationships we have teleological concerns all the time. Often, questions like “Why didn't you call?” or “Where have you been?” or “What do you think of my dress” and so forth are really ways of saying “I love you, do you still love me?”

Science, on the other hand, is all about exploring efficient causation. Science can work with the first two causes, but, ultimately, it prefers to cast them as types of efficient causation. Physics, for example, teaches us that everything is made of subatomic particles, so what distinguishes one material item from another (glass, wood, stone) is the arrangement of the particles. The electrons and protons (or quarks and leptons, or superstrings, or whatever) of glass are no different from those that make up wood or stone. This understanding renders the material cause as ultimately moot (since everything is made of the same stuff, there is no point asking about the material cause), and subsumes material causation under formal causation. Formal causation, in
turn, is easily subsumed under efficient caution by asking how things managed to get arranged in a certain way in the first place. Thus, the ultimate causal factors for science are such things as physical forces.

The final cause does not fit well into this scheme of things. It has been known, however, since the days of the Pre-Socratics, that more than one causal story could be constructed for a given event. Plato has his character Socrates, for example, point out that a philosophic competitor might “explain” his presence on a bench in the jail by telling a mechanical story about how his joints and muscles got him to just this location, but yet this would explain nothing, because it does not account for his motives (Phaedo 98c-99c). Science takes the opposite view: because a complete mechanical story can be told (at least hypothetically), the efficient cause can explain everything. In addition, science appeals to a dangerous logical device called Ockham’s razor, which can be formulated as saying: once you have a complete causal story, you have no need to look for more. With this in hand, the final cause (teleology) is rendered superfluous and so abandoned. Further still, some branches of science then seek to redefine teleological terms as physical terms and so reduce every final frontier to an efficient explanation.

Science, then, is an attempt to construct a complete causal story of the workings of nature in terms of efficient causation. The scientific method requires that every why question be reformulated as a how question, or be discarded as “pointless,” “vague,” or “meaningless.” Ultimately, then, the adoption of a scientific world view requires us to conceive of the entire universe as an ongoing mechanical process and nothing more. Included in this conception, then, is the conception of ourselves as robots and nothing more. If we feel that we have motives or purposes these must be delusions created by some faulty or self-consoling circuits (Kantian self-created illusions), but it is still a Hell.

Surely, if adopting the scientific world view is a matter of choice (as it certainly is), then at least some of those who adopt it must have a motive or purpose for doing so. And, if this is the case, then, for some people, teleology supplies the grounds for doing science in the first place. In addition, the scientific method (formulating a hypothesis and then designing and conducting experiments in order to test the hypothesis) is teleological: the scientist has a goal and works towards it. These considerations make it clear that science may ignore teleology, but it cannot meaningfully assert that teleology does not exist. This is to say that science cannot claim to be a complete account of the universe since it cannot explain its own beginnings and methodology in efficient causal terms without contradicting them. There is, then, something beyond the sphere of science, namely, an entire world of purposes, motives, goals, and desires that we all naturally inhabit in our daily lives. When we do science, we retreat from this larger world into a simpler one because the concepts of science simply cannot address this fuller reality.

Sadly, most students are never taught that doing science requires that teleology be temporarily set aside; instead, in the course of their indoctrination into the scientific method, they form the impression that teleology is nonsense, and so become trapped within a merely mechanical, soulless world of quanta, forces, and empty space. They enter into the narrow scientific frame of mind and then forget to come back out when the work day is over. The Hell they consequently inhabit is much larger than Kant’s Hell, and offers one the comfort that there actually are lots of nifty gadgets and mechanical companions there (not just Kantian self-created illusions), but it is still a Hell.

b. Nothing Can Come Into Existence From Nothingness?

The second assumption or principle of Science listed above, namely that nothing can come into existence from nothingness, also shows the structural weakness of science if it is regarded as a complete system. One way to see this is to review the importance of induction for science. Induction is a method of reasoning that allows one to take a conclusion gathered from a sample, and apply it universally. In this way we conclude, for example, that if a certain medicine works for a threshold number of patients in clinical trials, then it should work for a similar percentage of patients worldwide.

The idea that nothing can ever come into existence from nothingness may be arrived at inductively. After all, who has ever seen it happen? But here is another inductively verifiable principle: every action that occurs must being to
occur, or, in other words, if an action does not begin, it does not occur. If we put these two principles in the ring and ask about the existence of the universe, we get a real cat fight:

If existing is an action (as it would seem), then, since the universe exists, it must have begun to exist; but, since the universe is the sum total of all that exists, this would mean that the universe must have come into being from nothingness; but this is impossible, because nothingness can not produce anything; therefore, the universe does not exist because it could not possibly ever have begun to exist. 

The real problem in this paradox arises for science from the fact that astrophysicists can now prove that the universe began by extrapolating the expansion of the universe back to the moment when everything was in one very small place. Still, science often tries to wiggle its way out of the creation paradox by asserting that there has been an infinite chain of prior universes. This assertion, however, is completely non-scientific. There is no evidence for it. It is merely concocted in order to save the principle that nothing can come to be from nothingness. Yet, if we accept the logical consequence of the assertion that this fictional series of successive universes had no beginning, we find that science has stripped itself of its subject matter, for the logical consequence is that the universe does not exist. Of course, this is not the impression that scientists want their audiences to form when they say that the universe had no beginning. The impression that audiences (particularly naive students) form is one of a vague mystery which is supplemented by the awe caused in the mind by vainly trying to conceptualize an infinity of time. This, however, is mysticism, not science.

Students, then, form the impression that the universe did not come into existence from nothingness, and soon face a religious crisis: if the universe did not come into being from nothing, then it was not created by God. By putting God “out of a job” (so to speak) by means of this impression, the faith of many naive students is severely weakened. Such students must ask themselves, however, if they are acting wisely when they question their faith on the basis of an illogical impression. It is better to see the problem of the origin of the universe as one that lies outside of science, because science has restricted itself through the principle that nothing comes into existence from nothingness. In other words, it is “against the rules” of doing science to raise such an issue, and the consequence of breaking the rules is that one has to sift through the resulting nonsense (namely, that the universe had no beginning, and so forth), at the risk of one’s immortal soul.

The issue of the origin of the universe, therefore, is a topic that lies outside or beyond science. This is, then, yet another indication that science is not a complete account of all that exists. Shakespeare’s Hamlet was right, there is more on heaven and earth than this philosophy has dreamt of (Hamlet 1.5.166-167).

Traditionally, metaphysics is the field that ventures beyond science, and theology stands either at the heights of metaphysics or lies beyond metaphysics. These fields are hardly devoid of subject matter, and the validity of their subject matter remains unaffected by the false impression that science is the study of everything. Unfortunately, many modern students
and teachers of metaphysics and theology have been led astray by the impressions they have formed of science. Many contemporary philosophers and theologians, for example, strive to be “scientific” in their approach to their subject matter, little realizing that, if their subject could be handled scientifically, then it would be science, not metaphysics. Consequently, those seeking wisdom in metaphysics and theology are more likely to find it where ancient and medieval thinkers are still respected and studied. The Orthodox faith’s adherence to the Patristic traditions serves as a good example.

**c. Science vs. Divine Intervention**

We can now turn to the remaining assumption or principle of science, namely, that divine intervention does not occur. This is also a necessary assumption for science. Without it, the entire enterprise would never have started. As we noted above, the human mind naturally seeks teleological accounts for things. As the myths of world culture show, our minds can find imps, fairies, demons, angels and all manner of supernatural agents to cause all sorts of natural events. The explanation “God did it” comes so readily to mind and covers everything so easily that it encourages a certain torpor of mind. Here Ockham’s razor does its dirty work on the opposite side of the issue: If we already have a supernatural explanation, why should we bother to look for a natural one?

Yet having a teleological explanation alone is not the same as having a full explanation, any more than having only an efficient causal explanation would amount to a full explanation. We can see this in a simple event. The wood in the fireplace burns. It burns in part because it is wood (material cause), but it would not be burning if a heap of dirt was piled up over it (lack of a formal cause), and it would not be burning if a flame had not been applied to the kindling (lack of an efficient cause), and it would not be burning if I were not trying to warm the place up (lack of a final cause). If we want to understand the world (a natural desire for rational creatures), we have to look at the whole picture, not just a part.

God gave us intelligence so that we would make good use of it. He will not condemn us for investigating the natural world scientifically, providing we do not become prideful or hubristic along the way. The scientist, then, must make the assumption that divine intervention does not occur when he acts as a scientist. This last phrase in italics is the important part. It is scientific investigation and study that require this assumption, not life in general.

