

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

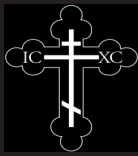
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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

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## INTERPRETATION OF THE JESUS PRAYER - LORD, HAVE MERCY!

*An extract from The Philokalia, Vol. 5*

On the importance of awareness and understanding in the prayer *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!* and, more concisely, *Lord, have mercy!* These prayers have been bequeathed to Christians from the time of the Apostles and it was decreed that they should constantly use these invocations, as also they do. However, while doing so, very few now know the meaning of *Lord, have mercy!* Therefore they invoke fruitlessly. They cry *Lord, have mercy!* but do not receive mercy from the Lord because they themselves do not know what they are seeking.

And so we must know: What kind of mercy from the Lord Jesus is this? What kind? Every kind: all that is needed by us in our present fallen state is in His right hand. For He, from the time when He was incarnated and became man, and endured such sufferings, and by the shedding of His most holy blood, redeemed man from the hands of the devil - from that time HE has become in some special way the Lord and Sovereign of human nature. Thus everything of ours is now in his hands.

The Lord was even before his incarnation, from the beginning, Lord of all, seen and unseen, as their Creator and Maker. According to their being so it is and will be, but not according to the free

activity of reasonable creatures. Devils and, after them, men, did not want of their own accord, to have Him as their Lord and Sovereign, and they detached themselves from Him who was the Ruler of all. For the All-gracious God, having created men and Angels independent and endowed them with reason, does not want to destroy this independence of theirs and rule over them by force, against their will.

Therefore, those who wish to be under the power and rule of God, over whom He rules and defends, but those who do not wish it, He leaves to do their own will as independent. That is why Adam, when seduced by the apostate devil, became an apostate from God and did not wish to obey His commandments. God left him to his free-will, not wishing to rule over him domineeringly. But the envious devil, having seduced him in the beginning, did not cease to seduce him further, until he had made him by his irrationality like senseless cattle and until he began to live like unreasoning animals.

Then the most merciful God took pity on him and bowed the heavens and came down to earth and became man for man's sake, and having redeemed him by His most pure blood, He provided a saving way of life for him, showed him in the holy Gospel how to please God, regenerated and recreated him by divine baptism, instituted heavenly nourishment for him in the most pure mysteries and, to speak briefly, with the sublimest wisdom, found means how He

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We remind our readers that this periodical is made possible through your donations and thus ask that you not forget your 2004 subscription contributions. Please refer to the top of the next page for contribution and payment information.

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Orthodox Heritage may, at times, bring up issues or present articles that some consider controversial. Such material is presented so that a distinction is made between salvation and the 20th century heresy of ecumenism. These are confusing times for the Orthodox faithful, and political correctness must be sacrificed so that His TRUTH be brought forth.

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could be inseparably with man and man with Him so that the devil should have no more place in man. But even after this He nevertheless forces no one, but leaves all free to accept the salvation that is offered to them or to perish. And so it goes: Some are saved; but others are negligent about salvation, some of whom do not believe the Gospel at all, while others believe but do not live according to the Gospel.

Those who are now Christians, after so many gifts of grace, after so many divine benefits, have again been seduced by the devil and by the action of the world and the flesh have been separated from God and have fallen under the yoke of slavery to sin and the devil, doing his will, but have not yet become quite insensible so as not to feel the evil that they have suffered, and understand their mistake and acknowledge the slavery into which they have fallen, but they do not see in themselves the power to be delivered from it - those have recourse to God and cry: Lord, have mercy, that the most merciful Lord may pity them and have mercy on them and accept them as the prodigal son and again grant them His divine grace and deliver them from slavery to sin, banish the devils from them and restore their freedom that in this way they may be able to live the rest of their life in a manner pleasing to God and keep the Divine commandments.

And so those Christians who with such an aim cry *Lord, have mercy!* are certainly granted the Divine mercy and receive grace to be delivered from slavery to sin and be saved. But those who have not at all the above thoughts and do not recognize the misery of their position and their slavery to the will of the flesh and worldly habits, and have not even time to think about their slavery, but without any such aim, simply from habit cry, Lord have mercy! - how can these receive the Divine mercy: and especially such amazing and infinite mercy? It is better for such people not to receive it than to receive it and lose it again, for then there would be a double sin.

I shall now explain to you by examples also. Imagine to yourself a man poor and destitute who wishes to receive alms from some rich person. What does he say when he comes to

the rich person? Something like: "Have mercy on me! Pity my poverty and set my life in order." Or someone has a debt and has nothing to pay it with. Wishing to be delivered from this burden he comes to the decision to ask his creditor to forgive him his debt. He approaches him and what does he say? Also simply: "Have mercy on me! Pity my poverty and forgive me the debt that I owe you." Similarly, when anyone is at fault in some matter before another and wishes to receive his forgiveness, what does he do? He comes to the person against whom he has sinned and says: "Have mercy of me! Forgive me for what I did against you."

All such people know what they are asking for and why they are asking, and they receive their petitions according to circumstances, and what they receive they turn to good account for themselves.

Now take on the other hand a sinner who is spiritually poor and in debt before God and has frequently offended Him. If he cries as if to God *Have mercy on Me!* but meanwhile does not understand what he is saying and why he is speaking, and does not even know what that mercy consists of which he wishes to receive from God and the use of it to him, but simply from habit cries *Lord, have mercy!* then how can God give him mercy when he cannot even recognize what he has received and therefore will not turn his attention to it and will make ill use of it or will augment still more that by which he became a sinner?

The mercy of God is nothing else but the grace of the Holy Spirit which we sinners must ask from God, unceasingly crying to Him: Have mercy on me! Show Thy mercy, my Lord, to me a sinner, in the pitiful state in which I am, and accept me again into Thy grace. Give me the Spirit of power that He may strengthen me in resisting the temptations of the devil and my sinful bad habits. Give me the Spirit of Counsel that I may become prudent and come to feeling and amend my life. Give me the Spirit of fear, that I may fear to offend Thee, and may fulfil Thy commandments. Give me the Spirit of peace, that I may guard the peace of my soul, and gather all my reasonings

and be quiet and untroubled by thoughts. Give me the Spirit of purity, that He may keep me pure from all defilement. Give me the Spirit of meekness, that I may be gentle-minded in my relations with my Christian brethren and restrained from anger. Give me the Spirit of humility, that I may not think highly of myself and that I may not be proud.

Whoever knows and feels how necessary is all that has been said and, asking it of the most merciful God, cries *Lord, have mercy!* will surely receive what he asks and be granted the mercy of God and His grace. But whoever knows nothing of what we have said and merely from habit cries *Lord, have mercy!* for him it is not possible to receive any mercy from God. For he had already previously received many mercies from God but he was unaware of it and did not thank God who gave him them. He received the Divine mercy when he was created and became a man. He received mercy when he was recreated in baptism and became an Orthodox Christian. He receive mercy when he was delivered from so many perils of soul and body which he experience in life. He received the Divine mercy every time he was granted to partake of the most pure Mysteries. He receive the mercy of God every time he sinned before God and grieved Him by His sins, and was not destroyed and not punished as was due. He received the Divine mercy when so many different benefits were bestowed on him by God, but either he was not aware of it or he forgot. How can such a Christian receive further mercy from God when he does not know and does not feel that he has received so many mercies from Him? And now even if he cries: *Lord, have mercy,* he does not know what he is saying and pronounces these words without any thought or aim, but simply from habit.



### ON ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE, CHRISTIAN LOVE, AND UNCANONICAL HIERARCHY

**T**he essence of love is truth -- love lives and thrives as truth. There can be no (ecumenical) 'dialogue of love' without the dialogue of truth. Otherwise, this dialogue is not true and is not natural. Accordingly, the commandment of the Apostle asks that love be genuine (Rom. 12:9). The heretico-humanistic separation of -- and detachment of -- love from truth is a sign of the lack of theanthropic faith, and a loss of theanthropic balance and common sense. At any rate, it was never - nor is it - the way of the Fathers."

Blessed Elder Justin Popovich

**U**nlawful (uncanonical) Archbishops should be disobeyed by priests and all the clergy and all the laity. By obeying they render themselves accomplices, and worthy of punishment for their guilt.

Saint Nikodemos the Athonite, *The Rudder*, pg. 1000

## AN ORTHODOX POSITION ON HARRY POTTER

By Aidenn Khan, *Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen*

**T**he Brotherhood of St. Poimen has recently received various letters and e-mails asking us to comment on the Harry Potter issue. For our readers who do not already know, Harry Potter is the fictional character created by J. K. Rowling for the Harry Potter series of books and films, designed primarily for children. Harry Potter's story is that of a youth raised in a school for sorcery who learns witchcraft with surprising speed and aptitude. He is portrayed as a so-called "good" witch (or warlock). Numerous articles have been written in favor or against the books in both purely literary and religious circles. Some Orthodox Christians have also taken part in these discussions from both sides of the fence. Some questions facing Orthodox Christians are the following:

1. Should anyone, especially an Orthodox Christian, read this series of books?
2. Is there such a thing as a "good witch" and is that relevant to the merit of a fictional story?
3. What is the proper Orthodox attitude toward these books?

It is the latter question which answers all of the former. The Harry Potter books are classed not simply as fiction but as fantasy literature. They use detailed imagery to produce an unreal picture in the imagination of the brain. The imagination has such a strong influence over mankind that we are warned by numerous Fathers of the Church to reject the images of dreams and scorn fantasies of the imagination in favor of what the Philokalic Fathers call "pure intellections," that is, abstract thinking free of images.

St. Hesychios of Jerusalem writes in the first volume of the *Philokalia*, "When there are no fantasies or mental images in the heart, the intellect is established in its true nature, ready to contemplate whatever is full of delight, spiritual, and close to God" (On Watchfulness and Holiness, #93). Here St. Hesychios is reflecting the patristic teaching that man, prior to his fall, had no use for imagination or fantasy. Imagination as we know it is a product of the fall.

But this is not to imply that we cannot use our imaginations to better our spiritual condition. Our Lord Jesus Christ made use of the powerful tool of imagery in His divine parables for the purpose of impressing upon our weak minds His eternal truths. St. Hesychios again comments, "Vaulting over all that lies between ourselves and death, we should always visualize it, and even the very bed on which we shall breathe our last, and everything else connected with it" (ibid, #95).

The Holy Fathers, in their perfect understanding of moderation and balance, advise us to limit as much as possible those things that stimulate the imagination and to be selective in what images we use to remind ourselves of the life beyond this life. It is for this very reason that icons are not painted in passionate forms, but written with symbolic imagery. Below

are additional comments from the Philokalic Fathers about imagery and imagination:

“In the time of contemplation we must keep our intellect free of all fantasy and image...”

St. Diadochos of Photiki

“The effect of observing the commandments is to free from passion our conceptual images of things. The effect of spiritual reading and contemplation is to detach the intellect from form and matter. It is this which gives rise to undistracted prayer.”

St. Maximos the Confessor

“The fifth form of discipline consists in spiritual prayer, prayer that is offered by the intellect and free from all thoughts. During such prayer the intellect is concentrated within the words spoken and, inexpressibly contrite, it abases itself before God, asking only that His will may be done in all its pursuits and conceptions. It does not pay attention to any thought, shape, colour, light, fire, or anything at all of this kind; but, conscious that it is watched by God and communing with Him alone, it is free from form, colour, and shape.”

St. Peter of Damaskos

Because it is precisely through the imagination that the evil one first attacks us in order to lead the soul captive, Orthodox Christians are to avoid as much as possible not only the Potter series but all fantasy literature.

Regarding so-called “good witchcraft,” be it known that any practice which seeks to manipulate future events according to the wish or whim of the practitioner -- whether his or her intentions are “good” or bad -- is always evil, since it does not account for and even contradicts the Divine Will. Harry Potter, therefore, is not appropriate for anyone to read. The books are intended as an initiation into the world of witchcraft. For anyone who doubts or denies this, let him visit a Barnes and Nobles or Borders bookstore and observe which books accompany Harry Potter on display: the series is surrounded by books about witchcraft aimed especially at teenage girls, and it is rarely, if ever, prominently displayed among other children’s books.

Those in favor of reading the Harry Potter series have criticized those against the series as being led astray by Protestant arguments. Orthodox Christians do not base their decisions on what Protestants have and have not said. Regardless of its source, an argument is either valid or invalid, either true or false. If a Protestant has spoken the truth regarding Harry Potter, we must commend him.

Those in favor of Harry Potter also insist that the books are good because they inspire children and adolescents to read. Pornographic material also inspires adolescents to read, but is it appropriate reading material? The last resort for the pro-Potters is to declare that the Three Holy Hierarchs insist that we should learn anything secular. This idea comes from a selective reading of these holy fathers. With a closer look at the text, any school boy could see that Sts. Basil, Gregory, and John all favor a selective reading of secular literature, especially those works dedicated to virtue, logic, and rhetoric. St. Basil even

gives a list of books to avoid. The “everything-secular-is-okay” argument, therefore, is based on false premises.

Of course, we cannot cover all objections in a short article. For this reason, St. Poimen’s Brotherhood is offering free of charge a booklet about the Harry Potter books. It covers a wide range of valid arguments, both Protestant and Orthodox. We encourage you to send us an e-mail or write to us for a free copy. If we do not already have it, please include your mailing address.

In conclusion, one very simple point in the debate is often sadly overlooked: on the great and terrible Day of Judgment, what will we say to our All-Merciful God when he asks us why we did not even read His commandments or pay any attention to the lives or writings of the divine men and women He sent to instruct us? “We left them, Lord, in favor of Harry Potter.”



## SCIENCE STUDIES THE JESUS PRAYER

*Originally published in Spirituality & Health -- The Soul / Body Connection, <http://www.SpiritualityHealth.com>*

Can seven words -- Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me -- change lives? It may seem a lot of effort over just seven words: Finding 110 Eastern Orthodox Christians, giving them a battery of tests ranging from psychology to theology to behavioral medicine, and then repeating the tests 30 days later. But the seven words -- “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” (aka the Jesus Prayer) -- are among the most enduring in history.

What Boston University psychologist George Stavros, Ph.D., wanted to find out was whether repeating the Jesus Prayer for ten minutes each day over the 30 days would affect these people’s relationship with God, their relationships with others, their faith maturity, and their “self-cohesion” (levels of depression, anxiety, hostility, and interpersonal sensitivity). In short, Stavros was asking whether the Jesus Prayer can play a special role in a person’s “journey to the heart.”

The answer -- at least on all the scales that showed any significant effect compared to the control group -- turned out to be a resounding yes. Repeating the contemplative prayer deepened the commitment of these Christians to a relationship with a transcendent reality. Not only that, it reduced depression, anxiety, hostility, and feelings of inferiority to others. So powerful were the psychological effects of the prayer that Stavros urges his colleagues to keep it in mind as a healing intervention for clients. He recommends that the prayer be used along with communal practices so that one’s relationship with God and others is “subtly and continuously tutored.” In other words, going inside to find God does not mean going it alone.

## Ἡ Ἐρχόμενη Ἀποστασία καὶ ἡ Ἀποφυγή τῆς

Γράφει ὁ Ἰωσήφ Χόστετλερ, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2003 (μερικὰ ἀπὸ τὰ περιεχόμενα τοῦ παρόντος ἄρθρου ἐξήχθησαν ἀπὸ τὶς ὁμιλίες τοῦ Πρ. Ἀθανασίου τοῦ Μυτιληναίου ἐπὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τῆς Ἀποκαλύψεως)

Ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχὴ τοῦ κόσμου, κάθε ἐποχὴ ἦταν μοναδική, καὶ χαρακτηρίζονταν ἀπὸ τὶς δικές τῆς νοοτροπίες καὶ ιδιοτροπίες. Ἡ ἐποχὴ μας, ὅμως, παρουσιάζει συγκεκριμένους παράγοντες ποὺ τὴν κάνουν νὰ ξεχωρίζει ὀλότιστα.

Ὁ Φρίντριχ Νίτσε, ἓνας σκεπτικιστὴς καὶ συγγραφέας ποὺ ἐξῆσε τὸν δέκατο ἔνατο αἰῶνα καὶ ὁ ὁποῖος κατεχόταν ἀπὸ ἓνα δαιμονικῶς ἐμπνευσμένο προφητικὸ χάρισμα, ἔγραψε ὅτι ἀφοῦ ὁ «Θεὸς εἶναι νεκρὸς» καὶ ὅτι «ἡ ἀλήθεια εἶναι σχετικὴ», «τὰ πάντα ἐπιτρέπονται». Τὰ λόγια του ἠχοῦσαν τὴν ἀλήθεια γιὰ πολλοὺς Εὐρωπαίους, διότι ἡ ἐμπειρία τους μὲ τὸν Θεὸ δὲν εἶχε ὑπαρξὴ καὶ ἡ ἐπικοινωνία τους μὲ τὸν Θεὸ γινόταν μὲσφ τοῦ αἰρετικοῦ Προτεσταντισμοῦ καὶ Παπισμοῦ, ὅπου ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔχει ξηρανθεῖ πρὸ πολλοῦ καιροῦ. Ἡ πορεία τοῦ αἰρετικοῦ δυτικοῦ ἀνθρώπου, μὲσφ τῆς παγκοσμιοποίησης, ἐξαπλώθηκε σὲ ὅλο τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἔτσι ἐπηρέασε ὅλη τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα, ἀκόμα καὶ ἐμᾶς τοὺς Ὁρθοδόξους.

Πῶς εἶναι δυνατὸν ὅμως οἱ ἄνθρωποι νὰ χάσουν τὴν πίστη τους πρὸς Τὸν Σωτῆρα τους; Πῶς μποροῦν ὀλόκληροι λαοὶ καὶ χώρες νὰ ἀπορρίψουν τὸν Ζωοδότῃ; Ἡ ἀπάντησις σὲ αὐτὸ τὸ καυτὸ ἐρώτημα τῆς ἐποχῆς μας εἶναι ἀπλή. Ἡ πίστις ἔχει ἐξαφανισθεῖ λόγφ τῆς ἔλλειψης τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ. Μὲ τὴν ὑπερηφάνεια καὶ μετὰ τὴν αἵρεσι, ὁ δυτικὸς ἄνθρωπος ἔχασε τὴν κοινωνία μὲ τὴν χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ, δηλαδὴ μὲ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν Θεὸ, ἀνοίγοντας τὴν πόρτα στὰ πνεύματα τοῦ ἀέρα, μὲ ἄλλα λόγια στοὺς δαίμονες. Δὲν ἔπαυσαν μόνο νὰ γνωρίζουν τὸν Θεὸ ἐμπειρικῶς, ἀλλὰ συγχέουν αὐτοὺς τοὺς δαίμονες ποὺ ἐμφανίζονται ὡς ἄγγελοι φωτὸς μὲ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν Χριστό!

Ὡς ἐκ τούτου, λοιπὸν, τὸ πρῶτο πράγμα ποὺ πρέπει νὰ καταλάβουμε σχετικὰ μὲ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα σήμερον εἶναι ὅτι, ἡ σύγχρονη πνευματικὴ κατάστασις ὀλόκληρου τοῦ κόσμου εἶναι τὸ ἀποκορύφωμα τῶν αἰώνων τῆς ἀποξένωσης ἀπὸ τὴν ἀληθινὴ Χριστιανισμὴν, κυρίως τοῦ δυτικοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Εἶναι γεγονὸς ὅτι προηγουμένως ἐπηρέαζε μόνο τὴν δυτικὴ Εὐρώπη, ἀλλὰ ἀργότερα ἡ ἐπιρροὴ ἐξαπλώθηκε σὲ ὀλόκληρο τὸν δυτικὸ πολιτισμὸ, καὶ τώρα πᾶ ἔχει μολύνει ὀλόκληρο τὸν κόσμον μὲ τὴν «μαγικὴ» τεχνολογία. Παρατηρεῖστε ὅτι δὲν ἀναφερόμεθα μόνο στὴν σύγχρονη Εὐρώπη ἢ μόνο στὸν δυτικὸ πολιτισμὸ, ἀλλὰ σὲ ὀλόκληρο τὸν κόσμον.

Αὐτὸ, λοιπὸν, εἶναι τὸ δευτέρου πράγμα ποὺ πρέπει νὰ ἀναγνωρίσουμε γιὰ τὴν κατάστασις σήμερον. Γιὰ πρώτη φορὰ στὴν ἱστορία τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος κάποιος μπορεῖ νὰ μιλάει γιὰ μία τόσο μεγάλῃ πνευματικὴ διαφθορὰ σὲ παγκόσμια κλίμακα. . . Ἡ παγκοσμιοποίησις εἶναι ἴσως τὸ πιὸ καθοριστικὸ γνῶρισμα τῆς ἐποχῆς μας καὶ κάτι ποὺ ξεχωρίζει ἀπὸ τὶς προηγούμενες ἐποχές. Καὶ γιὰ ἐμᾶς τοὺς

Χριστιανούς σημαίνει ὅτι μία ἀπὸ τὶς προϋποθέσεις γιὰ τὴν ἄμεση προσέγγισις τοῦ τέλους τῆς ἱστορίας ἔχει πᾶ παρουσιασθεῖ. Στὸ Βιβλίον τῆς Ἀποκάλυψης, διαβάσουμε τὰ ἐξῆς λόγια τοῦ Κυρίου πρὸς τὸν ἐπίσκοπον τῆς Φιλαδελφείας:

*Ὅτι ἐτήρησας τὸν λόγον τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου, καὶ γὰρ σε τηρήσω ἐκ τῆς ὥρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ τῆς μελλούσης ἔρχεσθαι ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης πειράσαι τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Ἐρχομαι ταχύ· κράτει ὃ ἔχεις, ἵνα μηδεὶς λάβῃ τὸν στέφανόν σου. (Ἀποκάλ. 3:10-11)*

Ἡ παγκοσμιοποίησις εἶναι μία προϋπόθεσις γιὰ τὴν ἔλευσις τῆς ἐποχῆς τοῦ Ἀντίχριστου, διότι ὅπως ἔχουν γράψει οἱ Πατέρες (κυρίως ὁ Ἄγ. Ἐφραίμ ὁ Σύρος καὶ ὁ Ἄγ. Ἀνδρέας τῆς Καισαρείας), καὶ ὅπως ὁ Κύριος γνωστοποιεῖ ἄνωθεν στὸν Ἐπίσκοπον Φιλαδελφείας, ὁ Ἀντίχριστος καὶ ὁ πειρασμὸς τῆς Ἀποστασίας ποὺ αὐτὸς φέρνει θὰ ἐπηρέαζι ὀλόκληρο τὸν κόσμον διότι ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ κυριαρχία του θὰ εἶναι παγκόσμια. Πρέπει λοιπὸν νὰ εἴμαστε ἔτοιμοι γιὰ κάθε πειρασμὸ. Καὶ τί εἶναι αὐτὸς ὁ πειρασμὸς ποὺ θὰ ἔρθι «ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης» καὶ ὁ ὁποῖος θὰ ἀφορᾶ πάντες τοὺς ἀνθρώπους;

Αὐτὸς εἶναι ἓνας πειρασμὸς ποὺ ξεκίνησε μὲ τὴν πρώτη παρουσία τοῦ Χριστοῦ στὴ γῆ καὶ θὰ κορυφωθεῖ στὴν παραμονὴ τῆς δευτέρας παρουσίας Του. Εἶναι ἓνας πειρασμὸς ποὺ προσπαθεῖ νὰ ξεθωριάσει τὸ Θεάνθρωπο πρόσωπον τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἐκεῖνο ποὺ ὁ Ἄρειος δὲν κατάφερε, στὴν ἐποχὴ μας, ὁ Οἰκουμενισμὸς πηγαίνει νὰ καταφέρει.

Ὁ Οἰκουμενισμὸς κατ' οὐσίαν προσβάλλει τὸ Θεάνθρωπο Πρόσωπον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τολμώντας καὶ θέλοντας νὰ τὸ ἐξαφανίσει. Ἀλλὰ ἂν πράγματι θέλει νὰ τὸ ἐξαφανίσει, κάτι ποὺ ὅπωςδήποτε ἐπιδιώκει νὰ κάνει ὁ Ἀντίχριστος, τότε τί ἀκριβῶς εἶναι ὁ Οἰκουμενισμὸς; Εἶναι μία ἀντίχριστος μέθοδος, ἓνας ἀντίχριστος τρόπος. Προσέξτε κάτι: ὅταν βγάζουν διαγγέλματα ὑψηλὰ ἱστάμενα πρόσωπα, δηλαδὴ μερικοὶ ἡγέτες τῆς ἐκκλησίας, δὲν ἀναφέρουν τὸν Ἅγιον Τριαδικὸν Θεόν, οὔτε ἀναφέρουν τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν. Ἀλλὰ, τί ἀναφέρουν; Ἀναφέρουν μόνο τὴν λέξι «Ὁ Θεός». Ἀλλὰ «Ὁ Θεός» εἶναι τάχα καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῶν μασόνων, καὶ τῶν εἰδωλολατρῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κάθε θρησκείας; Ἐνα τέτοιο «θεός» θὰ ἔχουν οἱ ὄπαδοι τῆς θρησκείας τοῦ μέλλοντος, οἱ ὄπαδοι τοῦ Ἀντίχριστου. Ἴδου ποὺ ὀδηγεῖ ἡ σαρκικὴ ἀγάπη γιὰ τὸν κόσμον τοῦτο καὶ ἡ ἀμέλεια γιὰ τὴν ὀρθὴ πίστις: στὴν ἀποστασία καὶ στὸν Ἀντίχριστο. Ὁ Χριστὸς θὰ τηρήσει, θὰ φυλάξει, τὴν ὥρα τοῦ πειρασμοῦ ΜΟΝΟ αὐτοὺς ποὺ ἔχουν πάρει τὴν ἀπόφασιν νὰ μείνουν κοντὰ εἰς τὸν ἀνόθευτον Χριστόν, δηλαδὴ αὐτοὺς ποὺ ἔχουν τηρήσει τὴν ὑπομονὴ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Μὲ τὴν παρουσία τοῦ Ἀντίχριστου οἱ θλίψεις θὰ ἔχουν κορυφωθεῖ. Καὶ μὲ τὴν παρουσία του, θὰ ὑπάρχει ἓνας τεράστιος πειρασμὸς ἐναντίον τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἠθικῆς ζωῆς. Ἀδικία, πόλεμος, πείνα, ἀρρώστιες... Ὁ Κύριος δὲν θὰ παρουσιασθεῖ πουθενά. Πολλοὶ θὰ σκανδαλισθοῦν διότι ὁ Κύριος δὲν θὰ παρουσιάζεται. Πολλοὶ λέγουν στὶς μέρες

μας: «Ποῦ εἶναι Ὁ Χριστός; Γιατί δὲν βάζει τὰ πράγματα στὴ θέση τους στὴν Ἐκκλησία, στὸν κόσμο;» Ἦδη στὴν Ἐκκλησία ὑπάρχει ἀφάνταστη ἀμαρτία ἀπὸ ἐμᾶς τοὺς Χριστιανούς. Ἄβυσσος κακοῦ ὑπάρχει ἐδῶ!»

Αὐτός, λοιπόν, εἶναι ἕνας μεγάλος πειρασμός -- ὅτι «Ὁ Χριστός μᾶς ἐγκατέλειψε». Ἀλλὰ πρῶτα ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν πολλῶν θὰ ψυχρανθεῖ. Καὶ αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ κρίση πού περνοῦν σήμερα οἱ Χριστιανοί -- ὅτι δὲν ἔχουμε πιά ἀγάπη γιὰ τὸν Χριστό. Καὶ ποιὸς εἶναι ὁ Χριστός; Ὁ Χριστός εἶναι Ἡ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ. Καὶ ἐμεῖς σήμερα, οἱ τάχα ὀπαδοί Του, καθημερινὰ ἀποδοκιμάζουμε τὸν Κύριό μας, τὸν Σωτήρα μας, τὸν Εὐσπλαγχο Χριστό μας. Ἡ ἐρώτηση πού ἀρμόζει γιὰ ἐμᾶς εἶναι: Ποιὸς θὰ μένει πιστὸς μέσα σὲ ὅλα αὐτὰ καὶ μέχρι τοῦ τέλους;

Ἄς κρατήσουμε αὐτὸ πού ἔχουμε. Τί ἔχουμε; Τὴν ὀρθή πίστη καὶ τὴν καλὴ ὁμολογία. Γιὰ αὐτούς, ὅμως, πού καταλαβαίνουν τὸν Χριστιανισμό μόνο ὡς κοινωνικὸ φαινόμενο, ἡ καλὴ ὁμολογία δὲν ἔχει καμμία σημασία ἢ νόημα. Χρειάζεται ἐπαγρύπνησις. Οἱ ἡμέρες μας εἶναι πονηρές... Ἄς προσέχουμε τοὺς ἑαυτούς μας!

*Βλέπετε ἑαυτούς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσητε τὴν εἰργασάμεθα ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβητε. Πᾶς ὁ προάγων καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει· ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδασκίᾳ, οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει. Εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ταύτην τὴν διδασκίαν οὐ φέρει, μὴ λαμβάνετε αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν καὶ χαιρεῖν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε.* (2 Ἰωάν. 1:8-10)

Ὁ Χριστός ἐρώτησε -- θὰ βρῶ πίστη ὅταν θὰ ἔρθω; Ὅχι «πίστη» γενικά, ἀλλὰ ὀρθή πίστη. Ὅταν ἐπιστρέψει ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, θὰ βρεῖ πίστη; Ὅλοι ἐμεῖς θὰ λέγαμε ὅτι ναί, θέλουμε νὰ μείνουμε στὴν ὀρθή πίστη, ἀλλὰ δὲν γίνεται μόνο ἔτσι, ἀπλῶς μὲ τὴν θέλησή μας. Ναί, πράγματι, δὲν ἀρκεῖ αὐτό. Πρέπει πρῶτα νὰ δημιουργήσουμε τίς ἀνάλογες προϋποθέσεις. Πρέπει νὰ ἐμβαθύνουμε τὸν ἑαυτόν μας πάρα πολὺ εἰς τὸν Λόγο τοῦ Θεοῦ. Πρέπει νὰ ἀποκτήσουμε πολὺ βαθιὰ γνωριμία μὲ τὸ Πρόσωπο τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὥστε ὅταν θὰ ἔρθει ὁ πειρασμός, καὶ θὰ ἔρθει ἀπὸ πάνω σὰν βροχὴ στὸ σπίτι τῆς πίστεώς μας, ἀπὸ ἀριστερὰ σὰν ἄνεμος, ἀπὸ κάτω σὰν ποτάμι, τότε τὸ δυναμωμένο σπίτι τῆς πίστεώς μας πρέπει νὰ τὸ ἀντέξει καὶ νὰ μὴ πέσει. Καὶ αὐτὸ θὰ γίνῃ μόνο καὶ μόνο ἂν στέκει πάνω ἀπὸ τὴν πέτρα πού λέγεται Χριστός. Πού σημαίνει ὅτι ἔχω προσωπικὴ γνωριμία μὲ τὸν Χριστόν, τὴν ζωὴ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ὄχι μόνο ὅτι τὸν βλέπω στὴν εἰκόνα καὶ καταλαβαίνω ὅτι εἶναι ὁ Χριστός. Αὐτὴ ἡ γνωριμία ὅμως προϋποθέτει δουλειά, πολὺ δουλειά, πάρα πολὺ δουλειά.

Μὲ τὸ τέλος τῆς ἱστορίας κοντά, καὶ μὲ τὴν ἐξάπλωση τοῦ προαναφερομένου πειρασμοῦ εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς γῆς, ἕνα τρίτο χαρακτηριστικὸ τῆς ἐποχῆς μας ἐμφανίζεται. Αὐτὸ εἶναι ἡ παρουσίαση μίας «νέας θρησκείας τοῦ μέλλοντος», ἢ μάλλον ἡ θρησκεία τοῦ Ἀντίχριστου.

*Ἔσται γὰρ καιρὸς ὅτε τῆς υἱαιουούσης διδασκαλίας οὐκ ἀνέξονται, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἑαυτοῖς ἐπισωρεύουσιν διδασκάλους κνηθόμενοι τὴν ἀκοήν, καὶ ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας τὴν ἀκοήν ἀποστρέφουσιν, ἐπὶ δὲ τοὺς μύθους ἐκτραπήσονται.* (2 Τιμόθ. 4:3-4)

Λόγω τοῦ ὅτι ὁ πειρασμός τῆς ἀποστασίας στὴν ἐποχὴ μας δὲν ἔχει καταβάλει μόνο ἕνα μικρὸ κομμάτι τοῦ κόσμου (ἢ μοναχὰ μίαν ὁμάδα ἀνθρώπων), αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Παύλου ἰσχύουν ὄχι ἀπλῶς γιὰ τοὺς ἑτερόδοξους, ἀλλὰ γιὰ καὶ γιὰ ὅλες τὶς θρησκείες. Δηλαδή, στὶς μέρες μας βλέπουμε νὰ ὑπάρχουν Ὀρθόδοξοι ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ κληρικοὶ πού ὄχι μόνο ἀποστρέφονται ἀπὸ τὴν ἀλήθεια ἀλλὰ καὶ δέχονται τοὺς μύθους τῶν θρησκειῶν, τῶν διαφορῶν ψευτοθεῶν. Ἔτσι πιά, τώρα ἐμφανίζεται μίαν ἐντελῶς νέα θρησκεία, μίαν παγκόσμια θρησκεία, πού ἀγκαλιάζει καὶ προσπαθεῖ νὰ ἐνώσει ὄχι μόνο ἐκείνους πού ἀποκαλοῦν τὸν Χριστὸ ὡς Σωτήρα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλους τοὺς κάθε μορφῆς αἰρετικούς, καὶ ἐπὶ πλέον τοὺς ὀπαδοὺς κάθε θρησκείας.

Ὅλες οἱ οἰκουμενιστικὲς συναντήσεις καὶ συνέδρια στὰ τελευταῖα πενήντα περίπου χρόνια, ἀλλὰ ἰδιαίτερος ἀπὸ τὸ 1990 καὶ μετὰ ἀπὸ τὴν συνάντηση στὸ Ἀσσίσι (ἐκεῖ πού συγκέντρωναν ὅλους τοὺς θρησκευτικούς ἡγέτες τοῦ κόσμου, ἀκόμα καὶ τὸν Πατριάρχη τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως), εἶναι πρόβες γιὰ τὸ ἀνοιγμα τοῦ μεγάλου θεάτρου. Τὸ ἐπόμενο βῆμα τῆς ἀποστασίας ἀπὸ τὸν Χριστὸ πού ξετυλίγεται εἶναι ἡ ἐνωσις τῶν θρησκειῶν. Καὶ ἐκεῖ πιά φτάσαμε... Λυπηρό, πολὺ λυπηρό, ἀλλὰ ἀληθέστατο!

Ἴδου τί λένε οἱ σημερινοὶ δοῦλοι τοῦ Ἀντίχριστου σὲ ἕνα Παπικὸ διαθρησκευτικὸ συνέδριο (μὲ Ὀρθόδοξους παρόντες) καὶ μὲ τίτλο «Τὸ Μέλλον τοῦ Θεοῦ», πού ἔγινε πρόσφατα στὴν Φατίμα, Πορτογαλίας: «Ἀπὸ τώρα, ὅλες οἱ θρησκείες τοῦ κόσμου θὰ δύναται νὰ μαζευτοῦν γιὰ νὰ προσκυνήσουν τοὺς διάφορους θεοὺς τους», «χωρὶς, δῆθεν, νὰ θέτουν σὲ κίνδυνο τὴν πίστη».

Οἱ παραδοσιακοὶ καθολικοὶ πού ἀντιτέθηκαν στὸ Συνέδριο χαρακτηρίστηκαν ἀπὸ τὸν κύριο ὁμιλητὴ ὡς παλαιομοδίτες, στενόμυαλοι, φανατικοὶ ἐξτρεμιστὲς καὶ προβοκάτορες. Ἐπέμενε, ὁ Παπικὸς θεολόγος, ὅτι οἱ θρησκείες τοῦ κόσμου πρέπει νὰ ἐνωθοῦν. «Ἡ θρησκεία τοῦ μέλλοντος θὰ εἶναι μίαν συγχώνευσις τῶν θρησκειῶν σ' ἕνα παγκόσμιο Χριστὸ πού θὰ ἱκανοποιεῖ τοὺς πάντες. Οἱ ἄλλες θρησκευτικὲς παραδόσεις εἶναι μέρος τῆς θείας Πρόνοιας γιὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα καὶ τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα ἐνεργεῖ καὶ εἶναι παρὼν στὸ Βουδισμό, Ἰνδουισμό καὶ στὰ ἄλλα «ἅγια» συγγράμματα τῆς Χριστιανικῆς καὶ μὴ Χριστιανικῆς δοξασίας. Ἡ παγκοσμιότητα τῆς Βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπιτρέπει αὐτό, καὶ αὐτὸ δὲν εἶναι τίποτε ἄλλο παρὰ μίαν διαφοροποιημένη μορφή τῆς συμμετοχῆς στὸ ἴδιο μυστήριον τῆς σωτηρίας. Στὸ τέλος ἐλπίζεται ὅτι ὁ Χριστιανὸς θὰ γίνῃ καλύτερος Χριστιανὸς καὶ ὁ Βουδιστὴς καλύτερος Βουδιστῆς.»

Τὸ κριτήριον ἐδῶ εἶναι κοινωνικὸ καὶ ὄχι σωτηριολογικόν. Πότε ἐμφανίστηκε μεγαλύτερη αἵρεσις ἀπὸ αὐτὴ ἐδῶ; Κατεβάζουμε τὸν Χριστιανισμό στὸ ἐπίπεδο τοῦ κοινωνικοῦ. Καὶ αὐτὸ δὲν φαίνεται μόνο μεταξὺ τῶν ἐπισκόπων, ἀλλὰ καὶ στὶς ἐνορίες, στὰ κηρύγματα, μὲ τὴν κατήχησις, καὶ τὶς ἠθικολογικὲς συνταγές. Ποῖος εἶναι ὁ κινητήριος μοχλὸς πίσω ἀπὸ τὴν δημιουργίαν μίας παγκόσμιας θρησκείας; Ἀπὸ

την άνοδο της τεχνολογίας και έπιστήμης, ό άνθρωπος έχει σήμερα στραφεί όλο και περισσότερο, προς την ύλική έπιτυχία και πρόοδο εις αυτόν τόν κόσμο. Σήμερα, λόγω της άγάπης της ύλης και πραγμάτων, ό άνθρωπος έχει ξεχάσει τόν άλλο κόσμο και, έπομένως, έχει χάσει όλο τó ενδιαφέρον του για τά θέματα της πίστewς, τού δόγματος, και της άληθείας πού άφορούν τόν Θεό.

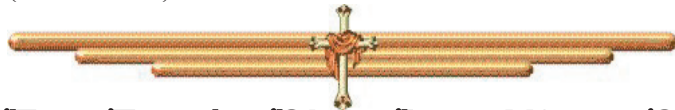
Άλλοίμονο σέ έμάς και σέ κάθε άλλο Όρθόδοξο πού κατέβασε τόν Χριστό και την Χριστιανoσύνη στο πολιτικό και κοινωνικό επίπεδο. Η Όρθόδοξος Χριστιανoσύνη δέν είναι θρησκεία αλλά άποτελεί την Άποκάλυψη τού Θεού εις τόν άμαρτωλό άνθρωπο. Οί θρησκευτές τού κόσμου, και τά μετ' αυτών πολλαπλά είδωλα, άποτελούν άπλά δημιουργήματα ανθρώπων. Πρέπει πάντα νά ένθυμούμεθα ότι ή Όρθόδοξος Χριστιανoσύνη είναι όντως, ή μία και μοναδική ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ! Έτσι λοιπόν, και πού μόνο θά κατεβάσουμε την Όρθοδοξία εις τó επίπεδο μίας άπλης θρησκείας, χειροποιήτου και όχι Θεοαποκαλυπτικής Άλήθειας, πέφτουμε σέ μεγίστη αίρεση και διακινδυνεύουμε την σωτηρία μας. Ο Άπόστολος έχει νά πεί τó έξής σέ αυτούς τούς ταλαίπωρους ανθρώπους της έποχής μας (μεταξύ τών όποιων και μερικοί ήγέτες της Όρθοδοξίας):

*Όταν λέγωσιν, Ειρήνη και ασφάλεια, τότε αιφνίδιος αυτοίς έφίσταται όλεθρος ώσπερ ή ώδιν τή έν γαστρι έχούση, και ού μη έκφύγωσιν. (1 Θεσσ. 5:3) Και,*

*Έγερθήσονται γάρ ψευδόχριστοι και ψευδοπροφήται και δώσουσι σημεία μαγάλα και τέρατα, ώστε πλανήσαι, ει δυνατόν, και τούς έκλεκτούς. (Ματθ. 24:24)*

Είθε οί λόγοι τού Κυρίου νά άντιλαοούν καθημερινώς στα αυτιά μας, ως άκριβώς Έκείνος μάς προειδοποίησε:

*Ό έχων ούς άκουσάτω τί τó πνεύμα λέγει ταίς εκκλησίαις. (Αποκάλ. 3:6)*



## Ένας Έναντίον Όλων, Άγιος Μάρκος Ό Εύγενικός

*ΠΗΓΗ: Περιοδικό Κυριακή, 19 Ιανουαρίου 2003, γράφει ό Σεβασμ. Μητροπολίτης πρώην Φλωρίνης κ.κ. Αυγουστίνος*

Σήμερα, 19 Ιανουαρίου, άγαπητοί μου, έορτάζει ό άγιος Μάρκος Έφεσού ό Εύγενικός. Στα εκκλησιαστικά βιβλία υπάρχουν και άλλοι Μάρκοι. Ένας είναι ό Ευαγγελιστής, πού έγραψε τó δεύτερο Ευαγγέλιο. Άλλος Μάρκος είναι ό άσκητής πού έζησε στην έρημο. Ό σημερινός λέγεται Μάρκος ό Εύγενικός, και ήταν μητροπολίτης Έφεσού.

Πότε έζησε; Λίγο προτού νά πέση ή Πόλις. Η Πόλις έπεσε 29 Μαΐου 1453, ήμέρα Τρίτη. Μερικά χρόνια πριν έζησε και έδρασε ό Άγιος Μάρκος. Ήταν χρόνια δύσκολα για τó γένος μας. Αυτοκράτωρ ήταν τότε ένας άδελφός τού Κωνσταντίνου τού Παλαιολόγου, ό Ιωάννης Παλαιολόγος. Αυτός συνεκάλεσε στο παλάτι σύσκεψη. Μαζευτήκανε στρατηγοί, ναύαρχοι, όλοι οί μεγάλοι, και έσκεπτοντο πώς θά σωθούνε από τόν κίνδυνο τών Τούρκων. Όλοι είπαν: Μόνονι μας δέν μπορούμε: πρέπει νά ζητήσουμε τή βοήθεια τών Ευ-

ρωπαϊών. Άλλά οί Ευρωπαίοι (Ιταλοί, Γάλλοι, Ίσπανοί, Γερμανοί...) δέν είναι Όρθόδοξοι. Πιστεύουν στον πάπα, και αυτόν προσκυνούν. Ήταν και τότε ό πάπας πανίσχυρος, γιατί έξουσίαζε όχι μόνο θρησκευτικώς, αλλά και πολιτικώς. Ότι ήθελε, έκανε. Άν έλεγε «πόλεμος», πόλεμος γινόταν· αν έλεγε «ειρήνη», ειρήνη. Έπρεπε, λοιπόν, νά πάνε στον πάπα και νά τόν παρακαλέσουν νά στείλη βοήθεια. Σηματοτίσθηκε, λοιπόν, μιá έπιτροπή. Εκκλησιαστικά μέλη της έπιτροπής ήταν ό πατριάρχης, ώρισμένοι μητροπολίται, και μεταξύ αυτών ό άγιος Μάρκος μητροπολίτης Έφεσού.

Τόν πήραν μαζί τους στην έπιτροπή, γιατί ήταν πολú μορφώμενος. Ήξερε την άγία Γραφή απέξω, ήξερε τούς πατέρες, ήξερε φιλοσοφία: ήταν ό πιό κατάλληλος νά κάνη συζήτηση με τούς δυτικούς. Μπήκαν σέ καράβι, για νά πάνε. Τώρα από την Πόλι φθάνεις στην Ρώμη με τó άεροπλάνο σέ δυό ώρες. Τότε, όμως, ήθελαν μήνες: νά περάσουν τó Δαρδανέλλια, τó Αιγαίο, κάτω από την Πελοπόννησο, για νά φθάσουν εκεί. Τά καράβια ήταν ιστοφόρα. Ξεκίνησαν, λοιπόν, και ύστερα από τέσσερις μήνες φθάσανε στην Ιταλία. Μόλις βγήκανε έξω, ό πάπας είχε την άξιασι, όλη ή έπιτροπή τών εκλεκτών Βυζαντινών με επί κεφαλής τόν αυτοκράτορα νά περάσουν νά τόν προσκυνήσουν, νά πέσουν στα πόδια του και νά φιλήσουν την παντόφλα του. Αυτοί τί άπάντησαν; «Εμείς άνθρωπο δέν προσκυνάμε: Τόν Θεό προσκυνάμε.» Και δέν άσπάσθηκαν την παντόφλα του.

Μέχρι και σήμερα, όποιος πάει στη Ρώμη νά δει τόν πάπα, πρέπει νά φιλήσει όχι τó χέρι αλλά τó πόδι του. Έμεις έχουμε συνήθεια νά φιλάμε τó χέρι τών κληρικών και τών μεγαλυτέρων· αλλά εκεί στη Ρώμη φιλάνε την παντόφλα τού πάπα.

Άρχισαν τέλος πάντων οί συζητήσεις. Σέ όλα είχαν διαφορές μεγάλες. Ποιές διαφορές; Μερικές είναι οί έξής: Έμεις στο βάπτισμα βυθίζουμε τόν βαπτιζόμενο στην κολυμβήθρα: πρέπει νά χωθή όλο τó κορμί στο νερό, νά μη μείνη τίποτε άσκεπαστο. Οί φράγκοι δέν βυθίζουν τó σώμα: μόνο τó ραντίζουν. Ένα αυτό. Τó δεύτερο. Έμεις κοινωνούμε σώμα και αίμα τού Χριστού μας. Αυτοί δίνουν μόνο «σώμα», την όστια όπως τή λένε. Τρίτον. Έμεις λέμε, ότι τó Πνεύμα τó άγιο έκπορευεται εκ τού Πατρός. Αυτοί προσθέτουν, ότι εκπορευεται «και εκ τού Υιού». Έμεις έχουμε τó Χριστό άρχηγό μας. Αυτοί λένε, ότι ό πάπας έχει τó «πρωτείο». Αυτές και άλλες άκόμα διαφορές ύπάρχουν μεταξύ μας. Και σ' αυτά τά σημεία έμεινε άνυποχώρητος ό άγιος Μάρκος.

Στó τέλος ό πάπας, όταν είδε τά δύσκολα, χρησιμοποίησε βία. Τους έθεσε σέ περιορισμό, τους άφησε νηστικούς μέρες ολόκληρες, τούς τυράννησε. Τότε τά μέλη της έπιτροπής, ό ένας κατόπιν τού άλλου ύποχώρησαν και άρχισαν νά ύπογράφουν την ένωση. Μόνον ένας δέν ύποχώρησε. Και αυτός ήταν ό Μάρκος ό Εύγενικός. Όταν ό πάπας έμαθε την άρνησί του, είπε: Άφοϋ δέν ύπέγραψε αυτός, «δέν κάναμε τίποτα». Δέν ύπέγραψε, και κινδύνευσε τά μέγιστα τότε. Με δυσκολία κατώρθωσε νά φύγη άβλαβής από τή Ρώμη και νά επιστρέψη στην Πόλι. Όταν έφτασε, βγήκε ό λαός και τόν ύποδέχθηκε. Γιατί ήταν ήρωας. Έμεινε άνυποχώρητος, ένας αυτός έναντίον όλων. Τιμούμε τόν άγιο Μάρκο τόν Εύγενικό. Γιατί αν δέν ήταν αυτός, έμεις τώρα θά ήμασταν

φράγκοι. Αντιστάθηκε αὐτὸς καὶ κράτησε τὴν ὀρθόδοξο πίστι, ὅπως παλαιότερα ὁ Μέγας Ἀθανάσιος. Οἱ παπικοί ἔλεγαν· Ἄν μπορῆς νὰ μετακινήσης τὸν Ὀλυμπο, μπορεῖς νὰ κλονίσης κι αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τὶς πεποιθήσεις του.

Τί μᾶς διδάσκει ὁ ἅγιος Μάρκος; Πρῶτον ἓνα διδάγμα ἔθνικό. Νὰ προσέξουμε καὶ σήμερα, γιατί πάλι κινδυνεύουμε ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους. Τὰ ἴδια ἔχουμε. Τότε κατέφυγαν στὸν πάπα. Τὰ ἴδια καὶ σήμερα. Τὴν ὥρα τοῦ κινδύνου ἐμεῖς ποῦ ἀποβλέπουμε; Στους ἰσχυροὺς τῆς ἡμέρας, ἄλλη μιά φορά, γιὰ νὰ μᾶς βοηθήσουν. Δὲν κάνω πολιτική, ἀλλὰ σὰς λέω τὴν πικρὰ ἀλήθεια. Ὅταν ἤμεθα στὴ Μικρὰ Ἀσία, μᾶς ἄφησαν καὶ οἱ Ἄγγλοι καὶ οἱ Ἴταλοι καὶ οἱ Γάλλοι. Μείναμε μόνοι. Ἐνῶ λίγο ἂν μᾶς βοηθοῦσαν, δὲν θὰ θρηνοῦσαμε τὴν καταστροφή. Μισοῦν, φθοноῦν τὴν Ἑλλάδα. Τί πρέπει νὰ κάνουμε ἐμεῖς; Νὰ ἔχουμε ὁμόνοια καὶ ἀγάπη, γιὰ νὰ μπορέσουμε νὰ κρατηθοῦμε σ' αὐτὰ τὰ ἐδάφη, ποὺ εἶναι ποτισμένα μὲ αἷμα. Ἀλλὰ κι ἓνα θρησκευτικὸ διδάγμα. Στὰ χρόνια μας ἔχουν σηκωθεῖ πολλοὶ ἄθεοι. Ἄλλοτε στὸν εὐλογημένο τόπο μας δὲν ὑπῆρχε ἄθεος. Τώρα οἱ ἄθεοι φτάσανε μέχρι τὶς στάνες· ἔχουμε καὶ τσοπαναραίους ἄθεους. Ἄν συναντήσετε ἄθεο, ποὺ λέει ὅτι δὲν ὑπάρχει Θεὸς κι ὅτι ὅλα ἔγιναν ἔτσι, νὰ τοῦ πῆτε ἓνα πράγμα: «Τὸ σπιτάκι ποῦ κάθεσαι, ἔτσι μόνο του ἔγινε; Κάποιος τὸ ἔχτισε. Καὶ τὸ σύμπαν, τὸ μεγάλο αὐτὸ σπιτί, ποιὸς τὸ ἔχτισε; Ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός!». Κλείστε τ' αὐτιά στους ἀπίστους καὶ ἄθεους. Ἀκόμα κλείστε τ' αὐτιά σας στους αἰρετικούς καὶ μάλιστα στους χλιαστές, ποὺ ἦρθαν ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀμερικὴ μὲ βαλίτσες δολλάρια. Αὐτὸ ποὺ πρέπει νὰ τοὺς ποῦμε ἐμεῖς εἶναι: Δὲν θὰ πουλήσουμε τὸ Χριστὸ σὰν τὸν Ἰουδα ἀντὶ τριάκοντα ἀργυρίων!...

Ἐνας τέτοιος πράκτορας ἦρθε κάποτε στὴ Φλώρινα καὶ ζήτησε ἀπὸ μία γυναίκα -- ιδιοκτῆτη κινηματογράφου -- νὰ τοὺς παραχωρήσει τὴν αἴθουσα, γιὰ νὰ μαζευτοῦν ἐκεῖ ἀπ' ὅλη τὴ Μακεδονία καὶ νὰ κάνουν συγκέντρωσι. Τῆς ἔδιναν, γιὰ μία ὥρα, πολλὰ χρήματα. Κι αὐτὴ τί ἀπάντησε: Φτωχὰ εἶμαι, ἀλλὰ τὸν κινηματογράφο σ' ἐσᾶς δὲν τὸν δίνω. Ὅλα τὰ δολλάρια τῆς Ἀμερικῆς νὰ μοῦ δώσετε, δὲ μαγαρίζω τὴν αἴθουσα!...

Κάτω στὴ Θεσσαλία, κοντὰ στὸν Πηγεῖο, εἶναι ἓνα χωριουδάκι. Εἶχε παπᾶ, χτυποῦσε καμπάνα, πήγαιναν ὅλοι στὴν ἐκκλησία· εὐλογημένο χωριό. Ἦρθε, ὅμως, ἀπὸ τὴ Γερμανία ἓνας ποὺ εἶχε γίνει χλιαστής. Αὐτὸς κατῶρθωσε σιγά-σιγά νὰ κάνει καὶ ἓναν δεῦτερο χλιαστή, σὲ λίγο ἓνα τρίτο... Τώρα τὸ χωριὸ εἶναι ὅλο χλιαστικό. Ψώριασαν τὰ πρόβατα! Φτάνει ἓνα, γιὰ νὰ ψωριάση ὅλο τὸ κοπάδι.

