



The Orthodox Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross, Lancaster, U.K.

The Stavronian

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*Ἦνθρονος Χριστός, Ζωοδότης.
(Φ. Κόντογλου, 1962).*

*The Parish of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross,
belongs to the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland.
The Patriarchate of Antioch is third senior of the Orthodox Churches.
The Patriarch is His Beatitude John X.*

*The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch
(Acts 11:26)*

THE SIGN OF CAIN - HAMLET: A MATTER OF ANCESTRAL SIN

The religious references in Shakespeare's Hamlet, as in many of the Bard's plays, are indications of the all pervading ramifications of 16th c. reformation in Europe. One of the major influences was the newly published Geneva Bible of 1560 which provided a rich source of supportive narrative. The wish to balance Catholic rituals and doctrine with Protestant biblical and puritanical theology was the coalition politics of the Erastian Elizabethan establishment. It was always going to be a would-be marriage of inconvenience - the Capulet meeting the Montague! Shakespeare's own (almost certain) espousal of Catholicism against the tide of fashion and his own reformed baptismal tradition, juggled faith, reflection and conscience within the circle of conflicting loyalties to the state. Such themes were played out not only on the stage of European history but from a personal perspective vicariously in his plays.

The unseen act in Hamlet is the sin of fratricide (and regicide) when Claudius kills his brother King Hamlet, Prince Hamlet's father, and to add salt to the mortal wound, marries the widowed Queen Gertrude.

The killing of Abel by his brother Cain in the book of Genesis, which is seen by God, is condemned with due indignation - "*The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.*", Genesis 4:10. Cain's response is: "*My guilt is too great to be forgiven.*" Genesis 4:13.

Cain refuses to deal with his passions through repentance. Indeed, he shows them hospitality and his sorrow at his unacceptable offering to God, leads to seething resentment, anger, hatred and the murder of his brother. God places a sign upon Cain. In the Septuagint, (the

Greek version of the Old Testament) the curse or mark of Cain is described as (στένων και τρέμων) "groaning and trembling."

Likewise Saul's intense jealousy against the popularity of David in I Samuel (1Kingdoms) 28, drives him to summon up Samuel's ghost, (or a demon which is the interpretation of most of the Church Fathers) this ends in an ever spiralling descent into madness. The witch of Endor (who also provides a source of interest for Macbeth) claims that she sees the ghost of a man rising from the abode of the dead, whom Saul assumes to be that of Samuel. "*So he said to her, "What did you perceive?" And she said, "A man is coming up, standing upright and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul discerned it to be Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down to him."*, I Kingdoms (Samuel) 28:14.

The troubled mind may indeed feign madness but in entertaining the passions, being possessed by obsessions, these work their compulsions upon the darker labyrinthine regions of the psyche, like a scratch on an old vinyl record that repeats a sound over and over again. If the needle is not removed, it sends one to distraction.

There are various clues to Shakespeare's own spiritual balancing act in his acquaintance with ecclesial and biblical doctrine. Roman Catholic *flights of angels* and *purgatory* are carefully weighed against protestant Old Testament scriptures as in the reference to the Judge of Israel *Jephthah*, whose virgin daughter like Ophelia dies in tragic circumstance. Do we have free will (St Augustine-Catholic) or are things predestined (Calvin-Protestant)? To paraphrase: *To be in control or not to be in control of our destiny* - that is the question!

Those who are of Adam's race are not guilty simply because of Adam's sin

but because of choosing sin rather than obedience to God's word. However, in the shadow of Adam's disobedience whereby there is a giving in to the temptation in order to "be like God" and the subsequent fall from grace; all have a propensity, a disposition, an inclination - a weakness!

We discover in Shakespeare's spirituality this interface between the human will and Divine Providence:

Hamlet : "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."

Proverbs 19:21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

Hamlet: "Our wills and fates do so contrary run."

Jeremiah 10:23: "O Lord, I know, that the way of a man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps".

Hamlet: "There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow."

Matthew 10:29: "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will."

Shakespeare explores our mortal weaknesses through the prism of faith which is at the same time both mystical and rational; God is knowable in His energies but incomprehensible in essence. Who are we? Of what are we made? What lies beyond? Such questions require answers from an authentic jurisdiction.

Many of Shakespeare's characters are dangerous risk takers moved by spontaneous action, to use the idiom, they "steer close to the wind." However, there is too an appreciation of the positive potential of humankind steered by the rudder of Biblical authority which illustrates the English renaissance's reliance upon anti-quity:

Hamlet: *What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an Angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!*

Psalms 8:4-6: *What is man, say I, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than God, and crowned him with glory and worship. Thou hast made him to have dominion in the works of thine hands, thou hast put all things under his feet.*

Shakespeare does not pretend to have all the answers to the complexities of the human condition; he simply observes - and presents. Nevertheless, he does invite us to participate, through our own fault lines, in mercy. From the Apophatic tradition of the Byzantine East to the *Cloud of Unknowing* of the Latin West - and indeed beyond, to the declarations of Luther's "Wittenberg" theses - there remains questions. One of Luther's spiritual descendants, centuries later, urged his listeners to consider such questions not with intellectual judgement but through the compassionate heart: "We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* .

