

A Message from the Patriarch of the Apostolic Orthodox Church

Out of My Mind . . . Be Back in Five Minutes

Ready for more? This will be our final essay on Scripture, at least for the present. In the preceding two *Messages*, we've talked a bit about literality, about writing styles and about the oral transmission of what has come to be known to us as Sacred Scripture. Finally, we turn our attention to perhaps one of the most controversial of topics: the accuracy of the Scriptures.

Let's play devil's advocate and list some of the many and varied reasons and opinions given over the past few millennia that would challenge our literalist even moreso than he has be thusfar. We begin with a party game. A simple sentence is written on a piece of paper and given to one of the guests. He is to whisper what is written into the ear of another. That person immediately whispers it to another, and so on. The last person to receive the sentence writes it down and that is compared to the original. As we all know, there will be glaring differences. But what is amazing is that the game may be played where the original *paper* is passed, each guest copying it. What is amazing is that the vast majority of times, inaccuracies are evident in the final paper. To compound this, ask the person who originally wrote the sentence if the last paper is an accurate representation of what he wrote, and many times he cannot say for certainty that it is. If meanings can be changed and accuracy lost in a few brief minutes, what does that say about the same possibility occurring a compilation of writings over a millennia-and-a-half?

As an example, look now at the top of this page. There's our sign. Or is it? Something has been changed. Do you see it? A few minutes ago, I added the word "Be." "So," you might say, "The meaning is still the same." But is it? By adding that one word, I effectively increased the chance of misinterpretation by 50%. How? Consider this. The word "be" may be taken in this instance to be either declarative or imperative. "*I'll* be back in five minutes," or "*You* come [be] back in five minutes." One makes a statement, the other gives an order. Which is correct?

And then there is politics, civil and ecclesiastical. How many of Christ's words were changed because of greed and corruption? How many to further one's cause? How many to destroy—yes, destroy—the true essence of Christianity? If you are like our literalist and say, "Why none, of course," I have a bridge in Brooklyn I'd like to sell you! We know from history written by early historians, not theologians, that as early as the first century of Christianity, such things occurred. When the Roman Empire under Constantine conquered nation after nation and gave them the choice of becoming Christian or die, the Scriptures were "adapted" to that culture to "make the transition easier." And let's not forget the early Œcumenical Councils. The holy Bishops voted on how the Scriptures were to be presented, did they not? Yes, after they had bribed (or threatened) the copyists to "more accurately render them." These were they same

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Councils who had not the courage to face the greatest theologian of the Church, Origen, but rather condemned and athamatized him and his writings hundreds of years after his death. Politics—the same then as today.

But there is one aspect of the Scriptures that very few apologists take into consideration. To whom were the authors writing? To the world? Hardly. Then, as now, the world had little love of things spiritual. To Christians at large? Seeing as few could read, this isn't likely. Who, for instance, now or then, could grasp the Mysteries portrayed in the Gospel of Saint John or in Revelations? Only the Mystics, and that is our answer. Scripture was written by Mystics, for Mystics. The language of mysticism is not black and white, but gray—it lacks definite “shape.” It is a language of symbolism, of what Carl Jung would call *archetypes*, things divine and universal. When reading Scripture of any religion, the Mystic does not read with his physical eyes, but rather with the eyes of the soul. Through his connection with the divinity within himself, he is connected with the author of Scripture, and, as stated in my last *Message*, “deep calleth unto deep.” For it is only the Mystic, the True Initiate of the Mysteries, to whom all is revealed.

So, does this mean that those who have not achieved this spiritual state might as well give up studying Scripture or contemplating the beautiful words contained therein? Because of the abominations that have been committed in the Name of God, should we view Scripture as a hoax, foisted upon an unsuspecting and gullible people? Absolutely not! Truth is Truth, no matter under what guise it may appear. The diamond is still in the place where it was formed, even though tons of earth may hide it. For despite the mistranslations, forgeries, additions and deletions that have occurred over the centuries, it is all still there, pristine as ever, to those who seek with their hearts rather than with their minds.

May the Light of Lights enfold you.

Mathias Mar Yusef, Patriarch

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