

The Confessor's Tongue for October 1, 2023

17th Sunday after Pentecost: Protection of the Theotokos; St. Romanos the Melode
In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising
authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

The Seven Beatitudes of the Apocalypse

Nearly every Sunday of the year and at many other Divine Liturgies besides, we sing the nine Beatitudes Christ delivered to His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount. These words describe the state of blessedness, of goodness, of human normality, health, and well-being. They present us with a progression in virtue.

Less well-known are the seven Beatitudes of the Apocalypse. The Apocalypse is the one book of the New Testament that is never appointed to be read at Divine Liturgy. It is, however, not quite true that it is not permitted to be read in church, for there is a provision in the *Octoechos* for there to be a *lectio continuo* through all the books of the New Testament at All-Night Vigils between Vespers and Matins. The priest and deacon then unvest, all sit in their places, all are served of the blessed bread and wine of the Litia, then from Pascha to All-Saints the Acts of the Apostles is read, and the rest of the year, the "seven Catholic Epistles of the Apostles, the fourteen Epistles of the holy Apostle Paul, and the Revelation of the Holy Apostle John the Theologian are read."

The first beatitude is for those who read, hear, and keep the words of the prophecy. This is a beautiful book to read, but it is difficult to understand. Several church fathers have written commentaries on it. In our own time, Archimandrite Athanasios Mitilinaios of Greece studied the text and the commentaries and over several years delivered a weekly talk on Revelation for his flock. This has now been translated by Constantine Zalalas in a work of five volumes. They provide valuable and inspirational reading to aid us in understanding this underappreciated book and to secure the promised blessing.

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Revelation 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Revelation 19:9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

"Perverse Thoughts Separate Men from God" Part Four

From Elder Paisios in "Elder Paisios of the Holy Mt."

There is no magical therapy that will automatically cure someone whose mind has gone astray due to his constant preoccupation with his false thinking; there are, however, certain steps to follow in order to recover:

First, and most important, is to realize the state of his own wretchedness.

After he realizes it, the second step is to repent, go to Confession, and never listen again to the voice of his own thoughts; instead, he must follow the voice of his spiritual father.

Thirdly, after he becomes aware of his miserable state of being, he should constantly ask God for His mercy through the Jesus Prayer, so Christ will help him, and His divine grace will return inside him.

One can only be cured and saved through humbleness, the only miraculous therapy I know of; only humility can save us.

Man is changeable; on the one hand, he clings to his good thoughts, and on the other, to his negative and devious ones. He does what he likes whenever he likes, for he has a free and independent will. The same thing applies to divine grace and illusion. Since man is constantly changing, divine grace and illusion come and go respectively.

If one lives in the world of his pride, that is the world of his own thoughts, he is filled with illusions and he is in danger. He must not listen to his thoughts, which try to push him left and right in order to destroy him; on one hand, they convince him that he is virtuous, nice, a real striver, talented, almost a saint, and on the other, that he is a failure and there is no hope for him to be saved. His thoughts will either create inside him the false belief that he is perfect and thus awaken his pride, or that he is a hopeless loser and fill him with despair. He must ignore both positive and negative thoughts, and always confess them to his spiritual father, and obey whatever he tells him. He should only trust him and not his own thoughts; furthermore, he must believe that he is nothing but a striving soul and constantly ask for God's mercy in his prayer in order for his mind to be cleansed.

As long as he thinks humbly of himself, God's grace remains within him and protects him. When he moves away from his humble thoughts and starts being preoccupied with what the patriarch or the bishop or the abbot or monks do or say, then God's grace starts retreating.

Therefore, the most important thing for us to look after is to preserve the sense of humbleness in our lives, and thus allow for divine grace to permanently remain within us. *To be continued...*

Book Review

Fr. Justin Frederick

Christian Orthodox Political Philosophy: A Theological Approach

Pavlos M. Kyprianou

Holy Trinity Publications: Jordanville, NT, 2023 150 pp.