Outcomes may be determined by reckless acts or through persistent watchfulness. Claudius expresses his remorseful posturing thus: *My words fly up toward heaven, but my thoughts stay down here on earth. Words without thoughts behind them will never make it to heaven.*

The marks of Cain remain and are visible in the light of suffering. "Groaning and trembling" appear where there is

guilt without grace, when there is remorse without repentance.

Words may give voice to ideas but the struggle of thoughts with action must have substance in and of the will, Divine and human.

Fr. Jonathan A. Hemmings



SONNET I

Nature and Nurture

Matthew 19:14; *But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."*

What is this treasure which I hold so near?
Closer than my breath which her name repeats;
Reserve her character till time stands clear
To shape her mind as her own voice entreats.
I do not cradle now by spoken will,
But by parental care as love dictates;
Her fragile frame from birth is caused to fill
Gentle arms, whose enfolding indicates.
Echoes aforesaid when grown, she will be A
woman, wife and mother to her child;
Transferring grace and form for all to see
The pattern's gift, though by encounters styled.
Sweet Nature, thy bounds are kindly, free and fair
As Nurture's bonds from beauty seeks to share.

As a parent every action you take is important when you raise children. It is not necessarily what you say but how you act that teaches them the Orthodox way of life. --- St Paisios of the Holy Mountain

Fr Jonathan

WHAT IS THE CHURCH

I walked into an Orthodox Church some time ago and found a Greek flag hanging from the wall. It could be (as it is often) a Serbian, Russian or Romanian national symbol instead - I would feel the same. This occasion prompted in me some thoughts and reflections about the nature of the Church, which I would now like to share with you. There are two main ways in which human beings relate to each other: kin (through blood and family ties) and shared interest (groups, clubs, societies, professions, etc.). A nation is such a powerful and enduring concept because it seemingly combines these aspects of relationship; cementing them strongly together - with the help of common language, custom and history. Also, apart and distinct from these two ways (natural and social) of connecting with each other, we were gifted with a third, a supernatural way of relating - the Church. Founded nearly two thousand

years ago, on Pente-cost, the Church was born through the feast of Holy Spirit, descending from above, transforming confused followers into the great apostles: holy, faithful and worthy disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

What is supernatural about the Church as opposed to the other communities; it is not the lack of sin or the sinners, nor is it the ability to constantly produce the amazing, 'super-human' acts. It is the single fact that it is founded on the solid foundation of divine virtues of Faith, Hope and Love, so wonderfully presented in the letters of St Paul. In fact, any community that nourishes and displays these particular virtues, carries the sign of the Church in itself - it doesn't need any specially assigned buildings or gathering spaces. A supernatural community is being established anywhere and everywhere, where Love, Faith and Hope reign supreme. Matthew 18:20; "*For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst*".

The Church is founded through and in the Holy Spirit, as an extension of the ongoing and everlasting mission of the Ascended Christ. Once we accept this, I think that it will be easier to deal with the heresy of ethno-phyletism in the Orthodox Church, a problem that just lingers on. In reality, bringing national flags in the church space is an attempt to secularise what is spiritual and to undermine the most basic mission of the Church: to bring together groups of total strangers, in order to transcend their natural and social loyalties and preferences, through the Power of the Spirit in the Christ Ascended. I am not saying (and it is not realistic) that sometimes these three aspects of human relationship: natural, social and supernatural, doesn't 'overlap', but our challenge is to try to always work against the grain of easy comfort and instant solutions. That way, our own identities will become less fixed and rigid,

and will hopefully reflect more of the divine freedom of the Holy Spirit. We are called to de-construct the worldly, and then replace it with the heavenly following the principles of our own Master-BUILDER. Matthew 12:48; *Who is My mother and who are My brothers? And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, Behold My mother and My brothers!*

Aleksandar Miljkovic
London



ENTHRONEMENT OF METROPOLITAN SILOUAN

The Enthronement of our Metropolitan Silouan and Patriarchal Divine Liturgy will take place at the Antiochian Cathedral of St. George. All are welcome!

Sat. 28th November

> 4.30pm: Great Vespers along with the Enthronement ceremony of His Eminence Metropolitan Silouan at the Cathedral of St George.

> 7.30pm-12.00pm: Reception/Dinner at the Royal Garden Hotel, 2-24 High Street Kensington, London W8 4PT. Tickets: £100 per person. For reservation, please contact either [Dr Samir Hraiki](#), or [Mr Simon Abdel-Nour](#).

