

# **CONCLUSIONS OF THE 25<sup>th</sup> PAN-ORTHODOX CONFERENCE OF THE DELEGATES OF ORTHODOX CHURCHES AND HOLY DIOCESES ON MATTERS PERTAINING TO HERESIES AND PARA-RELIGION (THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF GREECE)**

**Date :** Δεκεμβρίου 20, 2013

## **SYNODICAL COMMITTEE FOR HERESIES**

### **25<sup>th</sup> PAN-ORTHODOX CONFERENCE OF THE DELEGATES OF ORTHODOX CHURCHES AND HOLY DIOCESES**

#### **ON MATTERS PERTAINING TO HERESIES AND PARA-RELIGION**

**(Volos, Greece, 4 - 6.11.2013)**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The 25<sup>th</sup> Pan-Orthodox Conference of the Delegates of Orthodox Churches and Dioceses on matters pertaining to heresies and para-religion, which was held under the auspices of His Beatitude Hieronymos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, in the Thessalia Conference Centre at Melissiatika, Volos, from 4 to 6 November 2013, hosted under the care of His Eminence Ignatios, Metropolitan of Demetrias and Almyros, and presided by His Eminence Metropolitan Anthimos of Thessaloniki, Chairman of the Synodical Committee for Heresies, on the subject: **“The problem of disease; heretical and occultist approaches”**, following an extensive discussion on the presentations, has unanimously adopted the following **Conclusions**:

**1.** The Conference considered the issue of disease and its therapeutic treatment, as perceived by the Orthodox Church on the one hand and by contemporary heretical, occultist and eastern religious groups on the other.

In order to understand the radical differences between these two approaches to the issue, it is essential to have the necessary knowledge of anthropology, which is presupposed in each case.

Orthodox anthropology, which the Orthodox outlook on the issue of disease and its therapy is based on, accepts that man is God's creation, comprised of two harmoniously united, albeit different, elements, the body and the soul. Man is not soul alone or body alone; he is "both together".

**2.** In accordance with the teachings of the Orthodox Church, disease is related to man's status as a created being and is an aftermath of the fall, i.e., of man's voluntary alienation from God, Who is the source of life and incorruption. Man's fall disrupted the harmonious coexistence of body and soul and this disruption had devastating consequences upon both.

**3.** The taking on of human nature by God the Logos paved the way for the nullification of death and the salvation of man in his entirety. The incarnation of the Logos and His victory against death transformed suffering and disease into a "place" and "mode" of our salvation. Henceforth, both suffering and disease constitute means of redemption, if man makes the free choice to employ them in Christ.

**4.** In various heretical, occultist and eastern religious groups we encounter different notions concerning disease and its origins, namely:

a) In the heretical groups within the broader spectrum of Protestantism, disease is understood either as the work of a punitive God, i.e. punishment incurred because of a person's sins, or strictly as the devil's work.

b) in the occultist groups of the "New Age" movement and in groups originating in Eastern religions, disease is understood as a "blockage" of the normal flow of energy ("Prana", "Chi", "Cosmic energy", etc.) in the human body.

**5.** The so-called “alternative therapies” are an application, in the field of healthcare, of conceptions of God, man and the world, which are characteristic of Eastern religions and of the “New Age of Aquarius”; therefore they should more properly be designated as “New Age Medicine”.

According to these groups, everything is energy, everything is One (Theosophy’s claim that “All is One”) and everything is God. Based on this concept, they teach that by discovering his “divine Self” and by activating the mystic powers supposedly hidden inside him, man can heal himself. Self-healing is identified as the “release of blocked energy”.

**6.** A number of “alternative therapies” under various names suggest different ways for “releasing the blockages” of that energy. Homeopathy, for example, advocates the use of potentized homeopathic medicines; Acupuncture proposes the placement of needles at proper points that, according to its practitioners, correspond to “energy channels” in the human body, while other “therapies”, like Reiki, recommend the “removal of blockages” *“through the laying of hands performed by a highly spiritual person... who is actually a channel of universal energies...”*.

In some of these “therapies” we even observe the practice of blending Christian terms with occultist interpretations, as part of an attempt to provide a theoretical validation of the way in which the method supposedly works. Most groups employ scientific-sounding terminology, with the intent to impress and mislead the unsuspecting public.