Γι' αὐτό, ἂν καμμιά φορά στὴν ἐνορία σας ἔρθει χλιαστής, σημάνετε συναγερμό. Ἀνεβείτε στὰ καμπαναριά καὶ χτυπεῖστε νεκρικά τὶς καμπάνες, σὰ νὰ εἶναι Μεγάλη Παρασκευὴ. Διῶξτε τοὺς μακριά. Γιατί εἶναι λύκοι φοβεροί, ἀπατεῶνες καὶ πλαστογράφοι τῆς ἀλήθειας. Ἐτσι θὰ εἴστε παιδιὰ τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀθανασίου καὶ παιδιὰ τοῦ Μάρκου τοῦ Εὐγενικοῦ. Ἐτσι θὰ κρατήσουμε τὴν πίστι μας ἀπὸ γενεὰ σὲ γενεὰ, δοξάζοντας Πατέρα, Υἱὸν καὶ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος.

## Σῶμα Καὶ Αἷμα Χριστοῦ

ΠΗΓΗ: «Θαύματα καὶ Ἀποκαλύψεις ἀπὸ τὴν Θεία Λειτουργία», Ἐκδόσεις «Ἱερά Μονὴ Παρακλήτου-Ἱωραίου Ἀττικῆς»

Ἐνας εὐλογημένος ἀγιορείτης μοναχός, ὁ γερο-Αὐγουστίνος ὁ Ρῶσος (+1965), ἦταν πολὺ ἐνάρετος, πολὺ ταπεινὸς καὶ πολὺ ἀγωνιστής. Κάποτε παρουσιάστηκε ὁ διάβολος μέσα στὸ κελί του σὰν σκύλος φοβερὸς. Πετοῦσε φωτιὲς ἀπὸ τὸ στόμα καὶ ὄρμησε πάνω στὸ γέροντα γιὰ νὰ τὸν πνίξει, ἐπειδὴ, ὅπως τοῦ εἶπε, καιγόταν ἀπὸ τὶς προσευχὲς του. Ὁ γερο-Αὐγουστίνος τὸν ἄρπαξε καὶ τὸν πέταξε στὸν τοῖχο φωνάζοντας: «Κακὲ διάβολε, γιατί πολεμᾶς τὰ πλάσματα τοῦ Θεοῦ;» Ὁ διάβολος, κατατρομαγμένος ἀπ' τὴν ἀναπάντεχη ὑποδοχή, ἔγινε ἄφαντος.

Ἔστερα ὅμως ὁ ἀγαθότατος καὶ ἀπλούστατος γέροντας εἶχε τύψεις, ἐπειδὴ... χτύπησε τὸ διάβολο! Περίμενε μὲ ἀγωνία πότε νὰ φωτίσει, γιὰ νὰ πάει στὸν πνευματικὸ του νὰ ἐξομολογηθεῖ τὸ «ἀμάρτημά» του. Πραγματικά, μόλις φώτισε πῆγε στὴν Προβάτα (μιάμιση ὥρα ἀπόσταση ἀπὸ τὸ κελί του), ὅπου ἦταν ὁ πνευματικὸς του, καὶ ἐξομολογήθηκε. Ὁ πνευματικὸς μου ὅμως ἦταν πολὺ «συγκαταβατικός», διηγιόταν ἀργότερα ὁ γέροντας, «καὶ δὲν μοῦ ἔβαλε κανένα κανόνα, ἀλλὰ μοῦ εἶπε νὰ κοινωνήσω. Ἐγώ, ἀπὸ τὴ χαρά μου, ὅλη τὴ νύχτα ἔκανα κομποσχοίνι, καὶ μετὰ πῆγα στὴ θεία λειτουργία καὶ κοινωνήσα.»

«Ὅταν ὁ παπᾶς ἔβαζε τὴν ἅγια λαβίδα στὸ στόμα μου, εἶδα τὴν ἅγια Κοινωνία κομμάτι κρέας καὶ αἷμα καὶ τὴν μασοῦσα γιὰ νὰ τὴν καταπιῶ! Παράλληλα ἐννοιῶθα καὶ μία μεγάλη ἀγαλλίαση, ποὺ δὲν μπορούσα νὰ τὴν ἀντέξω. Ἀπὸ τὰ μάτια μου ἔτρεχαν γλυκὰ δάκρυα, καὶ τὸ κεφάλι μου φώτιζε σὰν λάμπα. Ἐφυγα γρήγορα γιὰ νὰ μὴ μὲ δοῦν οἱ πατέρες, καὶ τὴν εὐχαριστία γιὰ τὴ Θεία Μετάληψη τὴ διάβασα μόνος μου στὸ κελί μου.»

Στὸν ἱερὸ ναὸ τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ τῆς Λαύρας τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἀλεξάνδρου Νέφσκι, στὴν Πετρούπολη τῆς Ρωσίας, συνέβη κάποτε τὸ ἀκόλουθο περιστατικό: Στὴ διάρκεια μιᾶς Θείας Λειτουργίας, ὁ λειτουργὸς ἀρχιερέας Στέφανος, ἀφοῦ διάβασε τὴν εὐχή «Πιστεύω, Κύριε, καὶ ὁμολογῶ...» σήκωσε τὸ κάλυμμα τοῦ ἁγίου ποτηριοῦ κι ἔμεινε σὰν ἀποσβολωμένος. Εἶδε μέσα σάρκα καὶ αἷμα! Γύρισε τότε στὸ διάκονο, τὸν κατοπινὸ στᾶρετς Σαμψῶν (+1979), καὶ τοῦ εἶπε: «Βλέπεις, πάτερ;» καὶ τώρα, τί ἔπρεπε νὰ κάνουν;... Ὁ ἐπίσκοπος ἀφοῦ τοποθέτησε τὸ ἅγιο ποτήριο στὴν ἅγια τράπεζα, γονάτισε καὶ ἰκέτευε τὸν Κύριο νὰ κάνει ἔλεος. Πῶς θὰ μετέδιδε σάρκα ἀνθρώπινη στοὺς πιστοὺς; Ποιὸς θὰ τὴν ἔπαιρνε;

Ἀφοῦ προσευχήθηκε γιὰ ἓνα τέταρτο μὲ ὑψωμένα τὰ χέρια, ξανακοίταξε στὸ ἅγιο ποτήριο. Ἡ σάρκα καὶ τὸ αἷμα εἶχαν γίνει ψωμί καὶ κρασί. Ἐτσι βγήκε καὶ κοινωνήσε τοὺς πιστοὺς. Ὅσοι κληρικοὶ πληροφορήθηκαν τὸ θαῦμα, εἶπαν ὅτι τὸ ἐπέτρεψε ὁ Θεὸς γιὰ νὰ ἐνισχυθεῖ ἡ πίστι τους. Ὁ διάκονος Σαμψῶν μάλιστα, ποὺ κρατοῦσε τὸ ἅγιο ποτήριο, ὁμολόγησε ὅτι ἀπὸ τὸ γεγονός αὐτὸ πῆρε ξεχωριστὴ δύναμη καὶ παρηγοριά.



## ABBA MAKARIOS ON HIS VISION RE: DEMONS OF THE FLESH

Source: "Awakening Visions and Divine Interventions", published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated by St. Poimen Greek Orthodox Brotherhood staff.



**St. Makarios the Great**  
Feast Day: Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>

The Monk Makarios the Great was born in Egypt. From a young age he was gifted with the constant mindfulness of death, impelling him to ascetic deeds of prayer and penitence. He initially began to visit the church of God more frequently and to be more deeply absorbed in Holy Scripture. Until his parents end, the Monk Makarios ("Makarios" -- from the Greek -- means "blessed") used his time and income to help his parents and he began to pray fervently that the Lord might show him a preceptor on the way to salvation. The Lord sent him

such a guide in the person of an experienced monk-elder, living in the wilderness not far from the village. The elder took to the youth with love, guided him in the spiritual science of watchfulness, fasting and prayer, and taught him the handicraft of weaving baskets. Having built a separate cell, not far from his own, the elder settled his student in it.

Later on, having dwelt in the wilderness for three years, he went to Saint Anthony the Great, the father of monasticism, whom he had heard was still alive in the world, and he longed with a desire to see him. St. Anthony received him with love, and Makarios became his devoted student and follower. The Monk Makarios lived with him for a long time and then, on the advice of the saintly abba, he went off to the skete wilderness-monastery (in the northwest part of Egypt). He so shone forth there by his ascetic deeds that he came to be called "a young-elder," insofar as having scarcely reached thirty years of age, he distinguished himself as an experienced and mature monk.

The Monk Makarios survived many demonic attacks against him and accomplished many healings. The meekness and humility of the monk transformed human souls. His prayers saved many in perilous circumstances of life, and preserved them from harm and temptation. His benevolence was so great, that they said about him: "Just as God covereth the world, so also doth Abba Makarios cover offenses which he, having seen, is as though he had not seen, and having heard, as though he had not heard."

Holy Abba Makarios spent a total of sixty years in the wilderness, being dead to the world. The monk spent most of the time in conversation with God, being often in a state of spiritual rapture. But he never ceased to weep, to repent and to work. The abba ren-

dered his rich ascetic experience into profound theological works. Fifty discourses and seven ascetic tracts form the precious legacy of spiritual wisdom of the Monk Makarios the Great. His idea, that the highest blessedness and purpose of man -- the unity of the soul with God -- is a primary principle in the works of the Monk Makarios. Recounting the means by which to attain to mystical union, the monk relies upon the experience of both the great teachers of Egyptian monasticism and upon his own experience.

The monk lived until age 97. Shortly before his end there appeared to him the Monks Anthony and Pachomios, bringing the joyful message about his transition into a blessed heavenly monastery. Having given admonition to his disciples and having given them blessing, the Monk Makarios asked forgiveness from all and bid farewell with the words: "Into Thy hands, Lord, I commend my spirit."

When I came to Constantinople, I developed the desire to get to know the city. Walking into a neighborhood (and my conscience assures the truth for what I saw) I observed with my noetic eyes, which God granted me as a gift, a peculiar sight. I saw a man who appeared to be "well-to-do" standing outside of a place of debauchery. He appeared to be extremely troubled and distressed and hiding his face in the palms of his hands. He was crying in a manner as though the heavens were weeping along with him.

Once I approached him, I asked, "What is the reason for such lamentation and this much distress? And why do you not depart from this home of harlots and lewd women? Please tell me because your tears provoke a great amount of compassion within me."

He replied, "I am an angel by nature, oh glorious servant of God Makarios. As all Christians are granted a guardian angel at the time of their baptism for protection and as a veil, so is also the case with this man who is within this place of sin. I am extremely distraught to see him committing this lawlessness and squandering with this harlot. How can I not weep when I see the image of God be wasted and lost in this darkness?"

Hearing this, I then asked him, "And why do you not admonish and advise him accordingly so that he can depart from the darkness of this sin?"

The angel replied, "Because I have neither the ability nor the room to draw near him. From the moment that he commences to perpetrate the sin, he becomes a servant of the demons and I no longer have any authority over him."

And I again asked him, "What is it that makes it evident that you have no authority over him, even though God entrusted him to you?"

The angel replied, "Our God, Who is good and a Lover of mankind, created man independent and with free will. He allows him to walk on the path of his liking, once He revealed to him the two choices for a path, i.e., the narrow path and the wide one. Surely though, He also revealed the destination for each path. Thus, walking on the narrow and sorrowful

path, man is guided through temporary pains but is led to the never-ending in the ages of ages rest; on the other hand, choosing the wide path will lead man to the everlasting hell and the inferno of fire as well as all other of God's punishments. So what other admonition remains for me to do to my man whom God entrusted me to protect and cover? In addition, our Lord and God Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, admonishes, pleads, and teaches all to not participate in shameful acts and few barely and rarely consider and absorb His Divine words with respect." I asked him again, "Why do you raise your hands to the heavens with tears in your eyes?"

The Angel replied, "I see the demons who have surrounded him and hold him captive, some of them singing and others laughing with gladness. It is for this reason that I raised my hands in a prayer to God, so that He can redeem and deliver from sin His creation. And I pray that He grants me one day to joyfully experience his repentance, his return from his current ways and deeds, and the confession of his sins. I pray that God makes me worthy to deliver his soul, following his confession and repentance, blameless and pure to the Lord, without a single charge against God's goodness."

Having told me all these things, he disappeared.

I thus tell you, my brethren, that I know precisely that there exist no filthier sins than prostitution, adultery and the cursed sin of sodomy. And if the person who is drugged by these sins wishes to repent, God welcomes him with more and with greater warmth than all other sinners. This is because, although this terrible passion is our own choice, the devil multiplies it through the accompanying excitement. And if one wishes to rid himself of these types of passions, he is able to dry them up through vigilance and temperance.



## A MOTHER'S LAST REQUEST

Source: *Orthodox America*, "Spiritual Life" Articles

**I**n the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

My children:

I am addressing myself to one of you three, or to all of you together, and I ask that you fulfill this last request, your final obligation towards me.

Do not become despondent when you are left without me. God will **always** be with you. You, Olga, never forget Papa, nor the brothers. Never allow a dark thought to come between you, and if you see on their part something bad, do not judge before you have given it serious consideration. And don't turn for help to anyone but God. Our Lord will show you how to act.

It will be harder for Papa than for anyone else, since I have lived for so many years in his heart and before his eyes. That is why my move into my eternal "apartment" will be very dif-

icult for him. His grief will be quiet, like his whole life -- as pure as it has been and known to me alone, both in joy and in sorrow. At just such times remind him that he is not alone, that you are with him. But be careful, just as with a sick child. You'll heal his wounds with a story, not by scolding him. Don't let him go off to the club for too long; his health won't endure it and he will join me, but you still need him. Although you aren't aware of it, he is a great father and friend to you; he gave all he had and worked hard to make your lives happy.

Likewise, take care of Sasha, love him. Our Lord preserved him for us in answer to prayer, and because of this, his cross will weigh heavily upon him. And don't neglect Vasya either [her brother]. He spent his whole life with me, and I love him more than anyone. If he gets sick, visit him; when he dies give him a proper burial. He loves you and I ask that you love him.

While you still have the opportunity, elevate the wonder-working icons by turn on the day of our anniversary, August 24: one year -- the icon "Joy of All Who Sorrow", and the next year the Kazan Icon. If life should cast you in different directions and this is no longer possible, then you needn't do so. But in life's bitter moments don't forget to turn for help to the "Joy of All Who Sorrow." No matter how great your request, She will fulfill it; there is no end to her merciful kindness. Also, pray to St. Sergius of Radonezh. It is through his prayers that I have been with you this long -- which means that he will not forget you either in his holy prayers to the Lord.

Don't extinguish the vigil lamps. Light them not only in your own homes but even in other homes -- if there is no one there to do it. Go to church more often and uphold all the traditions and rites of the Orthodox Church. Here you will find great power which can open the way to communion with God.

Give my icon "Joy of All Who Sorrow" to Sashka.

Come to me, to my grave, on the 9th, the 20th and the 40th days. And should you need to ask me anything, perhaps I shall answer, just as my dearest mother answered all my difficult questions about life. Well, that is all.

May the mercy of the Lord be with you all.

PS: Tell the boy that I loved him.

Mama

St. Petersburg, c. 1900



**T**he work of the priesthood is done on earth, but is ranked among heavenly ordinances. And this is only right, for no man, no angel, no archangel, no other created power, but the Comforter Himself ordained this succession, and persuaded men, while still remaining in the flesh, to represent the ministry of angels.

St John Chrysostom

## APOPHTHEGMS BY THE GOD-INSPIRED ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, PART 7

*SOURCE: From the book "475 Apophthegms by the God-Inspired St. Isaac the Syrian," pp. 29-32, published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood.*

### 19<sup>th</sup> Lesson

170. Perpetual study of Holy Scriptures becomes the light for our souls and protects us from passions.

171. The Holy Angels take the form of Saints and reveal these forms to souls during sleep so that they bring joy to those that spent their day with edifying (good for the soul) thoughts.

172. The person that is preoccupied and thinks evil and indecent thoughts during the day will be visited by mischievous demons during his sleep who aim at grieving and distressing the soul.

173. Indolence and distress of the soul are the result of daydreaming by the intellect, vain and futile conversations, satiety of the stomach, abstinence from Holy Communion and refraining from prayer.

174. A monk's work does not include making his cell a hotel and getting full through hunger because prayer is greater than almsgiving, which is the work of laity.

175. When your nous scatters during the time for prayer, read the Holy Gospels and do not pray. Reading is the fountain of pure prayer.

176. When the prayer sweetens you, do the divine services through the prayer. When, though, you arrive to tears then abandon the prayer as well.

177. Pride is followed by lust and arrogance by delusion of thoughts.

178. Above all, love silence. It is through silence that the delight of the heart is born and one experiences a multitude of tears. Silence alone surpasses all other labors of the monastic community.

179. The desire for God (i.e., Holy Communion) is sufficient to become the consolation for the sorrows and distresses of this temporal life.

180. A person that loves the prayer also loves solitude because that is where one finds Christ so that he can converse with Him. Whoever, though, is a friend of the world, desires to be among many people.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Lesson

181. The person who is aware of his sinful nature is superior to the one who resurrects the dead through prayer! He who sighs for an hour for his soul is above the person who benefits the whole world through his teachings. The person who follows Christ while he is in mourning is worthier than the person who is praised in church by all people.

182. Let us maintain remembrance of death and let us despise the vanity and vainglory of this world so that we may become worthy of the luxury and joy of Paradise.

183. It is first through carelessness that we must liberate and deliver ourselves from the agitation of life's cares. And

then we ought to develop a desire for conversing with God through the prayer which will in turn guide us to God's love and Divine bliss.

184. The Spirit of God does not inhabit with those that live with comforts but rather the spirit of the devil. God's legitimate servants live with sorrow and distress while the world remains in luxury and comfort. They weep while the world laughs. They sigh while the world rejoices. They fast while the world dines in luxury...

185. Virtue, i.e., guarding Christ's commandments, is followed by grief that is due to the sorrows and temptations arising from the demons' malice. Through patience, we achieve humility and in turn earn God's Grace.

186. The reward is not given to a person for his virtue but rather for his humility. Without humility it is all futile.

187. Christ does not ask for the labor of commandments but rather mending of our soul!

### 21<sup>st</sup> Lesson

188. Withdrawal from good deeds and prayer will drive us to pride whence our guardian angel leaves and satan seizes us.

189. If you acquire grace, ask God for a) humility, b) a guardian angel, and c) that He withdraws His Grace, rather than you fall into pride. Our natural faults become the guardians of the virtues that God grants us.

190. Pride requires contrition so that humility can follow and the person may in turn enjoy God's gifts that are granted to the humble ones.

191. Before contrition, pride exists, and before God's grace, humility.

192. Pride is not the ordinary passing of a prideful thought but rather the passion that continuously dwells within a person and prevents him from knowing remorse.

193. The person who has attained an understanding of God's love does not want to remain in the present life but desires death.

194. Long-lived patience brings humility. Humility brings health to the soul. A healthy soul brings knowledge of God. Knowledge of God then guides us to God's love. Finally, God's love brings Divine Joy which is sweeter than honeycomb.

195. Everlasting life is the sense of God within all of us which brings us to God's love. There is no sweetness within our heart that can be compared with the sweetness of realizing God's knowledge.

196. The person who detests being pleasing to the world and is disgusted by vainglory has received the Holy Spirit, in other words, humility.



**I**f you see your neighbor committing sin, take care not to dwell exclusively on his faults, but try to think of the many good things he has done and continues to do. Many times, by examining everything he has done, you will come to the conclusion that he is truly better than you.

Saint Basil the Great

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## CONCERNING THE ANTICHRIST

*Source: In General About the Close of the Age, the Antichrist and the Second Coming of Christ," published by Orthodox Kypseli Publications, Thessaloniki, Greece 1998.*

### Saint Ephraim the Syrian

"... If someone ends up showing a little indifference, he is easily sieged and imprisoned by the miracles of the wicked and sly dragon. Such a person will appear unforgivable in the judgment. Because with his own eyes he believed willfully the tyrant..."

"... Be careful, brethren, of the haughtiness of the beast and the wicked crafts, because he begins with the belly. So that when someone ends up in difficulty deprived of food, he will be forced to accept the mark of him. In order that a person not have difficulty in accepting the mark, the wretched one does not carve it on all parts of the body; but on the right hand of man, so that a person will not have the power to form the symbol of Christ (i.e., make the sign of the Cross). Similarly on the forehead he carves the impious mark (Rev 13:26). If someone does not accept the mark of him, he is not imprisoned by the fantastic wonders. Nor also does the Lord depart from such a person, but He illumines his heart and draws him near Him. If we keep with sincerity the firm faith of Christ, we will easily scatter the power of the Enemy, we will obtain an unshakable and pious thought; and the weak Enemy will depart from us, because he will not have the power to do anything."

"... Dreadful, my brethren, is the struggle in all Christ-loving people so that till the time of death none cower, nor be negligent, when the dragon (the Antichrist) will be carving his seal instead

of the Cross of the Savior. Because he will use every manner so that the name of our Lord and Savior is not mentioned in his time."

"... His coming will become manifest to those who have their mind attached to things above. To those, however, who have their mind in earthly cares and long for earthly things, they will not become manifest."

### St. Kosmas Aitolos

"... As at the time of Noah people did not believe but were mocking, until suddenly the wrath of God and the flood came and it drowned all the people. Likewise now also, my Christians, at the Second Coming of Christ people will not believe... The words I tell you are not mine, they are the words of the All-Holy Spirit... and whoever wants, let him believe. Nevertheless, each one is free and will do as he wants. I am doing my obligation..."

"... Prior to the Second Coming of Christ, the Antichrist will be born and he will do so many evils in the world, and will name himself the son of God and will stand as a king to order the whole world and do miracles, according to fantasy, to deceive people to confess him as Christ; and whoever believes in him he will promise goods, and afterwards he will mark them on the forehead... and it is better that they are tyrannized and be killed rather than to believe him and be marked..."

"... I believe that these things, my brethren, startled you... and I who tell them tremble and cower; but what can I do in that I have the obligation to reveal them to you? ... After these evils of the accursed Antichrist, the All-holy Cross will shine above in the sky..."

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

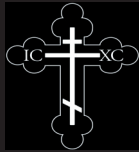
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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

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## A SIMPLE PRIEST OF OUR DAYS

*Compiled with excerpts from "Papa-Dimitri Gagastathis, The Man of God (1902-1975)," translated and edited by Dimitrios N. Kagaris, Orthodox Kypseli Publications, Thessalonika, 1997.*

*Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

*(Matt. 18:3)*

The neglected virtue of simplicity is well illustrated by the life of Father Dimitrios Gagastathis, a simple Greek village priest of our time. His simplicity is best exemplified by a letter which a priest-monk from Patmos wrote to him:

"...What difference does it make if you don't possess titles of worldly wisdom. Take for instance Saint Spyridon -- what was he? A simple man, most simple, a former shepherd. But nevertheless he put Arius to shame. Not to mention Saint Anthony, the completely illiterate doctor of the desert! You, too, Father Dimitrios, possessing simplicity of heart and an ardent love towards the Lord, you attract the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Besides, the Lord called you to work in a fold of simple men, villagers, who can understand you and you can understand them. You have had, with the Lord's Grace, a great effect on their souls as a genuine priest and a true servant of the Lord."

From the time he was born, in 1902, Papa-Dimitri lived in the small village of Platanos on the Thessalian plain. His family was poor, and before finishing the elementary grades, he left school to work as a shepherd. In 1921 he was drafted into the army. He served a three-year term and then returned to school, completing the sixth-grade equivalency required to become a priest. After an additional six months' study at a seminary,

in May 1931, he was ordained to the priesthood. Papa-Dimitri was married and had nine daughters. He served in the Church of the Archangels, the parish of his youth, his pastoral work complicated by alternate threats from local communist rebels, German occupying forces, and hostile Turks. In 1966 he was diagnosed with cancer. An operation in 1969 provided him a few years' reprieve, but the disease returned, finally claiming his life on January 16/29, 1975.

To move beyond these bare facts is to glimpse behind the veil, drawn closed by our sins, into the spiritual realm that is revealed to those of holy life. For Papa-Dimitri there was no perceptible boundary between the earthly and spiritual realms. In his autobiographical notes, he describes numerous of his encounters with angels, saints, and demons in a manner that leaves the reader amazed -- as much by the writer's guilelessness as by the incidents themselves.

From his childhood, it was evident that Papa-Dimitri belonged to God's chosen. He loved the services at the Church of the Archangels, and even his games reflected his desire to become a priest: he built "churches" and performed various "services," imitating what he observed while helping in the altar. As a youth he would take his flock and withdraw to some remote area to pray undisturbed. He consciously avoided worldly associations and strengthened his faith by studying the lives of saints and "whatever Christian book I could find."

As he continued to build on this foundation, he became subject to demonic attacks. "One night," he writes, when he was still a shepherd, demons came to his hut "in the form of a violent wind and with many cries to sweep me off along with the hut and destroy me." On another occasion, he had shut up the sheep and was going to church when, "Satan appeared to me in the form of a huge dog in an attempt to hinder me..."

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When he became a priest, he frequently served at night. "It's at night and on an empty stomach that one can pray better," he observed. As many as thirty villagers, plus children, would join him for these nocturnal liturgies. The demons made evident their displeasure, trying by all means to disturb and discourage this practice.

"One night, as I was doing my usual service, some time after midnight, I heard shouts, songs, dancing and music. Most strange -- given also that it was snowing outside and it was very cold. I went out and what should I see: The demons were having a wedding! I smiled slightly. I made the sign of the cross over them and said: 'Wherever the grace of the Holy Archangels falls, the power of the devil is routed!' as well as 'Let all adverse powers be crushed under the sign of Thy Precious Cross!' They all vanished immediately."

"Several other times the demons attacked me: once in the form of a boar, another time in the form of a dog trying to pass under my legs while I was reciting the Salutations of the Theotokos, and still another time, in the form of a tall black man who attempted to strangle me while I was on my way to the Archangels to pray. In every instance, I prayed and they disappeared."

Papa-Dimitri's faith in the power of the Archangels proved itself repeatedly. He was serving liturgy one night when the demons "came into the church and started overturning the chairs. The archdemon came into the sanctuary, shut the window and grabbed me by the throat to strangle me. I asked help from the Archangels, and when the rooster crowed in the morning, they all went away."

Another time, after a successful exorcism, "the demon got spiteful because we had chased it away, and came into the room while I was sleeping to devour me. It came ... in the form of a herd of pigs... As soon as they entered the room and I heard

their wild cries, I shouted, 'Archangel Michael, save me!' And behold, what a wonder! a young man killed the largest pig by his sword and told me: 'Don't be afraid, I'm with you!' I saw him at the door with the sword... Of course, it was his duty to save me, because I have been serving in his church sixty years now, both as sexton and as a priest."

His closeness with the angels and the saints gave him a wonderful boldness in addressing them. "Tonight I want a miracle," he would say to them, or, "Why do you stand idle? Give a helping hand."

Among his writings we read, "The simple man is neither wicked nor can he think anything wicked. He bears no resentment. He is like a child." Papa-Dimitri himself was like a child in this regard: he never thought evil of another. Because of this, he was at first taken in by the pro-communist guerrillas with their patriotic slogans, and he and his villagers began supplying them with food and clothing. Very soon, however, his error was revealed to him, and he determined to preach against communism, which he saw was an enemy of the Church, country, and family. He realized that in so doing he was placing his life in danger, but after praying to the Archangels to assist him in this struggle, all fear immediately

left him. Papa-Dimitri possessed great authority among the villagers, and the communists were anxious to destroy him. Several times Papa-Dimitri was sentenced to be executed, and several times he took leave of his family, fully expecting he would never again see them in this world, but each time he was miraculously delivered.

Once, when the guerrillas were pursuing him, he hid in the mountains, wandering for days without food or shelter. He finally met up with two nationalist soldiers: "At night we heard wolves howling. A whole pack was coming our way. From the depths of my soul I entreated Christ, the Theotokos,



**Papa-Dimitri Gagastathis**  
(1902-1975)

and Archangels to help us. Suddenly, I saw an unknown man walking around the pack and turning it away.”

He was alone again, still wandering and thoroughly exhausted, when he came to a swollen stream: “I tried to cross it, but I just couldn’t. I remained there for a while entreating the saints to help me. While I was praying, I heard a strong bluster, and I saw a young radiant rider passing in front of me and greeting me. I neither saw nor heard anything else -- just the greeting -- and, all of a sudden -- O great wonder! -- I was on the other bank of the river.”

At one time the guerrillas thought to entice Papa-Dimitri by offering him an office. They were going to give him a horse and four bodyguards if he would go around the villages and preach communism. On hearing of this proposal from the villagers, Papa-Dimitri turned to the Archangels: “They want to destroy me, but you thwart all their machinations!” When the communists came with the written order, he refused point-blank: “I just can’t do it. Such a job requires an educated and experienced man. And anyway, I’ve declared openly that I want to die as a priest, not as a clown. I won’t take this job. Be it now or never, I’m ready to die for Christ any time you wish!”

In the village lived a teacher who was a communist sympathizer and who had worked to have Papa-Dimitri eliminated. The tables turned and he was arrested by the nationalists. He was being hauled off to be executed when he saw Papa-Dimitri: “Father, help! Save me!” he cried. “I perceived that God presented me with my enemy to test me,” writes Papa-Dimitri in describing the incident. He ran alongside the soldiers, trying to persuade them not to punish the teacher, but they were unwilling to change the order. Finally he said, “I’ll sacrifice myself together with him! I have to, since the Lord said, I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:11).” When they saw the priest’s determination, the soldiers released their prisoner. Afterwards Papa-Dimitri told the teacher simply, “Be a good Christian. I deserve no thanks; give thanks to God and glorify Him!”

The persecution of the communist guerrillas was difficult to endure, but even more hurtful to Papa-Dimitri were the conflicts he experienced with his presbytera. She tried to persuade him to be more like “other priests,” those who, for the sake of their own safety, compromised with the communists, if only for the sake of appearances. Every time he set out on a forty-day series of Liturgies, she tried to hinder him, telling him that it was unnecessary, that it would undermine his health. Under the influence of a worldly visitor, she argued with Papa-Dimitri to allow their daughters to dress more fashionably, accusing him of wanting them all to become nuns. When their younger daughter left to join a convent without telling her mother, the latter berated Papa-Dimitri, and for hours gave him no peace. Through prayer and patience, Papa-Dimitri weathered these outbursts and frequently witnessed a remarkable and speedy change of heart in his presbytera. He realized that these conflicts were temptations. His presbytera was at heart a good woman: she came to appreciate their daughter’s decision, and during Papa-Dimitri’s final illness, she read for him the cycle

of services and never left his side. As for Papa-Dimitri, he was grateful: “Anyway, what I suffered from her did me actually good. She worked to give me a wreath, so that I also might expect some wage from God.”

Papa-Dimitri always had candy for children and money for the needy. He organized religious excursions for young people. It was said that he had a “restless love” and sought to bring everyone to Christ. One of the doctors who attended him during his final illness observed: “He would never turn away anyone who came to see him, no matter how tired he was. He always had a good word, a piece of advice, for everyone. Or he would relate a miracle from his life, repeating each time, ‘Our faith is alive, my children, our religion is alive!’ and giving glory to God, while tears flowed from his eyes.”

In June 1962, Papa-Dimitri visited the Holy Mountain at the invitation of the Most Holy Theotokos herself. There he was present at a gathering of hierarchs and clergy, when the Archbishop of Athens turned to the assembled company and said, indicating Papa-Dimitri: “Take a good look at this elder. We need priests like him!”



## GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF PAPA-DIMITRI

The purpose of whatever prayers and services we do is to come closer to God and get to love Him more.

God saved us from communism, but Satan delivered us to materialism.

Both clergy and laity today have lost spirituality. They constantly talk only about material and political things.

No one can hold two watermelons under one arm. That is, no one can seek office and be humble at the same time.

Prayer is a telephone, a wireless, by which one communicates directly with God. You dial the number on the telephone of prayer to speak with God and He answers. You hear Him clearly, you feel Him very close.

Miracles happen every minute, but we don’t perceive them because we are stone-hearted.

Soft-heartedness and simplicity are what’s needed. Never be afraid for a man who loves. In him God dwells.

We find it impossible in this day and age to work well in this life according to God’s will, because we lack the two wings of love and humility.

Now it’s time to weep and pray for the condition of today’s world. We must pray that God may enlighten them to see His way, the way of truth and of righteousness.

When you love God and all men with your heart, then you are in God’s law. We shall be judged because we don’t love.

Through her weeping icon, the Theotokos shows that she’s sad, because she sees what Russia suffers by the atheists, and because she’s blasphemed by many.

## ON THE PSEUDO-GOSPELS

*By the Staff of Orthodox Heritage*

We have observed the U.S. media coverage of this past Christmas season in absolute dismay over the continuing de-Christianization of this wonderful nation. One would have been hard pressed to hear the words “Merry Christmas;” people, instead, appear to have been conditioned via the mass media, and especially television, to substitute it with the politically correct “Happy Holidays” – the use of Christ’s name is now socially forbidden as it might offend a non-Christian...

If the anti-Christian forces stopped there it might be tolerable; yes, we do not like it but then what can we do, right? The sad fact, though, is that it does not stop there and it just keeps getting worse and worse. What has guided us to write this article is the latest anti-Christian phenomenon that is gaining momentum each year, that being the in-depth historical analyses of heretical texts, concepts and ideas which serve no other purpose than to plant the seed of doubt in Christian minds regarding the nature of Christ and the virginity of His Most Holy Mother, our greatest intercessor in Heaven, the Theotokos. Here are two examples of what we have all been exposed to during this festive season:

(1) TIME magazine, in the same issue in which they covered Saddam Hussein’s capture (the “We Got Him” issue), they included their “Lost Gospels” story, whereby they take great care in presenting the teachings of various heresies (Gnostics, Thomasines, Marcionites, and Ebionites). This article implicitly stereotypes Christians of that era as sharing in these “common” beliefs. Such a presentation can only do harm to the souls of any innocent Orthodox reader who lacks the maturity or depth that is required to confront such teachings.

(2) CBC, PBS and the History Channel all presented specials on the same topic, on the so-called “Gnostic’s Lost Gospels.” Orthodox Christians need to know that these gospels originated from the Gnostic pagan sects which outright reject Orthodoxy. According to the early Ecclesiastical writers, those sects were indulging in all manner of licentiousness, and to aggravate their wickedness, they esteemed copulation as a most sacred sacrament. St. Clement of Alexandria (150-220 A.D.) wrote: “For I may well call them Atheist, who impudently worship those parts, which modesty forbids to mention.” Generally, they regarded the material word as the creation of seven powers, called Eons [Greek: αἰὼν (aeon) = age period] and they were clearly identified with the sun, moon, and five planets of the Babylonian mythology.

Orthodox Christians must be made aware that the pseudo-gospels are a hoax and blasphemous. They were composed in heretical, atheist, charlatan and occultist circles under pseudonyms a long time after the alleged writers’ death. Our Holy Fathers rejected these heretical writings in the early centuries through Local and Ecumenical Councils. They enumerated and authenticated, with authority, all 27 books of the New Testament. St. Athanasius the Great concluded: “Behold the

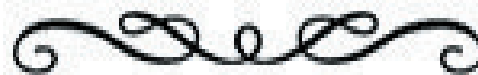
number and names of the canonical books of the New Testament. These are, as it were, the beginnings, the anchors and pillars of our faith, because they were written and transmitted by the very Apostles of Christ the Saviour, who were with Him and were instructed by Him.”

The mass media failed to inform the public of the history, beliefs and rituals of those occult sects. Nor did they offer any rebuttal from the historical custodian Orthodox Church, the Bride of Christ, which handed down to the world the Bible and which has stood firm and unchanged for 2,000 years.

We believe those occultist sects of old and new age movements, and their stories which are resurfacing today in an alarming way, are nothing more than a coronation of the devil. We also believe that any Orthodox who reads these articles or watches these TV programs is being subjected to spiritual harm. With the exception of those whose life is fully governed by a solid and tested Faith in Orthodoxy and Her values, it is next to impossible to not become infected to some degree by the heretical poison that has been released by them.

One final word of warning: our readers should also be aware that these programs do contain a substantial amount of truth. However, they introduce enough error on one theological concept or another to create the necessary damage. Let us not forget that Satan often operates by first pointing out truths, perhaps 99% truth – then the 1% of falsehood which is sufficient for anybody who believes him to lose their soul and their place in Christ’s eternal kingdom. We are told to “test the spirits” [1 St. John 4:1-4], and we must thus do so.

Our ancestors with their martyrdom, piety, and love for the true faith overcame paganism as well as all other heresies. Orthodoxy has thus been able to maintain herself unaltered in truth. We are the “The Church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth” [1 St. Tim. 3:15]. Let us remember the declaration of the 7th Ecumenical Council, 787 A.D. at Nicea, when only one Universal Church existed without denominations: “As the Prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the Teachers have dogmatized, as the Universe has agreed, as Grace has shown forth, as Truth has revealed, as Falsehood has been dissolved, as Wisdom has presented, as Christ has awarded! Thus we declare! Thus we assert thus we preach Christ our true God: in words, in writings, ... This is the Faith of the Apostles, This is the Faith of the Fathers, this is the Faith of the Orthodox, this is the Faith which has established the Ecoumene.”



The sign of purity is: to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep; to be in pain with the sick and in anguish with the sinners; to rejoice with the repentant and to participate in the agony of those who suffer; to criticize no man and, in the purity of one’s own mind, to see all men as good and holy.

**A contemporary Athonite Elder**



## Ἡ Συμβολὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Στὴν Ἐπιβίωση τοῦ Ἔθνους

Τοῦ κ. Κωνσταντίνου Χολέβα, Πολιτικοῦ Ἐπιστήμονα, Ἀπόσπασμα Ἀπὸ Τὸ Περιοδικὸ «Διάλογος», Τεύχος 33, Ἰούλιος – Σεπτέμβριος, 2003

Λένε μερικοὶ ὅτι τὸ μόνο στοιχεῖο τῆς Ἑλληνικότητας εἶναι ἡ γλῶσσα. Καὶ μάλιστα, γνωστὸς πρῶην βουλευτῆς πού ἀρθρογραφεῖ σὲ Κυριακάτικες ἐφημερίδες, ἔγραψε ὅτι τὸ μόνο πού μᾶς σώζει ὡς ἔθνος εἶναι ἡ γλῶσσα, ὄχι ἡ Ἐκκλησία. Καὶ ρωτῶ: πῶς ἐπέζησε ἡ ἐθνικὴ συνείδηση τῶν τουρκόφωνων τῆς Καππαδοκίας; Μεγάλο ἱστορικὸ κεφάλαιο, τὸ ὁποῖο λίγοι τὸ προβάλλουν, γιατί ἀκριβῶς προβάλλει τὸν ρόλο τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ἐπὶ τουρκοκρατίας σὲ ἄλλα μέρη, ὁ Ἑλληνισμὸς ἀναγκάστηκε νὰ ἐξισλαμισθεῖ καὶ ἀναγκάστηκε νὰ ἀλλάξει πίστη. Ὑπῆρξαν ἄνθρωποι πού ἐκούσιως ἐξισλαμίστηκαν γιὰ νὰ πάρουν χωράφια, γιὰ νὰ μὴ κινδυνεύουν, γιὰ νὰ μὴ φορολογοῦνται.

Στὴν Καππαδοκία τὴ σημερινή, στὸ κέντρο τῆς σημερινῆς Τουρκίας, ἐκεῖ πού ἐζήσαν οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἐκεῖ ἐπὶ τουρκοκρατίας ἐπέλεξαν κάτι διαφορετικὸ, πιὸ ἐξυπνο οἱ Μικρασιάτες. Σὲ 85 χωριά τῆς Καππαδοκίας ἐπέλεξαν γιὰ νὰ ἀποφύγουν τὴν μίση τῶν Τούρκων, νὰ μὴ ἀλλάξουν τὴ πίστη τους ἀλλὰ τὴν γλῶσσα τους. Εἶπαν θὰ τουρκοφωνήσουμε. Ἄλλωστε τί σχολεῖα νὰ ὑπάρχουν; Καὶ τὰ κρυφὰ σχολεῖα ἀκόμη χρειάζονταν κάποιον ἄνθρωπο πού ἔπρεπε νὰ διδάσκει ἐκεῖ. Οὔτε αὐτὸ μπόρεσαν. Ἀποφάσισαν λοιπὸν νὰ τουρκοφωνήσουν, ὅμως νὰ μείνουν Ὀρθόδοξοι.

Καὶ ἰδοὺ τὸ θαῦμα: ἐπὶ αἰῶνες ἡ μόνη τους ἐπαφὴ μὲ τὸν Ἑλληνισμὸ ἦταν οἱ Κυριακάτικες Λειτουργίες, οἱ ἀκολουθίες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Τουρκόφωνοι στὸ σπῆτι τους, τούρκικα μὲ τὰ παιδιά τους, τούρκικα μὲ τὴν ἐξουσία. Ἀλλὰ, πήγαιναν καὶ ἄκουγαν τὴν Θεῖα Λειτουργία σὲ μία γλῶσσα τὴν ὁποία οἱ ἴδιοι δὲν καταλάβαιναν, ἀπὸ ἓναν ἱερέα ὁ ὁποῖος καὶ αὐτὸς στὸ σπῆτι του τούρκικα μιλοῦσε καὶ πιθανὸν δὲν καταλάβαινε τὴν Ἑλληνικὴ Θεῖα Λειτουργία. Ἄκουγαν καὶ ψαλτάδες οἱ ὁποῖοι τὴν Ἑλληνικὴ δὲν καταλάβαιναν ἀλλὰ ἐπέμεναν νὰ τελοῦν τὴν Θεῖα Λειτουργία στὰ Ἑλληνικά. Μέσῳ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, οἱ ἄνθρωποι αὐτοὶ διατήρησαν τὴν ἐθνικὴ τους ταυτότητα. Ἡ γλῶσσα δὲν διατήρησε τὸν Ἑλληνισμὸ τόσο πολὺ ὅσο ἡ πίστη, καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι αὐτοὶ πού ἦρθαν τὸ 1923 στὴν Ἑλλάδα μὲ τὴν ἀνταλλαγὴ (τοῦ πληθυσμοῦ) καὶ χλευάστηκαν ὡς διῆθεν τουρκόσποροι, οἱ ἄνθρωποι αὐτοὶ μᾶς ἔδωσαν μεγάλα ἀναστήματα, σὰν τὸν Ἅγιο Ἀρσένιο ἀπὸ τὰ Φάρασα τῆς Καππαδοκίας, ὁ ὁποῖος ἔφερε τὰ λεγόμενα καραμανλίδικα Εὐαγγέλια, δηλαδὴ Εὐαγγέλια μὲ Ἑλληνικὰ γράμματα, ἀλλὰ στὴ τουρκικὴ γλῶσσα, καὶ ἄλλες μορφές ὅπως εἶναι ὁ Πρ. Παῖσιος, ὁ γνωστὸς μας Ἁγιορείτης μοναχός, ὁ μέγας θεολόγος Πρ. Ἰωάννης Ρωμανίδης καὶ πολλοὺς ἄλλους.

Πᾶμε τώρα στὸ ἀντίστροφο, ὅπου χάθηκε ἡ πίστη ἡ Ὀρθόδοξη, ἀλλὰ διατηρήθηκε ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα. Ἔμεινε Ἑλληνισμός; Ὁχι! Ἐνα παράδειγμα: Κάτω Ἰταλία καὶ Σικελία. Μέχρι τὸν 16<sup>ο</sup> αἰῶνα ἑκατομμύρια ἀπόγονοι καὶ ἀρχαίων

Ἑλλήνων καὶ Βυζαντινῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ Μανιάτες πήγαν ἐκεῖ ἐπὶ τουρκοκρατίας. Μόλις ἔρχεται ἡ παπικὴ λαίλαπα καὶ τοὺς κατακλύζει, τοὺς ἐκβιάζει, τοὺς ἐξαναγκάζει νὰ γίνουν παπικοὶ ἢ ἀκόμη καὶ οὐνίτες. Χάνεται ἡ συνείδηση τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ. Ἔχουμε βεβαίως κάποια Ἑλληνικὰ χωριά, στὰ ὁποῖα οἱ κάτοικοι εἶναι ἀκόμα ἑλληνόφωνοι ἀλλὰ μὲ ἰταλικὴ συνείδηση. Ἀπὸ τὰ ἑκατομμύρια τῶν Ἑλλήνων πού ὑπῆρχαν στὶς περιοχὲς αὐτές, σήμερα ἔχουμε μείνει ἀπειροελάχιστοι στὰ χωριά αὐτὰ πού λένε ὅτι κάποτε ἦταν Ἑλληνες – καὶ ἴσως νὰ τὸ νοιώθουν – ἀλλὰ πόσοι; Γιὰ αὐτὸ καὶ ἓνας διπλωμάτης, πολὺ σωστὰ ἔγραψε πρὶν ἀπὸ λίγο καιρὸ, ὅτι κάποτε τὸ πιὸ μεγάλο νησί τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ ἦταν ἡ Σικελία. Ἀλλὰ ὅταν ἔχασε τὴν Ὀρθοδοξία ἔχασε καὶ τὸν Ἑλληνισμὸ τῆς. Ἡ Κύπρος ἦταν τὸ δεύτερο μεγάλο νησί. Ἡ Κύπρος, γιατί διατήρησε τὴ Ἑλληνικότητά τῆς, πού τώρα φοβοῦμαι κινδυνεύει νὰ τὴν χάσει μὲ τὸ σχέδιο Ἀνάν; Διότι οἱ Κύπριοι παρέμειναν Ὀρθόδοξοι παρὰ τὴν Φραγκοκρατία, Ἀγγλοκρατία, Βενετοκρατία, Τουρκοκρατία, καὶ Γαλλοκρατία.

Ἄλλη περίπτωση Ἑλληνόφωνων πού ἐξισλαμίστηκαν, οἱ περίφημοι Τσάμηδες στὴ Θεσπρωτία. Μέχρι τὸν 17<sup>ο</sup> αἰῶνα στὴν Θεσπρωτία ἦταν ὅλοι Ὀρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί. Λόγω ἀτυχῶν ἐξεγέρσεων τοῦ Διονυσίου τοῦ λεγομένου Σκυλοσόφου ἢ λόγῳ ἐκούσιας προσχωρήσεως γιὰ κτήματα, κάποιοι ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς γίνονται μουσουλμάνοι καὶ ὀνομάζονται Τσάμηδες, ἀπὸ κάποια παραφθορὰ τῆς λέξεως Θύαμις πού εἶναι ὁ ποταμὸς Καλαμὰς (Θύαμις, Τσάμις). Οἱ Τσάμηδες διατηροῦν τὴν Ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα· ἀλλὰ μόλις ἄλλαξαν τὴν πίστη τους, ἔγιναν οἱ πιὸ φανατικοὶ τουρκαλβανοί. Ὁχι μόνο ἄλλαξαν τὴν ἐθνικὴ τους συνείδηση, ἀλλὰ ἔγιναν οἱ χειρότεροι διῶκτες τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ. Ἀκόμη καὶ οἱ Τοῦρκοι τοὺς χρησιμοποίησαν ὡς σφαγεῖς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ 1941-1944 οἱ Γερμανο-Ἰταλοὶ κατακτητὲς τοὺς τοὺς χρησιμοποίησαν ἐναντίον τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ πληθυσμοῦ τῆς Θεσπρωτίας. Γι' αὐτὸ τὸν λόγο σήμερα δὲν μποροῦν νὰ ἐπιστρέψουν τὰ παιδιά τους καὶ τὰ ἐγγόνια τους καὶ ἡ Ἀλβανία τὸ θέτει μονίμως ὡς ζήτημα.

Ποιὸς λοιπὸν σώζει τὴν ἐθνικὴ συνείδηση τοῦ Ἑλληνα στὶς δύσκολες στιγμές; Ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία πού κράτησε τοὺς τουρκόφωνους Καππαδόκες μέσα στὸ γένος ἢ ἡ γλῶσσα μόνη τῆς ἢ ὁποία δὲν μπόρεσε οὔτε τοὺς Τσάμηδες νὰ τοὺς διατηρήσει καθὼς καὶ τοὺς Σικελιανούς Ἑλληνες καὶ τόσοσους ἄλλους; Αὐτὸ δὲν μᾶς τὸ ἔχουν ἀπαντήσει οὔτε οἱ νεοπαγανιστὲς, οὔτε οἱ διάφοροι κουλτουριάρηδες, οἱ ὁποῖοι λένε, δὲν τὴν χρειαζόμαστε τὴν Ἐκκλησία, ὁ Ἑλληνισμὸς δηλαδὴ δὲν τὴν χρειάζεται.

Θὰ κλείσω μὲ μία ἀναφορὰ στὸν Ἅγιο Ἀρσένιο ἀπὸ τὰ Φάρασα τῆς Καππαδοκίας, αὐτὴ τὴν μεγάλη μορφή τῶν 85 τουρκόφωνων Ἑλληνορθόδοξων χωριῶν τῆς Καππαδοκίας. Εἶναι μία περιγραφή, πῶς μετὰ τὴν ἀνταλλαγὴ πού ὑπεγράφη στὴ Λωζάνη τὸ 1923, ξεκινοῦν οἱ Ἑλληνες μὲ ἐπικεφαλῆς τὸν Ἅγιο Ἀρσένιο, ὁ ὁποῖος ἀφοῦ ἦρθε στὸ Ἑλληνικὸ ἔδαφος, μετὰ ἀπὸ 40 μέρες – ἂν θυμᾶμαι καλά – ἐκοιμήθη. Βάπτισε, λέει, πρῶτα ὅλα τὰ ἀβάπτιστα παιδιά, διότι φοβήθηκε, μήπως μερικὰ, κατὰ τὴν ὥρα τῆς φυγῆς,

ἀποθάνουν ἢ σκοτωθοῦν. Μετὰ ἔσκαβε γιὰ μία ἐβδομάδα νὰ θάψει τὰ Ἱερὰ Σκεύη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, γιὰ νὰ μὴ τὰ βροῦν οἱ βάρβαροι Τοῦρκοι. Εἰς μνήμην ὅλων αὐτῶν πρέπει νὰ θυμόμαστε τὴν Ἱστορία μας...

**ΚΑΙ ΤΩΡΑ ΕΝΑ ΠΑΡΕΝΘΗΤΙΚΟ ΣΗΜΕΙΩΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΣΥΝΤΑΚΤΗ ΤΗΣ “ORTHODOX HERITAGE”:** Τὸ περιεχόμενο αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἄρθρου μὲ κανένα τρόπο δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ συνταυτισθεῖ ἢ νὰ χρησιμοποιηθεῖ γιὰ τὴν ἐξήγηση τοῦ ἐν Ἀμερικῇ φαινομένου τῆς ἀλλοιώσεως καὶ ὀργανωμένου διωγμοῦ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς γλώσσας, μέσα στὶς Ἑλληνορθόδοξες κοινότητες. Κατὰ τὴ γνώμη μας, αὐτὸ ἀποτελεῖ μία αὐτόβουλη ἀπόφαση μερικῶν σκοτεινῶν καὶ πολιτικῶς ἰσχυρῶν δυνάμεων τῆς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς μας. Ἡ πρᾶξι αὐτὴ εὐκόλα χαρακτηρίζεται, ἢ μᾶλλον ταυτίζεται μὲ μία δαιμονικὴ καὶ ἐσχάτη προδοσία.

Ἐκεῖνο ποῦ μᾶλλον ἐξηγεῖται στὴν Ἀμερικῇ εἶναι τὸ τί καὶ ποῦ ὀδηγεῖται τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ στοιχεῖο καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μας ὅταν ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἐγκαταλείπει τὴν ἀκέραιη Ὀρθοδοξία καὶ τοὺς Πατέρες καὶ ἀρχίζει νὰ συνταυτίζει τὸν ἑαυτὸ της μὲ τοὺς Λατίνους καὶ τοὺς Προτεστάντες. Μὲ τὸν ταχύτατο ρυθμὸ μὲ τὸν ὁποῖο ἡ ἐξουσία τῆς ἐν Ἀμερικῇ Ὀρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας ἀγκαλιάζει αἰρετικὲς ἀντιλήψεις καὶ ἰδιοτροπίες, εἶναι ἀδύνατον νὰ ἐπιτραπεῖ ἡ ἐπιβίωση τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς γλώσσας καὶ παράδοσης. Φυσικά, τὰ «Ἑλληνικὰ Φεστιβάλ» λόγῳ τῶν οικονομικῶν κινήτρων, ἀποτελοῦν τὴν μόνη ἐξαίρεση. Ἀλλὰ γιὰ μᾶς αὐτὸ ἀποτελεῖ μία ἄλλη ντροπή, γιὰ τὴν ὁποία θὰ μιλήσουμε ἄλλη φορά...