Sun. 29th November

> 11.00am: Patriarchal Divine Liturgy at St George's Cathedral with His Beatitude Patriarch John X, His Eminence Metropolitan Silouan and visiting Metropolitan. The Liturgy will be followed by lunch in the Cathedral.

For further information please click [here](#).



Our new Metropolitan Silouan, to be Enthroned on Nov. 28th in London.

ARCHDIOCESAN CONFERENCE 2016

Our Archdiocesan Conference will take place from the afternoon of Mon. 23rd May to Wed. lunchtime 25th May at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, Derbyshire, DE55 1AU. We are delighted that our new Bishop will be present!

The Theme of the Conference will be "Lights from Antioch." We shall explore the lives and teachings of 5 saints of the Church of Antioch, ancient and modern and reflect on their significance for the life and mission of the Church today in these Isles. The 5 saints will be: St. Ignatios of Antioch, St. Ephraim the Syrian, St. John Chrysostom, St. John of Damascus and St. Raphael of Brooklyn.

Demand for spaces is likely to be high so please act now. There are reduced rates for children, a £10 discount for

early bookers and a bursary for those who may need a little financial help.

Please click on the following links for information regarding the [programme](#), [poster](#) and [booking form](#).

BEING ORTHODOX IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

The [Orthodox fellowship of St John the Baptist](#) is organising a conference on 1-3 July 2016 at The Hayes, Swanwick: Fri. 4 pm to Sun. teatime. The title is "Being Orthodox in a Multi-Religious Society". At this Conference the Fellowship will consider the witness of the Orthodox Church in today's diverse society. Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain will preside and preach at the Sunday Divine Liturgy. Speakers include: Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia; Fr Philip Hall; Dr Mangala Frost; Dr Elena Narinskaya; Marina Robb.

NAMES OF DEPARTED LOVED ONES TO BE REMEMBERED THIS MONTH

Nov. 12: *Sir John Tavener*

Nov. 29: *Ioanna*

MEMORY ETERNAL!

Please send us the names of your departed loved ones and date of their departure in order for them to be remembered.



OLD STAVRONIAN CORNER

Alla Ganshyna sends her greetings to the Parish along with the following letter:

Dear Father Jonathan,

It is very important to have own Church for Lancaster Orthodox community and for Lancaster Orthodox Church. The area seems to be good, many Russian and other Slavonic people live at Morecambe area, I think you already know some of them. We hope, you will receive this place. And please, send our love and greetings to all at the Lancaster Orthodox Community.

In Christ,
Alla

~+~

Stella Christofi sends her greetings from Cyprus!

Hello Father,

Hope my email finds you well. I just wanted to know how are you and how our beloved church in Lancaster is going. You are in our thoughts.

Today I went to a church with Antonia and there was a piece of cloth of Saint Nicholas Planas for the faithful. I attach a photo for you, as you always talked to us about St Nicholas Planas.

Regards,
Stella



MAJOR CELEBRATIONS THIS MONTH

1st Nov: Sts Cosmas and Damian, the Holy Unmercenaries

8th Nov: Synaxis of Archangel Michael & Gabriel and the other Bodiless Powers

9th Nov: St. Nectarios the wonderworker, Metropolitan of Pentapolis

10th Nov: St. Arsenius of Cappadocia

11th Nov: St. Martin of Tours (†397)

13th Nov: St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople

14th Nov: St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica

15th Nov: Beginning of the Nativity fast

16th Nov: Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew

17th Nov: St. Hilda, Abbess of Whitby (†680)

21st Nov: The Entry of our Most-Holy Lady the Theotokos into the Temple

23rd Nov: St. Alexander Nevsky

25th Nov: Great Martyr Catherine of
Alexandria

30th Nov: Holy Apostle Andrew the first
called

For the lives of Saints please visit the
Calendar of the Greek Orthodox Archdi-
ocese of America: www.calendar.goarch.org



Services during November*

Sat. 7 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 14 th	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sat. 21 st	10:00 am	Holy Liturgy in R.C.
Sun. 29 th	-	No Liturgy this week

*Help setting up the church is greatly appreciated and starts from 9.15 a.m.

“God cares for everyone. Despair is in effect a lack of faith”
- St. George Karslides -



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For Old Stavronian blogs follow the links in Romanian [here](#) and in Greek [here](#) and [here](#).



Top and bottom sketches are created at the Holy Monastery of "The Annunciation of the Theotokos" Chios, Greece, courtesy of Fr Theodoros Dendrinos, Ithaca, Greece.
The sketch of Christ by Photis Kontoglou was scanned from the Orthodox calendar of the Apostoliki Diakonia of the Church of Greece.