As we have seen, science studies how (in an efficient causal sense) things happen, not why (in a teleological sense) they happen. We have also seen that while these causal explanations may overlap, they are not identical. There is, then, more to life than doing science, and more to the universe than science reveals or investigates. Yet, because this fact is not emphasized in schools, students naively form the impression that science is the study of everything, and that there is nothing beyond. Consequently, they mistakenly export the assumptions they make in the classroom or lab into real life and assert, as a matter of fact, that divine intervention does not occur. As a result, they find themselves confused about everything religious: from the power of prayer to the existence of God. Yet the crisis has a simple cause: the failure to distinguish between the restrictive requirements of doing science, and the wider realities of the real world. The difference between asserting that divine intervention does not occur “as a scientific principle” and that it does not occur “as a matter of fact” may be a subtle one, but that does not make it unimportant. Let us bear in mind that, “The snake was the most subtle beast in the garden” (Genesis 3:1). Sometimes avoiding the traps of the Devil is difficult, whether mentally, physically, or spiritually.

**d. Is There Something More?**

In order to keep this discussion short, I have not mentioned some important challenges to Christian belief that come from fields like anthropology, political science, and psychology. In general, many of these fields aspire to be scientific (since science has developed such an impressive list of successes), and, consequently, many of the challenges they pose are dependent on the atheistically-suggestive impressions that science can produce. Perhaps, then, the things said above can either be modified so as to address a specific challenge in one of these fields, or can be used to encourage teachers and researchers in those fields to open the horizons of their field to non-scientific modes of explanation.

I indicated at the outset that academia is subject to fashions, fads, phases and trends. If we review what we have covered this far, we can see that two things emerge as thematic in helping to establish these fads: assertions and impressions. These assertions and impressions are filtered into the popular culture through charisma and its contrary, as well as by the mechanics involved in such things as state and corporate sponsorship of education.

When we touch on the motives of industries and corporations in sponsoring education, we move into the realm of final causes. Today, the influence of corporate support for
education is still in a developmental phase, because it has only been happening for less than 150 years. Nevertheless, there have been major consequences. For example, most students today do not pursue a degree in order to become educated or wise, but in order to qualify for a certain kind of employment. While shifts such as this will have a significant impact on the culture, the corporate influence on education currently does not play a significant role in the trend towards atheism. This trend finds its motivations in a much older agenda, and so has had the time to grow into something much more systematic.

While some students may realize that the rise of science parallels the collapse of the power of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe, few realize how the two are interconnected. Until shortly before the scientific revolution, the Roman Catholic Church had been the dominant cultural force in Europe. In the early 1500s, however, the Protestant Reformation began. Because the Roman Catholic Church had been involved in secular affairs for centuries, the Protestant Reformation involved not only theological issues, but political and economic ones as well. Many of those who were eager for power, prestige, or wealth (and who were in a position to act on that desire), discovered that the surest route to their own success lie in weakening the Roman Church.

The famous “Copernican Revolution” provides an example of this. Copernicus was a Catholic priest who had an interest in mathematical astronomy. At the urging of certain Protestants who learned of his work, he apparently agreed to let them publish it. Copernicus, however, never released the manuscript. Instead, the Protestants acquired the manuscript and published it after his death. The Protestant interest in the text is clear: here they had a Catholic priest developing a system of astronomy that contradicted the system endorsed by the Pope, and supported not only by the Catholic hierarchy but also by its theological teachings. This was a golden opportunity to undermine the Roman Church’s teaching authority, and the Protestants naturally seized it. Somewhere along the line, the myth developed that Copernicus’ system was “simpler” or mathematically “more elegant” than the traditional system and so it came to be adopted as an “advance” or “progress.” As those who have actually compared the two systems know, these claims are false, but the sales pitch worked. As a result, the teaching authority of the Church was severely damaged, and those who were seeking to weaken it further had acquired several additional advantages, including:

- They could now make a case that the Roman Church would favor tradition over “the facts;”
- They could now make a case that the Church stifled academic freedom;
- They recognized that the Church was not as prepared to defend its views as it should have been;
- They recognized that science could be used to weaken the power of the Church.

These factors made it easy for the enemies of the Roman Church to attract intelligent, creative minds, and set them to tasks that were at odds with established Roman Catholic views. Consequently, those interested in gaining power, prestige, or wealth became the leading supporters of early science, fostering and protecting scientists and promoting their works, especially if they conflicted with ideas endorsed by the Church.

In order to reduce the amount of work that they had to do in order to usurp the old system, one of their first targets was the educational system, known as scholasticism. Today, we are frequently taught the caricature of scholasticism that its critics developed in order to defeat it. The word “dunce,” for example, originally referred to an adherent of the once well-respected scholiast Duns Scotus. The strength of scholasticism was in its tradition of scholarship. The results of the past were always being reassessed. Lengthy and intricate commentaries were written and elaborated on. “Progress” and “innovation” were looked on with suspicion, so it took a long time for any change to gain acceptance.

In order to bypass this system, a new beginning was made. Thinkers were encouraged to make a fresh start, and ignore the findings of the past. Writers like Francis Bacon led the charge. Rene Descartes began his Meditations by inviting the reader to forget everything he had been taught. Thomas Hobbes, in his Leviathan, took as a starting point a position which is diametrically opposed to the traditional view of human society that was formulated by Aristotle. And scientific discoveries, such as those that Galileo made famous, were intentionally given interpretations that conflicted with traditional, church-endorsed views. Whereas the old system had become bogged down in continually reassessing the thought of the past, the new system simply repudiated it.

While this abandonment made rapid “progress” possible, it also has some drawbacks. One is that the roots of modern thought are generally quite shallow. Another is that the early supporters, promoters, and practitioners of modern thought probably did not realize that, in undermining the faith that people had in the Roman Catholic Church, they were also undermining faith in religion. This is not because the Roman Catholic Church is identical with religion (or even with Christianity), but because in Europe it had come
to be regarded as identical with religion since it had faced little competition for over a thousand years. That is to say that, in weakening the position of the Roman Catholic Church, they were creating the impression in the European mind that religion in general was equally weak. Consequently, the original, anti-Catholic, agenda has, over time, become distorted and grown into an anti-religious and then an atheistic agenda, like a rock slide transformed into an avalanche.

Today, because the influence of the Roman Church has been considerably weakened, perhaps many of those who carry this agenda forward do not even know why they are doing it. Yet the impressions that they themselves have forced from the teachings of their masters have pushed them ever closer to the abyss. And their training requires them to draw the logical conclusions. As a consequence, they now face an awareness of such things as their own lack of purpose, their absence of a sense of who they are, and the prospect of their own immanent annihilation. They may, however, still partake in the feelings of newness, adventure, discovery, and rebellion that helped get the process started, but this would seem to be cold consolation.

The modern man, that is, anyone thoroughly indoctrinated in the Western educational system that has grown out of the Protestant attacks on the Roman Church, finds himself in a dismal Hell. He is nothing. On the positive side, as a pure potential, he can, theoretically, do anything. On the negative side, there is no reason for him to do one thing rather than another. The result is more likely to be paralysis than action, but even if the result is action, it must ultimately be empty, meaningless action. Once again, however, we can ask ourselves why anyone would ever “buy into” such a system in the first place. If we disengage ourselves from the secular motivations of the Protestant Reformation (which is hardly a matter of concern for Orthodox Christians, and which even most Europeans regard as ancient history), what remains to motivate us? Are we jumpingly in just to be with all the other lemmings? Are we pervertedly eager to be miserable? What is the attraction? What is the benefit?

CONCLUSION

The assertions of leading thinkers like Nietzsche, Marx, Kant, as well as those of numerous scientists, together with impressions formed by students exposed to them, can lead students into a real quagmire of doubt, or even further into any number of hellish states of mind. Yet escape is always possible for those who are ready to question assumptions and assertions, and who bear in mind that engaging in certain intellectual disciplines involves temporarily entering into a narrower frame of mind than that of normal experience. If students regard the works of the great thinkers of the modern movement as monuments worth visiting and studying, but not as homes worth inhabiting (something like the great Pyramids of Egypt, which are truly wonders, but the rooms inside are isolated, dismal, relatively small in proportion to the entire structure, and intended for none but the dead), they are likely to avoid the snares that await the unprepared.

Western intellectuals have been dropped into the abyss of despair. They have reached the conclusion that they are nothing, and so have nothing to offer their students. And yet all of this is a bleak mirage, and, with the help of God’s mercy and love, even these lost souls stand a good chance of being saved despite themselves. Christ is risen! Christ will come again! Believe it. Count on it. Act upon it. Nothing that science or philosophy or any other academic field has produced in the past 450 years presents a genuine obstacle to faith. You cannot be educated out of your faith (unless you call adopting false impressions “education”).

Of course, this is not to say that every student will be equally prepared to meet the challenges that come his or her way. Parents, priests, parishioners, and students themselves are right to be concerned about the power and influence of education. And it is appropriate for them to work together to protect and foster each other’s faith. When things look their bleakest, take Mother Teresa’s advice and pray anyway. Perhaps your example will inspire others to reconsider their actions and convictions.

John Newell, Ph.D.

