

son with God is an eternal and perfect citizen of the Kingdom of God.

Fr. John Jillions: As I said before, wherever a person encounters truth he is encountering the Logos. Now, for all kinds of reasons he or she may not recognize or accept that Jesus Christ is the Logos (often because of the follies of the Christian churches) but that does not mean they are without God. As Fr Meletios Weber, commented on the «12 step movement», God allows Himself to even be anonymous, such is his self-emptying love for the whole world (see his *Steps of Transformation*, Conciliar Press, 2003). Excessive religious triumphalism is what scares people about religion and—in the extreme—leads to authoritarian abuses. And remember that St Paul, whom no one can accuse of being lukewarm, said even our best knowledge is imperfect (1 Cor 13:9).

Nadezhda Lyakh: One of the issues of your newspaper contained this citation: «Treat others like you want to be treated» with the reference to God's commandment brought in by Jesus Christ. But this «golden rule» had been known to ancient Greeks and even to Confucius. It is very good for Jesus Christ to have reminded this «golden rule», but it cannot serve as a proof of the rightness of the Christian (Orthodox) faith. Nor is it an evidence of the fact that it was God who had given the commandment to the mankind.

Boris Kriger: It is ridiculous to blame Jesus Christ for plagiarism or lack of originality. Once again, treating the Gospel or Jesus Christ from the point of view of a judge is as good as picking up a flower with an excavator grab. The flower will most likely get squashed... Jesus Christ is opened only to those who believe, and it is only for them that He works miracles. All the others may pamper their vanity thinking they have «exposed the lies» of Christianity. But what will they be left with in the end?

Fr. John Jillions: If the Logos has been there from the beginning, why should we be surprised that something as basic as the «golden rule» is found in almost all cultures? We should rejoice and not be defensive that this somehow detracts from our claims about Jesus. If Jesus is the truth, then no investigation of any truth can be threatening to Him or to the Church.

Nadezhda Lyakh: I do not think that morality had been given to humans by God, while I do not object that the commandments of the Bible play a role of a «road sign» for everyone. I consider morality nothing but an «instrument» regulating social interrelations. It is obvious we should stick to morals! But not because these rules had been given by God. We should do it because we should «treat others like we want to be treated»!

Boris Kriger: Your position is close to that of Kant's with his «moral law» vested in every human being. Don't you think that your rejection of God's right to give us moral laws is ridiculous? Do you want to say that «I am your God...» commandment was not given by God Himself? Do you want to say that the commandments pose an iniquitous forgery? If so, why do you agree to follow them? Isn't it easier to acknowledge that they were given by God and that by following them, we are getting closer to God, and this fills us with joy and freedom from sin, than to think you are self-sufficient enough to make your own commandments? There is no source of such speculations other than our vanity... One should reconcile with God and give up fighting God, His Holy Scripture and His Church, one should quit trying to prove that God is not the one He claims to be, that the Holy Scriptures are not holy at all, and that the Church of Jesus Christ is nothing but a human-created institution. Such speculations are in a severe conflict with what Jesus Christ had disclosed to us, when He had promised that His Church would not be overwhelmed by the gates of hell, and that He would be with us till the end of time. This reminds me of a saying: «to pay for the taxi and then go on foot». Live a righteous life, but reject God out of a sense of pride and, therefore, acquire neither meaning, nor salvation. Who tries to convince us of such thoughts? No one, but the Satan — the source of all lies.



Taking Photos At Church Event in Ottawa

Fr. John Jillions: We don't need to reject the holiness of the Scriptures to also assert that they are the product of a synergy between God and many human beings over many centuries. Yes, there are those who argue that the Church is only a human institution, but we don't need to go to the other extreme either and argue that the Church is only divine.

Nadezhda Lyakh: To sum up the issue of attributing morals to God, I will give you a single postulate that is sure relevant to moral issues but has nothing to do with the Bible or any confession. That is, an «active citizenship». This thesis may be evaluated like «right or wrong». Since it regulates the interrelations existing between a human and society, then it expressly and directly refers to the morality issue. It has nothing to do with the Bible (or any other religion).