Ὅταν, ἀντιθέτως ἀπὸ τὸ τί γίνεται στὶς κοινότητες, μία ὁμάδα ἀποφασίζει καὶ συνταυτίζει Ὀρθοδοξία καὶ Ἑλληνισμό, τότε ἔχουμε τὸν πραγματικὸ θρίαμβο τῆς γνήσιας Ἑλληνορθοδοξίας. Τὸ ὄλοζώντανο παράδειγμα αὐτῆς τῆς θέσεως πραγματοποιεῖται καὶ εὐκόλα ἀναγνωρίζεται εἰς τὰ ἐν Ἀμερικῇ Ἑλληνορθόδοξα μοναστήρια. Ὁ Ἑλληνορθόδοξος Μοναχισμὸς σήμερα ἀποτελεῖ τὴν μόνη καὶ δυστυχῶς, τελευταία ἐλπίδα ἐπιβιώσεως, ὄχι μόνον τῆς Ὀρθόδοξου πίστεως, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς γλώσσας!



## Ὁ Θάνατος τοῦ Κωστή Παλαμά

Στὶς 27 Φεβρουάριου τοῦ 1943, ἡ Ἑλλάδα χάνει τὸν Ἐθνικὸ Ποιητὴ της, τὸν Κωστὴ Παλαμά. Τὴν ἐπόμενη ἡμέρα ἔγινε ἡ κηδεῖα του, ποῦ μὲ τὴν συμμετοχὴ χιλιάδων Ἀθηναίων, μετατράπηκε σὲ μεγαλειώδη ἐκδήλωση Ἐθνικῆς Ἀντίστασης. Ὁ Ἄγγελος Σικελιανὸς ἀπήγγειλε τὸ γνωστὸ ποίημά του: «Ἠχῆστε οἱ Σάλπιγγες. Οἱ σημαῖες οἱ φοβερὲς στῆς Λευτεριάς ξεδιπλωθεῖτε τὸν ἀέρα.» Τὸ πλῆθος, ἀγνοώντας τὴν παρουσία τῶν Γερμανικῶν κατοχικῶν στρατευμάτων, ἔψαλε τὸν Ἐθνικὸ Ὕμνο.

Ἄς τιμήσουμε καὶ ἐμεῖς τὸν Ἐθνικὸ μας Ποιητὴ. Στὴν ἐποχὴ τῆς γενικῆς ἀσκήμιας ποῦ ζοῦμε, αὐτὸς ἐξακολουθεῖ νὰ κρατᾷ μίαν ἀναμμένη λαμπάδα στὸ ναὸ τῆς ὁμορφιάς. Αἰωνία του ἡ μνήμη...

## Ἡ Τιμὴ Καὶ Προσκύνηση Τῶν Ἱερῶν Εἰκόνων

*Χρήστου Κρικῶνη, Καθηγητοῦ Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς Α.Π.Θ.*

Τὸ βασικὸ καὶ οὐσιαστικὸ χαρακτηριστικὸ τῆς Ὀρθόδοξου Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι ἡ χρῆση, ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ προσκύνηση τῶν Ἱερῶν εἰκόνων τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ ὅλων τῶν Ἁγίων. Διότι μὲ αὐτὲς ἐκφράζεται τόσον ὁ ἐγκόσμιος, ὅσον καὶ ὁ ὑπεκόσμιος χαρακτήρας της. Τὴν πραγματικότητα αὐτὴ θέλησαν νὰ τονίσουν οἱ ἐκκλησιαστικοὶ ἐκεῖνοι πατέρες, οἱ ὁποῖοι ὀνόμασαν τὴν πρώτη Κυριακὴ τῆς Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστῆς «Κυριακὴ τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας». Κατ’ αὐτὴν ἐορτάζεται ἡ ἐπέτειος τῆς ἀποφασισθείσης ἀναστηλώσεως τῶν Ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, κατὰ τὸ 843, σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν ἀπόφαση τῆς Ζ’ Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου.

Βεβαίως τὴν τιμὴ καὶ προσκύνηση τῶν Ἱερῶν εἰκόνων ἐπιβάλλουν καὶ ὑπαγορεύουν διάφοροι λόγοι. Πρῶτος εἶναι ἡ ἀνάγκη νὰ προσηλωθῇ ἡ σκέψη καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ τῶν πιστῶν στοὺς ἀποδέκτες τῶν προσευχῶν, τῶν δεήσεων καὶ τῶν παρακλήσεων τους, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν αἰνῶν καὶ τῶν εὐχαριστιῶν τους, δηλαδὴ στοὺς εἰκονιζόμενους Ἁγίους. Οἱ πιστοὶ προσευχόμενοι ἐνώπιον τῶν Ἱερῶν εἰκόνων ἀναπαύονται ψυχικά, βλέποντες τὶς συγκεκριμένους μορφὲς τῶν εἰκονιζόμενων Ἁγίων, ἔστω καὶ ὅπως λέγει ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος «ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ καὶ ἐν αἰνίγματι», καὶ τοῦτο διότι ἔτσι αἰσθάνονται τὴν παρουσία ἐκείνων στὴ μεσιτεία καὶ στὶς πρεσβεῖες τοὺς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν καὶ τοὺς ἐμπιστεύονται στὶς δεήσεις καὶ στὰ αἰτήματα τῶν προσευχῶν τους.

Δεύτερος οὐσιαστικὸς λόγος εἶναι ἡ μεγάλη διδακτικὴ ἀξία τῶν Ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, ὡς ἐκ τῆς θέσεώς τους στοὺς ἱεροὺς ναοὺς καὶ στὴ θεῖα λατρεία. Μὲ αὐτὲς διδάσκεται κάθε χριστιανός, πόσον ἐπιβραβεύει ὁ Θεὸς καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία ὅλους ἐκείνους, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἔμειναν στὴ γῆ πιστοὶ στὸ θέλημα Του καὶ ἀναδείχθηκαν ἄξιοι τοῦ σταυρικοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ ἀπολυτρωτικοῦ ἔργου τοῦ Θεανθρώπου. Τὴν ἐπιβράβευση αὐτὴ ἐκφράζουν στὶς εἰκόνες ἰδιαίτερα ὁ φωτιστέφανος τῶν Ἁγίων.

Τρίτος λόγος εἶναι ἡ πολυμερὴς ἱερότητα τῶν Ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, ἡ ὁποία ἀπορρέει ἀπὸ διάφορους παράγοντες, μεταξὺ τῶν ὁποίων σημαντικότεροι εἶναι ἡ θέση τῶν Ἱερῶν εἰκόνων στοὺς ἱεροὺς ναοὺς καὶ τὴ θεῖα λατρεία, ἡ θεολογικὴ διδασκαλία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ὅτι κάθε τιμὴ καὶ προσκύνηση τῶν Ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, «ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει» καὶ τὰ διάφορα ἱστορικὰ θαύματα, τὰ ὁποῖα ἀπεδόθησαν σ’ αὐτὲς.

Ὁ προσευχόμενος ἐνώπιον τῶν εἰκόνων αἰσθάνεται ὅτι βρίσκεται σὲ ἕνα ζωντανὸ προσωπικὸ διάλογο μὲ τοὺς εἰκονιζόμενους Ἁγίους τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἡ εἰκόνα θὰ μπορούσε νὰ παρομοιασθεῖ μὲ τὸν θεοφιλεῖ διερμηνέα τοῦ διαλόγου αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν μεσάζοντα ἐκεῖνον, ὁ ὁποῖος καθηλώνει ὅλη τὴν ὑπαρξὴ τοῦ προσευχομένου. Γι’ αὐτὸ καὶ ἡ Ζ’ Οἰκουμενικὴ Σύνοδος ἐχαρακτήρισε τὴν τιμὴ καὶ προσκύνηση τῶν Ἱερῶν εἰκόνων ὡς «ἐγκριτον θεάρεστον θεσμοθεσίαν καὶ παράδοσιν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, εὐσεβὲς αἶτημα καὶ ἀνάγκη τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτῆς».

Με τις εικόνες αυτές δὲν παραβιάζεται οὔτε ἀπογυμνώνεται τὸ ἀπερίγραπτον τῆς Θεότητος, ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς περιγράφεται μόνον ἡ ἱστορική θαναδρική παράσταση τῆς ἐπὶ γῆς παρουσίας καὶ ζωῆς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Δεδομένου ὅτι ὅλοι οἱ εἰκονιζόμενοι Ἅγιοι εἶναι «κατ' εἰκόνα καὶ ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ» ἐκτυπώματα τῆς μιᾶς Θεότητος, οἱ ἱερῆς εἰκόνες τους εἶναι ἐκτυπώματα τῆς πνευματικῆς τελειώσεώς τους στὸν κόσμον, σύμφωνα πάντοτε μετὰ τὴν διακήρυξη τοῦ Μεγάλου Βασιλείου «ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ προσκύνησις τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει».

Οἱ πρῶτοι εἰκονομάχοι, παρακινούμενοι συστηματικὰ ἀπὸ τις κατηγορίες τῶν Ἰουδαίων, περὶ εἰδωλολατρίας τῶν χριστιανῶν ἐκείνων ποὺ τιμοῦσαν καὶ προσκυνοῦσαν τις ἱερῆς εἰκόνες, μεγαλοποιοῦσαν κάποιες παρεκλίσεις καὶ ἀκρότητες καὶ ἐξεμεταλλεύονταν, δυσφημιστικά, κάποια μεμονωμένα περιστατικά ἀπλοϊκῶν, ἀγραμμάτων καὶ ἐνίοτε θρησκοπήτων χριστιανῶν ποὺ ἐκτρέπονταν σὲ ὑπερβολὴς καὶ καταχρήσεις τῆς τιμῆς τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία μετὰ τὴν ὀρθόδοξη διδασκαλία τῆς ποῦ ἀνέπτυξε γιὰ τὴν τιμὴ καὶ προσκύνηση τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, ἀντιμετώπισε ἐγκαίρως τὰ φαινόμενα αὐτὰ τῶν μεμονωμένων περιστατικῶν καταχρήσεων. Ἡ ὀρθὴ διδασκαλία τῆς εἶχε ἤδη διατυπωθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸν Μέγα Βασίλειο. Κατὰ τὸ πνεῦμα δὲ τῶν ἀποφάσεων τῆς Ζ' Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου καὶ οἱ εἰκόνες διδάσκουν τὴν κατὰ χάρι ἐξομοίωση τῶν εἰκονιζόμενων Ἁγίων μετὰ τὸ Θεό, διὰ τῆς ἀγιότητος τοῦ βίου τους, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἀρμόζει σ' αὐτὴς τιμὴ καὶ προσκύνηση. Σχετικὰ ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνὸς γράφει: «ὁ μὴ προσκυνῶν ἐχθρὸς ἐστὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς Ἁγίας Θεοτόκου καὶ τῶν Ἁγίων, ἐκδικητὴς δὲ τοῦ διαβόλου καὶ τῶν δαιμόνων, ἔργω ἐπιδεικνύμενος τὴν λύπην, ὅτι οἱ Ἅγιοι τοῦ Θεοῦ τιμῶνται καὶ δοξάζονται, ὁ δὲ διάβολος καταισχύνεται. Ἡ γὰρ εἰκὼν θριάμβωσις ἐστὶ καὶ φανέρωσις καὶ στηλογραφία εἰς μνήμην τῆς νίκης τῶν ἀριστευσάντων καὶ τῆς αἰσχύνης τῶν ἠττηθέντων καὶ καταβληθέντων».

Οἱ πιστοὶ «βλέποντες τὰς ἀναζωγραφήσεις», δηλαδὴ τις εἰκόνες, ἀνάγονται «εἰς ἔννοιαν καὶ τιμὴν τοῦ εἰκονισθέντος». Ἐπομένως ἡ εἰκόνα δὲν εἶναι αὐτοσκοπός, ἀλλὰ μέσον, μετὰ τὸ ὅποιο ὁ πιστὸς ἀνάγεται εἰς ἔννοιαν, μνήμη τοῦ θεαρέστου βίου τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου Ἁγίου καὶ ἐστὶ προτρέπεται σὲ ὁμοίωσίν του, ποῦ ἀποτελεῖ καὶ τὴν τιμὴ τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου Ἁγίου ἢ Μάρτυρος.

Μετὰ ὅλα αὐτὰ, συμπεραίνεται ὅτι ἡ ὁμοιότητα, σχετικὴ ἢ ἀπόλυτη, τῆς ἱστορικῆς, πραγματικῆς μορφῆς τοῦ πρωτοτύπου καὶ τῆς ἐξομοιωμένης στὴν εἰκόνα, εἶναι κάτι τὸ δευτερεύον στὶς ἐκκλησιαστικὲς εἰκόνες. Τὸ πρωτεύον καὶ κύριον σ' αὐτὴς εἶναι ἡ ιδιότητα καὶ ἡ ἰκανότητά τους νὰ ἀνάγουν στὰ πρωτότυπά τους καὶ σ' αὐτὸ συμβάλλει σημαντικὰ ἡ ἐπιγραφή, δηλαδὴ ἡ ἀναγραφή ἐπάνω τους τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου. Καὶ βέβαια ἡ μορφή τοῦ κάθε εἰκονιζομένου δὲν εἶναι ἐπινοήση τῶν ζωγράφων, ἀλλὰ ὅπως παρατηρεῖ ὁ ἱερὸς Φώτιος «τῆς γὰρ ἀνεκαθεν ἀποστολικῆς τε καὶ πατρικῆς παραδόσεως τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἀδιάπτωτον κήρυγμα, καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ἰδίους καὶ ἱεροὺς θεσμοὺς ἐργαζομένη ταύτην καὶ τεχνιτεύουσα, εἰκονίζει τε καὶ μορφοποιεῖ οὐδὲν τῆς ὑλικῆς

ἀκοσμίας, ἢ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης περιεργείας, ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐώσα παρρησιάζεσθαι. Ὅλον δὲ τὸ ἔργον ἐαυτῆς δεικνύσα καὶ ἀποφαίνουσα, καθαρῶς ἡμῖν καὶ ἀκιβδήλους ἐν τοῖς σεπτοῖς εἰκονίσμασι τὰς τῶν πρωτοτύπων ἐμφάσεις ἱεροπρεπῶς τὲ καὶ ἱεροτύπως παρέχεται».

Ἡ εἰκόνα εἶναι, κατὰ τὸν ἱερὸ Φώτιο, «αὐτόχρημα ἀρχέτυπον» κατὰ τὴν μορφή, τὴν κλήση, τὰ ἰνδάλματα τοῦ ἀρχέτυπου, κυρίως ὁμως κατὰ τὸ βαθύτερο θεολογικὸ τῆς περιεχόμενου καὶ τὴν ἀγιαστικὴ χάρι καὶ εὐλογία τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου, ἢ ὅποια ἐπιφοιτᾷ σ' αὐτὴ ἀδιαλείπτως, ὡς καὶ στὸ ἀρχέτυπο, καὶ μετὰ τὴν ὅποια κοινωνοῦν μετὰ κάθε τρόπο ὅσοι τιμοῦν τὸ πρωτότυπον καὶ ὅσοι προσκυνοῦν τιμητικὰ τὴν εἰκόνα του.



## Ἡ Ἀμερικανικὴ Κοινωνία

*Σεβ. Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἁγίου Βλασίου Ἱεροθέου Βλάχου*

**Α**ὐτὲς τις ἡμέρες παρακολουθοῦμε ὅλοι μετὰ βαθειὰ Ἀθλίψη καὶ ὑπαρξιακὸ πόνον τὰ ὅσα διαδραματίζονται στὸ Ἰράκ. Ἀγωνισθήκαμε ὅλοι, ὁ καθένας μετὰ τὸν τρόπο του, γιὰ τὴν ματαίωση τοῦ συγκαταβατικὰ ὀνομαζομένου πολέμου, ἀφοῦ εἶναι μία παράνομη εἰσβολή. Συμμετείχα σὲ ἀντιπολεμικὲς ἐκδηλώσεις στὴν ἔδρα τῆς Μητροπόλεώς μου. Δυστυχῶς ὁ πόλεμος ἐγίνε, παρὰ τὴν διεθνή κατακραυγὴ καὶ τώρα ἐλπίζουμε καὶ προσευχόμεστε οἱ συνέπειες νὰ εἶναι ὅσο τὸ δυνατόν λιγότερες.

Στὶς ἀντιπολεμικὲς ἐκδηλώσεις ἀκούσθησαν διάφορα συνθήματα. Ἐνα ἀπὸ αὐτὰ ἦταν καὶ τὸ γνωστὸ σύνθημα: «φονιάδες τῶν λαῶν, ἀμερικάνοι». Θὰ ἤθελα νὰ διατυπώσω μερικὲς σκέψεις μου γύρω ἀπὸ τὸ σύνθημα αὐτό, γιατί ὅπως θὰ φανῆ στὴν συνέχεια, αὐτὸ τὸ σύνθημα δὲν πρέπει νὰ ἀναφέρεται στὸν ἀμερικανικὸ λαό, ἀλλὰ στοὺς ἡγέτες του.

(1) Τὸ «Πνεῦμα» τῆς Ἀμερικῆς

Κατ' ἀρχὰς πρέπει νὰ ὑπομνησθῆ ὅτι ἡ ἀμερικανικὴ κοινωνία εἶναι μία ἀντιφατικὴ κοινωνία. Μέσα στοὺς κόλπους τῆς ἔχει τὰ πιὸ ἀντιφατικὰ στοιχεῖα. Ὑπάρχουν ἄνθρωποι ποὺ διαπνέονται ἀπὸ τὴν ἀλαζονεία τῆς ἐξουσίας καὶ τῆς παγκόσμιας κυριαρχίας καὶ ὑπάρχουν ἄνθρωποι ποὺ διακατέχονται ἀπὸ τὴν ψυχολογικὴ καὶ ὑπαρξιακὴ ἀνασφάλεια καὶ ἀναζητοῦν ψυχολογικὰ καὶ ὄντολογικὰ στηρίγματα.

Ὁ ἀμερικανὸς συγγραφέας καὶ σκηνοθέτης Frank Schaeffer στὸ καταπληκτικὸ του βιβλίον «ἀναζητώντας τὴν ὀρθόδοξη πίστη στὸν αἰῶνα τῶν ψεύτικων θρησκειῶν», κατὰ μετάφραση τοῦ Ἀρχιμ. π. Αὐγουστίνου Μύρου, ἀναλύει μετὰ ἐνάργεια καὶ σαφὴ γνώση τὸ πνεῦμα ἀπὸ τὸ ὅποιο διαπνέεται ἡ ἀμερικανικὴ κοινωνία.

Στὴν ἀρχὴ τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ γράφει μετὰ ἐκφραστικότητα: «Ἡ Ἀμερικὴ εἶναι ἓνα ἔθνος, ποῦ οἱ ὑπῆκοοί του λέμε ὅτι πιστεύουμε στὸν Θεό, ἐνῶ τὴν ἴδια ὥρα ζοῦμε καὶ συμπεριφερόμαστε ὅπως οἱ ἄθεοι. Κρινόμενοι ἀκόμη καὶ μετὰ τὸ ἐλάχιστο παραδοσιακὸ κριτήριον χριστιανικῆς συμπεριφορᾶς οἱ

ἀμερικανοί με δυσκολία μπορούν να χαρακτηρισθούν ως “χριστιανικός λαός”. Σε σύγκριση με άλλους πολιτισμούς, εμείς οι ἀμερικανοί είμαστε ίσως οι πιο ύλιστες και πιο μολυσμένοι ἄνθρωποι στη γῆ. Ὅμως, σύμφωνα με αὐτὰ πού λέμε γιά τούς ἑαυτούς μας, είμαστε ἕνας “θρησκευτικός”, κι ἀκόμη ἕνας “καλός” λαός».

Στό βιβλίο του ἐκφράζει τήν ἀλήθεια ὅτι στήν Ἀμερική ἐπικρατοῦν δυο τάσεις. Στήν πρώτη περιλαμβάνεται ἡ πλειονότητα τῶν ἀνθρώπων πού πιστεύουν ὅτι εἶναι θρησκευτικοί ἄνθρωποι, ἀλλά ὁμως αὐτή ἡ θρησκευτικότητα τους ὀφείλεται στήν «μεγάλη πίστη σέ πλανεμένες θρησκείες». Στήν δεύτερη τάση συγκαταλέγεται ἡ λεγόμενη «τάξη τῶν εἰδημόνων» (Knowledge Class) στήν ὁποία ἀνήκει τὸ λεγόμενο «ἀνώτατο διανοητικό, πολιτικό καί κοινωνικό στῶμα τῆς κοινωνίας μας». Καί φυσικά αὐτή ἡ «τάξη τῶν εἰδημόνων» εἶναι ἐκείνη πού καθορίζει ἐν πολλοίς τὸ πνεῦμα πού ἐπικρατεῖ σήμερα στήν Ἀμερική.

Γενικά τὰ ρεύματα πού κυριαρχοῦν στήν ἀμερικανική κοινωνία διαπνέονται ἀπό τὸν καλβινιστικό πουριτανισμό, τὸν εὐρωπαϊκὸ διαφωτισμὸ καί τὸ ρομαντικὸ κίνημα. Αὐτὲς οἱ ἀρχὲς διαπότισαν τὸ ἀμερικανικὸ ὄνειρο τῆς δημιουργίας μιᾶς κοινωνίας εὐδαιμονιστικῆς καί ἀπόλυτα κυριαρχικῆς στὸν κόσμο. Ἡ εὐδαιμονία συνδέθηκε με τὸ «χριστιανικὸ δόγμα», ὅπως μεταφέρθηκε με τούς μετανάστες καλβινιστές, καθὼς ἐπίσης αὐτὸ τὸ «χριστιανικὸ» πνεῦμα συνδέθηκε καί με τὶς μετριασμένες διαφωτιστικὲς ἀρχὲς τῆς ἐλευθερίας, τῆς δημοκρατίας, τοῦ ἀνθρωπισμοῦ.

## (2) Οἱ Ἀναζητήσεις τῶν Ἀμερικανῶν

Ἐνῶ αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ γενικὸ πνεῦμα πού ἐπικρατεῖ στήν Ἀμερική καί ἐνῶ οἱ ἡγέτες τῶν Ἀμερικανῶν διαπνέονται ἀπὸ τὰ ὅσα ἀνέφερα προηγουμένως, ἐν τούτοις στήν Ἀμερικανική κοινωνία κυριαρχεῖ μία ἀνασφάλεια καί μία ἀναζήτηση τῆς αὐθεντικῆς ζωῆς. Ὑπάρχουν πολλοὶ πού ἀντιδρῶν στήν «τάξη τῶν εἰδημόνων» (Knowledge Class). Ὑπάρχει ἐπίσης καί μία μεγάλη μερίδα ἀνθρώπων πού ἀναζητοῦν μία γνησιότερη ζωὴ πού νὰ ικανοποιῇ τὴν ἐσωτερικὴ καί ὑπαρξιακὴ πείνα τους, γι’ αὐτὸ καί παλαιότερα εἶχε γίνε ἀποδεκτὸς ὁ ὑπαρξισμὸς.

Ὅταν ἀναφερόμαστε στοὺς Ἀμερικανούς, πρέπει νὰ ἔχουμε ὑπ’ ὄψη μας ὅτι ὑπάρχουν πολλοὶ μετανάστες πού προέρχονται ἀπὸ ὅλα τὰ Κράτη τῆς γῆς καί πού δὲν συντονίζονται ἀπόλυτα με τὶς ἐπιδιώξεις τῆς ἡγεσίας τους. Ἄλλωστε αὐτὲς τὶς ἡμέρες εἶδαμε στὰ Μέσα Γενικῆς Ἐνημέρωσης ὅτι πολλοὶ Ἀμερικανοὶ ἀντέδρασαν ἐμφανῶς καί δημοσίως γιά τὸν πόλεμο στὸ Ἰράκ. Γιά παράδειγμα ὑπάρχουν Ἕλληνες, Βαλκάνιοι, Τοῦρκοι, Ρῶσοι, Ἀφρικανοί, Ἀσιάτες, Ἀραβες, Σύριοι, Λιβανέζοι κλπ. Καί ἂν σκεφθῆ κανεὶς ὅτι ὅλοι αὐτοὶ συνήθως σχημάτισαν «ἐθνικὲς θρησκείες» καί «ἐθνικὲς ἐκκλησίες», πράγμα τὸ ὁποῖο εἶναι ἕνα μεγάλο πρόβλημα γιά τὴν ἀμερικανική κοινωνία, τότε μπορεῖ νὰ καταλήξῃ στὸ συμπέρασμα ὅτι τὰ πράγματα δὲν εἶναι καί τόσο ἀπλά καί εὐκόλα στὸ νὰ καταδικάζουμε ὅλους τοὺς Ἀμερικανούς, ἐπειδὴ εἶναι Ἀμερικανοί.

Ὑπάρχει ἐπίσης μία μεγάλη μερίδα ἀνθρώπων πού ἔχουν ἀπογοητευθῆ ἀπὸ τὸν καλβινιστικὸ πουριτανισμό, πού κά-

νει τὸν ἄνθρωπο νὰ περιορίζεται μόνον στήν ἐπιδερμική ἠθική, καθὼς ἐπίσης ἀπογοητεύθηκαν καί ἀπὸ τὸν ὀρθολογισμό τοῦ διαφωτιστικοῦ πνεύματος, γιὰ καί πάλι δὲν ικανοποιεῖται ἡ ὑπαρξιακὴ τους πείνα. Ἐτσι ὑπάρχουν πολλοὶ πού ἀναζητοῦν μία ἄλλη θρησκευτικὴ βάση. Δὲν εἶναι παράδοξο, ἀπὸ τῆς πλευρᾶς αὐτῆς, ὅτι πολλοὶ Ἀμερικανοὶ ἀσπάζονται τὸν βουδισμό, γιὰ μέσα σὲ αὐτὸν αἰσθάνονται ὅτι βρίσκουν μία ἀπάντηση γιά τὴν ὀδύνη τῆς ζωῆς, καθὼς ἐπίσης ἀσπάζονται τὸν μουσουλμανισμό, γιὰ ἄλλωστε πολλὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ δυτικοῦ χριστιανισμοῦ ὁμοιάζουν με τὸ μουσουλμανικὸ ὄνειρο. Πράγματι τὸ εὐδαιμονιστικὸ πνεῦμα, ἡ κυριαρχία στὸν κόσμο, ἡ ἱερότητα τοῦ πολέμου, ἡ ἀτομοκρατία, εἶναι κοινὰ μεταξὺ τοῦ δυτικοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ καί τοῦ μουσουλμανισμοῦ.

Προσθέτοντας τὴν δική μου προσωπικὴ γνώση, θὰ ἤθελα νὰ σημειώσω ὅτι σήμερα ὑπάρχει μία μεγάλη μερίδα ἀμερικανῶν, πού ἀπογοητευμένη ἀπὸ ὅλα τὰ ἰδεολογικὸ-θρησκευτικὰ ρεύματα πού ἐπικρατοῦν στήν χώρα τους, ἀναζητοῦν καί βρίσκουν τὴν ὀρθόδοξη ἀλήθεια, με τὴν νηπτική παράδοσή της. Κλήθηκα νὰ συμμετάσχω σὲ πολλὰ συνέδρια καί σεμινάρια στὸ Σιάτλ, στήν Ἀτλάντα κλπ

Ἐπομένως, ὅταν ἀναφερόμαστε σὲ κατακριτέες ἐνέργειες τῶν ἡγετῶν τῆς Ἀμερικῆς, θὰ πρέπει νὰ εἶμαστε προσεκτικοὶ καί νὰ μὴ καταδικάζουμε ὅλους τοὺς Ἀμερικανούς, γιὰτι ὑπάρχουν ἐξέχοντες πολιτικοί, διανοούμενοι καί πολλὸς λαός, πού ἔχουν διαφορετικὴ ἀντίληψη γιά τὰ θέματα αὐτά. Δυστυχῶς ἡ «τάξη τῶν εἰδημόνων», με τὴν ὅλη νοοτροπία τους, ἔχουν τὴν δυνατότητα νὰ δημιουργοῦν τὸ κατάλληλο κλίμα καί νὰ ἀποπροσανατολίζουν ἀκόμη καί μεγάλη μερίδα τοῦ ἀμερικανικοῦ λαοῦ. Ἐγὼ τουλάχιστον ἔχω τὴν ἐλπίδα ὅτι ὁ ἀμερικανικὸς λαός με τὴν ἀνασφάλεια πού ἔχει, με τὶς ἀντιφατικότητες πού τὸν διακρίνουν, τὸ ὑπαρξιακὸ ἀνικανοποίητο πού τὸν διαποτίζει, με τὴν ἀναζήτηση τῆς ἱστορικῆς Ἐκκλησίας πού τὸν χαρακτηρίζει, με τὴν προσπάθειά του νὰ βρῆ ὑπαρξιακὲς καί ὑπαρκτικὲς ἀπαντήσεις εἶναι ἀρκετὰ ἀνοικτὸς στήν αὐθεντικὴ ὀρθόδοξη θεολογία με τὸ ἡσυχαστικὸ καί κοινωνικὸ τῆς πνεῦμα, με τὴν ἀγάπη στὸ πρόσωπο καί τὴν κοινωνία.

Ἀκριβῶς καί γιά τὸν λόγο αὐτὸν δὲν ἔχει εὐθύνη μόνον ὁ ἀμερικανικὸς λαός ἐναντι τοῦ κόσμου, ἀλλὰ καί εμείς, ἰδιαίτερος οἱ ὀρθόδοξοι, ἔχουμε εὐθύνη ἀπέναντί του, στὸ κατὰ πόσον ἔχουμε τὴν δυνατότητα νὰ τοῦ ικανοποιῶμε αὐτὸ τὸ ὑπαρξιακὸ κενό.



**Ἄ**φησε τὸ διάβολο. Μὴν τοῦ δίνεις σημασία. Ὅσο τοῦ δίνεις σημασία, τόσο περισσότερο σὲ πλησιάζει. Ἄν θέλεις νὰ τὸν διώξεις, νὰ τὸν ἀπομακρύνεις ἀπὸ κοντά σου, πᾶνε νὰ τοῦ δίνεις σημασία. Περιφρόνησέ τον. Μόνον ἡ περιφρόνηση τοῦ ἀξίζει. Ἀπὸ τὴ στιγμή πού θὰ ἀρχίσει νὰ τὴν εἰσπράττει, θὰ ἀρχίσει καί θὰ ὑποχωρεῖ. Μέχρι πού, τελικά, θὰ τραπῆ σὲ φυγή.

**Γέρων Πορφύριος (+1991)**

## AN INSTRUCTIVE LESSON FOR YOUTH FROM THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

By St. John Maximovitch

*And the younger of them said to his father, Father give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. [Luke 15: 32]*

The parable of the Prodigal Son is a most instructive lesson for youth. We see in the prodigal son the true character of flighty youth: light-minded, thoughtless, thirsting for independence; in short, everything that usually distinguishes the majority of youth. The younger son grew up in his parents' house. On reaching adolescence, he already began to imagine that life at home was too restrictive. It seemed unpleasant to him to live under his father's rule and his mother's watchful eye. He wanted to imitate his comrades, who had given themselves up to the pleasures of the world. "I am the heir of a rich estate. Would it not be better," he reasoned, "if I received my inheritance now? I could manage my wealth differently than my father does." Thus the light-minded youth was carried away by the deceitful glitter of the world's pleasures and decided to throw off the yoke of obedience and to depart from his parents' home.

Are not many inspired by similar impulses today, and, while they may not leave their parents' home, do they not depart from the home of their Heavenly Father, that is, from obedience to the Holy Church?

The yoke of Christ seems difficult for immature minds, and His commandments burdensome. They think that it is not really necessary to keep that which God and His Holy Church command us. To them it seems possible to serve God and the world at the same time. They say, "We are already strong enough to withstand destructive temptations and seductions. We can hold onto the truth and sound teachings by ourselves. Allow us to perfect our minds through acquiring many kinds of knowledge. Let us strengthen our wills ourselves amid temptations and seductions. Through experience our senses will become convinced of the vileness of vice!" Are such desires any better than the ill-considered request of the younger son to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me?"

And so, a light-minded youth ceases to heed the commandments and admonitions of the Holy Church. He ceases to study the Word of God and the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and listens intently to the sophistries of those who are falsely-called teachers, and in these pursuits he kills the best hours of his life. He goes to church less frequently or stands there inattentively, distracted. He does not find the opportunity to devote himself to piety and to exercise himself in the virtues, because he spends so much time attending shows, public entertainments, etc. In a word, with each day he gives himself up more and more to the world, and finally, he goes off to "a far country."

What is the result of such an estrangement from the Holy Church? It is the same as the result of the prodigal son's leaving his parents' house. Light-minded youths very quickly waste their excellent energies and talents of soul and body, ruining for time and eternity all the good they have done. Meanwhile, there appears "a mighty famine in that land:" emptiness and dissatisfaction -- the inevitable result of wild pleasures. A thirst for enjoyments appears, which intensifies with the gratifying of wanton passions, and finally becomes insatiable. It often happens that the unfortunate lover of the world, in order to gratify his passions, resorts to base and shameful pursuits, which do not bring him to his senses like the prodigal son and do not return him to the path of salvation, but complete his ruin, both temporal and eternal!



## A LIST OF THE PASSIONS

By St. Peter of Damaskos, from "The Philokalia: The Complete Text compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth," Volume Three



"The passions are: harshness, trickery, malice, perversity, mindlessness, licentiousness, enticement, dullness, lack of understanding, idleness, sluggishness, stupidity, flattery, silliness, idiocy, madness, derangement, coarseness, rashness, cowardice, lethargy, dearth of good actions, moral errors, greed, over-frugality, ignorance, folly, spurious knowledge, forgetfulness, lack of discrimination, obduracy, injustice, evil intention, a conscienceless soul, slothfulness, idle chatter, breaking of faith, wrongdoing, sinfulness, lawlessness, criminality, passion, seduction, assent to evil, mindless coupling, demonic provocation, dallying, bodily comfort beyond what is required, vice, stumbling, sickness of soul, enervation, weakness of intellect, negligence, laziness, a reprehensible despondency, disdain of God, aberration, transgression, unbelief, lack of faith, wrong belief, poverty of faith, heresy, fellowship in heresy, polytheism, idolatry, ignorance of God, impiety, magic, astrology, divination, sorcery, denial of God, the love of idols, dissipation, profligacy, loquacity, indolence, self-love, inattentiveness, lack of progress, deceit, delusion, audacity, witchcraft, defilement, the eating of unclean food, soft living, dissoluteness, voracity, unchastity, avarice, anger, dejection, listlessness, self-esteem, pride, presumption, self-elation, boastfulness, infatuation, foulness, satiety, doltishness, torpor, sensuality, over-eating, gluttony, insatiability, secret eating, hoggishness, solitary eating, indifference, fickleness,

self-will, thoughtlessness, self-satisfaction, love of popularity, ignorance of beauty, uncouthness, gaucherie, light-mindedness, boorishness, rudeness, contentiousness, quarrelsomeness, abusiveness, shouting, brawling, fighting, rage, mindless desire, gall, exasperation, giving offence, enmity, meddlesomeness, chicanery, asperity, slander, censure, calumny, condemnation, accusation, hatred, railing, insolence, dishonor, ferocity, frenzy, severity, aggressiveness, forswearing oneself, oath-taking, lack of compassion, hatred of one's brothers, partiality, patricide, matricide, breaking fasts, laxity, acceptance of bribes, theft, rapine, jealousy, strife, envy, indecency, jesting, vilification, mockery, derision, exploitation, oppression, disdain of one's neighbor, flogging, making sport of others, hanging, throttling, heartlessness, implacability, covenant-breaking, bewitchment, harshness, shamelessness, impudence, obfuscation of thoughts, obtuseness, mental blindness, attraction to what is fleeting, impassionedness, frivolity, disobedience, dullwittedness, drowsiness of soul, excessive sleep, fantasy, heavy drinking, drunkenness, uselessness, slackness, mindless enjoyment, self-indulgence, venery, using foul language, effeminacy, unbridled desire, burning lust, masturbation, pimping, adultery, sodomy, bestiality, defilement, wantonness, a stained soul, incest, uncleanness, pollution, sordidness, feigned affection, laughter, jokes, immodest dancing, clapping, improper songs, revelry, fluteplaying, license of tongue, excessive love of order, insubordination, disorderliness, reprehensible collusion, conspiracy, warfare, killing, brigandry, sacrilege, illicit gains, usury, williness, grave-robbing, hardness of heart, obloquy, complaining, blasphemy, fault-finding, ingratitude, malevolence, contemptuousness, pettiness, confusion, lying, verbosity, empty words, mindless joy, daydreaming, mindless friendship, bad habits, nonsensicality, silly talk, garrulity, niggardliness, depravity, intolerance, irritability, affluence, rancor, misuse, ill-temper, clinging to life, ostentation, affectation, pusillanimity, satanic love, curiosity, contumely, lack of the fear of God, unteachability, senselessness, haughtiness, self-vaunting, self-inflation, scorn for one's neighbor, mercilessness, insensitivity, hopelessness, spiritual paralysis, hatred of God, despair, suicide, a falling away from God in all things, utter destruction -- altogether 298 passions."

"These, then, are the passions which are named in the Holy Scriptures. I have set them down in a single list, as I did at the beginning of my discourse with the various books I have used. I have not tried, and nor would I have been able, to arrange them all in order; this would have been beyond my powers, for the reason given by St. John Climacus: 'If you seek understanding among wicked men, you will not find it.' For all that the demons produce is disorderly. In common with the godless and the unjust, the demons have but one purpose: to destroy the souls of those who accept their evil counsel. Yet sometimes they actually help men to attain holiness. In such instances they are conquered by the patience and faith of those who put their trust in the Lord, and who through their good actions and resistance to evil thoughts counteract the demons and bring down curses upon them."

## WISDOM FROM THE PULPIT OF GREEK ORTHODOX CLERGY

*Orthodox Heritage periodically collects spiritually instructive sayings from various homilies, translates them and presents them for the benefit of our readers and for the Glory of our Trinitarian God*

Spiritual advancement requires that we do not neglect the lower steps which lead us to the higher level.

Temperance is the daughter of prudence, the sister of abstinence and the mother of freedom.

God created us without our will but he can not save us without it.

The devil closes one door and God opens ten.

Spring is a natural renewal, an indication of immortality.

God always protects the widow and the orphan and He destroys the plans of sinful people wishing to harm them.

The fire lit by our sins must be extinguished not with water but with our tears.

Daily study of Holy Scripture makes us invulnerable to the attacks of sin.

When you stop pleasing yourself you start pleasing God.

As St. Kosmas Aitolos said, man needs two wings to fly and make it to Paradise; these are humility and love.

Holy water dissolves sins and prevents illness.

Sorrow is the school that helps us attain great virtues and shapes great characters.

Blood washes away with water and not with more blood.

Withstanding temptations allows us to recognize our weak nature, become humble and thus attract God's Grace.

God has riches, He loves us but we do not listen to Him. The devil is bankrupt, he hates us, but we give him our love.

Know thyself! Practice abstinence and temperance. Avoid obscene things.

Courage is to not carelessly jeopardize oneself but to instead march decisively towards the just struggle.

A cave provides us with as much space for God's grace as a palace.

One can hide himself or his actions from other people but not from God.

Kindness can always replace the absence of beauty, but beauty can never be a substitute for kindness.

Honesty is the face of our soul while hypocrisy is its mask.

If our actions cause us to be shameful in front of others, we should feel greater shame for God because He knows and examines all that takes place, even in the dark.

It is not sufficient to only praise virtuous people; you must also imitate them!

A person that speaks without thinking is like a man who shoots a gun without aiming.

Christian hope refers to the anticipation and awaiting for God and an eternal life near Christ.

If we have to choose between committing or accepting an unjust act, we must always be willing to be the recipients of injustice!

## APOPHTHEGMS BY THE GOD-INSPIRED ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, PART 8

*SOURCE: From the book "475 Apophthegms by the God-Inspired St. Isaac the Syrian," pp. 33-38, published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood.*

### 22<sup>nd</sup> Lesson

197. A person deemed worthy to experience divine grace does not allow passions to enter his heart. A different desire prevails within his heart, a desire that is stronger than any human passion, the desire for God's joy.

198. He who meddles with worldly matters, and is thus paralyzed due to non-stop conversations, is unable to maintain his spiritual health.

199. Lord Jesus Christ deem me worthy to remain as if dead towards all worldly associations of this age. Lifelessness towards the world is to not allow the intellect to desire any of earthly riches.

200. When man steps on the staircase of repentance, he begins, through divine grace, to taste the sweetness of the Holy Spirit's knowledge.

201. The sweet fire of God's love burns the passions of both soul and body. As much as a person struggles with prayer and the study of Holy Scriptures, so much he fails to realize that he is part of the world and instead focuses on accepting divine gifts and revelations.

202. All three, Adam, Eve and the serpent sinned. The curse upon each of them, though, was different. This is similarly applicable to each of us; we each receive our own intensity of hell, in accordance with our will and propensity towards sin.

203. The struggler, when he falls to sin, stands up and continues with his struggle. The slave of sin, on other hand, finds ways to enjoy her and never stops sinning.

204. Interruption of prayer, withdrawal from the study of Holy Scriptures, and absence of Holy Communion bring within us demons who then dominate and command us.

### 23<sup>rd</sup> Lesson

205. When we become slaves of the passions, our soul is dead.

206. A quiet mouth is capable of interpreting God's mysteries. Talkativeness and idle talk, on the other hand, draws us away from God.

207. The person who hinders his mouth from committing slander and criticism guards his heart and keeps her dispassionate; he instead sees our Lord God, driving away the demons of wickedness and malice.

208. He who takes care of his soul experiences delight in his heart.

209. Just as a fish that finds itself outside of water dies, likewise a nous experiences death when it departs from the memory of God.

210. Prayer kills all passions.

211. If you are cleansed from the passions of anger and wickedness, heaven will arrive within you and you will see Christ our Master and His angels.

212. People who are irascible, or always enraged, or gluttons, or only associate with worldly people, or stubborn, or angry, or hotheaded, and whoever else is full of passions, they all walk in darkness.

213. A spiritual person in the world who willingly suffers in his daily cares is better than the monastic who suffers in his spiritual struggles.

214. He who scorns and diminishes himself is enlightened by God's wisdom.

215. When we cut ourselves away from the consolation of this world, we become worthy of divine grace through the Holy Spirit.

216. God will find him who has only rich friends bankrupt.

217. A person that maintains memory of death and withdraws himself away from the pleasures of this world, that person was created by God and raised by the Holy Spirit and experiences delight and rejoicing in his heart.

### 24<sup>th</sup> Lesson

218. A man with pure heart speaks always with spiritual words. He, though, who has been conquered by passions, speaks passionately, even on spiritual matters.

219. Association, conversation and idle talk with worldly people cool down the fire of the Holy Spirit within our heart.

220. Love God so that you do not become captive of the love for the world.

221. The person who throws frequent banquets is a laborer for the demon of the flesh and pollutes the souls of humble men.

222. The causes for sin are found in wine, harlots, wealth, and youth.

223. He who abandons his wealth for God discovers inexhaustible treasures.

224. The table of the person who always persists on prayer emits a fragrance sweeter than perfumes.

225. Blessed is he who is nourished by the Bread that descended from Heaven and granted life to the world, i.e., Holy Communion. His heart rejoices and delights forever.

226. Blessed is he who has felt in his heart the cool freshness that results from God, i.e., the Holy Spirit. When a man is watered with It, his heart will be filled with great joy and gladness.

227. A meek and humble person is loved by all except those that are proud and enjoy slander.

228. The holy angels care for us as older brothers do for the younger siblings.



For everyone in general, fasting is above all temperance and strict moderation in the use of food. Consequently, you should use food in moderation and try especially to bridle the desires of the body, and not satisfy its lusts at all, for they are unnecessary for the preservation of health and the prolongation of life and then your fast will be true.

**Saint Innocent of Alaska**

*"Indication of the Way Into the Kingdom of Heaven"*

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The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or the Brotherhood of St. POIMEN

## A WONDROUS EVENT

*Personal experiences of Elder Paisios, from the book "Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain."*

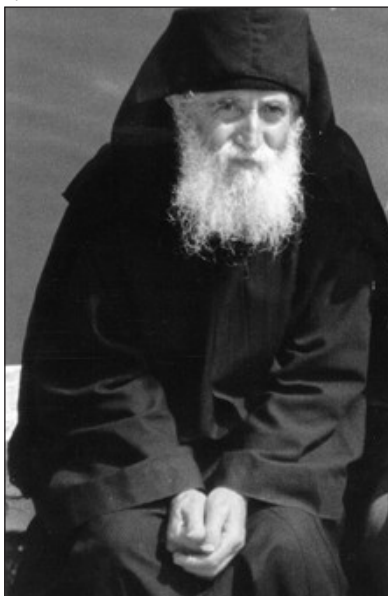
After the Turkish invasion in Cyprus, a Cypriot deacon monk went to visit the Elder, as he was feeling very sad about the terrible destruction and great loss of lives. (He had also lost some of his relatives).

Father Paisios was fond of him because he was a very pious and kind man and asked him to spend the night at his cell.

"In the morning, the priest will come to serve the Divine Liturgy. I will wake you up early, so we can chant the Matins service and read the prayers of the Holy Communion service."

The deacon went to his cell and the Elder to his own, where he prayed all night. A couple of times, he went to knock on the deacon's door and jokingly said, "Father, did you, by any chance, have a vision? Did you see an angel?"

Around two o'clock in the morning, Father Paisios woke him up to start the Matins service. At one point, the Elder began to read the service of the Holy Communion. The deacon was watching the way Father Paisios was reading, and how his face was full of compunction and piety.



When he reached the hymn of the fifth ode which says: "O Mary, Mother of God, the sacred tent of fragrance, through your prayers, make me a chosen instrument that I may partake of the holiness of your offspring," something extraordinary happened. The little chapel was filled with a white-blue light and the oil lamps, whose red flames became light-blue as well, began to move in a slow rhythm. At the same time, the whole chapel was permeated by a heavenly fragrance, beyond description.

The deacon was astonished and could not understand what was going on. He interrupted the Elder, whispering to him, "Father, what is happening?"

He made a signal for him to keep silent and told him, "Say the Jesus prayer and do not talk, because the Virgin Mary is visiting us."

For quite some time, the Elder and the deacon remained with their heads on the ground, until the white-blue light faded away taking along with it the sorrow and grief from the deacon's heart. In their place, there was joy, hope, faith and love for God, but also gratefulness towards the Elder who was the recipient of the grace of God.

Later on, the priest came to serve the Divine Liturgy. In the morning, the deacon left with a deep feeling of admiration for the spiritual boldness Father Paisios had before God.



# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγον εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

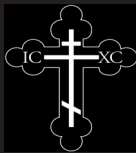
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## COMPARING ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY & OTHER TRADITIONS

*By Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos (edited for length)*

Orthodox spirituality differs distinctly from any other "spirituality" of an eastern or western type. There can be no confusion because Orthodox spirituality is God-centered, whereas all others are man-centered.

The difference appears primarily in the doctrinal teaching. For this reason we put "Orthodox" before the word "Church" so as to distinguish it from any other religion. Dogmas are the results of decisions made at the Ecumenical Councils on various matters of faith. Dogmas are referred to as such, because they draw the boundaries between truth and error, between sickness and health. Dogmas express the revealed truth. They formulate the life of the Church. Dogmatic differences reflect corresponding differences in therapy. If a person does not follow the "right way" he cannot ever reach his destination. If he does not take the proper "remedies," he cannot ever acquire health; in other words, he will experience no therapeutic benefits. Again, if we compare Orthodox spirituality with other Christian traditions, the difference in approach and method of therapy is more evident.

A fundamental teaching of the Holy Fathers is that the Church is a "Hospital" which cures the wounded man. In many passages of Holy Scripture such language is used, for example in that of the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable, the Samaritan represents Christ who cured the wounded man and led him to the Inn, which is to the "Hospital" which is the Church. It is evident here that Christ is presented as the Healer, the physician who cures man's maladies;

and the Church as the true Hospital. It is very characteristic that Saint John Chrysostom, analyzing this parable, presents the truths emphasized above.

Man's life "in Paradise" was reduced to a life governed by the devil and his wiles. "And fell among thieves," that is in the hands of the devil and of all the hostile powers. The wounds man suffered are the various sins, as the prophet David says: "my wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness" (Psalm 37). For "every sin causes a bruise and a wound." The Samaritan is Christ Himself who descended to earth from Heaven in order to cure the wounded man. He used oil and wine to "treat" the wounds; in other words, by "mingling His blood with the Holy Spirit, he brought man to life." Then the Good Samaritan, i.e. Christ, took man to the grand, wondrous and spacious Inn - to the Church. He handed man over to the innkeeper, who is the Apostle Paul, and through the Apostle Paul to all bishops and priests, saying: "Take care of the Gentile people, whom I have handed over to you in the Church. They suffer illness wounded by sin, so cure them, using as remedies the words of the Prophets and the teaching of the Gospel; make them healthy through the admonitions and comforting word of the Old and New Testaments." Thus, according to Saint Chrysostom, Paul is he who maintains the Churches of God, "curing all people by his spiritual admonitions and offering to each one of them what they really need."

In the interpretation of this parable by Saint John Chrysostom, it is clearly shown that the Church is a Hospital which cures people wounded by sin; and the bishops and priests are the therapists of the people of God. And this precisely is the work of Orthodox theology. When referring to Orthodox theology, we do not simply mean a history of theology.

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Orthodox Heritage may, at times, bring up issues or present articles that some consider controversial. Such material is presented so that a distinction is made between salvation and the 20th century heresy of ecumenism. These are confusing times for the Orthodox faithful, and political correctness must be sacrificed so that His TRUTH be brought forth.

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In Patristic tradition, theologians are the God-seers. Saint Gregory Palamas calls Barlaam [who attempted to bring Western scholastic theology into the Orthodox Church] a "theologian," but he clearly emphasizes that intellectual theology differs greatly from the experience of the vision of God. Theology is the fruit of man's cure and the path which leads to the acquisition of the knowledge of God.

Western theology, however, has differentiated itself from Eastern Orthodox theology. Instead of being therapeutic, it is more intellectual and emotional in character. In the West, scholastic theology evolved and is now based on rational thought whereas Orthodoxy is hesychastic. Scholastic theology tried to understand logically the Revelation of God and conform to a philosophical methodology. The Scholastics acknowledged God at the outset and then endeavored to prove His existence by logical arguments and rational categories. In the Orthodox Church, as expressed by the Holy Fathers, faith is God revealing Himself to man. We accept faith by hearing it not so that we can understand it rationally, but so that we can cleanse our hearts, attain to faith by *theoria* (see note, end of article) and experience the Revelation of God.

Scholastic theology reached its culminating point in the person of Thomas Aquinas, a saint in the Roman Catholic Church. He claimed that Christian truths are divided into natural and supernatural. Natural truths can be proven philosophically, like the truth of the Existence of God. Supernatural truths - such as the Triune God, the incarnation of the Logos, the resurrection of the bodies - cannot be proven philosophically, yet they cannot be disproved. Scholasticism linked theology very closely with philosophy and with metaphysics, and is accountable for much of the tragic situation created in the West with respect to faith and faith issues.

The Holy Fathers, however, teach that natural and metaphysical categories do not exist but speak rather of the created and uncreated. Never did the Holy Fathers accept Aristotle's metaphysics. Theologians of the West during the middle Ages considered scholastic theology to be a further development of the teaching of the Holy Fathers, and from this point on, there

begins the teaching of the Franks that scholastic theology is superior to that of the Holy Fathers. Consequently, Scholastics, who are occupied with reason, consider themselves superior to the Holy Fathers of the Church. They also believe that human knowledge, an offspring of reason, is loftier than Revelation and experience.

It is within this context that the conflict between Barlaam and Saint Gregory Palamas should be viewed. Barlaam was essentially a scholastic theologian who attempted to pass on scholastic theology to the Orthodox East. Barlaam's views -- that we cannot really know Who the Holy Spirit is exactly, that the ancient Greek philosophers are superior to the Prophets and the Apostles (since reason is above the vision of the Apostles), and that the hesychastic way of life (i.e. the purification of the heart and the unceasing noetic prayer) is not essential -- are views which express a scholastic and, subsequently, a secularized point of view of theology. Saint Gregory Palamas foresaw the danger of these views and through the power and energy of the Most Holy Spirit and the experience which he himself had acquired as a successor to the Holy Fathers, he confronted this great danger and preserved unadulterated the Orthodox Faith and Tradition.

If Orthodox spirituality is now examined in relationship to Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, the differences are immediately discovered.