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1 Before beginning, I should apologize and beg the reader’s indulgence. The subject I am addressing here is very large and deserves a full and meticulous scholarly study. There is also, however, some urgency in getting the message out, since many are being led astray. Since it is probably better to say something new, rather than everything ten or twenty years from now (or perhaps never), I have produced this preliminary sketch. Perhaps those who can discern where I intend to go can take this rough excursus, or some part of it, and turn it into the kind of discussion that it ought to be.

2 The magnitude of this declaration cannot be fully explored in this paper, but only pride or folly would cause one to take it lightly. Moses himself fell short of perfection.

3 One result of the “transcendence” of our brains is that we have no real idea of their actual nature. It could be that they mirror the world they create, but we know that, for example, a computer does not mirror the “reality” it creates when we play a game on it. For all Kant knows, this “mind-behind-the-scenes” could be that of a mollusk sitting at the bottom of the sea.

4 “Exists” here has its traditional meaning, not Kant’s meaning.

5 For Kant’s own presentation, see Critique of Pure Reason A597-602/B625-630.

6 Kant does find a reason for creating a god within: this god is a device our brains

7 See chapter 3 of Anselm’s Proslogium for his version.
A central component of our Christian Charities, the Children’s Relief Fund (CRF) is a humanitarian project designed for the assistance of children in need. It was initiated in response to pressing appeals coming from Lebanon in the wake of its disastrous invasion in 1982. But it soon caught on as a solid outreach program, serving hundreds of school-age children each year in the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch.

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10 For clarification, “I love you” here means “I am gladdened by your presence, I desire to refute), and so the cat will be back out of the bag. Mathematicians have known for some time that a system cannot be both consistent and complete. I think we would all prefer that science be consistent and recognize its limits.

11 Certainly, the history of science provides many examples (for example, the writings of Francis Bacon) of teleological arguments for why the culture should enter into the scientific enterprise in the first place.

12 I would say that this covers all people, but there is sure to be at least one who will be happy to proclaim himself a robot and nothing more.

13 If someone now wants to refute this claim, they may set about doing so and may even succeed, but their refutation will thus have a teleological origin (i.e., the desire to refute), and so the cat will be back out of the bag. Mathematicians have known for some time that a system cannot be both consistent and complete. I think we would all prefer that science be consistent and recognize its limits.

14 One of the problems that needs to be addressed more fully is the definition of the term “existence,” which, to my mind, nobody has yet defined fully and accurately.

15 For more paradoxes like this see, for example, the chapter “The Antinomy of Pure Reason” in Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason (A406-B432/B432-505).

16 Please do not waste your time attempting to do this, it is impossible.

17 That is, mysticism in its pejorative sense: obscure, irrational speculation.

18 It is important to note that these are science’s own rules, not the rules of a patriarch, or a theologian, or someone trying to stop science from examining an interesting topic. Another example of a self-limiting rule in science is the current adherence to the idea that objects cannot move faster than the speed of light. Anyone who wants to explore such a topic these cays will have to do it in another field, like science fiction.

19 Giving an exact date for things like this is difficult. For our purposes, we can set the beginning of the scientific revolution at about 1550.

20 In the discussion that follows, I will be examining only the secular motives and methods of the Protestant Reformation. If it seems to the reader that I am giving preferential treatment to the Roman Catholic Church, this is not my intention. The theological merits of the Protestant Movement are outside the concerns of this paper and have not had an effect on the rise of atheism (after all, neither Protestants nor Catholics are atheists).

21 Whether he actually agreed or not is debatable.

22 This claim is still echoed in school textbooks to this day.

23 As a matter of fact, the first evidence that the Earth orbited the Sun (stellar aberration) was discovered almost 200 years later (1725), but, by that time, the traditional view had long been abandoned.

24 That is, it lacked either the understanding or the charisma to combat the challenges it faced. The Church tried, instead, to use coercion, but this just made things worse.

25 After all, they were not atheists, but Protestants.

26 Indeed, this is the conclusion of Jean-Paul Sartre.
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Big Town from Small Town Eyes

A Teen SOYO – OYO Experience
by Theresa Nicholas
Ss. Peter and Paul, Ben Lomond CA

On an average Thursday night I’d be soundly asleep and awaiting another boring day at school. This wasn’t an average Thursday. I was in my bedroom with my two friends Mary-Lynn and Helen. I knew we were going to wake up at 4:00 AM but that didn’t stop my busy mind from the anticipation for the coming weekend. With only two hours of sleep I jumped at the sound of my alarm clock and remembered why I couldn’t sleep. My friends and I, tired as we were, quickly lugged our bags into my small car and we left our small town of Felton, population of 6,554 and we were shipped off to the airport.

It’s 5:00 AM and we get a boost of energy as we realize we are alone. No parents. We’re in an airport about to travel across the country. Even though I knew why I was going on this trip, there was other excitement inside that just wanted out, wanted out of my hometown. I was too ready, I guess you could say, to get out and explore. I kept envisioning the urban streets and the busy energy of the city life that is so foreign to me. After a long three-hour flight, I took my first steps in the city of Chicago and my first steps in a city with poverty.

Later that day we met with all the teenagers and chaplains of our OYO event at the Parish of All Saints Orthodox Church in the city. I was very overwhelmed to see twenty new faces. I met people from Kansas, New Jersey, California, Canada and even people that were natives of Chicago itself. I was surprised to meet people from the Greek Archdiocese. I was also very excited to see our leader for the weekend, Father Kevin Scherer. From our previous trips together, I had grown to admire his down-to-earth personality and wisdom of poverty on the streets. For a couple hours we discussed topics like homelessness and having inadequate resources; all this interests me. But really, I’m a very hands-on person; I wanted to get into action the minute I stepped off that plane.

When we started to drive to the house we would be working at, the streets drew my attention directly to the vibe of the people. As I sat in our van in slow moving traffic, everything outside seemed to be on fast forward. It was cold and no one knew each other. I saw that people were exhausted and wearisome of the day. I could feel the panic and frenzy of the business behind the glass. Maybe the other people in my car didn’t notice this, because their home is somewhat similar, but around my town, the streets aren’t a place of individuals so much; we are like a community and people are pleased to bump into a new face. Here, another human seemed to be an annoyance and another person to get in their way.

One of the most powerful images that pop up in my mind when I go back to Chicago is the beautiful skyline. The Sears tower and the magnificent skyscrapers were like none I’ve ever seen. These buildings represented power and when I thought about who and what ran those buildings, I thought of rich and important people. People who ran the city obviously wanted to show it all off with their elaborate building structures. As I looked away, my eyes encountered the skyline opposite. I saw rubble, small homes, broken windows, unbearably sized housing and filthy neighborhoods. This was Caburny Green Projects.

My emotions took on a whole new mentality as I went from feeling awe and amazement to confusion and heartbrokenness. I had seen housing projects in movies before, but it became real considering I was literally feet away from these so called “homes.” I was told that, in the past few years, much of Chicago’s homeless population came from families from these very houses. Why, because the city wasn’t content with the income and the image that these projects contributed to the city.

I felt angry and I couldn’t understand how someone could wake up every morning and look out their window and see a skyline of wealth that had provided them with next to nothing and threatened to take away even the little that they had. I was quick to see how the city made it easy to spot the skyline and the wealthy part of the city. It was also apparent how the projects were hidden and in an easy place to be ignored and unacknowledged. Witnessing these buildings helped me see clearly what people want to associate themselves with. These projects made me feel uncomfortable and the powerful people of Chicago no doubt knew this. When I stepped back and looked at the two and compared them, it seemed as though money was valued higher.
than family, that maybe money and power were much more important than the struggles of the poorer Chicagoans.

On my last night I actually got to go into the heart of the city and play with the children from the low income apartments and the shelter. That evening I was personally affected by a little girl. It was a starry night and the scenery resembled the movie “West Side Story.” There was one obvious difference between my group and the children we were playing with. We were white. They were black. We were rich. They were poor. To a grown-up person, this would make a difference but not to the children. These kids would love us if we were poor, rich, purple or green. It didn't make a difference. The girl that I started to play with took interest in me so genuinely. She played with my soft hair as she recited the long list of names in her family. I found comfort in her joy and purity. She valued things that mattered — her mom, her brothers and sisters and her friends. I guess I had expectations of her being really unhappy and mean, considering her circumstances, but she was just a kid and she wasn’t chained to these ideas of being dirty or poor.

Just as I was being intrigued by this young girl, she took my hand and started leading me into her shelter room in the same building. She took me inside her room where there must have been 200 bunk beds in a cramped, chilled room. She led me to her bunk bed where her mother lay. Without hesitation, she introduced me to her mother. Her mom was obviously uncomfortable and probably humiliated to have me see where her family lives day and night, in these small bunk beds. It wasn't like they didn't own anything, or they lived in rags. It just happened that they were temporarily without a home. At this point my heart was overwhelmed immensely. I saw how easy it would be to wind up somewhere like this. Who knows, maybe tomorrow my mom could lose her job and my house could be taken away from me. Some are just luckier than others.

