

The Confessor's Tongue for October 15, 2023

19th Sunday after Pentecost: Fathers of the Seventh Council

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.

“Perverse Thoughts Separate Men from God” Part Six

From Elder Paisios in “Elder Paisios of the Holy Mt.”

The spirituality of a person is defined by the quality of his thoughts. One day, three men were sitting in a part chatting. Suddenly, a young man hastily ran by them. When they saw him, they all thought of something.

The first one thought: “He must have stolen something, so he is running to escape.” The second thought, “He must be late for his date with some girl—that is why he is running.” And the third one said to himself: “Most probably, he is a chanter in a church and runs to be on time for the service.”

Three men had three different thoughts for the same person. Only the last one, however, who had a positive thought, was benefitted, whereas the other two were spiritually harmed.”

Father Paisios always insisted that when one of our brothers has a negative thought, we must try kindly and humbly to correct it. It is our duty to do so. Today, many people—unfortunately including some of our spiritual fathers—instead of trying to correct falsified thoughts, either consent to them or even distort the positive ones. I will give you an example so you can understand the way they function.

Suppose a young man says to his spiritual father: “A friend of mine did this and that to me.”

And thus, he starts telling him his negative thoughts about his friend. His spiritual father, instead of trying to change his thoughts and make him love his friend again, views his problem from a social point of view, and wishing to be nice, says to him:

“Since you know what kind of person your friend is, do not pay attention to him. Just ignore him.”

The young man may superficially feel better after listening to the words of his spiritual father, but his negative predisposition towards his friend is still inside him.

Now, when his friend goes to the same spiritual father to tell him the same things, the spiritual father faces the problem in the same way. He once again regards the problem from a social point of view and calms him down. He lets him, however, keep inside him the negative thoughts he has for his friend.

This way, the Elder said, I can even please the devil if I wish to. You will now see what happens next, since divine justice exists in our lives.

At some point, the two friends, who still have negative thoughts inside them, meet and begin accusing each other: “You dare this and that... I talked to my spiritual father and he also thinks the same way of you.” Eventually, they discover that what their common spiritual father tried to do was just to be nice to them. As a result, they end up losing their

trust and respect for him. The correct way of dealing with similar cases is the following, which I also apply.

A married man came to me to discuss the problems he was facing with his wife and how her behavior has affected his thoughts. I immediately started finding excuses for his wife's behavior. In the end, I told him that he should glorify God for the wife He gave him, and he is the one responsible for destroying their loving relationship. I made him question his behavior and love his wife again, by convincing him that he is in the wrong and that he should get rid of all his negative thoughts. I did exactly the same thing with his wife, when she came to see me. I also scolded her, so both of them got rid of their negative thoughts and ended up loving each other again. Moreover, she also understood why I scolded them, as they realize that my only aim was to bring them back together.

Thoughts are like airplanes flying in the air. If you ignore them, there is no problem. If you pay attention to them, you create an airport inside you and permit them to land!

Once, a young man visited the Elder for advice. Being simple-hearted, however, he couldn't restrain from listening to negative thoughts. These thoughts were acting as an obstacle to every good work he was trying to accomplish. Father Paisios, due to his discretion, realized that his negative thoughts were the cause of his problem, and told him the following:

There was a man who used to say: “If I get married and have children, and my children are boys and there is a war, they will have to join the army and, finally, they will get killed. So, there is no reason for me to get married.”

The, the Elder turns to him and says: “Isn't that a silly thought?”

“Yes,” the young man replied.

The Elder went on: “Be careful, because you are doing the same thing. Bear in mind that you will never achieve anything good, if you think and act this way.”

The Prayer of a Person Suffering from Distraction, Inattention, & Joylessness in Prayer

O Lord, gather my scattered mind and cleanse my frozen heart, giving me repentance, as Thou didst to Peter, sighs as Thou didst to the Publican, and tears as Thou didst to the sinful woman, that with a great voice I may cry out to Thee: O God, save me, as Thou alone art compassionate and the Lover of man.

Request for the Gift of Prayer

O Lord, teach me sincerely to pray to Thee with attention and love, without which prayer is not heard. Let my prayer not be slipshod unto sin for me! O God, Holy Spirit, grant me a spirit of prayer.

Prayer for Deliverance from Temptation of St. Symeon the New Theologian

O Master and Lord, allow not against me temptation or sorrow or sickness greater than my strength, but deliver me from them or give me strength to bear them with thanksgiving.

