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A PILGRIMAGE TOWARD CONCORD AMID USA-USSR DISCORD
A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

by Robert J. Palma

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As a major step in the thirty-year-old pilgrimage together of American and Soviet believers toward concord, the June 1984 visit of 266 American believers to the USSR received considerable coverage, ranging from the bad press given it by some of the USA media¹ to more informed commentary by participants.² Fueled in part by ignorance and errant patriotism, the worst case scenarios view such believers as victims of Soviet dupery, engaged in churchly trysts even as they extol a chimerical freedom of religion in the USSR. The more sympathetic commentators, including observers and participants, see the ongoing dialogue as making a valuable if modest contribution to peace-making, mutual understanding, and the healing of past schisms within Christendom. While as a Christian theologian, and a participant in the June 1984 delegation, I certainly find the latter more accurate and instructive than the former, I believe that both the negative reporting and the supportive commentary are too often content to stay within the eddies of activity on the surface of both the USA-USSR discord and also the believers' concord. Without denying the value of viewing the above pilgrimage and backdrop of discord from any of several perspectives, including political, economic, and ecclesiastical contexts, I propose to offer a more theological, one could say ontological, picture by cutting vertically through the more surface-oriented images of those inhabiting what I wish to call flatland, i.e., where the dimensions of depth and transcendence have been either given minimal attention, considered to be too distant to be relevant, eclipsed, or in some cases even denied. Digging beneath the fissures of USA-USSR discord as well as the apparent patchwork of continuing liaisons between Soviet and American believers, I hope to lay bare some of the mighty historic crosscurrents and spiritual undercurrents giving rise to both the discord and the concord. By exposing the deeper centripetal forces of believers' concord as well as the deeper

centrifugal forces of USA-USSR discord, I further wish to add to a fuller understanding of the persistent underlying dynamics of each, thereby hopefully strengthening the staying power of present and future participating pilgrims, and moving future commentators to attend more to dimensions given short shrift in flatland. Dipping beneath the surface phenomena of human conflict and camaraderie, one must be prepared to find unexpected bedfellows as well as a surprising interplay of historical antecedents yielding paradoxical consequences.

From Eddies to Undercurrents

Talk of spiritual affinities as undercurrents of USA-USSR discord will sound strange to those Soviet and American inhabitants of flatland accustomed to talk about such discord in the more familiar language of cold war, espionage, missile crises, grain embargoes, and Olympic boycotts. If anything, talk of spiritual undercurrents may conjure up for such inhabitants simply a picture of American believers in God set over against those Russian atheists, or possibly past church schisms such as the 1054 split between the Roman Church and the Orthodox Church seen as contributing to Solzhenitsyn's "world split apart."³ Moreover, as antidotal responses to the above eddies of discord flatlanders are wont to speak of summit and disarmament talks, increased trade, resumed USA-USSR athletic engagements, and more business, scientific, and ecclesiastical exchanges. While not wishing to belittle the import of such eddies of discord and concord, I would contend that those content to fix on what from the perspective of underlying spiritual currents appear as surface fissures and patchwork do indeed invite facile commentary and eventual disillusionment. However, in fairness to the residents of flatland, I must admit that they too are generally quite ready to dip some beneath the surface activity, even though the cited causes of discord tend to be rather obvious differences lying close to the surface. To these we now turn.

The forces contributing most to the USA-USSR discord are generally acknowledged to be major political, economic, and social differences, e.g., a free market system or capitalism versus a controlled economy or socialism, or democracy versus totalitarianism, or the USA protection of individual human rights versus Soviet abrogation of the same. These and other differences have especially for practitioners of the American faith been epitomized in the American kingdom of God set over against its antithesis, the Soviet evil empire. Such a divided world has fostered a theory of convergence where Western countries and the Soviet Union are expected to become more like one another. Solzhenitsyn says such "is a soothing theory which overlooks the fact that these worlds are not at all evolving toward each other and that neither one can be transformed into the other without

violence."⁴ But in contrast to what Solzhenitsyn says, I am proposing that the very emergence of a growing conformity between the two super-powers has done much to fuel USA-USSR discord. In fact, I shall argue that the most profound similarities, with material differences entailed, have proven to be most divisive of all, coming to expression in very strident and discordant voices.

