

# Why Christianity mustn't change (Saint Theophan the Recluse)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



## Why shouldn't Christianity change with the times?

*Saint Theophan wrote this on the Sunday after the Nativity, 29 December 1863 and his words are as apposite today as they were then.*

The times have changed!

How happy I was to hear this. This means that you're listening carefully to what I say, and not only that you're listening, but also that you're determined to abide by it. What more could we desire, those of us who preach as we were ordered to and what we were ordered to?

Aside from all this, I can in no way agree with your opinion and I consider it my duty to comment on and correct it, because (despite the fact that it perhaps goes against your will and conviction) it originates from a sinful source. As though Christianity could do away with its doctrines, its canons, its sanctifying ceremonies

in order to respond to the spirit of each era and, by altering itself to the changing tastes of the children of this age, could add or subtract something.



But it's not like this. Christianity needs to remain eternally unchanged, without depending at all upon or being led by the spirit of each age. On the contrary, Christianity has been given the task of governing and guiding the spirit of the age for those who obey its admonitions. In order to convince you of this, allow me to relay a few thoughts for your consideration.

Some have said that my teaching is strict. First of all, my teaching is not mine, nor should it be. From this sacred position, no one should or can, preach their own teaching. If, then, I or someone else ever dares to do this, you can have us removed from the church.

We preach the teaching of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, His holy Apostles and of the Holy Church which is guided by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, we take care in every possible way to maintain this teaching completely intact and inviolate in your mind and heart.

We present each thought and we use each word very carefully, so that we do not overshadow in any way this brilliant and divine teaching. No-one can act in any other way.

Such a law, which declares that a sermon preached in church is sent by God, has been established since the creation of the world, and thus has to remain in force until the end of the world. After passing down the commandments of God Himself to the people of Israel, the Prophet Moses, concluded as follows: 'You shall not add to the word I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, all that I command you today' (Deuteronomy 4:2).

This law of consistency is so unchangeable that even our Lord and Saviour Himself, when teaching the crowds on the mount said, 'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled' (Matthew 5, 17-18).

Then He gave the same authority to His own teaching, before interpreting the commandments in the spirit of the Gospel, by adding: 'Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 5, 19).

This means that each person who incorrectly interprets the commandments of God and reduces their importance, will be disowned in the life to come. This is what He said at the beginning of His preaching. He confirmed the same to Saint John the Theologian, the beholder of ineffable revelations, to whom He described the final judgement of the world and of the Church, indicating in the Apocalypse [Book of Revelation]: 'For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book' (Revelation 22:18-19).

For the entire duration of time in which He mediates, from His first advent into the world until His second coming, Christ gave to His holy Apostles and to their successors the following law: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..., teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you' (Matthew 28,19).

This means: 'Teach, not what would be possible for someone else to think up, but what I have ordered, and this until the end of the world'. And He adds: 'and behold,

I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen' (Matthew 28, 20).

The Apostles received this commandment and sacrificed their lives in order to abide by it. And to those who wanted to force them not to preach all that they were preaching and who threatened them with punishments and death, they answered: 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard' (Acts 4, 19-20).

This clear commandment was passed down by the Apostles to their successors, was accepted by the latter and has withstood the test of time within the Church of God. It's because of this commandment that the Church is the pillar and the foundation of truth. Therefore you see what inviolate stability it has? After this, who would be so bold as to move or to keep prodding at anything in the Christian doctrine and law?

Then listen to what's presented in the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, who for seven days found himself in ecstasy of prayer and after seven days heard the word of the Lord: 'Son of man, I made you a watchman for the house of Israel, and you will hear a word from My mouth' (Ezekiel 3,17). And he spoke out to the people: 'Here is the law for you! If you see a lawless person committing iniquity and you do not tell him to leave his iniquity and change his ways, "that lawless man shall die in his unrighteousness; but his blood I will require at your hand"' (Ezek. 3:18). However, 'if you warn the lawless, and he does not turn from his lawlessness, nor from his way, that lawless man shall die in his unrighteousness; but you will have delivered your soul. Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits a transgression, and I put him to the test, he shall die, because you did not give him explicit warning. He shall die in his sins, and his righteous deeds which he did shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you explicitly warn the righteous man not to sin, and he does not sin, the righteous man shall live, because you explicitly warned him; and you will deliver your own soul' (Ezek. 3:19-21).

What a strict law! And yet, it resounds in the consciences of all the shepherds at their election and ordination, when a heavy yoke is placed upon them: that is to herd the flock of Christ which He has entrusted to them, be it large or small. And they aren't only to herd it but to sustain it, also. How can someone be so arrogant as to distort anything at all in the law of Christ when this would result in the destruction of both the pastors and the flock?