

# To Our Readers

THE WHEEL is a journal of Orthodox Christian thought. It seeks to articulate the Gospel intelligently and constructively for the twenty-first century, a pluralistic era when the social identity of Christian faith and its role in public discourse present new and unique challenges. By embracing contributions on Orthodox theology, spirituality, and liturgical arts alongside serious engagements with the challenges of contemporary political ideologies, empirical science, and cultural modernism, this publication aims to move beyond the polarizations of much current debate in the Orthodox Church.

Our editorial mission is inspired by the early believers who transformed the pagan symbol of the wheel into the Christian acronym *ΙΧΘΥΣ* (see figures). Today, the wheel serves as a metaphor for a tradition that both grounds us and moves us forward. Such an understanding of church tradition is consonant with the description given by one of the great Orthodox thinkers of the last century, Vladimir Lossky:

*If the Scriptures and all that the Church can produce in words written or pronounced, in images or in symbols liturgical or otherwise, represent the differing modes of expression of the truth, tradition is the unique mode of receiving it. We say specifically unique mode and not uniform mode, for to Tradition in its pure notion there belongs nothing formal. It does not impose on human consciousness formal guarantees of the truths of faith, but gives access to the discovery of their inner evidence. It is not the content of Revelation, but the light that reveals it; it is not the word, but the living breath which makes the words heard at the same time as the silence from which it came; it is not the truth, but a communication of the Spirit of Truth, outside which the truth cannot be received. [...] It is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church.*

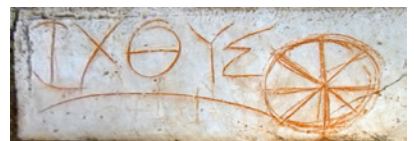
The thorniest problems of our time cry out for guidance from the Church's tradition, approached with the awareness of the multifaceted nature of truth that continues to be discovered and implemented over time through a process of prayer, creative reflection, and debate. Likewise, although the perspective of the editors is firmly rooted in the Orthodox Church, we welcome contributions from those outside its formal boundaries that challenge us to engage more deeply the living Gospel of Christ.

Our first issue considers the question of Orthodox identity. The following articles reflect on what it means to be a modern Orthodox Christian as revealed through works of art and the lives of the saints, how the contemporary Church has come to understand itself, and the realities of Christian participation in public dialogue.

We do not promise that the perspectives offered here will satisfy everyone, but we hope our readers will never retreat from prayerful, respectful efforts to discern God's hand in contemporary life. Indeed, our one editorial certainty is that living out the inexhaustible truth of the Cross and the empty tomb will continue to beckon the Church to hear and respond to the most radical and challenging of ideas without fear. ✱



The wheel symbol overlays the Greek letters *ΙΧΘΥΣ*, an acronym for *Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτήρ* (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior).



Christian graffito on a marble slab in Ephesus.