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May the Phos (Light) be With You (Andrew Estocin)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Popular culture is going to go crazy for Star Wars in the coming months. Count me among the millions of people who cannot wait for the latest installment of Star Wars entitled, The Force Awakens!

George Lucas' Star Wars films have captured the imagination of generations both young and old. Growing-up as the son of an Orthodox Priest, one of the fondest memories I have as a child is that of my father taking me to see Star Wars: A New Hope as a young child. My father knew what many good Orthodox parents have always known and that is that great stories about man and the choices he makes can lead us to Truth.

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Now, I am not saying that Star Wars is some type of modern replacement for the Tradition of Orthodox Christianity. This is hardly the case. However one of the most progressive beliefs that the Orthodox Church holds is that we can learn from the wisdom of the world even when it is not specifically Orthodox. St. Basil the Great reminds us that we can all engage secular culture and extract Truth from it. The fourth century Father of the Church writes:

“For just as bees know how to extract honey from flowers, which to men are agreeable only for their fragrance and color, even so here also those who look for something more than pleasure and enjoyment in such writers may derive profit for their souls...For the bees do not visit all the flowers without discrimination, nor indeed do they seek to carry away entire those upon which they light, but rather, having taken so much as is adapted to their needs, they let the rest go. So we, if wise, shall take from heathen books whatever befits us and is allied to the truth, and shall pass over the rest. And just as in culling roses we avoid the thorns, from such writings as these we will gather everything useful, and guard against the noxious. So, from the very beginning, we must examine each of their teachings, to harmonize it with our ultimate purpose.” (Advice to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature)

St. Basil’s words ring true not only for ancient Greek philosophers but also for today’s popular culture. Orthodox Christians can find Truth in the world in which we live because it is created as good by God.

Can Orthodox Christians follow St. Basil’s words and take “whatever befits us and is allied to the truth” from the Star Wars movies?

You bet! As Fr. Thomas Hopko writes, “God is not a prisoner of his own Church!” Therefore to find what is good and true in Star Wars, all we need to do is to strive to see the world through the eyes of the Church and practice some common sense discernment.

With that in mind, welcome to the first installment of *“May The Phos (τὸ φῶς) Be with You: Christian Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in the Star Wars Movies.”* This article is the first in a series that follows the guidance of St. Basil the Great and reflects on what is true and false in the Star Wars movies.

As you see from the title of this series, the first stop on this journey is to take the concept of *“The Force”* in Star Wars and replace it with the Greek phrase from the Gospel of John *The Phos (τὸ φῶς)* which means *“The Light”*.

This leads us to our first lesson in Orthodox discernment from Star Wars.

For Orthodox Christians life is about The Phos (τὸ φῶς) (The Light) not “The Force”.

The world of Star Wars revolves around a mysterious energy field called “The Force” that is a type of secret knowledge and impersonal power that controls the

world and guides human destiny.

Jedi Master Yoda describes what “The Force” to Luke Skywalker in the following video clip:

What would St. Basil Say about Yoda’s description of “The Force”? I am confident that St. Basil would love the character of Yoda but he would chuckle and say that the idea of “The Force” is something the Church has addressed and corrected in the 4th Century. Maybe he would even say that he is surprised this ancient error is still around in the year 2015!

St. Basil would say “The Force” is just the error of Gnosticism dressed up in new and fancy clothes.

So what is Gnosticism and why should Orthodox Christians care about it?

Gnosticism is an ancient error that some early Christians mistakenly embraced. In words of Robert Baron:

“Gnosticism was, and is, a multi-headed beast, but one of its major tenets is that matter is a fallen, inferior form of being, produced by a low-level deity. The soul is trapped in matter, and the whole point of the spiritual life is to acquire the gnosis(secret knowledge) requisite to facilitate an escape of the soul from the body.”

“The Force” for Yoda is something created by life, that grows and rejects “crude” matter. “The Force” is something we control through our feelings as a type of special knowledge and power.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a form of secret knowledge or power but Love and Truth for all human beings and creation. In this light, Orthodox Christianity has always held that matter and creation and are always good. Orthodox Christianity strives to reveal the holiness of the material world not reject it. Everything in the Church today from icons and incense to the sacraments revolves around this. All of this is accomplished because of and through The Phos (τὸ φῶς) who is Jesus Christ.

Consider the following words from the Gospel of John:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light (The Phos τὸ φῶς) of all mankind.” (John 1:1-5)

Therefore The Phos (τὸ φῶς) is not some secret knowledge or energy field we control. It is the uncreated Word of God and second person of the Holy Trinity who came into creation by becoming human. The Phos (τὸ φῶς) is the person Jesus Christ who humbly took on our material and created nature so that we can share in His Divine life. For Orthodox Christians, God is not a mysterious or secret force that is a type of impersonal power. For Orthodox Christians, God is a person whose love and life teaches us what it means to be human through humility, sacrifice and love. God is The Phos (τὸ φῶς) who sanctifies everything in His creation by humbling himself and bearing our burdens. Think about it, “The Force” is a Power to be wielded while The Phos (τὸ φῶς) is the Love of a Divine Person that turns the world upside down through humility and powerlessness.

So next time you hear the phrase “May the Force Be with You!” think about The Phos (τὸ φῶς) that is Jesus Christ. He makes everything in the world good as well as new. He asks us to treat our bodies and the created world as holy. He asks us to honor everything He has created and respect its inherent design. He asks us to be his co-workers and help direct the world onto the path of God’s Love. He asks us not to learn a secret knowledge but to share His Love and truth with everyone without exception or exclusion. In this light, the words “May The Phos (τὸ φῶς) Be With You” take on a completely different meaning.

In closing, consider the following words from the Nicene Creed that Orthodox Christians recite every Sunday:

I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father through Whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

As well as the following prayer:

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere and fillest all things; Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life – come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

As you can see in the end, it is The Phos (τὸ φῶς) not “The Force” that truly is “everywhere present and fillest all things”

So next time you watch an episode of Star Wars with your friends and family be

sure to let them know about the real Phosthat is the light of world and the Orthodox Church that has been teaching His way and reflecting this uncreated Light for over two-thousand years.

Watch for the Next Installment of May The Phos (τὸ φῶς) Be With You!

Coming Soon on OCN!

Source: myocn.net

