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ORTHODOX EVANGELIST

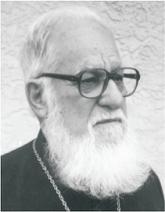
“Do the work of an evangelist” - 2 Tim 4:5



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Truth in an age of Confusion

By Archimandrite Fr. Eusebius Stephanou Th.D

Even though Father Eusebius is no longer with us, he left us a great treasure trove of writings. One of his writings which I wish to share is his teaching on **Jesus Christ The Whole Truth**.

We have had a number of people write us and expressed their desire that Father Stephanou's messages continue to be published in the Newsletters. It is a desire which I completely agree with. The following message is a compilation of his teachings on the subject.

Joseph Abbate / President

When we think of the Lord Jesus Christ, thoughts may arise of His healing ministry or His compassion which He had demonstrated here on earth. However, very few can fathom the role of being the personification of Truth. When before Pontius Pilate, Christ stated that “*everyone who is of the Truth hears my voice*” (John 18:37). It was not comprehended even by His disciples who were closest to Him, nor did the scribes and Pharisees recognize Jesus, even though they studied extensively in the scriptures.

Today, in an age of where multiple religions may be chosen from, it is confusing for one to decide. There are some which hold the belief that all religions hold an equal scale of truths and they wish to present the acceptance of all religions as equal to be a sign of peaceful coexistence and tolerance with one another. Yet, we are not

talking about the freedom to practice religion, we are talking about the matter of “Truth.” We know that all religions cannot be the Truth, even though some of them may have a hint or semblance of truth in some parts of them.

If you hold to the idea of equality of truth in all religions then Jesus Christ turns out to be just one among the founders of the world religions and one of mankind's historical sages, like Socrates, Mohammed or Gautama Siddhartha. Then Jesus really has no rightful claim on all men of all races. Then there are also other true religions apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Then there is more than one way to salvation.

But can man be truly happy with a philosophy and religion that is relative? Is it worth taking a chance with only one of the many different gods? Doesn't this kind of a person actually live in a kind of pantheon in which all the gods are to be respected and non-excluded? Isn't this a sort of modified polytheism, that is, worship of many gods? Relativism in religion is a kind of turning back to pagan polytheism. Isn't it a step backward, instead of forward in the knowledge of the whole truth about who God is and how we are related to Him?

Jesus Christ in His high-priestly prayer to His heavenly Father said: “*This is eternal life, that they should know Thee the only true God and Him Whom Thou has sent, Jesus Christ.*” When Jesus said, “*I am the Truth*”, He meant the whole Truth and not simply a fragment of the Truth. He didn't say, I am part of the Truth, and you can keep turning to other teachers and sages for other aspects of the Truth. He also wanted to tell us that, if there are any practices of Truth to be found at any source, they must be referred to Me, the fullness of Truth, because I am actually the fountain-spring of any fragment of Truth wherever it may be found.

If there is any truth to anything we are, we do, or we think, then Jesus is part of it, whether we are aware of it or not. But faith in Him is to recognize that in all things we see the reality of Jesus, whether in Church, or in the laboratory, or in the astronomical observatory, or in the college class room. Not to make this admission is the basic foolishness of unbelief.

A main reason for many of our social issues and godlessness in the academic world can be related back to our learning or rather lack of learning in our schools. The great philosopher and teacher Apostolos Makrakis proclaimed: “*Logic, being the science of the logical laws of cognition, is inseparable from every science, including philosophy itself, the queen and mistress of sciences. For neither can philosophy investigate philosophically without logic nor can any other science exist apart from the logical method by which the matter to be discerned by it is ascertained. Logic is therefore the common instrument of all sciences, not excepting even the supreme science of philosophy, and an*

indispensable element of every branch of science. If logic be renounced, philosophy and every other science must be renounced along with it." (The Logos and Holy Spirit in the unity of Christian Thought, Vol III p.19).

He also stated: *"Hence we may also define logic as the science of cognition according to right reason, the science of the laws and rules according to which the soul ought to carry on all its cognitive activities in order to possess itself of the truth and avoid error."* (p.17).