While probably less obvious than the differences already cited, there are also significant similarities near the surface of discord which include major "isms," national objectives, and institutional behaviors. What I have in mind include militarism, materialism, idealism, scientism, and a technocratic mindset. Remembering his own visit to the University of Moscow, Dale W. Brown says he "was struck by the similarities with the ethos of scientism, materialism, and service of national needs that permeate our own institutions."⁵ But why should such similarities breed contempt, or do they? Militarism is, of course, really an expression of discord, but it can also foster such, as evident in a spiraling arms race. While matter, ideals, science, and technology are not inherently divisive they can become such, depending on how they are viewed and the settings in which they are embraced. Given inordinate status as varying "isms," and embraced within the reduced reality of flatland, they involve national excess and self-deception spelling further disintegration of the human fabric. Moreover, within the confines of flatland or a shrunken world there is less room for coexistence or for fighting it out. While materialistic consumption may promote short-term useful economic cooperation, the pursuit of more consumer goods is no sure foundation for human accord, certainly not in the long term. Amid ever diminishing resources, like-minded materialists vie for a larger piece of the pie. While science as knowledge and method does not foment discord, methodological imperialism has led to estrangement within the human community, as has the self-deluded scientific mentality whose allegedly scientific proposals really reflect cultural biases and personal predilections. Consequently, similar minded scientific patriots residing in different nations hold that their respective systems have the blessing of nature, and each awaits confirmation of the same through their respective historical destinies. There are also the scientific patriots who affirm that through the disinterested pursuit of hard facts the human species can be salvaged, which can really be seen as a secularized or nationalized version of a gnostic heresy. However, what really makes the above into elements of discord will only be made evident by cutting through them vertically, thereby exposing deeper and still more determinative underlying similarities. In doing this we shall come to see that the profound spiritual undercurrents underlying USA-USSR discord are in fact related in a most

problematical fashion to those very spiritual undercurrents undergirding the concord toward which American and Soviet believers have been making their pilgrimage together.

Paradoxical or ironical as it may seem, I hope to show that this pilgrimage toward concord has largely arisen from a new humble recognition of a differentiation within Christendom based on a plurality of complementary truths set within the one trunk of God's multifaceted truth. On the other hand, past churchly discord has often arisen from different Christian communions expecting conformity on the basis of their respective professions of only selected facets, partial truths, and even heresies, involving the eclipse of the unitary wholeness of truth incarnate and disclosed in Jesus Christ. But in contrast to this pilgrimage there is the contrary development of a growing USA-USSR discord, which viewed also against the background of multifaceted Judeo-Christian truth is seen to arise ironically out of an historically emerging conformity between these superpowers. But the difference here is that this latter conformity is based on the superpowers' shared professions of the same or similar facets of the truth, the same partial truths, or the same heresies. But an even more significant difference underlies these contrary developments viz., that while throughout churchly discord the unitary wholeness of God's truth may often have been eclipsed, it was never dismissed nor were branches selected from it as bases for the factions' desired conformity ever torn asunder from the main trunk of God's truth; on the other hand, the USA-USSR discord has been fueled by a shared confession of similar segments of truth, partial truths, and heresies, but now severed from the unifying trunk, and secularized, apotheosized, and domesticated. Therefore, while the churches' professions of partial truths and heresies were divisive within the boundaries of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, the recovery of concord was always a hopeful possibility since the plurality of truths partially professed were still believed to be anchored in that unitary wholeness of truth witnessed to in the churches' conciliar confessions, and always spanning their past rifts as well as the ecumenical movement. But in the case of USA-USSR discord the prospects for future concord are much less hopeful, certainly in terms of the recovery just described, for this discord as a process of conformity through secularization has entailed the very repudiation of God's multifaceted and unitary truth whose remembrance is required for pilgrimaging toward concord. In light of this movement from eddies to undercurrents, I would have us now look more closely at the underlying shape of USA-USSR discord as well as the concord toward which Soviet and American believers have been journeying.

