

Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

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THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS

By St. John of Kronstadt.

Magnify O my soul, the honourable Translation of the Mother of God from earth to heaven.

[Refrain for the 9th Ode of the Canon]

† † †



Let us all be happy, beloved brothers and sisters that we belong to the Holy Orthodox Church, worthily and rightly glorifying the Most Holy Sovereign

Theotokos on this eminent day out of all the days of the year with special solemnity.

There exist on earth many societies and entire governments that do not consider the need nor the obligation to call upon and glorify the Queen of heaven and earth, the Mother of Our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, and other saints and angels; to submissively serve her lovingly, as the true Mother of God. Sadly nowadays we have heretics (among us) who actively dishonor the Mother of God, the saints, their icons, their relics and their festivals. O, if only they also unanimously with us glorified the worthy Queen of heaven and earth!

Today the Holy Church solemnly glorifies the honorable Dormition or translation of the Mother of God from earth to heaven. A wonderful translation—she died without serious illness, peacefully. Her soul is taken up in the divine hands of her Son and carried up into the heavenly abode, accompanied by the sweet singing of angels. And then, her most pure body is transferred by the apostles to Gethsemane

where it is honorably buried, and on the third day it is resurrected and taken up to heaven.

You see all this on the icon of the Dormition of the Theotokos. On it is represented the life-bearing body of the Theotokos laying on a bier, surrounded by the apostles and hierarchs, and in the center of the icon the Lord holding in His hands the most pure soul of the Theotokos. The translation of the Mother of God is a paradigm of the translation in general of the souls of Christians to the other world.

We say that our dead have “fallen asleep” or “passed away.” What does this mean? This means that for the true Christian there is no death. Death was conquered by Christ on the cross. But there is a translation, i.e., a rearrangement of his condition, i.e., his soul is in another place, in another age, in another world beyond the grave, eternal, without end, that is what is meant by “falling asleep.” It is as if it were a temporary dream after which, by the voice of the Lord and the fearful yet wonderful trumpet of the Archangel, all the dead shall live and come forth each to his place: *either to the resurrection of life or to the resurrection of condemnation* (Jn 5:29). This is what the Christian means by translation. We should be ready for this translation, for the day of the general resurrection and judgment, for this indescribable world event, recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

This preparation for the meeting of the heavenly King before the dread judgment seat, after death, is essentially the person's preparation throughout the whole of his life. This preparation means a change in all his thoughts, and the moral change of all his being, so that the whole man would be pure and white as snow, washing clean everything that defiles the body and

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Orthodox Heritage may, at times, bring up issues or present articles that some consider controversial. Such material is presented so that a distinction is made between salvation and the 20th century heresy of ecumenism. These are confusing times for the Orthodox faithful, and political correctness must be sacrificed so that His truth be brought forth.

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spirit, so that he is adorned with every virtue: repentance, meekness, humility, gentleness, simplicity, chastity, mercy, abstention, spiritual contemplation, and burning love for God and neighbor.

Our preparation for meeting the heavenly King, and for the inheritance of eternal life in heaven, should consist of these things. The heavenly King desires souls adorned with immutable virtue, souls prepared so that the Very Lord Himself could abide in them. Do not marvel that the Very Lord wants to live in us. In fact the human soul is more spacious than the heavens and the earth, for it exists in the image of God. And if one removes sins from the soul, the Lord of all will settle in it and will fill it with Himself. "We will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (John 14:23), says the Lord about the souls who love Him.

And so, ye participants in the Christian feasts, and especially the present feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, ye who are brightly adorned with every virtue and translated to the heavenly kingdom, to her Son and God, proclaim to each and every one about preparing their souls to be the dwelling place of the Lord, about continual repentance, and about the incorruptible adornment of Christian virtue. Let your death also be unashamed and peaceful,

serving as the pledge of a good answer at the dread judgment seat of Christ.

Comforting Truths

Inherent in the Feast of Dormition

Blessed is God for having granted us this great day, in which from ancient times and with triumphant hymns the universal Church accompanies heavenward into supreme Zion

the incorruptible body of the Mother of God together with her soul, and allows us to take pleasure in the spiritual fragrance of her indescribable holiness and in all the virtues with which she was endowed by the Holy Spirit and by the Son of God, Who had issued from her by taking on human nature!

With what tenderness, joy, and piety did the apostles and all the other elect enjoy the wondrous vision of the reposing Theotokos' visage, all shining with heavenly light, and the



indescribable heavenly fragrance of her God-bearing body, and the contemplation of the brightest visage of her Son and God, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who had come to take His holy Mother's soul into His hands! O, this was a celestial vision on earth, never seen before! Even the heavenly angels were visibly present here together with their King and Master.

Only three days did the Most-pure body of the Theotokos, buried by the apostles in Gethsemane, remain in the

tomb, only three days did it stay there, and afterwards it was resurrected by the Lord and united with her soul, and she was taken up together with her body into heaven. For only three days was she fated to repose in the sleep of death, just as the Lord Himself remained in His tomb for three days and afterwards arose to confirm the universal resurrection of mankind. Death, having been vanquished by the resurrected Christ, became for the faithful a dormition, a passage, a step towards immortality and eternal life, provided we die in faith, repentance, and virtue.

Let us venerate the Most-glorious Mother of God, higher than the heavens and purer than sunlight, who delivered mankind from its curse, i.e. from God's damnation.

But what exactly is God's curse? It is the consequence of God's righteous wrath upon criminal, sinful mankind, so ungrateful to its Creator and Benefactor, for which it had been deprived of God's mercy, eternally rejected from the face of God, condemned to the eternal torment of hell or to eternal death with the fallen angels, the evil spirits. Eve, our foremother, was responsible for this damnation together with Adam through the sin of disobedience—and even to this day its consequences continue to overshadow sinners who do not know God, their Saviour.

But the Theotokos, through her humility, obedience, meekness, God-like purity, acceptance of the Archangel's tidings, and above all through her wondrous bearing of the Son of God in her womb, attracted God's blessing upon the world by giving birth to the Saviour of the world and obtaining the benevolence of the Heavenly Father towards all the faithful. Another consequence of God's damnation of mankind was death, but Christ, the Son of God, Who was born of the Theotokos in flesh, Who suffered and died for the sins of mankind, took upon Himself our damnation, vanquished our death by His death, and removed the curse from us by crucifying our sins on the cross and granting us incorruptibility, resurrection, and immortality.

Such are the comforting truths which the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos brings us: it assures us that Christ the Saviour, born from the Most-pure Virgin Mary, removed from us the curse of our sins and granted to all of us resurrection from the dead on the last day of the world. Is this not comforting for every Christian believer?

And having such an expectation of a general resurrection from the dead, let us try throughout our entire life to become worthy of the glorious resurrection into eternal life by means of constant repentance, battle with our passions and the temptations of the flesh and the world, and strive for success in all virtues, in order to eternally enjoy the infinite, incorruptible, surpassing all understanding, all feeling and all expectation—the blessings of the Heavenly Kingdom, together with God, the Mother of God, the holy angels, and all the saints. Amen.

IS THE TERRIBLE JUDGMENT REAL?

By Archbishop Averky (Taushev) 1906-1976.

In our time we have become witnesses of a completely new teaching, so far unheard-of in our Church, to the effect that the Second Coming of Christ and the Terrible Judgment must be understood somehow in an "allegorical" way, and not literally, and that the Terrible Judgment will in essence be not at all terrible.

In propagandizing this "teaching," they affirm with great aplomb and authority that everything we expounded "has been thought up by dark fanatical monks," and that contemporary "enlightened Christians" cannot and must not believe in it all. (But how, we may ask, can we not believe in that which has been clearly and definitively said in the Sacred Scriptures, or by the great Fathers of the Church or the glorious, Spirit-bearing ascetics who have been glorified by the Holy Church?) For Christ Himself, they say, said that *He came not to judge the world, but to save it* (and then references are made to John 12:7, Matthew 18:11 and Luke 9:56).

Already a long time ago we were warned that the cunning of Satan and his servants, especially in the last times, will be manifest also in the fact that, in order to destroy people, they will also begin skillfully to use even the texts of the Sacred Scriptures, interpreting them in a distorted manner. (After all, on such distorted interpretations are based all the numerous contemporary sects.) And it is like that in the given case: Christ truly came to earth the first time in order to save the world, but the second time He will come no longer to save, but to judge the world. Moreover, the measure of this Judgment, as He Himself said, will be the word uttered by Him: *The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day* (Jn 12:48), that is: he who does not observe the teaching brought by Christ the Savior to the earth will be subjected to condemnation at the Terrible Judgment.

To whom could this not be clear? Only to a mind that is ill-intentioned! But how can one distort that which is said so clearly in the Sacred Scriptures? *Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.* (Rev 1:7; cf. Acts 1:11). *Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his works.* (Rev 22:12), says the Lord Himself. What could be clearer or more comprehensible than these words? And so there will undoubtedly be the Terrible Judgment, and there will be the reward of each according to his works, and there will be hell and the everlasting torments for the impenitent sinners. This will be demanded by the Highest Divine Justice, which is so clearly felt and whose inexorable necessity is recognized by every human heart that is uncorrupted, not poisoned by lying pseudo-wisdom...

A MODEL FOR PRIESTS: ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT (1829-1908)

By Fr. Edward Pehanich.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

[Hebrews 13:7]

† † †



The holy Apostle instructs us to “remember our leaders, those who speak to us the word of God, to consider the outcome of their lives and to imitate their faith.”

As we reflect on the Lives of the Saints and seek to imitate their faith, one of the challenges, especially for priests, is that the vast majority of Orthodox saints were either martyrs who suffered and died for

Christ or were monks and nuns. Very few of our canonized saints were married men and women who raised families, and even fewer were married priests. How can I, as a priest, lead a holy, Christ-centered life since I have a wife and a family and cannot spend hours each day in daily prayer nor undertake feats of asceticism as many of the saints? One great exception is St. John of Kronstadt, a married Russian priest, who with the exception of St. John Chrysostom, may likely be one of the most popular saints among Orthodox priests.

St. John was born in 1829 in the north of Russia to pious parents; his father Elias was the sacristan at the village church. While completing his seminary studies at the St. Petersburg Academy, he dreamt of becoming a missionary to the natives of Siberia or Alaska but observing the conditions of society in St. Petersburg he realized that there was much missionary work needed in Russia. He suffered from a long period of depression while at the Academy and later said he was only freed from this darkness by long prayer.

As he struggled over which direction to take in life he had a dream in which he saw himself as a priest at St. Andrew’s Cathedral in the city of Kronstadt, which is near St. Petersburg. Graduating from the Academy, he married Elizabeth, the daughter of a priest, and was ordained a priest in 1855. Appointed to St. Andrew’s Cathedral in Kronstadt, he was deeply moved when he entered the church for the first time and realized it was the church he had seen in his dream. His relationship to Elizabeth was more the relationship between a brother and sister since he devoted himself to virginity.

The city of Kronstadt was the place to which criminals from St. Petersburg were routinely deported and, as a port city, it was teeming with sailors, unskilled workers working the docks, and crowds of homeless people living in shacks and dugouts around the city. It was among these people that Father John began his ministry. Knowing of his generosity, crowds of beggars would flock outside his home and church and became known as Father John’s regiment.

Father John at first gave money and food to all who came to him but soon realized this was only temporary help and sometimes harmful to the poor. In 1873 he opened a House of Industry consisting of a number of workshops, a dormitory, a dining area, a health clinic, a library, and an elementary school. Here the poor were not simply given hand-outs but were helped to rise out of their poverty by learning a trade and receiving an education.

Serving as the pastor of a large city parish, serving the needs of the poor who flocked around him, and teaching religion in the local schools had Father John working from early morning to late evening each day. In the midst of his exhausting ministry he devoted careful time to his inner life of prayer and kept a diary in which he set down his thoughts, feelings, and prayers. This diary has been published in English under the title *My Life in Christ* and reveals the source of Father John’s strength to endure the many demands on him. For Father John, the center of his life was celebrating the Liturgy and receiving the Lord in Holy Communion, which he did daily.

He wrote in his diary: “I die when I am not celebrating the Liturgy... There is no true life in us without the Source of Life—Jesus Christ. The Liturgy is the source of true life, because God Himself is in it; the Lord of life gives Himself as food and drink to the believers, gives to His communicants life in abundance, as He himself says: *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.* (Jn 6:54).”

One person who observed Father John celebrating a Divine Liturgy wrote his impressions: “After having celebrated the Divine Liturgy and received Holy Communion, Father John’s face has changed. No longer is there in it even a trace of that fatigue and any kind of grief or sorrow which could have been seen when he first entered the church. An extraordinary spiritual joy, extraordinary peace and heavenly rest, extraordinary strength and power were now reflected in each trace of his features. His face was as if glowing, was as if giving off some sort of light. Father John was ready to once again work without tiring from morning to middle of night, he had supplied himself with a store of strength for all the daily tasks and worries which lay before him.”

Father John’s devotion to the Holy Eucharist led him to encourage frequent reception of the Holy Mysteries among his people, an “unusual” practice at the time since for most Russians Holy Confession and Holy Communion were done

once a year as merely an obligation. He expressed his dismay at such attitudes: “How meagerly you take Communion, and how necessary it is to partake more frequently! Your soul is parched with hunger and thirst for grace. Think of the Samaritan woman and Jesus Christ and know how to seek the living water of grace.”

Father John also devoted much time and energy to renewing the Sacrament of Holy Confession, which at that time had also become reduced to a once a year formality. He spent hours in individual confessions, writing in 1859: “What a wonderful thing! I heard people’s confessions yesterday from 4 to 11 p.m., and even though I was a little tired, I went to bed at midnight, and having gotten up at 4:30 a.m., felt brisk and healthy! How good it is to work for the Lord! How He strengthens one—it is marvelous!”

One penitent recorded his memories of confession with Father John: “He was not content with a simple, formal confession, but embarked on an entire education, testing, and examination of the feelings of the soul and of the penitent’s religious knowledge. Sometimes he would spend hours with the penitent and, postponing the absolution, made him return again and again. As the years went by the number of penitents grew tremendously.”

By the 1890’s so many people flocked to him for Confession that Father John instituted the radical practice of group, public confessions. Accounts of those mass confessions speak of thousands of people crowded into the Cathedral around Father John who weeping would speak to the people and lead the prayers of Confession. The crowd of penitents too would be weeping, screaming, shouting out their sins in repentance, falling prostrate on the floor. It is recorded that such public Confessions would go on for two or more hours.

Also, by 1890 Father John had acquired a reputation throughout Russia not only as a holy, generous priest but as a miracle worker. In 1883 sixteen people published a letter in a local newspaper thanking God for their healing through the prayers of Father John. From that time on, thousands of the sick and suffering descended on Kronstadt seeking his help in their healing.

In his diary and letters that have been preserved, Father John reveals that all in his life was not successful and all were not supportive of his ministry. He speaks of conflicts with his Metropolitan Isidor and the church hierarchy who were suspicious and cautious of his spreading celebrity. He also wrote of jealousy and envy on the part of fellow clergy who were reluctant to allow him to serve in their churches and disagreements with his wife who resented the women who demanded his attention. Predicting the calamity of the coming Russian Revolution of 1917, he was resented by many of the intelligentsia for his increasing number of sermons which warned Russia of a coming terrible judgment of God and the need for repentance.

Father John’s health began to decline in 1906 but he continued to celebrate his daily Divine Liturgy until December 10, 1908. He fell asleep in the Lord on December 20th, 1908 having received the Lord in Holy Communion till his last day. Father John was buried in the women’s monastery he had founded in St. Petersburg after a massive, public funeral. He was officially glorified as a saint by the Orthodox Church in Russia in 1988. This writer had the blessing, several years ago, of visiting the tomb of St. John in St. Petersburg, located in a basement chapel of the convent he founded. The nuns of the monastery informed me that Father John’s relics are not in the tomb but were hidden from the Communists during the Revolution and their location is unknown. The nun added: “We know his body is somewhere nearby, we feel his presence and miracles still take place here.”



Never despair in God’s mercy by whatever sins you may have been bound by the temptation of the Devil, but pray with your whole heart, with the hope of forgiveness; knock at the door of God’s mercy and it shall be opened unto you. I, a simple priest, am an example for you: however I may sometimes sin by the action of the Devil, for instance, by enmity towards a brother, whatever the cause may be, even though it may be a right cause, and I myself become thoroughly disturbed and set my brother against me, and unworthily celebrate the Holy Sacrament, not from wilful neglect, but by being myself unprepared, and by the action of the Devil; yet, after repentance, the Lord forgives all, and everything, especially after the worthy communion of the Holy Sacrament: I become white as snow, or as a wave of the sea, by the blood of Christ; the most heavenly peace dwells in my heart; it becomes light, so light, and I feel beatified. Then, indeed, I forget all troubles, anxieties, and the oppression of the enemy, I become entirely renewed, and as though risen from the dead. Do not then despair, brethren, whatever sins you may have committed, only repent and confess them with a contrite heart and humble spirit. Glory, O Lord, to Thy mercy! Glory, O Lord, to Thy long-suffering and forbearance!

The priest must be higher than the lordly haughtiness of well-born and coddled and not cringe before or fawn upon this haughtiness; he must not lower himself, not be cowardly before the powerful of this world, but hold himself with an awareness of his clerical dignity, gravely, evenly, in a pastoral manner—and serve unhurriedly, not so as to please people. He must denounce caprices, lordly arrogance, and any coldness to matters concerning the faith.

St. John of Kronstadt

TRUE WISDOM

Hieromartyr Onuphry of Kolyma (1938) Tobolsk, 1928. An ageless article that certainly applies to our life in today's world of materialism and comforts.

One local Orthodox priest in his sermon said: "In the first centuries of Christianity, in times of persecution, the faithful prayed in the catacombs, hidden in the damp underground. Faithful Christians came to these catacombs to offer prayers despite the darkness, dampness, and frightful cold, away from their persecutors... Presently, in this church where we are praying it is warm and bright, even when it is dark and freezing outside. We are able to peacefully sing hymns of praise to God, have discussions on lessons of faith, and to partake of the Communion of the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ. However, in these days of peace and quiet our churches are becoming devoid of people."

This is how Batiushka spoke, and I was struck by the truth and simplicity of his words! Really, what justification can lazy and light-minded Christians possibly have to depart from God the Source of all that is great and beautiful? What can the empty, sinful world give them? There is nothing more beautiful or perfect than God! The Word of Truth is in the Orthodox Church!



But outside of it are lies and, at best, futile and deceitful philosophies. In the world outside we find emptiness, a spirit of languor, as well as dissension, hate, and instability. Here, in the Christian world, we find tenderness, truth, love, joy which is real and stable for all time.

The light-mindedness of this Batiushka's parishioners became more apparent when I compared them to those in other cities. Here in the town of Tobolsk, for twenty thousand residents there are more than ten Orthodox churches. But in Kharkov, where I lived before, for half a million residents there were but two tiny Orthodox churches. In Sverdlovsk, the capital of the Ural provinces, there is also but one Orthodox church. On feast days, when I served in Kharkov, crowds of the faithful had to stand outside in the rain and frost, while those inside were fainting from lack of oxygen... and so many believers did not have the good fortune to be able to attend an Orthodox church at all!

For a period of seven months I was not able to pray in the temple of God. For this reason I understand from experi-

ence how criminal and terrible it is for those unfortunate light-minded people to neglect this great Sacred House of God, so valuable and easily attainable for them! My thoughts are then transported to people of other faiths, who are still unaware of the beauty of Orthodox services, the truth of Her teachings, and the joy of life in the Grace of the Church, which is freely given to the faithful in the Seven Mysteries of God through the Orthodox Church. And I came to the conclusion that, were they to accept Orthodoxy, people of other faiths would value Orthodoxy much more than we do. The unwitting words of our Saviour come to mind: *And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* (Mt 8:11-12).

There can be no justification for the negligence of these parishioners. Right here in these Orthodox churches that same Christ God proclaims His teachings and offers to partakers His Most Holy Body and Blood. Here, in the town of Tobolsk, a mere ten years ago people could not help but see true miracles with the revelation of the relics of Saint John, Wonderworker of Tobolsk and all Russia. I hear the echoes of other, frightening words of our God and Saviour to these lazy servants: *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin... If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.* (Jn 15:22, 24). The Lord uses all possible means to unite people to His Church and eternal blessedness, but people remove themselves from His Truth, and thus from eternal happiness.

Amid the turmoil and instability of our lives, amid major and minor events, amid human joys and sorrows there occurs, my beloved, an unseen spiritual process by which some people approach God's Kingdom, and by which others fall away from His Kingdom, according to their own volition; this is the most important activity of our earthly lives. **The world exists as long as there are still people who are able to attain eternal life.** The word of God clearly tells us that the present world will cease to exist specifically when the number of faithful Christians dwindles to a minimum: *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* (Lk 18:8).

