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MARY OF MAGDALA and SILICON VALLEY'S *Homo Deus* ^[1]

The era in which we live is characterized as the Fourth Industrial Revolution and is being propagated as the Anthropocene Epoch. This is a new phase of the human species, no longer called Homo Sapiens, but Homo Deus-Anthropotheos- according to G. Harari, author of a book with the same title; there is a certain prevailing aspiration, that through «genetic engineering, regenerative medicine and nanotechnology, this [species] will finally cheat death decade after decade, rejuvenating aged tissues and upgrading hands, eyes and brain, initially extending life expectancy». No longer is death treated as a consequence of the «fall»=(failure and disruption of human function and happiness) but as a «technical» problem. Under the banner of «eternal youth», a «beauty industry» has already been set up with huge profits for certain companies, but also high «costs», not only financial but mainly psychological, especially for the modern «myrrh bearer» woman. Particularly in South Korea, which is presented to the Western World as a «model» of a combination of Tradition and Super Genius (HiTech-Singularity), this explosion of technology and

«industry» has pushed the «anthropocene» into «man + void»: into the «monster» that is depression, and the «void» - an abyss of suicides. Even from the first few pages of the Bible, we see the development of two kinds of death: the first (physical) and the second (spiritual). Harari himself emphasizes that eventually people in the future may be non-mortal but not immortal!), and he doubts whether this will lead to bliss, as the most likely outcome is boredom -boredom and depression.

And this is precisely the challenge for Christianity, which from the very beginning speaks of renewal rather than novelty. It is now called upon to make use of the «meta» of Zuckerberg and Silicon Valley to introduce the «New Man» not merely into the biological «after Christ» but into an «after Christ» Society.

For the last twenty centuries, Christianity, unlike philosophy and psychotherapy, has not been launching nice «theosis prescriptions», but has been promoting the imitation of and co-existence with a specific Person: the God-Man Lord J e s u s - Deus Homo.



His resurrection introduces the «here and now» not a mere «upgrade», but the regeneration, renewal of life, which is not «life after death» (as Harari claims, confusing Christianity with Platonism) but «life without death». This life is not experienced by solitary «upgraded» people, but by a community that comes together to celebrate by eating and drinking from the same Cup, the Body and Blood of the Messiah. The «Christ is Risen Our Joy, the gospel of the Gospels, is not addressed to a few «chosen» technocrats: «On the contrary, those whom the world regards as fools, God chose them to put to shame the wise in the end; and those whom the world regards as powerless, God chose them to put to shame in the end those who are mighty in the world; and those whom the world regards as miserable and despised, God chose them, the nobodies, to abolish those who think they are something» (1 Cor. :1 27-28)[2]. Moreover, it has been experienced for centuries that: the Risen One did not appear to those who crucified Him in order to punish them, and indeed He brings forth new and joyful People (such as St. Porphyrios) not by means of «upgrading» but rather through «wounds» and martyrdom: «And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong.»(2 Cor. 12: 7-10).

In my opinion, these are the two most emblematic passages of the Pauline Epistles. If Dostoevsky had argued about the parable of the Prodigal Son that, even if all the Gospels were lost and this one was saved, then the Gospel of the Lord would survive, I believe the same is true of the Pauline Epistles. Even if they were



lost, the two verses above would convey to us the spirit of the Apostle of the Gentiles, who inspired the «three hierarchs» of our days (Anastasios of Albania, Demetrius the former of America, and Soterios Trampas of Pisidia, the former of Korea, who when faced with critical dilemmas always asked: What would Paul do in this regard?). I would like to focus on how the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus truly defeats the innermost mechanisms of fear and the pyramid of any authority, which for the Bible is not something established but a product of «sin» and the game «hide and seek» that man plays from his birth with pain, guilt and death.

In the earliest confession of faith, delivered to us «verbatim» by Paul in 1 Corinthians (15:3-8), the Risen Lord «appears first to Cephas, then to the Twelve.... And last of all, He appeared to me also a s of one born out of due time.». With the four Evangelists, however, the following is the case: they write at least a decade after Paul and disagree with each other on several points concerning the view of the empty tomb and the appearances of the Risen Lord. This is because they are indeed describing an authentic event, absolutely shocking. After all, none of the canonical Gospels claim that anyone saw the very event (the time and circumstances of the Lord's

rising from the tomb. That is why in Orthodox iconography the moment of Christ's Resurrection is never depicted, but the events before and after the Resurrection are depicted.