Protestants do not have a "therapeutic treatment" tradition. They suppose that believing in God, intellectually, constitutes salvation. Yet salvation is not a matter of intellectual acceptance of truth; rather it is a person's transformation and divinization by grace. In the Holy Scripture it appears that faith comes by hearing the Word and by experiencing "theoria" ("The vision of God"). We accept faith at first by hearing in order to be healed, and then we attain to faith by *theoria*, which saves man. Protestants, because they believe that faith by hearing saves man, do not have a "therapeutic tradition." It could be said that such a conception of salvation is very naive.

The Latins as well do not have the perfection of the therapeutic tradition which the Orthodox Church has. **Their**

doctrine of the Filioque is a manifestation of the weakness in their theology to grasp the relationship existing between the person and society. They confuse the personal properties: the “unbegotten” of the Father, the “begotten” of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Father is the cause of the “generation” of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit. The three Disciples of Christ (Peter, James and John) beheld the glory of Christ on Mount Tabor; they heard at once the voice of the Father, “This is My beloved Son,” and saw the coming of the Holy Spirit in a cloud, for the cloud is the presence of the Holy Spirit, as Saint Gregory Palamas says. Thus the Disciples acquired the knowledge of the Triune God in *theoria* and by revelation. It was revealed to them that God is one essence in three hypostases.

A faith, thus, is a true faith inasmuch as it has therapeutic benefits. If it is able to cure, then it is a true faith. If it does not cure, it is not a true faith. The same thing can be said about medicine: a true scientist is the doctor who knows how to cure and his method has therapeutic benefits, whereas a charlatan is unable to cure. The same holds true where matters of the soul are concerned. The difference between Orthodoxy and the Latin tradition, as well as the Protestant confessions, is apparent primarily in the method of therapy. This difference is made manifest in the doctrines of each denomination. Dogmas are not philosophy, neither is theology the same as philosophy.

Since Orthodox spirituality differs distinctly from the “spiritualities” of other confessions, so much the more does it differ from the “spirituality” of eastern religions, which do not believe in the Theanthropic nature of Christ and the Holy Spirit. These traditions are unaware of the notion of personhood and thus the hypostatic principle. And love, as a fundamental teaching, is totally absent. One may find, of course, in these Eastern religions an effort on the part of their followers to divest themselves of images and rational thoughts, but this is in fact a movement towards nothingness, to non-existence. There is no path leading their “disciples” to *theosis-divinization* (see note below) of the whole man.

This is why a vast and chaotic gap exists between Orthodox spirituality and the eastern religions, in spite of certain external similarities in terminology. For example, eastern religions may employ terms like ecstasy, dispassion, illumination, noetic energy, etc. but they are impregnated with content different from corresponding terms in Orthodox spirituality.

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#### Notes

*Theoria* is the vision of the glory of God. *Theoria* is identified with the vision of the Uncreated Light, the uncreated energy of God, with the union of man with God, with man’s *theosis*. Thus, *theoria*, vision and *theosis* are closely connected.

*Theosis-Divinization* is the participation in the Uncreated grace of God. *Theosis* is identified and connected with the *theoria* (vision) of the Uncreated Light (see above). It is called *theosis* in grace because it is attained through the energy, of the divine grace. It is a co-operation of God with man, since God is He Who operates and man is he who co-operates.

## CONCERNING TEMPTATION & SIN

By St. Theophan the Recluse

**B**e strong. The enemy fights you. But this does not mean that you are sinful. Nor should his attacks shake you or confuse you. Temptations arise from the envy of the enemy and return to his head. Not only are you not responsible for it, but provided you struggle, you will profit from it. Each time you repulse an attack of the enemy you secure a victory and you gratify God. It is not possible to avoid the annoying attacks of the enemy. Our life is formed in such a way. But this does not lead to the loss of the fighter, but rather to his salvation. As a consequence of the fall of the first created humans the passions nestle in us.

In order to get rid of them we must first realize their existence. And in order that we realize their existence they must manifest themselves, they must come out of their hiding. Temptations play their part in this and so, without the enemy’s intention, they help in our cleansing and sanctification. Thus the temptations force the evil that is hiding in us to come to the surface. The temptations arise from the flesh, the world and the devil.

Usually it progresses in these stages:

1. A bad thought appears in the mind or one of the senses is attacked. For example the eyes see an indecent picture. This is the start of the temptation. At this stage there is no sin or guilt because we are still at the attacking phase or at the unintentional attack by the enemy. If you react immediately and you turn to the Lord you have won a crown. But if you do not object and you start occupying yourself with the thought or the picture, this is not a good sign. Your Soul wavered. Despite all these so far there is no sin. But you took a step towards it. There are persistent indecent thoughts, thoughts that do not disappear easily or they return. Do not be weary of this. It is the work of the enemy. If every time you show your immediate dislike towards them and you go to the Lord frequently you are in a good spiritual condition. So do indecent thoughts come in you? Drive them away. Do they persist? You also persist in driving them away. The ancient fathers did the same thing. They, indeed, taught that the sooner one drives away the first bad thoughts the quicker he is freed from the war of the enemy. But he who delays and starts to occupy himself with the temptation will then make the second step to the fall.

2. The preoccupation with the temptation or the discussion with it is the second phase. Sin is still not occurring, but its beginning is created.

3. The third phase is a satisfaction or pleasure which arises from the prolongation of the temptation. At this stage we might have not committed the sin, but we are definitely in an unclean situation. Indeed it happens that the experience of pleasure arises without our will taking active part.

4. The fourth step towards sin is the bending of our will even if we have not eventually given our approval. At this point there is guilt because we cannot always be masters of

our feelings, but we can be masters of our will. As yet we have not practiced sin, but we are at its threshold.

5. The fifth phase is the consent to sin, the decision by a person to sin. Here we definitely have a sin but an internal sin.

6. After this follows the final stage, that is to say the commitment of sin. Here we have the complete fall, the destruction of the soul, the deprivation of the Divine Grace, the submission to the authority of the enemy. Regarding the blasphemous thought, or the blasphemous thoughts of disbelief which are directed against the Holy Communion you should know that they come from the enemy. The Lord Himself instituted the mystery of the Divine Eucharist saying: "This is my body" and "This is my blood". In addition He gave the commandment "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22. 19). The Apostles started to perform this holy Mystery and since then this act of the Church has not stopped nor would it stop until the end of time.

Joy is not something external to ourselves but it comes from the depths of our being. For us Christians joy arises from the expectation and the life in the wealth that emanates from the divine incarnation and it increases with our persistence in the state of our adoption by God. The Lord received human flesh from the virgin blood of our All Holy Virgin Mary and we become one with Him because of this incarnation. For this reason an important characteristic of the Christian life is the esteem of virginity. Not only bodily virginity but also spiritual.

The carnal sin constitutes a denial of our Christian qualities. And nothing suppresses the spiritual joy as much as this sin, although the enemy continually whispers to us that it is natural and insignificant.



## ON CHASTITY

Every man who loves purity and chastity becomes the temple of God. -- **St. Ephraim the Syrian**

Not he is chaste in whom shameful thoughts stop in time of struggle, work and endeavor, but he who by the trueness of his heart makes chaste the vision of his mind not letting it stretch out towards unseemly thoughts.-- **St. Isaac the Syrian**

Offer to the Lord the weakness of your nature, fully acknowledging your own powerlessness, and imperceptibly you will receive the gift of chastity. -- **St. John Climacus**

O Lord our God, Stop the rushing of passions, and quench the burning of bodily tension. Grant us to live chastely in word and act, that we may live a life of heroic virtue and not fall away from Thy promised blessings. -- **Evening Prayers**

I write to you in the midst of life, yet in love with death, for my love (eros) has been crucified. There is within me no fire of material longing, but living water, within me springing up, within me crying, "Come to the Father."-- **St. Ignatius of Antioch**

## ON PROTESTANTISM

*By Kostas Matsourakis, Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen*

Protestantism and its wide spectrum of religious practices represents a great antithesis with Orthodox Theology and spirituality. If one had time to make a sociological study of how evangelical Protestantism has sought to cope with its inability to come to grips with actual Scriptural revelation about redemption, theosis, the quandary of good and evil, etc., one would find that they resolved it by becoming increasingly light-minded, depriving their teaching of any depth and turning their churches into entertainment centers. They could not come to grips with their own internal contradictions, so they attempted to drown them out with mantras like "praise the Lord" repeated to the point of utter meaninglessness, by introducing escapism into their religious services and essentially reducing "good" to mean "like me."

Stop and think: they cry for a "return to traditional family values" but for the past 400 years, they have condemned tradition and been responsible for undermining the very concept of "traditional value." The idea of "value" itself is not Christian. Axiology is a poor substitute for a sound understanding of virtue. They lament the loss of respect for the structure of Church and society, but for 400 years, they railed against hierarchy and hierarchical structure. They lament the break up of the nuclear family (romanticizing it beyond recognition in the process), but have been the chief source of the doctrine of radical individualism and the destruction of the communal concept of Christianity.

The Gnostic slogan, "Christ as my own personal Savior" is a symptom of the illness that helped destroy the nuclear family and a clear declaration that they absolutely do not comprehend the Bible or the meaning of redemption. One could go on at length with all this, but the final point is that any form of unity with the Latins or Protestants would be a "false union," and could only be brought about politically (not spiritually) by means of a total collapse of Orthodox Christian revelation and theology.

The "contemporary worship" that one experiences growing up in Protestantism, with its "good feelings" and "Christian Rock and Roll" bands, is so shallow compared to what one discovers in the worship of the Orthodox Church. The most important element in Protestant worship is to feel emotionally "moved" during the singing or the sermon. Only then is the worship "good." Only if the worship band plays well or the singing is good, did worship "move" us. But where does the Bible talk about worship being "emotional" or "moving" us?

Throughout both the Old and the New Testament, worshipping God has always been about sacrifice. It is about what we offer God, not what we get out of worshipping Him. One must never forget that true worship is always directed at God and not to an inner emotional experience.

## Ἐλευθερία ἢ Θάνατος

Τῆς Πολυτίμης Μόρφα-Σουλιώτη, Φιλολόγου, ἀπὸ τὸ περιοδικὸ «Πληροφόρηση», Τετὰ Μητροπόλις Δημητριάδος, 03/2003



Οἱ Ἥρωες τοῦ 1821

Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ποὺ χάνει τὴν ἐλευθερία του, χάνει τὴ μισὴ ἀνθρωπιά του». Ἐξισώνεται μὲ τὰ ἄλογα κτήνη ποὺ ἐκτελοῦν μόνον ἐντολές καὶ ἱκανοποιοῦν τὴ δίψα γιὰ αἷμα ἐνὸς μακελλάρη ἀφέντη. Τετρακόσια χρόνια σκλαβιάς τῶν Ἑλλήνων σ' ἓναν βάρβαρο καὶ ἀλλόθρησκο κατακτητὴ σημαίνει ὅτι ὀλόκληρη ἄλυσίδα ἑλληνικῶν γενεῶν γεννήθηκαν σὲ ὑπόδουλη πατρίδα καὶ πέθαναν σκλάβοι.

Ὅμως, ἦλθε ἡ μέρα τῆς νεκρανάστασης, ἡ 25η Μαρτίου τοῦ 1821. Σκορπισμένοι οἱ Ἕλληνες σὲ ἐλεύθερες χώρες καλλιέργησαν τὶς ἐπιστήμες καὶ τὰ γράμματα, πρόκοψαν στὸ ἐμπόριο καὶ ἀπεκόμισαν πλοῦτη, ἀλλὰ πάνω ἀπ' ὅλα γεύτηκαν τὰ ἀγαθὰ τῆς ἐλευθερίας σὲ

ξένες χώρες καὶ πάντα στὸ νοῦ τους εἶχαν τὴν εὐεργεσία τῆς σκλαβωμένης πατρίδας τους. Πρῶτη εὐεργεσία ἡ ἐλευθερία.

Ὅταν οἱ σκλάβοι γευθοῦν τὰ ἀγαθὰ τῆς ἐλευθερίας, δὲν σκύβουν πιά τὸ κεφάλι. Παίρνουν τὴ μεγάλη ἀπόφαση καὶ ξεκινοῦν νὰ ἐλευθερωθοῦν ἢ νὰ πεθάνουν, γιατί - τὸ ξέρουν πολὺ καλά - σκλαβωμένη ζωὴ ἰσοδυναμεῖ μὲ θάνατο. Μόνο ὁποῖος ἔζησε ἑκατοντάδες χρόνια σκλαβωμένος σὲ ἀλλόφυλο καὶ ἀλλόθρησκο κατακτητὴ, μόνο ὁποῖος ἀνατράφηκε μὲ παραδόσεις γιὰ τὰ προηγούμενα μεγαλεῖα τῆς φυλῆς του, γιὰ Μαρμαρωμένο βασιλιά ποὺ περιμένει, γιὰ τὴν ἀδελφὴ τοῦ Μεγαλέξανδρου ποὺ ζητᾶ ἐπίμονα ἀπὸ τὰ καράβια τὴν ἐπιβεβαίωση ὅτι ζεῖ ὁ ἀδελφός της, μόνο ὁποῖος ἔνιωσε νὰ κυλάει στὶς φλέβες του τὸ αἷμα ἑκατοντάδων μαρτύρων τῆς Πίστης, μόνο ὁποῖος εἶδε τὶς ὠραίες θυγατέρες του μὲ ἄλυσίδες στὰ πόδια νὰ περιμένουν τὸν ἀγοραστή τους στὰ σκλαβοπάζαρα ἢ νὰ τὶς ἀρπάζουν γιὰ τὰ χαρέμια, μόνο ὁποῖου τοῦ ἀρπάζαν τὰ παιδιά του μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν ἀγκαλιά του, γιὰ νὰ τὰ κάνουν γενίτσαρους, μόνο ὁποῖος ἀναγκάστηκε νὰ ζεῖ σὰν ἀγρίμι στὰ βουνά, μόνο ὁποῖος ἔζησε καὶ πέθανε μὲ τὸ φόβο τοῦ ραγιά, μόνον αὐτὸς ἐξισώνει τὴν σκλαβωμένη ζωὴ μὲ τὸν θάνατο καὶ παίρνει τὴ μεγάλη ἀπόφαση νὰ ἀγωνιστεῖ γιὰ τὴ λευτεριά του ἢ νὰ πεθάνει.

«Καὶ ὅταν παίρνει αὐτήνην του τὴν ἀπόφαση, τὶς πιὸ πολὺς φορές κερδαίνει καὶ λίγες χάνει». Θὰ λέγαμε ὅτι ποτὲ δὲν χάνει, γιατί ὁποῖος εἰσέρχεται στὸ στάδιο τῆς αὐτοθυσίας ἔχει ἀρωγὸν τὸν Θεό. Ἐκεῖνον ποὺ θυσιάστηκε γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ δίδαξε σὲ τόσους καὶ τόσους μάρτυρες πῶς ὁ μοναδικὸς δρόμος γιὰ τὴν ὄντως ζωὴ

εἶναι ἡ ἐλευθερία. Ὅποιος παίρνει τὴν ἀπόφαση νὰ ἐλευθερώσει Πατρίδα, παλεῖ καὶ θυσιάζεται γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία τῶν σκλαβωμένων ἀδελφῶν του. Ἐκεῖνος εἶναι ἐλεύθερος ἀπὸ τὴν ὥρα ποὺ παίρνει τὴν ἀπόφαση νὰ πεθάνει, ἀπὸ τὴν στιγμή ποὺ ξεπερνᾷ τὴν ὀριακὴ κατάσταση τοῦ θανάτου. Ἀποφασίζει νὰ πεθάνει γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία ἐκείνων ποὺ θὰ ἐπιζήσουν καὶ τῶν γενεῶν ποὺ θὰ ἀκολουθήσουν.

Θυσίασε ὁ Ἕλληνας τῆς ἐπανάστασης τοῦ 1821 ποταμοὺς αἱμάτων καὶ στέρνες μὲ θησαυροὺς, ἔδωσε τὰ καράβια του στὸν Ἄγωνα, ἀνέχτηκε τὴν καταστροφὴ ἀκμαίων πόλεων καὶ νησιῶν, ἀπέβαλε τὸν ραγιαδισμό του καὶ εἶδε ν' ἀναδύεται ἀπὸ τὴν ἀφάνεια τὸ Νέο Ἑλληνικὸ κράτος: μικρὸ στὴν ἀρχή, ἀλλὰ μὲ ἀγῶνες πάλι καὶ θυσίες τὸ ἐπέξετεινε καὶ τὸ ἔφτασε στὰ σημερινά του ὅρια. Ἀπέδειξε τὴν ἀλήθεια τοῦ στίχου «Θέλει ἀρετὴν καὶ τόλμην ἡ Ἐλευθερία». Εἶναι ἐλεύθερος κανεὶς ἀπὸ τὴ στιγμή ποὺ παίρνει τὴν ἀπόφαση νὰ ἐγκαταλείψει τὸ βόλεμα καὶ νὰ εἰσέλθει στὸ ἀγωνιστικὸ στάδιο. Οἱ πρόγονοί μας τὸ ἀποφάσισαν καὶ τοὺς εὐγνωμονοῦμε. Μᾶς ἄφησαν παρακαταθήκη τὸ παράδειγμά τους. Ἐνας λαὸς διασκορπισμένος στὴ Βαλκανικὴ, στὴν Εὐρώπη, στὴ Ρωσία, στὴν Αἴγυπτο, στὴν Ἀσία, ξεκινᾷ μίαν Ἐπανάσταση ἀκέφαλη, χωρὶς στρατιωτικὸς ἀρχηγός, χωρὶς τακτικὸ στρατό, χωρὶς ἐπιμελητεία, χωρὶς πολεμικὰ καράβια, χωρὶς ἀνάμνηση ἐλευθέρου κράτους. Κι ὅμως, ἀναμετρήθηκε μὲ τακτικὸς στρατός, μὲ πολεμικὰ καράβια, μὲ δοκιμασμένους σερασκέρηδες, πάλεψε γιὰ 9 χρόνια, καθάγιασε τὸν τόπο του μὲ τὴ θυσία του καὶ ἀνάγκασε ὅλον τὸν κόσμον νὰ σκύψει εὐλαβικὰ ἐμπρὸς στὸ μεγαλεῖο τῆς θυσίας του.

Ἀφοῦ «ὁ Θεὸς ἔβαλε τὴν ὑπογραφή Του γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία τῆς Ἑλλάδος» ἀναγκάστηκαν καὶ οἱ δυνατοὶ τῆς γῆς νὰ ὑπογράψουν τὴν Ἐλευθερία τῶν Ἑλλήνων.



## Ἡ Ἑλλὰς Στὰ Μάτια Τῶν Ξένων

“Ἡ Ἑλλὰς καταληφθεῖσα, τὸν ἄγριο νικητὴ κατέκτησε, καὶ τὶς τέχνες εἰσήγαγε εἰς τὸ ἀγροῖκο Λάτιο.” ΟΡΑΤΙΟΣ, Ρωμαῖος ποιητῆς.

“Ὅταν γνωρίσουμε σὲ βάθος τὴν ἀρχαία Ἑλληνικὴ ἐπιστήμη καὶ μελετήσουμε τὶς προτάσεις της, θὰ μπορούμε νὰ προχωρήσουμε μὲ μεγαλύτερα βήματα στὴν κατανόηση τοῦ Σύμπαντος καὶ τῶν μυστικῶν του.” ΤΖΩΡΤΖ ΜΠΗΝΤΑ, βραβεῖο Νόμπελ Φυσικῆς.

“Εἶναι ντροπὴ νὰ λέγονται μορφωμένοι ὅσοι δὲν μελετοῦν τοὺς ἀρχαίους Ἕλληνες συγγραφεῖς.” ΡΑΜΠΕΛΕΣ, Γάλλος ἱστορικός.

“Αὐτὸ ποὺ χρειάζεται ἡ Δύση σήμερα, εἶναι νὰ ξαναγυρίσει στὴν ἀρχαία Ἑλληνικὴ Γραμματεία.” ΡΟΖΕ ΓΚΑΡΩΝΤΥ, Φιλόσοφος-συγγραφεὺς.

“Οἱ Ἕλληνες εἶχαν τὸ χάρισμα νὰ ἀποροῦν γιὰ πράγματα ποὺ οἱ ἄλλοι λαοὶ τὰ νόμιζαν αὐτονόητα” ΒΛΟΥΦΙΑΝΤ.

## Παπικές Άληθειες...

ΠΗΓΗ: Φυλλάδιο «Μήνυμα Διαμαρτυρίας» που εκδόθηκε πριν της εν Ελλάδι παπικής επίσκεψης

**Τ**ὸ Βατικανὸ εἶναι τὸ μόνο θεοκρατικὸ κράτος στὴν Εὐρώπη καὶ στὸν κόσμο.

Ἀσκεῖ θρησκευτικὸ, πολιτικὸ καὶ οικονομικὸ ἱμπεριαλισμὸ.

Συνέβαλε ἀποφασιστικὰ στὴν ἄνοδο καὶ διατήρηση τοῦ φασισμοῦ καὶ τοῦ ναζισμοῦ.

Χρησιμοποίησε τὰ τάγματα τῶν Ἰησουιτῶν ἐναντίον τῶν λαῶν, ὅπως οἱ Γερμανοὶ τὰ τάγματα τῶν SS.

Εὐθύνεται γιὰ τὴ συνεργασία τῶν «κίεραποστόλων» του μὲ ἀποικιοκρατικὰ καθεστῶτα σὲ χῶρες τοῦ Τρίτου Κόσμου.

Ὁργάνωσε τὴ θηριώδη καὶ ἀπάνθρωπη Ἱερὰ Ἐξέταση, ἡ ὁποία σὲ διάστημα ἑξὶ αἰῶνων (13ος-19ος) ὀδήγησε στὴν πυρὰ ἀναρίθμητους ἀθῶους ἀνθρώπους.

Εἶναι ὁ ἠθικὸς αὐτουργὸς τῆς σφαγῆς 800.000 Ὁρθοδόξων Σέρβων στὸν Β΄ Παγκόσμιον Πόλεμον (καρδινάλιος Στέπινιτς).

Ἀγιοποίησε δολοφόνους καὶ ἐγκληματίες πολέμου (πάπας Πίος ΙΒ΄, Στέπινιτς κ.ἄ.).

Τὸ Βατικανὸ καὶ ἡ Γερμανία σχεδίασαν καὶ πραγματοποιήσαν τὴ διάλυση καὶ τὸ αἱματοκύλισμα τῆς Γιουγκοσλαβίας (Ἀνδρέας Παπανδρέου, 17/6/1993).

Εἶναι ὁ κύριος ἐκφραστής καὶ συντελεστής τῆς Νέας Τάξεως Πραγμάτων καὶ τῆς Νέας Ἐποχῆς.

Εἶναι ὁ πνευματικὸς ἡγέτης τῆς Παγκοσμιοποιήσεως καὶ ὁ «προφήτης» τῆς δαιμονικῆς Πανθηρησκείας τῆς Νέας Ἐποχῆς.

Εἶναι ὁ ἐπίδοξος θρησκευτικὸς πλανητάρχης.

Εἶναι ὁ μεγαλύτερος ἐχθρὸς καὶ συκοφάντης τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας καὶ τοῦ Γένους μας ἀνὰ τοὺς αἰῶνας.

Ὁργάνωσε καὶ κατηύθυνε τὶς ληστρικὲς καὶ ἐπαίσχυντες Σταυροφορίες ἐναντίον τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἀνατολῆς καὶ τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ.

Εἶναι ὁ φυσικὸς καὶ ἠθικὸς αὐτουργὸς τῆς ἀλώσεως τῆς Βασιλεύουσας, τῆς σφαγῆς τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων Ρωμιῶν, τῆς βεβηλώσεως τῶν Ἱερῶν καὶ τῶν Ὁσίων τῆς Πίστεως καὶ τῆς φυλῆς μας.

Μὲ τὴν ἄλωση τῆς Πόλεως ἀπὸ τοὺς Σταυροφόρους (1204) ἔγινε ὁ φυσικὸς καὶ ἠθικὸς αὐτουργὸς τῆς μεγαλύτερης καὶ βαρβαρότερης λεηλασίας στὴν ἱστορία τῆς ἀνθρωπότητας.

Ὁργάνωσε, κατεύθυνε καὶ ἐπέβαλε τὸν βίαιον ἐκλατινισμό καὶ ἐξουνισμό ἑκατομμυρίων Ὁρθοδόξων ἀνὰ τοὺς αἰῶνες.

Τὸ 1821 οἱ Ἕλληνες παπικοὶ ὄχι μόνο δὲν ἔλαβαν μέρος στὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς Παλιγγενεσίας καὶ τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Ἀνεξαρτησίας, ἀλλὰ ταυτίστηκαν καὶ συνήγγησαν μὲ τοὺς Τούρκους κατακτητὲς κατὰ τῶν ἐπαναστατημένων Ἑλλήνων.

Τὴν ὥρα ποὺ ἡ Σμύρνη καιγόταν καὶ οἱ Ἕλληνες σφαγιάζονταν, ὁ πάπας ἔστειλε συγχαρητήριον τηλεγράφημα στὸν Κεμάλ Ἀτατούρκ γιὰ τὴν ἐξόντωση τῶν Ἑλλήνων.

Τὸ 1929 ἐνέκρινε τὸν βομβαρδισμό καὶ τὴν κατάληψη τῆς Κέρκυρας ἀπὸ τὸν Μουσολίνι.

Κατὰ τὴν διάρκεια τοῦ Β΄ Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου ὑπῆρξε στενὸς συνεργάτης τοῦ Ἄξονα, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ οὐδέποτε κατεδίκασε τὴν ἀπρόκλητη φασιστικὴ ἐπίθεση τῆς Ἰταλίας ἐναντίον τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν γερμανικὴ κατοχὴ ποὺ τὴν ἀκολούθησε.

Ποτὲ δὲν κατεδίκασε τὴν τουρκικὴ εἰσβολὴ καὶ κατοχὴ τοῦ Ἀττίλα στὴν Κύπρο (1974-2001).

ὑποστήριξε τὴν σκοπιανὴ καὶ ἀνθελληνικὴ προπαγάνδα στὸ μακεδονικὸ ζήτημα, ὀργανώνοντας ψευδεπίγραφη ἔκθεση «μακεδονικῆς τέχνης», δεχόμενος τὴν ὀνομασία τοῦ κράτους τῶν Σκοπίων ὡς «Μακεδονία.»

ΑΔΕΛΦΟΙ, ΤΑ ΜΑΤΙΑ ΣΑΣ ΑΝΟΙΧΤΑ!



## Ὁ Πνευματικὸς Ὡς Ἱατρὸς τῆς Ψυχῆς

Γέροντος Παΐσιου Ἀγιορείτου, «Παρακαταθήκη», τεύχος 25 (Ιούλιος-Αύγουστος 2002)

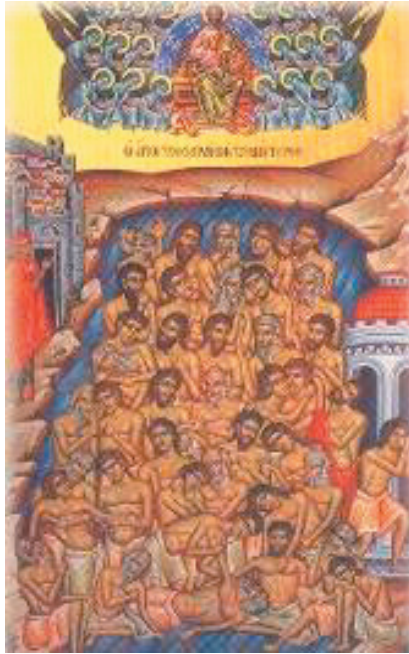
**Ο**ἱ ἄνθρωποι σήμερα εἶναι κουρασμένοι, ζαλισμένοι καὶ σκοτισμένοι ἀπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτία καὶ τὸν ἐγωισμό. Γι' αὐτὸ ὑπάρχει ἀνάγκη, περισσότερο ἀπὸ κάθε ἄλλῃ ἐποχῇ, ἀπὸ καλοὺς καὶ ἔμπειρους πνευματικούς, ποὺ θὰ πλησιάζουν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπλὰ καὶ μὲ πραγματικὴ ἀγάπη καὶ θὰ τοὺς ὀδηγοῦν μὲ διάκριση, γιὰ νὰ εἰρηνεύουν. Χωρὶς καλοὺς πνευματικούς ἀδειάζουν οἱ ἐκκλησίες καὶ γεμίζουν τὰ ψυχιατρεῖα, οἱ φυλακὲς καὶ τὰ νοσοκομεῖα. Πρέπει νὰ συναισθανθοῦν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ὅτι ταλαιπωροῦνται, γιὰτὶ εἶναι μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ, νὰ μετανοήσουν καὶ νὰ ἐξομολογηθοῦν ταπεινὰ τὶς ἁμαρτίες τους.

Ἡ ἐργασία τοῦ πνευματικοῦ εἶναι ἐσωτερικὴ θεραπεία. Δὲν ὑπάρχει ἀνώτερος γιὰτρὸς ἀπὸ τὸν ἔμπειρο πνευματικὸ, ποὺ ἐμπνέει ἐμπιστοσύνη μὲ τὴν ἀγιότητά του, πετάει ἀπὸ τὰ εὐαίσθητα πλάσματα τοῦ Θεοῦ τοὺς λογισμοὺς ποὺ φέρνει τὸ ταγκαλάκι καὶ θεραπεύει ψυχὲς καὶ σώματα δίχως φάρμακα, μὲ τὴ Χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ὁ πνευματικὸς, ὅταν ἔχει θεῖο φωτισμὸ, πνεῦμα Θεοῦ, καταλαβαίνει καὶ διακρίνει καταστάσεις, καὶ μπορεῖ νὰ δῖναι σωστὲς κατευθύνσεις στὶς ψυχὲς. Καλὰ εἶναι νὰ μὴν ἐχη πολλές ἀπασχολήσεις, γιὰ νὰ μπορῇ νὰ διαθέτῃ τὸν ἀπαιτούμενον χρόνον γιὰ τὴν κάθε ψυχὴ καὶ νὰ κἀνῃ σωστὰ τὴν δουλειά του. Διαφορετικὰ, παθαίνει ὅ,τι καὶ ἕνας καλὸς χειρουργὸς ποὺ, ὅταν κάθε μέρα ἔχει νὰ κἀνῃ πολλὰς ἐγχειρήσεις, κουράζεται καὶ εἶναι φυσικὸ νὰ μὴν ἀποδίδει ὅσο μπορεῖ.

## Η Μνήμη τῶν Ἁγίων Σαράντα Μαρτύρων

Τοῦ Τάκη Παντελόπουλου, ἀπὸ τὸ περιοδικὸ «Πληροφόρηση» τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Δημητριάδος



«Ὅτι οἱ Ἅγιοι, ἕκ διαφόρων πατρίδων ὄντες, ἐφ' ἐνὶ τάγματι ἐστρατεύοντο. Διὰ δὲ τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν ὁμολογίαν κατασχεθέντες καὶ εἰς ἐξέτασιν ἀχθέντες... Ἐπειτα ἐν ὥρᾳ χειμερινῇ, γυμνοὶ διανυκτερεύειν κατεδικάσθησαν μέσον τῆς λίμνης, τῆς πρὸ τῆς πόλεως...»

Στὴν πλούσια ἑορταστικὴ καὶ λατρευτικὴ χορεία τῶν ἑορτῶν, πὺξ ξεχωρίζουν τὴν περίοδο τῆς ἀνοιξῆς, καὶ ἰδιαίτερα τοῦ Μαρτίου,

συναντᾶμε στὶς 9 Μαρτίου τὴν μνήμη τῶν Ἁγίων Σαράντα Μαρτύρων.

Ὁ Συναξαριστὴς μᾶς πληροφορεῖ ὅτι οἱ Ἅγιοι αὐτοὶ ὑπῆρξαν στρατιῶτες ἀπὸ διάφορα μέρη καὶ ἀποτελοῦσαν ἓνα τάγμα πύξ, σύμφωνα μὲ μαρτυρίες, ἦταν στὴ Σεβάστεια τῆς Ἀρμενίας, πιστοὶ στὶς στρατιωτικὲς τοὺς ὑποχρεώσεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ στὴ Χριστιανικὴ Πίστη. Τὸ αὐστηρὸ ρωμαϊκὸ καθεστῶς καὶ ὁ τύραννος τῆς περιοχῆς ἐνοχλοῦνταν μὲ τὴν κατὰ Χριστὸν ζωὴ τους, γι' αὐτὸ τοὺς συνέλαβαν καὶ τοὺς βασάνισαν, ὥστε νὰ πειθοῦν καὶ νὰ θυσιάσουν στὰ εἰδῶλα. Μάταιες οἱ προσπάθειες τῶν Ρωμαίων βασανιστῶν νὰ ἀλλοιώσουν τὴν ἀκλόνητὴ πίστη τῶν στρατιωτῶν, οἱ ὁποῖοι ὑπομένουν μὲ ξεχωριστὴ καρτερικότητα τὰ βασανιστήρια. Σκληραίνοντας τὴ στάση τους οἱ βασανιστὲς τοὺς ρίχνουν μίᾳ χειμωνιάτικῃ νύχτᾳ σὲ παγωμένη λίμνη. «...καὶ οἱ τεσσαράκοντα Μάρτυρες, τοῖς πάγοις παραδοθέντες ἐμαρτύρησαν.» Ἀπὸ τοὺς σαράντα, ἓνας μόνον ὀλιγοψύχησε καὶ ἔτρεξε νὰ ζεσταθεῖ σὲ κοντινὸ λουτρό. Ὁ φρουρὸς καὶ δήμιος ρωμαῖος στρατιώτης, θαυμάζοντας τὴν ἀγωνιστικότητα καὶ τὴν ἀταλάντευτὴ πίστη τῶν Ἁγίων, πῆρε τὴ θέση τοῦ λιγοψυχῆσαντος καὶ οἱ τριάντα ἑννέα μάρτυρες ἔγιναν πάλι σαράντα.

Οἱ Ἅγιοι Σαράντα Μάρτυρες, μὲ τὸ ἐντυπωσιακὸ τους μαρτύριο προκάλεσαν τὸ θαυμασμὸ καὶ τὴ λατρεία τῶν χριστιανῶν καὶ ἐνέπνευσαν πολλοὺς καλλιτέχνες, ἰδιαίτερα τῆς ἀνατολικῆς Ἀγιογραφίας, ἐκφράζοντας τὴ λατρεία τους μέσα ἀπὸ τὰ ἔργα τους.

Γιὰ τὴν ἐντονότερη προβολὴ τῆς γιορτῆς ἔχουν ἐπιδράσει λαογραφικὰ ἢ γεωργικὴ ἀπασχόληση τῆς ἐποχῆς καὶ ὁ ἀρι-

θμὸς σαράντα. Στὴν ἀνοιξιὰτικὴ καλλιέργεια, οἱ γεωργοὶ θεωροῦν τὴν ἡμέρα τῆς γιορτῆς κατάλληλο χρονικὸ σημεῖο γιὰ τὸ φύτεμα τῶν ζαρζαβατικῶν. Ἐπίσης, σὲ μέρη ὅπου συναντᾶται ἡ σηροτροφία (καλλιέργεια μεταξοσκωλήκων), οἱ καλλιεργητὲς τὴν 9ῆ Μαρτίου προσκομίζουν στὴν Ἐκκλησία γιὰ νὰ λειτουργηθοῦν καὶ νὰ εὐλογηθοῦν οἱ σπόροι τῶν κουκουλιῶν. Οἱ γεωργοὶ σὲ ὀρισμένα μέρη τῆς πατρίδος μας καὶ τῆς Κύπρου τελοῦν τὶς διάφορες ἐργασίες τοὺς στρογγυλεμένες σὲ σαράντα καὶ συμβουλεύουν «Σαράντα φάε, σαράντα πιὲ καὶ σαράντα μεταφύτευε.»

Οἱ κοπέλλες πρέπει νὰ κλώσουν σαράντα κλωστὲς, οἱ νοικοκυρὲς νὰ παρασκευάσουν πίτα ἀπὸ σαράντα εἶδη χόρτων καὶ νὰ σπείρουν βασιλικὸ, γιὰ νὰ γίνῃ «σαραντάκλωνος.» Τὸ «Σαρανταλείτουργο,» τὸ «Σαράντισμα,» τὸ «Καλὰ Σαράντα» κ.ἄ. φανεροῦν τὸν συμβολισμὸ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ σαράντα. Καὶ στὴν καθημερινὴ ζωὴ ὁ ἀριθμὸς σαράντα ἐπιδρᾷ μὲ πνεῦμα ὠφελιμιστικὸ βέβαια, συνδεδεμένο ὁμως μὲ τὸ χριστιανικὸ χρέος τῆς φιλανθρωπίας. Μποροῦσαν νὰ φᾶνε καὶ νὰ πιοῦν σαρανταπλάσια, ἀλλὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ θυμηθοῦν νὰ κάμουν καὶ σαράντα ψυχικά. «Σαράντα φάε, σαράντα πιὲ καὶ σαράντα νὰ δώσεις γιὰ τὴν ψυχὴ σου.»

Στὶς ἡμέρες τοῦ Μαρτίου, δὲν μποροῦσαν παρὰ οἱ Ἅγιοι Σαράντα νὰ ἔχουν τὴ θέση πὺξ τοὺς ἀξίζει, γιὰτὶ πορευθήκαν, μὲ ἐφόδιο τὴν πίστη, πρὸς τὸ μαρτύριο καὶ τὴν ἀγιοσύνη. Εὐχὴ καὶ ἐλπίδα οἱ Ἅγιοι καὶ Μάρτυρες νὰ ὑπάρχουν στὴ συλλογικὴ μνήμη κάθε κοινωνίας πιστῶν, γιὰ νὰ ἀνανεῶνουν, μὲ τὰ πάθη τους, τὴ χάρη τους καὶ τὴ συγκίνηση πὺξ προκαλεῖ τὸ μαρτύριό τους, τὴ θρησκευτικὴ συνειδηση, πλουτίζοντας παράλληλα τὴ λογοτεχνικὴ καὶ εἰκαστικὴ μας παράδοση.



Ἀπὸ πὺξ ν' ἀρχίσω νὰ θρηνώ τὶς πράξεις τῆς ἄθλιας ζωῆς μου. Ἐχασα τὸ πρωτόκτιστο κάλλος καὶ τὴν εὐπρέπειά μου. Ὁ νοῦς μου τραυματίστηκε, τὸ σῶμα ἀσθένησε, νοσεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα, ὁ λόγος ἔχασε τὴ δύναμή του, ὁ βίος νεκρώθηκε. Προσπίπτω σ' Ἐσένα καὶ ἀντὶ γιὰ λόγια Σοῦ προσφέρω τὰ δάκρυά μου, ἀμάρτησα ὅπως κανεῖς ἄλλος πάνω στὴ γῆ. Παρασυρμένος ἀπὸ τὶς ἡδονές, μολύνθηκα ἀπὸ τὰ πάθη, ἀλίμονο! Ἀπὸ ἐραστής τῆς σοφίας κατάντησα ἐραστής πορνῶν γυναικῶν, καὶ ξένος ἀπὸ Ἐσένα τὸ Θεό. Ἐλέησέ με Κύριε, Θεέ καὶ Σωτήρα μου, χάρισέ μου πνευματικὴ ἐγρήγορη, ὥστε νὰ ἐπιστρέψω σ' Ἐσένα μὲ μετάνοια καὶ νὰ φωνάξω μὲ δάκρυα. Ἀμάρτησα Κύριε, δὲν ἀκολούθησα τὶς ἐντολές Σου, μὴν ἀπαιτήσεις ἀπὸ μένα ἄξιους καρποὺς μετάνοιας διότι μ' ἐγκατέλειψε ἡ δύναμή μου. Χάρισέ μου τὴ συντριβὴ τῆς καρδιάς καὶ ταπεινώσε τὴ σκέψη μου γιὰτὶ μόνον αὐτὸ μπορῶ νὰ Σοῦ προσφέρω σὰν θυσία πνευματικὴ.

Τριῶδιο  
Ἐλεύθερη ἀπόδοση στοίχων

## Σταυροαναστάσιμα Μηνύματα Ἐλπίδος

Ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο «Συγκλονιστικὲς Μαρτυρίες Φυλακισμένων»  
Ἐκδοτικὸς Οἶκος «Ὁρθόδοξος Κυψέλη»

*Οἱ δύο αὐτὲς ἱστορίες εἶναι σύγχρονες μαρτυρίες Ὁρθοδόξων ἀδελφῶν μας, κατὰ κανόνα Χριστιανῶν Ἑλλήνων, ποὺ φυλακίστηκαν γιὰ διήθεν χρόνους, σὲ κάποια χώρα. Ἡ ἀποφυλάκισή τους ἐξασφαλίστηκε διὰ τῆς ἠγεσίας τῆς «Ὁρθοδόξου Κυψέλης» καὶ μετὰ τὴν οἰκονομικὴ ἐνίσχυση ἀπὸ διάφορες φιλόχριστες καὶ φιλόανθρωπες ψυχὲς ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑλλάδα καὶ τὸ ἐξωτερικόν.*

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Ὁ Κύριός μου, οὔτε με ἀπαρνήθηκε οὔτε με ξέχασε...

**Μ**έχρι τὴν ὥρα ποὺ μοῦ ἔβαλαν τὶς χειροπέδες στὰ χέρια..., μέχρι τότε τὸν πίστευα, τοῦ ἔδωσα τὴν ζωὴ μου, τοῦ ἀφιέρωσα τὸν ἑαυτό μου. Καὶ ὅμως, με πρόδωσε. Ἔτσι πίστευα ὁ ἀνόητος γιὰ τὸν Κύριόν μου, γιὰ τὸν Χριστό μου.

Ἔφαγα τὸ ξύλο τῆς ζωῆς μου, ἔπαθα τὰ βασανιστήρια τῆς ζωῆς μου. Τὸ σῶμα μου εἶναι γεμάτο ἀπὸ πληγὲς ποὺ φανερώνουν τὸ πόσο καλὰ πέρασα καὶ περνῶ στὴν φυλακὴ. Τὸ μόνο μου λάθος ὁ προσηλυτισμός, ποὺ ἀπαγορεύεται, πόσο λάθος σὲ ὅλα ἤμουν;

Ποτέ μου δὲν πείνασα, ποτέ μου δὲν πέρασα ἔξω μιὰ νύκτα. Ποτέ μου δὲν στερήθηκα τίποτα, καὶ μόνο με τὰ λόγια ἔλεγα ὅτι τοῦ ἔδωσα τὴν ζωὴ μου. Πόσο ἀνόητος ἤμουν!

Καὶ ὅταν ἄρχισαν οἱ θλίψεις, οἱ πόνοι, τὰ βασανιστήρια, οἱ κακουχίες, ἀμέσως πείσμωνμα μαζί Του, ἀμέσως Τὸν ἐγκατέλειπα, ἀμέσως Τὸν ἀπαρνήθηκα.

Καὶ ὅμως ΕΚΕΙΝΟΣ, ὁ Κύριός μου, οὔτε με ἀπαρνήθηκε, οὔτε με ξέχασε, οὔτε με ἄφησε στὴν τύχη μου. Κάθε ἡμέρα, κάθε ὥρα, κάθε στιγμή, ἦταν κοντά μου, φύλακας ἄγγελος. Ἀμέτρητες φορὲς πῆγαν νὰ με ξεκάνουν με δηλητηριασμένα φαγητά, με χαλασμένα κρέατα, με σκουριασμένες κονσέρβες, ἀπὸ φάρμακα ληγμένα, ἀπὸ «τυχαία» περιστατικά καυγᾶδων...

Ἀπὸ τὶς ἀμέτρητες φορὲς ποὺ πῆγαν νὰ με δηλητηριάσουν οὔτε τὰ κόκαλά μου δὲν θὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ ὑπάρχουν...

Κατάλαβα, ὅτι πρέπει νὰ ζήσω ἀκόμη. Νὰ πληρώσω γιὰ τὴν προδοσία μου, γιὰ ὅλες τὶς ἀμαρτίες μου...

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Ἔπρεπε νὰ ζήσω ἐδῶ γιὰ νὰ καταλάβω ὅτι ζεῖ Κύριος ὁ Θεός

**Τ**ὸν εἶδα, ναι τὸν εἶδα! Ἦταν ἓνας πανέμορφος, ψηλός, ἄγγελικὸς ἄνδρας.

Τὸ πρόσωπό του ἔλαμπε. Τὸ χαμόγελό του με ἠρέμησε καὶ με ἔκανε νὰ πονῶ λιγότερο. Τὸ ἄγγιμά του, ἄγγιγμα ψυχῆς γιὰ μένα στὴν κυριολεξία.

...Ἦταν, δυστυχῶς, μιὰ ἀπὸ τὶς πιὸ δύσκολες ἡμέρες στὴν φυλακὴ..., ποὺ ἡ κάθε ὥρα της καὶ τὸ κάθε λεπτό της κρατᾶ χίλιες ὥρες. Μετρᾷς, μετρᾷς καὶ τὸ μόνο ποὺ σοῦ μένει εἶναι τὸ μέτρημα. Καὶ ἐκεῖ ποὺ ἠρεμεῖς, ποὺ κλείνουν τὰ μάτια σου ἀπὸ τὴν φοβερὴ ψυχολογικὴ κούραση καὶ τὶς κακουχίες, ἐκεῖ ποὺ ξεχνᾷς πρὸς στιγμή τὰ βασανιστήρια,

ἔρχεται ἓνας θόρυβος ἀπὸ γέλωτες, ἀπὸ ἄλυσίδες ποὺ σέρνονται στὶς πέτρες, ἀπὸ σύρσιμο τῶν παπουτσιῶν καὶ ἀνατριχιάσεις. Εἶναι πολὺ συνηθισμένος ὁ θόρυβος αὐτὸς καὶ ἡ κίνηση αὐτή. Γιατί ὅλοι λέμε, ποῖος εἶναι ὁ τυχερός; Καὶ δυστυχῶς κάποιοι ἀπὸ ἐμᾶς. Χθὲς ἤμουν ἐγώ. Δυὸ ὥρες με κλωτσούσαν, με κτυποῦσαν, ρίχναν κρύο νερό, με ἔφτυναν, με καίγαν με σιγάρο στὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὅμως, ἐγὼ χαίρομαι. Ναι χαίρομαι! Χαίρομαι γιατί ἤξερα, ὅτι μετὰ ἀπὸ κάθε τέτοια φοβερὴ δοκιμασία, ἀπὸ κάθε τέτοιο ξυλοδαρμό, μετὰ ἀπὸ τόσο πόνο σωματικό, θὰ ἔλθει ΕΚΕΙΝΟΣ. Θὰ με ἀγγίξει, καὶ τὸ ἄγγιμά Του θὰ γίνῃ ἄγγιγμα ψυχῆς. Θὰ γίνῃ βάλσαμο γιὰ τὸν ψυχικὸ καὶ σωματικὸ μου πόνο.

Καὶ ὅταν με δεῖ πολὺ χάλια, θὰ μοῦ πεῖ: κἄμε ὑπομονή «τὰ ἀγαθὰ με κόπους ἀποκοτώνται» καὶ, τυχερὲ, σὲ περιμένουν οἱ οὐρανοί, σὲ περιμένει ὁ Κύριός μας γιὰ νὰ σε στέψει.

Καὶ φεύγει, κατὰ θαυμαστὸ τρόπο, ὁ πόνος, ἡ κούραση καὶ πέφτω σὲ λήθαργο καὶ κοιμᾶμαι ὥρες. Καὶ ὅταν ξυπνῶ εἶμαι περδίκι...

Ἡ μόνη μου ἀνοησία, ὅτι ἔπρεπε νὰ ζήσω ἐδῶ γιὰ νὰ μπορέσω νὰ καταλάβω ὅτι ζεῖ Κύριος ὁ Θεός, ὅτι εἶναι κοντά μας στὶς δυσκολίες καὶ στὸν πόνο...

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*ΣΗΜΕΙΩΣΗ: Γιὰ τοὺς ἐνδιαφέροντας ἀναγνώστας μας, τὸ βιβλίο ἐκ τοῦ ὁποῖου ἐλήφθη τὸ παρὸν ἄρθρο δύναται νὰ παραγγελθεῖ ἀπὸ τὴν: «Ὁρθόδοξο Κυψέλη», Σπартάκου 6, Συκιές, 56626 Θεσσαλονίκη, GREECE (384 σελίδες, τιμὴ US \$25).*

*Τὸ συνολικὸ ποσὸ καταβολῆς διατίθεται ἀπὸ τὸν ἐκδοτικὸ οἶκο «Ὁρθόδοξος Κυψέλη» διὰ τὴν συντήρηση τῶν ἀποφυλακισθέντων Ὁρθοδόξων ἀδελφῶν τῶν ὁποίων δύο προσωπικὲς ἐμπειρίες παρουσιάζουμε εἰς τὸ παρὸν ἄρθρο. Οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι ἀδελφοὶ ποὺ ἔχουν τὴν δυνατότητα ἄς συνδράμουν ἂν θέλουν κάτι παραπάνω ἀπὸ τὸ ποσὸν τῶν \$25 γιὰ τὴν συντήρηση τῶν χιλιοβασανισμένων αὐτῶν ἀδελφῶν μας.*



**Τ**ὸ πᾶν εἶναι νὰ ἀγαπήσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ ὅλα τὰ προβλήματα τακτοποιοῦνται.

Καὶ τώρα τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα θέλει νὰ μπεῖ στὶς ψυχὲς μας, ὅπως καὶ τότε, ἀλλὰ σέβεται τὴν ἐλευθερία μας, δὲ θέλει νὰ τὴν παραβιάσει. Περιμένει νὰ τοῦ ἀνοίξουμε μόνοι μας τὴν πόρτα καὶ τότε θὰ μπεῖ στὴν ψυχὴ μας καὶ θὰ τὴν μεταμορφώσει. Ὅταν ἔρθει καὶ κατοικήσει σ' ὅλο τὸ χῶρο τῆς ψυχῆς μας ὁ Χριστός, τότε φεύγουν ὅλα τὰ προβλήματα, ὅλες οἱ πλάνες, ὅλες οἱ στενοχώριες. Τότε φεύγει καὶ ἡ ἀμαρτία.

Εὐτυχία μέσα στὸ γάμο ὑπάρχει, ἀλλὰ ἀπαιτεῖ μιὰ προϋπόθεση: νὰ ἔχουν ἀποκτήσει οἱ σύζυγοι πνευματικὴ περιουσία, ἀγαπώντας τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ τηρώντας τὶς ἐντολές Του. Ἔτσι θὰ φτάσουν νὰ ἀγαποῦνται ἀληθινὰ μεταξύ τους καὶ νὰ εἶναι εὐτυχισμένοι.

Γέροντας Πορφύριος (+1991)



## SENATORS SARBANNES AND SNOWE BETRAY THE MORAL HERITAGE OF THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAITH

By Fr. Johannes L. Jacobse, from <http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/>, reprinted with permission from the author (Fr. Johannes Jacobse edits the website [www.orthodoxytoday.org.](http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/))

Recently the United States Senate voted to ban partial birth abortions. Senators Paul Sarbanes (D-MD.) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) voted against the ban. President Bush promised to sign the legislation (former President Clinton twice vetoed the measure) that would end this gruesome practice.

A vote against a ban is a vote for infanticide. Consider what the procedure entails.

During a partial birth abortion, a near term baby is delivered feet first until every part of the body except the head is exposed. With the head remaining in the birth canal, the doctor inserts a pair of scissors into the soft tissue at the base of the skull and carves out a small hole. A suction tube is inserted into the hole and the brains of the child are sucked out. The dead child is then pulled completely out of the mother.

The procedure constitutes a grave offense against the sacredness of life. There is no medical reason to kill a child that would emerge alive from the womb just a minute or two later. Senators Sarbanes and Snowe disagree-enough at least to allow this barbaric practice to continue.

These Greek Orthodox Senators, like their liberal Roman Catholic

counterparts, defend their position by drawing a line between private morality and public policy. They believe that moral precepts drawn from Christianity should not shape their views on public policy.

Such a privatization of faith, writes Princeton scholar Robert P. George, “would have puzzled-even shocked-men such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt.” If Lincoln privatized religious faith, he would not have freed the slaves. If Martin Luther King privatized religious faith, blacks might still be sitting at separate lunch counters.

George writes that the privatizing of religious faith entered American political thinking during the Nixon-Kennedy campaign in 1960. Protestants were fearful that a Kennedy victory would mean that the Pope would have undue influence in American policy (the Pope had no such interest). Kennedy, seeking to quell Protestant fears, assured voters that his Catholic

faith would have no bearing on his public decisions. Roman Catholic bishops, not wanting to spoil a possible Kennedy victory, remained silent. Kennedy won and the doctrine took hold. It has guided liberal legislators ever since.

It is true that the Church should not run the State, just as the State should not run the Church. Both must respect the legitimate authority of the other. However, there is a world of difference between recognizing these two arenas of authority and divorcing morality from public policy.