Many people have forgotten God and have become immersed in today's culture outside the Church. They do not know, poor souls, they do not understand what is most important: the word of God and Christian life. Undoubtedly man's genius will, with time, produce great achievements in the realm of science and culture. Yet how confused and horrified will all those unbelievers be when, at the very height of man's culture—Alas!—at a time of total scarcity of faith on the earth, all their achievements will be destroyed and will perish with the rest of the world. They will see the advent and the glory of that Son of man, of Whom they did not want to know, Who is and always was the Master of heaven and earth.

His Apostles, while they were alive, as well as the pastors of the Church, perpetually spoke of this: *All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.* (Mt 28:18). Blessed and truly wise is he who, with the eyes of faith, sees this inner process of people joining God and His eternal kingdom, who responds to the call of God, hastens to join His Holy Church and, with Her guidance, with the help of the Grace of God, endeavors with fear and trembling to fulfill Christ's commandments, who sees the ways of evil and in every way turns away from them (cf. Pss 1:1-4).

In this is true wisdom! But being oblivious to and straying from the path of Christ, becoming immersed only in humanistic thoughts and deeds, is ignorance and eternal death for mankind. That true man of wisdom and ascetic of Christ, the Venerable Anthony the Great says: *People are generally called intelligent through a wrong use of this word. The intelligent are not those who have studied the sayings and writings of the wise men of old, but those whose soul is intelligent, who can judge what is good and what is evil; they avoid what is evil and harms the soul and intelligently care for and practice what is good and profits the soul, greatly thanking God. It is these alone who should properly be called intelligent.*



Those who really speak about the end times are those who practice hesychasm, not relaxation. Genuine Orthodox eschatology is hesychasm.

Fr. John Romanides (+2001)

The things of the past are shadow; those of the present icon; the truth is to be found in the things of the future.

St. Maximus the Confessor

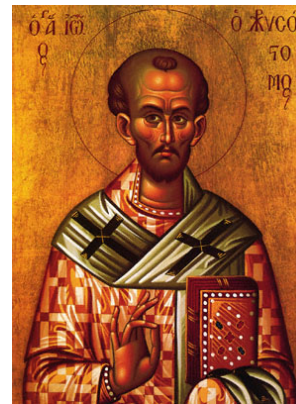
ON THE ANTICHRIST

By Saint John Chrysostom, his explanation of the 2nd Thess. epistle of Apostle Paul, Chap. 2 verses 3-12.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

[2 Thes 2:3-12]

† † †



He tells us: *Let no one of you be deceived by any means, that if the apostasy does not appear first to reveal the man of sin, the son of perdition, the one who opposes and exalts himself above all that is God or that is worshipped, so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

Here he talks about the antichrist and reveals great mysteries. What is this *falling away*, this *apostasy*? The antichrist himself he calls apostasy, because he will lead many to perdition and separate them from the faith, so that, he says, if possible to scandalize even the elect. He also calls him *man of sin*. Because he will perform uncountable sufferings but he will also induce others to do the same. He calls him also son of perdition, for he will be led to perdition.

But who is he really? Is he Satan? Of course not, but a man who will receive all his energies. *And the man will be revealed* he says, *who exalted himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped* meaning the antichrist. For he will not bring some idolatric religion but he will be anti-God and he will remove all Gods and he will command that he

be worshipped as God and he will move in the temple of God, not only the one in Jerusalem, but he will be trying to prove that he is God. For he will perform great deeds and wondrous signs.

Later, wishing to show who he is, whose appearance will happen through the energies of Satan, he says *by all means, signs and monstrous lies*. In other words, he will demonstrate all manner of miraculous capabilities, but nothing will be true but they will all be done to deceive. These things he foretold, that the Christians of his time, not be deceived. “And monstrous lies he says, meaning that with miracles they will be led to lies. *And by every deception of injustice to perdition.*”

Why would God permit—one could ask—such an event to happen? And what type of divine economy is this? What would be the gain from the appearance of that antichrist, since he will come to hurt us? Fear not, my dear, but listen to him who says that he will have authority only on those who will be lost anyway, who even if he did not come (the antichrist) they would not have believed.

You ask therefore what would be the gain? He comes therefore to screen them. So that they may not say, that because Christ was saying that He is God—even if nowhere did He say so openly—but because He was declared to be so by His followers, “that is why we did not believe. Because we heard that God is one by whom everything was created, that is why we did not believe in Christ.” The antichrist will therefore exactly refute their excuse. For when he will come and they shall believe in him as he does not represent anything right but everything unlawful, they will then be silenced. For if you do not believe in Christ, so much more you should not have believed in the antichrist. For He said He was sent by the Father, he (the antichrist) however the opposite. That is why Christ said, *I came in the name of the Father and you did not receive Me. If someone else will come in his name, him you will receive.* (Jn 5:43).

But they will say, we have seen signs. However even by Christ many and great signs were made. So much more you should not have believed in him (the antichrist). Of course much has been foretold, that he will be unlawful, the son of perdition, that his presence will be through the energies of Satan, while about Him the contrary that He is the Saviour, and the bearer of good works...

For they would not receive the love of truth, to save themselves. For this, God will send them deceit to believe in falsehood, to judge all those who did not believe in the truth but prosper in injustice. *That they be judged.* He did not say “that they be cursed” for even without Him they were cursed but *to be judged* namely to be condemned in front of the dread seat of judgment for they will be unrepentant. Who would they be these people? He explained it Himself, adding *those who did not believe in the Truth. For they* He says, *did not accept the love of Truth.* For **it was both love and truth.** For these two He came to this world and because He is a lover of mankind and to reveal the truth...

The antichrist instead will come to fault the people and to destroy them. And what does he then intend to do? He will agitate everything and he will shake everything and because of them that he will shake and because of them that he will be ordering and because of the fear he will create. He will be fearsome to all, by his authority, by his brutality, by his illegal orders.

Fear not though, his authority will be in force, He tells them, on those that are doomed to be lost. For then will come Elijah to protect the faithful. This was told by Christ: *Elijah will come and restore everything...* Exactly as John was the forerunner of the first appearance of Christ, so would Elijah will be the forerunner of His second glorious appearance

and for this he has not died but is preserved.



There will be a part that holds the true faith as it was passed down by the Holy Apostles and is preserved in the Orthodox Church, but even of these a not inconsiderable part will be **Orthodox only by name**, but in their hearts they will not have that order that is demanded by faith, but they will love the present age. Although the name of “Christian” will be heard everywhere, and everywhere there will be seen churches and church orders, all this will be only appearance, while within there will be complete apostasy. On this soil the kingdom of the Antichrist will be born—and it will grow in the same spirit of appearance.

St. Theophan the Recluse (+1894)

ON CREMATION INCINERATING EVERY HUMAN TRACE OF OUR DEARLY DEPARTED...

A "scorching" sermon by the Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus.



It is a known fact that certain indigenous circles of internationalist mockery, who, ignoring the long-standing Christian tradition of our spotless Faith have been penetrating every form of mass communication and through them, the conscience of contemporary man, poisoning it and buckling the bases of the Faith. As such, the indifference regarding the Faith and the Christian traditions, under the influence of the aforementioned, is sending roots into the morally listless and religiously sickly consciences.

Having perceived the signs of the times, and the twists and turns of those moving suspiciously against Her, and in order to safeguard the Orthodox tradition today that the procedure of cremation of the deceased is being fully materialized and suitably prepared, our Holy Church, as a caring mother, has enlightened Her Christ-named flock in an appropriate manner, for *the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* (Eph.4:12). She has stressed to Her members the spiritual dimensions and the consequences of such a choice in the spiritual life of the faithful, by having rejected the cremation of the deceased as an act that is incompatible to Her tradition, thus demarcating Her faith and Her respect for the human person, and by extension, for the human body, which is a temple and a dwelling of the Most Holy Spirit.

The human body is an icon of the immortal soul and a projection of eternity in this world. The burning of the body constitutes an iconoclastic act, which offends the faith in the eternity of the Church. The process of a body's deterioration should be a natural one, and never a forced one. Nature undertakes the deterioration of the body. Burning it perpetrates an act of violence on the body. The experience of the Church, which originates from the honoring of holy relics, convinces that relics are spiritually alive, which is why the Church regards burial as an eternal value, whereas cremation is not regarded as a personal right for the faithful members of the Church; it

is considered a clearly nihilistic act that denotes the end of a person, whereas on the contrary, burial marks the hope and the expectation of the Resurrection.

Regardless of the arguments it may be based on, the cremation of the deceased resides outside the Orthodox truth which has been defined by the Apostolic word: *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It (the body) is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written: The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam (Christ) was made a quickening spirit.* (1 Cor 15:42-45).

With the cremation of the deceased, society has subscribed to its nullification. What kind of relationship can a society have with Life, when a society does not accept man in his sickness, his weakness and his death; when a society incinerates its dead; when a society destroys the remembrance of their lives and the reminder to Her members; when a society regards man's beginning an artificial and selective one and his death a final and irrevocable one; when a society denies the breath of the eternal and entraps itself in the asphyxiation of the ephemeral? There have been atheists who have

Cremation is a grave sin and a nihilistic act. Even atheists have been accentuating the remembrance of their own terrestrial "gods" by preferring to embalm their bodies—as in the cases of Lenin and Mao Zedong.

Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus.

sought to preserve their societies' memory of their terrestrial "gods," by actually embalming their bodies, as in the cases of Lenin and Mao Zedong.

The result of humanism without God, of civilization without values, of nihilism without a purpose, and the result of athe-

ism's confusion, has been the riddance of the person—the incineration of even the last vestige of him. The cremation of the deceased leads to the cremation of human dignity. Most assuredly, the re-kindling of this "push" (political, social, or otherwise) to accept cremation will lead to an attempt to gradually deaden people's sensor of faith.

The meaning of "eternity" is becoming distanced from our life experience. Every single thing that reminds one of it and discreetly underlines it is gradually becoming undesirable to accept and bothersome in practice. A contemporary thinker has asserted in an article of his—with regard to the anti-metaphysical furor which is being observed—that the professed, modernizing mentality of recent years is an "anti-metaphysical, monomaniacal complex" seated within a "tortuous psychological insecurity."

The practical and the utilitarian perceptions have prevailed, and have numbed the spiritual and experiential dimensions of events. The true and the beautiful have become subjugated to the nakedness and the harshness of rationalistic practice.

The detailed reference that is also made by the four Evangelists on the interment of our Lord's Godly Body proves its importance in an undeniable manner. The same is observed in the hymnography and the hymnology for the Most Holy Mother's Dormition, for Basil the Great, St. Ephraim, the Holy Martyrs—and naturally for all the faithful—in the sublime funeral services.

The celebrations for the translation of precious relics and the tradition and experience of the Church are unshakeable proof of the respect shown to the human body, which comprises a human being's one hypostasis. As such, incineration of that body is evidence of a latent disdain for it, as well as disbelief in the resurrection of dead bodies, an ex-Christian belief in *metempsychosis* (reincarnation) or the denial altogether of the existence of the soul. Consequently, our Holy Church is justified in proclaiming that the incineration of the deceased body is an actual denial of the Resurrection and a provocative proclamation of a nihilistic hue.

The funeral service is inextricably linked to the visible presence of the human body, not a heap of ashes. All of the Troparia hymns speak of the "reposed" or "asleep" person not an incinerated one when bidding them the last farewell, and when burying their body, not ashes. Hence it is easily deduced that it is not possible to perform a funeral service, either prior to a cremation, or after it, given that in the former case a burial will not follow, and in the latter, there will be no body to bury.

Uninfluenced by the secular spirit, the Church will continue to inter and bury the bodies of Her faithful, which may well also be relics, given that the incorruptibility of relics and their potential to work miracles are both proof of man's *theosis* (deification), since the Grace of God can also permeate the entire human body.

The choice of cremation is a sin, and is proof of our erroneous relationship with the Church. Every deviation from Her teaching is an alienation from the Grace of the living God. For those who choose cremation of their dead body—and more so with a public statement of disbelief in the eternal life, or with disrespect and disregard for the Church—we are justified in asserting that **there is absolutely no reason for the performing of a funeral service or a memorial supplication**, because what the Church is obliged to respect is the rejection of Her teaching by the deceased himself, and not the relatives' possible desire (usually for social reasons) to hold a funeral or memorial service.

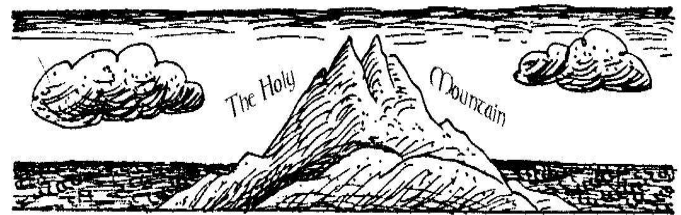
These services presuppose faith and hope in the afterlife by the deceased, and his respect for the Church. Services are not held for social purposes; they entail prayers and extensive supplications before God by the Church, who expresses Her love for the departed person as faith in the Lord, as hope for salvation, as desire for his partaking in the resurrection

for eternity, and as Her petition for the forgiveness of his sins by the Lord.

How can we chant *Blessed is the path that you walk on...* to someone who declares faith in his post-mortem nonexistence? Consequently, it is impermissible for our Most Holy Church to diminish the absolute character of this teaching of Hers, given that any possible related act would weaken Her relationship with the Truth.

Accordingly, in our God-saved Metropolis and with absolute respect—both towards the free choice of free persons, but also towards the commandments and the dogmas of our Most Holy Church—we hereby make known to everyone that **we will not be permitting the performing of funeral or memorial services to whoever wittingly chooses the cremation of his body**, thus actually denying the Resurrection of the dead. This is the most silencing response to all the sycophantic rumors that the Church's negative stance supposedly involves financial reasons.

+ Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus



Consider those nightmares and turmoil to be a storm roused by the devil's jealousy. The devil wants to intimidate you in the beginning of your spiritual journey, so that you say, "If in the beginning of my journey I encounter such temptations that are beyond my strength, who could possibly endure until the end?" In this way, Satan works his evil craft with experience and skill, making thus a long list of damned souls. But we know his traps through experience. In the beginning the journey is difficult, but afterwards come repose, joy, and high hopes of salvation. *Beholding the sea of life rising with the surging waves of temptations, I fly to Thy calm haven and cry to Thee: Raise my life from corruption, O most merciful One.* (Eirmos from the Ochoechos, plagal second tone.) Tempests and fair weather, war and peace, health and illness, gain and loss—these characterize the journey of every soul. The end of this journey is death.

So, blessed soul, do not lose heart along the road of your salvation. Together we shall walk the road, helping each other. The grace of God, which heals weaknesses and makes up for deficiencies, will be with us, girding our flaccid thoughts and anointing us with patience, until the command comes from the Ruler of All that we leave our body here and that our soul ascend to the heavens.

Elder Ephraim of Filotheou
From "Counsels from the Holy Mountain"

HOMOSEXUALITY & ENDORSERS

By Anthony of the Desert (for more of Anthony's material please visit Churchfathertheology.com).

A few weeks ago, conservative Mormon lawmakers, in Salt Lake City, voted to enact a pro-homosexual ordinance. Top musical acts (such as Bruce Springsteen and Pearl Jam) cancelled concerts in North Carolina due to the passage of a so-called anti-homosexual law (they were joined by major corporations pulling jobs and business from the state). During ice hockey's early round of the Stanley Cup playoffs, a player had to issue a public apology and was suspended for one game after uttering a homosexual slur. Given this rampant adoption of homosexuality into the fabric of American culture, we need to acknowledge God's teaching.

Modern society asserts that the Bible merely damns homosexuality in Old Testament books. How this would somehow obviate the authoritative denunciation of said sexual immortality functions as fictional absurdity; Scripture is unequivocal: *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman, it is an abomination.* (Lev 18:22, emphasis added). Moreover, in furtherance of the fact that homosexuality is heinous there resides both the sentence of death—*If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both committed an abomination. They shall be put to death.* (Lev 20:13—and the well-known narrative involving Sodom and Gomorrah: *Now before they went to sleep, the men of the city, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. Thus they called to Lot and said to him, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them.' But Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, and said, 'By no means, my brethren, do not act wickedly. I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men.'... Now the men said to Lot, 'Have you anyone else here in the city: son-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone?—then take them out of this place! For we will destroy this place, because their outcry has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.'... Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah.* (Gen 19:4-8, 12-13, 24).

Let us observe several keys within these passages:

[1] male residents of Sodom demanded sexual conduct with other men (v.5) and were known as Sodomites (v.4, a reference to not only their geographical domain but also to their engagement in sexual deviancy),

[2] in response to this monstrous requisition Lot offered his two virgin daughters for sexual molestation (v.8),

[3] the "men" who warned Lot about the destruction of Sodom, due to its rampant homosexuality, were angels (vv.1, 12-13) who acted under the Lord Jesus Christ's commands (v.13), and

[4] the Son of God utterly destroyed Sodom (v. 24), both as a consequence of homosexual behavior and the city's toleration of this wickedness. This last point is crucial: Condemnation from God befalls not only the homosexual act but also applies to its acceptance.

As if to cement the utter damnation of homosexuality, there dwells a second account of condemnation in Old Testament verse: *As they were comforting their heart, men of the city, sons of lawlessness surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man saying, 'Bring out the man who entered your house, that we may know him!' But the man, the master of the house went out to them and said to them, 'No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this foolishness. Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man's concubine, I will lead them out now. Subdue and control them, do with them what is good in your eyes; but to this man do not do such a thoughtless thing.'* (Jdgs 19:22-24).

Proponents of homosexuality further seek to minimize Sacred Scripture's categorical proscription via false assertion that only a sole New Testament passage dooms homosexuality; even if accurate, would not an unqualified scriptural prohibition suffice? In Romans we find: *"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness..."* (Rom 1:26-29). Stronger verbiage cannot be employed to expose homosexuality as: *vile passions* (v.26), *against nature* (v.26), *shameful* (v. 27), *error* (v.27), *debased mind* (v.28), *not fitting* (v.28), *unrighteousness* (v. 29), *immorality* (v. 29), *wickedness* (v. 29), *evil-mindedness* (v. 29), et al.

The New Testament then continues the condemnation of homosexual acceptance:



1. The sexual immorality that is homosexuality, encompassing also a sin against one's own body, is amongst the worst sin (1 Cor 6:18).

2. The abomination of one act of homosexuality causes tens of thousands to fall (1 Cor 10:8).

3. The homosexual, and toleration of homosexuality, prevents salvation (1 Cor 6:9; also, Gal 5:19, 21 and Eph 5:5).

4. We must not even associate with homosexuality (1 Cor 5:9).

5. We must not even speak about homosexuality (Eph 5:3).

6. Approving of others "being who/what they are," in terms of homosexuality, functions the same as if engaging in a homosexual act: *Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.* (Rom 1:32).

Sacred Scripture states: *Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions you were taught, whether by word or our epistle* (2 Thess 2:15). We **must** love the person and absolutely condemn the sin.



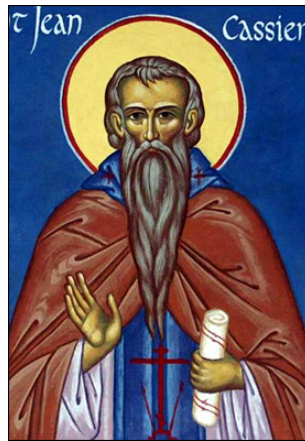
Jesus Christ is the faithful witness or the faithful martyr for two more reasons. The first one is because He gave witness to the Truth, as for example when Pilot asked Him, *Who are you?* and He answered, *For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice.* (Jn: 18:37). Poor Pilate asks, *What is truth?* (18:38) and Christ does not answer. Some have ventured to say that Pilate should have asked, "Who is the truth?" and that he would have probably received a response.

At any rate, the truth is a great subject. This is why we are struggling, to come to the truth. Poor Pilate had the entire Truth in front of him. The Truth is not some abstract idea or thought. The Truth is a Person. I am the Truth, Christ announced. He did not say, "I came to tell you a few nice things about the truth to help you along." He said; *I am the Way and the Truth and the Life!* (Jn 14:6)

Archimandrite Athanasios Mitilinaios (+2006)

ON AERIAL POWERS

St. John Cassian ca. 360-435, *Conferences* 8.12.



The atmosphere which extends between heaven and earth is ever filled with a thick crowd of spirits, which do not fly about in it quietly or idly, so that most fortunately the divine providence has withdrawn them from human sight. For through fear of their attacks, or horror at the forms, into which they transform and turn themselves at will, men would either be driven out of their wits by an

insufferable dread, and faint away, from inability to look on such things with bodily eyes, or else would daily grow worse and worse, and be corrupted by their constant example and by imitating them.

