



230. July 14/27, 1876 St. Nikodemus the Hagiorite

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Alexey,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Barbara arrived safely with the icon and relics and your /letter, for all of which many thanks. We look forward to the accounts of your pilgrimage, which should be a great inspiration to English-speaking Orthodox—it is indeed an easy thing simply to take for granted even the greatest treasures which are so close at hand. We see this in Russians and Greeks who possess such Patristic treasures which we just dream of seeing in English, and now in the English converts—who hopefully now will be roused to greater fervor for their own Orthodox Saints.

We have not heard anything from England in several weeks. Fr. John Marks wrote us a good letter inquiring if Fr. Panteleimon and fanaticism were really an accurate expression of the Synod outlook (one of the Guildford baptizees is pestering him with “apocalyptic warnings” about his damnation if he dies outside the Synod, etc.); and we replied, telling him no. (Did you meet him?) Andrew sent us a copy of Archbishop Nikodem’s epistle to him asking for his repentance. The hand of Fr. Panteleimon seems evident in this incident, and Archbishop Nikodem seems to have been placed in the unfortunate “political” situation of having to accept as his “defender” someone with whose views I really doubt he is in full accord. However, in that situation nothing further is possible for the good unless Andrew does what the Archbishop wants—ask forgiveness of the clergy whom he has “offended.” We strongly urged Andrew to do this, in written form, emphasizing to him that this does not mean changing his opinions about “rebaptism,” but only apologizing for any crudeness, etc., which he may have shown (which, judging from his letters to us, he probably has shown!) We haven’t heard further from him yet.

As for our Metr. Philaret issue: the little response so far has been mostly favorable. The enclosed letter was written before Archimandrite Cyprian saw the issue, but I think he would approve of our comments—save, perhaps, for the implied fact that to some extent our Church is still in actual communion with Constantinople. Fr. Theodoritos of Mt. Athos (who has never told us himself of his “jurisdictional problems”) wrote in approval of the issue, only adding that he is sorry that we are “still in communion with Demetrios.”

Frs. Panteleimon and Nektas are conspicuously silent, though undoubtedly the phone lines are buzzing! But we did hear from two Greek-American priests, Frs. Anthony Gavalas and Panagiotis Carras—their letters were very sincere and without bad feeling, but they are obviously extremely naive about “what the Synod believes,” and they simply have no idea that there can be any such



thing as a “temptation on the right side.” We have tried to prepare them a little for the shock ahead of them when they discover how “liberal” our bishops are in most places. In general there seems to be not much awareness of this problem we are raising, but the letter from Archimandrite Cyprian (you can keep the copy) persuades us more than ever that it is a very deep and important one.

Out of all this we see the necessity for the formulation of a sound “moderate” stand that will emphasize true Orthodoxy, firmly oppose ecumenism and modernism, but not go overboard in “defining” such things as the presence or absence of grace, or practicing “rebaptism” of those already Orthodox. (We accept that in some cases this might be allowable with the bishop’s approval—but beyond a few isolated cases this practice itself introduces a fanatical tone and a spirit of discord and distrust in the Church. This will be extremely difficult to do, especially with the presence among us of a politically-powerful “fanatic”; but with God’s help and the prayers of our patron saints we will try our best to do our little bit. We have little hope that our bishops (in view of the passions it would arouse in some quarters) will give us some “simple solution” to work with—such as, especially in view of the “Thyateira Confession,” announcing that we will have no communion with Constantinople whatever, but will also not rebaptize those who come to us from them. For us personally there is no problem: in view of the ever-increasing apostasy and bearing in mind especially Vladika Averky’s strong words on the subject, we ourselves have no communion with non-Synod jurisdictions, but without any animosity or demonstrations and without judging those bishops who continue to allow such communion. This allows us freedom to be occupied and inspired by non-polemical matters, without which church life becomes intolerably stifling. The more all of us can give spiritual food and inspiration, the better for everyone.

We look forward to seeing you. Our Vladika John issue in English is still far from finished— pray for us.

With love in Christ,
Seraphim, monk