

THE ORTHODOX SURVIVAL COURSE

Lecture Seven: Ecumenism

“The supreme happiness of man is the appearance of God in the flesh; however the highest calamity of man is also his apostasy from that same God and his return into the service of Satan.” -St Nikolai Velimirovich

Self-Worship

- I. All centuries give birth to one another and modern man pays the “debt” of his ancestors.
- II. The last three centuries have seen a drastic departure from Christ, and Western man forsakes his baptismal vows.
- III. The debt we pay is that we have lost Christ and His Church.
- IV. Even Christian sectarians today inherit the haughtiness of their forefathers and fall into disastrous consequences because of the lot they have been given.
 - a. All of the apostasy unfolding finds its origins on Papism, which is the mother of European humanism and the downfall of modern society.
 - b. The lie comes in the form of man on the pope’s throne as universal ruler.
- V. Everything is an attack on Christ and the devil has employed the method of adulteration.
 - a. Christ has no significance (“Jesus is just a remarkable man—not the God-man”)
 - b. If the devil cannot get someone to deny Christ’s divinity, he attacks them on an ecclesiastic plane (“The Orthodox Church is remarkable, but it is not divine.”)
- VI. Ecumenism is the fruit of this apostasy and it has at its heart humanistic ideology.
 - a. “Ecumenism, is the common name for the pseudo-Christianity of the pseudo-Churches of Western Europe. Within it is the heart of European humanism, with Papism as its head.” -St Justin Popovic

Origins of Modern Ecumenismⁱ

- I. Primer of the modern ecclesiological spirit:
 - a. Protestant missionary movement of the 19th c.
 - i. Great Awakenings and the “World Missionary Conferences”
 - b. Setting the stage for the “Ecumenical Century”:
 - i. Protestantism came out of western isolation
 - ii. Missionary efforts went hand in hand with colonial and economic expansion.
- II. The “Invisible Church” and raising an ecumenical generation
 - a. Evangelical Alliance
 - i. Aim at making an “invisible church visible.”
 - ii. “If theologies divide, experience could unite.”
 - b. YMCA and the Student Christian Movements
- III. Edinburg 1910: International Missionary Conference

ⁱ Notes taken from Archpriest Peter Heers, “The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism”

- a. Gathering of a multiple protestant confessions
 - b. Gave birth to the World Council of Churches (WCC)
 - c. Questions of doctrine were off limits, and dialogue as about mission and cooperation.
- IV. Encyclical of 1920 and Orthodox Participation
- a. Widening the definition of the Church by the words: “Unto Churches of Christ everywhere...”
 - b. International Missionary Conference in 1920 the Orthodox proposed an alliance in missionary endeavors.
 - c. Changed the definition of the Church itself within the Patriarchate.
- V. The WCC fails at “unity in experience” and departs from its Christian mission.
- a. Visible attempt at religious pluralism, a precursor of Anti-Christ

Discerning the Spiritsⁱⁱ

- I. What is the Church?
- a. The body of Christ, the God-man, the Ark of Salvation
 - i. “Salvation is wrought in the Church, and if there is a denial of the Church, there is a denial of the God-man.”
 - b. “The devil in every way to sway the Church from her Theanthropic identity.” This is the root of every heresy.
- II. Modern Ecumenism is a type of Arianism, but on an ecclesiological level—the lie that the Church is not divine.
- III. The demonic method at work in ecumenism today (this methodology has been employed by the devil since the fall of man):
- a. First stage: Co-existence
 - i. The lie comes in disguise, like the form of the snake in the garden to draw near to us.
 - ii. To protect ourselves, we must respect the boundaries of the Church, and not conform to this world or become a secularized faith.
 - b. Second stage: Dialogue
 - i. There are two types of dialogue, one that is blessed by the Fathers and one that is not:
 - 1. For clarification: This is biblical and apostolic. It comes from a disposition to learn from the Lord. This is blessed and will bear fruit.
 - 2. To investigate: This is not coming as a seeker, but “on equal terms.” A “let’s find a third way of truth and commonality” together. This does not usually end in a blessing, but can even lead to danger and adulteration.
 - ii. A dialogue that is non-repentant and done without any cost for the heterodox is shallow and is not within the true missionary spirit of the Church.
 - 1. The world might perceive this as inhospitable or intolerant, but it is actually a disservice to the heterodox and spiritually harmful.

ⁱⁱ Notes taken from Archpriest Peter Heers, “Demonic Method” PDF

- c. Third Stage: Infiltration
 - i. Penetrating the sacred trust of man
 - ii. Fighting the Church from within
 - iii. A corruption of Orthodox phronema (mindset).
 - d. Fourth Stage: Subversion
 - i. When the Church ceases to return the “heterodox, but that we, the Orthodox ourselves identify with the heterodox, consider them within the mystery of the Church, or even commune with them, whether in prayer or the Eucharist.”
- IV. As a missionary Church, we desire to be truly ecumenical and encompass the whole world, but it must be done with the integrity of the Church and its Bridegroom.

Dialogue of Love or Dialogue of Truth?

- I. The contemporary dialogue of “brotherly love” is an empty one
- II. A dialogue of love must be genuine, therefore it must be rooted in truth and not falsehood.
- III. How do we know what is Truth and what are the parameters of the Church?
 - a. Grace first works outside, but in the Church now works inside.
 - b. True union with the Church through repentance and conversion, and a complete transformation in baptism.
- IV. What is true Ecumenism in a patristic sense?
 - a. Separation from the Church is a separation from Christ, and therefore a separation from grace and truth, therefore Orthodox Christians must live in Christ to bring these things to the world.
 - b. To be ecumenical means to live our faith boldly, so that while the world crumbles, we keep a firm foundation in the life of Christ.
 - c. To love holiness and otherworldliness over inconsequential cares in life
 - d. We must keep our flavor: “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matt 5:13).