Thus, there would arise a sort of dangerous familiarity and deadly intercourse between men and the unclean powers of the air, whereas those crimes which are now committed among men, are concealed either by walls and enclosures or by distance and space, or by some shame and confusion; but if they could always look on them with open face, they would be stimulated to a greater pitch of insanity, as there would not be a single moment in which they would see them desist from their wickedness, since no bodily weariness, or occupation in business or care for their daily food (as in our case) forces them sometimes even against their will to desist from the purposes they have begun to carry out.



We wish to remind our readers to not neglect sending us their annual contribution to help us cover the costs associated with our humble publication. In addition, we kindly request of those who have the financial ability, that they consider sending us an amount over the requested annual contribution of \$24 to assist us with our educational and philanthropic activities.

Ἡλίας ὁ Θεσβίτης, ὁ Πύρινος Ἅγιος

Τοῦ Φώτη Κόντογλου, ἀπὸ τὸ «Γίγαντες Ταπεινοί», ἐκδόσεις «Ἀκρίτας» 2000.



Σήμερα 20 Ἰουλίου εἶναι ἡ μνήμη τοῦ προφήτη Ἡλία. Αὐτὸς ὁ ἅγιος ξεχωρίζει ἀνάμεσα στοὺς ἄλλους ἅγιους, καὶ μὲ ὅλο πὸν ἦτανε ἄνθρωπος, φαίνεται σὰν κάποιον ὑπερφυσικὸ καὶ μυστηριώδες πλάσμα, πὸν ἔρχεται καὶ ξανάρχεται στὸν κόσμον. Οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι περιμένανε νὰ ξανάρθει στὸν κόσμον, γιὰ τοῦτο θαρρούσανε πὸς ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Πρόδρομος

ἦτανε ὁ Ἡλίας. Καὶ τότε πὸν ρώτησε ὁ Χριστὸς τοὺς μαθητὲς του «Ποιὸς, λένε, πὸς εἶμαι, οἱ ἄνθρωποι», τοῦ ἀπαντήσανε πὸς λέγανε πὸς ἦτανε ὁ Ἡλίας ἢ κάποιος ἄλλος ἀπὸ τοὺς προφήτες.

Ὁ προφήτης Μαλαχίας, πὸν ἔζησε πολὺ ὕστερότερα ἀπὸ τὸν Ἡλία, λέγει: «Τάδε λέγει Κύριος παντοκράτωρ καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστελῶ ὑμῖν Ἡλίαν τὸν Θεσβίτην, πρὶν ἢ ἔλθειν τὴν ἡμέραν Κυρίου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐπιφανῆ», καὶ πολλοὶ το ἔξηγήσανε πὸς ὁ Ἡλίας θάρθη πάλι στὸν κόσμον πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴ Δευτέρα Παρουσία καὶ θὰ μαρτυρήσει. Σὲ ὅλα μοιάζει μ' αὐτὸν ὁ Πρόδρομος, γι' αὐτὸ οἱ ἀπόστολοι κ' οἱ ἄλλοι Ἑβραῖοι ὑποπτευόντανε μὴπως ἦτανε ὁ Ἡλίας ξαναγεννημένος.

Ὑστερα ἀπὸ τὴ Μεταμόρφωση, σὰν κατεβήκανε ἀπὸ τὸ βουνὸ οἱ τρεῖς μαθητάδες μὲ τὸν Χριστό, τὸν ρωτήσανε: «Οἱ γραμματεῖς λένε πὸς ὁ Ἡλίας πρέπει νάρθει πρῶτα. Ἐσὺ τί λές;» Κι' ὁ Χριστὸς τοὺς ἀποκρίθηκε: «Ὁ Ἡλίας ἔρχεται πρῶτα καὶ θὰ τ' ἀποκαταστήσει ὅλα ἀλλὰ σὰς λέγω πὸς ὁ Ἡλίας ἦρθε κιόλας, καὶ δὲν τὸν γνωρίζανε, ἀλλὰ τοῦ κάνανε ὅσα θελήσανε· τὰ ἴδια μέλλεται νὰ πάθει καὶ ὁ Γιὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀπ' αὐτούς.» Τότε καταλάβανε οἱ μαθητὲς πὸς γιὰ τὸν Ἰωάννη τὸν Βαπτιστὴ τοὺς εἶπε. Ρωτήσανε οἱ μαθητὲς τὸν Χριστὸ γιὰ τὸν Ἡλία, ἐπειδὴ τὸν εἶχανε δεῖ πρὶν ἀπὸ λίγο, ἀπάνω στὸ Θαβῶρ, νὰ φανερόνεται μαζί μὲ τὸν Μωυσῆ, τὴν ὥρα πὸν μεταμορφώθηκε ὁ Χριστὸς, καὶ νὰ μιλά μαζί του, μὲ ὅλο πὸν εἶχε ζήσει σ' αὐτὸν τὸν κόσμον πρὶν ἀπὸ 800 χρόνια. Ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὴ Σταύρωση, σὰν φώναξε ὁ Χριστὸς «Ἡλί ἡλί, λαμὰ σαβαχθανί», κάποιοι ἀπὸ τοὺς Ἑβραῖους πὸν στεκόντανε κοντὰ στὸ σταυρὸ λέγανε πὸς θὰ φώναζε τὸν Ἡλία νὰ τὸν βοηθήσει: «Τινὲς δὲ τῶν ἐκεῖ ἐστώτων ἀκούσαντες ἔλεγον ὅτι

Ἡλίαν φωνεῖ οὗτος.» (Ματθ. 27:47). Παντοῦ πλανιέται ὁ ἴσκιος του.

Ὁ προφήτης Ἡλίας γεννήθηκε πρὸ 2.770 χρόνια. Πατρίδα του ἦτανε ἓνας τόπος πὸν τὸν λέγανε Θεσβίτη. Στὰ σύνορα τῆς Ἀραβίας, κ' ἀπὸ τοῦτο λέγεται Θεσβίτης. Τὸν πατέρα του τὸν λέγανε Σωβάκ, ἀπὸ τὸ γένος τοῦ Ἀαρῶν. Τὴ νύχτα πὸν γεννήθηκε εἶδε ὁ πατέρας του πὸς πῆγανε νὰ τὸν χαιρετήσουνε κάποιοι ἄνθρωποι μὲ ἄσπρα ρούχα καὶ πὸς φασκιώσανε μὲ φωτιά τὸ νήπιον καὶ τοῦ δίνανε νὰ φάγει φωτιά. Σὰν μεγάλωσε, ἔγινε ἓνας ἄντρας τρομερὸς κ' ἔτρεχε παντοῦ καὶ ξόρκιζε τοὺς Ἑβραῖους νὰ γυρίσουνε στὸν ἀληθινὸ Θεὸ πὸν εἶχανε ἀρνηθεῖ καὶ προσκυνούσανε τὸν Βάαλ. Φωτιά ἔβγαινε ἀπὸ τὸ στόμα του καὶ δὲν στεκότανε μέρα-νύχτα, ἀλλὰ ὀλοένα μιλοῦσε γιὰ τὴν πίστη τ' ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ, γιὰ τοῦτο ὀνομάσθηκε «ζηλωτής»: «**Καὶ ἀνέστη Ἡλίας προφήτης ὡς πῦρ καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ ὡς λαμπρὰς ἐκαίετο.**» (Σοφ. Σειρᾶχ 48:1). Φωτιά ἔτρωγε νήπιον, μὲ φασκιὲς ἀπὸ φωτιά ἦτανε τυλιγμένος, φωτιά ἔβγαινε ἀπὸ τὸ στόμα του, φωτιά ἔπεσε στὸ θυσιαστήριον μὲ τὴν προσευχή του, φωτιά ἔκαψε τὴ γῆ ἀπὸ τὴν ἀνεβροχία ἐπειδὴ τὸ ζήτησε ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ, φωτιά ἦτανε τ' ἀμάξι πὸν τὸν ἄρπαξε στὸν οὐρανὸ.

Τὸν καιρὸ ἐκεῖνον ἦτανε βασιλιάς τῶν Ἑβραίων ὁ Ἀχαάβ, ἄνθρωπος ἀσεβῆς, πὸν προσκυνούσε τὸν Βάαλ, κ' εἶχε γυναῖκα τὴν Ἰεζάβελ, μίαν τίγρη αἰμοβόρα πὸν κυνηγοῦσε τὸν Ἡλία νὰ τὸν σκοτώσει, ἐπειδὴ δὲν ἔπαυε ἐλέγχοντάς τὴν γιὰ τὴν ἀπιστία της καὶ γιὰ τὰ κακουργήματα πὸν ἔκανε. Καὶ σὲ τοῦτο μοιάζει ὁ Ἡλίας μὲ τὸν Πρόδρομον, πὸν τὸν κατάρχευε ἢ Ἡρωδιάδα. Γιὰ νὰ φανεῖ ἡ δύναμη τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸν παρακάλεσε ὁ Ἡλίας νὰ μὴ βρεῖξει. Καὶ σφαλίσθηκε ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ δὲν ἔπεσε σταλαγματιὰ στὴ γῆ. Κ' ἔγινε λόγος Κυρίου στὸν Ἡλία νὰ πάγει νὰ κρυφθεῖ σ' ἓνα ξεροπόταμον πὸν τὸν λέγανε Χοράθ. Κι' ὁ Ἡλίας πῆγε στὸ ξεροπόταμον, καὶ τὰ κοράκια τοῦ πηγαίνανε ψωμὶ καὶ κρέας κ' ἔτρωγε, κ' ἔπινε ἀπὸ τὸ νερὸ πὸν στεκότανε στὶς λακκοῦβες τοῦ ξεροπόταμου.

Ὑστερα ἀπὸ λίγες μέρες ξερᾶθηκε ὀλότελα τὸ ξεροπόταμον καὶ τοῦ λέγει ὁ Θεός: «Σήκω καὶ σύρε σὲ μίαν πολιτεία πὸν τὴν λένε Σάρεφθα κοντὰ στὴ Σιδώνα, κ' ἐγὼ θὰ προστάξω μίαν χήρα γυναῖκα νὰ σὲ θρέφει.» Πῆγε λοιπὸν καὶ στάθηκε ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν καστρόπορτα, καὶ βλέπει μίαν γυναῖκα πὸν μάζευε λίγα ξυλαράκια, κ' ἔκραξε ὁ προφήτης καὶ τῆς εἶπε: «Σύρε καὶ φέρε μου μίαν στάλα νερὸ νὰ πιῶ.» Καὶ πηγαινάμενη ἡ γυναῖκα νὰ φέρει τὸ νερὸ, τῆς φώναξε ὁ Ἡλίας: «Φέρε μου καὶ λίγο ψωμὶ νὰ φάγω.» Τοῦ λέγει ἡ γυναῖκα: «Ὁ Θεὸς ξέρει πὸς δὲν ἔχω ἄλλο τίποτα παρὰ μονάχα μίαν δρᾶκα (μονοχειρῖα) ἀλεύρι στὴν κρήνα (σεντουκάκι) καὶ λίγο λάδι στὸ λαδικὸ, καὶ μαζεῦω τώρα λίγα ξύλα νὰ κάνω μίαν μικρὴ πίτα νὰ φάγω ἐγὼ καὶ τὰ παιδιὰ

μου κ' ὕστερα νὰ πεθάνουμε.» Τότε τῆς λέγει ὁ Ἥλι-
ας: «Μὴ φοβᾶσαι, μόνο σύρε καὶ κᾶνε καθὼς εἶπα,
ἀλλὰ φέρε μου πρῶτα ἓνα κομμάτι πίτα, κ' ὕστερα νὰ
φᾶς ἐσὺ καὶ τὰ παιδιὰ σου· γιατί, νὰ τὶ λέγει ὁ Κύριος:
Ἀπὸ τὸν κουβά σου δὲν θὰ λείψει τ' ἀλεύρι κι' ἀπὸ
τὸ λαδόμπρικό σου δὲν θὰ λιγοστέψει τὸ λάδι, ὡς τὴν
ἡμέρα ποὺ θὰ στείλω βροχὴ ἀπάνω στὴ γῆ.»

Πῆγε λοιπὸν ἡ γυναίκα κ' ἔκανε ὅπως τῆς παραγγέλιε
ὁ Ἥλιος, καὶ τὸν πῆρε στὸ σπίτι της, κι' ἀπὸ κείνη τῆ
μέρα δὲ λιγόστεψε τ' ἀλεύρι μῆτε τὸ λάδι σώθηκε, κατὰ
τὸ λόγο τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἀφοῦ πέρασε καιρὸς, ἀρρώστησε
βαρεῖα ὁ γυιὸς τῆς χήρας καὶ πέθανε. Κ' ἡ μάνα του ἡ
καημένη, ἀπὸ τὴν πίκρα της, εἶπε στὸν Ἥλια: «Ἄνθρωπε
τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἦρθες στὸ σπίτι μου γιὰ νὰ τοῦ θυμίσεις τὶς
ἁμαρτίες μου καὶ νὰ πάρει τὸ παιδί μου;» Τῆς λέγει
ὁ Ἥλιος: «Δῶσε μου τὸ γυιό σου.» Τὸν πῆρε λοιπὸν

στὴν ἀγκαλιά του καὶ
τὸν ἀνέβασε στ' ἀνώγι
ποὺ κοιμότανε, καὶ τὸν
ἔβαλε ἀπάνω στὸ στρω-
σίδι ποὺ κοιμότανε ὁ ἴδι-
ος καὶ φύσηξε τρεῖς φορὲς
στὸ πρόσωπό του κ' ἔκρα-
ξε στὸ Θεὸ κ' εἶπε: «Ἄς
γυρίσει πίσω ἡ ψυχὴ σὲ
τοῦτο τὸ παιδάριο.» Κ'
ἔγινε καθὼς εἶπε, καὶ ζω-
ντάνεψε τὸ παιδάριο. Τό-
τε φώναξε τὴ μητέρα του
καὶ τῆς τόδωσε, λέγοντάς
της: «Νά, ζεῖ πάλι ὁ γυιὸς
σου.» Κ' εἶπε ἡ γυναίκα:

«Τώρα κατάλαβα πὼς εἶσαι ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Θεοῦ, κι' ὁ
λόγος τοῦ εἶναι ἀληθινὸς στὸ στόμα σου.»

Σὰν περάσανε τρία χρόνια, εἶπε ὁ Θεὸς στὸν Ἥλια:
«Πῆγαινε στὸν Ἀχαάβ καὶ παρουσιάσου μπροστά του,
καὶ θὰ δώσω βροχὴ στὸ πρόσωπο τῆς γῆς.» Τράβηξε
λοιπὸν ὁ Ἥλιος καὶ πῆγε στὰ μέρη τῆς Σαμάρειας, κ'
ἦτανε μεγάλῃ πείνα. Ὁ Ἀχαάβ εἶχε ἓναν οἰκονόμο τοῦ
παλατιοῦ του ποὺ τὸν λέγανε Ἀβδιού, ἄνθρωπο ποὺ
πίστευε στὸ Θεὸ καὶ ποὺ προστάτευε τοὺς λίγους ποὺ
προσκυνούσανε τὸν ἀληθινὸ Θεό, κ' εἶχε κρύψει ἓκατὸ
παπάδες σὲ δυὸ σπηλιὲς καὶ τοὺς ἔθρεφε κρυφά. Εἶπε
λοιπὸν μία μέρα ὁ βασιλιάς στὸν Ἀβδιὸν νὰ βγοῦνε μαζὶ
στὸν κάμπο ἴσως βροῦνε λίγο χορτάρι γιὰ τ' ἄλογά τους
νὰ μὴν ψοφήσουνε. Ὁ Ἀχαάβ τράβηξε ἄλλοῦ, κι' ὁ Ἀβδι-
οῦ τράβηξε σ' ἄλλο μέρος. Καὶ κεῖ ποὺ περπατοῦσε ὁ
Ἀβδιού, βλέπει τὸν Ἥλια, καὶ σὰν τὸν εἶδε τὸν γνώρισε
κ' ἔπεσε χάμω καὶ τὸν προσκύνησε κ' εἶπε: «Ἐσὺ εἶσαι,
ἀφέντη μου, ὁ Ἥλιος;» Τοῦ λέγει ὁ προφήτης: «Ἐγὼ
εἶμαι· μόνο σύρε καὶ πὲς στὸν ἀφέντη σου τὸν Ἀχαάβ
πὼς θέλω νὰ τὸν ἀνταμώσω.»



Κι' ὁ καημένος ὁ Ἀβδιὸν στενοχωρήθηκε καὶ τοῦ
λέγει: «Ἀφέντη μου, τόσο ἀψηφᾶς τὴ ζωὴ σου καὶ
θέλεις νὰ δεῖς τὸν Ἀχαάβ; Αὐτὸς δὲν ἄφησε τόπο
ποὺ νὰ μὴ στείλει νὰ σὲ ζητήσῃ. Καὶ καλὰ νὰ πάγω
νὰ τοῦ πῶ πὼς τὸν θέλεις, μὰ ἂν ἔρθῃ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ
Θεοῦ καὶ σὲ ἀρπάξῃ καὶ δὲν σὲ βρεῖ ὁ Ἀχαάβ καὶ
πεῖ πὼς τοῦ εἶπα ψέματα, θὰ μὲ σκοτώσῃ.» Τοῦ λέ-
γει ὁ Ἥλιος: «Στ' ὄνομα τοῦ Θεοῦ, πῆγαινε νὰ κάνεις
ὅπως σου εἶπα καὶ μὴ φοβᾶσαι.» Κι' ὁ Ἀβδιὸν πῆγε
νὰ βρεῖ τὸν Ἀχαάβ.

Καὶ σὰν εἶδε ὁ βασιλιάς ἀπὸ μακριὰ τὸν Ἥλια, τοῦ
φώναξε: «Ἐσὺ εἶσαι ποὺ παραπλανᾶς τὸ λαό;» Τοῦ
λέγει ὁ Ἥλιος: «Δὲν εἶμαι ἐγὼ ποὺ παραπλανῶ τὸ
λαό, ἀλλὰ ἐσὺ κ' οἱ δικοί σου ποὺ ἀρνηθήκατε τὸν
Κύριο καὶ προσκυνᾶτε τὸν Βάαλ. Λοιπὸν στείλε τώρα
καὶ σύναξε ὅλους τοὺς παπάδες τῶν εἰδώλων, τοὺς

παπάδες τῆς ντροπῆς,
νάρθουνε στὸ βουνὸ
Καρμήλι.» Κι' ὁ βασι-
λιάς ἔκανε ὅπως τοῦπε
ὁ Ἥλιος. Καὶ σὰν μα-
ζευθήκανε οἱ ἀλλαξό-
πιστοι, γυρίζῃ καὶ τοὺς
λέγει ὁ Ἥλιος: «Ὡς πότε
θὰ κουτσαίνετε πότε
ἀπάνω στόνα ποδάρι
καὶ πότε ἀπάνω στάλλο;
Ἄν εἶναι Θεὸς ὁ Κύριος,
πηγαίνετε ξοπίσω του,
κι' ἂν εἶναι θεὸς ὁ Βάαλ,
πηγαίνετε μαζί του.» Κι'
ὁ λαὸς δὲν εἶπε τίποτα.

Τοὺς λέγει πάλι ὁ Ἥλιος: «Ἐγὼ ἀπόμεινα ὀλομόναχος
προφήτης τοῦ Θεοῦ, κ' οἱ παπάδες ποὺ προσκυνᾶνε
τὸν Βάαλ εἶναι χίλιοι διακόσοι. Φέρτε λοιπὸν δυὸ
μοσχάρια, κι' ἄς πάρουμε ἀπὸ ἓνα κι' ἄς τὰ σφάξουμε
κι' ἄς κάνουμε προσευχή, ὁ καθένας στὸ θεὸ του, κι'
ὅποιος θεὸς ρίξει φωτιὰ καὶ κάψει τὸ βόδι, ἐκεῖνος
εἶναι ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεός.» Κι' ὁ λαὸς φώναξε: «Σωστὸς
εἶναι ὁ λόγος σου.»