The support of partial birth abortion clarifies [Robert F.] George’s point. The defense of the procedure arises from the muddled reasoning that began with *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that nullified all state regulation of abortion. The Court ruled that abortion was legal because the unborn child is not

“viable”—a term they defined as being able to live outside the womb independent of any aid.

“Viability” is a seriously flawed concept but it shaped abortion politics for the next three decades. No person is able to live outside of his natural environment. To require the unborn child to survive outside of the womb is no different than requiring an astronaut to survive in space without a space suit, or a diver to survive underwater without air.

Further, viability does not exist on the biological continuum. Premature babies that would have died a mere decade or so ago are kept alive today as medical technology moves the line of survivability ever closer to the time of conception. The justices erroneously concluded that viability was a fixed point on that continuum—a criticism Justice O’Conner made years later.

Viability removes the legal standing of the unborn. From there it’s a short jump to argue that the unborn are not human beings at all—hence the assertion that the unborn child is only “potential human life.”

Viability rationalizes partial birth abortions in the same way. A child that is not fully delivered before its brains are extracted remains in the abortion rather than infanticide category so killing it remains legal. Further, categorizing the procedure as an abortion maintains the fiction that a child is not killed—at least in the mind of supporters.

Defenders of abortion realize that any restriction of the procedure will shift moral awareness against them. If it is wrong to kill a partially born infant, then why should it be right to kill an infant one minute before its birth? How about two minutes? How about five? What biologists knew all along is reaffirmed: human life develops along a continuum that starts at conception.



**A Fetus or a Child?**

**A human fetus sucks its thumb in week 20 of the pregnancy, in this undated photo by Swedish photographer Lennart Nilsson. Now in his 80s, Nilsson shot to world fame in 1965 when the American magazine *Life* ran 16 pages of pictures from his book ‘A Child is Born’ showing the development of a human fetus in the womb.**

A shift in moral awareness would also require leaders like Senators Sarbannes and Snowe to reevaluate their uncritical support of abortion rights—something they clearly refuse to do.

By privatizing religious faith, Senators Sarbannes and Snowe assume a posture of moral neutrality but in fact betray the moral teachings of the Orthodox faith. They substitute a moral vision that informs and justifies a culture of death and become the advocates for it.

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*OH Editor's Note: We consider it tragic that the U.S. Senators covered by the subject article, both of them Orthodox Christians, have selected to be supporters of "legalized murder." We also wonder why the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese (and other GOA organizations, such as Leadership 100), being fully cognizant of Senator Sarbannes position on the issue of abortion, continue to not only avoid confronting him on this very important matter, but also bestow upon him awards, honors, and recognition. In specific, within the GOA website we often read about the Senator's visits to the Archdiocese (latest one in December 2003). In the corresponding press release, we noted that "His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America expressed his gratitude for Senator Sarbannes' visit and said: 'Being with the Senator is always a great joy and a great source for exchange of ideas. He is one of the people that has wisdom in political, international and cultural issues...'" [from <http://www.goarch.org/en/news/releases/articles/release8710.asp>]. We also read that the Senator was the recipient of the 2003 Leadership 100 Award for Excellence [from <http://www.goarch.org/en/news/releases/articles/release8396.asp>].*

*We recognize that Senator Sarbannes is a descendent of Greek immigrants. This in and by itself can not possibly justify the current behavior of our Archdiocese and her "Leaders." Senator Sarbannes is a leading voice for abortion in the Senate and his position on this issue makes him complicit in the murder of innocent babies. We believe that our Archbishop must call this man to repentance and publicly declare his pro-abortion stance as anti-Christian.*



## ATHANASIOS DIAKOS: A HERO AND A MARTYR

*Compiled by George Karras, Orthodox Heritage Editor*

Within historical sources, popular tradition and the history of Greece one can easily distinguish all of the necessary elements which point out the brave character and the strong personality of Athanasios Diakos, a great national martyr and hero of the 1821 revolution. He was initially known as Athanasios Nikolaos Massavetas and was subsequently called "Diakos" due to his priesthood (deacon). At the age of 12, while he was hunted by the Turks, he left his village "Ano Mousounitsa" and resorted to St. John's Monastery of Artotina where he was ordained to the diaconate. After he became a deacon, a Turk, "attracted" by Diakos' appearance (he was ex-



tremely handsome), attempted to rape him. Athanasios killed him, escaped to the mountains and became a rebel.

Athanasios Diakos, with other revolutionaries and dignitaries of Eastern Roumeli, declared Greek Independence and the start for the Revolution at the Monastery of St. Lukas and on March 30, 1821, they entered Livadia. On April 8, 1821, the Greeks besieged the Turks in the castle of Vou-

dounitsa. In the meantime, Greeks of Attica, under the command of Meletis Vasileiou, attacked the Turks of Athens who subsequently retreated to the castle of Acropolis. By the end of April 1821, Turkish troops from various other regions and with 8000 infantry and 1000 cavalry were rushing to crush the revolution and the rebels from eastern Roumeli. Athanasios Diakos, with a handful of men, tried to hold the Alamana bridge at Thermopyles (near where Leonidas, another Greek hero of ancient times, fell with his men while defending that spot from the Persians some 2,000 years earlier). Other rebel fighters entrenched the slopes of surrounded mountains but subsequently abandoned their positions. Athanasios Diakos, with the bishop of Salona Isaias, were left alone with only a few dozens of men. When he was asked by the Turks to abandon this futile defense and save himself and his men, his answer was an emphatic NO. In the ferocious battle that followed, all of the Greeks under his command were killed and Diakos, with a broken sword, was captured alive. When Vrionis, the Turkish pasha, asked him to become muslim and fight with him against the other rebels, Diakos rejected his offer telling him: "I was born Romios (Greek) and I will die Romios."

On the 24th of April 1821, this capable Greek fighter, this hero, the myth called Athanasios Diakos became a martyr and left the living world and connected the ancient Greek history with the younger, showing the freedom-loving immortal spirit of the Greek people. The heroic and superhuman battle of Diakos in Alamana reconnects him with Leonidas in Thermopyles. His death was truly gruesome; he was run through with a spit and slowly roasted alive over an open fire, giving up his spirit at the peak of his youth and preferring death as Greek Orthodox instead of an earthly life full of pleasures but as a muslim.

That is why Athanasios Diakos as hero and national martyr goes beyond the narrow limits of the village where he was born and thus belongs to the whole nation and Orthodoxy at large in order to inspire the younger generations. At the time of his sacrifice he was only 33 years old. He was forced to abandon a future as a monk and a deacon and ended up as a fighter and a hero of the Greek independence struggle. His service to the cause was short, but his memory as a martyr will live forever!

## APOPHTHEGMS BY THE GOD-INSPIRED ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, PART 9

*SOURCE: From the book "475 Apophthegms by the God-Inspired St. Isaac the Syrian," pp. 38-42, published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood.*

### 25<sup>th</sup> Lesson

229. Patience and seclusion unite us through prayer with God.

230. Contempt and disdain for dishonorable things allow us to discover virtues. Become as if dead so that you may live.

231. Abandon small things so that you can discover great ones. Become dead for this life and allow yourself life beyond death. Prefer physical death to a negligent life. Seek whatever is beneficial to the soul and virtuous in God – as did Solomon and Eliseos – so that you may be glorified here as well as in heaven.

232. The person that seeks worldly things through prayer dishonors God. He who disregards his flesh while seeking heavenly gifts pleases the angels.

233. Whatever is acquired with great labor is also kept. Have thirst for Christ so that he can intoxicate you with His love and then with His joy.

234. When you ask God for something and He does not grant it, it is because a) you are unworthy to receive whatever it is that you seek, b) because you do not ask with your heart, and c) because you have not attained the level that is necessary for receiving the gift that you are soliciting.

235. The person who is connected with worldly matters can not ask for heavenly gifts, as they will never be granted to him.

236. Become prudent with your meekness so that the demons are unable to rob you through pride. Love humility in all of your deeds.

237. Do not forego afflictions and sorrows because it is through them that you discover God. Without temptations we are unable to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

### 26<sup>th</sup> Lesson

238. Pray that you do not become subjected to the temptations of the soul, which are a) infidelity, b) blasphemy, c) pride, d) physical war with the devil, and e) anger, rage and wrath.

239. The temptations of the flesh which we must endure with all our soul are a) bodily afflictions, and b) suffering for God's love. We must endure these because without them we may neither believe in Divine Providence, nor are we able to have outspokenness with God, realize His wisdom or acquire desire for the Divine. Through temptations our love for God is tested.

240. The person who does not patiently endure the temptations that accompany some virtue, he will be unable to realize this virtue.

241. Whoever forsakes prudence, or abandons the monastic schema, or renounces his Christian beliefs, or relinquishes some other virtue will inevitably fall from grace and the true faith of Christ.

242. God's words are sweeter than honey and cooler than morning dew on the obedient, sensible and God-fearing soul.

243. Do not seek advice from a person that does not share your conduct and demeanor, even when he is very wise.

244. God does not grant any great virtue without first allowing some great temptation.

245. There is something to be concerned about when you are in constant peace. Temptations are aroused and provoked as much and as long as you progress and improve spiritually... Temptations thus arrive in proportion to the Divine Grace bestowed upon you.

### 27<sup>th</sup> Lesson

246. **Question:** Do temptations arrive before God's gifts or are God's gifts granted and then temptations follow?

**Answer:** The Holy Apostles first received the Holy Spirit and then were they exposed to temptations. God prefers them, that something good is always followed by sorrow. Divine Grace precedes, however the impact of her power is delayed from becoming immediately apparent.

247. When a person begins to consider himself wise, prudent and sensible, it is then that he falls into the following greater temptations, in accordance with his pride: a) deprivation of all wisdom, b) severe realization of lustful thoughts c) quick to get angry and quarrel, d) blasphemy against God, e) talkativeness and idle talk, and f) lack of consolation for the heart as well as deprivation hope and faith.

248. When God wishes to bring sorrow upon a person, he then allows him to experience: a) stress, in other words drowning of the soul, and b) a spirit of absurdity and unreasonableness with its aftermath. All this arises from pride; the cure for these afflictions is found only in humility.

249. Humility wipes out all evil that arises from temptations because it is through her that we discover patience in our afflictions. It is from humility that consolation is derived, and this in turn instills in us love for God, thus increasing the joy of the Holy Spirit which guides us into the perfection of our soul.

250. A person that is disturbed and agitated is incapable of teaching others because he lacks spiritual health.

251. A body that is linked with sins finds rest only in lustful deeds. The spirit of God may not reside in such a body.

252. There is no virtue greater than true repentance. It benefits us all, sinners and righteous alike and always and for all that wish to realize eternal salvation...



**F**or the time being I live in a cave. I have wonderful silence. I am the luckiest of men, for I live without cares and enjoy the honey of silence unceasingly. And when grace departs for just a little, silence comes as another grace and it shelters me in its harbor. And thus, the pains and sadness of this evil and tiring life seem less significant. In the present life, until one's final breath, sadness always comes mixed with joy.

**St. Joseph the Hesychast (+1959)**

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## SOCRATES' TRIPLE TEST

One day an acquaintance met the great philosopher Socrates and said, "Do you know what I just heard about your friend?"

"Hold on a minute," Socrates replied. "Before telling me anything I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the Triple Filter Test."

"Triple filter?"

"That's right," Socrates continued. "Before you talk to me about my friend it might be a good idea to take a moment and filter what you're going to say. That's why I call it the triple filter test. The first filter is Truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"

"No," the man said, "actually I just heard about it and..."

"All right," said Socrates. "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now let's try the second filter, the filter of goodness. Is what you are about to tell me about my friend something good?"

"No, on the contrary..."

"So," Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something bad about him, but you're not certain it's true. You may still pass the test though, because there's one filter left: the filter of usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about my friend going to be useful to me?"

"No, not really."

"Well," concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither true nor good nor even useful, why tell it to me at all?"

## ON SPIRITUAL DELUSION

*This passage is the last thing written by the first Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, Metropolitan Anthony of blessed memory, from his book "Confession"*

Weak faith and carelessness are expressions of people's irreligion, but even a pious person is not protected from spiritual sickness if he does not have a wise guide, either a living person or a spiritual writer. This sickness is called prelest, or spiritual delusion, imagining oneself to be near to God and to the realm of the divine and supernatural.

Even zealous ascetics in monasteries are sometimes subject to this delusion, but of course, lay people who are zealous in outward ascetic struggles undergo it much more frequently. Surpassing their acquaintances in feats of prayer and fasting, they imagine that they are seers of divine visions, or at least of dreams inspired by grace. In all events in their lives they see special, intentional directions from God or their Guardian Angel, and then they start imagining that they are God's elect, and not infrequently try to foretell the future. The Holy Fathers armed themselves against nothing so fiercely as against this sickness of spiritual delusion.

Prelest endangers a man's soul if it lurks in him alone; but it is dangerous and imperiling also for the whole of local church life, if a whole society is seized in its grasp, if it makes its appearance anywhere as a spiritual epidemic and the life of a whole parish or diocese is oriented entirely towards it.

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

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## ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON MARRIAGE

*From Orthodox America, "Spiritual Life" articles*

A certain wise man, when enumerating which blessings are the most important included *a wife and husband who live in harmony* (Sir. 25:1). In another place he emphasized this: *A friend or a companion never meets one amiss, but a wife with her husband is better than both* (Sir. 40:23). From the beginning God in His providence has planned this union of man and woman, and has spoken of the two as one: *male and female He created them* (Gen. 1:27), and *there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Gal. 3:28).

There is no relationship between human beings so close as that of husband and wife, if they are united as they ought to be. When blessed David was mourning for Jonathan, who was of one soul with him, what comparison did he use to describe the loftiness of their love? *Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women* (II Sam. 1:26). The power of this love is truly stronger than any passion; other desires may be strong, but this one alone never fades. This love (*eros*) is deeply planted within our innermost being. Unnoticed by us, it attracts the bodies of men and women to each other, because in the beginning woman came forth from man, and from man and woman other men and women proceed. Can you see now how close this union is, and how God providentially created it from a single nature? He permitted Adam to marry Eve, who was more than sister or daughter; she was his own flesh! God caused the entire human race to proceed from this one point of origin. He did not, on the one hand, fashion woman independently from man, otherwise man would think of her as essentially different from himself. Nor did He enable woman to bear

children without man; if this were the case she would be self-sufficient. Instead, just as the branches of a tree proceed from a single trunk, He made the one man Adam to be the origin of all mankind, both male and female, and made it impossible for men and women to be self-sufficient. Later, He forbade men to marry their sisters or daughters, so that our love would not be limited to members of our families, and withdrawn from the rest of the human race. All of this is implied in Christ's words: *He who made them from the beginning made them male and female* (Matt. 19:4).

The love of husband and wife is the force that welds society together. Men will take up arms and even sacrifice their lives for the sake of this love. St. Paul would not speak so earnestly about this subject without serious reason; why else would he say, *Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord?* Because when harmony prevails, the children are raised well, the household is kept in order, and neighbors, friends and relatives praise the result. Great benefits, both for families and states, are thus produced. When it is otherwise, however, everything is thrown into confusion and turned upside down. When the generals of an army are at peace with each other, everything proceeds in an orderly fashion, and when they are not, everything is in disarray. It is the same here. For the sake of harmony, then, he said, *Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord...*

Let us assume, then, that the husband is to occupy the place of the head, and the wife that of the body, and listen to what *headship* means: For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the Body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be subject to their own husbands in everything. Notice that after saying the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, he

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Orthodox Heritage may, at times, bring up issues or present articles that some consider controversial. Such material is presented so that a distinction is made between salvation and the 20th century heresy of ecumenism. These are confusing times for the Orthodox faithful, and political correctness must be sacrificed so that His TRUTH be brought forth.

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immediately says that the Church is His Body, and He is Himself its Saviour. It is the head that upholds the well-being of the body. In his other epistles, Paul has already laid the foundations of marital love, and has assigned to husband and wife each his proper place: to the husband one of leader and provider, and to the wife one of submission. Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ -- and the Church, remember, consists of both husbands and wives -- *so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands, as to God.*

You have heard how important obedience is; you have praised and marveled at Paul, how he welds our whole life together, as we would expect from an admirable and spiritual man. You have done well. But now listen to what else he requires from you; he has not finished with his example. Husbands, he says, love your wives, as Christ loves the Church. You have seen the amount of obedience necessary; now hear about the amount of love necessary. Do you want your wife to be obedient to you, as the Church is to Christ? Then be responsible for the same providential care of her, as Christ is for the Church. And even if it becomes necessary for you to give your life for her, yes, and even to endure and undergo suffering of any kind, do not refuse. Even though you undergo all this, you will never have done anything equal to what Christ has done. You are sacrificing yourself for someone to whom you are already joined, but He offered Himself up for one who turned her back on Him and hated Him.

In the same way, then, as He honored her by putting at His feet one who turned her back on Him, who hated, rejected, and disdained Him, as He accomplished this not with threats, or violence, or terror, or anything else like that, but through His untiring love; so also you should

behave toward your wife. Even if you see her belittling you, or despising and mocking you, still you will be able to subject her to yourself, through affection, kindness, and your great regard for her.

There is no influence more powerful than the bond of love, especially for husband and wife. A servant can be

taught submission through fear; but even he, if provoked too much, will soon seek his escape. But one's partner for life, the mother of one's children, the source of one's every joy, should never be fettered with fear and threats, but with love and patience. What kind of marriage can there be when the wife is afraid of her husband? What sort of satisfaction could a husband himself have, if he lives with his wife as if she were a slave, and not with a woman by her own free will? Suffer anything for her sake, but never disgrace her, for Christ never did this with the Church.

Paul has precisely described for husband and wife what is fitting

behavior for each: *she should reverence him as the head and he should love her as his body.* But how is this behavior achieved? That it must be is clear; now I will tell you how. It will be achieved if we are detached from money, if we strive above everything for virtue, if we keep the fear of God before our eyes. What Paul says to servants in the next chapter applies to us as well, *...knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same again from the Lord* (Eph. 6:8). Love her not so much for her own sake, but for Christ's sake. That is why he says, *be subject ... as to the Lord.* Do everything for the Lord's sake, in a spirit of obedience to Him. These words should be enough to convince us to avoid quarrels and disagreements. No husband should believe any accusation he hears from a third party about his wife, and vice



*...let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife that she reverence her husband. (Eph. 5:33)*

versa; nor should a wife unreasonably monitor her husband's comings and going, provided that he has always shown himself to be above suspicion. And what if you devote the day to your work and your friends and the evening to your wife and she is still not satisfied, but is jealous for more of your time? Don't be annoyed by her complaints; she loves you, she is not behaving absurdly -- her complaints come from her fervent affection for you, and from fear. Yes, she is afraid that her marriage bed will be stolen, that someone will deprive her of her greatest blessing, that someone will take from her him who is her head.

A wife should never nag her husband: "You lazy coward, you have no ambition! Look at our relatives and neighbors; they have plenty of money. Their wives have far more than I do." Let no wife say any such thing; she is her husband's body, and it is not for her to dictate to her head, but to submit and obey. "But why should she endure poverty?" some will ask. If she is poor, let her console herself by thinking of those who are much poorer still. If she really loved her husband, she would never speak to him like that, but would value having him close to her more than all the gold in the world. Furnish your house neatly and soberly. If the bridegroom shows his wife that he takes no pleasure in worldly excess, and will not stand for it, their marriage will remain free from the evil influences that are so popular these days. Let them shun the immodest music and dancing that are currently so fashionable.

I am aware that many people think me ridiculous for giving such advice; but if you listen to me, you will understand the advantages of a sober lifestyle more and more as time goes on. You will no longer laugh at me, but will laugh instead at the way people live now, like silly children or drunken men.

What is our duty, then? Remove from your lives shameful, immodest, and Satanic music, and don't associate with people who enjoy such profligate entertainment. When your bride sees your manner of life, she will say to herself, "Wonderful! What a wise man my husband is! He regards this passing life as nothing; he has married me to be a good mother for his children and a prudent manager of his household." Will this sort of life be distasteful for a young bride? Only perhaps for the shortest time, and soon she will discover how delightful it is to live this way. She will retain her modesty if you retain yours. Don't engage in idle conversations; it never profits anyone to talk too much. Whenever you give your wife advice, always begin by telling her how much you love her. Nothing will persuade her so well to admit the wisdom of your words as her assurance that you are speaking to her with sincere affection. Tell her that you are convinced that money is not important, that only thieves thirst for it constantly, that you love her more than gold; and indeed an intelligent, discreet and pious young woman is worth more than all the money in the world. Show her that you value her company, and prefer being at home to being out. Esteem her in the presence of your friends and children.

Pray together at home and go to Church; when you come back home, let each ask the other the meaning of the readings and the prayers. If you are overtaken by poverty, remember Peter and Paul, who were more honored than kings or rich men, though they spent their lives in hunger and thirst. Remind one another that nothing in life is to be feared, except offending God. If your marriage is like this, your perfection will rival the holiest of monks.

If we seek the things that are perfect, the secondary things will follow. The Lord says, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you* (Matt. 6:33). What sort of person do you think the children of such parents will be? What kind of person are all the others who associate with them? Will they not eventually be the recipients of countless blessings as well? For generally the children acquire the character of their parents, are formed in the mold of their parents' temperament, love the same things their parents love, talk in the same fashion, and work for the same ends. If we order our lives in this way and diligently study the Scriptures, we will find lessons to guide us in everything we need!



## ON HOPE

*From the Spiritual Instruction of St. Seraphim of Sarov*

All who have firm hope in God are raised up to Him and enlightened by the radiance of the eternal light.

If a man has no care whatever for himself because of love for God and virtuous deeds, knowing that God will take care of him, such hope is true and wise. But if a man takes care of his own affairs and turns with prayer to God only when unavoidable misfortunes overtake him and he sees no way of averting them by his own power, only then beginning to hope in God's aid, such hope is vain and false. True hope seeks the kingdom of God alone and is convinced that everything earthly that is necessary for this transitory life will unfailingly be given.

The heart cannot have peace until it acquires this hope. It gives peace to the heart and brings joy into it. Concerning this hope the most holy lips of the Saviour have said: *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest* (Matt. 11:28); that is, have hope in Me and you will have relief from labour and fear.

In the Gospel of Luke it is said of Simeon: *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ* (Lk 2:26). And he did not lose his hope, but awaited the desired Saviour of the world and joyfully taking Him into his arms, said: *Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart into Thy kingdom which I have desired, for I have obtained my hope -- Christ the Lord.*

## THE LORD'S DESCENT INTO THE UNDERWORLD

*Excerpts from an ancient homily for Holy Saturday, taken from the web pages of Orthodox.net (<http://www.orthodox.net>)*

Something strange is happening -- there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep.

The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and He has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear. He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep.

Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, He has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, He who is both God and the Son of Eve.

The Lord approached them bearing the cross, the weapon that had won Him the victory. At the sight of Him Adam, the first man He had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone: "My Lord be with You all." Christ answered him: "And with your spirit."

He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: "Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. I am your God, who for your sake have become your Son.

Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by my own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake.

I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise up, work of my hands, you who were created in My image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in Me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated.

For your sake I, your God, became your Son; I, the Lord, took the form of a slave; I, whose home is above the heavens, descended to the earth and beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of man, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed to the Jews in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.

See on my face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your warped nature in my image.

On my back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back.

See my hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree.

I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my side for you who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in hell.

The sword that pierced me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly paradise. I will not restore you to that paradise, but I will enthrone you in heaven.

I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am life itself am now one with you. I appointed Cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, but now I make them worship you as God.

The throne formed by Cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The bridal chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open.

The kingdom of heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity."



## ANOTHER WONDROUS EVENT

*From the book "Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain."*

One night, I was in my cell at Katounakia saying the Jesus prayer and gradually I was possessed by a heavenly joy. Simultaneously, my cell, whose darkness was interrupted only by the trembling flame of a candle, was filled with a beautiful white-blue light. At the beginning, the light was very strong. I felt that my eyes were also "getting stronger" in order to withstand the glow. It was the Uncreated Light! I stayed in my cell for many hours, losing sense of all earthly things and living in a spiritual world, very different from this one.

While being in this state of the Uncreated Light and heavenly experiences, I lost all sense of time.

At one point the Uncreated Light started fading away and I was back to my old state of being. I began to feel hungry, so I took a piece of bread to eat. Then, I was thirsty and had some water to drink. I was getting tired and I needed to sit down and get some rest. I felt like an animal and I deplored myself for it. The change from one situation back to the other gave birth to a natural humbleness. Having experienced the difference between the spiritual state I was found in and my earthly needs, there was nothing left for me but to despise and blame myself for it.

Further down from my cell, another monk was residing. I looked outside and had the impression it was still night with a full moon. I went out and asked him, "What time is it? It seems that dawn hasn't broken yet this morning."

The monk looked astonished and asked me, "What did you say, Father Paisios? I didn't understand."

Only then, I realized what had happened. It was ten in the morning and the "full moon" I thought I had seen was the sun. The Uncreated Light was so strong that it made daylight and sun look like a night with a full moon. The difference between the light of the sun and the Uncreated Light was like the one between night and day.



## Ὁ Φθόνος

Τῆς Κατερίνας Τσακίρη, Θεολόγου, Περιοδικό ΑΝΑΓΕΝΝΗΣΗ, Φεβρουάριος 2002.

**Μ**υστική διαμαρτυρία τῶν Φαρισαίων! Ὁργή και ἀγανάκτηση! «Οὗτος βλασφημεῖ!». Δέν τὸ λέν πάντα τὰ χεῖλη, ἀλλὰ τί σημασία ἔχει! Ἐκεῖνος γνωρίζει τὰ βάθη τοῦ νοῦ και τῆς καρδιάς τοὺς παλμούς. Τὸν βλασφημοῦν οἱ βλάσφημοι και Τὸν κατηγοροῦν οἱ κατήγοροι. Τὸν φθονοῦν θανάσιμα και μὲ κάθε εὐκαιρία Τοῦ στήνουν παγίδες. Ὅπλο τους ἢ μοχθηρία, τὸ πάθος, ἢ συκοφαντία, ἢ ἐκδίκηση, τὸ ψέμα. Σκοπὸς τους και στόχος τους ἢ θανάτωσή Του. Ὅσο ξεσκεπάζει και ἀποκαλύπτει «τὰς ἐνθυμήσεις αὐτῶν», τόσο φουντώνει μέσα τους τοῦ φθόνου τὸ ἐωσφορικό πάθος. Ζοῦνε γιὰ νὰ μισοῦν και μισοῦν θανάσιμα. Ὁ φθόνος ἔχει κάψει τὰ σωθικά τους. Τοὺς ἔχει κάνει Χριστομάχους. Κάποτε θὰ γίνουν και Χριστοκτόνοι.

Ἀλήθεια, πῶς νὰ χαρακτηρίσει κανεὶς τὸ φθόνου; Δηλητήριο πού σκορπᾶ θανατικό; Φαρμακερὸ φίδι; Λύσσα τῆς ψυχῆς; Ἐστία μικροβίων; Μαύρη καταχνιά; Νύχτα ζοφερή; Πληγὴ ἐπικίνδυνη; Ὁ ἱερὸς Χρυσόστομος λέει ὅτι «ὡς ὁ σκόρος τὴν ἐσθήτα, οὕτως και ὁ φθόνος φθείρει τὸν ἄνθρωπον». Παρόμοια ἐκφράζεται και τῆς Καισαρείας ὁ φωστήρας, ὁ Μ. Βασίλειος. «Ὅπως ἢ σκουριά, λέει, κατατρώγει τὸ σίδηρο, ἔτσι κι ὁ φθόνος καταστρέφει τὴν ψυχή».

Ὁ φθονερὸς περιμένει μὲ λαχτᾶρα τὴν πτώση τοῦ ἄλλου, γιὰ νὰ χαρεῖ. Δέν ἠσυχάζει ποτέ. Τὸ κακὸ και μόνο τὸ κακὸ ὄνειρεῖται. Κι ὀρκίζεται νὰ τὸ ἐπιτύχει. Χρησιμοποιεῖ ὅλα τὰ μέσα. Δέν ἀνέχεται τὴν ὑπεροχὴ τοῦ ἄλλου. Ἀγωνίζεται νὰ κλονίσει τὴ θέση του νὰ διασύρει τὴν ὑπόληψή του νὰ τὸν κατηγορήσει νὰ τὸν πετάξει -- ἂν μπορέσει -- στοὺς δρόμους νὰ τὸν κάνει σκουπίδι! Εἶναι ἄνανδρος δολοφόνος. Σκοτώνει μὲ τὴ δολερὴ του γλώσσα. Δέν τὸ λέει ὁ Εὐαγγελιστὴς Ἰωάννης; «Ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἄνθρωποκτόνος ἐστίν» (Α΄ Ἰωάν. Γ΄ 15).

Εἶναι γνωστὴ σὲ ὅλους ἢ ἱστορία τοῦ Κάϊν και τοῦ Ἄβελ. Ἐπειδὴ τοῦ Κάϊν ἢ θυσία δέν ἄρεσε στὸ Θεὸ -- γιατί δέν πρόσφερε τοὺς πιὸ διαλεκτοὺς καρπούς τῆς γῆς -- «ἐλυπήθη Κάϊν λίαν, και συνέπεσε τῷ προσώπῳ αὐτοῦ». Σκυθρῶπιασε ἀπὸ τὴ ζήλια του και συνέλαβε ἀμέσως τὸ ἐγκληματικό του σχέδιο. Ἡ ἀδελφικὴ ἀγάπη ἔσπασε. Σὲ λίγα λεπτὰ ἀδελφοκτόνος! Γιὰ πρώτη φορὰ ἀνθρώπινο αἷμα βάφει τὸν πλανήτη μας.

Πασίγνωστη και τοῦ Ἰωσήφ ἢ ἱστορία. Πάντα θὰ συγκινεῖ τὶς ἀνθρώπινες καρδιές. Ἀδικουλήθησε στοὺς ἐμπόρους Ἰσραηλίτες ἀπὸ τοὺς φθονεροὺς ἀδελφούς του και μεταφέρθηκε στὴν Αἴγυπτο. Ὅμως κάποτε πέσανε στὰ χέρια τοῦ χωρὶς νὰ τὸ θέλουν. Ἀλλὰ τί μεγαλοψυχία! Τί ἀνεξικακία! Τί ἀγάπη! Οὐτε θύμωσε, οὐτε ἀγανάκτησε, οὐτε ἔδωσε διαταγὴ -- σὰν ἀντιβασιλιάς -- νὰ τοὺς φυλακίσουν ἢ νὰ τοὺς σκοτώσουν, παρ' ὅλο πὸν ἀπὸ τὸ φόβο τους τρέμανε.

Ὁ φθόνος ἔχει καταστρέψει τὰ πιὸ ὠραῖα ἔργα. Δηλητηριάζει τὶς πιὸ ἀρμονικὲς σχέσεις τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Γκρεμίζει ὅσα ἢ ἀγάπη ἔχει οἰκοδομήσει. «Οὐδὲν ὑφίσταται ζῆλος», λέει ὁ θεόπνευστος Παροιμιστής (ΚΖ΄ 4).

Τίποτε δηλαδὴ δέν μπορεῖ νὰ σταθεῖ μπροστὰ στὸ φθόνου. Ὁ φθονερὸς πικραίνεται και στεναχωριέται εὐκόλα. Ὑποφέρει ἐσωτερικά. Ὁ ὕπνος δέν ἔρχεται στὰ μάτια του. Δέν ἠσυχάζει. Ἀπὸ τὸ κακὸ του ἀλλάζει χρῶμα. Ἡ γαλήνη ἔχει δραπετεῦσει ἀπὸ τὴν ψυχὴ του. Τὸ κακὸ βράζει μέσα του, ὅπως τὸ νερὸ στὴν κατσαρόλα. Ζητᾶ ἐκδίκηση. Διψᾷ ἀνταπόδοση. Μήπως και τὸν Κύριό μας δέν Τὸν σταύρωσαν οἱ Ἀρχιερεῖς και οἱ Γραμματεῖς ἀπὸ φθόνου; «Διὰ φθόνου παρέδωκαν αὐτόν», σημειώνει ὁ Ἅγιος Εὐαγγελιστὴς Ματθαῖος (ΚΖ΄ 18). Ὁ φθόνος ἔκανε τὸ πιὸ μεγάλο ἐγκλημα τῶν αἰώνων. Ὅμως, ποιὸς βλέπει νὰ σαπίζουν οἱ τοῖχοι τοῦ σπιτιοῦ του και δέν λαμβάνει τὰ μέτρα του; ποιὸς ὑποφέρει ἀπὸ τὸ στομάχι του και δέν προμηθεύεται φάρμακα; και τῆς ψυχῆς τὰ πάθη θεραπεύονται μὲ ἀνάλογα πνευματικὰ φάρμακα. Τοῦ φθόνου τὸ ἀντιδοτὸ εἶναι ἢ ἀγάπη. Μὲ τὸ δροσερὸ τῆς νερὸ σβήνει τὸ ψυχοκτόνο καμίνι. Ἐκεῖ πὸν καλλιεργεῖται ἢ ἀγάπη δέν μπορεῖ νὰ φυτρώσει ὁ φθόνος. Ἀγάπη βαθεῖα. Ἀγάπη ἀπέραντη, πὸν ν' ἀγκαλιάζει ὄλους, φίλους κι ἐχθρούς. Ἀγάπη πὸν νὰ συνοδεύεται μὲ ὀλόθερμες προσευχές.

Τώρα πᾶνε τὰ παλιά! «Ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν». Αναγεννημένοι νὰ βαδίσουμε στοῦ Θεοῦ τὸ φωτόχυτο βασίλειο. Ἄκακοι νὰ γίνουμε, και ἀκίβδηλοι χαρακτηρῆς. Νὰ διώξουμε ἀπὸ τὴν ψυχὴ μας «πᾶσαν κακίαν και πάντα δόλον και ὑποκρίσεις και φθόνους» (Α΄ Πέτρ. Β΄, 1). Ὅπως τὸ φίδι τὸ χτυποῦνε στὸ κεφάλι θανάσιμα γιὰ νὰ τὸ κάνουν ἀκίνδυνο, ἔτσι και μεῖς νὰ χτυπήσουμε ἀποτελεσματικὰ τὸ ἀπαίσιο πάθος τοῦ φθόνου πὸν εἶναι ρίζα τόσων ἄλλων κακῶν. Ἄν ὁ συνάνθρωπός μας -- και ἰδιαίτερα ὁ ὁμότεχνός μας -- ἔχει κάποιες ἐπιτυχίες, νὰ χαροῦμε γι' αὐτό. Ὅλα ὅσα ἔχουμε, τοῦ Θεοῦ δῶρα εἶναι. Ὁ κάθε ἄνθρωπος ἔχει λάβει τὰ ἀνάλογα ἄλαντα. Ἐκεῖνοι πὸν ἔλαβαν πολλὰ νὰ μὴν ὑπερηφανεύονται. Ἀλλὰ κι ἐκεῖνοι πὸν ἔλαβαν λιγότερα νὰ μὴν ζηλοφθονοῦν. Κι ἂν δέν μποροῦμε νὰ ἀποκτήσουμε πλοῦτο, δόξα ἢ μεγάλες ικανότητες, πὸν ἔχουν ἄλλοι, στὸ χέρι μας εἶναι ν' ἀποκτήσουμε ἀρετὴ και ἀγιότητα, πὸν ἀξίζουν πιότερο ἀπ' ὅλα τοῦ κόσμου τὰ ἀγαθὰ.

Ὅπως γίνεται ἀποτοξίνωση τοῦ δηλητηριασμένου ὀργανισμοῦ, ἔτσι πρέπει νὰ γίνεῖ και τῆς ψυχῆς. Νὰ λάβουμε τὰ μέτρα μας. Νὰ πολεμήσουμε τὸν ὑπουλο και ἰσχυρὸ τοῦτο ἐχθρό. Νὰ ἐπιστρατεύσουμε ὅλες μας τὶς δυνάμεις. Νὰ τοῦ δώσουμε καιρία πλήγματα. Νὰ νεκρωθεῖ.

Ὁ φθόνος, ἀδελφοί μου, εἶναι καρκίνος τῆς ψυχῆς. Καρκῖνος ἐπικίνδυνος! Ἀπαίσιο πάθος! Νὰ προφυλαχθοῦμε!



**Α**πὸ τὴν ἐκούσια σωματικὴ φτώχεια και ταπεινωση, (πὸν περιλαμβάνει πείνα και δίψα και ἀγρυπνία και γενικὰ κάθε ταλαιπωρία και κακοπάθεια τοῦ σώματος, και μαζί μὲ αὐτὰ και ἔλλογη συστολὴ τῶν αἰσθήσεων), ὄχι μονάχα γεννιέται πένθος, ἀλλὰ και δάκρυα... Γιατί βέβαια χωρὶς συντριβὴ τῆς καρδιάς εἶναι ἀδύνατο, ὅπως λένε, νὰ ἀπαλλαγεῖ κανεὶς ἀπὸ τὴν κακία.

Ἄγ. Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς, Φιλοκαλία Δ΄ σελ. 26

## Νηστεύετε, Κάνει Καλό!

*Τοῦ Δρ. Αντώνιος Καφᾶτος, καθηγητῆς τῆς Προληπτικῆς Ιατρικῆς τοῦ Ἰατρικοῦ Τμήματος τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης, ἐφημερίδα ΤΟΛΜΗ, 14 Μαρτίου 2003*

**Η** νηστεία πού ἀκολουθοῦν πολλοί Ἕλληνες ἐφαρμόζοντας πιστά τίς ὀρθόδοξες χριστιανικές παραδόσεις ἀποτελεῖ τήν καλύτερη εὐκαιρία γιά μία περιοδική ἀποχή ἀπό τρόφιμα ζωϊκῆς προέλευσης.

Τά ὀφέλη εἶναι πάρα πολλά, ἐπισημαίνουν οἱ διατροφολόγοι καί οἱ διαιτολόγοι, ἐφόσον ὁμως αὐτή ἡ ἀποχή ἀπό τήν κατανάλωση προϊόντων κρέατος καί ἄλλης ζωϊκῆς προέλευσης δώσει τή θέση της σέ μία ἰσορροπημένη διατροφή ὅπου θά λαμβάνονται ὅλα τὰ ἀπαραίτητα θρεπτικά συστατικά. Ἡ νηστεία βοηθᾷ σημαντικά τόν ἀνθρώπινο ὀργανισμό νά βελτιώσει τὸ λιπιδαιμικὸ προφίλ. Ἡ ἔλλειψη τῶν τροφίμων ζωϊκῆς προέλευσης ἀπὸ τὴν διατροφή, σημαίνει μείωση τοῦ προσλαμβανόμενου λίπους καί βασικά τοῦ κορεσμένου λίπους πού εἶναι καί τὸ πιὸ ἐπιβαρυντικὸ, ἐπισημαίνουν ὅλοι οἱ διαιτολόγοι. «Ἡ ἀποχή ἀπὸ ὅλα τὰ ζωϊκὰ προϊόντα εἶναι ἐπιβεβλημένη σέ τακτὰ χρονικὰ διαστήματα. Αὐτὸ ἀποτελεῖ γενικὴ ἀρχή», δηλώνει στήν ΤΟΛΜΗ ὁ διαιτολόγος κ. Δημήτρης Μιρμιλιάγκος προσθέτοντας ὅτι κανεὶς δὲν παραβλέπει πὼς οἱ πρωτεΐνες πού ἐμπεριέχουν οἱ τροφές αὐτές εἶναι πολύτιμες γιά τὸν ἀνθρώπινο ὀργανισμό. «Αὐτές οἱ τροφές ὁμως προσφέρουν καί χοληστερόλη, οὐρικό ὄξύ, κορεσμένα λίπη, τοξίνες. Ἄρα, ἡ ἀποχή τους γιά ἓνα χρονικὸ διάστημα μπορεῖ νά ἐξισορροπήσει τὸν ὀργανισμό», τονίζει ὁ ἴδιος.

Ἡ διαιτολόγος κ. Εὐα Μπούκα ἐπισημαίνει ἀπὸ τὴν πλευρὰ της ὅτι ἡ νηστεία προσφέρει τὴ δυνατότητα γιά μία καλὰ ἀποτοξίνωση τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου ὀργανισμοῦ. Βασικὲς ἀρχές, ὡστόσο, γιά τὴν ἴδια καί στήν περίοδο τῆς νηστείας πρέπει νά εἶναι ἡ ἰσορροπία, ἡ ποικιλία καί τὸ μέτρο στή διατροφή. Ἡ ἰσορροπία ἀφορᾷ τὴ λήψη θρεπτικῶν συστατικῶν καί καθιστᾷ ἀπαραίτητη τὴν κατανάλωση προϊόντων πού παρέχουν στὸν ὀργανισμό τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀπαραίτητες πρωτεΐνες ὅπως εἶναι τὰ ὄσπρια καί τὰ θαλασσινὰ. Ἡ κ. Μπούκα συμβουλεῖ ἐπίσης τοὺς Ἡρακλειῶτες νά χρησιμοποιοῦν στή διατροφή τους τὴ σόγια πού χαρακτηρίζεται ὡς ὑποκατάστατο τοῦ κρέατος, εἶναι φυτικὸ προϊόν καί ἀρκετὰ εὐγευστο.

Τά ὀφέλη τῆς νηστείας εἶναι πολλά. Ὅπως ἐπισημαίνουν οἱ διαιτολόγοι, ἡ νηστεία μπορεῖ νά ρίξει κατὰ πολλὰς μονάδες τίς τιμές τῆς χοληστερόλης καί τῶν τριγλυκεριδίων, ιδιαίτερα σέ ὅσους οἱ τιμές ὑπερβαίνουν τίς φυσιολογικές. Ἡ μείωση τῆς χοληστερόλης μπορεῖ νά φθάσει ἀκόμα καί τὰ 40 - 50 mg ἐὰν ἀκολουθηθεῖ σωστά ἡ νηστεία γιά ὅλη τὴν περίοδο τῆς Σαρακοστῆς. Στὰ ὀφέλη τῆς νηστείας ἐντάσσεται ἐπίσης ἡ μείωση τῆς ἀρτηριακῆς πίεσης.

Οἱ διαιτολόγοι τονίζουν ἐπίσης ὅτι τὰ φρούτα, τὰ λαχανικά καί τὰ ὄσπρια σωστά μαγειρεμένα ὅπως καί τὰ δημητριακά εἶναι τροφές πλούσιες σέ κάλιο. Ἀντίθετα ὅσοι ἀκολουθοῦν τὴ νηστεία θά πρέπει νά εἶναι πολὺ προσεκτικοὶ στήν κατανάλωση τῶν ζυμαρικῶν. Ἡ νηστεία μπορεῖ νά βοηθήσει ἀκόμη καί στή μείωση τοῦ σωματικοῦ βάρους. Ἀκολου-

θώντας λοιπὸν τίς ἀρχές τῆς σωστῆς διατροφῆς ἀλλὰ καί τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας τὴν περίοδο τῆς Σαρακοστῆς πού διανύουμε μπορεῖ νά ὠφεληθοῦμε οὐσιαστικά ἀπὸ τὴ νηστεία, ἐνῶ προετοιμαζόμαστε σωματικά καί ψυχικά γιά τὸ Πάσχα.

Διακόσιες συνολικά μέρες ἀπὸ τίς 365 τοῦ ἔτους καλεῖ τοὺς πιστοὺς νά νηστεύουν ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία. Οἱ διατεταγμένες νηστείες πού ὀρίζει ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας ἀφοροῦν στή Μεγάλῃ Τεσσαρακοστῇ, στή Μεγάλῃ Ἑβδομάδα, ἡ νηστεία πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴ γιορτὴ τῶν Χριστουγέννων, τοῦ Δεκαπενταύγουστου καθὼς καί κάθε Τετάρτη καί Παρασκευή. Ἐπίσης ἡ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καλεῖ τοὺς πιστοὺς σὲ νηστεία τὴν 5ῃ Ἰανουαρίου, τὴν παραμονὴ δηλαδὴ τῶν Θεοφανείων, στίς 29 Αὐγούστου ὅπου τιμᾶται ἡ ἀποτομή τῆς κεφαλῆς τοῦ Προδρόμου, καθὼς καί στίς 14 Σεπτεμβρίου ὅπου ἐορτάζουμε τὴν ὕψωση τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ.



## Ὁ Ἀπλοϊκὸς Ἱερέας

*Χαρίσματα Καὶ Χαρισματοῦχοι, Ἐκδόσεις I.M. Παρακλήτου*

**Ε**νας ἐπίσκοπος κάποτε, περιοδεύοντας τὰ χωριά τῆς ἐπαρχίας του, ἔφτασε σ' ἓνα πολὺ μακρινὸ χωριουδάκι. Ζήτησε νά δεῖ τὸν ἱερέα. Ὑστερα ἀπὸ ἀρκετὴ ὥρα παρουσιάστηκε μπροστὰ του ἓνας ἀπλοϊκὸς χωρικός, πού μόλις εἶχε γυρίσει ἀπὸ τὸ χωράφι καί φοροῦσε τὰ ρούχα τῆς δουλειᾶς. Ἦταν ὁ ἱερέας τοῦ χωριοῦ! Ὁ ἐπίσκοπος δὲν ἔμεινε ἰκανοποιημένος. Ἦθελε πιὸ εὐπαρουσίαστο τὸν λειτουργὸ τοῦ Ὑψίστου.

Ἡ ἄλλη μέρα ἦταν Κυριακὴ. Ὁ ἱερέας ἐτοιμάστηκε νά λειτουργήσει κι ὁ ἐπίσκοπος δὲν τὸν ἄφηνε ἀπὸ τὰ μάτια του. Ἦθελε νά τὰ παρακολουθήσει ὅλα. Θὰ ἔβρισκε ἴσως πολλὰ σφάλματα στὸν ἀγροῖκο ἐκεῖνο χωρικό.

Παράδοξο ὁμως! Ἀπὸ τὴ στιγμή, πού ἄρχισε ἡ θεία λειτουργία, ὁ ἱερέας κυκλώθηκε ἀπὸ μία θεϊκὴ φλόγα πού τὸν θέρμαινε καί τὸν λάμπρυνε χωρὶς νά τὸν καίει! Κι αὐτὸ κράτησε ὡς τὸ τέλος τῆς λειτουργίας. Ἀφοῦ μοίρασε ὁ ἱερέας τὸ ἀντίδωρο στοὺς χωρικούς, τὸν φώναξε ὁ ἐπίσκοπος στὸ ἅγιο βῆμα καί πέφτοντας στὰ γόνατα, τοῦ ζήτησε νά τὸν εὐλογήσει. Ὁ ταπεινὸς κληρικὸς σάστισε.

-Πὼς εἶναι δυνατόν ὁ ἀνώτερος νά εὐλογηθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸν κατώτερό του; Ἐσὺ εὐλόγησέ με, ἅγιε δέσποτα.

-Ἀδύνατον νά εὐλογήσω ἐκεῖνον πού στέκεται μέσα σὲ θεϊκὴ φλόγα καί προσφέρει τὴν ἀναίμακτη θυσία. «Τὸ ἔλαττον ὑπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος εὐλογεῖται».

-Υπάρχει τάχα, ἅγιε δέσποτα, ἐπίσκοπος ἢ πρεσβύτερος ἢ καὶ διάκονος ἀκόμη, πού νά πλησιάζει τὸ ἅγιο θυσιαστήριον καί νά μὴν περικυκλώνεται ἀπὸ οὐράνιο φῶς; εἶπε μὲ ἀπορία ὁ ἀπλοϊκὸς ἱερέας.

Τί ν' ἀπαντήσει ὁ ἐπίσκοπος σ' ἐκεῖνον πού ἔβλεπε τὸ ὑπερφυσικὸ σὰν τὸ φυσικότερο πρᾶγμα τοῦ κόσμου. Θαύμασε τὴν καθαρότητα τῆς καρδιάς του κι ἔφυγε ἀπὸ τὸ μικρὸ χωριὸ ὠφελημένος.

## Λόγος Για Τη Μετάνοια

Του Ὁσίου Πατρὸς Ἡμῶν Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Σύρου (ἐλεύθερη ἀποδοση)

Ἐμὴν κυριευόμαστε λοιπὸν ἀπὸ ἐκεῖνο τὸ φόβο πού ἔχει Ἀσχέση μὲ τὰ πράγματα καὶ τὶς καταστάσεις τοῦ μάταιου αὐτοῦ κόσμου. Νὰ μὴν φοβόμαστε δηλαδή ἐκεῖ πού δὲν ὑπάρχει φόβος (Α' Ἰωάν. 4, 18). Γιατί ποιὸς ἀνθρώπινος φόβος μπορεῖ νὰ συγκριθεῖ μὲ τὸ θεῖο φόβο; Καὶ ποιά φθαρτὴ ἀνθρώπινη δόξα μπορεῖ νὰ συγκριθεῖ μὲ τὴν μεγαλωσύνη, τὴν ἀνέκφραστη δύναμη καὶ τὴν ἀφθαρτὴ δόξα τοῦ Θεοῦ;

Ἐπειδὴ ὁμως μᾶς παρασύρουν τὰ γήινα πράγματα, δὲν μποροῦμε, μὲ τὴ δύναμη τῆς πίστεως καὶ τὸ φωτισμὸ τῆς γνώσης, νὰ προσηλώσουμε τὸ νοῦ μας στὰ ἀόρατα. Ἄν λοιπὸν, ἔστω καὶ μόνο ἀπὸ τὴ θέα τῶν ὀρατῶν πραγμάτων ὀδηγούμαστε στὴν κατανόηση τῆς ἀνέκφραστης δυνάμεως τοῦ ἀφθάρτου Θεοῦ, ἄς σταθοῦμε ἐνώπιόν Του μὲ δέος καὶ ἄπειρο σεβασμὸ.

Ἄν κάποιος θελήσει νὰ μετακινήσει ἓνα βράχο, ἔστω κι ἂν ὁ ἴδιος εἶναι βασιλιάς, δὲν θὰ μπορέσει νὰ τὸ κάνει μὲ ἄλλον τρόπο, παρὰ μονάχα ἂν χρησιμοποιοῦσε διάφορους μοχλοὺς καὶ σχοινιά. Ὁ Θεὸς ὁμως μπορεῖ νὰ κάνει τὴ γῆ νὰ τρέμει καὶ μόνο μὲ τὸ βλέμμα Του (πρβλ. Ψαλμ. 103, 32). Δὲν ἀπορεῖ ὁ νοῦς σου; Τὸ βλέμμα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ μόνο νὰ κάνει τὰ βουνὰ νὰ τρέμουν κι ἄλλα βαριά πράγματα νὰ σαλεύουν! Ἐκεῖνος θέλει καὶ εὐδοκεῖ καὶ στηρίζει τὰ σύμπαντα μὲ τὸ λόγο Του! Δὲν σὲ ἐντυπωσιάζει πάνω ἀπ' ὅλα ἡ λάμψη τῆς ἀστραπῆς καὶ ὁ ἦχος τῆς βροντῆς; Αὐτὰ εἶναι τόσο ἐκπληκτικά ὥστε ὄχι μόνον οἱ ἄνθρωποι ζαρῶνουν ἀπὸ τὸ φόβο τους, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ θηρία καὶ τὰ κτήνη καὶ τὰ ὄρνεα καὶ τὰ ὑδρόβια πουλιά. Ὅσα ὁμως κι ἂν ποῦμε, δὲν θὰ καταφέρουμε νὰ παρουσιάσουμε τὸ μέγεθος αὐτοῦ τοῦ θέματος.

Ἄς γονατίσουμε λοιπὸν ἐνώπιόν Του κι ἄς κλάψουμε (πρβλ. Ψαλ. 94,6) μπροστὰ στὴν ἀγαθότητά Του, μιλώντας ἀπ' τὴν καρδιά μας καὶ λέγοντας: «Ἐσὺ Κύριε, εἶσαι ὁ Θεὸς μας καὶ κανένας ἄλλος. Ἐνώπιόν Σου ἁμαρτήσαμε κι ἐνώπιόν Σου τώρα προσπίπτουμε. Ἄν Σὺ θελήσεις, νὰ μᾶς σώσεις Κύριε, κανένας δὲν μπορεῖ ν' ἀναχαιτίσει τούτη τὴν ἀπόφασή Σου καὶ νὰ Σὲ δυσκολέψει».

Ὁ Κύριος εἶναι εὐσπλαχνος καὶ ἀγαθός. Κι ἂν ἀκόμα ἐμεῖς παρασυρθήκαμε καὶ ἁμαρτήσαμε ἀπὸ ἀπερισκεψία, ἄς φροντίσουμε νὰ θεραπευθοῦμε μὲ τὴ μετάνοια. Ἄν πάλι, ὡς ἄνθρωποι παρασυρθήκαμε ἀπὸ κάποιο πάθος, ἄς μὴν ἀπελπιστοῦμε ἐντελῶς, ἀλλὰ γνωρίζοντας Ποιὸς Θεὸς μᾶς ἔχει προσκαλέσει καὶ ἔχοντας συναίσθηση τῆς κλήσης μας, ἄς ἀκούσουμε ἐκεῖνον πού λέει: «Μετανοεῖτε, γιατί ἔφτασε ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν» (Ματθ. 4, 17).

