

Revelation Chapter 3

Revelation 3:1 *And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. 4 [But] Thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. 5 He that overcometh, in this manner shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*



Archbishop Averky:

Sardis in antiquity was a large and wealthy city, the capital of the region of Lydia, and now it is the poor Turkish town of Sard. Under Julian the Apostate the spiritual deadness of this city was clearly manifest. It quickly returned to idol-worship, for which the chastisement of God overtook it; it was destroyed to its foundations.

Arch. Athenasios Mitilinaios, *Homilies on the Book of Revelation, Vol. 1*, 2009, pp. 252-4.

“By the time Revelation was written, the city of Sardis was in decline and the life of the city was quite superficial. This was [also] the state of the rather nonexistent spiritual life of the bishop of the city. He was a spiritual vegetable, so to speak. He gave the impression that he

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existed, but he was spiritually dead.”



TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS IN SARDIS

[Comment: So here in the example of the bishop of Sardis, is a type of the vast majority of the bishops of world orthodoxy. To the world they appear to be alive, but in spirit, they are dead or dying, having cut themselves off from the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church by their heresy, by their unbelief in the true faith, by their ecumenism -- their failure to embrace the Holy Tradition of the Fathers in its entirety. We see this clearly in the state Church of Greece, where the battle over the true faith is rapidly heating up in the face of the indifference and secularism that has seditiously crept into it over the past 90+ years, ignited by the false council in Crete called by the Ecumenical Patriarch.]

Arch. Athenasios Mitilinaios, “It was already pointed out in the beginning of the book [of Revelation] during the introduction that Jesus Christ is the One who holds the seven churches of Asia Minor in His hands. The number seven is allegorical; it symbolizes and represents the entire Church. So, my friends, Jesus Christ holds the Holy Spirit and the churches. The [essence] of the entire verse is this: Jesus Christ sends His Holy Spirit to the seven churches of Asia Minor, in other words, to the entire Church. There is something here that we should find impressive, and that is that the Lord names and identifies His attribute--He holds the Holy Spirit. We also see quite clearly here that the Holy Spirit is called *the seven spirits* because the name *seven spirits* is used to declare the Holy Spirit in its fullness. He [Christ] has the Holy Spirit which He sends; and He specifically includes this inscriptional element in this epistle because it relates to the content of the epistle.

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“And the Lord said *to the Church in Sardis write: The words of Him Who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead* (Rev. 3:1). A few words later He declares the bishop spiritually dead. And in essence, He is saying to him, I am the One who gives the Holy Spirit; why then are you staying spiritually dead? Why aren't you benefitting from the presence of the Holy Spirit, so you and your church can exercise the spiritual life? This is what the inscription of the epistle is insinuating.

“...What then is the main theme of this epistle? *I know your works, you have a name that you live, but you are dead.* My friends, what a terrifying statement! This verse should terrify all of us. Each one of us must take a close look at himself. Many times, some of us are guilty of superficial piety, and please pay attention, because sometimes those who nod their heads may be even guiltier of this superficial piety ...

“This condition, according to St. Paul, is a sign of the last days. He writes, *But know that in the last days, perilous times will come. For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanders without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And, from such people, turn away* (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1-6) ...

“In essence, the religious people, the pious people, those that are considered pious, will simply *appear* to be so. They will be superficial Christians at best. They will not have the power of true faith or godliness. If we take into account that the Greek word *ευσεβεια* or godliness was used in the apostolic times to include the entire mystery of Christianity, then the mystery of godliness or piety is Christianity. When a person lives a pious life, he has the spirit of God and he has power. He has much spiritual power. When a person does not live the true gospel, but limits Christianity to some external forms by merely going through the motions, then he is a superficial Christian. In his actions, he has denied the power of the Holy Spirit, he is dead below the surface. He is internally dead. Do not let this surprise you; he is dead.

“Also in our times many faithful, many theologians, many of those who theologize, have reduced theology -- this true and fruitful knowledge of God which much reach the last cell of our body just like the food that we digest turns into blood and it reaches the last cell of our body -- to discussions and dialogues. Theology, the knowledge of God, must reach the last corner of my being; it must feed me; it must give me drink, it must satisfy my spiritual thirst. This is the purpose of theology: to satisfy my thirst, my spiritual hunger, to make me godlike, a Christ-like being. These days we have limited the knowledge of God to retreats, class discussions, and dialogues. We have become as St. Paul says *conversationalists of this age* (cf. 1 Cor 1:20). Theology has been reduced to conversations and discussions; it is not faith and life.

