

## Concerning Vladimir Moss' Views on Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky and The Dogma of Redemption

Recently Vladimir Moss has issued a general invitation for a public discussion of opinions and views concerning Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky and *The Dogma of Redemption*. Judging from Moss' earlier *On the Dogma of Redemption* published by him on the Internet,<sup>1</sup> and then his later remarks on the "Orthodox-Tradition / Paradosis" group site, such a discussion is an exercise in futility. He turns a deaf ear to that which would refute his arguments, or he distorts the direct meaning of the words. For example, the anathema against Basilakes, etc., inscribed in the *Synodicon of Orthodoxy*, condemns the Anselmian teachings that the wrath of God the Father must be appeased by the blood of the Son and thus God the Father is reconciled with mankind, i.e., that there were no intervals of time in God's reconciliation with man, and that the entire Trinity was reconciled at the same time, and not just the Father. Mr. Moss accepts this, supposedly, yet continues in his advocacy of the Atonement theory by later on insisting that *first* divine justice had to be satisfied. You cannot have it both ways.

"What joy does the Father have in the blood of His Son?" as Saint Gregory the Theologian says, when he points out that no necessary ransom was paid to God the Father, but rather it was a metaphor for acceptance of the *economy* for mankind's salvation. However, Vladimir Moss claims, "there are two ways which justice may be satisfied and evil blotted out: by the suffering of the offender, and by the suffering of the victim in the offender's place." Only suffering can satisfy justice, apparently also, "evil must be balanced by an equal and opposite good." For Vladimir Moss, retributory punishment advocated by the Old Testament Law must yet be valid, therefore, there must be a retribution, an appeasement of justice, and that — as he has stated many times — must be by suffering.

But where is forgiveness? Even if forgiven, must the penalty still be paid? Men can forgive a wrong, but God cannot do so? Why must the forgiveness be withheld until God's Justice is appeased and the wrong atoned for? Can God be restrained by a "law of justice"? The philosophic limitations and bonds of Scholasticism deny "our liberty which we have in Christ", "for if righteousness came by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 2: 4, 21).

Vladimir Moss claims there is no necessity in God, although he continues to maintain that God's justice must be satisfied, yet fails to explain how the necessity of justice can be applied to God. If, by some necessity of His nature, part of God cannot act, He will be composite and not absolutely free. V. Moss' attempts to explain God's love and justice prove that he has no understanding of the Orthodox Trinitarian doctrine, since he confuses "the things about God" and the divine attributes to such a degree that he makes them essential characteristics of the divinity. He simply repeats the theological errors of the scholastic philosophy.

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., <http://uk.geocities.com/guildfordian2002/Polemics/DogmaOfRedemptionEnglish.htm>, which is Vladimir Moss's response to the Synodal Resolution on *The Dogma of Redemption*, found at <http://deltard.org/hocna/defense.htm>. Also see: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/hocna/message/360>.

Vladimir Moss declares that he cannot believe that the long line of fathers from Metropolitan Peter Mogila,<sup>2</sup> Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, Archbishop Theophan the Recluse, and Archbishop Theophan of Poltava could ever be in error with their advocacy of scholastic doctrine. Yet Vladimir feels that he can safely ignore the examples from Saints Irenaeus, Athanasius the Great, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Photius the Great and others, as though they bear no weight, since they refute Vladimir's arguments.

May it be said that Western and Scholastic theologians have long berated and condemned the Orthodox Church and our Fathers for being primitive, backward, undeveloped, and lacking in profundity because we have never progressed and developed philosophical doctrines of atonement, the juridical appeasement of God the Father.<sup>3</sup> Thus these Western theologians bear witness that such teachings are alien to the Church, but Vladimir Moss will give intellectual stature to the Orthodox by grafting the philosophies of Scholasticism onto our doctrine.

The moral consequences of Scholasticism are demonstrated in the gruesome example supposedly taken from the life "of one of the greatest of Christian hierarchs, St. Dunstan of Canterbury († 988)", which Vladimir Moss tenders as proof of his contentions. This account, if genuine, is unique among the histories of the Saints.

Once three false coiners were caught and sentenced to have their hands cut off. On that day, which was the feast of Pentecost, the Saint was going to celebrate the Divine Liturgy; but he waited, asking whether the sentence had been carried out. The reply came that the sentence had been deferred to another day out of respect for the feast. "I shall on no account go to the altar today," he said, "until they have suffered the appointed penalty; for I am concerned in this matter." For the criminals were in his power. As he spoke, tears gushed down his cheeks, showing his love for the condemned men. But when they had been punished, he washed his face and went up to the altar, saying: "Now I am confident that the Almighty will accept the Sacrifice from my hands."

Another example from the Scriptures, however, refutes Vladimir Moss' understanding of the necessity for retribution and conditional forgiveness supposedly mandated in the Old Testament. Pilate released Barabbas to the Jews: "Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would" (Matt. 27:15). Here is a Jewish (and even pagan) understanding of Mercy that acts without Justice first being satisfied. Surely, Pilate or any governor would not have said: "He is reprieved, pardoned, and granted clemency — but now we have to execute him because Justice demands it." If man can forgive and pardon unconditionally, certainly God can.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Whose *Catechism* Vladimir defends against charges of scholasticism, while admitting in subsequent postings that he has not read the works of Metropolitan Peter Mogila.

<sup>3</sup> These Western 'theologians' derisively refer to our Orthodox doctrine as the "fishhook theory of salvation", since many of the Fathers speak of Christ using His Body on the Cross as though it were bait in order to fool, catch, and slay the great leviathan (cf. Job 41:1), that is, the evil one.

<sup>4</sup> On the mercy and compassion of God, also see:

*The River of Fire* [http://www.stnectoriospress.com/parish/river\\_of\\_fire.htm](http://www.stnectoriospress.com/parish/river_of_fire.htm), especially the patristic citations contained in the footnotes, many of which were incorporated into the *Synodal Resolution* mentioned in footnote No. 1 above.