



HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC LINK WITH GREECE

No. 58, December 2006–January 2007

EDITORS: Constantine Tzanos, S. Sakellarides

<http://www.helleniclinkmidwest.org>

22W415 McCarron Road - Glen Ellyn, IL 60137



Upcoming Events

Greek Thought and Western Christianity

On Sunday December 10, at 3:00 PM, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Professor Paul J. Griffiths, Schmitt Chair of Catholic Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago, in a lecture titled “*Greek Thought and Western Christianity*”. The event will be held at the Four Points Sheraton hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park (southeast corner of Irving Park Road and Mannheim Road)

Professor Griffiths will address, first, the reception and use of pre-Christian Greek philosophical thought by the early Western (Latin-using) Fathers of the Church, with special attention to Tertullian (second century), Ambrose (fourth century), and Augustine (fourth-fifth century). Some Latin Christians in this period were more positive than others in their evaluation of pagan Greek thought: Tertullian thought that Athens has nothing to do with Jerusalem, while Augustine thought that Plato was a reliable guide to truth. But in fact, Greek thought was essential for all Christian thinkers: Christian orthodoxy could not have taken shape without it.

Second, he will make some brief comments on the preservation of the Greek philosophical tradition by Muslims between the sixth and twelfth centuries, a period in which Latin Christians had effectively lost the knowledge of Greek. Then he will comment in a little more detail on the thirteenth-century recovery of Aristotle's thought in the Latin-using West, with special attention to Thomas Aquinas' use of Aristotle, and his joining of a modified Aristotelianism with an inherited neo-Platonism. This synthesis lies at the root of Catholic theology and philosophy from the thirteenth century until the present.

Finally, he will discuss the teaching of Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) and Pope Benedict XVI (2005-) on the question of the proper relations between faith and reason, and the significance of Greek thought for a proper evaluation of the powers of reason. At the end he will raise questions about whether Catholic Christianity is different from either Orthodox Christianity or Islam in the significance it gives to and the use it makes of Greek philosophical thought.

Paul J. Griffiths was born in England in 1955, and since 1980 he has lived mostly in the USA. He and his family were received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1996, having previously been Anglican. He received at the University of Oxford, England, a B.A. (first class honors) in Theology

(1978), and an M.Phil in Classical Indian Religion & Sanskrit (1980). In 1983 he was awarded a Ph.D in Buddhist Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and since then he has held faculty positions at several American universities, including the University of Notre Dame, the University of Chicago, and the University of Illinois at Chicago, where since 2000 he has held the Schmitt Chair in Catholic Studies.

He has published seven books as sole author and seven more as co-author or editor. The most recent are Reason and the Reasons of Faith [co-edited with Reinhard Hüter of Duke University], Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity, and Problems of Religious Diversity. He has also published many scholarly articles, translations, and book reviews. In a more popular vein he also writes and reviews frequently for Catholic journals of opinion (First Things, Commonweal, inter alia). Recent essays include: "Theology as a Science", "Goodbye, Naipaul", "Christ and Critical Theory", "Why Catholics Shouldn't Vote", and "Orwell for Christians". He is at the moment working on three books: (1) The Vice of Curiosity: An Essay on the Nature of Intellectual Appetite; (2) A Christian commentary on the Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi; (3) How Catholics Think: An Essay on Intellectual Style.

Annual Dinner Dance - Scholarship Awards

The Annual Dinner Dance, New Year Celebration, and Scholarship Awards of Hellenic Link–Midwest will be held on Saturday, January 20 2007, at the Four Point Sheraton Hotel, 10255 West Irving Road at Schiller Park. The proceeds from the Annual Dinner Dance are used to support the scholarships, cultural and educational programs, and all other activities of our organization. The generous support of our members and friends will be greatly appreciated. For tickets, \$70 for adults and \$45 for children and students (in advance), please call 847 498-3686, or contact any of the Board Members. If you wish to purchase tickets at the door on the night of the event, the price will be \$80.

In Brief

World's First Floating Desalination Platform

The Aegean Sea has the first floating desalination platform in the world, built entirely on Greek know-how. Its wind driven generator produces the energy needed to turn sea water into drinking water. It can operate in the most adverse weather conditions, and the platform can be moved to different islands to supply them with drinking water.