Discord through Conformity

Those deeper profound similarities underlying the maelstrom of USA-USSR conflict must be understood against the background of Judeo-Christian antecedents bound up with both the founding of old Russia and the settling of the thirteen colonies. But it would be most incorrect to suppose that these deeper similarities accounting for USA-USSR discord are no more than similar segments of truth and heresies derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition and embraced by both nations, for these similarities were also strongly conditioned by reductionism and secularization. This conditioning of such selected antecedents held in common fueled considerably the conformity which emerged between these two superpowers, finding expression in similar materialisms, humanisms, discordant yet similar views of freedom, diverging yet similar national eschatological visions, and competing yet similar civil religions. Of course, it would be wrong to suppose that these processes were concurrent developments within Russia and the United States, for one only has to consider the great gap of time between their national origins, the quite different roles that Christianity played in the formation and life of each nation, and the fact that much of the discordant conformity actually resulted from the Westernization of Russia. This Westernization and the waning of an isolationism long practiced by both countries were required for a potentially discordant conformity to take on the international proportions of USA-USSR discord.

Although in connection with the surface of discord I referred to like-minded materialists competing for more material goods, I did not uncover there the deeper divisive undercurrents found in that materialism shared by both Soviets and Americans. To see really how such a materialism has sown discord requires an historical perspective based on traditional orthodox doctrines of creation and Christ where "matter" has always had a holy place, unlike gnostic and docetic heresies where it was demoted, and adoptionist (e.g., Ebionite) christologies where human nature was no longer personally united with God's essential being. While the notion of holy matter or nature impeded scientific and economic advances, especially where Byzantine and Roman Christianity was regnant but less so where Protestantism became dominant, so long as it was kept subordinate to and seen itself to cohere in God the creator, it could not become an illusory and deceptive ground for human harmony, which according to Reinhold Niebuhr it did become in the thought of Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and John Dewey. While through Western Renaissance and Enlightenment thought the material world was increasingly divorced from God and secularized, through Ludwig Feuerbach's reductionistic materialism it took the place of God viewed as a projection of human nature. Through Marx materialism

became dialectical, and then was transported onto Russian soil by the nineteenth-century intelligentsia and Vladimir I. Lenin. Nicolas Zernov has described how the Westernizing intelligentsia sought to undermine the religious unity of the Russian people through "the preaching of socialism based on materialism and atheism,"⁶ while Lenin and his followers sought to restore spiritual unity by seeking "to convert the entire population to Marxism and dialectical materialism."⁷ But whether the more ideological Soviet type, or the more practical American type, a shared materialistic disposition has failed to support concord since matter itself needs to be integrated from above. But worse than this, this similarity even increases discord as these nations and their citizens compete in seeking human fulfillment through material self-aggrandizement and inordinate material consumption, ending in shared disillusionment inciting further rancor. As Solzhenitsyn has put it: "Our life consists not in the pursuit of material success but in the quest for worthy spiritual growth."⁸

Another discordant similarity between the USA and the USSR is rooted in images of human nature dominant in the Western Renaissance and Enlightenment and which had already seeped into the American and Russian psyches in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was not in Russia but in the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman West that an anthropocentric secularizing of human life and society emerged, in which God and God's light were gradually eclipsed even as humanity laid increasing claim to autonomy, both cognitive and moral. Over against medieval Christendom, dependence on divine grace and revelation, and the authority of the church, there sprung forth a quest for rational and moral autonomy whereby any semblance of Judeo-Christian humanism was to give way to a secular humanism. It may be imagined that a humanism freed from religious bias and indebtedness would pave the way for international concord, but such has not happened, for this "freed" humanism is adapted to human biases and also made culture specific. Paradoxical as it may seem, such a secular humanism found expression in both Western political and economic Liberalism and also, via the German philosophers Hegel and Feuerbach, in Marx's and Engels' dialectical materialism. The latter was then imported into Russia by Westernizers, viz., the 19th-century intelligentsia and Russian Marxists. Although the significant disparity between the political and economic theories of John Locke and Adam Smith and those of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels would contribute substantially to what is here termed the USA-USSR discord, powerful undercurrents comprising fundamental similarities proved even more divisive. The latter include materialism and its counterpart which Solzhenitsyn describes as the loss of "our spiritual life," which "is the essence of the crisis:

the split in the world is less terrifying than the similarity of the disease afflicting its main sections."⁹