How is the Church to engage in the realm of politics? Christ told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my disciples would be fighting." Some have taken this to mean that the Church should not be political. Yet the Gospel properly lived must affect every area of life and not be limited merely to a means of personal salvation. The Church is present in the world to preserve the world and sanctify it, though the full realization of the Kingdom will come only with Christ at His second coming. To sanctify the world, the Church must engage the world without undergoing a worldly secularization of herself. Christians are tempted by various ideologies that promise their followers improvement of the world, but these human ideologies only reduce and limit the authentic work of the Church.

Cypriot Pavlos Kuprianou, now monk Leontios, has written *Christian Orthodox Political Philosophy* to free the faithful from human ideologies that hinder the Church's work and to provide them with fundamental principles that must guide Orthodox engagement with the political realm. In the author's own words, "The aim of this book is to explore the borders and to propose criteria for distinguishing these boundaries between, on the one hand, a healthy adaptation of the Church with world in order to facilitate her redemptive mission, and, on the other, an unhealthy 'secularization,' which conforms the Church to the world, thus weakening her redemptive power."

Chapters cover the topics "Church and World", "Church and Nation", "Church and State", "Relationship between Local Church, State, Nation, and Universal World", "The Orthodox Diaspora", "Orthodoxy and Inter-Orthodox International Relations", and "Conclusions--Proposals". An Appendix addresses the history of the current crisis in Ukraine between Russia and the West.

The Church fights for the salvation of man, but to be effective, she must avoid worldliness or secularization, which "is the submission of the Church to the fallen world of demonic influence, and submission to the temptations of the devil." It also means "forgetting about 'the city that is to come,'" so that the Church identifies with man's ideologies and agendas in this world. Because the Truth is a Person, not an ideology or philosophy, the Church must rise above partisan politics. It does not found a party or give itself over to labels of the left or right. It does

not espouse a particular political ideology, but rather seeks the salvation and union of all in Christ.

Nationalism is an unhealthy temptation that undermines the Church's mission. The term "ethnophyletism" is also used to refer to this "unwholesome love for the homeland in a way which excludes love for the world as a whole." Nationalism and ethnophyletism are to be distinguished from patriotism, which means love for one's homeland without disdain for the rest of the world. Our love of our homeland cannot be such as causes us to be hostile or indifferent to the rest of the world. As Christians, we seek the salvation and sanctification of all nations, not just our own. The Church's task in the world is to make each nation Orthodox.

Some of Mr. Kyprianou's political recommendations he presents in the chapter "Church and State", which is by far his longest chapter, will be controversial. He correctly notes that "it would be wrong for the Church to support the separation of Church and State . . . because that would indirectly be tantamount to secularism." The Church rather should seek the maximus possible influence on the State while maintaining the maximus possible independence from the State without subjugating the State to itself (Theocracy). While any form of government is a better than anarchy, and Church dogma does not require a particular form of government, the author believes that a "person-centered, rule-of-law democracy is what is needed to promote an advanced form of society which we may call 'communion of persons.' A monarch elected for life subject to rule of law and parliamentary and judicial control would best effect this.

Kuprianou addresses the vexing question of overlapping jurisdictions in the Orthodox Diaspora. He proposes that each independent nation that has demonstrated a stable existence for a century should ultimately have its own autocephalous Orthodox Church once at least five percent of its population is Orthodox. The language of the national church should predominantly be the language of the land, though other languages may be used as warranted by local conditions.

Christian Orthodox Political Philosophy thoughtfully approaches its topic and offers much material for further reflection and discussion. While it will not offer the final, definitive word on this subject, it provides an excellent place to begin reflection and study on these questions.

Archimandrite Athanasius on End Times

What are the end times? Generally speaking, end times or *eschata* is the interval between the two appearances of Christ. *Revelation, v. iv, p. 231.*

Upcoming Events 2023

13-15 October Regional Young Adult Gathering
15 October: 2:00 p.m. Octoberfest

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!