It didn’t seem like I “helped” this girl, all I did was play with her for a couple hours. When I remember the fact that she gained nothing or very little that night, it made it clear to me why I went to Chicago. Sure, I would like to believe that I gave that girl something before I left. Honestly, I can’t say I gave anything meaningful to this girl. Probably unaware of her actions, she exposed part of her life, home and family to me. Through this little girl I found my purpose in a way perhaps, not only for my weekend in Chicago, but also for my life back at home. I found a deeper mission on this mission trip: to love and be compassionate to others and to find Christ in the poor homeless man, a little child, the rich business woman and even my own mom back at home.

Why couldn’t I just send the money to OYO and let them do the missionary work for me? Because it’s not about the money or the food we feed the homeless with. It is an opportunity to throw me out of my comfort space and allow me to connect with people that I never knew I could connect with. Experiences like these are important because maybe they teach me what it is to love people that aren’t necessarily easy to love and to love when it looks as though that other person has nothing to offer.

This trip was my third short-term missionary project with Orthodox Youth Outreach; I am still fascinated when I see the growth God has sent me into. I used to think that I went with OYO to help homelessness and poverty and change others. Now, returning from this big Illinois city, I see it as so much more than that. It’s a chance to focus on the heart of the people we encounter and to humble ourselves to become more like Christ.

It honestly would not have been worth it to me if I came home from this trip and Chicago didn't mean anything to me anymore. Fortunately, that isn’t the case. I have come home to recognize poverty all around me. Not necessarily in lack of money, but in lack of love and happiness too. It has become a clear reality that I have a ridiculously huge responsibility to love people in my own home town. Chicago has made me excited to start serving others and work on opening my eyes to see God’s plan and how He can use me right where I am. I am so passionate about what happened in November, and I pray that OYO will grow and continue to give opportunities for teenagers like me to serve and to experience moments that bring us closer to man and God.

OYO (Orthodox Youth Outreach) is a ministry of NAC Teen SOYO, which has been designed to provide local parishes and youth workers with the resources necessary to involve junior and senior high students in local community service and short-term mission projects. The purpose of the program is to encourage our youth to live out their faith through service to others. OYO provides opportunities for youth to get involved with outreach at different levels and help them grow into positions of student leadership.
January is
NAC Teen SOYO Education Month

Teen SOYO has committed itself to providing scholarships to educate parish youth workers. Teen SOYO members express that they see the difference between educated youth workers and those that are not. More significantly, they see the differences in the teens that are ministered to by educated youth workers.

We are committed to educating our parish youth workers in a significant way. This September we began this education process by partnering with the Antiochian House of Studies to provide the opportunity for parish youth workers to receive both a certificate in Applied Orthodox Studies with a concentration in Youth Ministry, as well as a Master Degree in Applied Orthodox Studies with a concentration in Youth Ministry. This program is specifically designed for parish Youth Workers that are working and who cannot leave their jobs and homes for an extended period of time to attend an Orthodox Seminary.

We are excited about the prospect of well-educated parish Youth Workers.

Join Teen SOYO in this quest to provide scholarships to your parish and youth workers to participate in this education program, so that they may better serve the youth of your parish.

You can help educate parish youth workers by making a contribution to the NAC Teen SOYO Youth Worker Fund

Name

Address

City State/Province Zip/Postal Code

Amount Enclosed:
☐ $1,000   ☐ $500   ☐ $250   ☐ $100   ☐ $50   ☐ Other Amount____________________

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Card # Exp. Date CVV2 Code*

*The last 3 digits on the back of Visa, MasterCard, and Discover cards. For AMEX cards, the 4 digits above the credit card number on the front.

More information on this education program can be found at:
http://www.antiochian.org/education_parish_youth_directors

Mail donations to:
NAC Teen SOYO Youth Worker Fund — Department of Youth Ministry — PO Box 389 — Westwood, MA 02090

On-line donations to the Youth Worker Fund may be made at: http://www.antiochian.org/youth_worker_fund
Support
YOUR LOCAL PARISH

In 1969, James Garner starred in a comedy western entitled Support Your Local Sheriff. It's an enjoyable film that trades on the clichés of the genre, the most important of which is the good townsfolk joining with the sheriff to fight off the local bad guys. The sheriff (Garner) in this case is a stranger who was passing through town on his way to Australia, but applied for the job as sheriff to supplement whatever he might earn prospecting for gold. In the end, the villains are routed, the town is saved, and the girl gets the guy (or vice versa).

That bit of movie trivia actually has little to do with the subject of this article, other than providing me a nice title on which to pun. The occasion for my thinking about this was prompted by the suggestion that someone made to me just recently. They suggested that the reason I attend St. Nicholas is that I am more comfortable with the Western Rite, and the reason others bypass St. Nicholas and drive to Post Falls (ID) is that they are much more comfortable with the Eastern Rite. This set me to thinking about why people attend one particular parish rather than another, and it also got me to thinking about the very nature of regional church organization.

As it turns out, the reason that I decided to attend St. Nicholas was not that I was comfortable with the Western Rite; at least this was neither true when I began attending the parish nor after I was chrismated into the parish. Instead, I began attending and continue to attend St. Nicholas because it is the Antiochian Orthodox parish that is closest to my home. If St. Nicholas were an Eastern Rite parish, it would still be my home parish. In truth, though, all of this requires an “all other things being equal” qualification.

There are three qualifications I would look for to support my position on “all other things being equal.” First, the liturgy must be done in the right manner and in accordance with the Canons of the Church. Next, the preaching and teaching must express true orthodox Christianity. Finally, the parish must encourage spiritual practices that push me towards growth in holiness. I believe that all of these are true at St. Nicholas.

The general point that I’d like to make, though, is that “comfort” isn’t really the determining factor for me. In fact, I believe that it should not be the determining factor for anyone. It might well be that I would be uncomfortable with the Eastern Rite, but if it were the nearest parish (and all other things were equal) that is where I would be on Sunday mornings and at other times throughout the week. As it stands, I’ve been to an Eastern Rite parish only once, and that was in the Byzantine Catholic Church. I thought that the liturgy was beautiful, even though it was unfamiliar to me.

All of which brings me back to my theme of supporting one’s local parish. I think that there can be good pastoral reasons for permitting or even encouraging someone to be a member of a parish that is not local, but it still seems to me that (all other things being equal) this should be the exception and not the rule. After all, if we are members of the same Church, if both rites are legitimate and “all other things being equal” conditions are met, then one should join with members of one’s local church family for worship, prayer, discipleship and service.

We should be careful not to judge those who bypass our doors to go to St. John’s or any other Orthodox parish. But I do believe that we can use this as an occasion to examine ourselves. To what are we committed? To that which makes us comfortable? To a particular liturgy or rite? To what then? If we are seeking comfort over truth, then aren’t we being conformed to the surrounding consumerist culture, rather than being transformed by the Holy Ghost? Shouldn’t our primary commitment be to the Truth, to the One Who Is the Truth?

What if we think that all other things aren’t equal? To be more precise, what if we find the spiritual temperature in one parish not quite up to the level of the spiritual temperature in another parish, what should our response be? Again, we cannot judge individuals and the decisions that they make, and there isn’t a “one size fits all” answer to this pastoral question. On the other hand, we can say in general that Christian charity calls us to enter into the life of our local parish, no matter its temperature; to love its people, to worship and pray faithfully, so that the love of God might have occasion to raise the temperature.

Perhaps the allusion of my title is more apt than I originally thought. We should never forget that we are in a spiritual fight. There really are bad guys, those spiritual powers of darkness, who are trying to wreck the lives of the townspeople. They would like
nothing better than to see us divided against each other, to be judging one another, to be breaking off into camps. In this way, the town can be rendered defenseless. But, if we put aside our self-love and begin to serve others, paying less attention to our own comfort, we can begin to pay more attention to comforting others. If we love rite less and rightly love others more, if we pursue the Truth and commit ourselves to supporting our local parish, then God can do great things and the townspeople will be saved.

by Subdeacon Brian Clayton, Ph.D.

Brian Clayton is a member of St. Nicholas Western Rite Church in Spokane, WA, and Professor in the Department of Philosophy, Gonzaga University, Spokane.

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Library Receives Memorial Collection

Constance Byers of Greensburg, PA and Mary Volchko of Ligonier, PA recently presented to Ligonier Valley Library twelve new books relative to understanding Orthodox Christianity.

The collection of books is a collaborative memorial donation from the family and their local parish in remembrance of the late Helen Marie Ross, sister of Byers and daughter of Volchko. Byers is a member of St. Michael's Antiochian Orthodox Church in Greensburg and serves as parish coordinator for the Fellowship of St. John Divine, which has a national book donation project. Helen Ross was a Ligonier resident and was also an active member of St. Michael's Church.

Janet Hudson, director of Ligonier (PA) Valley Library, was eager to receive the collection since the Library had two years ago upgraded its religious section and its holdings. “We recently worked on the religious section of the Library to offer information on all faiths to our library patrons. Prior to receiving this gift, our collection had many books containing information and references to Orthodox Christianity,” Hudson said, “but only had two titles specifically devoted to the Orthodox Christian faith. We are so pleased to receive this wonderful set of books. Be assured that they will be well used for many years to come.”