Also common to both of the above forms of humanism is a considerable naivete regarding human fallenness, which is the basis on which Reinhold Niebuhr in The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness included John Locke, Adam Smith, and also Marxists among the children of light, viz., those who failed to see how powerful and corrupt is human self-interest. Within the context of American-Soviet discord this moral naivete is manifest where offering one another mutual approbation as ordinary Russian and American people, basically decent, honorable, and well-meaning, each people similarly expressed moral cynicism and indignation vis-a-vis the political and economic theories and practices operative in the life of that other people. Similarly, Americans and Soviets feel the need to make war on those political and economic institutions which have befallen the life of the other nation, while at the same time defending their own national philosophy and institutions as congruent with essential human goodness. What is never sufficiently explained by the children of light is how such good and public-minded people could either beget or fall victim to such historical and social evils. Moreover, while differing political and economic beliefs and practices do contribute to discord, a deeper source of conflict is a shared failure to perceive the depth of universal human fallenness and related need for repentance. This crucial perception is absent in secular humanism, and is a prerequisite for human concord that cannot be acquired through human ingenuity. Rather, as I hope to point out, concord is finally a gift of grace as is that shared repentance which it presupposes.

Strange as it may seem, another source of USA-USSR discord bound up with this secular humanism are divisive similarities underlying conflicting conceptions of freedom. While a quick survey of the U.S. Bill of Rights and Articles 39-59 of the USSR Constitution makes readily evident that both are concerned to protect certain rights assuring humans space to fulfill themselves in keeping with each one's perception of human nature, a deeper study of the same along with regnant social theories, institutions, and cultural styles in the USA and the Soviet Union unveils different perceptions of economic and political freedom. Against the background of medieval nominalism, along with the Renaissance stress on the freedom of the autonomous individual and the Enlightenment's natural rights discernible by the autonomous reason, in American bourgeois democratic society economic and political freedom came to be viewed principally as the exercise of free choice, and as the liberty to actualize oneself in keeping with assumed human capacities and goodness. To be free is to be left

alone, to be free of interference in pursuing one's own welfare and happiness. It could be said that such a notion of freedom also rests upon a secularized version of the Pelagian heresy, which taught that humans continue to have the capacity not to sin and the power to do the good. On the other hand, the Russian and now the Soviet conception of freedom is indebted to Marx's and Engel's emphasis on the liberation of humans from class struggle, from oppression at the hands of the bourgeoisie, and from materialist estrangement suffered by the proletariat. Although it cannot be directly traced historically, it can also be said that the Soviet view of freedom has also been nourished by what is really a secularized version of the Orthodox Church's focus on freedom as being delivered from suffering, disease, and death, so evident in the central place given to the resurrection of the body of Christ. However, whereas the Russian Orthodox celebrate liturgically the freedom from want and death already realized in the risen Christ in the kingdom of God to which the celebrants will also ascend, Marx, Engels, and Lenin proposed to realize in history and society freedom from material deprivation and economic suffering, but through revolution rather than resurrection. Although once the above secularized versions of freedom are rehabilitated in terms of their Judeo-Christian antecedents they become complementary rather than being discordant, in the present context they remain divisive because the proponents of each have similarly severed their chosen perspective from the unifying and sustaining roots of both in God's being and grace. Moreover, both Americans and Soviets have similarly come to see their own preferred brand of freedom as an historic human achievement wrought in their own nation's past. Therefore, each similarly has much to lose in admitting that their own picture of freedom is partial and needs to be complemented by the opposition's picture of freedom. However, this spiritual and national pride shared by Americans and Soviets applies not only to their respective idealized freedoms significantly realized, but expresses itself also in their diverging yet similar eschatological visions.

In keeping with differences already cited, one can expect disparate American and Soviet visions of the future engendering further conflict. But here again I would argue that USA-USSR discord is fueled more by conformity than divergence, a conformity which extends even to the contours of the ideal society proposed. For as Reinhold Niebuhr said: "The similarities between classical laissez-faire theory and the vision of an anarchistic millennium in Marxism are significant, whatever may be the superficial differences."¹⁰ However, the really divisive conformity is found in similar Messianic fervor coupled with utopian dreams bent on establishing terrestrial paradises patterned after chosen economic-political models. The Bolshevik

revolutionaries had a rich reservoir of Messianic fervor to tap, extending from a Muscovite Messianism arising from Moscow seen as the Third Rome, and down through the Josephite tradition to 19th-century Slavophilism. Likewise, American Messianic fervor has been nourished by the image of an American Israel being led from European bondage to the promised land of the new world, the sense of being chosen as humanity's last and best hope, the frontier spirit facing a wilderness needing to be tamed, and the sense of a special destiny for a new people redeemed. If Philadelphia or Washington could not be the Third or even fourth Rome, it should certainly be viewed as the Second or New Jerusalem. Since only one of the nations could be the true deliverer of the world, such Messianic zeal in building a utopian future was bound to contribute to conflict down the road.