Πῆραν λοιπὸν τὸ ἓνα το βόδι οἱ χοτζάδες τοῦ
Βάαλ καὶ κάνανε θυσιαστήριο καὶ τὸ σφάξανε καὶ
τριγυρίζανε γύρω ἀπὸ τὸ θυσιαστήριο ἀπὸ τὸ πρῶν
ὡς τὸ μεσημέρι καὶ βγάζανε μεγάλες φωνὲς καὶ λέγανε:
«Ἄκουσέ μας, Βάαλ, ἄκουσέ μας καὶ ρίξε φωτιὰ.» Μὰ
ἀδιαφόρετα. Τότε τοὺς λέγει ὁ Ἥλιος: «Φωνάξτε πιὸ
δυνατά, γιατί μπορεῖ ὁ θεός σας νὰ κοιμᾶται ἢ νάχει
πιᾶσει κουβέντα.» Καὶ κείνοι κράξανε καὶ ἰδρώννα-
νε καὶ κόβανε τὰ κρεατὰ τους μὲ τὰ μαχαίρια καὶ μὲ
τὰ χαντζάρια, ὡς τὴν ὥρα ποὺ κόντευε νὰ βασιλέψῃ
ὁ ἥλιος. Τότε τοὺς λέγει ὁ Ἥλιος: «Παραμερίσατε νὰ
κάνω κ' ἐγὼ τὴν προσευχή μου.» Πῆρε δώδεκα πέτρες,

κατὰ τὶς δώδεκα φυλὲς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, κ' ἔχτισε θυσιαστήριον, κ' ἔσκαψε λάκκον βαθὺν ὀλόγυρον, καὶ λιάνισεν τ' ἄλλο βόδι καὶ τόβαλε ἀπάνω στὰ ξύλα καὶ λέγει στὸ λαό: «Πάρετε τέσσερες καρδιάρες νερὸ καὶ χύσετε τὶς ἀπάνω στὸ βόδι καὶ στὶς σχίζεις τὰ ξύλα.» Καὶ τὸ κάνανε. Κ' εἶπε: «Δευτερώσατε», καὶ δευτερώσανε. Κ' εἶπε: «Τριτέψετε», καὶ τριτέψανε. Καὶ γέμισεν νερὸ ὁ λάκκος καὶ ξεχειλίσει.

Καὶ τότε γύρισε ὁ Ἥλιος κατὰ τὸν οὐρανὸ κ' εἶπε: «Κύριε, ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τοῦ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ τοῦ Ἰακώβ, ἄκουσέ με σήμερον καὶ ρίξε φωτιά, γιὰ νὰ γνωρίσει ἐτοῦτος ὁ λαὸς πὼς ἐσὺ εἶσαι Κύριος ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός, καὶ πὼς ἐγὼ εἶμαι δοῦλος δικός σου, καὶ πὼς γιὰ σένα ἔκανα ὅ,τι ἔκανα. Ἄκουσε μέ, Κύριε, ἄκουσε μέ καὶ ρίξε φωτιά, γιὰ νὰ καταλάβει ὁ λαὸς ὅτι εἶσαι ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ἀληθινὸς καὶ πὼς ἐσὺ γύρισες τὴν καρδιά του πρὸς ἐσένα.» Καὶ παρευθὺς ἔπεσε φωτιά ἀπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸ καὶ κατάφαγε τὸ βόδι, τὰ ξύλα καὶ τὸ νερὸ καὶ τὶς πέτρες, ἀκόμα καὶ τὸ χῶμα ἔγλειψε ἢ φωτιά. Τότε ὁ λαὸς ἔπεσε καὶ προσκύνησε καὶ φώναξε: «Ἀληθινὰ αὐτὸς εἶναι ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός.»

Κι' ὁ Ἥλιος ἔφυγε ἀπὸ κεῖ, ἐπειδὴ ἡ Ἰεζάβελ ἔστειλε νὰ τὸν σκοτώσουνε, καὶ τράβηξε μέσα ἀπὸ βουνὰ καὶ πέτρες νὰ πάγει στὸ βουνὸ Χωρήβ, ποῦ εἶναι κολλημένο μὲ τὸ Σινά. Κι' ἀπὸ τὴν κούραση ἔπεσε μισοπεθαμένος καὶ κοιμήθηκε κάτω ἀπὸ ἕνα δεντρί ποῦ τὸ λέγανε οἱ ντόπιοι ραθμῶν κ' οἱ Ἕλληνες τὸ λέγανε ἄρκευθο, κ' εἶναι σὰν τὸ κέδρο. Καὶ πῆγε ἕνας ἄγγελος καὶ τοῦ εἶπε: «Σήκω καὶ φάγε, γιατί ἔχεις πολλὴν δρόμον νὰ πάρης.» Καὶ σὰν σηκώθηκε, εἶδε κοντὰ στὸ μέρος ποῦχε βάλει τὸ κεφάλι του, ἕνα κριθαρόψωμο κ' ἕνα λαγῆνι νερό, κ' ἔφαγε κι' ἀποκοιμήθηκε πάλι. Τρεῖς φορὲς τὸν σήκωσε ὁ ἄγγελος. Καὶ φτάνοντας στὸ Χωρήβ, βρῆκε ἕνα σπήλαιον κοντὰ στὸ μέρος ποῦ εἶχε δεῖ τὸν βᾶτο ὁ Μωυσῆς ὅπου ἄναβε χωρὶς νὰ καίγεται, καὶ μπῆκε μέσα. Κι' ἄκουσε φωνὴ νὰ τοῦ λέγει: «Τί κάθεται αὐτοῦ, Ἥλιος;» Κ' εἶπε ὁ Ἥλιος: «Ἀγάπησε ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν Κύριον Παντοκράτορα, γιὰτὶ σὲ ἀφήσανε οἱ γιοὶ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, γκρεμίσανε τὶς ἐκκλησίες σου, σκοτώσανε τοὺς παπὰδες σου, κ' ἐγὼ ἀπόμεινα καταμόναχος καὶ ζητᾶνε νὰ πάρουνε τὴ ζωὴ μου.» Τοῦ λέγει ὁ Κύριος: «*Ἀὔριο θάβγεις νὰ σταθεῖς μπροστά μου στὸ βουνὸ ἐτοῦτο καὶ θὰ σηκωθεῖ ἄνεμος δυνατός, ποῦ θὰ χαλᾶ τὰ βουνὰ καὶ τὶς πέτρες, ἀλλὰ δὲν θάμει ἐκεῖ μέσα ὕστερα θὰ γίνῃ σεισμός, μὰ κ' ἐκεῖ δὲν θάμει κ' ὕστερα θὰ γίνῃ φωτιά, κι' οὔτε ἐκεῖ θάμει κ' ὕστερα θὰ σφυρίξει ἕνα λεπτὸ ἀγέρι, κ' ἐκεῖ θάμει.*»

Καὶ σὰν τάκουσε αὐτὰ ὁ Ἥλιος, βγήκε ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴ σπηλιὰ καὶ σκέπασε τὸ πρόσωπό του μὲ τὴν προβιά ποῦ φοροῦσε. Κι' ἄκουσε πάλι τὴ φωνὴ καὶ τὸν πρόσταξε νὰ γυρίσει πίσω καὶ νὰ πάγει στὴ Δαμασκό. Κ' ἐπίασε νὰ περπατᾶ στὴν ἔρημον σὰν ἀγρίμι. Καὶ φτάνοντας

στὴν Παλαιστίνη, εἶδε ἕνα ζευγολάτη ποῦ ὄργωνε τὸ χωράφι του, κι' ὁ Ἥλιος ἔρριξε τὴ γούνα τοῦ ἀπάνω του. Κι' ὁ ξοχάρης ἄφησε τ' ἀλέτρι καὶ τὰ βόδια καὶ πῆγε μαζί μὲ τὸν Ἥλιον. Αὐτὸς ἦταν ὁ Ἐλισσαῖος ποῦ γίνηκε μαθητὴς του, καὶ καταστάθηκε μέγας προφήτης, καὶ δὲν ἀποχωρισθῆκε ὡς τὴ μέρα ποῦ ἄρπαξε τὸ δάσκαλό του ἕνα πύρινον ἀμάξι, καὶ τούριξε τὴ γούνα του μὲ τὴν ὁποία χτύπησε τὸν Ἰορδάνη καὶ πέρασε χωρὶς νὰ βραχεῖ.

Ὁ προφήτης Ἥλιος εἶναι πολὺ τιμημένος ἀπὸ ἐμᾶς τοὺς Ἕλληνες. Ὅπου νὰ πᾶς θὰ δεῖς ρημοκλήσια τοῦ ἀπάνω στὶς κορφὲς τῶν βουνῶν, ἀπὸ τὰ μικρὰ ὡς τὰ μεγάλα. Ὁ ἅγιος Νικόλαος φυλάγει τὴ θάλασσα κι' ὁ προφήτης Ἥλιος τὰ βουνὰ. Μέσα στὰ ρημοκλήσια τοῦ εἶναι ζωγραφισμένοι ἀπὸ κείνους τοὺς παληοὺς μαστόρους σὰν τσομπάνος μὲ τὴ φλοκάτα, μὲ μαλλιά καὶ γένια ἀνακατεμένα καὶ στριφτὰ σὰν ἀγοριόπρινος, γερακομύτης σὰν ἀητός, μὲ μάτια φλογερά. Κάθεται ἀπάνω σε μία πέτρα, μπροστά σε μία σπηλιά, σὰν τὸ ὄρνιον στὴ φωλιά του. Ἐχει ἀκουμπισμένο τὸ κεφάλι του στὴν ἀπαλάμη του, καὶ κοιτάζει κατὰ πίσω, σὰν νὰ ἀκούγει τὴ φωνὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ ποῦ τοῦ μιλά μέσα σὲ κείνα τὰ ἄσπλαχνα κράκουρα. Ἀπὸ πάνω του πετὰ ὁ κόρακας μ' ἕνα κομμάτι κρέας, καὶ χυμίζει κατὰ κάτω νὰ τοῦ τὸ δώσει.

Ὅπως εἶναι ζωγραφισμένος μέσα στὸ ρημοκλήσι του, θαρρεῖς πὼς βρῖσκεσαι ἀληθινὰ μέσα στὴ σπηλιὰ του, καὶ ἀκοῦς τὸν ἀγέρα ποῦ βουίζει στὰ χορτάρια καὶ τὰ ὄρνια ποῦ κρᾶζουνε κὸβοντας γύρους ἀπὸ πάνω ἀπὸ τὸ βουνό. Κανένα παμπάλαιο θυμιατήριον εἶναι κρεμασμένο δίπλα τοῦ ἀπάνω στὸν καπνισμένον τοῖχο, κανένα κερὶ σβηστὸ στέκεται μπηγμένο στὸν ἄμμο σ' ἕνα μανουάλι βουνίσιο σὰν τὸν ἅγιον ποῦ εἶναι ὁ νοικοκύρης ἐκείνου τοῦ ρημοκκλησιοῦ. Κάθε χρόνον, στὶς 20 Ἰουλίου, ἔρχονται ἀποβραδὺς οἱ Χριστιανοὶ ἀπὸ τὸ χωριὸ μὲ τὸν παπά, καὶ τὸν προσκυνᾶνε τὸν προφήτη Ἥλιον, ἀνάβουνε τὰ καντήλια, θυμιάζουνε, καὶ ψέλνει κανένας γέρος καὶ λέγει τὰ στιχηρὰ τῆς μνήμης του, καὶ κείνος ἀκούγει μὲ τὸ ἄγριο κεφάλι τοῦ ἀκουμπισμένο στὸ χέρι του, κι' ὁ κόρακας βαστᾶ τὸ ἴσιο μὲ τὴ βραχνὴ φωνὴ του: «*Χαίροις ἐπίγειε Ἄγγελε καὶ οὐράνιε ἄνθρωπε, Ἥλιε μεγαλώνυμε. Χαίροις Ἥλιε ζηλωτά, τῶν παθῶν αὐτοκράτωρ. Ὡ τοῦ θαύματος! Ὁ πῆλινος ἄνθρωπος, οὐρανοῦς τοῦ βρέχειν ὑετὸν οὐκ ἔδωκεν, καὶ οὐρανοῦς ἀνατρέχει ἐν πυρίνῳ ἄρματι.*» Καὶ τὴν ἄλλη μέρα, ἅμα τελειώσει ἡ λειτουργία, φεύγουνε οἱ ἄνθρωποι, κι' ὁ Ἥλιος κάθεται πάλι ὀλομόναχος «μιονώτατος», βουβός, τυλιγμένος στὴν προβιά του, σὰν ἀγιούπας κουρνιασμένος. Χιλιάδες χρόνια κάθεται ἔτσι, ἄλλες πολλὲς θὰ κάθεται, ἕως τοῦ ἐλθεῖν τὴν ἡμέραν Κυρίου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐπιφανῆ.

Νοσοκομείο πού «Νοσεῖ» πῶς Μπορεῖ νὰ Σώσει;

Γράφει ὁ *Ἡλιάδης Σάββας*, δάσκαλος, Κιλκίς, 2-2-2016.

Ὁ ἐκτὸς Ἐκκλησίας ἄνθρωπος τῆς Δύσης εἶναι ἀφώτιστος. Καὶ ἀφοῦ δὲν ἔχει ἐμπειρίες καὶ δὲν καταδέχεται νὰ ἀκούσει τὴν ἀλήθεια ἀπὸ τοὺς γνήσιους θεόπτες, τοὺς ἀγίους τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ καταλάβει τι σημαίνει ἀλήθεια. Ἐπιχειρεῖ νὰ σχετικοποιήσει τὰ πάντα περὶ τὴν ἀλήθεια. Θέλει νὰ προωθήσει, σχετικοποιώντας ἢ ἀμφισβητώντας, τὴ γνησιότητα καὶ τὴν καθαρότητα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἢ ὅποια τὸν ἐνοχλεῖ καὶ μπαίνει ἐμπόδιο στὸ ἀμαρτωλὸ θέλημά του καὶ στὴν προσπάθεια νὰ κάνει πονηροὺς ἐλιγμούς, μὴ ἐλεγχομένου ἀπὸ τὴν ὁδὸ τῆς ἀλήθειας.

Λέει πῶς χρειάζεται ἐξαγιασμὸ ἢ Ἐκκλησία. Ποιὸς ὅμως θὰ τὴν ἀγιάσει ἔτι περισσότερο τὴν Ἐκκλησία καὶ μὲ ποιὰ προσόντα. Ὁ ἀσθενὴς θὰ διδάξει στοὺς γιατροὺς καὶ στοὺς νοσοκόμους πῶς νὰ ἀποκτήσουν τὴν ὑγεία τους; Εἶναι δυνατόν; Δὲν εἶναι πλήρης παραλογισμὸς; Αὐτὸ ἐννοεῖ τὸ μήνυμα τὸ ἐξ Ἑσπερίας προερχόμενο. Τὸ πλάσμα θὰ διορθώσει, θὰ διδάξει, θὰ συμπληρώσει τὸν Δημιουργό...

Ἀλήθεια, ὅταν κάποιος ἀρρωσταίνει, τι νοσοκομεῖο ἀναζητᾶ, γιὰ νὰ θεραπεύσει τὸ σῶμα του; Μήπως νοσοκομεῖο ἀμφιβόλου ἱστορικοῦ ὡς πρὸς τὰ θεραπευτικά του ἀποτελέσματα ἢ ἀμφιβόλου καθαρότητας καὶ ἰκανότητας τῶν γιατρῶν καί... τῶν μέσων θεραπείας ποὺ διαθέτει; Καθόλου, βέβαια. Κι ἂν ἀντιληφθεῖ κάτι τέτοιο, τὸ ἀποφεύγει ἢ ἂν χρειαστεῖ, τὸ καταγγέλλει στὶς ἀρμόδιες ὑπηρεσίες. **Φεύγει μακριά**, διότι ὑπάρχει κίνδυνος, ἀντὶ νὰ θεραπευθεῖ, νὰ μολυνθεῖ θανατηφόρα.

Πόσο μᾶλλον καὶ ἀπείρως περισσότερο ἰσχύει αὐτὸ γιὰ τὸ νοσοκομεῖο τῶν ψυχῶν, ποὺ ἔχει τὴν «εὐθύνη» νὰ τὴν ὀδηγήσει ἐνώπιόν τοῦ Θεοῦ, στὴν αἰώνια μακαριότητα. Ποὺ τὸ ἐμπιστεύονται οἱ ψυχὲς μὲ κάθε βεβαιότητα, πληροφορημένες ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀγίους γιὰ τὶς ἀγιοπνευματικὲς ἐμπειρίες, γιὰ τὴν παρουσία τοῦ Θεοῦ μέσα σ' αὐτήν. Ποὺ γεύονται ἀπὸ ἐδῶ τὴ βεβαιότητα τῆς σωτηριώδους δυνάμεώς της. Πῶς μπορεῖ αὐτὴ «ἢ *Κιβωτὸς Σωτηρίας*» νὰ «μπαίνει»;

Εἶναι δυνατόν νὰ ἔκανε «μισὲς δουλειές» ὁ Θεὸς Λόγος; Ἀπὸ τὴ μιὰ νὰ ἐνανθρωπίσει ὡς ὁ ἔσχατος πάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων, νὰ ταπεινωθεῖ μέχρι ἐσχάτων, νὰ πάθει, νὰ σταυρωθεῖ, νὰ ταφεῖ κι ὅλα αὐτὰ γιὰ τὸ ἀγαπημένο του δημιούργημα, τὸν ἄνθρωπο, γιὰ νὰ τὸν ἐπαναφέρει στὴν παλιά του δόξα κι ἀκόμη πῶς ψηλὰ κι ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη νὰ τὸν ἀφήσει σὲ μιὰ «τρύπια κιβωτὸ» μέσα στὸν ὠκεανό, γιὰ νὰ ἐλπίζει στὴ σωτηρία του; Εἶναι δυνατόν ὁ Χριστὸς νὰ μᾶς ἄφησε Ἐκκλησία ἔστω καὶ ἐλαφρῶς «λερωμένη», ἀκάθαρτη, ἐλαττωματικὴ

καὶ νὰ χρειάζεται ἐξαγιασμὸ, καθὼς ὁ «ἡγέτης τῆς παποσύνης» διαφαίνεται;

Δὲν μάθανε οἱ αἰρετικοὶ πῶς ἢ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἢ Μία Ἁγία Καθολικὴ Ὁρθόδοξη καὶ Ἀποστολικὴ Ἐκκλησία εἶναι «*ἰατρεῖο ψυχῶν καὶ σωμάτων*»; Εἶναι δυνατόν νὰ μὴν ἔχει τὸν πλήρη ἀγιασμὸ, γιὰ νὰ μπορεῖ νὰ ἀγιάσει; Εἶναι δυνατόν τὸ νοσοκομεῖο, στὸ ὁποῖο ἐρχόμαστε νὰ θεραπευθοῦμε, νὰ εἶναι μολυσμένο καὶ νὰ μὴν ἔχει πλήρως καθαριστεῖ καὶ ἀπολυμανθεῖ; Τὸ λερωμένο δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ καθαρίσει κάτι ἄλλο, διότι ἀπλῶς θὰ μεταδώσει τὴ λέρα του καὶ τὰ μικρόβιά του. Εἶναι δυνατόν, ὁ ἐνανθρωπίσας Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, νὰ μᾶς ἄφησε «ἐλαττωματικὴ», «λερωμένη» Ἐκκλησία; Νὰ θυσιάστηκε, νὰ ἔχυσε τὸ αἷμα του γιὰ τὰ παιδιά Του καὶ νὰ ἄφησε παρακαταθήκη ἓνα ψεύτικο καὶ «νοσοῦν» Νοσοκομεῖο; Ὁχι. Ἄφησε τὸ πλεόν ἐγγυημένο καὶ ἀγιασμένο σωστικὸ θεῖο ἐγκαθίδρυμα.

Ἡ Πεντηκοστὴ εἶναι ἡ γενέθλιος ἡμέρα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Στὴν ὑμνολογία τῆς ἡμέρας διαβάζουμε τροπάρια, ποὺ ἀποδίδουν μὲ ἀκριβεία καὶ σαφήνεια τὸ νόημα τῆς ἐορτῆς:

(1) «*Τὴν μεθέορτον πιστοί, καὶ τελευταίαν ἐορτήν, ἐορτάσωμεν φαιδρῶς αὕτη ἐστὶ Πεντηκοστή, ἐπαγγελίας συμπλήρωσις, καὶ προθεσμίας ἐν ταύτῃ γὰρ τὸ πῦρ, τοῦ Παρακλήτου εὐθύς, κατέβη ἐπὶ γῆς, ὡσπερ ἐν εἴδει γλωσσῶν, καὶ Μαθητᾶς ἐφώτισε, καὶ τούτους οὐρανομύστας ἀνέδειξε. Τὸ φῶς ἐπέστη, τοῦ Παρακλήτου, καὶ τὸν κόσμον, ἐφώτισε.*» (Κάθισμα τοῦ Ὁρθρου).

(2) Ἐπαγγελίας καὶ προθεσμίας συμπλήρωσις: Κατὰ τὴν Πεντηκοστὴ ἔγινε ἡ συμπλήρωσις, ἡ ἐντελής πλήρωσις (ἢ τέλεια ὀλοκλήρωση) τῆς ὑπόσχεσης ὅτι θὰ κατέβει τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα στὴν Ἐκκλησία καὶ στὸν καθορισμένο χρόνον: «*Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ παράκλητος ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς, τὸ Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὃ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ.*» (Ἰω. 15:26). Στὴν Ἐκκλησία εἶναι παρὸν τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα καὶ μαρτυρεῖ στὶς ψυχὲς τὴν ἀλήθεια τοῦ Χριστοῦ στὴν πληρότητά της.