To be Christ-like in our thinking is to be Logos-like, Logical. To be Logical or Logos-like is to think correctly and accurately about all things: man, the world and God. St Athanasius the Great of the fourth century asks the question: *"How could men be logical if they had no knowledge of the Logos of the Father through whom they had received their very being?"* (On the Incarnation of the Logos of God, II).

Jesus is the only Being that is really all Truth and all Logos, that is, reason and sensibleness. Everything makes sense when you know Jesus. How can it be differently, since the universe and everything in it was made "through Him", as the Logos, Rationality, and Intelligence of God.

Without Jesus, not only was nothing made, that was made, but nothing can make sense. Only ignorance, confusion, and despair remain to torture man's soul when Jesus is left out of our lives, out of our thinking, and our deciding.

If the world was "made through Him", as the Bible teaches, then it can

be understood only "through Him." If there is anything defective with the world, then it can be restored only "through Him", through the Logos, through Jesus.

Man was made through the Logos Jesus and he's got to be remade through the same Jesus. He's sent back to the Maker to be repaired, because man is covered by a warranty and God honors His warranty so long as man takes the effort of doing his part and taking advantage of it.

It is in Religion that Jesus remakes or redeems sinful and broken man. But it is in the field of Knowledge and Science that Jesus is both the Cosmic Logos and the meaning of man and his outside world. At the Altar He is the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. In the university He is Master, Tutor, and Professor. *"Let no one be called professor, for there is one professor, Christ"*, the Bible tells us. Only when the day comes that universities will inscribe this over their portals will the world be assured of a Christian civilization.

There can be no knowledge of the True God without knowing who His True and Authentic Image is Jesus is the Eternal and Perfect Image of the Eternal and Perfect God. He not only reveals to us the True God, but also relates us to Him and to the created world. He makes both God and the world meaningful and relevant, because man through the Logos Jesus becomes meaningfully related to both God and the world about him.

Remember that when Jesus had been crucified, that by order of Pilate, the Romans placed a sign of declaration on the cross. It read: **"Jesus, King of the Jews."** What is important to note is the fact that it was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. This was so everyone in the area could read it, and also know that Jesus was King of all the known world at that time. Jesus fulfilled not only Biblical prophecy, but fulfilled His imminent

role of all three peoples and cultures.

The Jews brought the world God's word through the Holy Scriptures. The Greeks brought the world the sciences and academic thought, and the Romans brought the institution of Law which is the model of law to the world today. Jesus Christ is therefore the Truth of all three institutions. **He is the King and Truth of Religion, Science and Law.**

To practice religion without the Absolute Truth will only lead down the road to religious error and the possibility of losing one's very salvation. Studying the Sciences without Absolute Truth will lead to errors in the scientific world and everything in which science, mathematics and philosophy is used to create and sustain. The institution of Law without Absolute Truth will only lead to unjust laws or a complete lack of law which would result in total anarchy in society.

The fullness of Christ as the Lamb of God and the Bread of Life is to be found only in the Orthodox Church. This holds true also as regards Christ as the Cosmic Logos and as the principle of Logic and Philosophy. In Orthodoxy Christ is not only the Religious Truth; He is also the Cosmic and Epistemological Truth; He is the Truth in each of its aspects; He is the integrating and synthetic principle whereby the universe is to be viewed.

Yet, it is not enough to only hold the true beliefs in our rich theology and history. It must be proclaimed and practiced. We are not recommended by our Lord to be keepers of the faith, we are commanded to be doers as well. *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do men light a candle and hide it under a bushel, but places it on a candlestick, so it gives light to the whole house. Let your light so shine so before men that others will see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:14-16).

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Journey

by V. Rev. David Fontes, Psy.D.

I was brought up Roman Catholic and had never been to another Christian church before, but this day was different. It was Sunday morning when I rode my red cruiser bike to the address given to me by a Christian I met. His name was Chad. The name of the church he was inviting me to attend was Trinity Tabernacle. The first thing I noticed was that the building wasn't a church building at all, but an *Odd Fellows Hall*. For a moment I thought I got the address wrong and was ready to go back to my dorm room, but I had enough courage and interest to get off my bike and walk in the front door where I was greeted by a flight of stairs leading to the second floor. I heard people singing in the main hall at the top of the stairs.