As with secular humanism, the utopianism marking American and Soviet eschatological visions makes each nation oblivious to its own inordinate national pride, and provides a rationale for attacking the institutions and policies of the other for misleading the masses. This failure to recognize universal human fallenness also sets the stage for disillusionment causing further conflict, even fanaticism as naive dreamers persist in seeking historical confirmation for their utopian proposals. Similarly, these national visions of the future are secularized eschatologies in that each proposed a terrestrial paradise to be realized through human ingenuity and effort. Similarly, both the USA and the USSR see its own revolutionary birthday as the real beginning in the coming of the earthly kingdom. But here we find ourselves once again back in the crowded environs of flatland. Finally, our look at discord through conformity draws us inevitably to its bottom line, viz., competing yet similar Soviet and American national religions.

In hearing of conflict between American and Soviet basic religious beliefs, most American believers, liberal, conservative, and fundamentalist, would promptly interpret such to mean the opposition between American theists and Soviet atheists. Moreover, numerous devout Christians would see the line being drawn here between American Christians and Russian unbelievers, the Christian Flag versus the Red Flag. Without wishing to minimize the distance between Christian theism and Marxist-Leninist atheism, USA-USSR discord arises not principally from that difference but from competing yet similar Soviet and American national or civil faiths. Although the American faith intended here is somewhat similar to what Robert Bellah came to call civil religion in America, it would be wrong to identify them since the discord here being described cannot be adequately accounted for in terms of theism versus atheism. If such language were to be used in this present context, it would be better to speak of Soviet

theoretical atheism in conflict with American practical atheism. But as argued above, USA-USSR discord continues to be fueled not as much by great ideological disparities as by an ever evolving conformity involving also secularized religious dimensions. Depending on which of the two national religions is intended, salvation is either through the free market and democratic systems or through scientific socialism and the temporary dictatorship of the proletariat. Similarly, humans are guided to the different secular paradises promised by each nation through their respective secular forms of providence, that is, one is guided either by the invisible hand postulated by Adam Smith or by the historical determinism of Karl Marx's dialectical materialism. But in its starkest form, the discord here is to be found in the similar American and Soviet domestication of divinity, with the superpowers falling ever deeper into an antagonistic conformity as each claims unquestionable autonomy for itself. What we really have here are competing similar idolatries arising from secularized forms of severely kenotic christology, but instead of God's Son emptying himself radically into Jesus, the two superpowers act as though divinity has radically emptied itself either into the American body politic or into the Soviet body politic, depending on which side of the discord one is patriotically situated. The highly divisive similarity here is that a common spiritual legacy, represented in both Western and Eastern Christianity, has been reduced and absorbed without remainder into two national consciousnesses, that of the USA and the USSR, which then became warring idolatries seeking historical vindication under the sun. Here similarity truly breeds contempt, and without a shared allegiance to a relativizing God above all, life in flatland leaves little room for coexistence. In fact, could it not even be said that those preoccupied with erecting and strengthening the so-called walls of separation between church and state, through appealing in the USA to the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights or in the Soviet Union to Article 52 of the USSR Constitution, are thereby helping to establish such monolithic national religions as cited above? Moreover, could it be that a national or civil religion is even promoted and given preferential status under the guise of providing for and safeguarding the plurality of religious faiths and expressions? But now it is time to turn from the above discord to that concord made real and possible through grace, and out of which the call to pilgrimage emerges.

Concord through Grace

As the USA-USSR discord was seen to be fed by an international conformity pushed along by Russian Westernizers extending from the Petrine Enlightenment to Lenin's appeal to Western Marxism, so the pilgrimage of U.S. and Soviet Christians together over the past thirty

years has in part been stimulated by the dark shadow cast upon the earth by the threatening consequences of that discordant conformity. However, as suggested early on, the primary basis and motivation for the pilgrimage of believers is in that plurality in unity already bound up together in God's own multifaceted truth. Unlike the above discord which was fed by a massive conformity, the concord emerging among American and Soviet Christian believers has also been nourished by each group discovering in the other's profession exciting emphases which complement its own, discovering that together they come to reflect an exciting differentiation resident within the richness of their common Judeo-Christian heritage. Moreover, we shall see that the concord toward which the above pilgrim feet tread is not first of all a human achievement yet to be realized, but a past and present reality long celebrated by both American and Russian followers of Christ, as well as a gift of unity making possible the complementary witness already noted. This gift of unity has its origin in God's grace, from which emerges the call to pilgrimage toward future community made possible by that same grace.