Δὲν ὄρισε τὴ μετάνοια σὰν φάρμακο γιὰ κάποια μονάχα ἁμαρτήματα, ἀποκλείοντας κάποια ἄλλα. Γιὰ κάθε εἶδος τραῦμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, γιὰ κάθε ἁμάρτημα πνευματικό, ὁ Μεγάλος Γιατρός τῶν ψυχῶν μας, μᾶς τὴν ἔχει, σὰν φάρμακο χαρίσει.

Ἄς ξεριζώσουμε λοιπὸν τὶς κακὲς συνήθειες τῆς ψυχῆς μας. Ἄντι γιὰ τοὺς καυστήρες ἄς μεταχειριστοῦμε τὸ φόβο

τοῦ Θεοῦ, μὲ τὸν ὁποῖο θὰ μπορέσουμε νὰ ἀντικρούσουμε ὅλες τὶς ἄστοχες ἐπιθυμίες πού φέρουν μέσα τους τὰ ἀγκάθια τῆς ἁμαρτίας. Ἄς ἀντιταχθοῦμε μὲ τὸ συνετὸ λογισμὸ, σὲ αὐτὰ πού μᾶς ὑπαγορεύουν οἱ φιλήδονοι λογισμοί, γιατί εἶναι γραμμμένο: «Νὰ γίνεσθε ἅγιοι, γιατί ἐγὼ εἶμαι ἅγιος» (Α' Πέτρ. α' 16).

Ἐτσι, μὲ τὴ Χάρη τοῦ Σωτῆρα μας Θεοῦ, θὰ ἐπιτύχουμε τὴν ἀφθαρτὴ ζωή.

Ὁ Κύριος γιὰ τὴν ἐπιστροφή καὶ τὴν εἰλικρινὴ μετάνοιά μας θὰ συγχωρέσει καὶ θὰ παραγράψει τὶς ἁμαρτίες μας, γιατί εἶναι ἐλεήμων καὶ εὐσπλαχνος.

Κι ἂν κάποιος ἀπὸ ἐκείνους, πού ἔχουν τὴν ἐντύπωση πὼς ἔχουν κοπιᾶσει περισσότερο στὴν ἄσκηση καὶ τὴν ἀρετή, γογγύσει, γιὰ τὴ μεγάλη εὐσπλαχνία τοῦ Δεσπότη Χριστοῦ, -- ἐπειδὴ τάχα ἐνῶ μπήκαμε στὴ δουλειά πολὺ ἀργά, μᾶς πληρώνει τὸ ἴδιο μὲ τοὺς πρώτους -- θὰ δώσει γιὰ μᾶς ἀπολογία ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Κύριος καὶ Δημιουργὸς καὶ θὰ πεῖ: «Φίλε, δὲν σὲ ἀδικῶ. Δὲν ἔχεις μαζί μου συμφωνήσει νὰ ἐργαστεῖς γιὰ ἓνα δηνάριο; Πάρε ὅ,τι ἔχουμε συμφωνήσει καὶ πήγαινε στὸ καλὸ. Ἐγὼ θέλω νὰ δώσω σὲ τοῦτον πού ἦρθε τελευταῖος στὴ δουλειά, ὅ,τι ἀκριβῶς ἔδωσα καὶ σὲ σένα τὸν πρώτο» (Ματθ. 20, 1314).

Ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι Ἐκεῖνος πού κρίνει καὶ δικαιοῦναι. Ποιὸς μπορεῖ νὰ βγεῖ μπροστὰ Του καὶ νὰ μᾶς καταδικάσει (Ρωμ. 8, 34);

Σ' Αὐτὸν ἀνήκει ἡ δόξα στοὺς αἰῶνες. Ἀμήν.



## Ἡ Πίστη Σώζει

Ἀπόσπασμα ἀπὸ ἄρθρο τοῦ κ. Μακαρίου Τηλλυρίδη Μητροπολίτου Κένυας καὶ Εἰρηνοπόλεως, τὸ ὁποῖο δημοσιεύεται στὸ 1<sup>ο</sup> τεῦχος τοῦ 2004 τῆς ἐφημερίδος «Ἐπάλληξ» πού ἐκδίδει ἡ συνώνυμος Πολιτιστικὴ καὶ Κοινωνικὴ Κίνηση

«Πάντα σημειῶνω τὶς σκέψεις μου ὕστερα ἀπὸ μία «Π» συνεχῆ καὶ μακρὰ περιοδεία στὶς διάφορες ἐπαρχίες τῆς Μητροπόλεως Κένυας καὶ Εἰρηνοπόλεως. Ἀπόψε βρίσκομαι ἀκόμα ἐν κινήσει. Δὲν ὑπάρχει ἠλεκτρικὸ ρεῦμα. Μὲ τὸ λιγοστὸ φῶς πού ἐκπέμπει ἓνα μικρὸ κερί κάθομαι καὶ σκέφτομαι. Συλλογίζομαι πόσο σύντομος εἶναι ὁ ἐπίγειος βίος μας καὶ πόσα ἄστοχα παραβλέπουμε καὶ δὲν θέλουμε νὰ δεχτοῦμε τὴν πραγματικότητα. Ἡ εἰκόνα τῆς ζωῆς μας ἐδῶ στὸν ἄωρο τῆς ἱεραποστολῆς εἶναι μία συνεχῆς μαρτυρία πού συνοδεύεται ἀπὸ ἓνα μαρτύριο πού δὲν ἔχει ὄρια καὶ τέλος».

Ὁ διαπρεπὴς Ἱεράρχης ἀναφέρεται στὴ συνέχεια στὴν περίπτωση ἐνὸς μουσουλμάνου, ὁ ὁποῖος πάσχων ἀπὸ καρκίνου, ἀνέμενε τὸν θάνατο, ὅταν καλὴ του τύχη πέρασε ἀπὸ τὸ νοσοκομεῖο ὅπου νοσηλεύεταν, ἓνας ὀρθόδοξος ἱερέας γιὰ νὰ διαβάσει εὐχὲς σὲ παρακείμενο ὀρθόδοξο.

«Οἱ συγγενεῖς τοῦ μουσουλμάνου ἀπελπισμένοι ζήτησαν ἀπὸ τὸν ἱερέα νὰ προσευχηθεῖ γιὰ τὸν ἐτοιμοθάνατο. Ὁ ἱερέας τὸ ἔπραξε καὶ ὦ τοῦ θαύματος! Ἐκεῖ πού περιμέναν

τὸ θάνατο, ὁ κύριος αὐτὸς θεραπεύεται, βρίσκει τὶς δυνάμεις του καὶ ἀφήνει τοὺς πάντες σὲ ἐκπληξη. Ὁ καρκίνος πού εἶχε ἦταν σὲ προχωρημένο στάδιο. Κι ὁμως ἡ πίστη του τὸν ἔσωσε. Κανένας ἐκεῖνη τὴν ὥρα δὲν γνῶριζε ποῖο ἦταν τὸ σχέδιο τοῦ Θεοῦ, τί ἀποκαλυπτικά σημεῖα τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ Θεοῦ θὰ ἐκδηλώνονταν. Ἀσθενὴς καὶ συγγενεῖς φεύγουν ἀπὸ τὸ νοσοκομεῖο. Ζητοῦν νὰ μάθουν τί εἶδους θρησκεία ἦταν αὐτὴ πού με μία προσευχὴ καὶ τὸ σταύρωμα ἀναστήθηκε. Ἔμαθαν γιὰ τὴν ὀρθοδοξία, ἄκουσαν γιὰ τὰ πολλαπλά θαύματα πού ἐπιτελοῦνται, ζήτησαν πληροφορίες καὶ λεπτομέρειες.»

Ἡ συνέχεια ὄχι ἀπλὰ ἐνδιαφέρουσα, ὄχι συγκινητική, ἀλλὰ πράγματι συγκλονιστική, ἂν λάβουμε ὑπόψη ὅτι ὕστερα ἀπὸ βαθειὰ σκέψη, ἐσωτερικὴ ἀπόφαση καὶ προετοιμασία, βαπτίστηκαν ὄχι μόνον ὁ πρῶν ἀσθενὴς μουσουλμᾶνος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλα τὰ μέλη τῆς οἰκογενείας του, στὸ ποτάμι τοῦ χωριοῦ τους.

Καὶ συνεχίζει ὁ γράφων στὸ ἄρθρο του στὴν ἐφημερίδα «Ἐπάλξεις».

«Ἐτσι, λοιπόν, μέσα σ' αὐτὸν τὸν χρόνο αὐξήθηκε ἡ νέα κοινότητα τῶν Ὀρθοδόξων. Ὁ ἱερέας τῆς κοινότητας μαζί με τὸ ἐπιτελεῖο του δραστηριοποιήθηκαν σὲ τέτοιο βαθμό, ὥστε με τὴν οικονομικὴ ἐνίσχυση τοῦ πρῶν μουσουλμᾶνου νὰ κτισθεῖ ἓνας ναὸς με λάσπη ἀφιερωμένος στὸν Ἅγιο Μωυσὴ τὸν Αἰθίοπα. Καὶ ὄχι μόνον αὐτό. Τέτοιοις ἦταν ὁ ζήλος καὶ ἡ πίστη τῶν πρῶν μουσουλμᾶνων, ὥστε μέσα σ' αὐτὸ τὸ διάστημα ἔμαθαν νὰ ψάλλουν τὸν ὄρθρο καὶ τὴν θεία λειτουργία ἀπ' ἔξω (ἀπὸ στήθους) στὰ Σουαχίλι. Τόσος ἦταν ὁ πόθος τους! Ὅταν ἔφθασα ὕστερα ἀπὸ ἓνα χρόνο, ἀντίκρισα τὸν ναὸ καμωμένο ἀπὸ λάσπη - ἀκόμα περισσότερο ἔδειχναν ὅτι ἡ πίστη τους δὲν ἦταν τυπικὴ ἀλλὰ οὐσιαστικὴ. Δὲν εἶναι καὶ λίγο πράγμα μέσα σ' ἓνα χρόνο νὰ βρίσκει κανεὶς μία ὀργανωμένη ὀρθόδοξη ἐνορία με τὸσους πιστοὺς καὶ τόση ζωντάνια».



## Ὁ Τελευταῖος Ἄγγελος Τῆς Σμύρνης

*Τοῦ π. Ἀθανασίου Γιουσιᾶ, ἀπὸ τὴν εἰσαγωγὴ τοῦ βιβλίου «Ὁ Τελευταῖος Ἄγγελος Τῆς Σμύρνης», πού διαπραγματεύεται τὴν προσωπικότητα τοῦ Ἁγίου Χρυσοστόμου Σμύρνης (ΠΗΓΗ: Ἱστοσελίδες τῆς Ἐνοριακῆς Κοινότητος Ἁγίου Θεράποντα, Μυτιλήνης, <http://www.aegean.gr/agios-therapontas/>).*

**Σ**τὴν Ἀνατολὴ εἶναι οἱ ρίζες μας! Ἡ Πόλη τῶν ὄνείρων μας, ἡ Βασιλεύουσα, οἱ Κυδωνίες, ἡ Πέργαμος, τὰ Μοσχονήσια, ἡ Ἐφεσος, ἡ Καππαδοκία, ὁ Πόντος... Στὴν Ἀνατολὴ εἶναι τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸ μας Πατριαρχεῖο, ἡ Ἁγία-Σοφία... Στὴν Ἀνατολὴ εἶναι οἱ ἐλεύθερες πολιορκημένες πολιτείες! Στὴν Ἀνατολὴ εἶναι οἱ τόποι οἱ ποτισμένοι με τὸν ἰδρώτα τοῦ Ἑλληνα, με τὸ δάκρυ τοῦ ἀσκητῆ καὶ με τὰ αἵματα τῶν ἁγίων! Ἡ Ἀνατολὴ ἦταν Ὀρθόδοξη, ἦταν ἡ κοιτίδα τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ. Οἱ περιοδεῖες τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Παύλου καὶ ὄχι μόνον, οἱ Ἐπιστολές του, ὁ τάφος τοῦ Εὐαγγελιστῆ Ἰωάννη, οἱ ἑπτὰ Οἰκουμενικὲς Σύνοδοι

τὸ ἐπιβεβαιώνουν. Οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας ἐκεῖ κήρυξαν κι ἀγωνίστηκαν... Ἐκεῖ πού τώρα βασιλεύει ἡ ἡμισέληνος, κάποτε θριάμβευε ὁ Τίμιος Σταυρός. Στὰ τιμημένα χῶματα τῆς Μικρασίας φιλοξενήθηκαν γιὰ 3.000 χρόνια Ἕλληνες κι ἐκεῖ ρίζωσαν καὶ μεγαλοῦργησαν. Κάθε στίχος τοῦ Ὀμήρου, κάθε πλάκα ἐπιτύμβια, κάθε σπασμένη κολώνα, κάθε ἄγαλμα καὶ ναὸς, κάθε μνημεῖο τῆς, βοοῦν στοὺς αἰῶνες τὴν ἑλληνικότητά της.

Τὶς ἀδικοχαμένες αὐτὲς πολιτείες δὲν τὶς ἀναπολῶ με τὴ μανία τοῦ κατακτητῆ ἢ τοῦ ἐθνικιστῆ, ἀλλὰ με τὴ λαχτᾶρα τοῦ πρόσφυγα καὶ με τὸν πόθο τοῦ φιλόπατρι. [...] Δυστυχῶς ὁμως, οἱ ἀδικοχαμένες πολιτείες τῆς Ἀνατολῆς μέχρι σήμερα παραμένουν σταυρωμένες. Ὁ λευκοφορεμένος ἄγγελος τῆς Ἀνάστασης δὲν ἔχει ἀκόμα ἀποκυλήσει τὴν ταφόπετρα τῆς σκλαβιάς! Ἡ γιὰ μὲν ἐμὲ καὶ μὲν αὐτὴν τόσοι καὶ τόσοι ἄλλοι πρόσφυγες, πέθανε με τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς στὰ ὁμορφα μέρη πού ἐγκατέλειψε. Οἱ χιλιάδες ἐθνομάρτυρες, πού ἄγρια θανατώθηκαν ἐκεῖνες τὶς δύσκολες μέρες τῆς Μικρασιατικῆς Τραγωδίας, περιμένουν τὴν ἀνθρώπινη δικαίωση...

Δὲ μεγάλωσα με παραμύθια πού εἶχαν γιὰ ἥρωες σταχοποῦτες καὶ κοκκινοσκουφίτσες. Τὰ «παραμύθια» πού μοῦ ἔλεγε ἡ Μοσχονησιώτισσα γιὰ μὲν ἦταν ἀληθινά. Ἦταν γεγονότα πολεμημένα ἀπὸ τὴν προσφυγιά. Ἦταν στιγμιότυπα ἀπὸ τοὺς δυὸ διωγμοὺς πού γνῶρισε. Συνοδεύονταν με δάκρυα... Ἦθελε μ' αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο νὰ μοῦ μεταδώσει τὸν πόνο τῆς, τὸ παράπονό τῆς, τὴν ἐλπίδα τοῦ γυρισμοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπη τῆς γιὰ τὸ σπίτι πού ἄφησε, γιὰ τὴν πολιτεία πού ἔχασε. Μοῦ ἔλεγε γιὰ τὸν πάπα-Ἀβέρκιο, πού τὸν σκότωσαν λίγο πιὸ ἔξω ἀπὸ τὰ Μοσχονήσια οἱ «Τουρκαλάδες, οἱ χαλαστάδες, τὰ σκυλιά», ὅπως χαρακτηριστικὰ τοὺς ὀνόμαζε. Μοῦ ἔλεγε γιὰ τὸν ἡγούμενο τῆς Παναγιάς τῆς Λέκας, τὸν πάπα-Προβέντζα, πού με τὴν ξιφολόγη τὸν θανάτωσαν καὶ τὸ σῶμα του τὸ ἔσυραν «ὡς τὸ Ἅγιασματ». Μοῦ ἔλεγε γιὰ τὸν πάπα-Τσαλικὴ, πού τὸν κρέμασαν ἀνάποδα στὰ κλαδιὰ μιᾶς ἐλιάς· γιὰ τὸν πρωτοσύγκελο, τὸν πάπα-Διονύση, πού τὸν ἔριξαν ζωντανὸ σ' ἓνα βαθὺ πηγάδι. Μοῦ ἔλεγε γιὰ τὸ Δεσπότη τους, τὸν Μοσχονησιῶν Ἀμβρόσιο, πού τοῦ πετάλωσαν τὰ πόδια καὶ τὸν κατατεμάχισαν. Μοῦ ἔλεγε ὅ,τι εἶχε ζήσει καὶ ὅ,τι εἶχε ἀκούσει. Κι ἔτσι ἀγάπησα τὴ Μικρασία, τὴν πατρίδα τοῦ πατέρα μου, τὴν πατρίδα τῆ δικῆ μου. Ὅταν μεγάλωσα, διάβασα παρόμοιες ἱστορίες κι ἔμαθα γιὰ τὸν Δεσπότη τοῦ Αἰβαλιοῦ, τῶν Κυδωνιῶν Γρηγόριο, πού τὸν ἔθαψαν ζωντανὸ μαζί μ' ἓνα πλῆθος κληρικῶν τῆς περιοχῆς του. Ἔμαθα γιὰ τὸν ἐπίσκοπο Ζήλων Εὐθύμιο, ἀπὸ τὰ Παράκοιλα τῆς Λέσβου, πού ὑπέκυψε στὸ θάνατο μετὰ ἀπὸ πολυῶδυνα μαρτύρια ἐπὶ 41, ἀκριβῶς, ἡμέρες. Ἔμαθα γιὰ τὸν πάπα-Μελέτιο ἀπὸ τὴ Σμύρνη, πού τὸν σταύρωσαν στὸν κορμὸ ἐνὸς πεύκου· γιὰ τὸ Μητροπολίτη Ἰκονίου Προκόπιο, γιὰ τὸν Μητροπολίτη Σμύρνης Χρυσόστομο...

[...] Σήμερα, χωρὶς νὰ ἔχω διαγράψει τίποτα ἀπὸ τὸ μυαλό μου, μυστικὰ καὶ ἀγαπητικὰ, ἀφήνοντας πάντα λίγα δάκρυα νὰ κυλήσουν προσεύχομαι: «*Κύριε, μὴ στήσης αὐτοὺς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν αὐτῆν*» (Πράξ. 7, 60).

## PASCHA IN DACHAU, 1945

*By Gleb Alexandrovitch Rabr - Prisoner R (Russian)*

This is my father's account of how he celebrated the feast in 1945.

The last transport of prisoners arrives from Buchenwald. Of the 5,000 originally destined for Dachau, I was among the 1,300 who had survived the trip. Many were shot, some starved to death, while others died of typhus... April 28th: I and my fellow prisoners can hear the bombardment of Munich taking place some 30 km from our concentration camp. As the sound of artillery approaches ever nearer from the west and the north, orders are given proscribing prisoners from leaving their barracks under any circumstances. SS soldiers patrol the camp on motorcycles as machine guns are directed at us from the watch-towers, which surround the camp.

April 29th: The booming sound of artillery has been joined by the staccato bursts of machine gun fire. Shells whistle over the camp from all directions. Suddenly white flags appear on the towers -- a sign of hope that the SS would surrender rather than shoot all prisoners and fight to the last man. Then, at about 6:00 p.m., a strange sound can be detected emanating from somewhere near the camp gate which swiftly increases in volume... Finally all 32,600 prisoners join in the cry as the first American soldiers appear just behind the wire fence of the camp. After a short while electric power is turned off, the gates open and the American GIs make their entrance. As they stare wide-eyed at our lot, half-starved as we are and suffering from typhus and dysentery, they appear more like fifteen-year-old boys than battle-weary soldiers...

An international committee of prisoners is formed to take over the administration of the camp. Food from SS-stores is put at the disposal of the camp kitchen. A US military unit also contributes some provision, thereby providing me with my first opportunity to taste American corn. By order of an American officer, radio-receivers are confiscated from "prominent Nazis" in the town of Dachau and distributed to the various national groups of prisoners. The news come in: Hitler has committed suicide, the Russians have taken Berlin, and German troops have surrendered in the South and in the North. But the fighting still rages in Austria and Czechoslovakia...

Naturally, I was ever cognizant of the fact that these momentous events were unfolding during Holy Week. But how could we mark it, other than through our silent, individual prayers? A fellow-prisoner and chief interpreter of the International prisoner's committee, Boris F., paid a visit to my typhus-infested barrack "Block 27" to inform me that efforts were underway in conjunction with the Yugoslav and Greek National Prisoner's Committees to arrange an Orthodox service for Easter day, May 6th.

There were Orthodox priests, deacons and a group of monks from Mount Athos among the prisoners. But there

were no vestments, no books whatsoever, no icons, no candles, no prosphoras, no wine... Efforts to acquire all these items from the Russian parish in Munich failed, as the Americans just could not locate anyone from that parish in the devastated city. Nevertheless, some of the problems could be solved: The approximately 400 Catholic priests detained in Dachau had been allowed to remain together in one barrack and recite mass every morning before going to work. They offered us Orthodox the use of their prayer room in "Block 26", which was just across the road from my own "block". The chapel was bare, save for a wooden table and a Czenstochowa icon of the Theotokos hanging on the wall above the table -- an icon which had originated in Constantinople and was later brought to Belz in Galicia, where it was subsequently taken from the Orthodox by a Polish king. When the Russian Army drove Napoleon's troops from Czenstochowa, however, the abbot of the Czenstochowa Monastery gave a copy of the icon to czar Alexander I, who placed it in the Kazan Cathedral in Saint-Petersburg where it was venerated until the Bolshevik seizure of power. A creative solution to the problem of the vestments was also found. New linen towels were taken from the hospital of our former SS-guards. When sewn together lengthwise, two towels formed an epitrichion and when sewn together at the ends they became an orarion. Red crosses, originally intended to be worn by the medical personnel of the SS-guards, were put on the towel-vestments.

On Easter Sunday, May 6th (April 23rd according to the Church calendar), which ominously fell that year on Saint George the Victory-Bearer's Day, Serbs, Greeks and Russians gathered at the Catholic Priests barrack. Although Russians comprised about 40 percent of the Dachau inmates, only a few managed to attend the service. By that time "repatriation officers" of the special "Smersh" units had arrived in Dachau by American military planes, and begun the process of erecting new lines of barbed wire for the purpose of isolating Soviet citizens from the rest of the prisoners, which was the first step in preparing them for their eventual forced repatriation. In the entire history of the Orthodox Church there has probably never been an Easter service like the one at Dachau in 1945. Greek and Serbian priests together with a Serbian deacon adorned the make-shift "vestments" over their blue and gray-striped prisoners uniforms. Then they began to chant, changing from Greek to Slavonic, and then back again to Greek. The Easter Canon, the Easter Sticheras -- everything was recited from memory. The Gospel -- "In the beginning was the Word" -- also from memory.

And finally, the Homily of Saint John Chrysostom -- also from memory. A young Greek monk from the Holy Mountain stood up in front of us and recited it with such infectious enthusiasm that we shall never forget him as long as we live. Saint John Chrysostom himself seemed to speak through him to us and to the rest of the world as well! Eighteen Orthodox priests and one deacon -- most of whom were Serbs, participated in this unforgettable service.

Like the sick man who had been lowered through the roof of a house and placed in front of the feet of Christ the Saviour, the Greek Archimandrite Meletios was carried on a stretcher into the chapel, where he remained prostrate for the duration of the service.

The priests who participated in the 1945 Dachau Easter service are commemorated at every Divine Service held in the Dachau Russian Orthodox Memorial Chapel, along with all Orthodox Christians, who lost their lives "at this place, or at another place of torture" ("na meste sem i v inykh mestakh mucheniya umuchennykh i ubiennykh"). The Dachau Resurrection-Chapel, which was constructed by a unit of the Russian Army's western group of Forces just before their departure from Germany in August, 1994, is an exact replica of a North-Russian "tent-domed" (Shatrovyie) church or chapel. Behind the altar-table of the chapel is a large icon depicting angels opening the gates of the Dachau concentration camp and Christ Himself leading the prisoners to freedom. Today I would like to take the opportunity to ask you, Orthodox Christians all over the world, to pass on the names of fellow Orthodox who were imprisoned and died here in Dachau or in other Nazi concentration camps so that we can include them in our prayers. Should you ever come to Germany, be sure to visit our Russian Chapel on the site of the former concentration camp in Dachau and pray for all those who died "at this place, or at another place of torture."

Khristos voskrese! Christos anesti! Christ has risen! Al Messieh Oahm!



## THE EXAMPLE OF ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

*From "The Life of Our Holy Father St. Maximus the Confessor," Boston: Holy Transfiguration, 1982, pp. 60-62.*

The life of Saint Maximus is also instructive for us. Saint Maximus, though only a simple monk, resisted and cut off communion with every patriarch, metropolitan, archbishop and bishop in the East because of their having been infected with the heresy of Monothelitism. During the first imprisonment of the Saint, the messengers from the Ecumenical Patriarch asked him,

"To which church do you belong? To that of Byzantium, of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, or Jerusalem? For all these churches, together with the provinces in subjection to them, are in unity. Therefore, if you also belong to the Catholic Church, enter into communion with us at once, lest fashioning for yourself some new and strange pathway, you fall into that which you do not even expect!"

To this the righteous man wisely replied, "Christ the Lord called that Church the Catholic Church which maintains the true and saving confession of the Faith. It was for this

confession that He called Peter blessed, and He declared that He would found His Church upon this confession. However, I wish to know the contents of your confession, on the basis of which all churches, as you say, have entered into communion. If it is not opposed to the truth, then neither will I be separated from it."

The confession which they were proposing to the Saint was not Orthodox, of course, and so he refused to comply with their coercions. Furthermore, they were lying about the See of Rome which, in fact, had remained Orthodox. Some time later, at his last interrogation by the Byzantine authorities, the following dialogue took place:

The Saint said, "They [the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Alexandria and all the other heretical bishops of the East] have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the local synod which took place recently in Rome. What Mysteries, then, can they perform? Or what spirit will descend upon those who are ordained by them?"

"Then you alone will be saved, and all others will perish?" they objected.

To this the Saint replied, "When all the people in Babylon were worshipping the golden idol, the Three Holy Children did not condemn anyone to perdition. They did not concern themselves with the doings of others, but took care only for themselves, lest they should fall away from true piety. In precisely the same way, when Daniel was cast into the lion's den, he did not condemn any of those who, fulfilling the law of Darius, did not wish to pray to God, but he kept in mind his own duty, and desired rather to die than to sin against his conscience by transgressing the Law of God. God forbid that I should condemn anyone or say that I alone am being saved! However, I shall sooner agree to die than to apostatize in any way from the true Faith and thereby suffer torments of conscience."

"But what will you do," inquired the envoys, "when the Romans are united to the Byzantines? Yesterday, indeed, two delegates arrived from Rome and tomorrow, the Lord's day, they will communicate the Holy Mysteries with the Patriarch."

The Saint replied, "Even if the whole universe holds communion with the Patriarch, I will not communicate with him. For I know from the writings of the holy Apostle Paul: the Holy Spirit declares that even the angels would be anathema if they should begin to preach another Gospel, introducing some new teaching."

As history has demonstrated, Saint Maximus -- who was only a simple monk and not even ordained -- and his two disciples were the ones who were Orthodox, and all those illustrious, famous and influential Patriarchs and Metropolitans whom the Saint had written against were the ones who were in heresy. When the Sixth Ecumenical Synod was finally convened, among those condemned for heresy were four Patriarchs of Constantinople, one Pope of Rome, one Patriarch of Alexandria, two Patriarchs of Antioch and a multitude of other Metropolitans, Archbishops and Bishops. During all those years, that one simple monk was right, and all those notable bishops were wrong!

## APOPHTHEGMS BY THE GOD-INSPIRED ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, PART 10

SOURCE: From the book "475 Apophthegms by the God-Inspired St. Isaac the Syrian," pp. 42-46, published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood.

### 28<sup>th</sup> Lesson

253. What good is life when it is away from God?
254. The power of the prayer (Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me the sinner) is great, especially when it is said with boldness.
255. When I suffer in the name of God, I have boldness with Him; He helps in everything and grants me whatever I request.
256. God allows temptations for: a) Those who struggle, so that their spiritual wealth may grow; b) those who are negligent, so that they may be guarded from their own fall; c) those who may be asleep, so that they can wake up; d) those who are far away from God, so that they may draw near to Him, and e) His friends, so that they may have boldness with God. It is as though through these bitter pills that God restores spiritual health to Christians.
257. As the atmospheric weather alters (from cold to warm), it is so for our soul as well; spiritual warfare is followed by divine grace. We must not get discouraged by changes in our spiritual state. During a time of spiritual joy, we must anticipate sorrow. Therefore, when divine grace overshadows you, you must never become prideful and high-minded.
258. Real humility, even when good deeds are absent, is capable of forgiving many sins. Good deeds, though, without humility, not only provide zero benefit, but are capable of causing great harm. As salt makes food tasty, so it is with humility and virtues. It is humility and only humility that is adequate to stand forthright in front of God and earn us eternal salvation.

### 29<sup>th</sup> Lesson

259. Repentance is a continual pleading towards God, with prayer and tears, for the forgiveness of our past sins. Repentance continues until we reach the future age, when there no longer exists a fear of spiritual change.
260. This world is a fight and a struggle. Let us not lose courage, despair and become neglectful; through the Prayer, we must plead for God's help!
261. Temptations constitute God's great gift to us, as long as we do not lose courage but instead gather the fruit of spiritual profit through our interaction with them.
262. Satan exercises great and violent temptations to those who are negligent hoping that they will lose courage and resign from spiritual struggle. If you do not destroy your sensitivity to senses for the love of God, you risk spiritual death!
263. God protects and covers the spiritually novice strugglers and does not allow them to fall into the hands of the demons because they do not know yet how to fight.
264. Satan does not initially engage the brave, valiant and zealous fighters but waits for when their zeal has cooled down.

265. The great offender (i.e., Satan) pursues the timid, faint-hearted and selfish people as if in a storm because they do not rely on divine help.

266. God does not permit the temptations of hunger, bodily illnesses, and dreadful visions unless it is for our spiritual benefit.

267. Pride drives away our Guardian Angel while prayer and humility always draw us near him, to help us and protect us.

268. Voluptuousness, comfort, and egotism are the reasons for the concession of our fall. Prayer, humility, struggles, and our Guardian Angel assist us in our salvation.

269. He who labors for his sins in this world wears out his hell and punishment.

### 30<sup>th</sup> Lesson

270. Every comfort is followed by hardship, and every hardship for God is followed by divine comfort. Disgust and grief follow pleasure.

271. Withdraw yourself from the world and you will realize its offensive odor. Abandon the causes of passions so you can be free of them.

272. The person who is incapable of winning the small battles will surely never win the big ones.

273. If we do not approach our Lord through prayer, the holy sacraments, and fear of God, we will by all means draw near Him through our Lord's *instruction*.

274. A good Christian preoccupies himself with the study of God's law day and night!

275. A monk is a person who, away from the world, prays to God hoping to inherit Paradise. His possessions are divine consolation and joy that arises from faith.

276. Prudent and wise is the person who drives away lustful thoughts through the Prayer.

277. Humble is he who accuses himself of something which he neither caused nor is it his fault. A humble person does not just withstand criticism by others; he accepts it with joy.

278. In the Kingdom of Heaven, everyone will rejoice in accordance with the grace that he received from this life and without paying attention to the measure of grace which others are experiencing. It is for this reason that he neither envies nor feels sorrow for the plentiful abundance of grace that another may be enjoying.

279. A person who is not spiritually healthy has no business teaching spirituality to others.

280. Withdrawing from people, frequent reception of Holy Communion, continuous prayers, and study of Holy Scriptures are necessary until the Holy Spirit conquers our soul.



Elder Sophrony (Sakharov) once said, to me "When a priest comes to you for confession, do not instruct him. Simply hear his confession and read the prayer over him. Then remove your epitrachelion, place it around his neck, kneel before him, and ask him to read the prayer over you. That is how we did it on the Holy Mountain."

Archimandrite Zacharias (Zacharou) of Essex

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## THE EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AND CHRISTIAN HOPE

*By Metropolitan Philaret*

The emotions of the human heart, and many other emotions, have a great significance for the Christian. For example, the elevated feelings of sympathy and antipathy, of mercy, compassion, etc., must be developed in the heart of the Orthodox Christian, if possible, from the very earliest years.

Alas, all too often this does not happen. Unfortunately, in many good Orthodox Christian families, life is arranged in such a way that the parents consciously guard their children from contact with human need, sorrow, heavy difficulties and trials. Such an excessive protection of children from sober reality brings only negative results. Children who have grown up under greenhouse conditions, separated from life, grow up soft, spoiled and not well-adjusted for life, often thick-skinned egoists, accustomed only to demanding and receiving, and not knowing how to yield, to serve or to be useful to others. Life can break such people cruelly, and sometimes punishes them unbearably, often from their early school years. It is necessary, therefore, for those who love their children to temper them. Above all, there must always be one definite Orthodox Christian aim set before both parents and children: that children, while growing and developing physically, must also grow and develop spiritually, that they may become better, kinder, more pious and more sympathetic.

In order to accomplish this, however, it is necessary to allow children to come into contact with people's needs and wants, and to give them the opportunity to help. Then the children

themselves will strive for goodness and truth; for everything that is pure, good and bright is especially near to the soul of the unspoiled child.

Those emotions about which we have spoken, including the highest of them -- mercy and compassion -- are met within all people. Speaking now of feelings of a purely Christian kind, we pause on the feeling of Christian hope. Christian hope can be defined as a sincere, vivid remembrance of God, inseparably tied with the assurance of His Heavenly love and help. A man who has such hope always and everywhere feels himself under the Father's protection, just as he everywhere and always sees the infinite vault of heaven above him in the physical world. Therefore, an Orthodox Christian who hopes in God will never come to despair, will never feel himself hopelessly alone. A situation can seem hopeless only to an unbeliever. A believer, one who hopes in God, knows His nearness to the sorrowing human heart and will find comfort, courage and help in Him.

Of course, the crown and summit of Christian hope is in the future. We Orthodox Christians know that our Symbol of Faith, in which all the basic truths of the Christian Faith are gathered, ends with the words, *I await (expect and earnestly long for) the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come, Amen.*

So a full realization of the bright Christian hope will arrive when life finally triumphs over death and God's truth over worldly untruth. Then every woe will be healed, for *God will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more, neither shall there be anguish nor grief nor pain any more... And eternal joy will be in their hands.* (Rev. 21:4; Isa. 35:10).

Here is the summit, crown and full realization of Orthodox Christian hope, and the triumph of those who, in this earthly life, were persecuted and oppressed and banished for Christ's truth.



# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

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## THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

By Archpriest P. Veletsky, St. Petersburg, 1874

What an exalted sight was presented by the ascent of our Lord Jesus Christ. There had been no such triumph since the beginning of the world. It started on earth and came to a completion in the heavens.

The description of this triumph on earth is written in the Gospel of St. Luke, who speaks of how our Lord, raising up his hands, blessed the apostles and other believers. Then, he stepped away from them and by His almighty power ascended to the heavens, to a cloud as if to a chariot of triumph, which lifted Him and hid Him from the eyes of the Apostles. This spectacle was so astonishing, in spite of the fact that the Apostles were accustomed to all the miracles of our Lord, and was so amazing that it is not known how long they would have remained standing and gazing after our ascended Lord, had not the angels instructed them and brought them back to themselves: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

But this was only the beginning of the triumph, and the complete and perfect one awaited Him in the heavens. And this is how the holy Prophet David describes it in Psalm 23:

Multitudes of angels accompanied Him and multitudes met him. The accompanying angels called to the awaiting ones, "lift up your gates, you princes, and the King of glory will enter..." The others

inquired, "Who is this King of Glory?" "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle," was the answer. It is the One Who defeated the world, sin and the devil. It is the new Adam who has destroyed the wall between heaven and earth erected by the old Adam. "Lift up your gates, you princes," and "be lifted up, you eternal doors," for they are no longer needed. From now on, the heavens shall be open so that the King of Glory can enter along with those believing in Him. "Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

When the Son of God reached above the heavens to the Throne of God of Sabaoth, then, this is how our Heavenly Father welcomed His Beloved Only-Begotten Son:

"Sit Thou at My Right hand..." (Psalm 101), and enter into the glory that You had of Me before the formation of the world, and of which You had to conceal for a time in the form of man. I give You all authority in heaven and on earth. Henceforth, I do not judge anyone, but give the whole judgment over to You. I subjugate all to be as the footstool of thy feet.

Great was the degradation, heavy was the Cross, cruel were the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ; but this is why God the Father elevated Him and gave him a name that is above all names: "That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (Phil. 2:10)

We have no greater honor than to carry the name of a Christian and to be disciples of the ascended Lord, because in the Ascension of our Lord is bounded all of our hope of receiving eternal salvation.

Christ our Saviour, in His God state had always been and is equal to God the Father and He, speaking in human terms, sat on the Throne of Glory even

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when He was bodily in the tomb, and His Spirit in hell as God. For whom then, is this magnificent reception arranged? Who is being escorted with such triumph by all the heavenly Hosts? Who is the Pre-Eternal Son of God who is ascending from the earth to the heavens, in our flesh which He assumed in the womb of the Ever-Virgin Mary? Our humanness is being seated on the throne of the Divinity!

What an honour and glory for us! The nature of man in Jesus Christ is elevated above the heavens, glorified above the cherubim and the seraphim, and since we "have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Subsequently, we are elevated and glorified with Christ.

If people pride themselves in their ancestry with famous heritage, then they should pride themselves even more so in knowing that our origin and heritage are from Him, Who sits at the right hand of our Heavenly Father. If the merits of forefathers give honour and respect to their descendants, then what honour and respect will we receive before the angels and mankind through Christ our Saviour? If famous names are flattering to us, then, how much more should the name of Christian be, which gives us the right of entry into the abode of the King of Heaven? Aside from this fact, we will be honoured by eventually inheriting eternal bliss.

He is our Firstborn, our King, our Head; and where the Firstborn is, there are His subjects; where the Head, there the members. As by his death on the Cross, Christ the Saviour abolished death; as by His Resurrection from the tomb our future resurrection; so, by his Ascension to the Heavens, he confirms that we with our bodies will pass from earth to heaven.

Great was the mercy of the Son of God – that He left the heavens and descended to earth for a short time to accomplish the great deed of the Redemption of mankind. It would have been sufficient for us if He returned to us our lost paradise and sufficient if He established an earthly kingdom for our well-being. Let us wonder at the abyss of God's mercy: He, instead of earthly paradise, establishes a Kingdom in the heav-

enly realm. "I go," He said to the Apostles, "to prepare a place for you and when I prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (St. John 14:3)

But Christ the Saviour said that in the home of His Father, there are many abodes. Not only for the Apostles is a place prepared in the heavenly Kingdom, but also for us: "If I will ascend from earth, I will draw all to Me."

The abodes of the Heavenly Father are so immense that they can accommodate all who believe. If we were not direct recipients of God's teaching of the heavenly Teacher and were not witnesses to the miracles of Christ, to His Resurrection from the tomb and Ascension from earth to heaven, the more beneficial it is to our faith, because "blessed are they that have not seen but believed." (St. John 20:29)

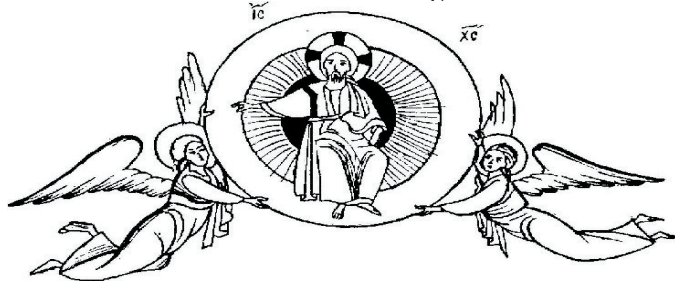
All we need is to show our faith through our deeds, "because faith without deeds is dead." And the pre-eminent children of the Church, similar to the Apostles, sacrificed all to prove the sanctity of their faith, to retain purity and chastity and to acquire salvation for themselves. They, as good soldiers of Christ, had to fight with the impurity of the idolaters, with the total depravity of their age, with the force and might of the powers and masters of the earth. Their good deeds were punished as criminal actions and a host of martyrs and confessors of Christ proved that from such an unequal struggle they always emerged victorious. We, on the contrary received "the yoke of Christ as easy and the burden light."

Triumphantly, we can confess our holy Faith, because the masters and powers of the earth have bent their knees before the Crucified Lord and exhibit a high example of honouring God and of righteousness. We do not need to hide in the deserts and caves to worship the Triune God. The holy churches are open for us all. Everywhere, the holy sacraments are being offered for the strengthening of our faith and the doctoring of our spiritual maladies. Everywhere, we meet spiritual pastors who are ready to direct us to the Truth and

show us the path to the Kingdom of Heaven. In other words, the Holy Church, like an all-caring mother, gives us all means for salvation. It only remains for us to utilize these means and it remains to show that we are Christians not only in name, but in actuality.

Let us prove that we are Disciples of Christ by keeping love amongst us, loving our fellow man, and chasing away all animosity and all disagreement. "In this, all shall understand that you are My disciples, if you have love amongst yourselves." Let us prove that we belong to Christ. Let us crucify our flesh with our passions and lusts. Let us not give way to sensual wishes, but save the purity of our soul and make our bodies temples of the living God. Let us cease from rage, anger, jealousy and other passions, "because if you are Christ's, you will crucify your flesh with its passions and lusts." Finally, as followers of Christ, we must take up our Cross and carry it through, not for some short segment of time, but throughout our whole life to our grave. Regardless of what unpleasantness befall us, we must endure them with full Christian patience for the sake of Christ. We must in all things submit our will to God's will. We must kiss God's hand, be it punishing or rewarding. If we co-suffer here with Christ, we will ascend and be glorified with Him.

And so, in celebrating the glorious Ascension of our Lord, let us remember now that our fatherland is not on earth, but in heaven and that life given to us here is for a short time. Let us utilize this short time to find eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.



### ON NOETIC PRAYER

The more the prayer unites us with Christ, the more it separates us from the devil -- and not only from the devil, but also from the spirit of the world, which engenders and sustains the passions.

The prayer's satan (i.e., adversary) is listlessness. Satan's satan is the desire for the prayer, the fervor of the heart. "Be fervent in spirit," says the apostle, "serving the Lord." (Rom.12:11) This fervor draws and retains grace for the one who prays, and it becomes light and joy and indescribable consolation for him, but to the demons it is fire and bitterness and persecution. When this grace comes, it collects the nous from its wandering and sweetens it with the mindfullness of God, healing it of all evil and unclean thoughts.

Selected from "Counsels from the Holy Mountain,"  
the Letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim

### ST. ARSENIOS BOKA (+1989)

Source: From the Greek Orthodox Publication "Ὁ Ὁσσιος Φιλόθεος τῆς Πάρου (Saint Philotheos of Paros)," Issue 9, Sept-Dec 2003, pg. 91, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood

St. Arsenios was born in 1910 in a small village in Romania by pious Orthodox parents, Joseph and Christina. When his mother was pregnant with little John (his baptismal name) she dreamed repeatedly that either the sun or the moon shone on her stomach. She thus often wondered what kind of a child was that would be born.

While St. Arsenios was young, his father passed away and his mother was forced to remarry. This second marriage troubled her son John immensely and he thus stayed away from home for a long time. He eventually joined the brotherhood of the St. Constantine Binkoveanou monastery whereby he patiently cultivated his spiritual side. He was enlightened by the Grace of the Holy Spirit and acquired the gift of foreseeing the future.

St. Arsenios became renowned for his abilities as a confessor and a spiritual guide. When he met a person, one felt that the Saint had the ability to enter and examine the depths of that person's soul. He was able to reveal your thoughts and many past sins or deeds. He would also know a person's name upon meeting them and without any prior knowledge. Once he was ordained and received the blessing to confess, he would frequently reveal the unconfessed sins (forgotten or not) to those who came to him, as well as things that would happen to them in the future.

He was extremely bothered and concerned about the many people he confessed who refused to change their life, selecting to continue satisfying their desires. St. Arsenios was fully aware that, in the Day of Judgment, he would be their guarantor for the salvation of their souls. He thus begged and pleaded with God to reveal to him the reason for which people refuse to abandon their sinful ways.

One day, while he was sitting in a chair within his garden staring at the mountain across from him, he observed that a huge dark cloud appeared on the mountaintop. There was great commotion and noise coming from within the cloud. Continuing to attentively stare at it, he suddenly observed that the cloud separated in two and at the very peak of the mountain there was a royal throne surrounded by fire. On the throne was seated the Enemy of mankind, Satan, surrounded by a plethora of demons. St. Arsenios was able to clearly follow what was transpiring. He thus hears the Evil One say:

"Which one of you is skillful and clever enough to come up with some kind of a cunning and wicked thought which we will whisper in the minds of people so that we can attract them and draw them to our side? In this way we can establish a kingdom that is greater than God's since there is so little time left..."

A demon then appeared who worshipped his leader all the way to the ground and said:

“Excellent leader of the darkness, I consider it proper to whisper into people’s ears that there is no God.”

Satan then said:

“Your wickedness is not the best because we can gain a greater number of souls in a different way. Let somebody else come up with another idea.”

A second one came and said:

“Excellent leader of the darkness, I suggest that we whisper to them that there is a God but there is no such thing as Heaven or Hell and that this life of theirs simply ends at their grave.”

Satan, after extensive contemplation, said:

“This wicked thought is also insufficient and will not enable us to win many souls. People will remember that Christ said, as He ascended into Heaven: *‘In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. [Jn 14:2-3]*’ The faith of people into these words is unfortunately strong enough to counteract our plans. People will continue to believe that He will reward all according to their life deeds. Let another one of you suggest something else.”

A third one then came up and after he worshipped his leader all the way to the ground, took the floor and said:

“Most excellent leader of the darkness, I propose that it is much better that we praise people for their faith in God, their belief in the existence of Paradise and Hell, their expectation for the Last Judgment. However and at the same time, let us whisper to them: *‘Do not rush into repentance. Let repentance be your deed during the latter part of your life. Death is still far away. For the time being, enjoy your life, satisfy all of your carnal desires because you have plenty of time left.’* Thus, while we conduct our alluring and magic works, they will grow old without realizing it and reach their life’s end before they can repent. Death will arrive suddenly and will find them unprepared and they will be ours forever.”

Satan then moved his head acknowledging his satisfaction. He grunted and squealed with devilish joy and with hasty

anxiety told them all: “Quickly, all of you go and do exactly as your colleague indicated.”

It is for this reason that people fulfill their Christian duties in a lackluster manner. The cunning demons, throughout their life, whisper to them in a tempting way regarding the joys of this world and people obey. They refuse to change their ways and continue to satisfy their desires and sinful nature, ignoring the advice of the Church regarding true repentance, even in their old age...

St. Arsenios foretold his end by informing many that he had three more Paschal seasons to celebrate and indeed, he fell asleep in the Lord three years later. He had foreseen the fall of the Communist establishment and the rise of the Romanian people against the atheist regime, and quickly after this prophecy he fell asleep in November 1989 (the Communist regime fell one month later, in December 1989). He has remained in the souls of many of his spiritual children, continuing to guide them from above.

There exists a miraculous event that attracts thousands of Christians to his grave site, at the Prislop women’s monastery. Even though the temperatures there can be extremely low, often reaching 20 degrees Celsius below zero, all of the flowers

that have grown on his grave neither wither nor freeze and die by the extreme temperatures but instead remain in full blossom. From winter to summer, the Saint’s grave remains full with blossomed, multi-colored fragrant flowers.

May the prayers of St. Arsenios, this notable, tireless and remarkable servant of God be with all of us sinners!



**The grave of St. Arsenios full of year-round blossomed, multi-colored and fragrant flowers**



Almsgiving above all else requires money, but even this shines with a brighter luster when the alms are given from our poverty. The widow who paid in the two mites was poorer than any human, but she outdid them all.

**Saint John Chrysostom**

## Γιατί Πρέπει Νά Θυμόμαστε Τὴν Ἄλωση

Κωνσταντῖνος Χολέβας, Πολιτικός Ἐπιστήμων

Πάνω ἀπὸ πεντακόσια πενήντα χρόνια πέρασαν ἀπὸ τὴν ἀπο-φράδα ἐκείνη ἡμέρα τῆς 29ης Μαΐου 1453. Τότε ποὺ ἀκούστηκε ἡ κραυγὴ «Ἐάλω ἡ Πόλις» καὶ ἡ Βασιλεύουσα, ἡ Πόλη τῶν Ἁγίων, τῶν Αὐτοκρατόρων καὶ τῶν θρύλων, πέρασε ὑπὸ τὴν κατοχὴ τοῦ Ὄθωμανοῦ δυνάστη. Ἔτσι ἄρχισε ἡ Τουρκοκρατία. Τὸ Γένος ἐπεβίωσε, ἀλλὰ ἡ Κωνσταντινούπολις καὶ ἡ Ἁγία Σοφία παραμένουν σὲ ξένα χέρια. Σήμερα τιμοῦμε τοὺς πεσόντες κατὰ τὴν πολιορκία καὶ κατὰ τὴν Ἄλωση, διαβάζουμε τοὺς θρήνους καὶ τοὺς θρύλους, συγκινούμεθα καὶ διδασκόμεθα. Διότι αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ ἀξία τῆς ιστορικῆς μνήμης. Νὰ ἀποτελεῖ μάθημα ἐς αἰεὶ γιὰ τὶς νεώτερες καὶ τὶς ἐπερχόμενες γενιές.

1) Πρέπει νὰ θυμόμαστε τὴν Ἄλωση γιὰ νὰ ἀποτίουμε ἓνα διαρκῆ καὶ μεγάλο φόρο τιμῆς στὸ Βυζαντινὸ κράτος, τὴν Ρωμανία ὅπως τὴν ἀναφέρουν τὰ κείμενα τῆς ἐποχῆς, τὸ ἐκχριστιανισθὲν ρωμαϊκὸ κράτος τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους, ὅπως τὸ χαρακτηρίζει ὁ νεώτερος βυζαντινολόγος Διονύσιος Ζακυθηνός. Ἡ Βυζαντινὴ Αὐτοκρατορία μὲ πρωτεύουσα τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη Νέα Ρώμη ἄντεξε ἐπὶ 11 αἰῶνες. Μετὰ τὴν ἄλωση ἀπὸ τοὺς Σταυροφόρους τὸ 1204 ἡ ἔδαφικὴ τῆς ἔκτασις καὶ τὸ σφρίγγος τῆς περιορίσθησαν σημαντικά. Παρέμεινε ὅμως καθ' ὅλην τὴν διάρκειά τοῦ βίου τῆς τὸ κράτος στὸ ὁποῖο πραγματοποιήθηκε ἡ ἐπιτυχὴς καὶ δημιουργικὴ συνάντησις Χριστιανισμοῦ καὶ Ἑλληνισμοῦ. Ἡ Ἑλληνορθόδοξη Παράδοσις ὑπῆρξε τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα αὐτῆς τῆς συναντήσεως καὶ τὸ Βυζάντιο τὴν διέδωσε μὲ εἰρηνικὸ τρόπο στοὺς γειτονικοὺς λαοὺς. Αὐτὴν τὴν ἱεραποστολικὴν δρᾶσι τῶν Βυζαντινῶν προγόνων μας καταδεικνύουν καὶ μαρτυροῦν οἱ πολιτισμοὶ τῶν σημερινῶν λαῶν τῆς Ἀνατολικῆς Εὐρώπης. Ὁ Ρῶσος Πατριάρχης Ἀλέξιος παραδέχθηκε, ὅταν βρέθηκε τὸ 1992 στὴν Ἀθήνα, ὅτι ἡ Ρωσία εἶναι πνευματικὸ τέκνο τοῦ ἑλληνοχριστιανικοῦ πολιτισμοῦ τοῦ Βυζαντίου. Ὁ Ρουμάνος ἱστορικὸς καὶ πολιτικὸς τοῦ 20οῦ αἰῶνος Νικολαί Γιόργκα χαρακτήρισε τὴν Μολδοβλαχία μετὰ τὴν Ἄλωση ὡς «τὸ Βυζάντιο μετὰ τὸ Βυζάντιο». Καὶ τὸ κυριλλικὸ ἑλληνογενὲς ἀλφάβητο ποὺ χρησιμοποιοῦν πολλοὶ σλαβικοὶ λαοὶ ἀποτελεῖ ἔμπρακτὴ ἐπιβίωσις τῆς ἀκτινοβολίας τοῦ Βυζαντινοῦ πολιτισμοῦ. Αὐτόν, λοιπόν, τὸν πολιτισμὸ πρέπει νὰ διδάσκουμε καὶ νὰ διδασκόμαστε ἐμεῖς οἱ σύγχρονοι Ἕλληνες.