When I walked through the door into the Odd Fellows Hall I thought to myself that the building was correctly named, for I saw about fifty people at the front of the room doing different things. Many of the people had their hands raised, or were kneeling while singing something I couldn't make out. I sat in one of the metal chairs with some other people wondering what I had gotten myself into!

I'd never seen a group of church people praising God in that manner. I went to the farthest left side that I could go and I knelt down. I could hear more clearly what the people at the front of the church were saying. They were indeed praising Jesus (God) in English, but also in other languages I didn't understand. There was an intense joy I felt deep inside. I quietly prayed, "God, I don't understand these people, but whatever they have I want." After the praying stopped, I went back to my chair and listened to the minister preach his sermon. But, I am getting ahead of myself, and need to give

some background information about my journey.

I was born into a Roman Catholic family in 1953, was baptized as an infant and chrismated in my elementary years. I don't remember what grade I was in. I do remember that when the bishop laid his hands on my head, I felt as though time stopped for a moment. I think that is the best way to describe it. I believe I had my first communion when I was eight years old. My parents made sure I went to religious education in my elementary and junior high years. In my high school years I played the organ at church services with the choir. That lasted for a couple of years until my dad got upset at the pastor for coming over to our home to tell my parents they needed to donate more money. We suddenly stopped attending church.

It was the late '60s with the hippies and liberation movements of all kinds. I wasn't a hippy but did get involved in yoga practice. I was on the varsity tennis team in high school, president of the chess club, and I enjoyed making movies with my friends. I was creative and liked to draw.

In my senior year at high school, I started thinking about Jesus as the best person to follow in my life. I was accepted at the University of California at Davis for 1971. Once, while I was watching my yoga program on T.V., the instructor said to find an object and focus my attention on it. I found a small card with a picture of Jesus on it, so I focused my attention on Him. I can see now that I was slowly thinking more and more about Jesus.

The next special thing that happened that summer before I began college was that my family was watching a Billy Graham

crusade on T.V., and at the end of the program Billy made an invitation to let Jesus be the Lord of my life. He asked us to bow our heads and pray with him. I was too shy to do so in front of my parents, so I didn't, but his words were powerful. He wasn't inhibited in speaking what he believed, and that impressed me.

I kept running into one of these Jesus People almost every day that week. He would greet me "Hi brother," which was strange to me. One of them invited me that Friday night of Orientation Week to come to a *Jesus Party* at a *Trinity House* in downtown Davis. He gave me the address. Should I go? I built up the courage and said I would come.

It was Friday night and I rode my bike to Trinity House. I saw about 35 young people outside the house. I entered the house as people greeted me. The *party* started as we all sat on the floor and began to sing Christian songs as some of the people played their guitars and recorders. There was such joy on the faces of the students as they clapped and sang the songs. Then a few of the participants stood up and told their testimony of how *they* came to Jesus, for Him to be their Lord and Savior. Then one of the young men stood up and shared about his love for Jesus, and at the end of this *sermon* he asked if anyone wanted to receive Jesus Christ tonight as Lord. Some raised their hands, but I didn't. They ended with a prayer, then had refreshments and fellowship.

At that meeting I met a fellow college student, Chad, who spoke to me for a while and ended by inviting me to church that Sunday. He gave me the address to Odd Fellows Hall. As I was leaving, another young man, Cliff, put his hand on my shoulder and said that he was going to pray for me. That touched me

very deeply! I pondered what I had experienced at Trinity House on my bike ride back to my dorm room. I felt the enthusiasm of the group and it excited me. Then on Sunday morning, October 3, 1971, I rode my bike to *Odd Fellows Hall!*

Now I will pick up where I left off at the beginning of my story. Chad talked with me for a while after the service about coming over the next day to my dorm room. I said yes. Tomorrow was the first day of class.