In common with nations and empires, the Christian church has her own history of conflicts and separations, including that between Rome and Constantinople leading to the sad split of 1054, which also contributed to the divorce between East and West. The church has suffered schisms because like nations she too has always been composed of sinners. However, as suggested above in discussing the movement from eddies to undercurrents, the historical reality of there being Nestorian, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Reformation churches represents also differing emphases on various segments of truth and partial truths reflecting a genuine plurality within God's own being, acts, and creation. But it must also be said that encapsulation to vested interests and specific cultural biases also fostered schisms and heresies within the church. Nevertheless, insofar as manifest divergences were finally and in reality complementary emphases suggests that they are signs of a deeper unity versus sheer conformity. In fact, we have emphatic evidence of such a deeper unity in the various churches', throughout East and West, shared affirmation of such fundamental bonds in being as God's own trinitarian being and life, the personal union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ, the dependency of the creation on the triune God its creator, and the relation of Jesus Christ, the ruler of all, to his church. But the key factor here is that this shared profession is a celebration of past and present realities, grounded in the bedrock of divine grace and serving as the foundation upon which future fellowship among believers of such countries as the USA and the USSR is a hopeful possibility. Here the quest for concord does not make its appeal to a

shared material world which itself needs to be integrated, nor to an empty human nature still in need of definition, but to a shared humanity already defined by having been taken up into union with God through God's Word incarnate in Jesus. While different churches may have been preoccupied with different branches of God's own tree of life, the latter always remained bound together as members of the main trunk of God's truth consisting of those bonds in being already cited.

The real unities on which the pilgrimage of U.S. and Soviet believers is based moves us to see unity also as a gift of divine grace. While, as we shall see, Soviet and American believers are called to covenant together, and to make fellowship real in their actual worshipping and living, unlike secular humanism and its views of freedom as heroic human achievements, concord is here above all seen as a gift of grace to be received with repentance and gratitude. In the face of all the fissures marring the face of human society, several of which run between the USA and USSR, the kind of unity ascribed to the church as the body of Christ can only be given from above by the Holy Spirit. This unity, experienced by those open to receive such a gift, involves more than a consensus of beliefs, for it is a unity in communion which is deeper than doctrine and disposition. Aleksei S. Khomiakov, an undisputed leader of the 19th-century Slavophile movement in Russia, put it as follows:

The unity of the Church follows of necessity from the unity of God; for the Church is not a multitude of persons in their separate individuality, but a unity of the grace of God, living in a multitude of rational creatures, submitting themselves willingly to grace.¹¹

The Russians have a special Slavonic word for this communion grounded in the gift of unity from above, the word is sobornost. Sergius Bulgakov, former Marxist later ordained priest, states that "sobornost is the state of being together" and also that "it is the liberty in love which unites believers."¹² This sobornost is finally a gift of the Holy Spirit, a gift of communion which cuts across cultural, linguistic, ethnic, ecclesiastical, and even political boundaries, and a gift bestowed on repentant believers out of the transcendent grace of God. Not on the basis of a common citizenship, language, class, or denomination, but only out of a shared commitment to those bonds of being already given, and out of a common faith infused by divine love, may human beings truly flock together, worship and pray together. This gift of oneness in the triune God, and the emerging concord rooted in the same, relativizes and neutralizes those lesser allegiances which when dominant become divisive and even demonic.

