

THE ORTHODOX SURVIVAL COURSE

Lecture one: The Orthodox Worldview

I. Why is this important?

- I. Today it is more important to develop an Orthodox worldview than in past times.
 - a. Our society does not live in harmony with our faith.
 - b. Daily life is not permeated with Orthodox life.
 - c. Orthodoxy is an island surrounded by a world with opposite principles.
- II. We must have awareness and learn to deal with matters of our age in an Orthodox manner.
 - a. In order to survive today and not be crippled spiritually by this world, we need to develop our outlook so we are not swept away with the times.
 - b. We have to be aware of the demands the world makes on us and be able to deal with these demands in a holistic manner.
- III. We must be guarded, as our faith is attacked in a clandestine manner.
 - a. To survive our times with our faith intact

II. Contemporary Life

- I. Our life is in complete absurdity compared to life 100-150 years ago.
 - a. We live a spoiled and pampered life from the time we are born.
 - b. Perpetual adolescence and the want for “grown up toys.”
- II. Self-worship and fascination with oneself.
 - a. Lack of inner development: leaving a person unable to come to serious terms both with himself and the world around him
 - b. The religious search becomes a search for abnormal states and feelings, many times resulting in mind control and the obsession with artificial experiences.
- III. Totalitarian demands on the soul.
 - a. All aspects of life is permeated with the “spirit of the times” and one must recognize that it is virtually impossible to escape it.
 - b. Music, billboards, television, etc. which dictate modern values, tastes, etc.
 - c. Universal temptation is openly hostile towards a serious spiritual life.
 - d. We must recognize that the concept of the “gulag” and what we are experiencing today is the same: to annihilate the Christian ethos and spirit.
 - i. Seduction of the mind
 - ii. To the world, our ideology must be eliminated: it cannot except Christ.

The Spiritual Life in Context of Contemporary Reality

- I. In these modern circumstances is where we begin.
- II. Two false approaches:
 - a. "Serving two masters":
 - i. An attempt to go along with the times, not recognizing the devastating spiritual consequences.
 - ii. This road is destructive and those on it are either dead or dying.
 - b. "Ultra-Orthodoxy":
 - i. Learning about Orthodoxy, but not having it in the heart
 - ii. This road neglects a realistic approach and falls into the same trap of "self-worship."

Gaining Awareness

- I. We are in this world and must "face it and its temptations squarely and realistically."
 - a. We must know what is influencing us and how to fight back against it with an Orthodox approach.
- II. We have to become acquainted with the best products of secular culture.
 - a. "Therefore, in our battle against the spirit of this world, we can use the best things the world has to offer in order to go beyond them; everything good in the world, if we are only wise enough to see it, points to God, and to Orthodoxy, and we have to make use of it." -Fr Seraphim Rose

An Orthodox Worldview

- I. We will not survive if we just have knowledge on narrow church subjects, but we need to view the world through our Orthodoxy and recognize how deep our Orthodoxy actually is.
- II. "One is Orthodox all the time every day, in every situation of life, or one is not really Orthodox at all. Our Orthodoxy is revealed not just in our strictly religious views, but in everything we do and say. Most of us are very unaware of the Christian, religious responsibility we have for the seemingly secular part of our lives. The person with a truly Orthodox world-view lives every part of his life as Orthodox." -Fr Seraphim Rose
- III. How to nourish this worldview in our daily life:
 - a. To be in constant contact with the Church and her way of life.
 - b. We must have the correct attitude towards spiritual nourishment.
 - i. Must be down to earth.
 - ii. Cannot be Self-centered, but deep
 - iii. Loving and forgiving

- iv. Our disposition must be innocent, not high in the clouds of sophistry or being “professional”
- c. We cannot make this world our home and should feel uncomfortable living in it.

Recognizing the Signs of the Times

- I. The abnormality of the world: Never has there been the acceptance of such weird and abnormal behavior as we see today.
- II. Wars and rumors of wars: The increasing hostility and power of destruction.
- III. Widespread natural disasters: Disease, Tsunamis, etc.
- IV. Increasing centralization of information and power over the individual: The current mining of every person’s data, location, preferences, etc. and the increasing obligations one must meet in order to participate in society.
- V. Multiplication of false Christs and false Antichrists: Those who show forth “signs and wonders,” attracting mass followings.
- VI. Obsession with signs and wonders: Obsession with alien-life forms, spirits, and extraordinary experiences.

“The Apocalypse is Now”

- I. Christ is calling us and we must heed the Christian call.
- II. We cannot be frightened, but must be aware.
 - a. “In these last days, when the breath of the Antichrist pollutes land and sea and every breath of life, God fans the activity of noetic prayer in the bosom and heart of the Church like a refreshing dew of grace, like the breeze heard by the Prophet Elias (3 Kings 19:12), as an antidote for the health and salvation of soul and body in the days that are upon us and those to come.” -Elder Ephraim of Arizona
 - b. “The signs of the times are everywhere all around us, yet hardly anyone wants to see it. The end is soon approaching and anyone who has not found love will be swept away by the deluge. The door to the Ark is not yet shut, there is still mercy left for us. We must take every moment left as an opportunity to move closer to Christ. Don’t waste time by unnecessarily obsessing and arguing with hard-headed people over the signs of the times. Spend your time plowing the field so you can find the treasure. Only those who have found the treasure will be saved. Don’t be like the foolish virgins, be sure that you aren’t caught at midnight without oil in your lamp... In the end times a man will be saved by love, humbleness and kindness. Kindness will open the gates of heaven; humbleness will lead him into heaven; a man whose heart is filled with love will see God.” -St Gabriel of Georgia.