Each island has a different water supply and irrigation needs. Certain Aegean islands like Syros, Tinos, Mykonos, Serifos, Sifnos, Rhodes, Kos and Karpathos have satisfactory underground and surface water reserves and desalination units while others like Milos, Kimolos, Iraklia, Schoinousa, Simi, Halki, Patmos and Megisti have their water supply needs covered partly by the existing infrastructure or entirely by water supplies coming from other regions.

In northern Europe, offshore wind farms are gaining ground but there the sea is shallow for a long distance from the coasts and the windmill bases are being cemented to the bottom of the sea. The floating wind farms, however, can be the solution in the Mediterranean, Japan or the United States where the sea is deep and the winds very strong.

Bank of Greece's Report on Greek Economy

On October 10, 2006, the central bank of Greece presented its intermediate report on the Greek economy. The report said that economic developments are positive, there is a GDP growth rate of 3.8 %, and inflation is contained around last year's levels.

Unemployment remained at very high levels, and economic growth was not equally distributed among the population in the last 10-15 years; according to Eurostat, 20 percent of Greeks are poor, with their incomes at least 60 percent lower than the average national income.

Economic recovery in the Eurozone is more strongly based, while the European Central Bank has raised interest rates five times since December 2005, to 3.25 percent.

Greek economic growth this year (in fixed prices) is expected at around 3.8 %, up from 3.7 % in 2005, supported by strong growth in domestic demand and strong exports. Higher investments, after a small decline in 2005, reflected higher business investments and a recovery in investments on houses and of a public investments program. The average annual inflation is expected to reach 3.3 % this year, unchanged from 2005. The core inflation (excluding energy and non-processed food) is expected to fall to 2.8 % this year from 3.2 % in 2005. Greek inflation remained significantly higher compared with the Eurozone's average rate, further reducing the economy's international price competitiveness.

The Bank of Greece underlined the big gap currently prevailing between the average weighed interest rates on new bank loans and bank saving deposit rates. The gap was much larger than the Eurozone average.

The country's living standard continued to lag behind the EU-15 average despite a steady growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) the last 13 years, while poverty and inequality

indexes exceeded average EU rates, evidence that economic growth was not adequately distributed among the population.

The Greek economy continued to face serious challenges due to its structural weaknesses, reflected in the inflation, a high current accounts deficit (projected to reach 11 percent of GDP this year), high public debt and a high unemployment rate.

Private consumption was the main driving force behind the country's GDP growth since 2001, with business investments lagging far behind. The central bank said higher consumption was negatively affecting inflation, economic competitiveness and the country's external debt, thus affecting medium- and long-term economic growth prospects.

The Greek economy needs a transformation to ensure high growth rates in the future, based more on exports and business investments. The report urged for measures to boost national savings, mainly through reducing fiscal deficits. Economic transformation needs structural reforms to attract foreign direct investments, creation of large enterprises with exporting activities, to ensure the viability of the pension system, upgrading of education and promotion of research and technology, combating of bureaucracy and modernization of the civil administration. Combating corruption was also a necessary precondition, the report said.

From Our History

The Destruction Of Smyrna (September 1922)

My wife and I were at Sevdikeuy, a Greek village a few miles south of Smyrna on the Ottoman railway, when the news that the Greek army was meeting with serious reverses arrived. These rumors were not believed at first, until the official news was received that the Greek army had suffered a terrible and irretrievable defeat and that nothing now prevented the Turks from descending to the coast. The population began to leave, a few at first, then more and more until the flight developed into a veritable panic.

The town was fast filling with refugees from the interior. The majority of these refugees were small farmers who had lived on properties that had descended from father to son for many generations. Their forebears had settled in Asia Minor before the Turks had begun to develop into a nation. They were children of the soil, able to live and care for themselves in their little houses and on their few acres, each family with its cow, its donkey and its goat. They were even producing tobacco, figs, seedless raisins and other products for export. They were expert in the cultivation and manipulation of the better qualities of cigarette tobacco and the priceless raisins, of which latter Asia Minor produces the best quality in the world. This valuable farmer element, the very backbone of the prosperity of Asia Minor, had again been reduced to beggary and thrown upon American charity. They were arriving by

thousands in Smyrna and all along the seacoast. They were filling all the churches, schools and the yards of the Y.M. and Y.W.C.A. and the American mission schools. They were sleeping in the streets. Many were getting away during those first days on steamers and sailing craft. For the man whose heart has not suffered atrophy as a result of the Great War, the spectacle of great numbers of helpless little children was particularly moving. Unfortunately, atrophy of the human heart has been one of the most noticeable phenomena of the great Armageddon. Doctor Esther Lovejoy, of New York, used an expression with regard to certain Americans who were present during the scenes of suffering and outrage.