(3) «*Καθὼς τὸ Πνεῦμα ἐδίδου*» (Πράξ. 2:4), γράφει γιὰ τοὺς Ἀποστόλους. Τοὺς καθοδηγοῦσε καὶ τοὺς ἔλεγε στὸ λόγο τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα. Ἦταν θεόπνευστοι οἱ λόγοι τους. Εἶναι δυνατόν νὰ ἀφήνει κενὰ στὶς «πληροφορίες» ποὺ παρέχει σὲ κάθε καλοπροαίρετη καὶ καθαρὴ ψυχὴ;

(4) «*Πάντα χορηγεῖ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, βρῦει προφητείας, ἱερέας τελειοί, ἀγραμμάτους σοφίαν ἐδίδαξεν, ἄλιεις θεολόγους ἀνέδειξεν, ὅλον συγκροτεῖ τὸν θεσμόν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, Ὁμοούσιε καὶ Ὁμόθρονε, τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ τῷ Υἱῷ, Παράκλητε, δόξα σοι.*» (Ἰδιόμελο τοῦ ἐσπερινοῦ τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς). Ἀπόδοσις: «*Ὅλα τα παρέχει πρὸς σωτηρία τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα. Ἀναβλύζει τὸν προφητικὸν λόγο, τελειοποιεῖ τοὺς ἱερεῖς, Διδάσκει τὴν ἄνωθεν σοφία στοὺς ἀγραμμάτους. Ἀνέδειξε*

ἀληθινούς θεολόγους τούς ψαράδες. Καταρτίζει με κάθε πληρότητα και τελειότητα τὸ θεῖο καθίδρυμα, τὴν Ἐκκλησία. Ἐσὺ ποὺ ἔχεις τὴν ἴδια οὐσία και κάθεσαι στὸν ἴδιο θρόνο με τὸν Πατέρα και τὸν Υἱὸ, Παράκλητε, Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα, δόξα σὲ σένα.» (Παράκλητος=Αὐτὸς ποὺ παρέχει βοήθεια, στήριξη και παρηγοριά, ὁ παρήγορος, ὁ διδάσκαλος).

(5) «Τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, φῶς, και ζωή, και ζῶσα πηγὴ νοερά, Πνεῦμα σοφίας, Πνεῦμα συνέσεως, ἀγαθόν, εὐθές, νοερόν, ἡγεμονεῦον καθαῖρον τὰ πταίσματα, Θεὸς και θεοποιοῦν, πῦρ, ἐκ πυρὸς προῖόν, λαλοῦν, ἐνεργοῦν, διαιροῦν τὰ χαρίσματα δι' οὗ Προφηται ἅπαντες, και Θεοῦ Ἀπόστολοι, μετὰ Μαρτύρων ἐστέφθησαν. Ξένον ἄκουσμα, ξένον θέαμα, πῦρ διαιρούμενον εἰς νομὰς χαρισμάτων.» (Ἰδιόμελο τῶν αἰῶν).

Θὰ μείνουμε στὴ φράση: «Δι' οὗ Προφηται ἅπαντες, και Θεοῦ Ἀπόστολοι, μετὰ Μαρτύρων ἐστέφθησαν.» Μᾶς λέει ξεκάθαρα πὼς ὅλοι οἱ Προφῆτες, οἱ Ἀπόστολοι και ὅλοι οἱ ἅγιοι, ποὺ εἶναι μέλη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, στεφανώθηκαν με τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα. Αὐτοί, βέβαια, εἶναι οἱ στυλοβάτες στὴν Παράδοση τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Αὐτοὶ εἶναι οἱ φορεῖς τῶν ἐμπειριῶν. Αὐτοὶ μας διδάσκουν, πὼς ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας εἶναι χώρος και τόπος ἀγιότητας και ποτὲ δὲν εἶπαν ἢ ἐνόησαν πὼς χρειάζεται κάτι γιὰ νὰ συμπληρωθεῖ. Διότι οἱ ἴδιοι, οἱ Ἀπόστολοι, τὴν ἡμέρα ἐκείνη «ἐπλήσθησαν ἅπαντες Πνεύματος ἁγίου.» (Πράξ. 2:4).

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶναι ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστὸς παρατεινόμενος στοὺς αἰῶνες και, ὅπως ἦταν Ἐκεῖνος ἀναμάρτητος: «Τις ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέγχει με περὶ ἁμαρτίας;» (Ἰω. 8:46), ἔτσι και ἡ Ἐκκλησία του συνεχίζει νὰ εἶναι καθαρὴ, ἄσπιλη, ἀμόλυντη: «Οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναῖκας ἑαυτῶν, καθὼς και ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησε τὴν ἐκκλησίαν και ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς, ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀγιάσει καθάρισας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι, ἵνα παραστήσει αὐτὴν ἑαυτῷ ἐνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ρυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων, ἀλλ' ἵνα ἡ ἀγία και ἁμωμος.» (Ἐφ. 5:25-27).

Μετέχοντας τῶν χαρίτων τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ὁ ἄνθρωπος, μετέχει τῆς θεότητος κατὰ χάρι. Εἶναι ἔτοιμος νὰ συγκατοικήσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνες με τὸ Θεὸ πρόσωπο πρὸς πρόσωπο, καθὼς λέει ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος: «Βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς και ἐπεγνώσθην.» (Α' Κορ. 13:12). Πὼς θὰ δοῦμε πρόσωπο πρὸς πρόσωπο, ὅταν δὲν ἔχουμε καθαρῶς ἀπὸ ἐδῶ; Κι ὅταν τὸ καθαρῶς ποὺ πλενόμαστε εἶναι τελείως καθαρὸ και ἀπολυμασμένο, μόνο τότε θὰ βγοῦμε καθαρὸι γιὰ τὴν ἄλλη ζωή, νὰ συναντήσουμε τὸ Φῶς τῆς αἰωνιότητος, δηλαδὴ τὸ Χριστό. Γιατί, ὅσο κι ἂν προσπαθοῦμε μόνοι μας, δὲν

γίνεται ἡ κάθαρση, παρὰ μέσα στὴν ἀγία μας Ἐκκλησία, με τὰ ἐγγυημένα ἀπὸ τὸ Χριστὸ καθαρῶς και θεραπευτικὰ μέσα ποὺ διαθέτει.

Στὴν ἀγία μας Ἐκκλησία ὅλα εἶναι τέλεια. Στὸν ἄνθρωπο μένει και στὴν προαίρεσή του, νὰ πλησιάσει, νὰ μπῆ, νὰ δοκιμάσει, νὰ ἀγιαστεῖ και νὰ φωνάζει ἀσταμάτητα σὲ κάθε ἀμφιβάλλοντα νοῦ: «**Ἔρχου και ἴδε.**» (Ἰω. 1:47).



Ὁ θυμὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ

Ἁγίου Νικολάου Βελμίροβιτς.

Ρωτᾶτε: «Γιατί ὁ Θεὸς κατέστρεψε τὰ Σόδομα;» Μὰ δὲν σὰς κατέστη σαφὲς ἀπὸ τὴν ἴδια τὴ Γραφὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ; «Εἶπε δὲ Κύριος κραυγὴ Σοδόμων και Γομόρας πεπλήθυνται πρὸς με, και αἱ ἁμαρτίαι αὐτῶν μεγάλαι σφόδρα.» (Γεν. 18:20). Και ὅτι ἡ ἁμαρτία Σοδόμων ἦταν ὄντως πολὺ μεγάλη και σφοδρὴ, φαίνεται και ἀπὸ τὸ ὅτι δὲν εἶχαν βρεθεῖ οὔτε δέκα δίκαιοι. Διότι στὴν ἐρώτηση τοῦ δίκαιου Ἀβραάμ, ἐὰν θὰ καταστρέψει τὴν ἁμαρτωλὴ πόλη, σὲ περίπτωσι ποὺ βρεῖ σ' αὐτὴ δέκα δίκαιους, ὁ Κύριος ἀπάντησε και εἶπε: «οὐ μὴ ἀπολέσω ἐνεκεν τῶν δέκα.» (Γεν. 18:32). Ἀλλὰ δὲν βρέθηκαν οὔτε δέκα. Ὅλοι οἱ πολῖτες ἦταν σὲ πόλεμο ἐναντίον τοῦ Θεοῦ και ἐναντίον τῆς φύσης. Οἱ ψυχὲς τους ἦταν νεκρὲς ἐνῶ τὰ σώματα ἐκφυλισμένα. Γι' αὐτὸ χτύπησε «θεῖον, και πῦρ» (Γεν. 19:24), τὸ σύμβολο τῆς βρώμας και τῆς ἔξαψης τῶν παθῶν τους, και ἀπὸ τὰ Σόδομα δὲν ἔμεινε τίποτα πλὴν τοῦ κακοῦ ὀνόματος και τῆς φρικιαστικῆς ἀφήγησις.

Ὅμως δὲν ἔπεσε ὁ θυμὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ μόνο στὰ Σόδομα, ἀλλὰ και σὲ πολλὲς ἄλλες πόλεις, ὅπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἶχε κάνει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους δύσμορφους σὲ τέτοιο βαθμὸ, ὥστε νὰ μὴν μοιάζουν καθόλου πια με τὸ ἔργο τοῦ οὐράνιου Δημιουργοῦ. Και ἐφόσον ἔτσι ἔγινε με τὴν κακὴ πόλι, στίς ὁποῖες δὲν εἶχε ἀκουστεῖ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, πὼς μάλλον μπορεῖ νὰ συμβεῖ με τὴν χριστιανικὴ πόλις τὴν ἐφάμιλλαν ἢ παρόμοιαν ὡς πρὸς τὸ κακὸ με τὰ Σόδομα—τὴν βαπτισμένην σὲ... ὄνομα τοῦ Κυρίου Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ;

Διαβάστε τὴν ἀπειλή τοῦ Σωτήρα πρὸς τὴν πόλη Καπερναοῦμ: «Και σὺ Καπερναοῦμ, ἡ ἕως τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὑψωθείσα ἕως ἄδου καταβιβασθήσῃ ὅτι εἰ ἐν Σοδόμοις ἐγενήθησαν αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ γενόμεναι ἐν σοί, ἔμειναν ἂν μέχρι τῆς σήμερον.» (Ματθ. 11:23).

Και πράγματι, ἡ προφητεία ἐκπληρώθηκε: ἐκεῖ ὅπου κάποτε στεκόταν ἡ υπερήφανη πόλις τῆς Καπερναοῦμ τώρα εἶναι ἀδιαπέραστος θαμνώδης τόπος, πέτρες και φωλιὰς φιδιῶν. Με τὰ μάτια τους τὸ εἶδαν και με τὴν καρδιά ἔτρεμαν ὅλοι οἱ προσκυνητὲς τῶν Ἁγίων Τόπων.

Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία ὡς Μία Διαρκῆς Πεντηκοστή

Ἅγιος Ἰουστίνος Πόποβιτς (+1979).



Ποιὸς εἶναι ὁ Θεάνθρωπος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός; Ποιὸς εἶναι σὲ Αὐτὸν ὁ Θεὸς καὶ ποιὸς ὁ ἄνθρωπος; Πῶς γνωρίζεται ὁ Θεὸς στὸν Θεάνθρωπο καὶ πῶς ὁ

ἄνθρωπος; Τὶ ἐδώρησε σὲ μᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὁ Θεὸς ἐν τῷ Θεανθρώπῳ; Ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ φανερῶνει σὲ μᾶς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ «Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας.» Μᾶς ἀποκαλύπτει δηλαδὴ ὅλη τὴν ἀλήθεια γιὰ Αὐτόν, γιὰ τὸν Θεὸ ἐν Αὐτῷ καὶ γιὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο καὶ γιὰ τὸ τί χάρισε σὲ ἡμᾶς μ' ὅλα αὐτά. Αὐτὸ ἐπίσης ἀπειρώς ξεπερνᾷ κάθε τι ποὺ οἱ ἄνθρωποι ὀφθαλμοὶ εἶδαν καὶ τοῖς ὠσίν αὐτῶν ἠκούσθη καὶ ἡ καρδιά αὐτῶν κάποτε αἰσθάνθηκε.

Μὲ τὴν ἔνσαρκη ζωὴ του στὴ γῆ ὁ Θεάνθρωπος ἐγκαθίδρυσε τὸ Θεανθρώπινο τοῦ Σώματος, τὴν Ἐκκλησία, καὶ μὲ αὐτὴν προετοιμάζει τὸν γήινο κόσμον γιὰ τὴν ἔλευση καὶ τὴ ζωὴ καὶ τὴ δραστηριότητα τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος στὸ Σῶμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ὡς ψυχῆς Αὐτοῦ τοῦ Σώματος.

Τὴν ἡμέρα τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα κατήλθε ἐξ οὐρανοῦ στὸ Θεανθρώπινο σῶμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ γιὰ πάντα παρέμεινε σὲ Αὐτὸ σὰν Παν-Ζωοποιὸς ψυχὴ Αὐτοῦ. Αὐτὸ τὸ ὄρατο Θεανθρώπινο σῶμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας συγκροτοῦν οἱ Ἅγιοι Ἀπόστολοι μὲ τὴν πίστη των στὸν Θεάνθρωπο Ἰησοῦ Χριστὸ ὡς Σωτῆρα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ ὡς τέλειον Θεοῦ καὶ ὡς τέλειον Ἀνθρώπου. Καὶ ἡ κάθοδος καὶ ἡ σύνολη δραστηριότητα τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος στὸ Θεανθρώπινο σῶμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἔρχεται ἀπὸ τὸν Θεάνθρωπο καὶ ἐξαιτίας τοῦ Θεανθρώπου.

Κάθε τι στὴν Θεανθρώπινη Οἰκονομία τῆς σωτηρίας προῆλθε ἀπὸ τὸ Θεανθρώπινο πρόσωπο τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Τέλος, ἀκόμη ὅλα συνοψίζονται καὶ ὑπάρχουν στὴν κατηγορία τῆς Θεανθρωπότητας ἀκόμη καὶ ἡ δραστηριότητα τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος. Κάθε ἐνεργητικότητα Αὐτοῦ στὸν κόσμον εἶναι ἀχώριστη ἀπὸ τὸ Θεανθρώπινο ἀνδραγάθημα τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία τοῦ κόσμου. Ἡ Πεντηκοστὴ μὲ ὅλες τὶς αἰώνιες δωρεὲς τῆς Τριαδικῆς Θεότητος καὶ Αὐτοῦ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος προσδιόριζε τὴν Ἐκκλησία τῶν Ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων δηλαδὴ τῆς Ἁγίας Ἀποστολικῆς πίστεως, τῆς Ἁγίας Ἀποστολικῆς παράδοσης, τῆς Ἁγίας Ἀποστολικῆς ἱεραρχίας, ἀκόμη καὶ κάθε τι Ἀποστολικῶς ποὺ εἶναι Θεανθρώπινο.

Ἡ Ἅγία πνευματικὴ ἡμέρα ἡ ὁποία ἄρχισε μὲ τὴν Ἅγία Πεντηκοστὴ ἀδιάκοπα συνεχίζεται στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία μὲ ἀνείπωτη πληρότητα ὅλων τῶν Θεϊκῶν δωρεῶν καὶ ζωοποιῶν δυνάμεων. Κάθε τι στὴν Ἐκκλησία ὑπάρχει ἐν Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι καὶ ἀπὸ αὐτὸ τὸ πολὺ μικρὸ καὶ ἀπὸ αὐτὸ τὸ ὑπερμέγεθες. Ὅταν ὁ ἱερεὺς θυμιάζοντας στὴν Ἐκκλησία παρακαλεῖ τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦ Χριστὸ νὰ καταπέμψῃ τὴν χάρη τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅταν τὸ ἀνέκφραστο θαῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἢ Ἅγία Πεντηκοστὴ πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν χειροτονία τοῦ ἐπισκόπου ἐπαναλαμβάνεται καὶ δίδει ὅλο τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς χάριτος καὶ μὲ αὐτὸ πασιφανῶς μαρτυρεῖ ὅτι ὅλη ἡ ζωὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας συγκροτεῖται ἐν τῷ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι.

Δὲν ὑπάρχει ἀμφιβολία ὅτι ὁ Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἶναι μὲ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο στὴν Ἐκκλησία καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶναι μὲ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο στὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦ Χριστό. Ὁ Κύριος εἶναι ἡ κεφαλὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα τῆς καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον εἶναι ἡ ψυχὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχὴ ἤδη τῆς Θεανθρώπινης οἰκονομίας τῆς σωτηρίας τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο συνδέθηκε μὲ τὸ θεμέλιο τῆς Ἐκκλησίας δηλαδὴ μὲ τὸ θεμέλιο τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ «*τοῦ Λόγου κτίσας τὴν σάρκωσιν.*»

Στὴν πραγματικότητα κάθε ἅγιο μυστήριον καὶ ὅλες οἱ θεῖες ἀρετὲς εἶναι μία Ἁγιοπνευματικότης. Τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο διὰ μέσου αὐτῶν ἔρχεται σὲ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐντὸς ἡμῶν. Αὐτὸ κατέρχεται οὐσιωδῶς ποὺ σημαίνει ἀληθινὰ καὶ οὐσιαστικὰ μὲ ὅλες τὶς θεϊκὲς του σημαντικὲς ἐνέργειες. Αὐτὸ—ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς θεότητος. Αὐτὸ—τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς χάριτος. Αὐτὸ—ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ κάθε ὑπάρξεως. Εἶναι αἰώνιον καὶ Διαθηκικὸ Εὐαγγέλιον. Ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς μὲ τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα κατοικεῖ σὲ μᾶς καὶ ἡμεῖς σ' Αὐτόν. Αὐτὸ καὶ μόνον μαρτυρεῖ τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος σὲ μᾶς. Ἐμεῖς μὲ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο ζοῦμε ἐν Χριστῷ καὶ Αὐτὸς σὲ μᾶς. Μάλιστα αὐτὸ τὸ γνωρίζουμε «*ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος οὗ ἡμῖν ἔδωκεν.*» (Α΄ Ἰω. 3:24).

Μὲ μία λέξη ὅλη ἡ ζωὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας σὲ ὅλες τὶς δικὲς τὶς ἀναρίθμητες Θεανθρώπινες πραγματικότητες ὁδηγεῖται καὶ χειραγωγεῖται ἀπὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο τὸ ὁποῖο πάντοτε εἶναι τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεανθρώπου Χριστοῦ (Γαλ. 4:6). Γι' αὐτὸ ἔχει γραφεῖ στὸ Ἅγιο Εὐαγγέλιον: «*Εἰ δὲ τις Πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ οὐκ ἔχει, οὗτος οὐκ ἔστιν Αὐτοῦ.*» (Ρωμ. 8:9).

Ὁ χερουβικὰ μνηθεὶς στὸ Θεανθρώπινο μυστήριον τῆς Ἐκκλησίας σὰν τὸ πιὸ ἀγαπητὸ παν-μυστήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος διακηρύσσει τὸ παναληθὲς καὶ χαρμόσυνο μήνυμα: «**Τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο ἀρχιτεκτονεῖ Ἐκκλησία Θεοῦ.**»

Ἡ Κοίμησις τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου

Ἀγίου Λουκά Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κριμαίας (+1961).

Τὸν καθένα ἀπὸ μᾶς τὸν βασανίζει τὸ ἐρώτημα: τί θὰ γίνῃ με μᾶς καὶ τί μᾶς περιμένει μετὰ τὸ θάνατο; Μία σαφὴ ἀπάντησις σ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἐρώτημα μόνοι μας δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ τὴν βροῦμε. Ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ τὸ μυστικὸ μᾶς ἀποκαλύπτουν ἡ Ἁγία Γραφή, ὁ λόγος τοῦ Κυρίου μας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἐπίσης τὸ ἀπολυτικίον καὶ τὸ κοντάκιον τῆς μεγάλης αὐτῆς γιορτῆς τῆς Κοιμήσεως τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου καὶ οἱ ἐκκλησιαστικοὶ ὕμνοι ποὺ ψάλλονται σ' αὐτὴ τὴ γιορτῆ.