Boris Kriger: The concept of active citizenship relates to God and the Bible because there is nothing that would not be related to them. God can never be a minor part of the universe that you can put in a box in your garage and forget about it. God is the source of everything. If your active citizenship consists in clothing a beggar or feeding a starving man—then, according to Jesus Christ, you are clothing and feeding the Son of God. If your concept is not doing any good, then it is nothing but another demonstration of pride.

Nadezhda Lyakh: And what about that conversation from the Bible? By the way, it is one of the key ones. «And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God? Jesus sayeth unto him, Thou hast said...» Well, Boris! How can there possibly be such a conversation? Imagine I ask you: «Are you a writer, Boris?» And the answer is: «It was you who had said that, Nadezhda.» Do you see any logic here?.. How could Jesus Christ, being the Son of God, in-

stead of giving a direct and clear answer: «Yes, I am the Son of God!»—turn off a question and say: «You said that!»? Or, perhaps, the conversation was merely misquoted, either right on the spot or during the centuries. Then how can we trust any other Bible quotations? Who can guarantee that none of them contain any misinterpretations?

Boris Kriger: The answer is literal translation of the Aramaic phrase, which actually confirms His words. 'You said so' means 'yes'. Such form of answer is used in several ancient languages.

Nadezhda Lyakh: I hold the teachings of Jesus Christ in high respect! I recognize and understand their importance and essentiality. I strongly believe that Jesus Christ was the greatest and happiest man ever. Yet, he was a Man! With a capital «M».

Boris Kriger: The denial of Jesus Christ's divinity is not something new. However, it does not leave anything of Christianity. For if God didn't let to crucify Himself for our sins, by showing the highest possible level of love, then the concept of Christianity, the Bible prophecies and any kinds of conscious understanding of the universe are lost. So here is your chance to choose. You may believe in God, believe that God Almighty incarnated, you can accept this good news and join the Body of Christ, acquire the Holy Spirit and enter the Heavens, or you may stick to heretical opinions that give nothing but a temporary and very delusive satisfaction of a human's pride. The saint and righteous John of Kronshtadt wrote: «Believe whole-heartedly and undoubtedly that the only-begotten Son of God, made flesh, had suffered for you as well, and exactly for you... Move His martyrdom closer to your heart, try as you can to apprehend them with your weak minds and bear your own sadness, illnesses and sufferings magnanimously, without grumbling, with gratefulness for God, and may your hearts glow with the flame of love for the One Who, for love of you, suffers the cruel flame of anguish of body and mind.»

Nadezhda Lyakh: It was people who wrote the Bible. People with their mistakes and foul-ups, problems and passions. They wrote, re-wrote, corrected, elaborated, and translated it. Therefore, one should read the Bible accordingly, separating the wheat from the chaff. In other words, one should employ a critical approach to some extent. Of course, at every life stage, a person can find something in the Bible that is new and important for him or her, some issues that had been left underappreciated until that moment. However, to listen to every word pronounced by clergy... It is better to listen to one's own heart and soul. And communicate with God directly.

Boris Kriger: I was hoping that we had already answered to this question by publishing the article by the martyred priest Daniil Sysoyev in one of the previous issues of our newspaper. It is not possible to find better words, and especially when we remember that his voice comes out from the other side, that he witnessed with his life a complete rejection of the world's pleasures and sacrificed his life for the sake of teachings of Jesus Christ.

You cannot use a critical approach to reading the Bible, nor can you judge God. We must not think of ourselves as of a measure of everything, or believe that listening to our passion-wounded heart and our soul fatally wounded with sins will give us a chance to hear God's voice, without being attracted by voices coming out from the evil sources.

The priests are different from ordinary people as they are vessels of the God's Grace by virtue of their ordination. With the gifts of this Grace they can serve the sacraments: Baptism, when all our past sins are washed off from us; Confession, when our new sins are absolved; Holy Communion, our direct reunion with God. These sacraments work miracles with a human soul. They are not invented by humans. They were given by Jesus Christ Himself, and God's grace is given to us by the Holy Spirit, and exactly via the priesthood, that had received it from the Apostles, and the Apostles, in their turn, had received it directly from the Holy Spirit on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Christ. This fact had made a basis for the Feast of the Holy Trinity, or Pentecost.



Blessing icons in Huntsville with Archpriest Oleg Kirillov, Dean of Ontario