“Their minds did not seem to register”. Had she said “heart”, she would have been nearer the truth. The refugees carried with them as much of their belongings as their strength permitted and one often saw a little child sitting on top of a great bundle of bedding, the whole supported on the shoulders of some man or woman stumbling along.

Many of the refugees were carrying sick upon their shoulders. I remember especially one old gray-haired woman stumbling through the streets of Smyrna with an emaciated feverish son astride her neck. He was taller than the mother, his legs almost touching the ground.

Then the defeated, dusty, ragged Greek soldiers began to arrive, looking straight ahead, like men walking in their sleep. Great numbers — the more fortunate — were sitting on ancient Assyrian carts, descendants of the very primitive vehicles used in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

In a never-ending stream they poured through the town toward the point on the coast to which the Greek fleet had withdrawn. Silently as ghosts they went, looking neither to the right nor the left. Front time to time some soldier, his strength entirely spent, collapsed on the sidewalk or by a door. It was said that many of these were taken into houses and given civilian clothes and that thus some escaped. It was credibly reported that others whose strength failed them before they got into the city were found a few hours later with their throats cut. And now at last we heard that the Turks were moving on the town. There had been predictions that the Greek troops, on entering Smyrna, would burn it, but their conduct soon dispelled all such apprehensions. In fact the American, with the British, French and Italian delegates had called upon General Hadjianesti, the Greek commander-in-chief, to ask him what measures he could take to prevent acts of violence on the part of the disorganized Greek forces. He talked of a well-disciplined regiment from Thrace which he was expecting and which he promised to throw at as a screen to prevent straggling bands from entering the city and even of organizing a new resistance to the Turks, but could give the delegates no definite assurance. He was tall and thin, straight

as a ramrod, extremely well-groomed, with a pointed gray beard and the general air of an aristocrat. He was a handsome man, with the reputation of a lady-killer. That was the last time I saw him, but when I read later of his standing before a firing squad in Athens, I still retained a vivid mental picture of that last interview in the military headquarters in Smyrna. If it was he who was responsible for sending away the flower of his troops to threaten Constantinople at a time when they were most needed in Asia Minor, he deserved severe punishment or confinement in a lunatic asylum. He had the general reputation of being a megalomaniac, with not too great ability. What was needed was a man of energy with a clear understanding of the situation who would have taken hurried and wise measures to save as much as possible of the wreckage. But Hadjianesti was busy furnishing in gorgeous style and repairing a palace on the quay which he had requisitioned for a residence. He deserved to be pitied, for it is probable that he was not well-balanced mentally.

It was definitely asserted that the Turkish cavalry would enter the town on the morning of September 9 (1922). The Greek general staff and the high-commissioner with the entire civil administration were preparing to leave. The Greek gendarmes were still patrolling the streets and keeping order. These men had gained the confidence of every one in Smyrna and the entire occupied region by their general efficiency and good conduct. Whatever accusations may be substantiated against the Greek soldiers, nothing but praise can be said of the Greek gendarmes. The Greek officials all left. Mr. Sterghiades had but a few steps to go from his house to the sea where a ship was awaiting him. He had done his best to make good in an impossible situation. He had tried by every means in his power to make friends of the implacable Turks, and he had punished severely, sometimes with death, Greeks guilty of crimes against Turks. He founded a university at Smyrna, bringing from Germany a Greek professor with an international reputation to act as president.

One of the last Greeks I saw on the streets of Smyrna before the entry of the Turks was Professor Karatheodoris, president of the doomed university. With him departed the incarnation of Greek genius of culture and civilization in the Orient.

(To be continued)

From The Riches Of Our Cultural Heritage

Poetry by Yannis Ritsos

ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΣ

Είναι πολύ μακρινές οι γυναίκες. Τα σεντόνια τους μυρίζουν
καληνύχτα.

Ακουμπάνε το ψωμί στο τραπέζι για να μη νιώσουμε πως λείπουν.
Τότε καταλαβαίνουμε πως φταίξαμε. Σηκωνόμαστε απ' την καρέκλα
και λεμε

«Κουράστηκες πολύ σήμερα», η «ασε θ' αναψω εγω τη λάμπα».