And yet all four Evangelists agree on one (point): the first creatures who heard the shocking message from an angel (= messenger) were not Cephas and the Twelve (who were now numerically eleven) but were women (who were then considered unreliable witnesses in the courts of law), known as «Myrrh-bearers».

Although at first, as John Mark emphatically notes in his «open epilogue», «they were possessed by terror and fear. And they said nothing to anyone, being afraid» (Mk. 16:8), eventually these women became the «Apostles of the Apostles». And this happened even though their message was initially considered by the male disciples to be a delirium.

It should be noted that the Lord, during His Risen Lord «appears first to Cephas, then to the Twelve... And last of all, He appeared to me also as one born out of due time.». With the four Evangelists, however, the following is the case: they write at least a decade after Paul and disagree with each other on several points concerning the view of the empty tomb and the appearances of the Risen Lord. This is because earthly activity, had female disciples, unlike the majority of rabbis, who interpreted the Scriptures in «closed quarters» (without roaming around) to predominantly men, claiming that «anyone who teaches his daughter the Torah is like someone who teaches her lust [3]. In synagogues, women sat in a separate place from men, in a small room, since they were considered 'unclean' during menstruation.» Of course, then (during Jesus' earthly ministry), women disciples did not have from their Lord the authority to preach, exorcise and heal as the male disciples did. They «served» (= supporting materially and spiritually) the circle of the Twelve, who had also left their jobs and their homes. But in John (4:5-42), the Samaritan woman, who was living with the «sixth» man, after her dialogue with the Incarnate one who was weary with fatigue from the

midday heat (12.00 noon when, according to Rabbinic tradition, the «tragic» dialogue between Eve and the «serpent» took place), she emerges as a «bright» «apostle» and martyr, stirring up her entire city to visit Christ, who eventually stays there for three days.

In addition, all four Evangelists agree that the first eyewitness is Mary of Magdala. She -especially in the Gospel of the Beloved (= John 20:11-18)- runs in the morning, before dawn, and at the end she hears the «Do not touch me» at the place of the Skull, which now -after the torrents of water and blood that have run from the «side of the new Adam»- is «painted» as the garden of the New Eden. «In the interval between [the time] when Mary Magdalene faces Jesus in the tomb, and when she runs and announces the good news to the disciples, and shares the good news with them, Mary Magdalene was the Church. For that one hour or two, Mary Magdalene was the only one who knew about the Resurrection which made her for that time the Church.»

Sotiris Despotis
Professor at the University of Athens

[1] For Magdalene I used material from the chapter of the same name in D. Gibson, & M. M. McKinley, *The Jesus Code*. Athens: Heaven 2016, which I had the true pleasure of translating in 2016.

[2] «That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.» 1 (Cor. 1:29-31) [KJV]

[3] Torah: is the name of the Law in Judaism, the teachings Moses gave to the Jews at the Pentateuch. («Better that the words of the Torah should be burned than that one should entrust them to a woman!» declared the 1st century Rabbi Eliezer.

Visit to Ansan to Support the Parents of the Students of the MV Sewol Accident

On Monday, April 1, 2024, Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan, accompanied by Fr. Antonios Lim and theologian Eleni Cho, visited Ansan City, upon invitation, to meet with representatives of the student's parents at the "4/16 Sewol Families for Truth and A Safer Society" office, who drowned on April 16, 2014, in the tragic maritime accident while traveling on a student excursion on the MV Sewol, in which 304 passengers, including 250 students from Danwon High School, died unjustly.

The parents respectfully received the members of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea and reported to them two demands, which unfortunately have not yet been met after ten years: firstly, that the case be cleared up and that justice be done for those responsible for the accident. And secondly, the creation of a cemetery on a site near the high school, so that all the classmates can be buried together because they are buried in different places.

The representatives of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea listened with great attention to the parents' just demands and promised to do everything possible in their power to satisfy their demands, contacting the local City Hall and asking that the demands of the aggrieved parents be respected. They also informed them that they would hold a memorial service in which they would commemorate the names of all the students. The memorial service was decided to be held on Sunday 14 April.

After the meeting with the representatives of the parents, the representatives of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea visited the plot of land where the parents are asking for the cemetery, which has been named "4/16 Life and Safer Park", and the Exhibition of personal items of the victims, which are housed at the Ansan Arts Center, under the title: Special Exhibition of Memory Items for the 10th Anniversary of the Sewol Ferry Disaster.



A new page in the Mission of Oceania

The Church of Christ was born on the day of Pentecost with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the heads of the Holy Apostles and transformed them from mere fishermen into fishers of men.

