



WORDS AND WORSHIP

This month's words: (*Soorp, Soorp...Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Host, Heaven and Earth are full of thy Glory.*)

Ask someone familiar with the *badarak* what hymns are most beautiful, and he or she is likely to answer that "Soorp Soorp" is one of them. The words above are taken from that hymn, but where do they come from originally, and what do they tell us about our form of worship, the Divine Liturgy?

The words come from the beginning of the sixth chapter of the Book of Isaiah. In those verses the prophet is describing his vision—a vision given to him by God—of the worship that takes place in heaven. Isaiah writes that he "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

Very often we in the Orthodox churches are asked where we get our form of worship. People wonder whether it was written by some monk somewhere, and depending on their own backgrounds they may object to the fact that it has a set form rather than being "spontaneous" and therefore supposedly more heartfelt.

These beautiful words of Isaiah give us some important answers to such questions. First of all, they show us that our worship is based on the worship that takes place in heaven itself, and which has been revealed to us by God in the Holy Scripture. Little wonder that "Soorp Soorp" is such a sweet-sounding piece of music; it is based on the song of the angels! By putting our worship in the form we have, we are following the Biblical model given to us by God Himself. Isaiah does not write that the seraphim worship God "spontaneously", saying or singing whatever they are moved at that moment to say or sing. No, the prophet tells us of

a patterned, formal worship in heaven. And that is why our own worship has pattern and form. Anyone who charges that our worship is "not Biblical" is simply less familiar with the Bible than he or she ought to be before making such a statement.

Does it occur to us, as we worship at the Divine Liturgy, what a privilege has been given to us? We are permitted, through God's gracious revelation of heaven to His prophet Isaiah, to pray and sing as the angels (seraphim) themselves do. What an immense gift from God! What a sign of God's love for His human creatures!

So at the very next Liturgy you attend, think about these things as you prepare for Holy Communion by singing "Soorp Soorp." Be assured that you are Biblically "right" in worshipping this way, and that you are following the pattern of worship revealed by God Himself. Most of all, thank Him for His gracious gift of possibility to sing the song of the angels right here on earth.

Because of You

Is anybody happier because you passed his way?
Does anyone remember that you spoke to him today?
Can you say tonight, in parting with the day that's slipping fast,
That you helped a single brother of the many that you passed?
Is a single heart rejoicing over what you did or said?
Does the man whose hopes were fading now with courage look ahead?
Did you leave a trail of kindness, or a scar of discontent?
As you close your eyes in slumber, do you think that God will say,
"You have earned one more tomorrow by the work you did today?"

Anonymous

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