Θέλω ὅλοι σας νὰ καταλάβετε, γιατί ὁ θάνατος τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου λέγεται Κοίμησὴ τῆς. Ὁ μέγας ἀπόστολος Ἰωάννης ὁ Θεολόγος, στὸ 20^ο κεφάλαιο τῆς Ἀποκαλύψεως, μιλάει γιὰ τὸν πρῶτο καὶ τὸ δεύτερο θάνατο. Ὁ πρῶτος θάνατος εἶναι ἀναπόφευκτος γιὰ ὅλους μας, καὶ τοὺς ἁγίους καὶ τοὺς δικαίους. Ἀλλὰ ὁ δεύτερος, ὁ φοβερὸς καὶ αἰώνιος θάνατος, περιμένει τοὺς ἀμετανόητους ἁμαρτωλοὺς, οἱ ὅποιοι ἀρνήθηκαν τὴν ἀγάπη καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνη τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ εἶναι καταδικασμένοι νὰ βρῶσκονται αἰώνιως σὲ κοινωνία μετὰ τὸ διάβολο καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους του.

Στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο διαβάζουμε τὰ λόγια τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὰ ὁποῖα εἶναι πολὺ στενὰ συνδεδεμένα μετὰ ὅσα γράφει ἡ Ἀποκάλυψις: «*Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με ἔχει... ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν.*» (Ἰωάν. 5:24). Τὸ ἀκοῦτε, τὸ καταλαβαίνετε; Ὅλοι ὅσοι ὑπακούουν στὸν λόγο τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ πιστεύουν στὸν Οὐράνιο Πατέρα του, μετὰ τὸ θάνατό τους, θὰ περάσουν στὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ. Δὲν ὑπάρχει λόγος νὰ δικαστοῦν αὐτοὶ ποὺ ἔχουν ζωντανὴ πίστιν στὸν Θεὸ καὶ ὑπακούουν στὶς ἐντολές του.

Καὶ στοὺς μεγάλους δώδεκα ἀποστόλους εἶπε ὁ Κύριος: «*Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὑμεῖς οἱ ἀκολουθήσαντές μοι, ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ, ὅταν καθίσῃ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ, καθίσεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐπὶ δώδεκα θρόνους κρίνοντες τὰς δώδεκα φυλάς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ.*» (Ματθ. 19:28). Δικαστὲς καὶ κατήγοροι θὰ εἶναι κατὰ τὴν Φοβερὰ Κρίσιν τοῦ Θεοῦ οἱ Ἀπόστολοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Βεβαίως, εἶναι τελείως ἀδύνατο νὰ φανταστοῦμε νὰ δικάζονται ἡ Ὑπεραγία Θεοτόκος καὶ Ἀειπάρθετος Μαρία, ὁ Βαπτιστὴς τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰωάννης, οἱ μεγάλοι προφῆτες τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ Ἥλιος καὶ ὁ Ἐνὼχ τοὺς ὁποίους ζωντανούς τοὺς πῆρε ὁ Θεὸς στὸν Οὐρανό, ὅλο τὸ ἀμέτρητο πλῆθος τῶν μαρτύρων τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ οἱ δοξασμένοι ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ ἅγιοι ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ θαυματουργοί.

Εἶναι ἀδύνατον ἀκόμα καὶ νὰ περάσει ἀπὸ τὸ μυαλό μας ἡ σκέψη πὼς θὰ δικαστοῦν αὐτοί, οἱ ὅποιοι ἄκουσαν ἀπὸ τὸ στόμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ: «*Ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν.*» (Λουκ. 17:21). Σ' αὐτοὺς τοὺς

μεγάλους ἀγωνιστὲς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, σὰν σὲ πολῦτιμους ναοὺς κατοικοῦσε τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα. Ἀκόμα καὶ ζώντας στὴ γῆ, αὐτοὶ βρισκόταν στὴν ἄμεση κοινωνία μετὰ τὸν Θεό, ἐπειδὴ ἔτσι εἶπε ὁ Κύριός μας Ἰησοῦς Χριστός: «*Εάν τις ἀγαπᾷ με, τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει, καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ἀγαπήσει αὐτόν, καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐλευσόμεθα καὶ μονὴν παρ' αὐτῷ ποιήσομεν.*» (Ἰωάν. 14:23).

Ἡ Ὑπεραγία Παρθέτος Μαρία ὑπῆρξε ἄχραντος ναὸς τοῦ Σωτῆρος καὶ σ' αὐτὴν κατοίκησε τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν ἁγιότατη μήτρα τῆς ἔλαβε τὸ ἀνθρώπινο σῶμα ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ. Γι' αὐτὸ ὁ σωματικὸς τῆς θάνατος δὲν ἦταν θάνατος ἀλλὰ Κοίμησις, δηλαδὴ ἓνα ἄμεσο πέρασμα ἀπὸ τὴ Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ στὴ Βασιλεία τῶν Οὐρανῶν καὶ τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ.

Μοῦ ἤρθε τώρα στὸ μυαλό καὶ κάτι καινούριο. Νὰ πιστεύουμε, ὅτι καὶ τὸ σῶμα τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου μετὰ τὴ δύναμη τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔγινε ἄφθαρτο καὶ ἀνελήφθη στοὺς οὐρανοὺς. Αὐτὸ μᾶς λέει καὶ τὸ κοντάκιον τῆς μεγάλης γιορτῆς τῆς Κοιμήσεως τῆς Θεοτόκου: «*Τὴν ἐν πρεσβείαις ἀκοίμητον Θεοτόκον, καὶ προστασίαις ἀμετάθετον ἐλπίδα, τάφος καὶ νέκρωσις οὐκ ἐκράτησεν ὡς γὰρ ζωῆς Μητέρα, πρὸς τὴν ζωὴν μετέστησεν, ὁ μήτρανοικήσας ἀειπάρθενον.*»

Προσέξτε: «**Τάφος καὶ νέκρωσις οὐκ ἐκράτησεν.**» Σκεπτόμενοι αὐτό, ἅς θυμηθοῦμε καὶ τί γράφει ἡ Ἁγία Γραφή γιὰ τὸ θάνατο τοῦ μεγαλύτερου προφήτη τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης, τοῦ Μωυσῆ: λέγει ὅτι πέθανε σύμφωνα μετὰ τὸν λόγο τοῦ Θεοῦ στὸ ὄρος Νεβὼ καὶ τάφηκε στὴ γῆ Μωάβ. Ὁ τάφος τοῦ μεγάλου αὐτοῦ προφήτη ἔπρεπε νὰ εἶναι γιὰ πάντα τόπος προσκυνήματος γιὰ ὅλο τὸ λαὸ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ. Ὅμως στὴ Βίβλο διαβάζουμε, ὅτι «*οὐκ οἶδεν οὐδεὶς τὴν ταφὴν αὐτοῦ ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης.*» (Δευτ. 34:6). Ὅμως κατὰ τὴ Μεταμόρφωση τοῦ Κυρίου στὸ ὄρος Θαβῶρ ἐφανίστηκε ὁ Μωυσῆς στὸν Κύριο μαζί μετὰ τὸν προφήτη Ἠλία, ὁ ὁποῖος ἀρπάχτηκε ζωντανὸς στοὺς οὐρανοὺς. Νομίζω ὅτι δὲν θὰ εἶναι ἁμαρτία ἂν θὰ ποῦμε, ὅτι τὸ σῶμα τοῦ μεγάλου Μωυσῆ, ὅπως καὶ τὸ σῶμα τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου, μετὰ τὴ δύναμη τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἔμεινε ἄφθαρτο. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ τάφος του εἶναι ἄγνωστος.

Νὰ σκεφτόμαστε, ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφές μου, τὴν μακάρια Κοίμησις τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Παρθέτου Μαρίας καὶ νὰ θυμόμαστε τὰ λόγια τοῦ Κυρίου μας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ: «*Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον, καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν.*» (Ἰωάν. 5:24).

Νὰ μᾶς ἀξιώσει ὁ Θεὸς νὰ γευθοῦμε καὶ ἡμεῖς οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ τὴ μεγάλη αὐτὴ χαρὰ, μετὰ τὴ χάρις καὶ τὴ φιλανθρωπία τοῦ Κυρίου μας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος σὺν τῷ ἀνάρχῳ αὐτοῦ Πατρὶ καὶ τῷ Παναγίῳ Αὐτοῦ Πνεύματι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.

Ξύπνα Ραγιά...

Ιστολόγιο-Ομάδα Εκπαιδευτικών «Ο Παιδαγωγός».

Θυμάμαι τότε...

Ποῦ οἱ Ἕλληνες πήγαιναν ἐκκλησιά (στὴν εὐλογημένη Ὁρθόδοξη ἐκκλησιά καὶ δὲν μποροῦσε



κανεὶς νὰ φανταστεῖ συλλεΐτουργα μὲ τοὺς αἰρετικούς παπικούς)...

Τότε ποῦ ὑπῆρχαν ἄντρες καὶ γυναῖκες καὶ ὄχι μία κοινωμία μὲ ντύσιμο καὶ ὀμιλία unisex...

Ποῦ ὁ ἄντρας ἐξέπεμπε σεβασμὸ καὶ ἡ γυναῖκα καλοσύνη...

Ποῦ ἡ γυναῖκα εἶχε σεμνότητα (προσέξτε τὸ μακρὸ φόρεμα)...

Ποῦ οἱ γυναῖκες στὴν ἐκκλησιά φοροῦσαν μαντήλα καὶ οἱ χῆρες φοροῦσαν μαῦρα...

Τότε ποῦ τὰ κοριτσάκια περιποιόταν τὰ μαλλιά τους κάνοντας κοτσιδάκια (ἀπλό, ἀπέριττο καὶ ὄμορφο) καὶ δὲν ὑπῆρχαν κομμωτήρια...

Τότε ποῦ τὰ ἀγοράκια δὲν ἄλλαζαν κούρεμα σύμφωνα μὲ τὶς ἐπιταγὲς τῆς μόδας...

Τότε ποῦ ἡ οἰκογένεια ἦταν ἀκόμη οἰκογένεια, ποῦ σκεφτόταν καὶ ἀγαποῦσαν πραγματικά τα παιδιά



τους καὶ δὲν χώριζαν μὲ τὶς πρῶτες δυσκολίες γιὰ «νὰ ζήσουν» τὴν ζωὴ τους μὲ κάποιον ἄλλον...

Τότε ποῦ ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τοὺς γονεῖς, τὴν διαπαιδαγώγηση τῶν παιδιῶν ἔκανε ὁ παππούς, ἡ γιαγιά, ὁ παπὰς καὶ

ὁ δάσκαλος τοῦ χωριοῦ καὶ ὄχι ἡ τηλεόραση καὶ τὰ μικρο-διαβολοκούτια ποῦ κρατοῦνε στὰ χέρια τους καὶ κοιτάζουν ἀκατάπαυστα...

Τότε ποῦ στὰ σχολεῖα μάθαιναν γιὰ ἁγίους καὶ ἥρωες καὶ ὄχι γιὰ τὸ «ρατσισμό» καὶ τὴν λεγόμενη «διαπολιτισμικότητα»...

Τότε ποῦ στὰ σχολεῖα μας φοιτοῦσαν Ἑλληνόπουλα...

Τότε ποῦ ἡ μάνα ξαγρυπνοῦσε ὑπομονετικά δίπλα στὸ ἄρρωστο παιδί καὶ δὲν τὸ ἄφηνε στὴν «γιαγιά» γιὰ νὰ πάει στὴ δουλειά, γιὰ καφέ ἢ γιὰ ψώνια...

Τὰ θυμάμαι ὅλα αὐτὰ... κι ἀναρωτιέμαι μήπως πρέπει νὰ ἀναθεωρήσουμε τὶς ἀξίες καὶ τὰ ἰδανικά (ὑπάρχουν;;;;) τοῦ δυτικοῦ τρόπου σκέψης ποῦ μᾶς ἐπέβαλε ἡ καθημερινὴ πλύση ἐγκεφάλου ἀπὸ τὶς τηλεπρεσόνες καὶ τοὺς ἐρμαφρόδιτους στὴν τηλεόραση.

Διαφορετικά, ὅτι σπείραμε (παιδιά χωρὶς ἐγκράτεια, ἄσκηση, ἀρχὲς καὶ ἀξίες), γιὰ μία ἀκόμη φορὰ αὐτὸ καὶ θὰ θερίσουμε (ὑλισμὸς, καλοπέραση, κατανάλωση, ναρκωτικά, χούλιγκανς, ἀθεία, ἀναρχία, μι-



ζαδόροι, διαπλοκὴ καὶ τελικὰ ὑλική, ἠθικὴ καὶ πνευματικὴ χρεοκοπία).

Ἄν δὲν μετανοήσουμε οἱ ἴδιοι, ὅσα κεριά κι ἂν ἀνάψουμε, δὲν μᾶς σώζει οὔτε ὁ Ἅγιος Παῖσιος, οὔτε ὁ Ἅγιος Πορφύριος, οὔτε οἱ προφητεῖες οὔτε τὰ ἅγια λείψανα.

Ἡ ἐπιλογὴ γιὰ τὴν κόλαση ποῦ ζοῦμε, εἶναι ΔΙΚΗ ΜΑΣ.

Ξύπνα Ραγιά!

Ξύπνα, καὶ πάρε τὶς τύχες τῆς οἰκογένειας, τῆς πατρίδας καὶ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας στα χέρια σου!

Ἄρκετὰ ἀνέχτηκες προδότες, κίναιδους καὶ λαμόγια καὶ στὴν πολιτικὴ καὶ στὴν ἐκκλησία.

Ξύπνα Ραγιά, ΞΥΠΝΑ καὶ ΑΓΩΝΙΣΟΥ!



Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψη τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων γιὰ τὴν ἔκδοση τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οἰκονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντας κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὅσιος Ποιμῆν.»

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE JUNE COUNCIL

By Fr. George Maximov, April 27, 2016, translated by Jesse Dominick.

On April 19th, 2016 a conference was held at St. Tikhon's University in Moscow on the topic "The Pan-Orthodox Council: Opinions and Expectations," in which numerous hierarchs, priests, and theologians participated; among them was also Fr. George Maximov, a well-known missionary priest in Moscow. Fr. George offered a presentation titled "Misgivings Regarding the Upcoming Pan-Orthodox Council." In his talk he addresses what he sees as some problematic theological points arising from the Council documents, as well as problems with the Council's procedural regulations.

† † †

Your Eminences, dear fathers and brothers, I studied some of the draft documents of the Council and would like, on one hand, to present as an example one of the problematic points there, and on the other hand to highlight the danger that arises from the peculiarities of the Council's approved regulations.

In the draft of the document, "The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World", the assertion that, "as in the old Adam was contained the entire human race, so in the New Adam is gathered the entire human race" is accompanied by a citation from Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius, as we know, is NOT a holy father of the Church, and is well-known to have had Arian sympathies. I think for all of us here it is obvious that to cite an Arian in an Orthodox document is nonsense.

The idea which they are trying to justify with the quote from Eusebius, is in and of itself, to put it mildly, suspect, insofar as it directly implies that the entire human race is already in some way gathered in Christ, the New Adam. But insofar as the entire human race does not belong to the Orthodox Church, it turns out that they are talking about some means of union with Christ other than the Church, and this union has already occurred for all men.

At this point they also provide a quote from St. Cyril of Alexandria, for vindication, but this quote is reproduced incorrectly; the holy hierarch himself, as is obvious in context, speaks about the union of the entire human race with Christ as occurring exclusively through participation in the mystery of the Eucharist. That is, the union is exclusively inferred for members of the Church only. However, in the quote provided by the Council's organizers, it appears in a truncated form, thus giving the impression that he is speaking generally about the whole human race. Conclusively, in this document we are served with: a dubious idea, a link to a heretic, and an incorrect quote from a saint.

To delete or correct this point without any harm to the basic meaning of the document is not at all difficult. I can easily suggest some specific edits for how to safely remove

these heretical statements, or, we could say more softly, statements allowing for heretical understandings. However, when I had an appeal to His Holiness the Patriarch on this account, with full confidence that he would not leave such problems unresolved, it was pointed out to me that according to the "regulations" only those amendments which are supported by the representatives of all the Local Churches can be introduced into the text.

It turns out that even if such amendments were gathered as a result of today's work and voiced by His Holiness at the Pan-Orthodox Council, they have very little chance of approval. After all, even if our amendments were supported by almost all the Local Churches, but only one did not support them, then, according to the regulations, the amendments would not be accepted. In my opinion this represents a great threat; this is because it was clearly stipulated during the preparation phase for the Council that the representatives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople were rather "unenthusiastic" about any amendments by the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church. It turns out that they have a method for blocking any amendments to the documents. Conclusively, there is a clear danger that these drafts, with their references to Arians (and all other problematic content which others have pointed out) will be accepted, because our amendments shall never gain the consensus of all the representatives of the Church. I thus submit that it is a very worthwhile matter to give serious attention to such danger.

Furthermore, I would like to comment on the words of a previous presenter in which he expressed the thought that our diplomatic relationships with the non-Orthodox do not allow the use of the terms "heretic" or "heresy," and on the basis of this postulated the inappropriateness of their use in the documents of the Pan-Orthodox Council.

We can agree that, in the diplomatic sphere and in the vast majority of worldly situations, the use of the words "heresy" and "heretic" are likely inappropriate. But when this (political) approach, which should exclusively pertain to the rather narrow and private sphere of "ecclesiastical diplomacy," is in turn extended to the general sphere of our Orthodox understanding as to who and what is heretical, then it is completely erroneous and incorrect. I have had the opportunity to hear some Church officials of lower rank express their opinion that now, generally, it is forbidden to say that Catholics are heretics; and, such restrictions are applied to even Orthodox in conversation with other Orthodox—not just in an official message to the Pope or some high-ranking Catholic. For example, we have found such "ecclesiastical political correctness" within books intended for Orthodox readers and for internal Church distribution. Many of the faithful as well as the clergy are now sincerely persuaded that we are not in the right to use

these traditional, patristic terms even in our personal documents, texts, and conversations. I do not think this is either proper or correct. Such views have no theological basis and as they are contrary to patristic teachings and must receive no dissemination whatsoever.

In conclusion, the observation that the document of the Pan-Orthodox Council about attitudes towards the heterodox could stand to introduce the term “heresy” does not seem at all to me ridiculous or preposterous. If these documents are first of all intended for an Orthodox reader, then it is perfectly natural to lean upon the theological tradition which was developed and became the standard in the Orthodox Church, firmly entrenched in Her Tradition. If this text is a diplomatic letter addressed to non-Orthodox then it should have a different status and should hardly be entertained at a Pan-Orthodox Council, and should be titled differently, for example: “A message to Members of Heterodox Confessions” or something like that.

This is what I considered prudent to bring forth about these very problematic points. Thank you for your attention.



Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

[Rev 3:11, the last words of St. Philaret of New York]

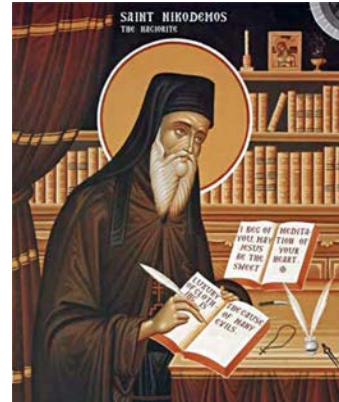
† † †

These words have a particular significance in our time, our greatly sorrowful and wicked days which are full of temptation. They remind us of that priceless spiritual treasure that we possess, as children of the Orthodox Church. Yes, we are rich. This spiritual wealth is that which the Holy Church possesses. This is the wealth which belongs to all her faithful children... The teaching of the Faith! Our wonderful, salvific Orthodox Faith! The countless living examples of the lives of people who have lived according to the Faith and according to the lofty principles and laws which the Church sets before us. Those who have attained that spiritual purity and exalted state that is called sanctity, the beauty and magnificence of our Orthodox divine services, and a living participation in them through faith and prayer. The fullness of the spiritual life of grace which is accessible to each and every one. And, what is the crown of all, the unity of the children of the Church in that love of which the Savior said: *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* (Jn 13-35).

St. Philaret, Metropolitan of New York
First Hierarch of ROCOR (+1985)

MANY EVILS ENSUE WHEN WE DO NOT ADVISE OTHERS

By St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite.



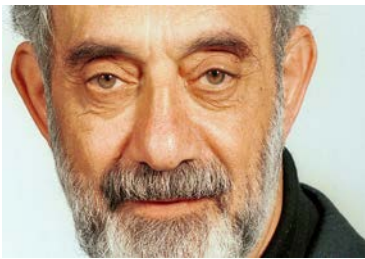
You should realize, my dear brothers, that if all of us were interested in contributing to the salvation of our fellow brothers, then in a short time evil people would correct their ways, and relatively quickly our cities would become free of evil and sin. This is certainly the case, because if one single person alone possessing a heart filled with godly zeal and filled with love for his fellow man is capable of correcting an entire nation, how much more so can large numbers of Christians—when of course they decide to lay hold of zeal and are determined to implant brotherly love within their souls—correct people who are living in sin?