“We also notice that a great number of beautiful churches are being built today [in Greece at the time this homily was given, and in our time in Russia by the Moscow Patriarchate]. Each

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possible physical detail is attended to with regard to decoration. However, the living temples of God are being ignored. Where are the Christians? Here in Greece you will see the parish priest build a new temple, a new church with a wood carved iconostasis, beautiful, ornate, wooden carved seats, beautiful icons, (Byzantine style), filled with the best Byzantine music; everything is just beautiful.

“There is nothing wrong with all this, please understand; there is absolutely nothing wrong with all this. However, when this becomes the main preoccupation of the shepherd while the living temples of God are falling apart, while they are abandoned to fill up with cobwebs, while they are dying spiritually because the shepherds are not shepherding, then we can speak of a spiritual death. We also install great crystal or brass chandeliers in our churches with bright and multiple lights to light up the space of our churches. We install flickering lights with light dimmers to add a mystical atmosphere to our services, but the light of our Christians has gone out. The Lord says; *You are the light of the world* (Matt. 5:14). But are the Christians today lights in this world?” [Again, remember Archimandrite Athanasios is talking about the state Orthodox Church of Greece (New Calendar Church) in the 1980s.)]

“St. John Chrysostom says, ‘One Christian, only one Christian full of fire, full of zeal can revive and entire city.’ Does that take place today? I am afraid we are in a state of paralysis. It has been said, and rightly so, that long ago the holy chalices were wooden the the Christians were golden. Today, the holy chalices are golden but our Christians are wooden.

“I have discussed above the seven stars that he here calls the *spirits of God*. But now we must listen to what he says concerning those who live in Sardis. *I know your works*, , but *you are dead* in sins. For in the holy Scriptures, it is customary that those snared in sins are called dead, as for example, in this passage from the most wise Paul concerning those who have passed from unbelief to faith in Christ: *And you, although dead in trespasses, He made alive together with Christ* (Ephesians 2:5). Likewise, the *Shepherd* of Hermas] says that those who go down into the water of baptism are *dead*, but those who come up are *living* (Hermas Sim 9.16.4). But, he [the LORD] says, **wake up** from your slumber of sin and *strengthen what remains and is on the point of death*. [“Sardis was built on a mountain and an acropolis was constructed on a spur of this mountain, which was all but impregnable. Yet twice in the city’s history it had been taken unawares and captured by enemies. The parallel with the church’s lack of vigilance, and its need to wake up lest it fall under judgment is striking.” (See photo next page)]

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There still remain among you works and practices that are weak but that have not totally disappeared. Preserve those things that are still alive, even though they are already tending toward death. When he says *strengthen*, “it is as though he said make stable and strong that which is loose and in danger of falling into disuse.” For, he says, there are no works among you that are done in earnestness; rather, some have died away, and others are increasingly moribund. Remember, therefore, *how you received* the faith and *how you heard* the word concerning the faith, and maintain in life those works that are still alive, and for those that have already died away, *repent*. *If you are not watchful*, that is, if you are as one waking from the sleep of a lazy stupor, *I will come* to you as one ready to punish, and when you least expect it. The holy apostle spoke similarly concerning others: *When people say, There is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come on them as travail comes on a woman with child* (1 Thess 5:3). *You have a few names in Sardis*, he says, *who have not soiled their garments; and they walk with me in white, for they are worthy*, and being in the meantime entreated by them, he says, I delay my coming and am long-suffering toward you...

Averky: By those who *have not defiled their garments* are metaphorically depicted here the defilements of the soul, and therefore those who have not defiled their garments are those whose minds have not participated in the false teachings of heretics, while their lives were not spotted by passions and vices. By *white raiment* is to be understood the wedding garments in which the guests at the wedding banquet of the King’s Son will be clothed; in this image the Lord set forth in the parable the future blessedness of the righteous in His Heavenly Kingdom (Matthew 22:11-12). These garments will be like the garments of the Saviour at the time of the Transfiguration which became *white as the light* (Matthew 17:2).

