

# THE SOWER

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## On Sergianism

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Many of us have a cynical attitude towards Sergianism, believing the matter is so complex that it does not deserve examination, and further, that if the Church Abroad did not come to a final determination on this matter over the course of eighty years, it would be impossible to resolve it now. Therefore it should not even be raised. But for many of us this seems incorrect. Sergianism split the Russian Church, and this schism, to the great tragedy of Russia, persists to this very day. Sergianism is not merely a false teaching concerning relations between Church and state. In fact it has many levels. Contemporary Sergianism in general is an entire system of false beliefs about the Church, implying that it is a human and earthly political organization upon which an earthly, political, and not spiritual, church can be based.

Sergianism arose from a false understanding of the relation of the Church to **persecution**. Thank God, at this time the fierce persecution against the Church has temporarily ceased, but we know from prophecies that there will be persecution in the future and that it will be even more ferocious than under the Bolsheviks. If those days are not cut short by God, no one shall be saved. Therefore it is imperative, while we can, to confirm what is acceptable during times of persecution, according to the teachings of the Church, and condemn those things which are impermissible and unacceptable for the Church and that alienate the individual from it. This needs to be done **not** to save the Church from annihilation, but to save the **souls** of its members from destruction, as this is the **primary** responsibility of the Church; secondly it must be done so that by having clearly exposed the falsehood of Sergianism, we may help those who remain in it, to reject it. This is the only means by which one may help in abolishing the Sergianist schism in the Russian Church, which greatly impedes the spiritual rebirth and re-establishment of a Russian Orthodox state.

Throughout almost its entire history, beginning with Christ and His Apostles, the Church was subject to persecutions. Following the teachings and example of Christ, the Apostles, and the countless martyrs and confessors, the Church has always recognized only two standards of behavior in regard to the persecutors - either martyrdom or flight from the persecutors. Christ Himself, from the first days of His life on Earth, fled to Egypt from the persecutors. It also would not be the last time He fled from persecutors until His time had finally come to die on the Cross. This is what Christ taught us, *"When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another; For verily I say unto you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes."* (Matt. 10:23). And so, martyrdom for Christ is glorious and valorous, though not all Christians are worthy of it.

The second alternative, when faced with persecution, is to flee from the persecutors into the catacombs or to another city, in other words, out of the country, and this is completely permissible and acceptable for the Church, according to the teachings of Christ Himself. **But Christ never taught that when persecuted, to join with the persecutors to save our lives or to save the Church from annihilation.** Such behavior was always condemned categorically and firmly by the Church as a denial of Christ. Such conduct can be understood and sympathized with, but it **cannot possibly be justified or even extolled as being wise.**

Here you have it - Sergianism not in words, but precisely, in deeds. In conclusion, I repeat the basic, perhaps unspoken idea of Sergianism: "when the Church is threatened by the danger of annihilation, it is permissible and acceptable to submit to any compromise with falsehood, even to the point of joining with the persecutors for the sake of preserving the Church and saving it from annihilation."

Dear fathers and brothers, for the sake of the salvation of the souls of the flock entrusted to us, for which we will answer to Christ at the coming Judgment, and for the sake of averting the current and future temptation from our flock, let us adopt and confirm the witnessing to the truth of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia and let us declare that Sergianism is a lie and a departure from Orthodoxy, and therefore it is condemned and rejected by the Church of Christ.

## Questions and Answers

### A clarification of religious devotion and instruction.

Excerpted from an article by Archbishop Averkiy (Taushev).

From the journal "Orthodox Life." Publishing house of St. Job of Pochaev, 1958.

**Question:** I noticed that no one was kneeling during the liturgy. It was explained to me that the rector had said that kneeling is not appropriate on Sundays, since Sundays are especially festive days, as they honor the Resurrection of Christ. (In Russian, the word for "Sunday" is "Voskreseniya", literally "Resurrection." - ed.) Is that true? The first day of Pentecost is always on a Sunday. At our church, the prayers are read while "on one's knees."

**Answer:** Unfortunately, in our day very few people know the rules of the Church for kneeling, and that kneeling on Sundays is not appropriate (as well as on all great feast days of our Lord and throughout the period from Pascha to the Feast of the Holy Trinity). There are many church rules and canons that discuss this prohibition. The 90th Rule of the Sixth Ecumenical Council strongly admonishes against kneeling on Sundays and adds this is necessary to "honor the Resurrection of Christ." In other words, the expression of repentance of one's sins that is connoted by kneeling is incompatible with the festive grandeur that is associated with the joyous feast day of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Our Holy Fathers did not consider whether to kneel or not kneel on Sundays to be an inconsequential or trivial matter, as many do nowadays, unfortunately, as they ignore the rule. They considered it so important that they specifically indicated through a canon rule from what point in the Divine Liturgy it is not permissible to kneel and at what point it is allowed once again. According to this rule, one does not kneel from the moment of the "vespers entrance" at vespers on Saturday night to the vespers entrance at vespers on Sunday. That is why it is not surprising that during vespers of the first day of the Feast of the Holy Trinity, the three prayers of St. Basil the Great are read while kneeling, even though it is always on a Sunday. These prayers are read right after the vespers entrance at vespers, in accordance with the 90th Rule of the Sixth Ecumenical Council.

One needs to consider carefully the point of this Church regulation and what deep meaning and educational value it represents, which is something that many do not want to do in our time. They prefer their own interpretation of the voice of the Holy Church. The general decline of understanding of religion and the church in our time has resulted in many Christians, for the most part, not to experience Sundays as a day of joy, as Pascha, and something we celebrate every week. That is why they do not comprehend how out of place kneeling is on this day, and how it strikes a dissonant chord with the jubilant singing.

### The Haitian Orthodox Mission

Though the tragedy of the earthquake in Haiti has faded from the news, the people of Haiti are still in great need of our help. The Mission, headed by Archpriest Gregory Williams, has been working hard to restore the Orthodox community there.

The most urgent need is to rebuild the schools founded by the Mission. The photograph shows the type of damage inflicted by the tremors.

**Please** help by making out a donation to "The Haitian Orthodox Mission" and sending it to:

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