Truly, the sole reason for the perilous plight of contemporary sinful people, the primary cause that has allowed immorality to increase in our days and permitted the devil to reign within present-day society is none other than we ourselves. For when we witness our fellow [Orthodox] brothers and [Orthodox] Christians sinning openly and carrying out various evils, we do not take the initiative to collectively go to them in an attempt to help them and correct them with brotherly advice and even reproof, if necessary. On the contrary, each one of us comes up with various excuses, we all remain silent, we quietly withdraw to ourselves, and thus we allow others to continue carrying out all the sin they choose and all the evil they desire.

Behold how the gold-tongued St. John Chrysostomos precisely confirms these truths: *Therefore, let us not say these things. Rather, let us display proper solicitude for our brethren. I promise with all exactitude, and I guarantee you, that if all of you who are present here resolve to secure the salvation of all who inhabit this city, everything will speedily be restored to good order... Let us then take an interest in the salvation of our brothers and sisters. One man filled with zeal is sufficient to correct an entire city! Hence, when not one, or two, or three, but such a great multitude is capable of contributing in the correction of them who live carelessly, and yet the majority are perishing and falling, it is from no other cause other than our own laziness—not our weakness. Isn't it irrational for us to hasten to lend a hand and help raise up an animal that has fallen, yet to neglect and show no concern for our fellow human beings who are perishing?*

THE INFALLIBILITY OF (TRUE) COUNCILS AND ECUMENICAL SYNODS

Source: "Empirical Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church according to the spoken teaching of Fr John Romanides," Volume 1, Dogma, Ethics, Revelation, by Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos. Fr. John is the one theologian of our days whose writings constitute a modern day legacy, artfully, simply and succinctly emphasizing the deep gulf separating the hesychastic Orthodox dogma from the intellectualist and juridical expressions of Western dogmas (and heresies). The quoted text is from Fr. John's writings-lectures.



It is well known that the Orthodox Faith was defined first in Local Councils, but later also in Ecumenical Councils through dogmas and sacred canons, by the Church's Holy Fathers, who convened these

Councils in order to deal with heretics.

The Ecumenical Councils are infallible, but this has to be interpreted in an Orthodox way:

"Today we have the teaching about the infallibility of the Ecumenical Councils. This teaching on the infallibility of the Ecumenical Councils, as it is described nowadays, is as though there were an institution called 'Ecumenical Council,' which has infallibility in the Church. In all the years that I have been reading the Fathers, I have never found that idea anywhere. Such a perception does not exist in the Fathers. The Ecumenical Council is definitely infallible, but it is not an infallible institution and it is not a permanent institution. The Church existed for three hundred and twenty-five years before the First Ecumenical Council and lived without an Ecumenical Council; and from the ninth Ecumenical Council in 1341 until today there has been no Ecumenical Council."*

The divine inspiration of the Ecumenical Councils is connected with the presence at them of the Church's Holy Fathers who were divinely inspired. The Council is not divinely inspired as an institution, but because **glorified people** take part in it.

"What makes an Ecumenical Council divinely inspired? Or, what makes a Local Council divinely inspired, and what is divine inspiration? When the Fathers of a Council, be it Local or Ecumenical, assemble to condemn a heresy, what constitutes the authority and the divine inspiration for this Council? For the bishop who takes part in a Council, together with all the other bishops, whether we take them singly or as a group, when does divine inspiration begin and when does it cease?

"I, for one, have never found anywhere the view that the Fathers of a Council are divinely inspired because they have come together in an Ecumenical council, and so at that time

they are divinely inspired. Whether there is a Local Council or an Ecumenical Council, the views are the same as far as the Fathers of the Church are concerned. The difference is the universal nature of the one and the local nature of the other, which is not a matter of the Churches but a matter of the way they were convened.

"If we had one hundred and fifty bishops who were not divinely inspired before they went to the Council, would those who were not inspired before the Council become divinely inspired after the inaugural prayer of the Council? And would they cease to be divinely inspired after the end of the Council? What is happening here? Was the Apostle Paul divinely inspired before he picked up his pen to write the Epistle to the Romans, and did he cease to be divinely inspired when he wrote the Amen at the end? When did his divine inspiration begin and when did it end? The same can be asked of all the books of Holy Scripture.

"That is why I, for one, offered the view that divine inspiration in the Church is no different from the inspiration that scientists have."

The bishops, who attained to the vision of God, beheld God and were in communion with Him, thus became the Fathers, who are the basis of the Ecumenical Councils.

Those who are guided by their experience are divinely inspired. Naturally this experience is of two kinds: the experience of illumination and the experience of glorification. These empirical Fathers are the basis of the Ecumenical Councils.

The glorified bishops reached the state of union with God and divine vision and have sure knowledge of God. The Holy Spirit acts through them. The Holy Fathers lived in various parts of the world, but through the Holy Spirit they had acquired experience of God, and when they gathered in Ecumenical Councils they also acquired a common terminology.

"Without there being any Pope of Rome among the Fathers to dictate what the dogmas were, all the Fathers together completely spontaneously always supported the same truth. These were people who were separated by vast geographical distances, which in those days were equivalent to the distance from us to the moon, because someone living in one part of the Empire was as far apart from someone else living in another part of the empire as if they were living on two different planets. As they had the same experience, however, they reached common decisions."

There are, unfortunately, some people today who overlook the glorified Fathers and value the Councils more highly than the Fathers, whereas the opposite is the case. The Councils themselves call upon the teaching of the God-seeing Fathers.

"Orthodox people today do exactly the same. 'The Church says,' or 'Holy Scripture says,' or 'the Ecumenical Council says.' This is strange, because we learn from contemporary Orthodox Christians that the Ecumenical Council has great

authority in the Church and they are doubtful about the authority of the Fathers of the Church. They put the Council above the Fathers of the Church.

“When you read the record of the proceedings of the Councils, the Ecumenical Council invokes the Fathers of the Church. They say, ‘The three hundred and eighteen Fathers said,’ ‘The one hundred and fifty Fathers said,’ ‘The six hundred Fathers said.’ When we think of an Ecumenical Council, for us it is Council of Fathers of the Church. It is an assembly of Fathers who teach these things...”

An Analogy to the Sciences of Astronomy and Medicine

In this section we will examine this issue by taking examples from two sciences: astronomy and medicine.

First of all, it should be stressed once more that the Church’s tradition is the experience of the God-seeing saints, Prophets, Apostles and Fathers. They lived this experience by the revelation of God and conveyed it to their spiritual children, and it is recorded in their writings. Thus three factors are very closely linked: the saints who behold God, their illuminated *nous*, by means of which they share in the experience of revelation, and their writings, in which the experience is recorded in created words and concepts. The basic elements of the tradition are the glorified saints (glorified=*theosis*), who are the bearers of the tradition.

“The Fathers of our Fathers in the Old Testament, the Prophets, had glorification (*theosis*) without the human nature of Christ. Afterwards, the Apostles also had glorification, with the human nature of Christ. And, after Pentecost we have another kind of glorification, with the experiences that they have after glorification, because the same experience of Pentecost continues within the Church and has not come to an end. Given that the experience of Pentecost has not come to an end, the bishops, who have this experience, are led to the same experience and know what they are talking about.

“Because of the continuity of this tradition, the Orthodox patristic tradition resembles modern biology, chemistry, astronomy and medical science. In this way the tradition of the Church is continued empirically. What experience, ultimately? The fact that cures continue and people are cured. People continue to learn the truth from astronomy, medical science, biology, in other words, from the experience of purification, the experience of illumination, which is the cure of the human personality, and the experience of glorification, which is the telescope and microscope of Orthodox theology. This is why we believe that we are on the right path and are still within the tradition.”

Those who behold God are like scientific astronomers, who examine the star-filled sky and discover stars that are invisible to the naked eye by using telescopes. Whatever they see they record in their writings. The saints do the same.

“We find this tradition dotted here and there throughout the writings of the Fathers, but mainly in the writings of St. Symeon the New Theologian, all his disciples and among those referred to as hesychasts. What is this tradition? It is extremely simple, as simple as can be.”

It is divine vision of the uncreated energy of God and guiding people on the basis of this experience. The vision of the inexpressible reality takes place by means of a special organ, the *nous*, which is illumined by the Holy Spirit. Those who behold God are in the state of illumination. They reach the state of glorification, participate in the Light and see the Light. *In Your light we shall see light*. On this point they resemble astronomers who see stars that are invisible to the naked eye by using special instruments called telescopes. Also, anyone who wishes to confirm the observations of

astronomers has to use the same instruments. This means that any Christian who wishes to verify the experience of the God-seeing saints has to acquire an illuminated *nous*.

“When there are doubts concerning astronomical writings, we take telescopes and by means of telescopes we confirm the correct interpretation of the books concerning astronomy. One looks, another looks, a third one looks and so it goes on. And all those who check with telescopes, radio telescopes, etc., say, ‘Ah! That is what those notes mean. Did you see it when you looked through the telescope? That is the explanation.’

“And the correct interpretation continues down the years, because there are people who see and know how to use telescopes and radio telescopes and the equipment with which they measure distance analogous with the speed of light—spectrographs, spectrograms—they even know how to measure material composition, they can even measure speed with them.”

This example shows that astronomers are closely linked with telescopes and writings. In the same way, doctors are closely associated with equipment and operating theatres and with curing people.

If, however, astronomers lose their telescopes and start to imagine stars or to speculate about them, they become astrologers. The same can happen to doctors, who, if they lose their equipment, become charlatans.

“If astronomers lose their telescopes and no longer know how to handle the various pieces of astronomical equipment,



they are reduced to being astrologers instead of astronomers. And, given that they have become astrologers, and the others have become sham doctors and pseudo-biologists and so on, are those who are no longer able to handle the scientific equipment of Orthodox theology astronomer-theologians or astrologer-theologians?"

In other words, true theologians are those who see God, who are like astronomers. When, however, without their *nous* being illuminated, they theologize by using speculation and their imagination instead, they turn into speculative thinkers and scholastics. Subsequently, when the astronomer, who has turned into an astrologer because he does not have the right equipment but uses speculation, takes part in a conference of astronomers, his participation in the conference does not in itself convert him into a scientific astronomer.

"This is the major question from the scientific point of view: Can someone who has become an astrologer, because he does not know how to use astronomical equipment, consider that this weakness is compensated for by the fact that he attends conferences? If astronomers forget about astronomical equipment and simply preserve the books about astronomy and misinterpretations begin, will they interpret the books about astronomy correctly, because they have gathered at a conference? I am simply posing the question. Will the conference produce correct astronomy? Will it upgrade astrology to astronomy? Is it the conference that will achieve this? Or will it be a conference of astrologers?"

The same can be observed in respect of doctors who are unable to use their instruments and equipment or operating-theatres in order to treat the sick. They are unable to cure people, and cannot be regarded as doctors merely because they attend medical congresses.

"Doctors have inherited the equipment of medical science, all the tools for surgical operations, from the past. We have X-ray equipment, hospitals, operating rooms and so on. What if the doctors who know how to use all this equipment disappeared, and untrained women who dabbled in practical medicine came in from the villages? And if the state made these untrained women responsible for the Universities and they taught the students, as the students were involved in strikes and politics, and these untrained women ended up being accepted by medical science, then they would start to be dangerous.

"Let us suppose that doctors have reached the point of no longer knowing how to use these tools, but use them at random. If the radiologist graduated from the University of Thessaloniki in 1870, so he does not know how to read X-rays and makes bad diagnoses, and the doctor performs bad surgical operations, and so on. So instead of people being cured, 90% die and 10% are cured. Whereas in America, France, England, Switzerland and Germany 60% are cured, in Greece 10% are cured. Well, if the Greek doctors have a

conference will the success rate increase to 90% or 100%? What is the use of a conference of doctors who do not know medical science? What good does it do? Do you follow what I am trying to say?"

By analogy, the same happens with bishops who do not have the suitable equipment, an illuminated nous, when they participate in the Council. They cannot be real theologians and they are unable to know the tradition. They are not illuminated simply because they take part in a Council. Illumination comes first.

"As a researcher I raise a topic: This bishop has received his diploma, but would never have received it except that his Metropolitan continuously phoned up all his professors, and he received his diploma with five marks, whereas he deserved no marks at all. If he, together with seventy such bishops, gathers in a conference of bishops called a Council, will they make correct decisions? Because the Holy Spirit descended? Or is this a parallel situation with the situation in all the other positive sciences? What is the difference between theology and the other positive sciences? Do you follow my argument?"

"I am afraid that I am telling you things that are rather shocking. How can I put it? I am, however, obliged as a researcher and historian—because my own special subject is history—as a historian I am obliged, when I undertake historical research and find certain things, I am obliged to inform you."

From this point of view, if the Orthodox bishops, who are disciples of those theologians who are not followers of the patristic tradition, ever gather in a Council, will the fact that they are meeting together in a conference make them Fathers of the Church? And if we call the conference an Ecumenical Council, can it ever reach a correct decision?

Only if they copy Holy Scripture and the patristic texts to the letter, without adding a word of their own, only then is there any hope of them reaching an Orthodox decision, only then. If, however, they add words that are not in Holy Scripture and the patristic tradition, it is almost certain that they will produce a decision that is dogmatically incorrect. It is almost certain. Guaranteed! Guaranteed!"

Scientific astronomers have criteria in order to verify their conclusions. Of course there are books, but there are also telescopes that confirm their observations. The astrologers, who rely on speculation and imagination, have no criteria to separate which group of astrologers are genuine and which are not.

"If there is a group of astrologers, do they have the right to denounce another group of astrologers? Can one group say, 'We are better astrologers than the others', and the other group say, 'We are better than you', and someone else to say, 'No, we are better than you' and so on, and can the astrologers argue among themselves? With what criteria?"

This happens in Orthodox theology too. The God-seeing saints, like scientific astronomers, have secure criteria and, like true doctors, they have successes, because they use suitable instruments and are part of the Orthodox tradition. Heretics, by contrast, resemble astrologers who do not have secure criteria, as each one uses his own speculation, and they do not achieve success.

“I want to emphasize the fact that every science is judged by the end result, not just by the means. Because if a doctor appears and begins to carry out surgical operations, and other doctors follow the traditions, and he begins to do a surgical operation, the others say, ‘But he will kill the patient by doing that. What is he doing? We have never seen anyone doing an operation in that way before,’ and people are indignant, because they know that surgical operations are not usually performed in that manner, but are done differently. However, they see that he cures the patient. Then he repeats the same method once again. When they see good results produced five or six times, will the doctors continue to say that the method is no good? Then the doctors will not say that it is not a good method. Because if it were not a good method, how would it achieve so many successes?”

In the Orthodox tradition those who see God—the Prophets, Apostles and saints—are closely associated with their illuminated *nous* and their divinely inspired writings. That is why people are cured. There are successful cures, people continue to be sanctified, to reach illumination and glorification. Also, the interpretation of divinely inspired writings requires divinely inspired commentators, who have the same illuminated *nous* and the same tradition as the divinely inspired writers of Holy Scripture and the patristic books.

In the Orthodox Church we have both God-seeing saints, whose nous is illumined, and writings, so Holy Scripture is linked with Holy Tradition. When the ‘astronomers’ (God-seers) and the ‘telescopes’ (illuminated nous and glorification) are lost, the writings are also misinterpreted. Then the astronomers turn into astrologers who speculate, and their conference becomes a conference of astrologers instead of astronomers.

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[*] From the “Orthodox Heritage” Editor: The esteemed Fr. John Romanides makes a clear recognition herein of the Church’s 8th and 9th Ecumenical Councils, both held in Constantinople, albeit not “officially” recognized yet as Ecumenical. A short reminder of these Holy Synods’ focus is as follows:

The 8th Ecumenical Council. This was the fourth Council of Constantinople, (879-880); restored St. Photius the Great to his see in Constantinople and anathematized the Latins’ heresy of *filioque* as well as any who altered the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, abrogating the decrees of the Robber Council of 869-870. This council was at first ac-

cepted as ecumenical by the West but later repudiated in favor of the robber council in 869-870 which had deposed Photius.

The 9th Ecumenical Council. This was the fifth Council of Constantinople, (1341-1351); affirmed *hesychastic* theology according to St. Gregory Palamas and condemned the Westernized philosopher Barlaam of Calabria and his associated heresies and blasphemy relative to the “created” energies of God.

Our Brotherhood considers it an unfortunate (deliberate) “miss” that the recently completed Council of Crete did not proceed with such official recognition. Given, though, the strong ecumenist motivations and spirit of the Cretan council, we can “understand” why such recognition was not deemed worthy by its organizers. It is our prayer and hope that a truly Pan-Orthodox Council in the future shall proceed with this recognition while concurrently condemning ecumenism, the heresy of all heresies.



The Divine Liturgy is not a matter of texts and editions, but a living tradition. The service is not learned from books, but from [empirical] experience, from serving with one’s fathers and preceptors in the Faith.

As Orthodox clergy become more removed from established centers of piety, especially those in *diaspora* from traditional homelands, the need for guidance from detailed liturgical texts becomes the more important, both for the instruction of the newly ordained and for the continued guidance of those already familiar with the divine services. This is especially true of English translations which guide those who may have little familiarity with texts in the original languages.

It is hazardous to take older and more recent editions and to draw conclusions about modifications and changes in practice. It would be wrong to take such an array of variations and to assemble one’s own technique of serving, though one might quote precedents and give convincing arguments for each variation. It is necessary to understand these variations lest we become adamant about practices which have undergone change. It is important to study and to understand the history of liturgies that we might the better distinguish a variation from an innovation which is theologically incorrect, that we might avoid some of the changes one finds in recent editions which seem generated by nothing more than a striving after originality.

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WHAT IS HOLINESS?

By Hieroschemamonk Ambrose (formerly Fr. Alexey Young), a spiritual child of Fr. Seraphim Rose.

In order to talk about holiness, we need to talk about the saints, who are our best examples of holiness. For this purpose, we must say that a saint does not exist outside of Orthodoxy. Of course there are outstanding people—Mother Theresa for example, but in the precise Orthodox understanding **sainthood is limited to the Orthodox Church.**

It is a requirement for holiness to confess the Orthodox faith. False doctrine inhibits our movement towards God. It slows us down and prevents us from going the whole way to Him, whereas authentic doctrine illumines our path to God.^[1] St. Theophan the Recluse notes that false doctrine can result in profound inner unhappiness and emotional distress.

A saint is not simply one who has cultivated the virtues or one who controls himself through asceticism, but rather is the one who has Christ Himself living with him. Sainthood infers a completely organic relationship with Christ. A saint is one who is not separated from Him in any way. The saint has gone through the stages of repentance and purification to attain a remarkable state of union with Christ. This is the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*. To become one with Christ is the purpose of life.

Self-help and self-improvement groups prove ultimately meaningless when you consider that, in the end, you will die. As Fr. Seraphim was wont to remind me—all things pass away except for Jesus Christ. When we truly confront this reality, and the reality of death, then many things we thought were important begin to take a back seat. But, death has been transcended. Death has been transfigured.

We feel unholy and unworthy when we hear in the Liturgy *Holy things are for the holy!* but the Church understands this and replies *One is Holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.* It is because of this Holy One that we have our hope. From Him comes forth all holiness.

Baptism and Chrismation enter us into the communion of the saints, into a new way of living, thinking, seeing, hearing, tasting, and touching. We join the ranks of those who have sought and found Christ and heard *I Am He*.

The saints debase themselves with startling humility. They had no pretensions about themselves, but we who are not saints sometimes pretend to be holy and righteous and hereby debase others, whereas a true saint makes us, the insignificant, feel loved. There was always a sense of stillness and peacefulness about Fr. Seraphim. Problems resolved themselves in his presence. Fr. Seraphim always accepted a person as he was, but could knock him down a peg when he was a fake.

We ought to struggle, repent, seek mercy, try to learn patience, try to have more love and humility, and so on. In doing so something begins to happen within us—we begin to realize that we have a quietness within us that did not originate from

within us. This is the beginning of *theosis*. Christ says: *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* (Jn 7:38). It begins as a trickle and then flows out through our whole being.

When we approach a saint we feel that he loves us and does not exploit us. Saints are “little christs.” If we enter into a relationship with a saint by asking for his intercessions we will find there a beginning of warmth, and a sense that the saint is present and listening to us.

St. Gregory Palamas writes that God and His saints have the same glory and splendor because God deigns to share it with us. The saint reminds us that God loves us, and that he too was weak but that we all have the strength of being loved by Christ. We can return and find God, but if we abandon God then we become slaves of self-love, which destroys us and those around us.^[2] The saints reproach us.

A man dominated by self-love will soon be dominated by all the passions, sins, and temptations. One-by-one they will find a home in him. The solution is modeled for us by the saints—that is, living for Christ and not ourselves. Only then do we become real people. We learn real theology from being in the presence of a saint who is a clear icon of Christ before us. St. John of Damascus speaks of the saints as full of grace, which does not depart at death, and thus we have relics, and icons and such spiritual “artifacts.” God rests in His saints.