It was Monday, October 4, 1971, that Chad came over and talked to me about Jesus and committing my life to Him. He left my dorm room and I went to my classes which included Chemistry IA (a tough class). That night I started to study my Chemistry book, but I couldn't concentrate. It was about 10pm in the evening when I heard the words coming from my thoughts, "Let it be tonight." The words kept repeating themselves, getting louder and stronger in my head. Where do I pray? In my dorm room my roommate could just pop in, and that would be embarrassing. I remembered visiting a Roman Catholic Church earlier, so I got on my bike and rode to the church which was only a few blocks away.

I opened the front door of the church and was a bit surprised to find that all the furniture was gone. Maybe they had cleaned the carpet and altar area. All the lights were off and it was dark. I walked up to where the altar would have been and knelt down. I immediately began to cry, deeply sobbing. I am not a crier but I was crying now. I was asking God to forgive me for my sins and to take my life totally. I must have been in deep prayer because when I became aware of the room around me a half hour later, I found myself on my *feet* with my hands over my head thanking God.

I felt a huge weight lifted off my back. It was as if I had been carrying a cumbersome sack of rocks and the entire sack fell to the floor. I didn't know I'd been carrying so much emotional weight until it was gone. I

guess I just got used to it over the years. A peace filled my heart like I had never experienced before. You could have had a weapon pointed at my belly and I wouldn't have flinched a bit. My entire body was tingling. After praising God for a few more moments I turned around and started walking out of the church. I sensed that someone was in the building to my left but I never turned my head to see who it was. He probably wondered if I was a student praying. My whole body was still tingling as I rode back home. I called Chad, who was excited for me and came over again to my dorm room the next day.

I was told by Chad that I now needed to get water baptized. On Wednesday night I rode over to a house which had a doughboy pool in the back yard. When it was my turn to be baptized, I got into the pool with Cliff and Ron who were going to do the baptizing. Cliff said to me if I feel like saying something after I was baptized, to do so. After they had immersed me three times and lifted me from the water, I felt a very strong urge to say something, but I didn't.

I felt a new energy and power in my life to share the gospel with anyone I met. When Chad came over to my dorm room, he explained that what I had received from the Holy Spirit was the Gift of Tongues as found in Scripture. That sounded strange to me--I'd never heard this terminology before. The first image to me was envisioning horse tongues or cow tongues. He shared some scriptures with me about the Gift of Tongues. "So *that* is what it was," I thought to myself. Still a bit strange, but I couldn't deny what'd happened to me the night before. I continued to pray in tongues in my prayer life, and felt emboldened to share with others the love of Christ.

We all went to Jesus Parties and church services at Trinity Tabernacle. Other dorm students that we talked to were giving their lives to Jesus and coming to church with us. Little did I know that I was

becoming part of the Jesus Movement in the early 1970's. My shy self grew bolder and bolder for Christ, and I ended up playing my guitar and passing out Christian tracts to students on campus with other brothers and sisters on Fridays, and inviting people to our Jesus Party that night.

In my second year at U.C. Davis I was living at Trinity House and feeling blessed. In my third year, I lived with three other Davids in an apartment together. We continued to all go to church and witness for Jesus Christ. It was at this time that I started wondering what God wanted me to do with my life after college. One afternoon I got down on my knees and began to pray. I was determined that I was not going to stop praying until I got an answer. The two choices I ended up with were becoming a psychologist or a priest. I became both.

For the priesthood, God eventually led me into the Orthodox Church. I became a priest in 1992 and went back to college to earn my doctoral degree in psychology in 1998. I am now an Archpriest in an Orthodox Church in America (OCA) parish in California, in addition to having a part-time private practice with patients who are looking for help. I still am open to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, praying for those whom I encounter. I have written a book, *In the Eyes of Your Creator*, published by *Ancient Faith Publishing*. I continue to grow in the Lord with some struggles along the way.

It is my prayer that you will repent of your sins, ask Jesus to come into your life, get baptized and chrismated in the Church, and receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Orthodox Church; the Church that Jesus originally founded 2,000 years ago. May you be filled with the Holy Spirit and your guardian angels protect you. God bless you, my friend, in your journey!