

So Much for Obedience

With Lack of Leadership, Fundamentalist Arrogance Leads to The Loss of Objective Thought.

by Mr. Steve Johnson

There is a website that has received attention because of the controversial statements made that denigrate and belittle the Ecumenical Patriarch. These statements are written by a Greek Orthodox Priest! The website is <http://www.OrthodoxWitness.org>. It is written and founded by a Greek Orthodox priest named Fr. Emmanuel Hatzidakis. He is now assigned as a chanter of the Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Tarpon Springs, Florida, in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA), under the Metropolis of Atlanta.

On June 15th 2014, Fr. Hatzidakis wrote and published an article entitled "Do All Religions Have the Same Heavenly Father?". This has surfaced on numerous Facebook posts that people are arguing about. The controversy stems from the following excerpt of the Patriarch's comments:

"We are all created by God and as such we are all brothers and sisters. We have the same heavenly Father, whatever we call him." Charlie interrupted the Patriarch: "All religions have the same heavenly Father?" "Of course," was the Patriarch's reply, adding: "God is but one, independently of the name we give him, Allah or Yahweh, and so on. God is one and we are his children."

Fr. Hatzidakis responded with *"It's not a matter of a name (God, Allah, Jehovah, Buddha, Supreme Being, the Power), so that it doesn't matter what we call Him, as long as we call upon Him. No. Not so! Our God is Christ: "This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:20-21). Outside of Christ every other "god" is an idol."* <http://www.orthodoxwitness.org/do-all-religions-have-the-same-heavenly-father/>

Fr. Hatzidakis continues with this provocative statement: *"Sorry, your All Holiness: this is the faith of the Orthodox Christian people, and one would expect our Patriarch to be a leader "who rightly teaches the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), not one who betrays it."*

There you have it. A Greek Orthodox Priest publishing insulting remarks about the Patriarch, and even calls him a betrayer of the Orthodox Christian Faith. What is worse is that no one has appeared to censure nor admonish him. With the apparent void in Hierarchical leadership in the GOA, and in the Metropolis of Atlanta, a priest is openly and unambiguously sowing seeds of contempt, if not slander, with impunity, under the guise of "the purity of the faith". We have seen this type before.

The fact of the matter is that Fr. Hatzidakis does not at all appear to be listening carefully to what the Patriarch said. Fr. Hatzidakis and his like-minded brethren, have confused this to mean that one religion is as good as another. The Patriarch never said that. The Ecumenical Patriarch was alluding to the innate image and likeness of God that everyone is created with. In this universal context that begins with the creation of man in the Book of Genesis, we are all indeed brothers and sisters. We all have the image and likeness of God. As to what religion (or non-religion) that one follows, they are all certainly NOT the same. The Patriarch never said they were all the same.

The arrogance of someone that thinks they are elite because of what they believe in is baffling. What is equally baffling is that our Metropolitans just sit quietly by while all manners of theological compromises are routinely made with impunity, by the fundamentalist movement. Here are a few that we typically see in the Ephraim camp: heresies like Aerial Tollhouses are routinely promoted as gospel;

manipulative teachings of “blind obedience” have been heard on many occasions; conjugal relations of husband and wife are only for procreation purposes. How have these issues been addressed by our Metropolitans in the GOA? They haven’t.

What do we stand for? If we don’t stand for something, we may fall for anything. It is no wonder why so many people have either adopted the fundamentalist teachings of Ephraim, or left the GOA for another jurisdiction or denomination. The others who remain, just stay in the background and don’t get involved. Who could blame them? For many of those who remain, it is quite probable that their days are numbered also because who wants to go to a Church that stands for nothing, or, is a free-for-all bastion of chaos?

Finally, this article is one of many that make one seem to think that OrthodoxWitness.org is yet another fundamentalist venue which spews arrogance and contempt. Here are some other titles: [The Fall of the Third Rome: Moscow Capitulates to Papism](#), [Is GOARCH’s “Praxis” Magazine Going New Age?](#), [Why the “Holy and Great Synod” of the Orthodox Church Should Not Convene](#), [What Should We Do If Our Bishop Is An Ecumenist?](#). The last article cited here is yet another document critical of the Ecumenical Patriarch as well.

Metropolitan Alexios where are you?

Fr. Hatzidakis and the fundamentalist adherents of the Ephraim ilk have forgotten how they emphasize “obedience”. They seem to have qualified it in a way they criticize others for – as is fitting for “their interpretation”. They have forgotten that scriptural passage in Hebrews where Saint Paul states in chapter 13 verse 7: *“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”* (KJV)

And in Hebrews chapter 13 verse 17: *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”* (KJV)

Imagine a Greek Orthodox Priest publishing that our Patriarch has betrayed the faith! Imagine that there are many lay people that now believe this – not only from Fr. Hatzidakis, but also because of the fundamentalist Ephraimite messages that have emerged with impunity over the years. Do any of our leaders care enough to address anything? Do any of our leaders care about our Patriarch?

So much for obedience.