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Averky: The decrees of God concerning the fate of men are symbolically depicted in the image of a book in which the Lord, as the All-knowing and All-righteous Judge, records all the doing of men. This symbolical image is often used in Sacred Scripture (Ps. 68:28, Is 4:3, Dan 7:10, 12:1, Mal 3:16, Ex 32:32-33, Luke 10:20, Phil 4:3, Rev 13:8, 17:8, 20:12,15). According to this conception, he who lives worthy of the highest purpose is as it were inscribed in the book of life, while he who lives unworthily is as it were blotted out of this book, thereby being deprived of the right to eternal life. And therefore the promise to the one who overcomes sin, that his name will not be blotted out of the book of life, means the same thing as a promise not to deprive him of the heavenly goods which are prepared in the future life for the righteous.

Averky: The promise to *confess His name* is the same thing that the Lord promised during His life on earth to His true followers (Matt. 10:32, Luke 12:8), that is, “I will acknowledge and proclaim him to be my faithful disciple.

Revelation 3:7 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; 8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. 9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy*



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crown. 12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

In our passage from Revelation on the Church in Philadelphia, our Lord Jesus Christ states that He has the keys of David, one of His human ancestors -- a most arresting statement. Why would the Son of God, Emmanuel, God Incarnate need with the keys of David, King of Israel? Let's see if we can find out! I'll be reading primarily from Archbishop Averky Taushev¹ (1906-1976) of Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, NY, and Æcumenius², a Christian author who said that over 500 years had elapsed since St. John wrote down his Revelation. He was likely a contemporary of St. Andrew of Caesarea AD 563 - 637 (another well-recognized Orthodox commentator of the *Apocalypse*).

[Archbishop Averky: Philadelphia was the second greatest city of Lydia and was named for its founder, Attalus Philadelphus [233-138 BC], king of Pergamos. This city, alone of all the Asia Minor cities, for a long time did not give into the Turks. It is remarkable that even at the present time [mid-20th century] Christianity in Philadelphia is in a more flourishing condition than all the other cities of Asia Minor. Here there has been preserved a numerous Christian population, having its own bishop and twenty-five churches. The inhabitants are distinguished by their great hospitality and kindness. The Turks call Philadelphia *Alakh-Sher*, that is, *city of God*, and this name involuntarily reminds one of the promise of the Lord: *I will write upon him (that overcometh) the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God.*]

To those in Philadelphia, he says, *Write the words of the holy one, the true one*. The holy One is the Son of God. And the seraphim also bear witness to the when they ascribe the threefold holiness to the one lordship [referring to the *holy, holy, holy* of Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8], since he possesses nothing earthly or sinful, and even though the Word became flesh, *he did not sin; nor was any guile found in his mouth*, as the Prophet Isaiah says. He is said to be *true*, for he is, and he truly is what he is said to be. He is said to be God and this title is not false, for he is truly God, Immanuel, even though the accursed Nestorius does not agree to this. He became man; not because he ceased to be God, but he is truly man, even though Eutyches, hated by God, is displeased with this claim. What he is, he is truly, and there is nothing concerning him that is by way of mere ascription, as the Nestorians say, nor is there anything that is mere appearance and fantasy, as the Eutychians would have it, and also that accursed and despicable race of Manichaens.

He who has the key of David. He calls authority a *key*. Whoever is entrusted with the key of a house is entrusted with the authority to open and to close it. [Archbishop Averky (1906-1976) writes: The Son of God calls Himself *he that has the key of David* in the sense of having the

1. Archbishop Averky (Taushev) (translated from the Russian by Fr. Seraphim Rose), *The Apocalypse in the Teaching of Ancient Christianity*, St. Herman of Alaska Press, Platina, CA 1995, p. 93-95.

2. Æcumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, in *Ancient Christian Texts: Greek Commentaries on Revelation, Æcumenius and Andrew of Caesarea*, IVP Academic Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2011, pp. 16-18.

