

7th July 2009

His Eminence Bishop Daniel of Dacia Felix

[...]

[Part of transcript missing due to sound-related problems.]

In my capacity as Orthodox bishop I believe [this meeting] must reveal in our midst the Messiah. We must see in this monastery the well of Jacob, we must place ourselves in the position of the Samaritan woman, we must hear Jesus revealing Himself to us as the Messiah – the Christ, today, here and now; we must let Him reveal to us certain aspects of the Messianic Jewish Movement, we must let Him enlighten us as to how the dialogue between this movement and the Orthodox Church at large, and the Romanian Orthodox in particular, is to proceed.

In the second half of the sixth century AD pope Gregory the Great was planning, from his see in Rome, how to win England for Christ. Similarly, towards the end of the ninth century AD, at Constantinople, Patriarch Photius was planning the conversion of the Slavs to Christ through the efforts of the Holy Apostles, or Equal-to-the-Apostles, Cyril and Methodius. We do not claim to compare Neamts either with Rome or with Constantinople; we do not mean to claim that in the few days of our assembly here we can plan out the conversion of Israel, as a whole, to Christ. This is a plan beyond our ken; but not beyond God's ken. This is one of God's ultimate plans for history and for the world, the return of Israel to Christ, the re-encounter of Israel with Christ, the acknowledging of Christ by Israel as her Messiah. As members of the Orthodox Church from among the Gentiles, we can do nothing but contemplate this plan that is beginning to unfold. And personally I believe and I confess that it is neither through the Catholic Church, nor through the Orthodox Church that Israel shall come back to Christ; it is rather through this bridge, through the Movement of the Messianic Jews. This is why I believe that we are made contemporary with this work of the Holy Spirit precisely through the Messianic Jewish Movement. Although you may be but a small flock, only approximately 10% of all the Jews in the world, remember that our Saviour tells us, in the Gospel according to Luke, "Do not fear, small flock!" And there has never been a smaller flock than the number of the twelve apostles; yet through these twelve Christ has conquered the world!

As regards the Messianic Jewish Movement, allow me to share a few reflections. As I see it, any movement presupposes a number of elements. This is not the moment to enter a discussion on the concept of movement as perceived by Saint Maxim the Confessor – inspired from the philosophy of Aristotle. However, any movement presupposes, to begin with,

an impulse. Secondly, it presupposes a direction; thirdly, an orbit; and fourthly, a purpose. The impulse for the Messianic Jewish Movement is the Holy Spirit. The moment when the Movement of the Messianic Jews was set in motion, or started, is the Pentecost, or the Descent of the Holy Spirit. The first spokesperson for the Movement of the Messianic Jews was St Ap Peter, at Pentecost. The Gospels and the Pauline Epistles, as well as the entire New Testament, is nothing other than the fruit of the Messianic Movement from the beginnings of Christianity and of the Church. It appears to me that the Messianic Movement is like a river, long concealed in the desert, which God is now calling to the surface after hundreds and hundreds of years. The direction of the Messianic Jewish Movement is no one other than the Messiah of Israel, Jesus Christ. A movement must have a direction, an orientation, a point of departure and a point of arrival. And the link between these points defines the direction. The direction of the Messianic Movements is the Messiah of Israel, and the orbit of this Messianic Movement – and here I suggest the image of our planet, the Earth, revolving around the Sun – is the divine revelation in the bosom and at the core of which moves, and will continue to move, the Movement of the Messianic Jews, in contact, in tangency with us, the Christians from among the Gentiles. The purpose of the Messianic Movement is the conversion of Israel, the salvation of Israel, and of us all, and the second coming of Christ. The topic of our meeting, here, these days, is "Reconciliation in the Messiah." Last year's topic was "Communion in the Messiah." It seems to me that the order of the two should have been reversed, as it is reconciliation in the Messiah that must happen first in order for communion in the Messiah to be made possible. But the one year that separates the two is probably of but little consequence.

As I see it, "Reconciliation in the Messiah" builds on the truth of the revelation in Genesis 33.

Having received the invitation to participate in this conference from Fr Vasile Mihoc, and learning the topic of our meeting, I immediately set out to search the Holy Scripture for places to support this topic.

So what I would like to remind you here of first is the momentous reconciliation between Pilate and Herod on the Friday of the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ. Pilate became reconciled with Herod by sending Jesus to Herod. Until that moment they had been enemies. But their reconciliation seems to me to have been a reconciliation not *in* the Messiah but *because of* the Messiah. For neither of the two received the Messiah, but rather allied themselves against the Messiah; this is not a model of reconciliation that we should follow.

The most prominent reconciliation between two persons in the Bible seems to me to be the reconciliation between Esau and Jacob. After 21 years spent in Mesopotamia, after having robbed him of his right of first-born, after having stolen from him the fatherly blessing of Isaac, after having fled away because of Esau's enmity, after having been made worthy of the revelation of Peniel - full of fear and trembling, Jacob meets Esau again. You are all well aware of the steps by which the two brothers came closer and became reconciled with each other: Jacob sends ahead his flocks, then his wives, then his children, and only then comes he. But after a lapse of 21 years God has changed Esau's heart, and their re-encounter and embrace is full of tears. Which is why their reconciliation also is final. I believe this is a reconciliation in the Messiah, whom they both were expecting, although in the Holy Scripture Esau is often the negative symbol, while Jacob is always the positive one. Extremely telling seem to me to be the words of the two brothers to each other. Jacob tells Esau that beholding his face was like beholding the face of God, and Esau tells him that he will adjust his pace to the pace of Jacob. These seem to me to be two fundamental conditions for reconciliation in the Messiah - Christ. To see in the other the face of God, and to adjust our pace to one another, in the rhythm of our reconciliation in Christ.