We can come to understand Who God is and who we are through the saints who are aflame with love for God. They remind us that something never ceases or passes away. God cannot hate, and God cannot get angry. God is only loving; and unless we reach a state of only loving, God will be Hell for us. Metropolitan Hierotheos says that contact with the saints reveals the hurt child within us.

But how can we experience the saints? It is not enough just to ask their intercessions. To have a deeper, more meaningful relationship with a saint we must already imitate him in some way—to have contrition and a feeling of disillusionment in our own ability to accomplish spiritual tasks. Humility is the beginning of a true sense of reality—that is, that we have long way to go to reach God.

There are six kinds of saints, or six types of holiness, listed here in relative importance for the Church:

1. Apostles: their teaching is the foundation of the Church
2. Martyrs and confessors: they are an example to us of supreme sacrifice
3. Prophets: they foretold the coming of Christ
4. Hierarchs and teaching saints: they preserve unity among the faithful; this includes saints such as St. John of Damascus and St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain
5. Monastics: they have died in peace praying for the world
6. Righteous: they have attained holiness in the world by keeping the commandments, participating in the liturgical

life of the Church, etc.; this includes saints such as Abraham and Sarah, Joachim and Anna, St. Joseph, etc.

St. Kosmas of Aetolia says that the martyrs are in Paradise with their blood, and the monastics with their ascetic life—and how shall we who beget children attain Paradise? By hospitality, relieving the poor, the blind, the lame (like St. Joachim), by almsgiving, love, and fasting which causes us to be enriched in body and soul.

The Righteous includes Fools-for-Christ who hide their virtues and endure contempt to achieve humility and patience. All these paths have the common basis of asceticism and spiritual work—that is, an athleticism of the spirit. The Orthodox saint is already a citizen of Heaven and helps us achieve that goal.

In Paradise, before the Fall, Adam had constant remembrance of God. His sin deeply darkened this, which was passed on to the rest of humanity. We bear signs of this corruption and decay and spiritual nature that are darkened by forgetfulness of God. The saints are those who have remembered God and are anxious to teach us to do the same.

† † †

Question: Could you elaborate on your statement that there are no saints outside of Orthodoxy?

Answer: For instance, there is a striking difference between Francis of Assisi and Orthodox saints. Francis identified himself with Christ many times when he experienced *stigmata*. (*Stigmata*—singular *stigma*—body marks, sores, or sensations of pain in locations corresponding to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ, such as the hands, wrists, and feet. *Ed.*) We do not identify with Christ but are saved by Him. We focus more on the Resurrected Christ. Francis saw himself as especially singled out by Christ, but an Orthodox saint always sees himself as the least of all. Once, when Francis was sick, his doctor told him to eat meat, which was against the rule of the Franciscans. He felt so guilty that he went into the market, dumped ashes on himself, proclaimed his sin to all, loudly talking about how much of a wretch he was. Our saints never draw such attention to themselves.

Question: Could you elaborate on God not getting angry?

Answer: We must remember that the Old Testament is not the full revelation of God. We only see Christ angry once, when He drives the money-changers out of the Temple, which is an example of righteous anger because he was angry for the honor of the Father. The Old Testament is more about how the Jews perceived God, and they were in a very imperfect relationship with Him. It is not for us to judge those outside the Church, but we know that Orthodoxy is the fullness of truth.

Question: If we are new to Orthodoxy, how do we discern what our distortions are?

Answer: It is very important to read the lives of the saints. We have to start at a pre-school level before reading the Philokalia. Fr. Seraphim recommended that people read

Dickens to show them normal life, to overcome hardness of heart. These writings show a living theology. We can watch and learn from others. We do not need to know why everything is done, but just do it. Holiness needs to be studied in action. Read less theology and more lives of the saints.

Question: Could you compare and contrast Western asceticism and the western worldview with Orthodoxy?

Answer: Generally in the West asceticism came to be seen as an end in itself, but in Orthodoxy it is only a means to an end.

Question: Do saints continue to grow in holiness after death when they are united to Christ?

Answer: Yes, although we do not know very much about this. We know our prayers for the reposed are beneficial in some way—they are unable to pray or give alms for themselves, so we can do it for them. This implies continuing growth and change. And remember, a person is not a saint until they die—he can always fall.

† † †

[1] Amongst the sayings of the desert fathers we find this story of Abba Agathon: “It was said concerning Abba Agathon that some monks came to find him having heard tell of his great discernment. Wanting to see if he would lose his temper they said to him: ‘Aren’t you that Agathon who is said to be a fornicator and a proud man?’ ‘Yes, it is very true,’ he answered. They resumed, ‘Aren’t you that Agathon who is always talking nonsense?’ ‘I am.’ Again they said ‘Aren’t you Agathon the heretic?’ But at that he replied ‘I am not a heretic.’ So they asked him, ‘Tell us why you accepted everything we cast you, but repudiated this last insult.’ He replied ‘The first accusations I take to myself for that is good for my soul. But **heresy is separation from God**. Now I have no wish to be separated from God.’ At this saying they were astonished at his discernment and returned, edified.”

[2] Self-love can be said to be the root of all sin, as it was self-love or self-will that moved Adam and Eve towards sin. “The passions are planted by self-will, when a person wants to live according to his own will, and not God’s,” writes the Hieromartyr Daniel Sysoev, *A Sobering book. Explanation of the Book of Ecclesiastes*, p. 36.



In these apocalyptic times it is difficult, or rather impossible, for many hierarchs of the local Orthodox Churches, to confess correctly in this Ecumenical Synod, which eventually is going to be convened, the Orthodox dogmas and the correct truths, according to the teachings of the holy Fathers, because of human weaknesses.

St. Justin Popović (+1979)

ON THE CONCLUSION OF THE CRETAN “COUNCIL”

By George Karras, “Orthodox Heritage” Editor, Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen, June 26th 2016.

The long awaited “Pan-Orthodox” Council of Crete, planned for well over 90 years, highly anticipated and promoted by the ecumenists (and of great concern to Orthodoxy’s traditionalists) has come to its close. Discussing it with various Orthodox brethren and reading whatever has been published among the various Orthodox electronic news media and discussion forums, one thought prevails among most: “So what... What was this all about? What purpose did this multi-decade effort produce?”

We shall make an effort to answer these questions, providing our Brotherhood’s views and opinions.

Has the Council Accomplished Anything?

This is a question that, sadly, is not as simple to address as the faithful might have hoped or expected. The Council’s conclusive statement has the appearance of a United Nations proclamation and very little that resembles the writings of our Holy Fathers (or past Ecumenical Synods or Local Councils). The topics addressed by the Council and the spirit of the attendants (not all of them Orthodox...) most certainly provide the reader of the final documents with content that does not appear to be aligned with our Holy Patristic Tradition. We implore our readers to access the documents of this Council and place them side-to-side with the documents from Councils or Synods of earlier eras.

The persistence of the Ecumenical Patriarch to hold this Council (in spite of having lost its Pan-Orthodox identity when four Churches refused to participate) had become the source of primary concern. Why was it necessary to hold it now? Why the refusal to postpone it when four different Patriarchs and dozens of hierarchs from all over the Orthodox world requested?

Great Councils have been utilized by the Church to address immediate or impending heretical views or clear heresies and emphatically and succinctly declare Orthodox positions and values, always patristically-based, never with any regard to political correctness or governmentally-motivated views of the past, present, or future age. That is clearly not the case for the Cretan Council of 2016.

First and foremost, there existed no “declared” heresy that was the topic of the Council nor any complex Church dogma that the hierarchy clarified for the faithful. The Council not only did not confront ecumenism, the heresy of all heresies plaguing the faithful and the Church in our days, but it did not even dare imply its existence. As a matter of fact, we dare suggest that its highly publicized agreed upon and signed position papers offered nothing of value whatsoever. Concurrently, it

is our most definitive view that its statements water down the Faith, and its organizers have attempted to take Orthodox a few steps closer to the unholy goals of the ecumenists. Time, as well as the views of the knowledgeable flock and clergy, shall determine whether their efforts carried any success beyond the customary circles of watered-down, lukewarm parishes and the clergy who have already been compromised by the message of the “unity with other faiths at ‘most’ costs.”

In support of the aforementioned position, we turn to the saintly hierarch of our days, bishop Avgoustinos of Florina, who late in his life, often spoke about this topic, despite his advanced age. He openly and clearly expressed the reason for his objection to the convocation of this synod. If Ecumenical Synods were convened, he said, it was to address heresy. Indeed, he saw an urgent reason to convene a new Ecumenical Synod if only in order to condemn contemporary heresies, particularly the heresy of Ecumenism, called “the heresy of heresies”. But he realized that **it would not be possible to condemn this arch-heresy, when the overwhelming majority of our hierarchs either openly promote it or tacitly accept it.**

The Council did issue several position papers, none of them providing any breakthrough on any issues except one. Its greatly discussed paper on “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World” wherein recognition is given to the heterodox (to “other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions”). The statement’s authors promote relations with these “churches and confessions” that should be based “...on the speediest and objective clarification possible of the whole ecclesiological question, and most especially of their more general teachings on sacraments, grace, priesthood, and apostolic succession.” The paper includes several paragraphs justifying the continuation of dialogues and the ecumenical movement, and the need for continued participation in the World Council of Churches (WCC) for the “advancement of theological dialogues.” Of course, none of them have ever dared to address the fruits of all these dialogues during the past several decades of WCC participation—they have caused more damage to our Faith and not a single “Christian denomination” has inched towards Orthodox *ethos* and dogma, not one...

What the Council Did NOT Achieve

The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople was anxious to proclaim the Council’s happy results to the world and all Orthodox that were paying attention. We hold great reservations to anything that the Council and its architect, Patriarch Bartholomew, proclaim relative to the results and instead turn to history awaiting the characterization that she will grant to the Cretan gathering. We do objectively note, however, that the Council failed in its pre-stated primary goal of Orthodox unity and its desire to be Pan-Orthodox.

As all are aware by now, not one, but four of the Local Orthodox Churches refused to participate for well-documented and fully justifiable reasons. Among them are the Churches of

Antioch and Russia representing both a significant number of faithful as well as Orthodox tradition and history. We admire the firm and Orthodox positions taken by the Churches of Georgia and Bulgaria, so clear and succinct in their exemplification of true Orthodox values and principles. We have also been informed that the decisions to not participate in the Council were unanimous by the hierarchy of those two Churches! We pray for many years of life for the bishops of these Churches and plead that they maintain their Orthodox posture, irrespective of the many political pressures to which they have and continue to be subjected by their pro-western governments.

To the best of our knowledge (and we have read nothing to the contrary) the traditional requirement to recognize the Church's seven Ecumenical Synods and read their decisions, did not take place. Is it perhaps because some of these decisions stood in contrast with the objective of this Council?

The council missed the greatest opportunity in the last several decades to unite Orthodox who are painstakingly separated from the 14 Local Churches; it failed to open its arms and appeal for a return to the Orthodox children separated from the plurality of Orthodoxy—the Old Calendarists. The Ecumenical Patriarch, in his efforts to draw closer to the west and the Latins, drew further away from Orthodoxy's separated children. He had repeatedly implied and stressed his goals to serve as the uniting force in Orthodoxy; however, rather than bring closer, as a good and loving father, to the bosom of unity those who separated due the calendar issues (and the ecumenist movements of his predecessors), he created a larger rift among the Orthodox. It is very likely that he has placed such true Orthodox unity beyond any reach whatsoever.

The Council did not seek the continuation of operating within the confines and in protection of the one holy Orthodox faith, but instead marched closer to the west and was preoccupied in its efforts to harmonize with the heterodox and their worldly spirit. This is best demonstrated by the Council's refusal to confess two previous councils with an Ecumenical identity (879-880 with Saint Photios the Great and the council of 1351 with the Saint Gregory Palamas), which upheld the stature of Ecumenical Councils in the conscience of true Orthodox faithful everywhere.

As the Council was taking place, the Turkish government proceeded to convert Aghia Sophia, the greatest temple of Orthodoxy, into a mosque, for the 30 days of Ramadan, and the Koran was read daily until July 5. Not a word of protest by

any of the Council officials, including the Ecumenical Patriarch and his Synod, all of whom are Turkish citizens.

The Council invited and insisted upon observers; heterodox observers in the Orthodox Council! Prominently featured members of the Latins, the Protestants and the Monophysites were there not to comprehend Orthodox dogma and theology but instead “monitor” progress and report details of the proceedings to the heads of their “churches.” For what purpose and since when do we allow wolves in sheep's clothing among the shepherds of His flock? To call this outrageous would be minimalist—instead it is further evidence of the aforementioned desire of harmonizing with the worldly spirit in which all heterodox operate, far away from true Orthodox dogma and certainly the patristic *phronema*.

Peace was preached and written about in the final documents, in a vague manner and certainly with no direct reference to the on-going turmoil in the Middle East and elsewhere. The Council did not confront the violence preached and practiced (yes, preached and practiced) by Islam, and not just by ISIS. (It is preached, and practiced, for example, by the current Turkish government as exemplified by the genocide they are inflicting upon the Kurds and their continuing support to the ISIS terrorists.) It was an intentional miss of convenience, once again in the name of political correctness.

Islam is not a religion of peace. One may easily find articles within the electronic media containing the various teachings on the Koran—those which today's politicians choose to ignore as they call Islam a religion of peace... Nothing is further from the truth.

We appreciate some sections of the statement on Marriage and the fact that feared compromises to Church dogma did not take place, other than the continued *oikonomia* for marriage of Orthodox with heterodox. However, there was a huge opportunity missed; there was not any clear and succinct statement of condemnation for the legalization of gay “marriage” by the governments of most western nations. The Council failed to issue the warranted strong language that needs be used for this (and other) unacceptable forms of “family” lifestyle that make an absolute mockery of the Church's Holy Sacrament.

Lastly, the Council also failed to emphasize that Orthodoxy shall never compromise any of Her dogmas or any part of Holy Tradition and water it down to what the heretics have now established within their “churches,” whether that is questionable priesthood practices, improper fasting or marriage



The heterodox “observers” of the Cretan Council

between men and women who are not Orthodox. An opportunity missed to remind the faithful that the Holy Orthodox Church is the only church of yesterday, today and tomorrow and there has never existed any “completeness of faith” outside this church established by and belonging to Him.

Some Conclusive Thoughts

The Cretan Council, in our opinion, rather than being a gathering that spread joy and unity, succeeded in further dividing and confusing the flock and spreading the fear of schisms among various Local Churches. We heard and observed, in several of the “Council press briefings” the deteriorated (and we dare call them treacherous and treasonous) words and behaviors of some of Orthodoxy’s hierarchy; we have read statements that exemplify the repeated compromises to the heterodox, and we saw the efforts to water down our Faith. Most importantly, rather than confronting the arch-heresy of ecumenism, the attending hierarchy glorified it (directly and indirectly), both in their statements as well as their discussions.

St. Paisios the Athonite had expressed his sorrow over the ecumenism movement with great pain in his heart: “With sadness I must write that among all the ‘unionists’ I’ve met, never have I seen them to have either a drop or shred of spirituality. Nevertheless, they know how to speak about love and union while they themselves are not united with God, for they have not loved Him.” Some years later, Fr. Charalambos Vasilopoulos in his “Ecumenism Unmasked”, tells us that “... the ecumenists will attempt to validate the modernism they are trying to promote within the Church ... **They want it to be a synod that will eventually tear down the decisions of the previous Ecumenical Synods.**”

It is indeed the latter that worries the Orthodox circles whom the ecumenists nowadays have termed as “fundamentalists and fanatics.” Yet the hierarchy that has (as its majority) aligned itself with the ecumenist movement, is slowly losing their Orthodox flock as they pursue followers among the heterodox; as correctly pointed out by an Athonite in a recent conversation, “**they want to unite with the heterodox but they will end up losing the Orthodox.**”

The bishops in Orthodoxy are first and foremost, before any other pastoral interest, the guardians of the holy and Orthodox faith. Their council can only be holy if it knows how to preserve the purity of the Orthodox faith. It was a brave and a blessed avowal expressed by some Local Churches’ Orthodox Synods in discussing their decision on whether or not to participate in this council, for instance, the declaration of the Bulgarian Church: “**Outside the Holy Orthodox Church there are no other churches, there are only heresies and schism. Calling these churches is an absolute mistake, theologically, dogmatically and canonically.**”

As we await the true outcome of this Council, we remain firm in our opinion that this was the first of more Councils to be called by the Ecumenical Patriarch (or his successor), until

the Faith is adequately “watered down” for a true Sacramental union with the heterodox. That is the unholy goal of the ecumenists.

One question, though, troubles the traditional hierarchy and the traditional Orthodox theologians of our Church: Will there be immediate schisms forthcoming? Great fears for such a horrific outcome are being expressed among various circles, especially since a rumor is prevailing that the four Local Churches absent from the Cretan Council intend to call their own Council and follow a more traditional inclusion formula, more along the lines and rules applied during the Church’s Seven Ecumenical Synods. Would such an event lead us into a schism? How would the Ecumenical Patriarch respond?

While we believe that Sacramental union of the ecumenists with the heterodox is indeed their pursuit, we are all too aware that this Sacramental union is already happening in some parishes—it just has not been officially declared and it certainly is not being addressed by bishops who know that it is taking place. Some priests are communing the Monophysites openly, the sacrament of marriage is being mocked by Church officials who (in the name of “love”) compromise Church beliefs and dogma towards homosexuality; new Orthodox from Protestant “branches” that carry zero resemblance to any type of Christianity, are being refused the sacrament of baptism, and (even though the recent Council re-affirmed that “marriage between Orthodox and non-Christians is categorically forbidden in accordance with canonical *akriveia*”) some clergy is allowing the Sacrament of marriage to take place between Orthodox and Jews or followers of other religions.

Yet, among this confusion and uncertainty, we are encouraged to hear that there are still several hierarchs and clergy that remain faithful to the faith; several of the hierarchs attending the Council refused to sign the documents on “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World,” and it was not just the beloved bishops Athanasios of Limmasol and Hierotheos of Nafpaktos—there were quite a few more. It is exactly these men and their spiritual leadership, along with the resistant non-attending Local Churches and the many elders and monastics across the Orthodox world that give strength to the faithful. And we are among them, remaining in absolute belief in His words: *And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* (Mt 28:20).

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.



One should not seek among others the truth that can be easily gotten from the Church. For in her, as in a rich treasury, the apostles have placed all that pertains to truth, so that everyone can drink this beverage of life. She is the door of life.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, “Against Heresies”

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SIN HAS BECOME FASHIONABLE!

By St. Paisios the Athonite (feast day July 12th).

The greatest barbarianism in the world is not war, but moral catastrophe. People are deteriorating both spiritually and physically. Some people try to justify the situation by saying that sinful life did not begin in our times. “Look at what was going on in ancient Rome!”—they say.

True, but the people in Rome were pagans and worshipped idols. And Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans addressed himself to these pagans, who had become baptized, but had not yet foresworn their bad habits.

We should not follow the examples of the greatest decadence in each epoch. Just think—we are Orthodox people, and where have we landed! About other people nothing can be said at all. But the worst thing is that modern people, while engaging in sin on a wholesale basis and seeing that someone is not following the spirit of the times and is not sinning, but demonstrates an iota of piety, they call such a person backward, a retrograde. These people are upset that someone is not sinning. They equate sin with progress. And that is absolutely the worst thing.

If modern people, living in sin, would at least recognize it, God would have mercy upon them. But they try to justify that which has no justification, and they laud sin. Moreover, to count sin as progress and to say that morality has outlived its time is, beside everything else, a most horrible blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if someone living in this world engages in spiritual endeavor and keeps his life pure,

that lifestyle has great value. Such people are due to be immensely rewarded,

In olden times a lecher or a drunkard was ashamed even to go to the market-place, because people would have started laughing at him. One can say that this situation served to place a certain restraint upon sin. Yet today, if someone lives righteously, particularly a maiden, people say about her: “Well, well, did she come from another planet?” In general, when lay people committed sin in former times, the poor wretches felt their sinfulness and became a little humbler. They did not mock those who lived spiritually, but on the contrary, they admired them. In our times, however, those who sin do not feel guilty. They likewise have no respect for others. Everything has been flattened down to the ground. If a person does not live in a worldly manner, sinners make a mockery of him.

However, in trying to justify that which has no justification, people feel tormented in their souls and do not find peace anywhere. They are all internally unnerved, and so the miserable ones seek amusement for themselves, they run around in bars and discos, get drunk, watch television incessantly... In other words, their conscience bothers them, and in order to forget about it they engage in trivialities.

Every person has a conscience. Conscience is the very first Holy Scripture, given by God to the first-created people. No matter how much an individual tries to override his conscience, it will always denounce him from within. There is nothing sweeter than a peaceful and tranquil conscience. Such a person feels himself internally uplifted.