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highest authority in the house of David, for a key is a symbol of authority. The house of David or the kingdom of David means the same thing as the Kingdom of God, of which it was a prefiguration in the Old Testament. Further it is said that if the Lord deigns to open the doors of this kingdom to anyone, no one can hinder this, and the contrary likewise.] And this is made quite clear in the Gospels in the promises made to Peter. For Jesus said, *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* Since the key signifies authority, when



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he says *He who has the key of David* it is clear that just as David ruled the physical Israel, so in addition to the physical Israel, I also rule the spiritual Israel. However, to be sure, the distinction of authority differs by an incomparable superiority. For what equality does humankind have with God? And this is the good news that the holy angel, Gabriel, proclaimed to the Virgin concerning the Lord: *And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of David, his father, and He will rule over the house of Jacob forever: and of His kingdom there will be no end.* Therefore, since Christ possessed a likeness to the kingdom of David, it is appropriate that he says *He who has the key of David.* Then, remaining with the image of the key he adds, *who will open and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.* For it is God that justifies. Who is to condemn? Who can justify? For *to open* and *to close* simply mean to *justify* and *to condemn.* *I know your works,* he says, for they are pious, and *I have given* to you the *open door* of blessings. And he repeats what he had said: *Who opens and no one shuts.* And so, no one will close that open door that I have given.

I know, he says, *that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.* Philadelphia was a small city and therefore possessed but little power. Nonetheless, by keeping the faith of Christ, it rose above its own strength, and one undaunted to live among those who trouble the faithful. [Archbishop Averky writes: This church has not renounced the Name of Jesus before the satanic synagogue of its Jewish persecutors nor the firmness of the faith of the Philadelphians which could not be broken by the Judaizing false teachers.] Then, as a reward for their genuine sincerity toward Him, He promises that many on the Jewish registry will come to her and accept the faith of Christ. For this is what it means for them to worship at her feet, namely, in the last days to choose to be enrolled in the church, that is, to be a part of the church. And the prophet also joyfully spoke of this, *I have chosen to be thrown aside in the house of my God rather than to dwell in the tents of sinners (Psalm 83:10 Lxx).* Since, therefore, you have in patient suffering preserved my faith, also *I will keep you from the hour of the evil trial.* He is speaking of the persecution that occurred against the Christians under the emperor Domitian. As Eusebius reports in his *Ecclesiastical History* and in his *Chronikon Canon*, Domitian was the second persecutor of the Christians after Nero, and it was under this emperor that the holy Evangelist [St. John] was condemned to live on the tiny and barren island of Patmos.

And he says, *I am coming soon* in order to help you. *Hold fast what you have, so that no one may take your crown.* And what is it that you are to hold fast? Clearly one's genuine love for the Lord, in which, should you contend to the end, you will obtain the crown of life. For the victors' prizes go only to those who remain to the end. And I will make him who conquers temptations to rejoice always in the vision of God, for this is what it means to become a pillar of the divine temple. For certainly the pillar would not leave for no reason the place in which it is established.

And I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, namely, of the heavenly Jerusalem, and the new name. Through these names he reveals the joy of God, the dwelling in the midst of good things and the blessedness that they will have in the coming age. The *new name* has never been heard anywhere, which the saints, who reign with Christ and who

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are called *friends* and *brethren* and *servants* will obtain. But the new name transcends even these designations. For these names [former designations] are written in holy Scripture and have been heard by the human ear. But the new name has been unnamed in every place. And that he says *of my God* suggests that He does not deem Himself unworthy of the limitations of His condescension or of the humility of His human nature. For if he disdained these things, who would have compelled Him to be personally united to the flesh and so to fashion our salvation? To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 3:14-22 *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue [spit] thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*



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Archbishop Averky, pp. 97-8: Laodicia is the 7th and last of the churches to which the Lord writes in the Apocalypse. “And He does not utter a single favorable word, but has much to say by way of accusation. He reproaches it for the fact that it is neither hot nor cold, and therefore He threatens to spit it forth from His mouth like lukewarm water which causes nausea. Despite the opinionated self-confidence of the Laodiceans in their moral perfections, the Lord calls them wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, exhorting them to take care to cover their nakedness and to heal their blindness. At the same time He calls them to repentance, saying that with love He stands at the door of the heart of everyone who repents and is ready to come to him with His mercies and forgiveness of everything. The one who overcomes his pride and in general his own more infirmities the Lord promises to place together with Himself on His throne.