Hudson noted she had recently visited the Antiochian Village Heritage Library and was “amazed” at their holdings. Antiochian Village is a very close, convenient resource to refer patrons of Ligonier Valley who desire more information on theological topics, she added.

Father Michael Massouh, executive director of Antiochian Village, commented, “Antiochian Village Christian Conference and Retreat Center’s Heritage Library has 21,000 volumes in the area of theology and related topics, with an emphasis on Christian theology and its Eastern heritage. In the past couple of years, we have been working in a variety of ways with Janet and the Ligonier Valley Library. The memorial donation of books by Connie and Mary to add to its religious section, as well as the referral of patrons seeking additional religious or theological information to the Village’s Library, are just two more examples of partnerships where everyone benefits.”

The twelve-book collection was carefully selected by the Fellowship of St. John Divine of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America as a communication ministry tool that will provide introductory information about the Orthodox faith to anyone who might be interested. The same books have been donated as memorials or gifts to fifty-one libraries throughout the United States where Antiochian Orthodox parishioners reside, as part of an on-going project for the Fellowship.
On Thursday, July 15, 2004, the biennial summer Conference of the Western Rite Vicariate leadership convened at the Hilton Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA just prior to the special Convention of the Antiochian Archdiocese. Some thirty-five members of the Western Rite parishes, together with interested Byzantine clergy and friends, met in a day-long session.

The conference opened with a Liturgy celebrated by Fr. Nicholas Alford and a team from his St. Gregory’s parish in Falls Church, VA, with delegates singing all the responses. After a continental breakfast provided by the Vicariate, the Agenda filled the full day, interrupted by lunch and ending at 5:00 p.m. with a sung compline presented by Fr. John Connelly and a group from his St. Mark’s parish in Denver, CO.

Metropolitan Philip addressed the meeting, assuring the members, as he always does, of his interest and support. Although the Western Rite movement received the blessing and authorization of the Archdiocese fifty years ago, it is not fully known or understood by many members of the community. The Conference petitioned His Eminence to assure the rites be protected from interference from the uninformed. The Agenda discussed the need for outreach with increased publicity, especially to the Byzantine co-religionists.

Three new missions reported. A recent member, Fr. John Flora, attended with a delegate from the new St. Michael’s Church in Wichita, KS, currently located in the chapel of the Cathedral there.
While modern health professionals have only recently begun to question the notion that the mind, body, and spirit can be treated separately, many holistic approaches to healing have their roots in fundamental ancient practices of Byzantium, according to new research presented at Harvard University and Hellenic College.

The Healing Initiative, affiliated with both Hellenic College and the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard, sponsored a conference recently on the subject of Byzantine healing practices as related to modern understandings of holistic health. The two-day conference brought together leading scholars and health professionals from throughout the U.S. for the first of three research seminars on integrative healing practices. The subject of this year’s conference addressed historical foundations. The second conference, which will be held next spring on the Hellenic College campus, will focus on theological issues in healing, and the third conference the following year will address modern applications.

The Healing Initiative has secured funding for next year’s conference through grants from the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard, the Lilly Endowment, the Metanexus Institute, and Hellenic College — all of whom sponsored the first of the conferences this spring.

This year’s conference, Holistic Healing in Byzantium: Epistemologies and Methodologies, examined the history of Byzantine integrative healing approaches. The presenters considered interdisciplinary questions such as: How did Byzantines understand the difference between scientific and religious healing?; and Can holistic models of healing, such as those practiced in Byzantium, be reconciled with the specialized approaches of today’s healing disciplines?

Professor of History at Salisbury University, Timothy Miller, Ph.D., author of The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire, presented evidence for the relatively advanced scientific nature of Byzantine hospitals compared to their medieval Western counterparts. Whereas many hospitals in Latin Christendom were primarily institutions for caring, not curing, emphasizing confession of sin as well as weekly rites of aspersion with holy water, Byzantine hospitals had a decidedly more medical character — and as a result became training centers for physicians.

In fact, care for the sick was an innovative and central component of Byzantine monastic culture, according to research by Andrew Crispil, Ph.D., a professor of religion at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Crispil suggests that monastic leaders wrestled less with the implications of sickness within their own bodies than with the treatment of the sick within society. The resulting concern and social inclusion for the sick and disabled within the community is well-documented in writings from the fourth and fifth centuries.

However, as in modern times, the range of healing options pursued by individuals in Byzantium depended to some extent on one’s abode and social class, according to research by Alice Mary Talbot, Ph.D., who is Director of Byzantine studies at Dumbarton Oaks. Healing options varied from medical institutions to magic, traditional herbal medicine, and faith healing. Talbot’s paper, “Faith Healing in Byzantium,” explored the religious aspects of Byzantine healing. She found that “accounts of healing miracles often stress the element of personal faith, that is, a pilgrim would be healed only if he or she believed fervently in the power of the relics or living holy man.” Additional miracle accounts underscore the importance of shrines housing relics or holy icons of a saint, a healing spring, or a living holy person with healing powers.

Other presenters focused specifically on the holistic approach embodied in Orthodox Christian perspective. Maria Evangelatou, Ph.D., in her presentation, “Virtuous soul, healthy body: the holistic concept of health in Byzantine representations of Christ’s healing miracles,” examined the use of textual and visual artifacts to reinforce the holistic notion that sickness and infirmity were connected to faith and morality. Evangelatou explained that holistic healing “acknowledges that human beings are made of both matter and spirit and accepts these two spheres.”

John Chirban, Ph.D., Th.D., a senior fellow at Harvard’s Center for the Study of World Religions, professor of psychology at Hellenic College, and conference coordinator, addressed the integrative nature of Orthodox Christian holistic approaches. Chirban’s analysis contends that rather than viewing the world as divided between the scientific and the spiritual, Byzantine healers emphasized a broad range of avenues for healing. Instead of focusing on one aspect of mind, body, or spirit, Orthodox Christian health practitioners attempted to address the whole self — the rational self, the emotional self, the self that experiences the world, the True Self at the core of one’s nature, and the self that is connected to others and God. Any of these could be a medium for healing: for example, in addition to impressive medical advances in Byzantium, healing was also understood as a byproduct of one’s goodness.

In conjunction with this research, Chirban and the Institute of Medicine, Psychology, and Religion (IMPR) have conducted a pilot study in the form of surveys of contemporary Orthodox clergy and health professionals in order to understand the diversity of professional perspectives on holistic healing and faith in modern times.

A project of the Healing Initiative, the IMPR study in the form of surveys of contemporary Orthodox clergy and health professionals in order to understand the diversity of professional perspectives on holistic healing and faith in modern times. Chirban presented initial findings from this study at the closing of the conference and invited Orthodox Christian practitioners of medicine, psychology, and religion to participate in the larger national study. Work is under way to put the survey on-line and expand it nationwide: please visit inmpr.com.

Other presenters at this year’s conference included Peter Bistolariades, M.D., surgeon; Rev. Nicholas Graff, Director, St. Photios shrine; Rev. Markos Nickolas, pastoral psychologist; Jeff Rediger, M.D., Director of the Plymouth Clinic, McLean Hospital, Harvard Medicine School; Susan Sereb, Ph.D., Director, The Healing Initiative, The Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University; and Rev. Nicholas Triantafilou, President, Hellenic College & Holy Cross School of Theology.


To participate in the Healing Initiative’s national study of health professionals and clergy or receive more information regarding the conference, please write to:

The Healing Initiative: Byzantine Healing & Holistic Health
The Institute of Medicine, Psychology, and Religion
PO Box 380958
Cambridge, MA 02138
Or visit www.inmpr.org
Successful Alumni Reunion Marks Renewed Effort to Build Up Alumni Relations

On Columbus day weekend forty alumni traveled to Crestwood, NY, for an Alumni Reunion, the first of its kind at St. Vladimir’s Seminary. This three-day event — held from Sunday, October 10 to Tuesday, October 12, 2004 — brought together representatives of many graduating classes, honoring the classes of 1954 and 1979 in particular. Some of those who attended were returning to the seminary’s campus for the first time since they graduated.

The Alumni Reunion will henceforth be an annual event at St. Vladimir’s Seminary. It is the realization of the administration and Board of Trustees’ strong desire to reach out to alumni and build up their relationship with the seminary and with one another. As such, it is also a fulfillment of one of the goals set by the seminary’s strategic plan, “SVS2010.”

The first Alumni Reunion was a great success. Participants enjoyed the chance to reunite with old friends and witness the developments that have taken place at the seminary in recent years. They were given a tour of campus, and also attended classes given by Priest John Behr and Dr. Albert Rossi.