In gratefully accepting the above gift of unity and concord, Christian believers in both East and West can remind one another of or even unveil to each other shafts of light and facets of truth resident within the fullness of the truth of the gospel professed in common. The deeper coming together of Orthodox and Western Christianity is clearly a lesson in complementarity. Through serious dialogue complementary doctrinal emphases and ecclesiastical practices surface and mutually enrich the participants. While Eastern theology has focused especially on the three persons in the Trinity, Western theology has focused especially on the essential unity in the Trinity. They complement each other since the basis of fellowship remains the one triune God. While the Eastern churches have given special emphasis to the incarnational life of God in Christ, the Western churches have especially emphasized the atoning death of Christ. While the Orthodox churches have especially celebrated the present glory of the resurrected Christ as Pantocrator, Western churches have stressed continuing suffering in the shadow of Christ's cross. While the Orthodox emphasize the already transfigured reality imaged in icons, Western churches, especially Protestantism, stress the moral imperative arising from the gospel and having social and political implications. While Orthodoxy has kept the traditions and maintained with such diligence the dogmas contained in conciliar theology, Protestant Christians have promoted change and reform. While Western churches have seen the church and its unity more in institutional terms, the Orthodox churches view the church more as a redeemed organic community whose unity resides in the one faith professed and in the communion of the sacraments. While Western Christianity has conceived of human freedom principally in terms of being enabled to do the good and right as willed by God, Eastern Christianity has conceived of such freedom principally in terms of being freed from suffering and death. The basic reason for citing these different foci is to show how the flocking together of Eastern and Western believers is a mutually enriching experience, even as they journey together ever more deeply into the fullness of the truth professed. Instead of discord increasing through a growing conformity, as noted in the political arena, we find here an ever greater concord emerging through a growing awareness of differences which are complementary since they have their foundation in the multifaceted but also unitary truth of God professed in common.

In the midst of the discord of a world split apart, and on the basis of concord as both a reality and a gift, along with its promise of complementarity, there arises a powerful call for American and Soviet believers to pursue a pilgrimage together. But even as this reality, gift, and promise demand pilgrimage toward actual harmony in

daily believing and living, the mind and life of repentant pilgrims are required for a growing deeper and fuller appreciation of concord as the reality and gift of God's grace.

The Call to Pilgrimage

The actual living out of concord and harmony calls for a recovery of the pilgrim's mentality. Such a mentality involves humble repentance even as the pilgrims' eyes are turned forward but also back some, but especially away from an idolatrous fixing on one's earthly city as eternal and abiding, or as God's own city and kingdom fully realized. This calls for thinking less of Moscow as a Third Rome and less of Washington as a Second Jerusalem. The pilgrim's mind calls for standing with Abraham, who with aching feet "looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."¹³ For in unison with Abraham and all other sojourning humans we must confess that "here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come."¹⁴ What holds for cities also holds for nations, which means that the USA is considerably less than God's new Israel, and holy mother Russia is much less holy than once thought. But at the same time it must be noted that this does not call for consigning the whole faith of the fathers to oblivion. For as Solzhenitsyn made clear in his Templeton Prize address, "Men Have Forgotten God," given in May 1983, human beings in both East and West must remember and return to the God of their mothers and fathers. But the pilgrim must also qualify the deference which is rightly given to classic formulations of the faith in the past, as well as those of the present. For pilgrims recognize that all humans are still only on the way to the city of God, and that therefore all human witness given on the way continues to be partial and tentative, including that of respected saints within the great cloud of witnesses. Seeing all churches, including one's own, as composed of those only in via fosters an openness to the traditions and confessions of others who have also been witnessing down through the ages to the reality of that concord given by God's grace. For the humble pilgrim recognizes that no one's private locale is an eternal abiding place, and that no tower of Babel must therefore be constructed in one's own personal bailiwick. Moreover, since the most fundamental concord is a reality already given, there is no need for a feverish quest for the uniformity of doctrinal expression or liturgical style. But what is needed is a recovery of that humble mind of the pilgrim exemplified by father Abraham, and also by such as St. Nilus of Sora, that Russian monk who lived in a remote hermitage in the forest beyond the Volga River, who sought to draw a definite line between God and Caesar and who also saw the earthly church as always on a pilgrimage. In passing it could be said

that the suffering of the Russian Orthodox Church from the Bolshevik revolution to the present has helped her to be less encapsulated to a parochial vision involving holy mother Russia and to her old establishment status.