2) Πρέπει νὰ θυμόμαστε τὴν Ἄλωση, διότι μέσα ἀπὸ τὶς διηγῆσεις τῶν ἱστορικῶν τῆς ἐποχῆς ξετυλίγεται ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Διάρκεια, ἡ διαχρονικὴ πορεία τῶν ἀξιῶν τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ. Ἡ συγκλονιστικὴ ὁμιλία τοῦ Κωνσταντῖνου Παλαιολόγου στίς 28 Μαΐου πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν τελικὴ ἐπίθεσι τῶν Ὄθωμανῶν μᾶς διδάσκει γιὰ τὴν ἀγωνιζόμενα: Γιὰ τὴν Πίστιν, γιὰ τὴν

Πατρίδα, γιὰ τοὺς συγγενεῖς μας. Προσθέτει καὶ τὸν βασιλέα, διότι ἐκεῖνο ἦταν τὸ πολίτευμα τῆς ἐποχῆς. Ὅμως τὸ τρίπτυχο Πίστις, Πατρίδα, συγγενεῖς, ποὺ ἀναφέρει ὁ τελευταῖος Αὐτοκράτορας, μᾶς συνδέει μὲ τὸν ὄρκο τῶν ἀρχαίων Ἀθηναίων Ἐφήβων καὶ μὲ τὸν παιᾶνα τῶν Σαλαμινομάχων, τὸ «ἴτε παῖδες Ἑλλήνων...» καὶ φθάνει αὐτὴ ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Διάρκεια μέχρι τὴν προκήρυξι τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου Ὑψηλάντη, ποὺ ἔγραφε τὸν Φεβρουάριον τοῦ 1821 «Μάχου ὑπὲρ Πίστεως καὶ Πατρίδος», καὶ μέχρι τὰ λόγια τοῦ Κολοκοτρώνη πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὲς τοῦ πρώτου Γυμνασίου τῆς ἐλευθέρου πλέον Ἀθήνας: «Ὅταν πιάσαμε τ' ἄρματα, εἶπαμε πρώτα ὑπὲρ Πίστεως καὶ ὕστερα ὑπὲρ Πατρίδος». Αὐτὲς εἶναι οἱ διαχρονικὲς ἀξίες τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ. Αὐτὸς ὁ ἠθικὸς δεσμὸς ἐνώνει τὸν Παλαιολόγο μὲ τοὺς Σαλαμινομάχους καὶ μὲ τὸν Κολοκοτρώνη καὶ μὲ τὸ 1940. Μαχόμεθα γιὰ τὴν Πίστιν, τὴν Πατρίδα, τὴν Οἰκογένειαν. Ὅσο κι ἂν κάποιοι μᾶς χαρακτηρίζουν...ἀναχρονιστικοὺς. Τιμῶντας τὴν μνήμη τῶν προδρόμων καὶ τῶν μαρτύρων τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Διάρκειας ἐμεῖς γι' αὐτὰ θὰ συνεχίζουμε νὰ ἀγωνιζόμενα!

3) Θυμόμαστε τὰ γεγονότα τῆς ἐποχῆς πρὶν καὶ γύρω ἀπὸ τὴν Ἄλωση, διότι μᾶς διδάσκουν τὴν πολυτιμὴ συμβολὴ τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας μας στὴν ἐπιβίωσις τοῦ Γένους μας. Λίγες δεκαετίες πρὸ τῆς Ἀλώσεως εἶχαμε μία ἔντονη καὶ αὐταρχικὴ παρέμβασις τῆς τότε Πολιτείας πρὸς τὴν Ἐκκλησία. Ἡ αὐτοκρατορικὴ ἐξουσία πίστεψε - φεῦ! - ὅτι ἂν ὑπογράψουμε τὴν ὑποταγὴ τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας στὸν Πάπα, θὰ ἔχουμε μεγάλη βοήθεια ἀπὸ τὴν Δύση κατὰ τῶν

Ὄθωμανῶν. Τὸ 1438-39 στὴν Φερράρα καὶ στὴν Φλωρεντία σύρθησαν μὲ πιέσεις καὶ ἐξευτελισμοὺς οἱ ἐκκλησιαστικοὶ ἡγέτες στὴν ὑπογραφή τῆς ψευδοενώσεως τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν. Ὁ Μάρκος ὁ Εὐγενικός, Ἐπίσκοπος Ἐφέσου, ἀρνήθηκε νὰ ὑπογράψῃ καὶ ἔσωσε τὴν τιμὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Προσέξτε: Δὲν ἀρνήθηκε νὰ συζητήσῃ, διότι ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία δὲν ἀρνεῖται τὸν διάλογο. Ἀρνεῖται τὴν ὑποταγὴ. Καὶ ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς ποὺ ὑπέγραψαν μία μεγάλη μορφή ἀπέσυρε τὴν ὑπογραφή τῆς μόλις ἐπέστρεψε στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη. Πρόκειται γιὰ τὸν Γεώργιο Σχολάριο, τὸν μετέπειτα Γεννάδιο, πρῶτο Πατριάρχη μετὰ τὴν Ἄλωση.

Ὁ λαὸς ἀκολούθησε τὸν Μάρκο καὶ τὸν Σχολάριο. Οἱ ἀνθροπικοὶ εἶχαν δίκαιον, διότι παρὰ τὴν ὑπογραφή τῆς ψευδοενώσεως τὰ καράβια τοῦ Πάπα δὲν φάνηκαν ποτὲ στὴν μαχόμενη Βασιλεύουσα. Ὁ Βρετανὸς ἱστορικὸς Στήβεν Ράνσιμαν στὸ περισπούδαστον ἔργον τοῦ «Ἡ Μεγάλῃ Ἐκκλησία ἐν Αἰχμαλωσίᾳ» δικαιώνει τοὺς ἀνθροπικοὺς λέγοντας ὅτι διέσωσαν τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ μόνον ἔτσι ἐπεβίωσε ὁ Ἑλληνισμὸς. Καὶ στὸ ἄλλο σπουδαῖον ἔργον τοῦ, τὴν «Ἄλωση τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως» διαμειβεῖται

**Ὡ παῖδες Ἑλλήνων,  
ἴτε ἐλευθεροῦτε πατρίδ'  
ἐλευθεροῦτε δὲ παῖδας,  
γυναίκας, θεῶν τε  
πατρῶν ἔδη, θήκας τε  
προγόνων  
νῦν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀγῶν.**

ὄλους τὸς ἐπικριτὲς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τοῦ μοναχισμοῦ τονίζοντας ὅτι στὰ θαλάσσια τείχη τῆς Βασιλεύουσας ἕναν ἀπὸ τοὺς πύργους τὸν ὑπερήσπιζαν Ἕλληνες μοναχοί.

4) Θυμόμαστε τὴν Ἄλωση, διότι ἡ Ἱστορία μᾶς διδάσκει ὅτι ὅταν οἱ λίγοι ἀποφασίσουν νὰ ἀντισταθοῦν κατὰ τῶν πολλῶν, μπορεῖ νὰ ἡττηθοῦν πρόσκαιρα, ἀλλὰ τελικὰ σὲ βάθος χρόνου κερδίζουν. Ἡ ἀντίσταση στὰ τείχη τῆς Βασιλεύουσας τῶν 5000 χιλιάδων Ἑλλήνων καὶ τῶν 2000 ξένων συμμάχων τοὺς ἔμεινε στὶς ψυχὲς τῶν ὑποδούλων ὡς τίτλος τιμῆς καὶ δέσμευση γιὰ νέους ἀγῶνες. Ἡ θυσία τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου Παλαιολόγου στὴ πύλη τοῦ Ρωμανοῦ ἔθεσε τὶς βάσεις γιὰ τὸ 1821. Τὰ δεκάδες κινήματα τῶν ὑποδούλων ἐτράφησαν ἀπὸ τοὺς θρύλους τοῦ Μαρμαρωμένου Βασιλιᾶ καὶ τῆς Κόκκινης Μηλιάς. Ἄν εἶχαν παραδοθεῖ τὴν 29η Μαΐου 1453, δὲν θὰ ὑπῆρχε ἀντίσταση καὶ Ἐθνεγερσία. Ἡ συνθηκολόγηση θὰ ἦταν ἀνεξίτηλη ντροπή. Ἐνῶ ἡ ἡρωϊκὴ ἄμυνα γέννησε τὴν ὑπομονή, τὴν ἐλπίδα, τὴν προσδοκία. Αὐτὴ τὴν ἐλπίδα ἐκφράζει καὶ ὁ Ποντιακὸς θρῆνος:

«...Ἡ Ρωμανία πέρασεν, ἡ Ρωμανία πάρθεν,

*Ἡ Ρωμανία κι ἂν πέρασεν ἀνθεῖ καὶ φέρει κι ἄλλο...»*

Ἄλλωστε καὶ ὁ Θ. Κολοκοτρώνης ἔλεγε πρὸς τοὺς ξένους συνομιλητὲς του: «Ὁ βασιλεὺς μας συνθήκην δὲν ἔκαμε, ἡ φρουρὰ του πολεμᾷ ἀκόμη καὶ τὰ φρούριά του ἀντιστέκονται». Καὶ ἐξηγοῦσε ὅτι ἀναφερόταν στὸν Κωνσταντῖνο Παλαιολόγο, στοὺς κλεφταρματολοῦς, στὸ Σοῦλι καὶ στὴν Μάνη. Οἱ πεσόντες κατὰ τὴν Ἄλωση μᾶς δώρησαν τὸ δικαίωμα στὴν Μεγάλῃ Ἰδέα. Καὶ χωρὶς Μεγάλες Ἰδέες τὰ Ἔθνη δὲν πᾶνε μπροστὰ.

5) Ἡ ἀντίσταση τῶν τελευταίων μαχητῶν τῆς Πόλεως καὶ τὸ «πάντες αὐτοπροαιρέτως ἀποθανοῦμεν καὶ οὐ φεισόμεθα τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν» ἐμπνέει ἔκτοτε τὰ ΟΧΙ τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ. Σήμερα ὀφείλουμε νὰ συνεχίζουμε νὰ ἀντιστεκόμαστε μὲ κάθε τρόπο. Οἱ σημερινὲς ἀλώσεις εἶναι μικρὲς καὶ καθημερινές. Ἐπομένως ὑποουλές καὶ ἐξίσου ἐπικίνδυνες. Ἡ ὑπὸ νόμηση τῆς γλώσσας μας, ἡ ἄγνοια τῆς ἱστορίας μας, ἡ ξενομανία, οἱ συκοφαντίες κατὰ τῆς Ἑλληνορθόδοξου Παραδόσεώς μας, οἱ ὑποχωρήσεις ἀπέναντι σὲ Τούρκους, Σκοπιανούς καὶ Ἀλβανούς, ὅλα αὐτὰ καὶ πολλὰ ἄλλα ἀποτελοῦν μικρὲς ἀλώσεις πὺ ἀπαιτοῦν γνώση, ἀντίσταση καὶ μαχητικότητα. Δὲν ἀρνούμαστε τὴν ἐπικοινωνία καὶ τὴν συνεργασία μὲ ἄλλους λαοὺς καὶ πολιτισμοὺς. Ὁ Ἑλληνισμὸς ποτὲ δὲν κλείστηκε στὸ καβούκι του. Θὰ ἀρνηθοῦμε ὅμως τὴν ἀφομοίωση, τὴν ἀλλοτριώση, τὶς γκρίζες ζῶνες στὰ ἐδάφη μας, στὰ πελάγη μας, στὴν Ταυτότητά μας καὶ στὶς ταυτότητές μας. Θὰ ἀγωνισθοῦμε μὲ ὄπλα πρωτίστως πνευματικὰ καὶ ἠθικά. Καὶ θὰ διδασκόμαστε ἀπὸ τὴν Παράδοση καὶ τὸ βίωμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας. Ἡ Ἄλωση καὶ οἱ μετέπειτα ἐξελίξεις μᾶς διδάσκουν ὅτι τελικὰ ἐπιβίωσαμε μέχρι σήμερα χάρις στὴν Ἐκκλησία μας. Διότι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Παράδοση εἶναι Σταυροαναστάσιμη. Μᾶς θυμίζει ὅτι μετὰ τὴν κάθε Σταύρωση τοῦ Γένους ἀκολουθεῖ ἡ Ἀνάσταση. Ἀρκεῖ νὰ τὸ πιστέψουμε!

## Ἡ Μητέρα: Τὸ Πιὸ Δυναμικὸ Χριστοαρχέ-τυπο Ἀγωγῆς

ΠΗΓΗ: Περιοδικὸ «ΠΡΟΣΒΑΣΗ», Ἰούλιος – Αὐγουστος 1998, γράφει ὁ. πρ. Σαράντης Σαράντου

Εἶναι πολυσυζητούμενο θέμα! Εἶναι κοινὴ διαπίστωση! Εἶναι κοινὸς παιδαγωγικὸς τόπος: Τὸ ἀρχέτυπο, τὸ πρότυπο, τὸ ἀρχετυπικὸ παιδαγωγικὸ πρόσωπο παίζει τὸν πρῶτο ρόλο στὸ πολύμοχθο ἔργο τῆς ἀγωγῆς τῶν νέων ἀνθρώπων. Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος ἰδιαίτερα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλοι οἱ ἅγιοι Πατέρες μας πὺ ἄσκησαν ἕνα τεράστιο ποιμαντικὸ λειτούργημα μέσα στὸν κόσμος, διαπίστωναν πάντοτε τὴ δυσχέρεια τῆς διαποιμάνσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ διὸ τῶν νέων, καὶ τὴν ἀνάγκη ἀληθινοῦ ἀρχέτυπου.

Ἡ προσωπικότητα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀποτελεῖται ἀπὸ φανερὲς ἐξωτερικὲς δημιουργικὲς συνιστώσες, ὅσο καὶ ἀπὸ κρυφὰ ἐσωτερικὰ ψυχοδυναμικὰ στοιχεῖα. Καὶ οἱ δυὸ παράγοντες πὺ ἀπαρτίζουν τὴν προσωπικότητα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, οἱ ἐξωτερικὲς ἰκανότητες καὶ τὰ ἐσωτερικὰ ψυχοδυναμικὰ στοιχεῖα διαμορφώνονται μὲ βάση τὰ πρῶτα ἀρχέτυπα ἀγωγῆς, καὶ διὸ τὸ πρῶτο πὺ εἶναι ἡ μητέρα.

Πρῶτο βασικότατο ἀρχέτυπο ἀγωγῆς εἶναι τὸ πρόσωπο τῆς μητέρας. Μὲ πόσο σεβασμὸ στεκόταν μπροστὰ στὴ μητέρα ὁ ἅγιος Γέροντας, ὁ π. Πορφύριος! Μὲ τί θαυμασμὸ παρακολουθοῦσε τὸ μυστήριό τῆς συλλήψεως τοῦ ἐμβρύου, τοῦ νέου ἀνθρώπου! Μὲ πόση χαρὰ ἐβλεπε μὲ τὰ χριστοδιακριτικότερα πνευματικὰ μάτια του νὰ μεγαλώνει καὶ νὰ ἀναπτύσσεται ὁ νέος ἄνθρωπος στὴ μητρικὴ κοιλιὰ!

Συμβούλευε τὶς νέες κοπέλλες, τὶς νέες ὑποψήφιες μητέρες, σὰν νὰ ἦταν ὁ πιὸ ἔμπειρος γιατρός. Ἐξεδήλωνε ὁ ἅγιος Γέροντας ὅλη τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ πατρικὴ ἀγάπη του στὶς γυναῖκες πὺ ἐγκυμονοῦσαν. Πίστευε ὅτι ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀγάπη καὶ ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ τρυφερότητα εἶναι ἀπαραίτητες προϋποθέσεις γιὰ νὰ φέρει εἰς πέρας ἐπάξια ἡ ἐγκυμονοῦσα τὸ θαυμαστὸ ἔργο τῆς «θεοσυνδημιουργίας», πὺ ὅμως εἶναι ἐπίπονο.

Ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀγάπη τοῦ Γέροντα ἀποτελοῦσε τὸ πρῶτιστο θεανθρώπινο ἀρχέτυπο ἀγωγῆς, πὺ βοηθοῦσε τὶς γυναῖκες νὰ γίνουν οὐσιαστικὰ μέτοχες στὸ ἔργο τῆς δημιουργίας τοῦ Τριαδικοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὅταν ἡ γυναῖκα νοιώσει τὴν πρῶτη καὶ βασικὴ ἀποστολὴ της, ὅταν ὑπακούσει στὶς βαθύτατες καὶ ἐσώτατες ἐφέσεις τῆς καρδιάς της, ὅταν κατανοήσει ὅτι τὸ πολυτιμότερο χάρισμά της εἶναι ἡ πραγμάτωση τῆς «Θεολειτουργίας» τῆς μητρότητας, τότε καταξιώνεται ὅλη ἡ ὑπαρξὴ της. Ὅλο τὸ θεϊκὸ μεγαλεῖο τῆς δημιουργίας τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδος τελεσιουργεῖται στὰ σπλάχνα της. Τότε γίνεται τὸ πιὸ πανευτυχὲς πλάσμα ὅλης τῆς κτίσεως. Τότε χαίρεται μὲ τὴ μεγαλύτερη χαρὰ τῆς μεγαλύτερης δημιουργίας, τῆς πραγματικῆς συμμετοχῆς της στὸ ἔργο τῆς δημιουργίας ἐνὸς νέου ἀνθρώπου μὲ ἀσύλληπτες καὶ ὑπερχρονικὲς προοπτικὲς.

Ὁ ἅγιος Γέροντας, ὁ π. Πορφύριος, εἶχε φτάσει στὰ πολυπόθητα γιὰ κάθε συνειδητὸ ἀγωνιζόμενο χριστιανὸ μέτρα τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ἀπαθείας. Καμμιά σκιά αἰσθησιασμοῦ ἀσφαλῶς δὲν μπορούσε νὰ μειώσει τὸ θαῦμα τῆς κυοφορίας ποὺ παρακολουθοῦσε μὲ τὰ θεοφώτιστα μάτια του νὰ ἐπιτελεῖται στὰ σπλάχνα τῶν πνευματικῶν του παιδιῶν, τῶν νέων μητέρων. Τίς εὐλογοῦσε καὶ θερμότατα εὐχόταν νὰ διακονοῦν οἱ νέες μητέρες σ' αὐτὸ τὸ θεαρεστότατο διακόνημα μὲ ὑπακοή ἀρχοντική καὶ μὲ χαρὰ μεγάλωψυχη. Τὸ ἀρχέτυπο τοῦ ἁγίου πνευματικοῦ πατέρα, ὡς εἰκόνος Χριστοῦ, λειτουργοῦσε χριστοδυναμικὰ στὶς ψυχές καὶ στὰ σώματα τῶν νέων μητέρων. Ὅλες οἱ σωματικὲς δυνάμεις τῶν εὐλογημένων ἀπὸ τὸν Γέροντα ἐγκυμονουσῶν ἐξελίσσονταν χαρισματικὰ μέχρι τῶν ὀριακῶν ὥρων τοῦ τοκετοῦ καὶ τῆς γεννήσεως τοῦ νέου παιδιοῦ. Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλα τὰ ψυχοδυναμικὰ ἀναπτύσσονταν ἔτσι, ὥστε νὰ ἀντέχουν στὶς ποικίλες δοκιμασίες τῆς ἐγκυμοσύνης καὶ τῶν ὠδίνων τοῦ τοκετοῦ.

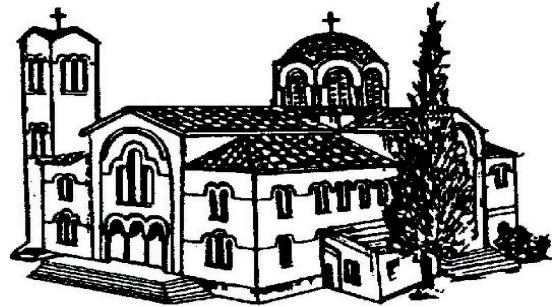
Συμβούλευε ὁ Γέροντας τίς ἐγκυμονοῦσες νὰ ἀποβάλουν κάθε σκοτεινὸ λογισμό, κάθε μελαγχολικὸ καὶ ἀπαισιόδοξο αἶσθημα. Νὰ μάθουν προσεκτικὰ νὰ κνηγοῦν τὸν φόβο, τὴν ἀγωνία καὶ κάθε ἀντιπάθεια ποὺ δηλητηριάζει τίς σχέσεις τους. Ἦθελε ὁ Γέροντας οἱ ἐγκυμονοῦσες νὰ λένε τὴν εὐχή τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας, νὰ ἀκοῦνε Βυζαντινὴ μουσική, νὰ ἔχουν ἐπαφή μὲ τὸ ὁμορφο φυσικὸ περιβάλλον, νὰ δημιουργοῦν εὐχάριστες πνευματικὲς συζητήσεις μὲ τοὺς γύρω τους καί, τὸ κυριώτερο, ἀρμονικὲς σχέσεις μὲ τοὺς συντρόφους τους. Συνιστοῦσε ἀκόμα ὁ Γέροντας νὰ μιλοῦν στὸ ἔμβρυο καὶ νὰ δείχνουν ἐνδιαφέρον χαϊδεύοντάς το ἔστω καὶ πάνω ἀπὸ τὰ τοιχώματα τῆς κοιλιᾶς. Ἰσχυριζόταν ὁ ἅγιος θεοφώτιστος Γέροντας ὅτι τὸ ἔμβρυο, ὁ νέος ἄνθρωπος, εἰσπνέει τὸ εὐκρατο ψυχολογικὸ καὶ πνευματικὸ κλίμα τῆς μητέρας του. Τρέφεται ψυχικὰ καὶ πνευματικὰ ἀπὸ τὰ χριστοψυχικὰ καὶ τὰ χριστοπνευματικὰ βιώματα τῆς μητέρας του, ὅπως τρέφεται ἀπὸ τὸ αἷμα της, ἀπὸ τὸ σῶμα της.

Γι' αὐτὸ ὅλοι μας πρέπει νὰ προσέχουμε πάρα πολὺ τὴν ὑποψήφια νέα μητέρα. Ἀπὸ τὸν πιὸ κοντινὸ της, τὸν σύζυγο, μέχρι τὸ πιὸ ἀπόμακρο περιβάλλον της, ὅλοι μας θὰ πρέπει νὰ γίνουμε πιὸ διακριτικοί. Νὰ δείξουμε ζεστασιά στὴν ἐκκολαπτόμενη μητέρα καὶ στὸ κυοφορούμενο παιδάκι, γιὰ νὰ γεννηθεῖ ἀρτιμελὲς ἰσορροπημένο καὶ χαριτωμένο. Ὅλοι μας ἔχουμε εὐθύνη γιὰ τὴ συμπεριφορά μας πρὸς τὴν ἐγκυμονοῦσα καὶ πρὸς τὸ κυοφορούμενο.

Ἄν δὲν μετανοήσουμε γιὰ τὴν ἀψυχολόγητη καὶ ἀπάνθρωπη σύγχρονη συμπεριφορά μας πρὸς τὴν μητέρα καὶ τὸ κυοφορούμενο, μέσα στὴ σύγχρονη μισάνθρωπη ἐποχή μας -- ποὺ μισεῖ δηλαδὴ τὰ παιδιά --, ἀσφαλῶς ἄς μὴν περιμένουμε προκοπὴ ἀπὸ τὴ νεολαία μας. Ἰσορροπημένη καὶ προοδευτικὴ νεολαία ποτὲ κατ' οὐσίαν δὲν θὰ ὑπάρξει χωρὶς χαρισματικὸ χριστοαρχέτυπο μητέρας, ἢ ὅποια θὰ ποιήσει καὶ θὰ ὑφάνει, τοῦ Κυρίου συνεργοῦντος, τὴν ψυχολογία καὶ τὴν σάρκα τοῦ παιδιοῦ της δίνοντας τὸ

σῶμα της καὶ τὸ αἷμα τῆς καρδιάς της στὸ κυοφορούμενο καὶ μετέπειτα στὸ νεογέννητο καὶ ἀκόμα ἀργότερα στὸ ἀναπτυσσόμενο παλληκάρι της ἢ στὴν ἀναπτυσσόμενη θυγατέρα της.

Δόξα στὸν Τριαδικὸ Θεό, γιατί ὀλόκληρη ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία μας, ὡς ταμειοῦχος τῆς χάριτος τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδος, ἐγκυμονεῖ στὰ δικά της σπλάχνα -- στὰ ἀχραντα Μυστήρια -- τέτοιες μανάδες ποὺ μποροῦν «χριστοὑπεύθυνα» νὰ φέρουν στὸν ἑλλειμματικὸ μὲ ὑπογεννητικότητα κόσμο μας «χριστοεὔρωστα» καὶ «χριστοκαταξιούμενα» παιδιά.



## Ὁ Λόγος τῆς Δημιουργίας Ἀμαρτωλῶν Ἀνθρώπων

*Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου Δαμασκηνοῦ*

**Ἑρώτηση:** Γιατί ὁ Θεὸς δημιούργησε (ἂν καὶ γνώριζε ἐκ τῶν προτέρων) αὐτοὺς ποὺ ἐπρόκειτο νὰ ἀμαρτάνουν καὶ νὰ μὴ μετανοοῦν;

**Ἀπάντηση:** Ὁ Θεὸς ἀπὸ ἀγαθότητα δημιουργεῖ ἐκ τοῦ Ἀμηδενὸς τὰ δημιουργήματά Του καὶ εἶναι προγνώστης αὐτῶν ποὺ θὰ συμβοῦν. Ἄν βέβαια δὲν ἐπρόκειτο νὰ ὑπάρχουν, οὔτε θὰ ἐπρόκειτο νὰ εἶναι κακοὶ καὶ οὔτε θὰ τοὺς γνώριζε ἐκ τῶν προτέρων. Διότι ἡ γνώση ἀναφέρεται σ' αὐτὰ ποὺ ὑπάρχουν καὶ ἡ πρόγνωση ἀναφέρεται σ' αὐτὰ ποὺ ὅπωςδήποτε θὰ συμβοῦν, προηγεῖται δηλαδὴ ἡ ὑπαρξη καὶ μετὰ ἀκολουθεῖ ἡ καλὴ ἢ κακὴ ὑπαρξη. Ἄν ὅμως -- παρ' ὅλο ποὺ ἐπρόκειτο νὰ δημιουργηθοῦν χάρις στὴν ἀγαθότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ -- τοὺς ἐμπόδιζε νὰ δημιουργηθοῦν τὸ ὅτι ἐπρόκειτο νὰ γίνουν κακοὶ ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς δικῆς τους προαίρεσης, τότε τὸ κακὸ θὰ νικοῦσε τὴν ἀγαθότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ὁ Θεὸς λοιπὸν τὰ δημιουργεῖ ἀγαθὰ ὅλα ὅσα δημιουργεῖ, γίνεται δὲ ὁ καθένας καλὸς ἢ κακὸς ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς δικῆς του προαίρεσης. Λοιπὸν ἂν καὶ εἶπε ὁ Κύριος: «Συνέφερε τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκεῖνῳ, εἰ οὐκ ἐγεννήθη» [Ματθ. 26, 24], τὸ ἔλεγε ὄχι ἐπικρίνοντας τὴν δημιουργία του, ἀλλὰ τὴν κακία ποὺ προστέθηκε στὸ δημιούργημά Του ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς δικῆς του προαίρεσης καὶ ἀπερισκεψίας. Διότι ἡ ἀπερισκεψία τῆς γνώμης τοῦ ἀχρήστευσε τὴν εὐεργεσία τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ, ὅπως ἀκριβῶς ἂν κάποιος, ἀφοῦ δεχτεῖ πλοῦτο καὶ ἐξουσία ἀπὸ ἓναν βασιλιά, θὰ καταδυναστεύσει τὸν εὐεργέτη του, αὐτὸν ὁ βασιλιάς, ἀφοῦ τὸν ὑποτάξει ὅπως τοῦ ἀξίζει, θὰ τὸν τιμωρήσει, ἂν τὸν δεῖ νὰ παραμένει μέχρι τέλους στὴν ἐξουσία τοῦ τυράννου.

## ORTHODOXY IN THE WEST TODAY AND THE ROYAL PATH

By Fr. Alexey Young, from *Orthodox America*

**From the Editor:** *The subject article is an edited (due to its length) version of a wonderful paper titled "Our Orthodoxy and Its Future." We present a small section that is relevant to all Orthodox in America.*

In 1976 the late Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose) wrote the following: "Orthodox Christians live today in one of the great critical times in the history of Christ's Church. The enemy of man's salvation, the devil, attacks on all fronts and strives by all means not merely to divert believers from the path of salvation shown by the Church, but even to conquer the Church of Christ itself, despite the Saviour's promise (Matt. 16:18), and to convert the very Body of Christ into an organization preparing for the coming of his own chosen one, Antichrist, the great world-ruler of the last days."

Of course, we know that this attempt of Satan will fail. But the great question of our times for all Orthodox Christians to face is a momentous one: the Church will remain, but how many of us will still be in it, having withstood the devil's mighty attempts to draw us away from it? (The Orthodox Word, Sept.-Oct., 1976)

Regarding the extremes of the "right" and the "left," Fr. Seraphim (Rose) said that "zeal not according to knowledge" was simply "an excuse for pharisaic self-satisfaction, exclusivism, and distrust" of others (O.W., May-June, 1975) -- something to be avoided at all costs, and that it is the exact opposite of what Archbishop Averky called "being in step with the times." The future of Orthodoxy should belong to neither of these two extremes, neither of the right nor the left, for "holy zeal" is not extremism, it is simply true and authentic Orthodoxy.

In order to see Orthodoxy's future and its possibilities, we must know something about what is going on with Orthodox Christianity in both the East -- in the historic countries of our origin, especially in countries such as Greece and Russia -- and, most important, we must be fully aware of what's going on in the apostate West.

In the United States, in particular, there is a kind of broad "spectrum," from left to right. On the extreme right we have a relatively small number of Greek Old Calendarist groups. Many of these otherwise very sincere and pious believers often squabble among themselves, sometimes for good reason, sometimes not. Fr. Seraphim (Rose) called the extremist Greek Old Calendarists "exclusivists." Partly because of this, and partly because of the disagreements among themselves, in America they have been relatively ineffective at reaching the Western mind and soul, often presenting (perhaps without intending to do so) a very rigid and even haughty face to prospective inquirers into the Faith. In his opinion, these groups are not the future of Orthodoxy.

On the "left" we have several groups that follow the New Calendar and they have quite consciously accepted the principles of liturgical reform, innovationism and modernism. One of these groups, in particular, is anti-monastic, which means that it vigorously opposes traditional Orthodox spirituality; repeatedly there is a call for what is called "American Orthodoxy." Just exactly what this means, however, is difficult to say, but it is a contradiction in terms. America and her culture are by definition liberal, constantly changing and unstable, interested in keeping her citizens comfortable and entertained and distracted from spiritual realities and needs. America also embraces everything that is modern and fashionable. True Orthodoxy, on the other hand, is by nature conservative, stable, and unchanging, even reactionary, and concerned with eternal verities focused not on what is comfortable and perishable, but on the carrying of crosses as the only way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Some of these Orthodox groups are very open to missionary opportunities -- and in this sense they can be very creative -- but are they bringing new converts to authentic Orthodoxy or some kind of "Eastern Rite Protestantism"? A Church which more and more resembles the culture of the Anglican or Episcopal Church and is no longer Orthodox but something that is attractive on the outside, looking and smelling and sounding like the "real thing," but inside it is an empty shell, incapable of giving the abundant life our Savior promised in the Gospels.

The very fact that these modernist Orthodox are involved in liturgical reform and modernization -- which often means drastically shortening or even completely eliminating some of the services (and it also now means abolishing fasts and the churching of women after childbirth, it means the use of girl acolytes, and the tonsuring of female readers) -- all of this is already a very serious and dangerous attack on our holy Faith, and virtually no one is objecting, no one is criticizing, and no one has the courage to stand up and cry out, "The Emperor has no clothes!" Our Blessed Metropolitan Philaret of holy memory would speak out, were he with us today, just as he spoke out so courageously in his famous "Sorrowful Epistles" in the late 1960s. And our Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco would have spoken up, too. Decades ago he reminded us that we cannot and must not tamper with the Divine services because these "church services contain in themselves the fullness of the Church's dogmatic teachings and expound the path to salvation. They embody a priceless spiritual wealth. The more fully and properly they are done, the greater the benefit received by those who participate in them. Those clergymen who perform the services negligently and abbreviate them out of laziness are robbing their flock, denying it vital bread, and abducting from it a valuable treasure..." (quoted in "Liturgical Materials," by Archpriest Peter Perekrestov, p.1)

It is true that in some of these New Calendar Churches there

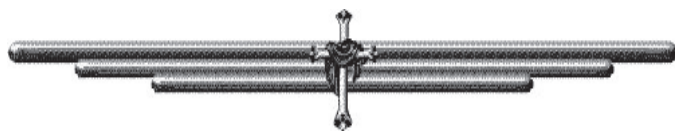


was an initial burst of missionary growth, some of it healthy, some not. But that time is now passing as many of their new faithful discover the lives of the saints, the traditional spirituality of the Church, and other things that they had not been given when they first converted to Orthodoxy. They now want something deeper, something capable of sustaining and nurturing a profound and lasting spiritual life. Many of these seekers find their way to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. So, clearly, the future of Orthodoxy -- in spite of appearances just a few years ago -- does not lie with the modernists. History shows that those who are too far to the right or to the left do not, in the end, carry the day and, ultimately, will not even survive. Is there another way, another -- "middle" -- path to the future of Orthodoxy? I believe that there is.

Between these two extremes of right and left is the "balance point," or what the Fathers of the Church themselves called "the Royal Path." As Fr. Seraphim (Rose) wrote: "This true Orthodox moderation is not to be confused with mere lukewarmness or indifference, or with any kind of compromise between political extremes....[It's emphasis is] constantly on the spiritual side of true Orthodoxy", which neither the extremists of the left or the right know or completely understand. As Fr. Seraphim wrote unequivocally: "The Russian Church Outside of Russia has been placed, by God's Providence, in a very favorable position for preserving the 'royal path'." He continued:

"Living in exile and poverty in a world that has not understood the suffering of her people, she [the Church Abroad] has focused her attention on preserving unchanged the faith which unites her people... Today," Fr. Seraphim continues, "more than at any other time...[we must struggle to preserve] Orthodox tradition in an age of apostasy, [for] the voice of true and uncompromising Orthodoxy could be heard throughout the world and have a profound effect on the future course of the Orthodox Churches... It is of critical importance, therefore, that this voice be actually one of true, that is, patristic Orthodoxy."

Fr. Seraphim also observed --and this is very important -- that "the 'royal path' of true Orthodoxy today is a mean that lies between the extremes of ecumenism and reformism on the one side, and a zeal not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2) on the other."



**D**uring the time of one's confession not only the person who makes his confession is judged, but the confessor as well. In the past, confessors were practical. They did not judge on the basis of the seriousness of a transgression, but rather on the intent. They did not concentrate so much on the sins being confessed as on thinking of how to treat the repentant person's soul.

From "An Athonite Gerontikon"

## HOW TO HONOR THOSE WHO HAVE DEPARTED THIS LIFE?

By Saint John Maximovitch (+1966)

**W**e often see relatives of the departed go to great lengths in arranging an elaborate funeral. Substantial sums are not infrequently spent on fancy tombstones. Relatives and friends spend lots of money on wreaths and flowers (even though the latter have to be removed from the coffin before it is closed, so as not to hasten the decomposition of the body). Some like to pay their respects to the departed and express their condolences by placing a notice in the newspaper, although such a public display reflects the shallowness of their feelings and often their insincerity. One who is truly grieved will not advertise it; a personal expression of sympathy carries more warmth.

Whatever such arrangements we make, the deceased is not going to benefit. For the dead body it is all the same whether it lies in a plain or a fancy coffin, in a lavish or a humble grave. It does not smell the fragrance of the flowers that are brought; it does not need feigned expressions of sympathy. The body will be given over to decay; the soul lives, but it no longer experiences any feelings through the sensory organs. Another life has begun for the soul, and it has other needs.

Here is what it needs and what we must do if we indeed love the departed and desire to bring him our gifts.

What, in fact, will bring comfort to the soul of the departed? First of all, sincere prayers on his behalf -- prayers at home and especially the prayers of the Church, joined with the Bloodless Sacrifice, i.e., commemoration at the Divine Liturgy.

Many appearances of the deceased and other visions attest to the tremendous benefit which the departed receive from prayers on their behalf and from offering the Bloodless Sacrifice in their name.

Another thing that brings them consolation is almsgiving and other charity in their name. To feed a hungry man in the name of the departed, to help an indigent is to do the same for the deceased.

Saint Athanasia (commemorated April 12), before she died, willed that for the forty days after her repose the poor be fed in memory of her. However, the sisters of the convent were lax and did so for only nine days. The Saint then appeared to them in the company of two angels and said, "Why did you forget my will? Know that charity and the prayers of a priest, offered on behalf of a soul through the course of forty days, stir up God's mercy: if the souls of the departed were sinful, the Lord absolves their sins; if they were righteous, those praying for them are rewarded with virtue." Especially nowadays, when it is so difficult for everyone, it is senseless to waste money on useless things when, in spending it on the poor, one can do two good deeds at once--benefiting the departed and also the recipient of the charity.

Not long ago, on the first-year anniversary of nun Maria's repose, in accordance with her will, donations were collected and a dinner for the needy was prepared on the grounds of

the Archbishop's residence. Some 150 people responded to the notice, and all were fed. A great good was thereby accomplished.

Even if one does not do good on such a big scale, if one feeds at least a few or even one hungry person, this is already something. To do this is not difficult; one has but to give a sum of money for a memorial repast to the Committee for Assistance to the Needy at the Archbishop's church, or to the House of Mercy or the soup kitchen. With prayer for the departed, food will be given to the poor. They will be satisfied physically, and the departed will have their fill spiritually.



## THE WORLD OR YOUR SOUL

*By Saint Theophan the Recluse (+1894)*

Everything related to the ordering of external life according to the spirit of new life can be called "leaving the world," or casting out the spirit of the world from the entire course of our lives. "I have chosen you out of the world," that is, He has taken us out of it. This is what the Lord said to the Apostles. Whoever seeks the Lord must remove himself from the world.

By "world" is meant everything passionate, vain or sinful that enters into personal, family and social life, and which becomes there the custom and rule. Therefore leaving the world does not mean running away from the family and society, but abandoning the morals, customs, rules, habits and demands that are entirely antithetical to the Spirit of Christ which has entered and ripens within us.

The vain, passion-soaked world is inevitably transmitted to our souls, and arouses or infuses passions. Just as one who walks near soot turns black, or as one who touches fire gets burned, so does the one who participates in worldly things become imbued with passions hateful to God.

From this it follows that leaving the world is nothing other than cleaning up your entire external life, removing from it everything passionate and replacing it with something pure, which will not disrupt the spiritual life, but rather aid it. Be it in family, personal or social life -- completely re-order your outward behavior... as the spirit of your new life requires it.

The world can still be with us in the heart, so long as we are simply living as we please, solely to gratify ourselves.

"How can I leave the world?" one may say. It is only frightening superficially, while inwardly leaving the world means entering paradise. What is more valuable -- the world or your soul, time or eternity? Give up the small and take the measureless in full measure.

## A LETTER OF ENCOURAGEMENT IN ILLNESS

*By Hieromonk David*



Dear B\_\_\_, This unfortunate illness is a huge stress to me, because it is not only about my personal suffering and me, but also about the feelings and care of many people around me. In my life I always tried to carry my sufferings on my own and put my trust only in God. For me it was difficult and unpleasant to burden others and I rarely asked anything from them.

But many offered and gave to me even without asking. Sister Julia and her goodness and sacrifice, mother Elena, the reposed father Lazar, brothers and sisters, monks and nuns, my Metropolitan, our whole large and honorable family let their backs carry part of my cross. And I thank them for that.

I truly understand that my life is not worth such efforts and the engagements of such a number of people. It is a whole industry that developed around my health and me.

It is astonishing and I am surprised. First, it bothers me to have such care and attention because it is undeserved. On the other hand I cannot but rejoice realizing that in this life I touched souls and met so many wonderful people who were always ready to help me.

Deep inside I was ready for death so much earlier because I believe in the Resurrection of the dead. But it seems that God wants to teach me in other ways and I have to bow before His holy will. Let it be as it is commanded. If God wants me still living in this world it is fine. But if He wants me to get rid of these earthly responsibilities, I am ready to move.

At this moment I am tranquil and calm. Inside me I feel victory over death, given by God, and it makes such a tremendous joy, the feeling of ontological freedom. It will be the will of the Holy Father and I am not afraid of His plans for me whatever they are. It would be much easier to know that my close ones will accept what my destination is and will not be afraid.

I tried shortly to describe the state I am in so you will have evidence of the invisible part of me which I think is even more important than the visible one. Let it be God's will. To Him is eternal glory. And to you all who care for me, especially my mother, sister, father, relatives, friends, spiritual brothers and sisters, eternal peace and thanks for all from sinful,

Hieromonk David

## APOPHTHEGMS BY ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, PART 11

*SOURCE: From the book "475 Apophthegms by the God-Inspired St. Isaac the Syrian," pp. 47-52, published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood.*

### 31<sup>st</sup> Lesson

281. When our soul abandons darkness, these things follow: a) Our heart burns and stays warm, as if on fire, night and day, b) The sweetness of our thoughts are such that we do not desire even food, and c) While we study Holy Scriptures or pray or preoccupy ourselves with something else, our tears are flowing non-stop. All these things though, we stand to lose if we fall victim to pride, negligence and indolence.

282. The prayer of a humble person, as it exits his lips, enters the Lord's ears.

283. Wine warms the body and God's word warms the mind.

284. Honest, hard work and humility make us gods on earth.

285. Warmth and grief of heart cannot co-exist. When warmth of heart is granted, her grief and mourning flee.

286. Blessed are those who have chosen to sail in the sea of sorrows for God's love. These people will quickly arrive to the harbor of God's kingdom.

287. It is better to experience death for God's love than to have life full of shame and indolence.

288. If your heart is pure, God will raise you to the heights of virtues and will grant you wisdom and perfection.

289. When you suffer from the darkness of thoughts, it is better that you go to sleep; darkness of thoughts is always followed by blasphemy.

290. Those who suffer from the illness of soul are in need of compassion and sympathy instead of reproach and scolding. When I lack compassion for my fellow man, I cause great harm to my soul.

291. God's wisdom is found in the leniency and meekness that endures the weaknesses of others. This is the accomplishment of brave souls.

292. It is impossible to completely avoid the temptations of dark thoughts and spiritual negligence. It is equally unlikely for us to be fully consoled in this life.

### 32<sup>nd</sup> Lesson

293. Foolish and silly zeal drives away the peacefulness of the soul. Whoever attempts to cure the faults of others through zeal causes great harm to the health of his soul.

294. A person whose soul is suffering in illness and insists on correcting others is like a blind man directing traffic.

295. He who prays while holding a grudge towards his fellow man is like a person who sows in the sea.

296. If I truly love God, then I humble myself with great simplicity.

297. A person that talks too much, even about spiritual things, is unworthy of holiness.

298. Repentance accompanied by a true change of mind is like a shattered earthen cask.

299. Prudence and idle talk, especially with members of the opposite sex, is like a lioness and a sheep in the same room.

300. Almsgiving is very helpful to the person who might deserve great punishment.

301. As we never compare a grain of sand with a large amount of gold, it is also so with God's justice; it can never be compared with His great mercy!

302. The person that has gained true humility has become as if dead towards the world and the passions of the flesh.

303. An envious person has the devil in his heart.

304. Humility and prudence guide us towards the salvation of our soul.

305. When present in places where many people gather, prefer silence and fear association with improper people.

306. Among all sacrifices, the most honorable in God's eyes is the body of a prudent person.

307. God loves a humble soul as much as He loves the Seraphim.

308. Oh love, blessed is he who has found you, the harbor of every joy!

309. Do not befriend those who love laughter and comedians and those who scorn others.

310. Frown on people who slander others.

311. You should never converse with a proud or envious person. If you must, talk with them very carefully.

### 33<sup>rd</sup> Lesson

312. It is truly a great virtue to pity the wicked and perform good deeds on behalf of sinful people, even more than for the righteous and just people.

313. Give almsgiving with a joyful face and always console and comfort those who are sorrowful.

314. The day that you pity an ill person, consider yourself a witness in Christ's name.

315. All of your deeds must exemplify a good and kind conscience. Excuses are not for the Christians!

316. When I slander someone, both I, as well as all of my deeds, are dead for that day. It is better to keep company with the lepers than with proud people.

317. Grieve and mourn with the sinful and be joyful with the repentant. Become friend to all and abstain from all.

318. Cover the sinner and consider everybody a saint.

319. If you are not saintly with your heart, become pure in body, i.e., stop committing sins of the flesh.

320. If you are not meek, you should at least pacify yourself.

321. The person that maintains constant memory of God is a temple of divine grace.

322. To desire good is in your nature; to perform good deeds, though, is of God.

323. Comfort and too much body rest harms only young people. Inattention to the senses, though, harms even the elderly.

324. We must not feel sorry when we err on something but rather when we insist on our wrongdoing.

325. Do not hate the sinner; hate the sin. Since you consider yourself righteous and just, where is your love towards the sinner?

326. "Dead to the world" is he who neither displays love towards those who honor him nor does he despise and scorn those who dishonor him. When I have the Jesus Prayer within me, I neither get angry nor do I fall victim to gluttony.

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## THE PASSION OF CHRIST: A GREEK ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE

*By Athena Georgotas, from TGA News, March 10, 2004*

The “passion” aroused by Mel Gibson’s version of the passion of Christ will continue for some time to evoke controversy and thought-provoking questions about our individual and collective experience of Christ’s suffering and His Resurrection.

No less does this movie challenge our thinking as Greek Orthodox Christians than it does the rest of the Judeo-Christian society in America. For the Greek Orthodox Christian, Gibson’s movie cannot but engender a sense of profound respect and pride for the richness with which our faith captures the mystical and spiritual dimensions of the crucifixion of Christ in the services of Holy Week preceding Easter. In contrast to the movie’s singular approach to the crucifixion, the liturgical experience of Greek Orthodox Easter weaves together the spiritual and temporal nature of the crucifixion with some of the deepest, most eloquent prose in the history of literature. Through these profound writings, composed by the brilliant minds of the Fathers of our Church, we are given the opportunity to experience the totality of the crucifixion; not just viscerally, but spiritually as well. It is a unique experience encompassing all five senses in the reality of this ultimate sacrifice of love.

Each year we embark upon a journey during Great and Holy Lent that takes us directly to the passion of Christ. With the

akolouthies of Lent, we are prepared to experience that which is fathomless. Who among us is not moved on Holy Thursday after the fifth gospel is read and the priest chants “Σήμερον κρεμάται ἐπὶ ξύλου ὁ ἐν ὕδασι τὴν γῆν κρεμάσας”/“Today is hung upon the Tree, He Who suspended the land in the midst of the waters” as we kneel to the procession of the cross that passes next to us? Who among us does not cry, feeling the anguish of the Virgin, when we sing “ὦ γλυκύ μου ἔαρ, γλυκύτατόν μου τέκνον, ποῦ ἔδυσσόν σου τὸ κάλλος”/“O my sweet spring time, my most beloved Child, whither has Thy beauty sunk down” during the Lamentation Services on Good Friday? How beautiful and penetrating are the words of our church Fathers, beyond anything that the visual could capture.

Perhaps it’s time for us to revisit the framework of our own faith when sifting through the array of public opinion about Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*. I can understand the ability of this movie to move some people in other Christian denominations that do not have this profound experience and are looking for that connection. I cannot understand how this movie could add anything to the experience of the Greek Orthodox Christian. Rather, it should illustrate to us the vibrancy that the Greek Orthodox Church has managed to keep alive over the centuries; a vibrancy that has been lost in the Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions. Although I respect Mr. Gibson’s noble efforts in this production, his attempt to recreate the final hours of Christ cannot quite match the experience that Greek Orthodox Christians are used to during Holy Week.

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)

Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

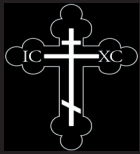
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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

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## WHAT WAS CHRIST WRITING ON THE GROUND?

By St. Nikolai Velimirovich (1880-1956)

*Bishop Nikolai, a gifted theologian combining a high level of erudition with the simplicity of a soul steeped in Christ-like love and humility, is often referred to as the "new Chrysostom" for his inspired preaching. As a spiritual father of the Serbian people, he constantly exhorted them to fulfill their calling as a nation: to serve Christ. During WWII he was imprisoned at the Dachau concentration camp. He later served as a hierarch here in America, where he died.*

Once, the All-loving Lord was sitting in front of the temple in Jerusalem, nurturing hungry hearts with His sweet teachings. *And all the people came unto Him* (John 8:2). The Lord spoke to the people about eternal bliss, about the never-ending joy of the righteous in the eternal homeland in the heavens. And the people delighted in His divine words. The bitterness of many disappointed souls and the hostility of many of the offended vanished like snow under the bright rays of the sun. Who knows how long this wonderful scene of peace and love between heaven and earth would have continued, had not something unexpected now occurred. The Messiah Who loves mankind never grew tired of teaching the people, and pious folk never grew weary of listening to such healing and wondrous wisdom.

But something frightening, savage, and cruel occurred. It originated as even now it often does, with Scribes and Pharisees. As we all know, the Scribes and Pharisees outwardly kept the law, but actually transgressed it. Our Lord frequently chastised them. For example, He said: *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! . . . ye . . . outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity* (Matt. 23:27, 28)

What did they do? Perhaps they had caught the leader of a band of brigands? Nothing of the sort. They forcibly brought forth an unfortunate sinful woman, *taken in the act of adultery*; brought her forth with triumphant boasting and crude and deafening cries. Having brought her before Christ, they cried: *Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou?* (John 8:4-5; cf. Lev. 20:10, Deut. 22:22).

The case was presented in this way by sinners, who denounced the sins of others and were adept at hiding their own shortcomings. The frightened crowd parted, making way for their elders. Some fled out of fear, because the Lord had been speaking of life and happiness, whereas these loud-mouths were clamoring for death.

It would have been appropriate to ask why these elders and guardians of the law did not stone the sinful woman themselves? Why had they brought her to Jesus? The law of Moses gave them the right to stone her. No one would have objected. Who protests, in our day, when the death sentence is pronounced over a criminal? Why did the Jewish elders bring this sinful woman to the Lord? Not to obtain a commutation of her sentence or clemency from Him! Anything but that! They brought her with a premeditated, fiendish plan to catch the Lord in words contradictory to the law, that they might accuse Him as well. They hoped with a single blow to do away with two lives, that of the guilty woman and that of Christ. *What sayest Thou?*

Why did they ask Him, when the law of Moses was clear? The Evangelist explains their intent in the following words: *This they said tempting Him that they might have to accuse Him* (John 8:6). They had lifted their hands up against Him once before to stone Him, but He had eluded

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them. But now they had found an opportunity to accomplish their desire. And it was there, before the Temple of Solomon, where the tablets of the commandments had been kept in the Ark of the Covenant, it was there that He, Christ, had to say something contrary to the law of Moses; then their goal would be attained. They would stone to death both Christ and the sinful woman. Far more eager were they to stone Him than her, just as they would later with even greater zeal ask Pilate to release the bandit Barabbas instead of Christ.

All of those present expected that one of two things would happen: either the Lord in His mercy, would release the sinful woman and thereby violate the law; or He would uphold the law, saying, *Do as it is written in the law*, and thereby break His own commandment of mercy and loving kindness. In the first instance He would be condemned to death; and in the second, He would become an object of mockery and derision.

When the tempters posed the question, "What sayest Thou?" a deathly silence fell: silence among the crowd which had gathered; silence among the judges of the sinful woman; silence and bated breath in the soul of the accused woman. A great silence falls in large circuses when the tamers of wild beasts bring forth tame lions and tigers and command them to perform various movements, to assume various positions and do tricks at their behest. But we see before us no tamer of wild animals, but the Tamer of men, a task significantly more difficult than the former. For it is often harder to tame those who have become wild on account of sin, than to tame those who are wild by nature. *What sayest Thou?* once more they pressed Him, burning with malice, their faces contorted.



**Christ Writing on the Ground**  
by Photios Kontoglou

Then the legislator of morality and human conduct *stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not* (John 8:6). What did the Lord write in the dust? The Evangelist maintains silence concerning this and does not write of it. It was too repulsive and vile to be written in the Book of Joy. However, this has been preserved in our Holy Orthodox tradition, and it is horrible. The Lord wrote something unexpected and startling for the elders, the accusers of the sinful woman. With His finger He disclosed their

secret iniquities. For these who point out others' sins of others were experts in concealing their own sins. But it is pointless to try to hide anything from the eyes of One Who sees all.

"M (eshulam) has stolen treasures from the temple," wrote the Lord's finger in the dust.

"A (sher) has committed adultery with his brother's wife;

"S (halum) has committed perjury;

"E (led) has struck his own father;

"A (marich) has committed sodomy;

"J (oel) has worshipped idols."