A highlight of the event was a banquet honoring the classes of 1954 and 1979. Mr. Brian Gerich, a member of the seminary’s Board of Trustees who has contributed generously to the strengthening of alumni relations, delivered the main address. Prof. Veselin Kesich, professor emeritus of New Testament and member of the class of 1953, also spoke about his recent travels in Serbia. He described how he encountered many St. Vladimir’s Seminary alumni in Serbia, as well as hierarchs, monks, and others in the Church who shared with him how thankful they were for the influence of St. Vladimir’s Seminary in their lives.

Archpriest Paul Lazor (class of 1964) presided at the Divine Liturgy on Tuesday morning of the reunion. This service was a unique opportunity for priests spanning a wide range of classes to serve together. Concelebrating were Protopresbyter Daniel Hubiak (1956); Archpriest Sergius Kuharsky (1953); Archpriest Steven Belonick (1977), alumni liaison; Archpriest Rade Merick (1979); Archpriest Joseph Purpura (1979); and Archpriest Anthony Yazge (1988). A memorial service was also held on Monday in remembrance of departed hierarchs, deans, faculty, and alumni of the seminary.

During the general assembly of the alumni, the establishment of an SVS Alumni Scholarship was announced which will be awarded to students demonstrating need. Archpriest Alexander Federof, rector of St. John of Damascus Church (OCA) in Poway, CA, joyfully presented a $5,000 check on behalf of his parish to initiate the scholarship fund. Two additional gifts toward the fund were presented later at the assembly.

Concluding the event was a special luncheon with His Beatitude Metropolitan Herman of the OCA, who addressed the alumni with kind words. His Eminence Archbishop Nicozlo, from the Orthodox Church in Georgia, was also present at the luncheon. The Alumni Board used this occasion to hold their biannual meeting and made many decisions concerning the future of alumni relations. A continuing education program for alumni was seriously discussed and endorsed by the seminary’s faculty. Ways to better reach out to alumni were also discussed. Archpriest Anthony Hughes, rector of St. Mary Church (AOCA) in Cambridge, MA, and Archpriest Ted Pisarchuk, rector of St. Justin Martyr Church (OCA) in Jacksonville, FL — both of whom have sent many students to St. Vladimir’s Seminary — sat in on the meeting to discuss recruitment strategies.

Finally, the alumni board experienced some transitions in leadership, with Archpriest Anthony Yazge stepping down from the position of president after eight years of service. Replacing him is Archpriest John Dresko, rector of Holy Trinity Church (OCA) in New Britain, CT, who was elected to a two-year term. Archpriest Yazge will continue to function as a member of the Alumni Board. Dianne Storheim from Edmonton, Alberta, will take over the position of secretary, replacing Alexandra Safchuk from Bethesda, MD.

The next Alumni Reunion is scheduled to take place October 9-11, 2005. These dates coincide with Columbus Day in the U.S. and Thanksgiving Day in Canada, thus making it possible for many to attend. Visit the seminary’s web-site, www.svots.edu, to find news of this newly established annual event, and many others hosted throughout the year at St. Vladimir’s Seminary.

The Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting Adds an Additional Scholarship

For the past twelve years the Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting has offered two scholarships, one for $1,000 and the other for $500.

The eligibility requirements are:
• Be a registered active member of a Boy or Girl Scout unit;
• Have earned the Eagle Scout Award for boys or the Gold Award for Girls;
• Be an active member of an Eastern Orthodox Church and must have earned the Alpha Omega Religious Scout Award;
• Have demonstrated practical citizenship in their church, school, Scouting unit, and community;
• Be enrolled in an accredited US high school and in their final year;
• Submit four letters of recommendation with the application; one letter from leaders of each of the following groups: religious institution, school, community leader, and head of Scouting unit.

Starting this year, the Russian Children’s Welfare Society, Inc., has funded an additional scholarship for $1,000 for a Scout who is of Russian descent and meets the above eligibility requirements.

The Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting Scholarship Committee will award the three national scholarships to the recipients who best meet the qualifications, and not on a “need” basis.

Applications can be obtained from E.O.C.S. Chairman, George N. Boulukos, 862 Guy Lombardo Avenue, Freeport, New York 11520, and must be submitted by May 1st of each year. The national winners will be announced in June of each year.
The Basilica of St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church, Livonia, MI

“Children are the Life of our Church Today”

This summer at the Basilica of St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Livonia, MI, we experienced a bursting of life from the children of our parish. We were pleased to see that the numbers were the biggest we have ever seen in both our Vacation Bible School (VBS) program and our 2nd annual Camp St. Mary program, but the real joy came from the spiritual life that blossomed from the youngest child and flowed to each and every adult in our parish.

It is truly amazing to watch preschool children worship their God and enjoy being gathered together in His church. It is incredible to watch young middle school students lead and mentor their younger elementary church members in the teachings of the Church, and then the very next day see those same middle school students being touched and molded by young adults who gave of their time and energy to make a difference in the lives of others. It is remarkable to hear a young college-aged student describe how spending his time being a leader in this summer program changed his life and direction for his future.

In years past we had grown to accept that each summer we would experience a down time and that it’s “just the way it is.” But with the implementation of a new summer program we call “Camp St. Mary,” our summers, along with our VBS program and the Antiochian Village, have become more alive than the regular school year.

Camp St. Mary began with a vision from a young college student named Michael Ansara who wanted our stu-
stems to have a camp-like experience like he had grown to love from years of being both a camper and a counselor at the Antiochian Village. “If we can't bring all of our kids to the Village, then we will bring the Village to them,” he thought. And so plans began to develop the logistics of a summer camp program right here at home.

Camp St. Mary met on every Tuesday during the summer for 10 consecutive weeks. The kickoff week was a trip to the world famous amusement park Cedar Point in Sandusky, OH. After the excitement started, the next 9 weeks were mapped out with precision, after the structure of the Village. Every Tuesday morning began with a prayer service followed by an hour and a half of Christian Education that was broken into two parts. One half was class lecture and discussion; the other half dealt with a hands-on experience of Orthodoxy including chanting, learning choir, making holy bread, a detailed church tour, and more. After a short refreshment break the students gathered for a community service project. This year we focused on doing outdoor yard work for our community's senior citizens and handicapped. We also wrote letters to a children's hospital and did some much-needed work around our own church facility.

The afternoon program was always geared toward food, fun, and fellowship. This year our campers enjoyed a water park and wave pool, canoeing, going to a lake, visiting a recreation center, bowling on a rain day, exploring a high-ropes course, and more. One week, while many of our students traveled to the Village, the remaining group visited the Holy Dormition Orthodox Monastery near Jackson, Michigan.

The summer concluded with an overnight camp-out trip at the Ansara Ranch, which has become one of the highlights of each camp season. Our students then turned their focus to their upcoming school year with all their new supplies and gear. Each one stepped onto their campuses with a big smile, because they all knew they just had the best summer of their lives.

47th Annual Antiochian Archdiocese Convention — Youth Activities

St. George, Troy, MI, welcomes you to the 47th annual Antiochian Archdiocese Convention. As you continue reading you will feel the excitement for our youth to attend this memorable convention.

There will be a youth room Monday-Friday from 10 am-10 pm. You will be able to gather there with friends. The youth room will be supplied with foosball, board games, music and snacks. The Dearborn Community Center is 10 minutes from the Hyatt Hotel (the convention hotel). We have access to the center Monday-Friday from 10 am-2 pm. It has activities for all ages. Children under 13 years of age must be accompanied by an adult. Shuttles will run from the hotel to the community center. Convention goers can enjoy an array of activities there, including zero depth entry pool for smaller children, a leisure pool with waterslides, and an Olympic-size lap pool. Also at the community center is a thirty-foot rock-climbing wall, basketball and volleyball courts, and playground equipment.

On Tuesday evening, we will host a movie at Henry Ford Index Theatre. Shuttles will be available.

We also have available an art room from Wednesday-Friday from 10 am-12 noon, which is free for children eight years and younger. Encourage your children to take part in this activity, as they will be able to make many exciting art projects. All projects will be donated to Children’s Hospital and other charitable organizations. Free workshops on Icons/Incense/Crosses are available for children nine years and older. These workshops will take place on Wednesday from 10 am-12 noon. Also planned for Wednesday is a day at Greenfield Village from 10 am-3 pm. Shuttle service will be available, and there is an admission charge to the Village. At Greenfield Village you can visit America’s greatest historical attraction and see the actual places where history was born, such as Thomas Edison Memorial Park Laboratory, the Wright Brothers’ home and workshop and much, much more. Enjoy re-enactments and live demonstrations on American Ingenuity and take a ride in a Model T, steamboat locomotive or steamboat for a nominal charge.

Thursday is Carnival Night at 7 pm. This is a ticketed event which includes fun games for the young and old, an array of interactive games including sumo wrestling, hiphop-hop, horse racing, duck pond, bottle and bean bag toss, clowns, face painting and much more.

Friday evening we will host the Hafli-American Dance. This also is a ticketed event. Enjoy Arabic dancing at the Hafli or “Cut a Rug” in the Hubbard ballroom to American music with DJ Jason.

Saturday from 12:30 pm-4 pm is an afternoon planned that will be very rewarding and help those in need. Help stomp out hunger by volunteering to pack food for distribution at the Gleaners Food Bank.