Others, like Homeopathy practitioners, claim that their “medicines” can even treat passions of the soul, like selfishness, envy, wrath, anger, etc., thus usurping the role and work of the Orthodox Church as “spiritual infirmary”.

**7.** The so-called alternative therapies not only have occultist implications, but their very foundations are non-Christian and in fact lie in the realm of the occult. Most of them represent more than mere proposals for the therapeutic treatment of the body; they also promise the transition, through what they call “quantum leap”, etc., to the “New Age”, and the creation of a new type of man.

The Conference has reached the conclusion that these “therapies” (Angel Therapy, Ayurveda, Bach Flower Remedies, Aura Soma, Aromatherapy, Acupuncture, Bioenergy Therapies, Esoteric Healing, Craniosacral

Therapy, Crystal Therapy, Homeopathy, Reiki, Reflexology, Shiatsu, pseudo-scientific psychotherapies, et al.) are founded on a worldview –serving as their background– which is contrary to and incompatible with the Orthodox faith.

**8.** Their widespread dissemination is developing into a major social issue of a medical and pharmaceutical nature with moral, social and spiritual repercussions, which occasionally endangers human lives. It also causes serious spiritual and pastoral problems.

Since the State guarantees – notably through the Constitution – the legal right to health, which is put at risk by the aforementioned “therapies”, it ought to take practical steps, as well, in order to safeguard this right.

These “therapies” threaten to distort the Orthodox mindset. They are potential “bridges” that could bring unsuspecting Orthodox Christians in contact with Eastern religions and Occultism.

**9.** The so-called “alternative therapies” or, according to the Medical Association of Athens “Unorthodox Treatment Methods”, in which a metaphysical energy is predominant, rely on obsolete and fictitious data. They lack rigorous scientific methodology. Furthermore, they are based on unverified principles, which normally belong to the realm of fantasy. Since they do not take advantage of modern scientific advancements and methods, they have been designated, by official Greek and international medical bodies and associations, as pseudo-sciences.

According to such medical bodies, any noticeable therapeutic effect –if and when it occurs– is usually observed in auto-immune, psychosomatic and neuro-vegetative disorders. It is caused by the simulated medicine (placebo) mechanism, which is activated through the power of suggestion. Classical Medicine, by contrast, is an applied science, which is constantly advancing research and making progress, thus offering substantial care to millions of ailing people.

**10.** The Conference also reviewed “therapies” performed within groups of the broader Protestant spectrum (Neo-Pentecostals, “Charismatics”, Christian Science, etc.), as well as within Roman Catholicism to the extent that it has adopted such “charismatic” Protestant practices. Alleged therapies in such circles

include a fair amount of on-demand “healings” (instances of fraud), a type of show that not only fails to provide actual healing, but is also heavily criticized by other Protestant communities.

**11.** Pseudo-therapies, whether of the Pentecostal or the “New Age” type, are considered to be either cases of clandestine fraud or phenomena caused by psychological suggestion, or bad imitations of miraculous healings in the Bible, without ruling out the possibility of demonic involvement. As such, they constitute signs of the Antichrist.

What fundamentally distinguishes them from the miraculous healings effected by Saints is that they are performed for the ulterior purpose of misleading people away from Jesus Christ, the only true Physician of our souls and bodies.

**12.** As God’s creation, man can only be complete and find true healing by being fully united with Jesus Christ within the Orthodox Church, as stated by the Church Fathers.

The Conference unanimously approves the Conclusions stated above and authorizes its Chairman to sign them.

The Chairman of the Conference

† Metropolitan Anthimos of Thessaloniki

The Delegates of Orthodox Churches:

The Ecumenical Patriarchate – Metropolitan Damaskinos of Kydonia and Apokoronos

The Patriarchate of Alexandria – Metropolitan Proterios of Ptolemais

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem – Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda

The Patriarchate of Russia – Hegumen Theofan Lukiyanov

The Patriarchate of Serbia – Bishop Porfyrios of Jegar

The Patriarchate of Romania – Dr. Ciprian Streza

The Church of Cyprus – Protopresbyter Demetrios Kostopoulos

The Church of Greece – Protopresbyter Kyriakos Tsouros

The Church of Poland – Protopresbyter Andrzej Lewczak

The Chairman of the Conference

† Metropolitan Anthimos of Thessaloniki

*(Source: imglyfadas.gr)*