Όταν ανάβουμε το σπέρτο, εκείνη στρέφει αργά πηγαίνοντας
με μιαν ανεξήγητη προσήλωση προς την κουζίνα. Η πλάτη της
είναι ένα πικραμένο βουναλάκι φορτωμένο με πολλούς νεκρούς—
τους νεκρούς της φαμίλιας, τούς δικούς της νεκρούς και τον δικό
σου.

Ακούς το βήμα της να τρίζει στα παλιά σανίδια
ακούς τα πιάτα να κλαίει στην πιατοθήκη κ' ύστερα ακούγεται
το τραίνο που παίρνει τους φαντάρους για το μέτωπο.

ΟΙ ΤΑΦΟΙ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΓΟΝΩΝ ΜΑΣ

Έπρεπε να φυλάμε τους νεκρούς μας και τη δύναμή τους, μήπως
καμιάν ώρα

οι αντίπαλοί μας τους ξεθάψουν και τούς πάρουν μαζί τους. Και
τότε,

χωρίς τη δική τους προστασία, διπλά θα κινδυνεύουμε. Πως πια θα
ζούσαμε

χωρίς τα σπίτια, τα έπιπλά μας, τα χωράφια μας, χωρίς προπάντων,
τους τάφους των προγόνων μας, πολεμιστών η σοφών? Ας
θυμηθούμε

πως οι Σπαρτιάτες κλέψανε τα οστά του Ορέστη απ' την Τεγέα. Θα
έπρεπε

ποτέ οι εχθροί μας να μην ξέρουν πού τους έχουμε θαμμένους.

Όμως

πώς θα μπορούσαμε ποτέ να ξέρουμε ποιοί 'ναι οι εχθροί μας
ή πότε και απο πού θα εμφανιστούν? Όχι λοιπόν μεγαλόπρεπα
μνήματα,

όχι φανταχτερά στολίδια—αυτά κινούν την προσοχή και το φθόνο.

Οι νεκροί μας δεν τα 'χουν διόλου ανάγκη, ολιγαρκείς, σεμνοί κι
αμίλητοι τώρα,

αδιαφορούν για το υδρομέλι, τ' αναθήματα, τις μάταιες δόξες..
Κάλλιο

μιά σκέτη πέτρα και μιά γλάστρα γεράνια, μυστικό σημάδι,
ή και καθόλου. Σαν πιάτο σίγουρο, νάν τους κρατούμε εντός μας, αν
μπορούμε,

κι ακόμη πιάτο καλά μήτε κι εμείς να μη γνωρίζουμε πού κείνται.

Έτσι πού γίνανε τα πράγματα στα χρόνια μας—ποιός ξέρει—
μπορεί και οι ίδιοι εμείς νάν τους ξεθάβαμε, νάν τούς πετούσαμε μια
μέρα.

WOMEN

Women are very distant. Their sheets smell of “good night.”
They set the bread down on the table so that we don't feel
they're absent.

Then we recognize that it was our fault. We get up out of the
chair and say:

“You worked awfully hard today,” or “Forget it, I'll light the
lamp.”

When we strike the match, she turns slowly and moves off
with inexplicable concentration toward the kitchen. Her back
is a bitterly sad hill loaded with many dead —
the family's dead, her dead, your own death.

You hear her footsteps creak on the old floorboards,
hear the dishes cry in the rack, and then you hear
the train that's taking the soldiers to the front.

THE TOMBS OF OUR ANCESTORS

We ought to protect our dead and their power in case
someday our adversaries disinter them and carry them
off. Then,

without their protection, our danger would double. How
could we go on living

without our houses, our furniture, our fields, especially
without

the tombs of our ancestral warriors and wise men? Let's not
forget

how the Spartans stole the bones of Orestes from Tegea. Our
enemies

should never know where we've buried our dead. But

how are we ever to know who our enemies are

or when and from where they might show up? So no grand
monuments,

no gaudy decorations—things like that draw attention, stir
envy. Our dead

have no need of that; satisfied with little, unassuming and
silent now,

they're indifferent to honey-liquor, votive offerings, futile
glory. Better

a plain stone and a pot of geraniums, a secret sign,

or even nothing at all. For safety's sake, we might do well
to hold them inside us if we can,

or better still, not even know where they lie.

The way things have turned out in our time, who knows,
we ourselves might dig them up, throw them out someday.