“Laodicea, now called by the Turks, *”Eski-Gissar,”* that is, *”Ancient Fortress,”* is in Phrygia [western Turkey] on the river Likos, near the city of Colossae. In antiquity it was famous for its trade, fertility of its soil, and its domestic animals. Its population was very numerous and wealthy; of this there are testimonies of the excavations at which there have been found many precious pieces of sculpture, fragments of luxurious marble decorations, pedestals, baskets, etc. One may suppose that it was its wealth that made the Laodicians so lukewarm to the Christian faith, for which the city was subjected to the chastisement of God--its total destruction and desolation by the Turks.”

Chilton, pp. 132-3: “The wealthiest city in the region, Laodicea was another important center of emperor worship. In His message to the [bishop] of this church, Christ identifies Himself [as *the Amen. אמן*]. This is a familiar word to all [us Orthodox]. We repeat it at the close of [the Creed, psalms], and prayers. It is generally understood to mean *So be it*; but in actual force, in terms of the theology of the Bible, it is much stronger. It is really an oath: to say *Amen* [in the Old Testament really] means to call down upon oneself the curses of [breaking] the Covenant” [which were given by the Lord to warn Israel of the consequences of not obeying the Law that they had agreed to follow, cf. Num. 5:21-22; Deut. 27:15-16, Neh. 5:12-13].

3:14 *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

Chilton, p. 133 : “Thus the One who speaks to Laodicea is [אמן] *the Amen*, the great guarantor of the Covenant, the infallible Witness, who is Truth Himself, with all the authority possessed [as] Creator and King of the universe. And He has come to bear testimony against His church.

3:15 *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue [spit] thee out of my mouth.*

Chilton, p. 134: “Laodicea was *lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold*. This has often been interpreted as if *hot* meant *godly enthusiasm* and *cold* meant *ungodly antagonism*, but there is another explanation which suits the historical and geographical context better. Laodicea was situated between two other important cities, Colossae and Hieropolis. Colossae, wedged into a narrow valley in the shadow of towering mountains, was watered by icy streams which tumbled down from the heights. In contrast, Hieropolis was famous for its hot mineral springs which

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flowed out of the city and across a high plain until it cascaded down a cliff which faced Laodicea. By the time the water reached the valley floor, it was lukewarm, putrid, and nauseating. At Colossae, therefore, one could be refreshed with clear, cold, invigorating drinking water; at Hieropolis, one could be healed by bathing in its hot mineral-laden pools. But at Laodicea, the waters were neither *hot* (for health) nor *cold* (for drinking).

“In other words, the basic accusation against Laodicea is that it is ineffectual, good for nothing. The Laodicean church brings neither a cure for the illness nor a drink to soothe dry lips and parched throats. The sort of Christianity represented by Laodicea is worthless. The church provided ”neither refreshment for the spiritually weary, nor healing for the spiritually sick. It was totally ineffective, and thus distasteful to its Lord.”

[Is this not the type of Church that Fr. George (Jiri) Jan told us about a couple of years ago, when he described the types of people in Greece who were coming to the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Fili, Greece because the new calendar priests were not filling their spiritual needs and, as confessors, had ceased giving patristic counsel? These new calendar orthodox parishioners were not being given living water to refresh their spiritual weariness, nor being counseled by priests of the state churches of Greece with true Orthodox spiritual medicine for healing their spiritual illnesses. Consequently, the new calendar orthodox people were being irresistibly drawn in greater numbers to our Monastery in Fili, overrunning Fili’s resources, requiring additional help from the local GOC parishes. There they found grace of God is poured forth in the love, worship, counseling, prayer, and mysteries of the Church, infusing them with the light and life of Christ through his faithful servants. Obviously this was not happening in Laodicea, with the self-satisfaction and complacency of the priest and the church members there.]. Why the self-satisfaction and complacency?

3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Chilton, 135-6: “The city of Laodicea was proud of its three outstanding characteristics: its **great wealth** and financial independence as an important banking center; its textile industry, which produced ‘a very fine quality of world famous **black**, glossy wool’; and its scientific community, renowned not only for its prestigious medical school, but also for an eyesalve (called “Phyrgian Powder”) which had been known from the days of Aristotle [384 BC-322 BC].” This powder was made from Phyrgian rock.”

