



## 258. Jan. 20/Feb. 2, 1979 St. Euthymius the Great

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Fr. Ioannikios,

Christ is in our midst!

Thank you for your letters. Regarding Fr. Lev: your letter is a study in restraint in the face of attacks which, from what we have seen of them, are simply outrageous. Until about a month ago, Fr. Lev had sent nothing whatever to us of all his letters on the subject of life after death, despite the fact that one of the letters (which we received from elsewhere) specifically said a copy was sent to us. The few letters of his we have seen strike us as simply immature struttings based on an obvious failure to have studied the question well or read many of the basic texts he wants to attack. Then a month ago or so he sent us his one and only communication with us on the subject: a copy of a letter addressed to an unnamed priest (perhaps this was the letter you were answering?) wherein he has various unkind words about the “Platina doctrine of the soul,” the un-Orthodoxy of Jordanville publications, and the “ghastly” teaching of Archbishop John Maximovitch on life after death. Such things are inexcusable; they reveal not a love of truth or theology, but intellectual adventurism in search of new “victories” over anyone who disagrees with his whims. The recent Tlingit Heralds also, with their new “victories” over the Shroud of Turin, “after-death” experiences, etc., are just cheap and totally unobjective and unfair. How did he get the reputation of a “theologian”?!

Incidentally, if Fr. Lev has made any specific references to Egyptian sources concerning life after death, I’d be interested in seeing them, as a student of the question. The after-life “gates” and “mansions” of the Egyptian Book of the Dead certainly have nothing remotely to do with the Orthodox teaching, and if he is looking for “influence” on the toll-houses from there, he is a million miles off. It seems natural to suppose that the image of the toll-houses comes from nothing more complex than Roman civil law; but no one except Fr. Lev seems to mistake the image for the reality. The qualification that the toll-houses are not “dogma” is, it seems to me, unnecessary and rather dangerous; we believe and accept and hand down ourselves, as a full part of our Holy Orthodoxy, much that is not “dogma”: the sign of the Cross, the way of performing the Mysteries, holy water, prospophora, the services of the Trebnik, our love for the Saints, etc. etc.—but if someone begins to take them away from us, or undermine the foundations for our acceptance of them, he is helping to destroy our faith as surely as one who challenges basic dogmas. This dissatisfaction with the way Orthodoxy has been handed down to us, this “reformism on the right,” so to speak—seems very unhealthy to us.

Well, enough thoughts on an unpleasant subject. We ourselves don’t plan to answer any attacks



Fr. Lev may throw in the air around us; but of course if he would deign to write us personally and tell us of his disagreements we would try to write a polite reply. Our last attempts to communicate with him resulted in emotional replies which (in one case) even Fr. Neketas thought was too much.

A more pleasant subject: we are pleased with your tape-project on Vladika Averky's Gospels and will stop ours where we are (something like 60 or 70 pages). Actually, we had specifically in mind having something in English by the time our Br. Thomas is ready for that class, and your tapes will do that nicely. I have started the Apostol and will continue that. Fr. Michael's Dogmatic Theology, God willing, is to be out by this summer, if I can get all the transcripts corrected by then (the task I find hardest and slowest). Pray for this—the book is needed and overdue.

Thomas Delp has had rather a miraculous recovery, after receiving Unction on his deathbed; but spiritually, alas, he seems as bad as ever. He is in full possession of his faculties, but is an utter slave to his own passionate inclinations and self-justification. He is in a rest home in Redding now and we see him occasionally, but he is very displeased with our attempts to shake him out of his sleep of sin. He is an alcoholic, and quotes St. Paul on "wine for the stomachs sake" to justify it; and for the sake of a worse passion he even disagrees with the Orthodox teaching on sexual morality. We did get to meet his mother for the first time because of all this; she is a pious Roman Catholic, and attended an Orthodox Liturgy for the first time when Fr. Herman served in Medford (where Thomas was in the hospital). She has given up on him and doesn't want him back in Florida. His future is grim if there is no change in his will; this whole trial was obviously sent him to wake him up, but up to now he resists God's call.

Please pray for us. We're struggling to print a few more things while we still have freedom, which seems short the way things are going. May God grant even us fat geese to exercise a little even if, alas, we just can't fly any more!

With love in Christ,  
Unworthy Hieromonk Seraphim