Not only does a pilgrimage toward concord call for a recovery of the repentant humble mind of the pilgrim, but also a sorting out of various kinds of pilgrimages abounding, including those personal, political, and religious, and involving both reality and symbol. During the past thirty years numerous American believers have made their journey north of Moscow to Zagorsk, the Vatican of Russian Orthodoxy and home of Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery, while Soviet believers have in their own way retraced some of the steps of the American pilgrims. But this has involved much more than geographical traversing, for while the latter has its own inherent value it represents deeper kinds of journeying together on the part of Soviet and American believers. About such journeying it has been asked, "what purpose does it serve politically, especially in terms of international peace?" Without minimizing the contribution such journeying may make to peace, asking such a question too early on is to miss the deeper meaning of the coming together. For when believers move forward to worship, pray, and commune together we have divinely ordained human behavior which in a profound sense is not meant to be primarily useful, not even in terms of international relations. For belonging to the very essence of the pilgrimage to which God has called all humans are joint worship and loving fellowship. For here one must remember sobornost, that being together which is a visible expression of the union of the Christian community in Jesus Christ. This converging about the one Lord and Savior has its own intrinsic worth, and hopefully may also contribute to the building of peaceful relations among nations. But the above reality of congregating together is also a symbol of related deep and essential pilgrimages.

The journeys to Moscow, Leningrad, Washington, and New York on the part of believers signify a deeper pilgrimage into a shared and remembered past, particularly the mighty acts of God for sinners in both East and West. Furthermore, such a journey into the past includes searching out together the rich diversity of the Biblical witnesses, but also the treasures of conciliar theology and the great but often forgotten or even unknown glimpses of truth resident in traditions other than one's own. But such again calls for repentance and humility, for repentance is the only fitting response to past conflict and disagreement often rooted in distracting heretical visions, partial visions mistaken for the whole truth, and provincial preferences. However, the concordant coming together of Soviet and American believers is finally a testimony to that deepest journey on

which each believing participant has embarked, viz., the one which leads into the very gestalt of God's grace and brings the earthly traveler near to God's own heart. The visible and more public pilgrimages are indeed also signs of deeper journeys into the plurality of God's own unitary truth, but this is just what one should expect, for humans congregating on the surface of human life must inevitably follow from the converging about one Lord and ruler of all. Out of a shared digging for the truth of the whole gospel emerges unity as complementarity and pilgrimage as convergence. The vision of a new heaven and a new earth and the pilgrimage forward to God's own city under the leading of the Holy Spirit constitute that powerful spiritual undercurrent motivating U.S. and Soviet believers to congregate and covenant together.

Although, as already stated, the purpose of a pilgrimage toward concord is not simply nor primarily to serve as a means toward some larger practical objective, the visible reality of Christian sorbor-nost does have something to say in the midst of a world split apart. It is also a witness to a unity and a communion not founded on ethnic, social, political, and economic similarities, but one made possible through justification by God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. Such a witness helps to call those with discordant voices away from their captivity to their own confining personal and national self-interests and away from misplaced allegiances to the various gods inhabiting national pantheons. Even while still needing to take their lesser cultural, political, and even ecclesiastical paths, the deeper pilgrimage of American and Soviet believers into the unity of God's love serves as a vector countering those forces which would fling the members of the human race further apart. It is therefore imperative that such a call to pilgrimage be heeded, which is expressed by the apostle Paul as follows:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.¹⁵

Endnotes

¹See Alan Geyer, "The NCC Takes Another Beating," OPREE, Vol. 4, No. 6, December 1984, where he describes major examples of this bad press such as the New York Times and Time magazine, but also singles out some "stellar exceptions" to this bad press.

²See On the Way to Unity and Peace, a booklet published by the U.S.-USSR Church Relations Committee of the NCCC which gives reports on its 1984 program and experiences.

³Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, East & West (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 40.

⁴Ibid., p. 43.

⁵Dale W. Brown, "Who Are the Russians?," What about the Russians?--a Christian Approach to U.S.-Soviet Conflict, ed. Dale W. Brown (Elgin, Illinois: The Brethren Press, 1984), p. 9.

⁶Nicolas Zernov, The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1963), p. vii.

⁷Ibid., p. viii.

⁸Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Men Have Forgotten God," National Review, July 22, 1983, p. 876.

⁹Solzhenitsyn, East & West, pp. 69-70.

¹⁰Reinhold Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 32.

¹¹Aleksei S. Khomiakov, The Church Is One (1864), p. 3.

¹²Sergius Bulgakov, A Bulgakov Anthology, ed. James Pain and Nicolas Zernov (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 127.

¹³Hebrews 11:10 (Revised Standard Version).

¹⁴Hebrews 13:14 (Revised Standard Version).

¹⁵Ephesians 4:4-6 (Revised Standard Version).