Æcumenius, p. 127: “And what is the reason for this situation: You place your hope he says, in the uncertainty of riches and choke the gift of God as thou it were among thorns. For you did not listen to him who said, *Should wealth increase, do not set your heart on it (Psalm 61:11 Lxx)*. He calls *riches* anything that is earthly and temporary. You do not know that *you are poor and naked* of those spiritual realities that endure. *I counsel you, therefore, to buy god refined in fire that you may be rich*. The prophet teaches what that god is which is refined by the fire of the Spirit when he says, *The words of the Lord are pure words, silver refined by fire,*

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proven in an earthen furnace and purified seven times. In this way he spoke of the proclamation of the gospel. And therefore he gives this advice: seek *from me* that which is able to make you wise and cause you to live near to God. For one who possesses this will be aglow in virtue and will be cleansed in soul and body. This is the meaning of the new white robe.

“And buy from me *salve to anoint your eyes that you might see.* Jeremiah spoke reproachfully to some who were blind concerning the spiritual light of the Lord and said, *Behold, neither your eyes nor your heart is whole (Jeremiah 22:17).* And so he advises that they undertake the cure of repentance for such blindness, just as the barren fig tree received imprompt through the application of manure and inexpensive treatments.”

[Should we in the True Orthodox Church not rejoice in the richness of our True Orthodox faith, the very faith of the Apostles, the living waters that are welling up within her; should we not rejoice in the garb of righteousness that the Church affords us through, that we put on after we cast off the garb of our own life, not only at baptism, but throughout our life through repentance and works of faith; and should we not rejoice that Christ has opened up our eyes to get a glimpse of the Heavenly Kingdom, that we might strive to enter the narrow gate that leads to life?]

3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Æcumenius, p. 127: “Those whom I love, he says, *reprove and chastise.* Oh, the superabundant greatness of the love of Christ! He promises to love those who are such as the passage describes. Therefore, when He reproves and chastises, He is eager to improve their works and bring repentance to those who have sinned. *Behold,* he says, *I stand at the door, and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.* Here the Lord reveals His own humble and peaceful nature. The devil *with hatcher and hammer,* smashes the doors of those who do not receive him, as the prophet said (Psalm 73:6 Lxx), but the Lord even now in the Song of Songs says to the bride, *Open to me, my sister, my bride* (Song of Songs 5:2). And should someone open to Him, He will come it, but if not, He will go away. That supper that is with the Lord signifies the reception of the holy mysteries.”

3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Æcumenius, pp. 127-8: “*The throne,* indicates the kingdom and the rest of the coming age. Therefore, He says that those who have conquered the enemy *will be glorified with me and will rule with me (Romans 8:17).* When He says, *as I myself have conquered,* He is speaking in a human manner on account of the assumption of the flesh. For God the Word did not acquire the kingdom as a prize for virtue, for He has this essentially as an eternal possession. For it this were not so, He would not be able to share it with others. But according to the Theologian and the *son of thunder,* He shared from His fullness with all the saints (John 1:16). For this reason

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also He promised to His holy apostles that they would sit on twelve thrones and judge the future twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28, Luke 22:30). For when He Who is God and the eternal King became man for us, He shared everything that is ours, except only sin (Hebrews 4:5), and shared everything of His with those who had conquered the devil as it was possible for human nature to receive. Therefore, having made a cloud the chariot of His ascension into heaven, He said through the apostle that the saints would be snatched up to meet Him on the clouds (Acts 1:9, 1 Thess 4:12). And when He, Who is the Creator and Lord of creation, shall come as judge, He will allow the Saints to judge those who had rebelled against the truly divine and blessed service. As the apostle says, *Do you not know that we are to judge angels (1 Cor 6:3)?* that is, the principalities of the darkness. Since, therefore, we have such a benefactor of humankind as judge, let us be zealous to receive His favor, fulfilling at all times the word of Solomon: *Let your garments be always white (Eccl 9:8)*, not making them filthy through evil deeds. For in this way, having decorated our souls in a way fit for marriage, we shall present ourselves lovely for union with the King, and we shall receive the eternal blessings in Christ, our God, the supplier of these things, with whom glory honor, and worship be to the Father, together with the all-holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.”