In turn, the Holy Apostles imparted Divine Grace to their disciples and they in turn imparted it to their own disciples. Since then, the presence of the Grace of the Triune God in the world and in humans takes place through the Priesthood.

The Priesthood is the bearer of the holy spiritual heritage in our world and in humans.

Without the Priesthood there is no Church.

Without the Priesthood, Divine Grace is not transmitted through the Holy Sacraments of our Church.

Without the Priesthood there can be no continuity in the mission of the Church.

Without the Priesthood, Holiness becomes a distant dream for man.

The Church exists where the Priesthood is active.



The above thoughts come to mind this Easter, the last Easter in which the four priests ordained by the Metropolitan Amphilochios (Tsoukos) were the bearers of the Priesthood in the islands and in the Mission of the Pacific Ocean.

As of the day of the Resurrection 2024, whether due to death, sickness or infirmity,





none of Father Barnabas, Father Panagiotis, Father George and Father Bartholomew will be in the churches of Fiji, Toga, and Samoa to teach, catechize, minister, bless, and sanctify.

Anew period begins for the Pacific mission. Our five children who are preparing for the priesthood are not yet at an appropriate age and two of them have not yet finished their studies.

We would not want to interrupt the momentum of their education because of temporary liturgical needs and deprive the Church of the Pacific of future worthy and qualified priests.

Now, though, we are faced with the challenge of a shortage of priests. Father Alexios, who was ordained two years ago and is serving in Labasa, Fiji, remains the only local priest.

For the next two to three years at least, we need pious priests, experienced and well trained, enlightened by the Holy Spirit and willing to minister to our newly converted brothers and sisters.

We need Priests capable and experienced to responsibly bring the gospel of Christ to the islands.

Without Priesthood there is no Church.

Without Priests there is no Mission.

We appeal to your love in our efforts to find

the most valuable agent of the Mission, the Priest.

So, the work that has been accomplished these fifteen years may continue, and that there may be hope in the lives of our young brothers and sisters in Christ in the Pacific Ocean.

P.S. After Easter and for a period of six months, reputable craftsmen from Greece have been carrying out technical maintenance work in our Churches of Holy Trinity, Saint Paraskevi and Dormition of the Mother of God; replacing the roof of the missionary centre in Sabeto and carrying out repairs to the buildings of the orphanage of St. Tavitha and hospitality areas.

They are also preparing infrastructure for the construction of the nursery and school in Sabeto, and plan to go to Toga to complete the Church of St George which they themselves had erected.

This is the first large-scale maintenance carried out since the COVID pandemic. Your support and contribution will be a special blessing to the Church of Oceania.

We wish the Grace of the Holy Spirit to be ever present in your lives.

† **Myron, Metropolitan of New Zealand**

Group Baptisms Before Easter

On Lazarus Saturday, in the holy church of St. Maximos the Greek, Orthros and a Baptismal Divine Liturgy were celebrated, during which ten new members entered the Church of Christ through the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Chrismation.

Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan presided over the Holy Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist, co-officiating with the protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Fr. Roman Kavchak, and Fr. Anthony Lim.

After the end of the Baptismal Divine Liturgy, most of the participants attended the reception that followed in the Hall of the Missionary Center in honor of the new believers.

Also on Lazarus Saturday, a group Baptism was celebrated in the parish of St. Paul the Apostle in Incheon.

May the Risen Lord establish in faith our newly-baptized Korean and Slavic-speaking brothers and sisters, so that they may live Christ-filled lives in His uncreated Church on earth until the end of their lives.





Excursion to Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) at Yong-in

On Saturday of Bright Week, 11th May, members of “Syndesmos”, accompanied by Fr. Antonios Lim and the Metropolitan of Korea and Exarch of Japan Ambrosios, visited the campus of the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) at Yong-in.

There, the members of “Syndesmos” were guided around the University’s campus and experienced how the lessons at the Department of Greek Studies take place with His Eminence Ambrosios as a professor. Then, all together walked around the wonderful grounds of the University, the green hills, the river, and a big lake right in the middle of the campus’s grounds. The happy voices of the young visitors filled the air, and the bright faces made the day even more brilliant.

After the guided tour and the walk, the members of the team had a meal at a local restaurant. Around the tables, they gathered in

groups, and the food was combined with a nice chat and friendly socialization.

Last but not least, there was a football match organized. Everybody was enthusiastic and the friendship between the group members got stronger through fair play. After the end of the match, the group returned to Seoul to participate in the Great Vespers at St Nicholas’ Cathedral, giving thanks to God for this wonderful experience, and looking forward to an even better one in the near future.