I do not mean to elaborate any further upon this subject; all I mean to do is bring it before your eyes for reflection. I consider that the role of the Messianic Movement of the Jews is that of mediating the reconciliation between Esau and Jacob. Esau and Jacob were both sons of Isaac and Rebecca. It may be that even today part of Israel is Jacob, and part of it, Esau. I believe that the Messianic Jews are represented by the image of Jacob. I do not mean to paste over those Jews who do not believe in Christ the label of Esau. What I would like to underline here is the fact that the Messianic Jews must hasten to meet those Jews who would also become Messianic. The right of the first-born belongs to the Messianic Jews. The blessing of Isaac is also yours. But it is together that we must prepare this moment - crucial and providential - of the reconciliation in the Messiah, both of the Church from among the Gentiles with the Church from among the Jews, as well as the reconciliation of all the nations of the earth, so that we may all be together the people of God.

Two, and respectively three, years ago I cited certain biblical images to describe the Messianic Jewish Movement. How is it, then, that I see now, at our fourth assembly, the Movement of the Messianic Jews? These days I have been pondering on the encounter between the Messiah - Christ and the high priest Caiaphas. Caiaphas's question and Christ's answer: "You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven..." - Christ's confession that caused Caiaphas to tear down his

vestments. The first part of the words of Christ has already found its fulfilment, as we see in the vision of St Archdeacon Stephen as he was standing before the Sanhedrin, when he saw the heavens opening and Jesus seated at the right hand of God, as in Acts 7:50 ff. The second part of Christ's words to Caiaphas has not yet been fulfilled, but is prophesied in the book of Revelation, which reads: "every eye will see Him... even those who have pierced Him." I would like to dwell a little bit upon the moment when Caiaphas tears down his high-priestly vestments before Christ, the Eternal High Priest. From a certain point of view, this gesture defines the denial by the Israel of those times of Christ. Certainly, seen from a certain angle, the tearing down of the clothes signifies the ending of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New, just like the tearing of the curtain of the Temple at the moment of the death of Christ on the cross. Now, my question is, is there a way of sewing back Caiaphas's high-priestly vestments, or not? Do we still need Caiaphas's vestments, or not? Does anyone still need them, or not? In the book of Acts we see St Ap Peter raising from the dead Tabitha of Joppa, who upon her death, and before being raised from the dead, left behind a great number of vestments made by her hand. The women believers in Joppa, most certainly Jewish, showed Peter innumerable vestments made by Tabitha's hands. The meek, the unassuming and the holy disciple of Christ from Joppa. Can it be, I wonder, that God raises Tabitha through the hands of St Peter so that Caiaphas's torn vestments may be repaired? This is, no doubt, a rhetorical, a symbolical and a spiritual question. Because I can see the Messianic Jewish Movement being prefigured in Tabitha. The Movement of the Messianic Jews must prepare vestments for Israel, just like those vestments made by Tabitha; the wedding vestment of Israel. This is why the mission of the Messianic Movements is huge, terrible, and all the more holy. I believe that the Messianic Jewish Movement has to repair Caiaphas's high-priestly vestments. Sew them back together thread by thread. So that there may be a full reconciliation between Christ and Caiaphas, between the Messiah and Israel, and between us all, at the foot of the cross of Christ.

In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in chapter 3, St Ap Paul speaks about the veil upon the hearts of the Jews who do not believe in Christ, and about how this veil is removed whenever a Jew returns to Christ and confesses Him as the Messiah. The Messianic Movement has the role of removing this veil from the heart of Israel. The Messianic Movement *is* Israel's true heart. The Messianic Movement fills the heart of Israel with the faith and the love of Christ - the Messiah. You all, our Messianic Jewish brothers, have your faces uncovered, and your hearts, released from this veil that the Apostle Paul talks about. You are, from those who have been called, the chosen ones; you are the dough that makes grow all the composition; you are the salt of the land of Israel, the salt of the seed of Israel, the salt of the

people of Israel. In this lies your blessing. And we, the Gentile Christians, can do nothing but attempt to decipher this sign of the times that you bear within yourselves, in your Movement, in your faith, in your prayers and singing, in your hope – which is also ours. I have recently come across two extremely interesting phrases: a Christianity on more voices and a Church with more bell-towers. This is the reality of our times. A Christianity on more voices, just like the chords of David's harp; a Church with more bell-towers, all of them, whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Messianic Jewish, proclaiming the resurrection of Christ and preparing the world for His second coming.

This is my word to you as an Orthodox bishop, this is the sign of my love and my esteem, and also the testimony of the fact that I perceive you as my brothers in Christ – the Messiah. And should the need arise I shall be your spokesman in the highest forum of the Romanian Orthodox Church, that is, the Holy Synod. And maybe, after all these yearly - friendly and brotherly - meetings, an official dialogue will also ensue.

Thank you.