



61st Year

August 25, 2013

Pamphlet #34 (3143)

THE EDIFICE OF THE CHURCH

The Apostle Paul tells us epigrammatically that “no one is able to place another foundation except the one which is laid, who is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). No one, neither angel, nor human is able to place another foundation and to replace the unique foundation of the Church, who is Christ.

First, because He founded the salvation of humans with His divine birth, the blood of His sacrifice upon the Cross and His lifegiving Resurrection. Secondly, because He sent the Holy Spirit which comprises the whole institution of the Church. And third, as Son of the living God, eternal and unending, He has secured the eternal duration of the Church. The Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament referring to the wisdom of God, characteristically writes: “before the age he founded me” (8:23).

We should build upon the foundation

From the moment we have understood which is the foundation of the Church, in other words, Christ, we should be careful how we will build upon the foundation of Christ. The basic drive of our effort must be the unity of the body of the Church. Whatever strays from this goal becomes a schism and heresy, it takes us away from salvation and does not add any progress to our spiritual life.

The Apostle Paul brings himself as an example, as a foundational thread, who leads us as to how we will become edifying: “as a wise architect I placed a foundation”. As a wise architect, responsible for the erection of the spiritual edifice, in other words, of the Church, he placed the foundation Christ, Christian faith, his teaching, his miracles, his life, his Gospel. Upon these we should also be moving.

The Apostle tells us that the members of the Church are “God’s colleagues”, “God’s cultivation”. And “God’s edifice”. In other words, even though the foundation of our salvation belongs on our Lord Jesus Christ, He is “the one who sews His seed”, we also ought to cooperate with our desires, our eagerness, our dispositions, but also with our will and desire so that we traverse the path of His commandments, to cultivate spiritual virtues, to chisel a Christian train of thought, an

ecclesiastical one in the area of the Church. This manner secures her unity and benefits us also who in the communion of grace, advance spiritually.

The spiritual materials of the edifice in Christ

When we build upon the foundation of the Church our spiritual life attention is needed to the materials we use. The Apostle Paul makes a distinction between the materials which have value and those which do not have value.

Gold and silver are precious metals, as are also precious stones (diamonds etc.) which endure in time and with these one makes precious objects.

Thus also with Christian virtues also: 1. The deep and tried faith like gold in a furnace and obedience to the will of God. 2. Patience and fortitude in trials which make the soul shine like silver. 3. The blessed meekness and the god-taught humility, the god-imitating purity, hope and love which scatter their dazzling spiritual luster among the members of the ecclesiastical community but also in the world. These spiritual "materials" contribute effectively to the building and making firm of the edifice of the body of the Church, to the unity of the members with Christ and to their spiritual fruit bearing.

The materials which destabilize the edifice in Christ

Saint Nikodemos the Haghiorite interpreting the words of the Apostle "whoever builds upon this foundation... wood, grass, reed" (1 Cor. 3:12), writes that intoxication, or laughter or unbridled amusements resemble piles of wood which the fire makes into ashes. The fleshly passions resemble the grass, which is completely burned up just as the lewd desire burns up the soul and the body. And avarice and greed resemble the reeds which do not resist the fire, but help it to spread even more. In other words, the sinful way of life destabilizes the members of the Church. Simultaneously they are made useless and vanish.

But also efforts which don't have only a moral character, but are called spiritual, spiritual currents, spiritual culture, which nevertheless are not focused on the spiritual foundation of faith, on Christ, the cornerstone of the Church, harm rather than help the body of the Church. Because they stray from the teaching and the tradition of the Church. They blur and place man's salvation in doubt.

And as is mentioned in the apostolic text such a deviation equals corruption, the tearing down of the temple of the soul which each believer builds in himself. He opposes the will of God because all believers are the temple of God, they have received the saving and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, who is God. Who breathes, engraces, dwells and acts in the edifice of the Church. So God will corrupt him who tries to corrupt the temple of God with his actions (1 Cor. 3:17). He will be led to corruption and death, both the physical, as well as the spiritual one. The gift of the grace of God will be taken away from within him and he will become a son of perdition with his own responsibility.

Archim. Ch. N.