A fabulous Saturday evening is in the planning stages and will be an evening you will not want to miss.
The parish of St. George, Troy, MI anticipates your arrival to the 47th Antiochian Archdiocese Convention. Bring the entire family and friends for a week we promise will be memorable for all, a week filled with spiritual and social renewal. Please continue reading *The WORD* each month for future convention highlights. See you in July 2005.

**Kids Reaching Out to Kids**

The Church School of St. George Cathedral of Worcester, MA was asked to take on two more fund-raisers this year. Would we accept the challenge? Of course we would. Last year, we were very successful in our attempt to collect as many postage stamps as possible for the Archdiocese’s Department of Prison Ministry. This program, which we called “Stamp-Out Loneliness,” was fun and enjoyed by all. In the end, over 2,000 first-class postage stamps were donated to the Prison Ministry Department. Now, we were being asked to raise funds to purchase Orthodox cross necklaces for the children living at Hogar Rafael Ayau Orphanage in Guatemala. During a Real Break visit, one of our youth determined the children would love receiving them. Sitting around one evening with a group of former Church School teachers, we came up with the idea of “Kisses fro Crosses.” We bagged just seven Hershey Kisses in each of nearly three hundred small bags and tied them with ribbons. We also included a note thanking parishioners for their $1 donation per bag. The children passed them out after Liturgy and during coffee hour one Sunday and came away with over a few hundred dollars. Our parishioners were very generous and in less than one half-hour all bags of Hershey Kisses were gone. The children were thrilled. Our next step was to purchase the cross necklaces and package them to be sent to Guatemala. Donated Christmas cards were secured and the Church School children wrote a personal message inside each of them and included a lovely icon with the cross necklace. They were packaged and off they went to Guatemala to be enjoyed by all. It was truly a rewarding experience for the Church School children.

The second fund-raiser was held during Advent and we chose the Children’s Relief Fund of our Archdiocese as the recipient. Each child in our Church School program was given a collection card that consisted of an Icon of the Feast of the Nativity, along with an explanation of the Children’s Relief Fund on the outside. When this card was opened, there was enough room on the inside to attach forty quarters … one for each day of the Nativity Fast. The children were asked to do “just a little bit more” than they normally do during the course of the Fast, whether it was a little bit of extra work around the house, or doing something charitable on a daily basis. They were asked to couple this activity with attaching a quarter to the Collection Card on a daily basis, thus collecting a total of $10 for the Children’s Relief Fund during the course of the Fast. The cards were returned after the Feast of the Nativity, and it was determined that our Church School children collected nearly $1,000 for this worthwhile cause.

With their participation in these two fund-raisers, our children continue to be the embodiment of St. Paul’s words to Timothy, “Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

**Mission: Possible**

**Sayidna Antoun Visits Mission Church of the Virgin Mary**

With a visit from His Grace Bishop Antoun, the mission Church of the Virgin Mary located in Palos Hills, IL celebrated its first anniversary the weekend of August 27-29, 2004.

In the summer of 2003, Metropolitan Philip assigned Father Malek Rihani
and the faithful to move forward and establish a mission in Chicago’s Southwest Suburbs. With the support of Father Nicholas Dahdal and the St. George Parish Council (Cicero, IL), Father Malek and the faithful people in Chicago’s southwest community began working together to extend the Orthodox faith throughout the community and to establish a church to prepare our children for the uncertainty and complexity that exist in the world today. We need to protect, love, guide and teach our children.

In the fall of 2003, the mission was officially given the name, “Church of the Virgin Mary” (with the patronal feast of the Holy Dormition celebrated on August 15).

Father Malek and the newly-appointed Parish Council began working together, moving quickly to find a location for the community to worship together. As the search for a location continued, Father Malek began holding Great Vespers services in the homes of the Parish Council members on Saturday evenings. Every Vespers service was well attended, especially by the young adults in our community. The enthusiasm of the community was confirmation that we needed to move forward quickly to find a location to hold services. During this time, the Ladies Guild, Sr. SOYO/Fellowship of St. John the Divine and Teen SOYO elected officers and actively began establishing their respective memberships to assist the Church of the Virgin Mary Mission on this journey. The choir chanters were assembled and began practicing.

On Sunday, January 18, 2004 we celebrated our first Divine Liturgy together. This was made possible through the gracious hospitality of Father Andrew Harrison and our brothers and sisters at St. Luke Orthodox Church (OCA) in Palos Hills, IL, who opened their doors and have allowed the Church of the Virgin Mary Mission to use their beautiful church and facilities. It was a glorious day! Over three hundred people came to worship with us on the brisk, sunny winter day. Unfortunately, we had to turn people away as we could only accommodate approximately 250 people. It was evident that there is a tremendous need for a church in the far southwest side of Chicago.

In mid-February we held our first Sunday School class — with over 80 students registered! The Sunday School curriculum was designed to introduce and reinforce essential concepts of the Orthodox Faith to our children. Membership in our organizations continues to grow and all of the groups continue to be extremely active, both with spiritual and fellowship events. The choir/chanters, with their angelic voices faithfully sing the responses for the Liturgical Services each week.

We know you need to crawl before you can walk, but things are moving fast and our parish is growing quickly. Within just a few short months of existence we had over 130 registered families — the size of a mid-size parish! Our immediate goal is to quickly find a place of our own so we can continue to reach out to the community. As Father Malek said, “We still have a long way to go. We don’t have a building of our own, we don’t have a full-time priest, and we don’t even have an office or a secretary. But we do have faith, and we are determined to provide a better and more effective ministry to you — our beloved and deserving community; so let’s continue to work together as one loving
family, and to stay focused on the heavenly rather than the earthly.”

We recently celebrated our first anniversary, and we celebrated it as “Founders Weekend” to honor the many who worked hard in establishing this Mission. Countless hours were spent planning, executing and following-up to ensure the weekend was a success. Our focus remained on one thing — “to do it for the Glory of God.” Each event highlighted not only our physical growth thus far, but promoted family, spirituality and fellowship.

The weekend’s activities began on Friday evening at a dinner with Father Malek, Khouriye Dina, and the Parish Council members and their spouses as they welcomed His Grace Bishop Antoun to Chicago. Sayidna Antoun was very pleased to learn of the mission’s progress. His message to the group was clear: keep working hard, and find a place of your own in which to worship. His Grace knew that we are in a temporary location, and encouraged all of us to find a place very soon. He also spent time answering questions regarding church, sacraments and dogma. All of us were enlightened by his knowledge, and his unending patience and love for all who asked questions of him. He certainly made all of us feel great about what we were doing with the Mission.

On Saturday, Sayidna met with the Sunday School children, Ladies Guild, Teen & Sr. SOYO/Fellowship groups. This was an informal gathering, an opportunity for the children to ask the Bishop questions. The children had been preparing for Sayidna’s visit for weeks. To show their love and appreciation for Sayidna’s visit they sang him a special version of the poem “Footprints,” to which we actually added the footprints of the two youngest children of the mission. Sayidna was very pleased with it. Thanks to our Ladies, who prepared a delicious lunch for all to enjoy.

Great Vespers on Saturday evening was a delightful service. His Grace Bishop Antoun presided over the service. Celebrating the service along with Fr. Malek was Fr. Andrew of St. Luke Orthodox Church (OCA) and their community. Immediately following the service was a potluck dinner in the church hall. As we gathered together and broke bread, a main dish enjoyed especially by Sayidna was “mansaf,” a traditional Jordanian dish that he requested. As the evening concluded, Sayidna answered questions from the group, and was able to meet the many members of our Mission.

On Sunday morning the Divine Liturgy was held at a local banquet hall to accommodate the large crowd. The stage at the banquet hall was transformed into a beautiful altar — with an iconostasis built especially for the occasion, thanks to some creative and hard-working parishioners. His Grace celebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, along with Fr. Malek and Deacon Saed.

A Grand Banquet/Hafleh was held on Sunday evening, attended by approximately 500 guests, including families and area clergy from throughout greater metropolitan Chicago. We thank God for the visit of His Grace Bishop Antoun. He bestowed Christ’s blessings upon us. His presence confirmed the gathering of the faithful as members of God’s holy Church. His message inspired all of us to continue to work hard and focus on our possibilities, not our challenges as we bring the community together. IS POLLA ETI DHESPOTA!

To place this weekend in the archives of this Mission, and to help support our building fund, a “Commemorative Journal” was compiled with well-wishers sending in ads and letters in support of the Mission. This professional journal was given to all the banquet attendees. Thanks to the hard work of this committee, this journal will forever remind us of our humble, yet fast-paced beginnings!

If you are in the neighborhood,
please join us in worship on Sundays at 1:00 p.m. for the Divine Liturgy and on Saturdays at 6:30 p.m. for the Great Vespers service.