The Crucifixion and Resurrection Pasha in the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea



On the afternoon of April 28, 2024, the Procession of the Bridegroom began, thus inaugurating this year's Holy Week, as well as the week of the Lord's Passion and His Resurrection.

Every day the arranged Holy Services were held, morning and afternoon, and the faithful came and took part in the Worship. Inside the churches, numerous young people stood out, who gave a sense of spiritual Spring with their presence and offered their help for the various preparations, such as in the cleaning of the church, the decoration of the Epitaph and anywhere else where it was needed. Thus, they received deservedly salary from God: **“Lord, sanctify those who love the dignity of your House”**.

The Services were accompanied by the choir, as they had long ago begun the preparation of the hymns for Holy Week and the Resurrection, and their labor was rewarded. The wonderful crucifixion hymns of the period resounded in the church and overwhelmed the souls of the

faithful, uniting the voice of man with that of Heaven. **“Glory to your condescension, only philanthropist”!**

The Service of the Bridegroom, the Last Supper, the Betrayal, the Immaculate Passions, the Epitaphic Lamentations... The solemnity, the emotion and, above all, the anticipation culminated. And there it is! **This Holy and blessed day, the first of the week, the king and master of all days**” has arrived. The churches in all the Parishes of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea are filled with people, not only Koreans but from many parts of the world, who heard the joyful call of the bell: **“Christ is Risen!”**.

Darkness... No sound... But suddenly a flash! **“Come and receive light”** and the churches are filled with hundreds of lighted candles and the dim torches flood the hearts with warmth. **“Christ is Risen!”**, **“Truly the Lord is Risen!”**(Korean, Russian, Greek, Romanian, English) resonates everywhere.

The Service of Orthros (Matins) and the Divine Liturgy of the Resurrection are held solemnly and the resurrection paean is heard over and over again sung by everyone: **“Christ is risen from the dead, having trampled on death and giving life to those in the graves”**. *All the nations You have established, O Lord, bow down before you, and glorify Your name...*” says the prophet David and one can see and hear it. The Resurrection of the Lord is a joy for everyone: *“With joy all things are fulfilled, the joy of Resurrection, as they received the knowledge of the Lord’s Resurrection.*

The Easter common meal of love is followed in a solemn atmosphere for the hundreds of believers participating in the Vespers of Love, during which the relevant Gospel passage was read in several languages.

Somewhere in the world, in a non-religious country, in a country where there are “saviors” everywhere, but nowhere salvation, where there are innumerable lights, but nowhere the Light... *“Now everything is filled with light”!* **Christ is Risen!**



The Spring International Food Festival 2024

On Sunday, May 26, 2024, the Spring International Food Festival was held, just as every year, in the courtyard of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Seoul, with the participation of many countries, including Korea, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Greece, Lebanon, America, and Canada.

The event began immediately after the end of the Divine Liturgy when many people gathered and formed queues in front of the stalls of each country.

Everything was perfectly organized, as everyone had contributed in his or her way. Some prepared the food, others set up the stalls and tents, while others helped by washing the cooking utensils. Among all the volunteers, the members of the Youth Association Syndesmos stood out, who worked extremely hard, gave up much of their time, and were powerfully present.

Their efforts were rewarded in the best way, as the festival was a great success. Throughout its duration, despite the adverse weather conditions, many people flocked to taste the delicious food and get to know the Orthodox Church.



We owe many thanks to all those who participated and contributed to the smooth running of the event, but also to those who honored us with their presence. We will renew the appointment for next time!





The second anniversary memorial service for the late Metropolitan Soterios

On June 9th (Sunday), the Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service were held at the Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Gapyeong, to mark the second anniversary of Metropolitan Sotirios' passing. Both Rev. Father Antonios Woo Jong-Hyun along with Father Jeremy Cho Kyung-Jin celebrated the Divine Liturgy and the Memorial Service. After the Service, the priests and the faithful went to the deceased's grave, held a brief memorial service, and paid tribute to his memory.

There were discussions by everyone present remembering the late Bishop Soterios, who devoted himself to the work of the Lord during his lifetime, taught and sacrificed himself as a father to his

spiritual children, and now offers endless intercessory prayers for us.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone, who cleaned and organized the inside and outside of the monastery for today's Memorial Service; to those who prepared flowers at the church and the gravesite; to those who prepared various foods for the attendees from the day before, and specially to everyone who did not hesitate to travel a long way to attend this event in honor of the late Metropolitan Soterios.

On the same day, the Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service were also held at each local Orthodox church in Korea.





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