On Protestantism Fr. Mateja Matejic

In view of the fact that Protestantism has a large number of different groups, each having its own set of beliefs and no unity of faith, it is rather difficult to compare Orthodoxy to Protestantism.

From the beginning of the 16th century when it came to existence, until the present day, Protestantism as represented a religious, social, and cultural factor which has had a significant impact on the history of the world. The history of Christianity is incomplete without consideration being given to Protestantism. Its influence on the culture of the United States is quite obvious. In our daily life, we Orthodox in this country have frequent contacts with Protestants. We could not have failed to notice that there are some sincere and devoted Christians among them. We most likely have noticed their missionary zeal, philanthropic endeavors, quests for knowledge, love of freedom, ability to organize, and quite liberal religious tolerance. However, while being impressed by the qualities displayed by individual Protestants, we owe to ourselves to consider also the dogmatic position of Protestantism as such in order to be able to say a meaningful yes or no to Protestantism from the point of view of authentic Christianity.

The first question we must ask is: what is Protestantism? Henry van Dusen, a Protestant himself defines Protestantism as:

... the branch of Christianity which sprang up in the sixteenth century in the attempt to recover original, authentic Christian faith and life by purging the Church of the West in that day of its worst perversions, abuses, and excesses.

On the basis of this definition, yet without asserting or questioning its correctness, we may rightly conclude that Protestantism is not the original form of Christianity: It did not exist until the sixteenth century. It emerged as an opposition to abuses practiced in the Western, i.e., Roman Catholic Church.

The latter conclusion enables us to further realize that Protestantism is a progeny of Roman Catholicism, rather than of Christianity, as such. The intent of Protestant Reformation was rather noble, yet the failure of Protestantism to realize that goal has to be admitted. We regret to say, but, historically and dogmatically, Protestantism is not the road to authentic Christianity—but a road leading away from it.

One must also point out that Dusen's definition of Protestantism refers to it in terms of a monolithic, homogeneous religious entity, which, in fact, it is not.

Protestantism comprises a multitude of different and, in some case, mutually exclusive religious views, ideas, precepts, practices, and groups.

Some of the Protestant denominations emerged at the beginning of the sixteenth century, others came into existence much later. Some are of quite recent origin. The process of dissolution of the formerly integral, smaller, or larger, Protestant groups is an ongoing process, and new sects continue to emerge at an almost alarming rate.

From its inception, Protestantism has been a pluralistic and heterogeneous institution. Various branches of Protestantism, if we may use this terminology, were established at different times and by different religious leaders. Thus, for example, almost simultaneously—yet independently from Martin Luther, the founder of Lutheranism and Protestantism—other former Roman Catholics, (e.g. Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox), rebelled against the Roman Catholic Church and established their own types of Protestantism.

The disunity and heterogeneity of contemporary Protestantism, now consisting of several hundred sects and factions, is so evident that it does not need to be illustrated with specific examples. However, despite that disunity and heterogeneity, there are some views, practices, and tendencies common to at least a majority of Protestants, if not to all. For this reason, some comparison between Orthodoxy and certain Protestant beliefs, more or less common to a majority of Protestants, may be made.

Originally, Protestantism was conceived not only to be against something, to protest, but also to stand for something (*pro* = for; *testare* = to witness, to profess, to proclaim). In its positive and affirmative aspect, Protestantism was meant to be a courageous demand for the indispensable moral regeneration and spiritual rejuvenation of the Roman Catholic Church. At the same time, it was conceived as a much needed and fully justified protest against the spiritual decline and moral degeneration of the Roman Catholic Church. Had Protestantism accomplished its initial intent and purpose, had it been *pro* (for) an integral reform and against the widespread corruption within the Roman Catholic Church, it would have been a religious movement most beneficial for all of Christianity. Regrettably, in actuality, almost from its very beginning, Protestantism ceased to be a reformation of the Roman Catholic Church and became a denial of the church as such. *In Orthodoxy: Courage to Be Different--Strength to Remain the Same*

Upcoming Events 2023

13-15 October Regional Young Adult Gathering
15 October: 2:00 p.m. Oktoberfest
28 October: 10:00 a.m. Charpie Baptism
31 October: 6:00 p.m. All Saints Party
11 November 10:00 a.m. Adult Baptisms
12 November: Parish Thanksgiving Meal

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!