Orthodox Campus Fellowship

The Indiana University OCF group set up a power point presentation on the Orthodox Faith, prepared by Richard Barrett, at the Memorial Union of Indiana University. The Union is a center for guests and student activities. Our students were able to set up a table in the lobby of the Union. As can be seen in the photograph, they also set up a background of icons, etc., and had available handout material on the Orthodox Church. This was a good way to introduce non-Orthodox students to our faith, as well as to let them know that we have an Orthodox Church in Bloomington, IN.

St. Nicholas Orthodox Parish in Amsterdam Invites Beslan Siege Victims to Holland

At the initiative of the Russian Orthodox parish of St. Nicholas in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, a group of twenty children who fell victim to the siege of School Nr 1 in Beslan (Northern Ossetia) are to visit Holland in the spring holidays of 2005. The group is to be accompanied by three teachers and psychologists from the school.

Shortly after the dramatic end of the occupation of the school, a group of parishioners decided to launch an initiative as a contribution to reconciliation in the region. “Hatred scorches the human heart,” parish priest Sergi Osviannikov stated at the memorial service for the victims; “while vengeance, a force that deprives people of their humanity, can be avoided.” The parish decided to invite children who have been held hostage, as well as children of teachers killed at the school, to spend a holiday in Holland. The value of holidays for traumatized children has been established in many regions such as Northern Ireland and Chechnya. In 2002, St. Nicholas Church supported a summer camp for children from Chechnya.

In co-operation with the ad hoc Committee of Teachers and Parents from the school (on-line at www.beslan.ru), it has been decided to invite twenty children to spend one to two weeks with Dutch families in May 2005. The program, open to children irrespective of their religion and ethnicity, is being developed together with the Committee.

The number of children may possibly grow as other churches and community organizations in Holland support the initiative. Thousands of Dutch music lovers were informed about the initiative as maestro Valery Gergiev (himself from Northern Ossetia) chose to support the project at the Rotterdam Gergiev Festival 2005.

St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church has been in existence since 1973. The parish numbers some 250 members from over 20 ethnic backgrounds. Services are held both in Dutch and Slavonic.

Healthy Syrian and Lebanese Cooking

Helen Corey, a member of St. George Orthodox Church of Terre Haute, IN, is an internationally famous, award-winning cookbook author. Helen has traveled extensively throughout the United States conducting cooking shows and appearing at book signings; she has been featured in numerous newspaper and magazine articles. Helen has just released her newest book, Healthy Syrian and Lebanese Cooking. In one review, the Brazil Daily Times wrote: “A very unusual and truly interesting culinary masterpiece. More than just a cookbook of recipes from the land of
Bible History, Corey gives a detailed description of Mid-East customs, celebrations and holidays. It contains a complete section on Lenten foods…” This new book also includes health benefits of the foods, hints on cooking, and useful everyday Arabic phrases, along with an Arabic glossary. The book includes photos of children making holy bread, the service of a house blessing and much more.

The book takes you on a journey to Syria with all of the historical sites and a blessed icon of the Theotokos. Traditions and foods of the Orthodox Church, including feast and fast days, are highlighted in this cookbook. Metropolitan Philip, in his endorsement of the book writes, “It is the only book of its kind which faithfully portrays the religious and cultural significance of various foods our people have eaten since the dawn of time.” You may order the book directly from Helen Corey, 209 S. 23rd Street, Terre Haute, IN 47803, via e-mail at Hcoreyfood@aol.com, or visit Helen’s web-site at HelenCorey.org.

Project Mexico and St. Nicholas Cathedral join hands, reach out to Los Angeles Hispanic Community

The unseasonable, torrential rains may have kept some of the regular attendees from the 8:00 a.m. Spanish service at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Los Angeles on Sunday, October 17. After all, many of them must walk to the Cathedral on Sundays for what is normally a Typica service led by Deacon George Ajalat and Reader Ron Olson. Those who persevered through the rain that day were treated to a full Divine Liturgy celebrated by Fr. Pedro Medina, who was visiting from St. Innocent Orphanage Chapel in Tijuana, Mexico, at the invitation of Fr. Michel Najim, the Cathedral’s Senior Pastor. Fr. Pedro is a convert to Orthodoxy from Roman Catholicism and one of only a handful of Orthodox priests in Mexico.

Accompanying Fr. Pedro were four of the boys (now young men) from St. Innocent Orphanage. (Brian, Alfredo, Everardo and Jorge were among the very first group of boys who were taken in by St. Innocent Orphanage in 1996.) Three of them have completed the St. Innocent program and have graduated to the Life Skills program, which includes assistance with college or vocational training, and one-on-one guidance with goal-setting and other skills necessary for an independent, adult life. Jorge, the youngest of the four, will graduate from high school this coming June, and aspires to a career as a chef.

After the Spanish Liturgy, Fr. Pedro and the boys spent some time in fellowship with the Hispanic families and encouraged them in their life as Orthodox Christians, after which they attended the 10:30 a.m. English Liturgy. In his remarks at the conclusion of the second Liturgy, Fr. Pedro spoke of how much he has learned from the boys at the orphanage about the love of Christ, which shines so brightly through them as they grow in their spiritual lives, embrace the Faith, and begin to heal.

The visit by Project Mexico’s “ambassadors” was a wonderful opportunity to join hands and support each other’s efforts to bring the gem of Orthodoxy to Spanish-speaking people on both sides of the border!

For more information about Project Mexico, contact Gregory Yova, 619-426-4610 or info@projectmexico.org.
Music Education in Our Church

As a newborn, I didn't breathe for my first two weeks. I didn't feel like it. As a result, I was hooked up to a machine that took all the blood out of my body, oxygenated it, and then put it back in. Thinking about it now, it's pretty cool. It sounds like something out of Star Trek. It went on for a week or two. The only real human interaction I had during that time was with my dad. He would sit next to the contraption I was isolated in and sing to me. Just sing. Eventually, I came home from the hospital. Home was filled with music. My parents, my dad especially, would just walk around the house singing... constantly. My parents were never into the music of the 80's (I don't know why), so the music they would often sing was church music. Beautiful hymns. In the car, the tapes were not Michael Jackson or Van Halen, they were from St. Vladimir's Seminary. Tuesday nights was choir rehearsal, and they would both go with me in tow. I could say that I spent my formative years immersed in the music of the Orthodox Church. As a result of this, I always felt very comfortable in the choir loft or at the chanter's stand. I would just stand there. One particular Sunday, however, all that changed. I went up into the choir loft as I would often do, just wandered up there, and the new choir director told me to leave. I wasn't allowed there because I was too young. I remember it very distinctly. I was crushed.

Across the country, school districts have money problems the cause cut-backs in their music education programs. Programs used to the support of three or even four music teachers are now relying on one to do that job. As a result, the kids suffer. If they are talented, their parents might suggest that they sing in the choir. Unfortunately, the kids that are not considered talented are left out. How often are the kids of our parishes encouraged to join the choir? More importantly, how often are they discouraged from joining the choir?

I've spent the past four years as a counselor at the Antiochian Village. The most beautiful music I have ever heard is sung there. 300 children singing to the glory of God in unison is what I would imagine the angels sound like. The most amazing thing is how well they know the music of our church. When on the Challenge Course, a group will often sing a hymn to show their unity. When walking from one activity to another, they sing to St. Raphael. During the morning program chanting lessons, all they want to sing is their favorite hymn. How many adults can even name their favorite hymn, let alone sing all the words from memory?

Many faith traditions utilize youth choirs. Protestant and Catholic churches often have hymns offered by children's voices or children's bell choirs. One of my closest friends from college is now the music director of a Roman Catholic Church in the Pittsburgh area. They have one mass entirely led by the children: the children are the choir, the cantors and sometimes even the piano players. Similarly, in many of our parishes, Saturday nights often bring "Camp Vespers." The teens of the church sing and chant Vespers just like they would at the Antiochian Village Camp during the summer. This can become the foundation for a youth choir in a parish.

The idea behind a "Camp Vespers" is what is important. Maybe it begins as a once a month occurrence on Saturdays, then twice a month, eventually every Saturday is "Youth Vespers." On a side note, it is important to make sure that it is not called "Camp Vespers" so as to not exclude children that have not been to summer camp. The children can then begin participating on Sundays. The children can sing during communion and gradually have the children singing more and more. The keys to having a successful youth choir are bringing the children together for the first time (possibly the most difficult) and strong leadership.

The music of our Church is some of the most beautiful music in the world and also some of the most powerful. It unites people from around the world and calls people to Christ. We must invite our children to participate in making this music. On the other hand, denying our children from participation in the music of our Church can push them away from Christ.

During the Cherubic Hymn we sing:

We who mystically represent the Cherubim, and sing to the life-giving Trinity the thrice-holy hymn, let us now lay aside all earthly care: that we may receive the King of all, who comes invisibly upborne by the Angelic Hosts. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

How appropriate it is that the children of our Archdiocese represent the Cherubim and sing to the life-giving Trinity without ego and with purity of heart.

by Gregory Abdalah

Greg Abdalah works for the Western Pennsylvania Deanery.
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