And so one statement after another was written in the dust by the awesome finger of the righteous Judge. And those to whom these words referred, bending down, read what was written, with inex-

pressible horror. They trembled from fright, and dared not look one another in the eye. They gave no further thought to the sinful woman. They thought only of themselves and of their own death, which was written in the dust. Not a single tongue was able to move, to pronounce that troublesome and evil question, *What sayest Thou?* The Lord said nothing. That which is so filthy is fit to be written only in filthy dust. Another reason why the Lord wrote on the ground is even

greater and more wonderful. That which is written in the dust is easily erased and removed. Christ did not want their sins to be made known to everyone. Had He desired this, He would have announced them before all the people, and would have accused them and had them stoned to death, in accordance with the law. But He, the innocent Lamb of God, did not contemplate revenge or death for those who had prepared for Him a thousand deaths, who desired His death more than everlasting life for themselves. The Lord wanted only to correct them, to make them think of themselves and their own sins. He wanted to remind them that while they carried the burden of their own transgressions, they shouldn't be strict judges of the transgressions of others. This alone did the Lord desire. And when this was done, the dust was again smoothed over, and that which was written disappeared.

After this our great Lord arose and kindly said to them: *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her* (John 8:7). This was like someone taking away the weapons of his enemies and then saying, *Now, shoot!* The once haughty judges of the sinful woman now stood disarmed, like criminals before the Judge, speechless and rooted to the ground. But the benevolent Saviour, *stooping down again, wrote on the ground* (John 8:8). What did He write this time? Perhaps their other secret transgressions, so that they would not open their closed lips for a long time. Or perhaps He wrote what sort of persons the elders and leaders of the people should be like. This is not essential for us to know. The most important thing here is that by His writing in the dust He achieved three results: first, He broke and annihilated the storm which the Jewish elders had raised against Him; second, He aroused their deadened consciences in their hardened souls, if only for a short time; and third, He saved the sinful woman from death. This is apparent from the words of the Gospel: *And they [the elders] who heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst* (John 8:9).

The square before the temple was suddenly empty. No one was left except those two whom the elders had sentenced to death, the sinful woman and the Sinless One. The woman was standing, whereas He remained stooped towards the ground. A profound silence reigned. Suddenly the Lord arose again, looked around, and, seeing no one but the woman, said to her: *Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?* The Lord knew that no one had condemned her; but with this question He hoped to give her confidence, so that she would be able to hear and understand better what He would say to her. He acted like a skillful doctor, who first encourages his patient and only then gives him medicine. *No one has condemned you?* The woman regained the ability to speak, and she answered, *No man, Lord.* These words were uttered by a pathetic creature, who just before had no hope of ever uttering another word, a creature, who most likely was feeling a breath of true joy for the first time in her life.

Finally, the good Lord said to the woman: *Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more* (John 8:10,11). When the wolves spare their prey, then, of course, the shepherd does not wish death for his sheep either. But it is essential to be aware that Christ's non-judgment means much more than the non-judgment of humans. When people do not judge you for your sin, it means that they do not assign a punishment for the sin, but leave that sin with and in you. When God does not judge, however, this means that He forgives your sin, draws it out of you like pus and makes your soul clean. For this reason, the words, "Neither do I condemn thee," mean the same as *Thy sins are forgiven thee; go, daughter, and sin no more.*

What unspeakable joy! What joy of truth! For the Lord revealed the truth to those who were lost. What joy in righteousness! For the Lord created righteousness. What joy in mercy! For the Lord showed mercy. What joy in life! For the Lord preserved life. This is the Gospel of Christ, which means the Good News; this is Joyful News, the Teaching of Joy; this is a page from the Book of Joy.



## FR. SERAPHIM ROSE ON EXCESSIVE REACTIONS TO ECUMENISM

Source: "Father Seraphim Rose, His Life and Works," by Hieromonk Damascene, pg. 997

Some would-be zealots of Orthodoxy use the term [ecumenism] in entirely too imprecise a fashion, as though the very use of the term or contact with an "ecumenical" organization is itself a "heresy." Such views are clearly exaggerations. "Ecumenism" is a *heresy* only if it actually involves the denial that Orthodoxy is the only true Church of Christ. A few of the Orthodox leaders of the ecumenical movement have gone this far; but most Orthodox participants in the ecumenical movement have *not* said this much; and a few have only irritated the Protestants in the ecumenical movement by frequently stating at ecumenical gatherings that Orthodoxy *is* the only Church of Christ.

One must certainly criticize the participation of even these latter persons in the ecumenical movement, which at its best is misleading and vague about the nature of Christ's Church; but one cannot call such people "heretics," nor can one affirm that any but a few Orthodox representatives have actually taught ecumenism as a *heresy*. The battle for true Orthodoxy in our times is not aided by such exaggerations. The excessive reaction against the ecumenical movement has the same worldly spirit that is present in the ecumenical movement itself.

## ON PRAYER

## BY ARCHIMANDRITE SOPHRONY

Source: From "On Prayer" by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) p.168-170

The way of our Fathers requires strong faith and longsuffering, whereas our contemporaries attempt to acquire spiritual gifts, including even direct contemplation of the Absolute God, through pressure and in a brief space of time.

Often one can remark a disposition in them to draw a parallel between prayer in the Name of Jesus and yoga or "transcendental meditation" and the like.

I think it necessary to point out the dangers of this delusion, the danger of looking on prayer as a very simple, easy, "technical" means leading to direct union with God.

I consider it essential to emphasize the radical difference between the Jesus Prayer and all other ascetic theories.

All those are deluded who endeavor mentally to divest themselves of everything that is transitory, relative, in order in this way to cross some invisible threshold, to realize their being "without beginning", their "identity" with the Source of all that is; in order to return to Him, to be merged in Him, the nameless transpersonal Absolute; in order in the vast expanse of what is beyond thought to unify one's personal individuality with the individualized form of natural existence. Ascetic efforts of this kind enabled some strugglers to a certain extent to rise to metalogical contemplation of being; to experience a certain awe; to know the state when the mind is stilled, when it goes beyond the bounds of time and space. In like states man may feel the peace of divestment of the constantly changing manifestations of the visible world; he may uncover in himself freedom of spirit and contemplate mental beauty.

The ultimate development of such impersonal asceticism has led many ascetics to perceive the divine origin in the very nature of man; to a tendency to the self-divinization that lay at the root of the great Fall; to see in man a certain "absoluteness" which in essence is nothing else but the reflection of the Divine Absoluteness in the creature created in His likeness; to feel drawn to return to the state of peace which man knew before his appearance in this world.

In any case, following such an experience, a mental aberration may arise within the mind. I am not setting myself the task of listing all the various types of mental intuition, but I will say from my own experience that the True, Living God, the I AM, is not here in all this. This is the natural genius of the human spirit in his sublimated impulses towards the Absolute.

All contemplation arrived at by this means is self-contemplation, not contemplation of God. In these circumstances we open up for ourselves created beauty, not First Being. And in all of it there is no salvation for man.

The source of real deliverance lies in unquestionable, wholehearted acceptance of the Revelation, "I am that I am ... I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." God is Personal, Absolute Trinity, One and Indivisible.

Our whole Christian life is based on this Revelation. This God called us from nonbeing into life. Knowledge of this Living God and discernment of the manner of His creation releases us from the obscurity of our own ideas, coming from beneath about the Absolute; rescues us from our unconscious attraction. But for all that, it is ruinous to withdrawal from existence of any sort.

We are created in order to be communicants in the Divine Being of Him Who really is. Christ indicated this wondrous way: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life."

Apprehending the depths of the Creator's wisdom, we embark on the suffering through which Divine eternity is to be attained. And when His Light shines for us we unite in ourselves contemplation of the two extremes of the abyss on the one side, the darkness of hell; on the other, the triumph of victory. We are existentially introduced into the province of Uncreated Divine Life.

And hell loses power over us. We are given grace to live the state of the Incarnate Logos, Christ, Who descended into hell as Conqueror. Then by the power of His love we shall embrace all creation in the prayer: "O Jesus, Gracious Almighty, have mercy upon us and Thy world."

Revelation of this Personal God imparts a wondrous character to all things. Being is not some determined cosmic process but the Light of the indescribable love between Divine and created persons. It is the free movement of spirits filled with wise knowledge of all that exists, and consciousness of self.

Without this there is no sense in anything but only death. But our prayer becomes a living contact of our created persona and the Divine Person that is, something absolute.

And this is expressed when we address the Word of the Father: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Unoriginate Word of Thine Unoriginate Father, have mercy upon us. Save us and Thy world."



The life of a priest, a real priest, was always difficult, and now it is even more so. Some people think that it means only serving in Church, but no; it is an extremely difficult and all-encompassing way of life. You have to forget yourself completely and give yourself to others. You must take upon yourself the souls of hundreds of people and lead them. Not everyone is strong enough to undertake this way of life. Many people think being a priest is an easy profession. Yes, it is easy if you do not give yourself to others, but it is extremely difficult if you do.

Father Arseny (1893-1973)



## Ὁ Οἰκουμενισμός

Τοῦ Νικολάου Θ. Ζήση, ἀπὸ ἐντυπο Ὁρθοδόξων Χριστιανῶν Νέων Θεσσαλονίκης

**Π**όσο ἀνόητος θεωρεῖται ἕνας ἀσθενής ὅταν ἀρνεῖται μία μέθοδο θεραπείας πού τοῦ προτείνουν ὄλοι οἱ γιατροί, ἐπειδὴ θέλει νὰ τὴν προσαρμόσει στὶς ἀδυναμίες του! Ἀλλὰ καὶ πόσο ἐγκληματικὸ θὰ ἦταν νὰ προσπαθῆσει ὁ ἀνόητος αὐτὸς ἀσθενής νὰ πείσει καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀσθενεῖς νὰ παραβαίνουν τὶς συνταγές τῶν ἰατρῶν, καὶ νὰ παραποιήσῃ τὰ ἱατρικὰ βιβλία καὶ τὰ πορίσματα τῆς ἐπιστήμης τῶν τελευταίων αἰώνων, ὥστε νὰ προσαρμόζονται γιὰ τὰ ἐπόμενα χρόνια στὴ δική του ἀρρωστημένη γνώμη καὶ νὰ στεροῦν ἔτσι ἀπὸ τοὺς μελλοντικούς ἀσθενεῖς τὴν θεραπεία...

Τί θὰ ἔκαναν τότε οἱ κανονικοὶ ἰατροί; Δὲ θὰ κατήγγελλαν τὰ γιατροσόφια τοῦ ἀσθενοῦς αὐτοῦ ψευτογιατροῦ; Δὲ θὰ προστάτευαν τὴν ὑγίη ἐπιστήμη; Δὲ θὰ κατηγοροῦσαν τοὺς ἰατροὺς ἐκεῖνους πού ἐγκατέλειψαν τὴν ἀληθινὴ ἱατρικὴ καὶ ἀνέχθησαν τὴν ψεύτικη ἱατρικὴ τοῦ ἀσθενοῦς γιὰ ἐπικίνδυνη ἢ καὶ ἐγκληματικὴ ἀμέλεια;

Ἡ διδασκαλία καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας, δὲν εἶναι παρὰ πνευματικὴ ἱατρικὴ, δηλαδὴ μέθοδος θεραπείας κάθε ἀνθρώπου ἀπὸ τὰ ἁμαρτωλὰ πάθη πού ἀπέκτησε ἢ ἀνθρωπότητα μετὰ τὴν πτώση τῆς ἀπὸ τὸν Παράδεισο (φιλοδοξία, φιλαργυρία, φιληδονία, μὲ μιὰ λέξη φιλαυτία: ἀγάπη τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ μᾶς ἐμπαθῶς, καὶ ὄχι ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ, τῶν συνανθρώπων μᾶς καὶ τοῦ ἐνιψηνψαυτοῦ μᾶς ὑγιῶς).

Ἐπειδὴ ὁμως δὲν εἶναι ἀπλή ἡ θεραπεία μᾶς, κάποιοι προσπάθησαν νὰ τὴ «διευκολύνουν» καὶ νὰ διδάξουν ἄλλον τρόπο σωτηρίας, πού νὰ ἀνακατεύει τὴ σωστὴ «θεραπευτικὴ μέθοδο» τοῦ Ἰατροῦ, τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μὲ τὴ δική τους μέθοδο· αὐτοὶ εἶναι οἱ ἀρχηγοὶ τῶν αἰρέσεων, οἱ αἰρεσιάρχες. Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία γιὰ νὰ προστατεύσει τοὺς πιστοὺς, καταδικάζει ἀνέκαθεν τὴ διδασκαλία τῶν αἰρεσιάρχων, τὴν αἵρεση, καὶ ἀφορίζει, δηλαδὴ ἀπομακρύνει, τοὺς αἰρετικούς ἀπὸ τὶς συνάξεις τῶν πιστῶν. Ὅμως σήμερα, δυστυχῶς, βρίσκονται καὶ πάλι ψεύτικοι γιατροὶ τῆς ψυχῆς, ὀρθόδοξοι κληρικοὶ καὶ θεολόγοι, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἀνακατεῦν τὴν ἀληθινὴ ἱατρικὴ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῶν Πνευματοφόρων Ἀγίων μὲ τὰ γιατροσόφια τῶν αἰρετικῶν. Τὸ καταστροφικὸ αὐτὸ ἀνακάτεμα ἀλήθειας καὶ ψέμματος, πνευματικῆς ἱατρικῆς καὶ κομπογιαννιτισμοῦ ὀνομάζεται Οἰκουμενισμός.

Ἡ «Οἰκουμενικὴ Κίνηση» ξεκίνησε ὡς προσπάθεια πολλῶν χριστιανικῶν ὁμολογιῶν νὰ βοηθήσουν διήθεν στὴν ἐπίλυση τῶν κοινωνικῶν προβλημάτων πού μᾶστιζαν τὸν κόσμον μετὰ τὸν Β΄ Παγκόσμιον Πόλεμον. Ἡ ἴδρυση (1948) τοῦ «Παγκόσμιου Συμβουλίου τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν» (Π.Σ.Ε.) συνοδεύτηκε καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν πρώτη παρατυπία τῶν ὀρθοδόξων οἰκουμενιστῶν πού συμμετεῖχαν: ἀποδεχόμενοι τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Π.Σ.Ε. δέχθηκαν πῶς ὅλες οἱ προτεσταντικὲς παραφυάδες πού συμμετεῖχαν σ' αὐτὸ ἦταν «ἐκκλησίες», ἐνῶ τὸ Συμβούλιο τῆς Πίστεως σαφῶς παραδέχεται μόνον Μία, Ἁγία, Καθολικὴ καὶ Ἀποστολικὴ Ἐκκλησία. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία

αὐτὴ, ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη, ἔχει σαφῶς ἐνιαία πίστη, καὶ γι' αὐτὸ εἶναι μία, ἀκόμη καὶ ἂν ἀποτελεῖται ἀπὸ πολλὰς τοπικὰς Ὁρθόδοξες Ἐκκλησίες.

Οἱ οἰκουμενιστὲς, ὀρθόδοξοι καὶ μὴ, διαμόρφωσαν τὴν ἐξωφρενικὴ «θεωρία τῶν κλάδων» σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν ὁποία καμμία χριστιανικὴ ὁμολογία, οὔτε ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία, δὲν ἔχει ὀλόκληρη τὴν ἀλήθεια, ἀλλὰ μόνον τμήματα ἀληθείας (ὅπως ἕνα δένδρον χωρίζεται στὰ κλαδιά του)· ἔτσι προσπαθοῦν νὰ διαψεύσουν τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ τοὺς Ἀποστόλους πού τονίζουν ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία δὲν θὰ παύσει ποτὲ νὰ ὑπάρχει, καὶ ὅτι αὐτὴ εἶναι στῦλος καὶ θεμέλιος τῆς ἀληθείας (Μάτθ. 16, 18 & Α΄ Τίμ. 3, 15). Ἐτσι οἱ κληρικοὶ καὶ οἱ θεολόγοι τοῦ οἰκουμενισμοῦ προσπαθοῦν νὰ μᾶς πείσουν ὅτι οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι καὶ οἱ παπικοὶ ἢ οἱ προτεστάντες εἶναι στὸν ἴδιον βαθμὸ Χριστιανοί, μολονότι οἱ μὲν διατηροῦν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον ἀνόθευτο, ἐνῶ οἱ δὲ κόβουν καὶ ράβουν λόγια τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῶν Ἀποστόλων ὅπως τοὺς ἀρέσει, οἱ μὲν πιστεύουν ὅτι ἡ Χάρις εἶναι θεϊκὴ, οἱ δὲ ὅτι εἶναι δημιουργημένη, οἱ μὲν βαπτίζονται, οἱ δὲ ραντίζονται, οἱ μὲν τιμοῦν τοὺς Ἁγίους, οἱ δὲ ὄχι, καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ.

Οἱ οἰκουμενιστὲς ἱεράρχες συμπροσεύχονται μὲ αἰρετικούς ἢ μερικοὶ τελοῦν καὶ Θεῖα Λειτουργία μὲ αὐτοὺς παραβαίνοντας τὴ διδασκαλία τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς καὶ τῶν Οἰκουμενικῶν Συνόδων, δηλαδὴ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῶν Ἀγίων. Ἐτσι, ἀντὶ νὰ διδάξουν στοὺς αἰρετικούς τὴν ἀλήθεια, γιὰ νὰ τοὺς σώσουν ἀπὸ τὴν αἵρεση, τοὺς ἀφήνουν νὰ νομίζουν ὅτι πιστεύουν ὀρθά. Παράλληλα ἀποτρέπουν πολλοὺς αἰρετικούς ἀπὸ τὸ νὰ γίνουν Ὁρθόδοξοι, γιὰ νὰ μὴ στενοχωρηθοῦν οἱ αἰρετικοὶ κληρικοὶ. Ἀλλὰ καὶ πολλοὶ Ὁρθόδοξοι σκανδαλίζονται, διότι θέλοντας νὰ ἀντιδράσουν στὸν οἰκουμενισμό καταφεύγουν σὲ σχίσματα, ὅπως αὐτὰ τοῦ παλαιοῦ ἡμερολογίου. Καὶ ἐνῶ οἱ οἰκουμενιστὲς ἀγαποῦν τοὺς αἰρετικούς φίλους τους, μισοῦν ἢ ἀδιαφοροῦν γιὰ ὅσους δικαιολογημένα διαμαρτύρονται.

Πρόσφατα οἱ Χριστιανοὶ οἰκουμενιστὲς ἔκαναν ἀνοίγματα καὶ στὶς θρησκείες τοῦ Ἰουδαϊσμοῦ καὶ τοῦ Μουσουλμανισμοῦ. Μερικοὶ μάλιστα ἰσχυρίστηκαν ὅτι καὶ αὐτὲς ὀδηγοῦν στὴ σωτηρία καὶ ὅτι ὄλοι πιστεύουμε στὸν ἴδιον Θεό· μὲ τὶς εὐλογίες, λοιπόν, τῶν οἰκουμενιστῶν ἀνοίγει ὁ δρόμος γιὰ τὴ θρησκευτικὴ ἰσοπέδωση στὴν ὑφήλιο. Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἀπαραίτητη γιὰ τὴν καθιέρωση τῆς Νέας ἐποχῆς, ὥστε νὰ ἔλθει ὡς κοινὸς καὶ παγκόσμιος θρησκευτικὸς ἡγέτης ὅλων τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὁ Ἀντίχριστος.

Πρῶτο «θαρραλέο» βῆμα τῆς (κάποτε) παραδοσιακῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος πρὸς τὸν θεομίσητο οἰκουμενισμό ὑπῆρξε ἡ ὑποδοχὴ τοῦ πάπα στὴν Ἑλλάδα ὡς ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ ἡγέτη, «ἐπισκόπου Ρώμης», ἀντὶ τῆς ἀποφυγῆς καὶ καταδίκης του ὡς αἰρεσιάρχης, ὅπως ἐπιβάλλει ἡ ἴδια ἡ Ἁγία Γραφή (Α΄ Τίμ. 6, 3-5, Τίτ. 3, 10-11 κ.ἄ.).

Ἡ ἐγκατάλειψη τῆς ἀληθείας ἀπὸ τοὺς ὀρθοδόξους οἰκουμενιστὲς ἀμείβεται ἐκ μέρους τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἀδρά, μὲ φήμη καὶ δόξα, χειροκροτήματα, ἐπιδοτήσεις, συμπόσια, ταξίδια καὶ πολιτικὰ ἀνταλλάγματα. Ἐδῶ ἐπαληθεύεται

αυτό που λέει ο Ευαγγελιστής Ιωάννης «ἀγάπησαν τὴ δόξα που δίνουν οἱ ἄνθρωποι παραπάνω ἀπὸ τὴ δόξα που δίνει ὁ Θεός» (Ιω. 12, 43). Ἐμεῖς, ὅμως, με ὑπομονή, πίστη καὶ ἀγάπη, ἄς μένουμε σταθεροὶ καὶ ἔτοιμοι γιὰ τὴν υπεράσπιση τῆς ἀληθινῆς Πίστεώς μας στὴν ὁποία σώζονται καὶ οἱ συνάνθρωποὶ μας καὶ ἐμεῖς· ἀμήν. Γιατί οἱ καιροὶ δυσκολεύουν...



## Ὑπομονὴ στὶς Θλίψεις

Τοῦ Ὁσίου Θεοφάνους τοῦ Ἐγκλείστου (+1894), ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο «Ὁσίον Θεοφάνους τοῦ Ἐγκλείστου, Χειραγωγία στὴν Πνευματικὴ Ζωή», σελ. 12-13, ἔκδ. Ἱ.Μ. Παρακλήτου,

Δὲν εἶναι εὐκόλο νὰ ὑπομένουμε καρτερικὰ καὶ ψύχραιμα Δκάθε θλίψη, προπαντὸς ὅταν εἶναι βαρεῖα. Ἀλλὰ τὸ βάρος εἶναι πολὺ μεγάλο τὴν ὥρα τῆς συμφορᾶς καὶ γιὰ λίγο ἐπειτα ἀπ' αὐτήν. Ὑστερα, σιγά-σιγά, γίνεται πιὸ ἐλαφρὸ. Ὁ χρόνος, βλέπετε, εἶναι ὁ καλύτερος γιαιτρός. Διώχει τὸν πόνο, στεγνώνει τὰ δάκρυα, φέρνει τὴν λήθη, ξαναδίνει στὴ ζωὴ τὸν κανονικὸ τῆς ρυθμὸς... Ἔτσι θὰ γίνεῖ καὶ μετὴν δικὴ σας συμφορὰ. Κάντε κουράγιο, καὶ ἡ πληγὴ σας θὰ ἐπουλωθεῖ.

Στὸ μεταξύ, νὰ στερεώσετε μέσα σας τὴν πεποίθηση ὅτι ὅλα παραχωροῦνται ἀπὸ τὸν Κύριο. Ἐκεῖνος γιὰ ἓνα μόνο πράγμα ἐνδιαφέρεται: τὴ σωτηρία μας. Καὶ γιὰ τὸ σκοπὸ αὐτὸ μεταχειρίζεται κάθε πρόσφορο μέσο, ἀκόμα, κάποτε-κάποτε, καὶ τὸ πιὸ σκληρὸ. Ὅ,τι στέλνει, λοιπόν, ὁ Θεός, νὰ τὸ δέχεστε σὰν φάρμακο τῆς ψυχῆς, πικρὸ ἀλλὰ θεραπευτικὸ καὶ ὠφέλιμο. Τίποτα δὲν συμβαίνει τυχαῖα, ὅλα ρυθμίζονται ἀπὸ τὴ θεία πρόνοια. Γι' αὐτὸ, ὅποτε σᾶς βρίσκει κάποια θλίψη, νὰ σκέφτεστε πὼς εἶναι μιὰ ἐπίσκεψη, μιὰ ὑπόμνηση, μιὰ εἰδοποίηση τοῦ Θεοῦ γιὰ κάποιο σφάλμα σας. Νὰ τὸ εὐχαριστεῖτε αὐτὸ καὶ νὰ διορθώσετε.

Στοὺς δικαίους οἱ θλίψεις στέλνονται ὡς δοκιμασίες -- ἔτσι ἔγινε μετὸν μακάριο Ἰώβ τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης. Σ' ἐμᾶς τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς, ὅμως, στέλνονται ὡς σωφρονιστικὲς τιμωρίες καὶ ὡς ἐρεθίσματα γιὰ μετάνοια.

Σηκώνετε βαρεῖες θλίψεις; Λυπᾶμαι γι' αὐτὸ καὶ σᾶς συμπονῶ. Ἄλλη βοήθεια δὲν ὑπάρχει, παρὰ μόνο ἡ ὑπακοὴ καὶ ἡ ἐλπίδα στὸ ἔλεος τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὅλα ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ προέρχονται καὶ παραχωροῦνται. Καὶ γιὰ ὅλα πρέπει νὰ τὸν εὐγνωμονοῦμαι, ὄχι μόνο γιὰ τὰ εὐχάριστα, ἀλλὰ καὶ γιὰ τὰ δυσάρεστα. Γιατί κι αὐτὰ στὴν ὠφέλειά μας ἀποσκοποῦν: στὴν κάθαρση, στὴν ἀπόκτηση καὶ στερέωση καλῶν ἔξεων, στὴ μνήμη καὶ ἐπίκληση τοῦ Κυρίου.

Μὴ βαρυγκωμᾶτε, λοιπόν. Κάντε ὑπομονὴ στὶς σκοτεινὲς ἡμέρες. Θὰ ἔρθουν καὶ φωτεινὲς!

## Ὁρθοδοξία Καὶ Ἡ Ἀπανθρωπία Τῆς Βίας

ΠΗΓΗ: Περιοδικὸ Παρακαταθήκη, τ. 29, Μάρτιος-Ἀπρίλιος 2003, Πρωτοπρ. Γεώργιος Δ. Μεταλληνός, Καθηγητῆς Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν.

Ἡ ἔπιθεση στὴν Νέα Ὑόρκη (11.9.2001) δὲν ἀπέδειξε μόνο ὅτι καμμία ὑπερδύναμη στὸν κόσμο μας δὲν εἶναι ἄτρωτη καὶ, συνεπῶς, ἀξιοπίστη ἡγήτιδα τοῦ κόσμου, ἀλλὰ ὀδήγησε καὶ σὲ τραγικὰ ἐπακόλουθα, μετὰ σωρεία ἀθῶων θυμάτων στὸν βωμὸ τοῦ Μολῶχ τῶν συμφερόντων. Ἔτσι φθάσαμε στὴν ἰταμὴ εἰσβολὴ στὸ Ἀφγανιστὰν καὶ στὸ Ἰράκ, ὅπως παλαιότερα στὸ Κόσσοβο, μετὰ τις ἐκατόμβες τῶν ἀθῶων. Διότι στοὺς ἀδικοχαμένους ἀθῶους τοῦ Ἰράκ, τῆς Σερβίας, τῆς Νέας Ὑόρκης ἐντοπίζεται τὸ πρόβλημα. Χωρὶς νὰ εἶναι ἀνάγκη νὰ γίνονται συμψηφισμοί, μπορεῖ τὰ γεγονότα αὐτὰ νὰ τοποθετοῦνται παράλληλα, διότι μόνο ἔτσι θὰ μπορέσουμε -- ἂν διαθέτουμε ἴχνος ἀνθρωπιάς -- νὰ τὰ ἀποφύγουμε στὸ μέλλον. Ἀφοῦ ὅμως συνεχίζεται ἡ ἐξολόθρευση τῶν ἀθῶων, φαίνεται ὅτι κάποιοι δὲν διαθέτουν ἀνθρωπιά, ἀλλ' οὔτε καὶ τις πολιτικὲς ικανότητες (ἴσως οὔτε καὶ τὴ θέληση) νὰ τὴν ἀποφύγουν. Ἔτσι, μιὰ τρομοκρατία, ποὺ καλύπτεται μετὰ τὸν μανδύα τῆς διεθνοῦς νομιμότητας, συστρατεύει πιεστικὰ τοὺς συμμάχους τῆς, γιὰ νὰ καταπνίξει τὴ «ρέμπελη» τρομοκρατία ἄλλων συμφερόντων, μετὰ ἄμεσο κίνδυνο μιὰ νέα παγκόσμια σύρραξη, ποὺ γιὰ κάποιους πολιτικὸς ἀναλυτὲς ἄρχισε ἤδη. Ἡ ἰουδαιοχριστιανικὴ Δύση (κατὰ τὸν Σ. Χάντιγκτον) ἐναντίον τῆς ἰσλαμικῆς Ἀνατολῆς, ἔστω καὶ ἂν τὸ Ἰσλάμ ἔχει πλέον διεισδύσει καὶ στὴν πολυ-πολιτισμικὴ πιά Δύση καὶ τὰ ὅρια τῆς διάκρισης τῶν πολιτισμῶν, γεωγραφικὰ τουλάχιστον, εἶναι δυσπροδιόριστα.

Δὲν εἶναι ἡ πρώτη φορά, ποὺ ἡ πολιτικὴ πέτυχε νὰ κινητοποιήσει καὶ τὴν (ἰδρυματικὴ) Ὁρθοδοξία, ἀπὸ τὴν πνευματικὴ κορυφὴ τῆς, τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριαρχεῖο, σὲ μιὰ «σταυροφορία» -- ὁ ὅρος ἐχρησιμοποιήθη ἀπὸ τὸν Πλανητάρχη -- καταπολέμησης τῆς τρομοκρατίας, στὴ μιὰ μορφὴ τῆς φυσικά, σὲ συνεργασία καὶ μετὰ τὰ ἄλλα θρησκευόμενα τοῦ κόσμου. Αὐτὴ ἡ ἐπιβληθεῖσα διαθρησκευακὴ συνεργασία, ποὺ ἐντάσσεται στὴ νεοεποχικὴ κίνηση πρὸς τὴν «Πανθρησκεία», θέτει τὸ πρόβλημα -- ἀφοῦ ὁ λόγος εἶναι περὶ θρησκευτῶν (θρησκευμάτων) καὶ ὄχι πολιτικῶν δυνάμεων -- τῆς δυνατότητας σύμπτωσης, γιὰ νὰ ὑπάρξει δυνατότητα συνεργασίας. Ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία (ὅταν εἶναι Ὁρθοδοξία, δηλαδὴ πατερικότητα) δὲν μπορεῖ λ.χ. νὰ σταθεῖ ποτὲ στὸ πλευρὸ τοῦ Ἰσχυροῦ, ἐπειδὴ εἶναι ἰσχυρὸς, ἀλλὰ τοῦ Δικαίου, δηλαδὴ τῶν ἀθῶων θυμάτων ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου. Ὅποτε γεννᾶται τὸ ἐρώτημα, ποιὲς δυνατότητες ἔχει ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία σὲ μιὰ τέτοια συστράτευση; τί θὰ ἀντιμετωπίσει; Ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία βρίσκεται -- καὶ πάλι -- μεταξύ δυὸ κατέναντι, τοῦ δυτικοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀνατολικοῦ, τὰ ὁποῖα

ἀποδεικνύεται για μία ακόμη φορά, ότι τελικά συμπίπτουν στην ιδεολογικοποιημένη (δηλαδή πολιτικοποιημένη) πίστη τους. Η «τζιχάντ», όποιες αποχρώσεις και αν έχει, δεν παύει, όταν αναθερμανθεί ο θρησκευτικός φανατισμός, πού είναι ο φοβερότερος όλων, διότι ενδύεται θεία αποστολή, να προσλαμβάνει την έννοια του «ιερού πολέμου κατά των ἀπίστων» και να συμπίπτει έτσι με την «ιερὰ ἐκδίκηση» (ιερὸ πόλεμο) τῆς ἄλλης πλευρᾶς, πού καθαγιάζει ἀκόμη και τις ναζιστικές μεθόδους. Τὸ κοινό, ἡ νομιμοποίηση τῆς βίας για τὴν ἐπιβολή τῆς πολιτικοποιημένης θρησκείας ἢ τῆς θρησκευοποιημένης πολιτικῆς. Τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα ὁμοῦ εἶναι τὸ ἴδιο.

Ὁ δυτικὸς χριστιανισμὸς, ἄλλωστε ἔχει βαθεῖες θεολογικὲς προϋποθέσεις στὸν καθαγιασμὸ τῆς βίας ἀπὸ τὸν 11ο αἰώνα και τὴν ἐνιαία χριστιανικὰ Δύση. Εἶναι ἡ «θεολογία» τοῦ Ἀνσέλμου Κανταβρυγίας (+1100) «περὶ ἱκανοποιήσεως (satisfaction) τῆς θείας δικαιοσύνης». Ὁ Θεὸς στέλνει τὸν Υἱὸ του, Χριστὸ στὸν κόσμο, ὄχι ἐξ ἀγάπης πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπο (Ιω. 3, 16 - Ρωμ. 5, 8), ἀλλὰ για νὰ ἱκανοποιηθεῖ ἀπὸ τὴν προσβολή τῆς ἀνθρώπινης ἀμαρτίας! Τὸ δυτικὸ φεουδαρχικὸ -- ρατσιστικὸ -- ἱπποτικὸ δίκαιο προβλήθηκε, ἔτσι, στὸν Θεὸ (εἰδωλολατρία), πού νοεῖται ὄχι ὡς Πατέρας «πλήρης οἰκτιρμῶν και φιλανθρωπίας», ἀλλὰ ὡς φεουδάρχης-τύραννος και τιμωρὸς, πού ζητεῖ συνεχῶς ἐκδίκηση (καλβινιστικὴ νοοτροπία, πού εἶναι τὸ ὑπόβαθρο τοῦ ἀμερικανικοῦ χριστιανισμοῦ). Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ νοοτροπία τοῦ δυτικοῦ ἀνθρώπου, πού φάνηκε ἰδιαίτερα στις σταυροφορίες (ἡ μανία τῶν σταυροφόρων τῆς δ' σταυροφορίας τοῦ 1204, κατὰ τὸν ἱστορικὸ Victor Franklin, ἐναντίον τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας ἔκανε τὴν πολεμικὴ μανία τοῦ Ἰσλάμ νὰ φαίνεται φιλόφρων... Ἡ «θεολογία» τοῦ «θανάτου τοῦ Θεοῦ» εἶναι καρπὸς αὐτῆς τῆς νοοτροπίας. Τὸ συσσωρευμένο πάθος τῆς ἰσλαμικῆς κοινωνίας κατὰ τῆς Δύσεως ἐκφράζεται ὡς τυφλὴ ἐπιθετικὴ ἐνίοτε, πού ἀντιμετωπίζεται ὄχι με πνεῦμα δικαιοσύνης ἀπὸ τὴ Δύση (σύλληψη και καταδίκη τῶν πραγματικῶν ἐνόχων και ὄχι ναζιστικὰ ἀντίποινα). Ὅταν ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία συμπράττει με ὅποιοδήποτε τρόπο, σὲ μιὰ τέτοια λογικὴ, δὲν εἶναι Ὀρθοδοξία, ἀλλὰ θλιβερὸ κακέκτυπὸ της.

Ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία γνωρίζει, βέβαια, τὴν βία και τὴν ἐφαρμοζεῖ στη σκληρότερη μορφή της. Ἡ γλώσσα τῶν ἱερῶν κειμένων της εἶναι ἀπόλυτα ἐπαναστατικὴ (π.χ., ὕμνογραφία τῆς Ἀναστάσεως) και καταδικαστικὴ για τὴν ἀδικία και ἐκμετάλλευση (Ἰακώβου, κεφ. 5). Ἡ βία της ὁμοῦ δὲν στρέφεται πρὸς τὰ ἔξω, πρὸς τὸν συνάνθρωπο, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τοῦ Διαβόλου και πρὸς τὰ μέσα, στὸ ἐσωτερικὸ μας. «Ἡ βασιλεία (χάρη) τοῦ Θεοῦ βιάζεται και βιασταὶ ἀρπάζουσιν αὐτήν» (Μάτθ. 11, 12). Εἶναι βία, ὅπως ἀποδεικνύει ἡ ἀσκητικοηπτική πράξη τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας, πού ἀσκεῖται στὴν ἐπαναστατημένη και διεστραμμένη φύση μας, τὰ ἐνστικτὰ μας, για νὰ μὴν τυραννοῦν τὸν ἄνθρωπο και τὸν δυναστεύουν. Μέσω τοῦ αὐτοβιασμοῦ ἐλευθερώνεται ὁ

ἄνθρωπος στὴν ἄκτιστη Θεῖα Χάρη. Μόνον ἔτσι γίνεται «ναὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ» δηλαδή Χριστιανὸς (πρβλ. Ρωμ. 8, 9). Μόνον ἔτσι πατάσεται ἡ τρομοκρατία και ὄχι με βομβαρδισμοὺς ἀθῶων. Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία τῶν Ἁγίων μας και γι' αὐτὸ δὲν παράγει τρομοκράτες, κάθε εἶδους, ἀλλὰ Μάρτυρες. Ὁ τρομοκράτης, κάθε εἶδους, βιάζει τοὺς ἄλλους και τοὺς ἐξολοθρεύει, ἔστω και ἂν αὐτοκτονεῖ μαζί τους (καμικάζι). Ἐδῶ ἰσχύει τὸ ἐβραϊκὸ, «ἀποθανέτω ἡ ψυχὴ μου μετὰ τῶν ἄλλοφύλων» (Κρ. 16, 30). Ὁ Μάρτυρας νικᾷ με τὴν αὐτοθυσία του, πού προσφέρεται ὑπὲρ τῶν ἄλλων. Ἐχῶ ὀνομάσει τοὺς Νεομάρτυρες τῆς ὀθωμανοκρατίας «τοὺς δυναμικότερους και ἀποτελεσματικότερους ἀντιστασιακοὺς, ὄχι με ὄπλα, ἀλλὰ με τὸν σταυρὸ». Ὁ Μάρτυρας τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας νικᾷ τοὺς τυράννους τοῦ κόσμου με τὴ θυσία του, ἀποδεικνύοντας ὅτι δὲν εἶναι ἀκαταγώνιστοι και ἐνθαρρύνοντας και τοὺς ἄλλους στὴν ἀντιμετώπισή τους. Οὔτε ὁμοῦ ἱερὸ πόλεμο γνωρίζει ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία. Ὁ πόλεμος εἶναι πάντα σατανικὴ ὑπόθεση. Στὴν ἱστορία της δέχθηκαν οἱ Ἁγιοὶ μας, «κατ' ἄκρην οἰκονομίαν», τὸν ἀμυντικὸ και ἀπελευθερωτικὸ ἀγῶνα (αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ θεολογικὸ ὑπόβαθρο τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπανάστασης τοῦ 1821) ὡς αὐτοθυσία ὑπὲρ τῶν ἄλλων (βλ. Ἰωάνν. 15, 13), ἀλλὰ ἐνῶ οἱ μετέχοντες σὲ τέτοιους πολέμους τιμῶνται ὡς ἥρωες, δὲν μποροῦν νὰ γίνουν κληρικοὶ, ὡς φονευτές, και ἔτσι περνοῦν ἀπὸ μακρὰ μετάνοια.

Ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία δὲν μπορεῖ, συνεπῶς, ἀπὸ τὴ φύση της νὰ συγκαλύψει ὅποιαδήποτε ἀδικία και ἀπανθρωπία, ἀπ' ὅπου και ἂν προέρχεται. Εἶναι ἐπίσης ξένη πρὸς κάθε ἐννοια τρομοκρατίας, πού τὴν θεωρεῖ ἐγκλημα φρικτὸ και ἀπάνθρωπο. Δὲν μπορεῖ ὁμοῦ νὰ πολεμήσει τὴν τρομοκρατία μόνον με διακηρύξεις και μανιφέστα, ἀλλὰ καλώντας στὸν τρόπο ζωῆς τῶν Ἁγίων, πού ὡς ἐλευθερωμένες ἐν Χριστῷ ὑπάρξεις, ὑπερβαίνουν ὄλες αὐτὲς τις καταστάσεις τῆς πεπτωκυίας φύσεως. Αὐτὸς ὁ τρόπος ζωῆς και ὑπάρξεως τῶν Ἁγίων εἶναι τὸ ὀρθόδοξο ἦθος. Δὲν ἀρκεῖ, συνεπῶς, μιὰ ἐξωτερικὴ συμφωνία λόγων, ἀλλὰ και ἐνταξὴ σ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἦθος, τὸ ὅποιο με τὴν ἄκτιστη Θεῖκή Χάρη νικᾷ τις ροπὲς και πρακτικὲς τῆς πτώσεως και φθορᾶς μας, δηλαδή τοῦ θανάτου μας.



**Δ**ὲν ὑπάρχει ἀπελπισία ὅταν εἶσαι μέσα στὴν Ἐκκλησία, ὅτι και νὰ ἔχεις κάνει, ὅ,τι και νὰ ἔχεις ὑποστεί. Δὲν ὑπάρχει ἀπελπισία. Στενοχώρια μπορεῖ νὰ ἔχεις, ἀλλὰ ἀπελπισία ὄχι. Ὁ Θεός, μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν ἐξομολόγηση – ὁ καλὸς Γέροντας τόνιζε πάρα πολὺ τὴ σημασία τοῦ Ἱερέα, τὸ χεῖρ τοῦ παπᾶ... ἦταν σὰν νὰ ἔβγαине ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ ἡ Θεῖα Χάρη – σὲ βοηθᾷ και ξεπερνᾷ αὐτὰ τὰ ὅποια μπορεῖ νὰ σὲ ὀδηγήσουν στὰ ἔσχατα ὄρια τῆς ἀπελπισίας.

Γέροντας Πορφύριος (+1991)

## A 5TH CENTURY ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT

Information and pictures taken from the related article by John Gallager, "Ancient American" magazine, issue no. 54.

In the stillness of Cockaponset State Forest, southern Connecticut, near the town of Guilford, masterfully carved from solid rock, stands North America's oldest Christian church. Epigraphic evidence indicates that it is approximately 1,500 years old and was built by Orthodox Christian (Greek Byzantine) monks who fled North Africa in the wake of the Vandal invasions. There exist several Greek cupule (small cup-shaped structure) patterns in the form of Chrismons (monograms of Christ), baptismal fonts, a cathedra or throne, candelabras, and an altar; all of these finds were discovered on this site.

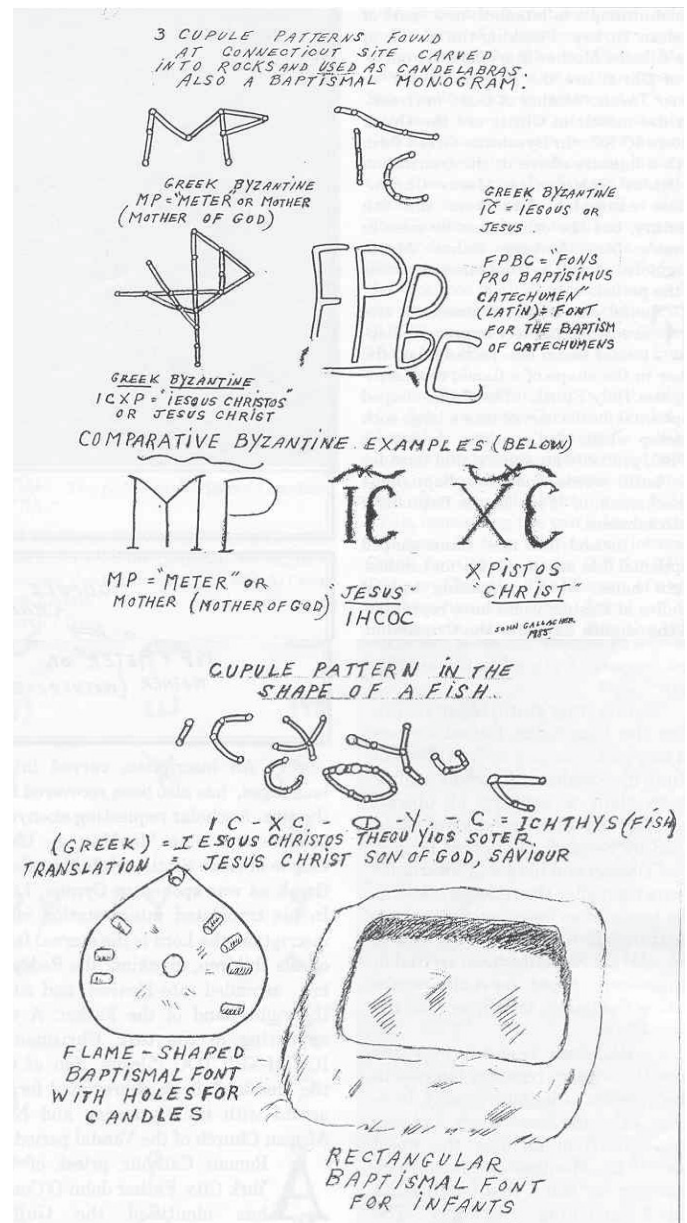
It is clearly evident that these were not just a few inscriptions; rather, this was a place of worship, and the artifacts parallel 1926 discoveries made in a remote Moroccan oasis. A diffusionist scholar, Frederick J. Pohl, studied the inscriptions and has placed the monks' arrival in North America at about 480 AD. This was a time period of great strife in the northern African area.

By 430 AD, there were many bishops operating across North Africa, mostly in Tunisia, where Orthodoxy sank its roots in the Dark Continent at the ancient Phoenician port-city of Carthage. That was also a period of great persecution of the Orthodox-minded monastics by the Vandals, who had adopted the heresy of Arianism (condemned by the Nicene Ecumenical Synod of 325 AD). The Vandals had crossed into northern Africa to avoid the barbarians that were attacking them in northern Europe.

Monasticism, on the other hand, had been flourishing in that area since the time of Sts. Basil and Augustine, as early as 388 AD. The monastics did not only reject Arianism, but they spoke often against the heretics of their area. The six Vandal monarchs who ruled the area decided to rid themselves of the non-Arian monastics via persecution of their "fellow" Christians. They drove many monks into the deserts and mountains of eastern Libya, and of course towards the "setting sun," northern America. This persecution did not end until the defeat of the Vandal army by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, in 534 AD, allowing the return of the monastics to the general area of northern Africa.

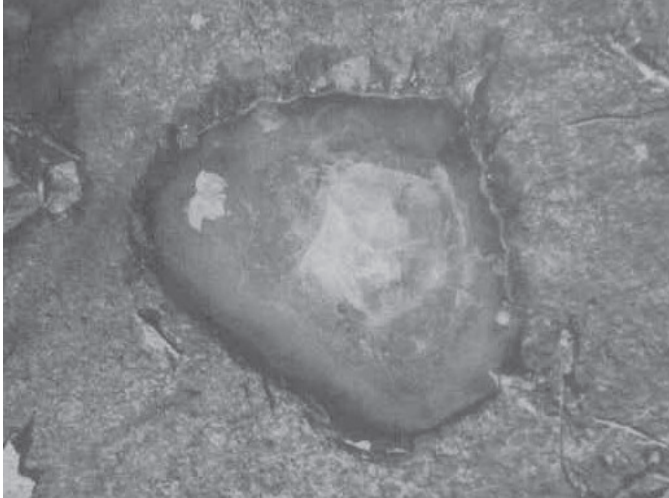
An inscription by a monk who returned to his homeland after the defeat of the Vandals describes the voyage of fellow ascetics to North America. Specifically, it refers to destruction by fire, looting, and the eventual escape of the monastic community "towards the setting sun," to Asq-Shammal, or the Northern Land, in several ships. The inscription refers to a "north and west course from Morocco."

At the Connecticut site, there were several finds including the following.



Various Inscription and Baptismal Font Sketches

1. A total of 96 holes or pupules, all of which are in the form of Chrismons or monograms of Christ and the Virgin Mother of God. Some are in the shape of a fish with the letters IXΘΥΣ (symbolizing Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτὴρ / Jesus Christ Son of God Savior).
2. A candelabra which features a total of 14 holes, used to hold candles or tapers, with a seven-level plinth or base below. The 14 holes incised into the horizontal surface of the altar niche spell the Greek letters IC with a Byzantine ligature above it. The ligature binds the two letters I and C together to form the name "Jesus." The base of the candelabra is Doric Greek in style.
3. Another cupule pattern spells out the Greek letters "MP" for "Μήτηρ," here referring to the term "Mother" for the Blessed Theotokos.



Flame-Shaped Baptismal Font



Overflowing Fountain Sculpture with Fish

4. There were two extremely impressive baptismal fonts, one rectangular and one in the shape of a flame (representing the Holy Spirit received at Baptism). Incised in the flame-like font are nine holes for candles. Eight of them likely represent the eighth day after the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the beginning of the New Era, thus the spiritual birth of the baptized person. The ninth hole in the middle is used for the Paschal candle, symbolic of Christ.

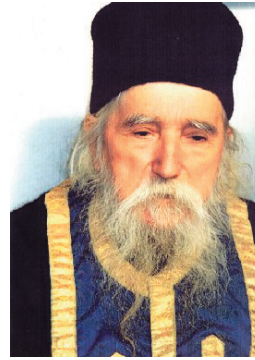
5. Nearby, there is beautiful carvings representing overflowing water and fishes protruding from the ocean. It is symbolic of the newly baptized Christians, known as “little fishes,” who emerge from the waters of eternal life after being baptized.

6. Another carving forms a rock seat or throne in which the bishop or Elder and Abbot of the monastery sat while overseeing the entire Baptismal sacrament.

These finds stand as another testament to the glory of Orthodoxy, which traveled to North America through persecuted monks from northern Africa. They built places of worship to our Lord and Savior some one thousand years before the “official” arrival of Christianity with Christopher Columbus in 1492.

## HOW ONE SHOULD ATTEND THE DIVINE SERVICES

By Elder Cleopa of Romania (+1998)



Christians should stand in church with faith, fear of God, and attention. They should force themselves as much as possible to pray without distraction and with feeling of heart. Also, Christians have the following duties: to go regularly to church, for whoever often misses the services, except for the sick, are barred from the Holy Mysteries; to be reconciled with all men and to ask forgiveness

of anyone they have hurt; to preserve their purity at least two days before going to church and at least one day after; to come early to the divine services in order to have time to venerate in peace and hear Matins.

Every Christian should offer some gift to the Lord according to his ability, even if it is very small, as a sacrifice from the work of his hands. They should give names for commemoration, and ask the priest to take out parts (from the prosphora) for the living and dead members of their families. Christians should stand in church modestly and in good order, the men on the right and the women on the left. They should wear clean and modest clothes, and women should have scarves on their heads.

It is forbidden to talk during services without great need. After Divine Liturgy starts, everyone should remain in his place and not move about to venerate the icons. They should follow the Liturgy with pious attention, and listen to the prayers and singing of the choir, the Epistle and Gospel readings, and the sermon. No one should leave the church before the end of the Liturgy without great need. Those who have confessed and prepared for Holy Communion should read the appropriate prayers before Communion in advance, and before they approach the Holy Gifts they should ask forgiveness of all the faithful. After the Liturgy, those who received Communion should read the prayers of thanksgiving, spending the day in spiritual joy and guarding themselves from all temptations.

Parents should bring their children to church regularly, taking care that they receive communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. After the end of the divine services, Christians should reverently return to their homes, spending the rest of the day thinking of holy things, reading spiritual books, and visiting the sick. They are also obligated to tell those at home who didn't come to church about what they heard and learned in church from the troparia, readings, and the sermon. These are the most important duties of Christians when they go to church on Sundays and feast days.

## THE SEEDS OF SECULARISM

Author Unknown

“**B**ut the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God... nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”. (1 Cor 2: 14).

Religion without power and mystery is not religion but philosophy. It is simply secularism with sacred rituals. For the person who has become infected with secularism, their understanding of mystery or of the supernatural tends to be psychological rather than spiritual. It is heavily dependent on their rational perception. While the intellect is a necessary partner in our quest for the truth, it has its limitations. Even in this finite universe, our reason cannot penetrate the mystery of infinity or the natural laws that govern the microscopic world of the atom. Who can understand the origin of life? What is man? Is he a naked ape or a micro-Christ?

When we study physical phenomena there is a great danger that our intellect will create fantasies, the stuff of legends, and in extreme situations our own gods. Prime examples are socialism and evolution. True religion is not man-made but is revealed. And revelation is accompanied by power (dynamis); in Orthodoxy we call this power grace. “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1: 3). Grace in this respect is the power of the Holy Spirit that penetrates the inner being of man, guiding him to spiritual perfection and salvation. This salvation cannot be achieved by self-motivation or purely rational means. Indeed, many of God’s mysteries remain closed for us. Philosophizing in theology inevitably stifles faith and reverence, and leads in extreme instances to cynicism.

What is particularly disturbing today is the number of Orthodox Christians who have become dependent on their rational understanding, especially when approaching the mysteries of God. Infected by the secular spirit of contemporary society, the traditions of the Church are frequently challenged or are totally ignored. For example, the Virgin birth, in the minds of such Orthodox, has shifted from its true meaning of Virgin birth to that of Virgin conception.

Instead of putting their doubt or lack of understanding on the back burner, they strive to make sense of such a mystery in rational terms without the least concern for the consequences. Blinded by the secular spirit and accustomed to having their own way, they easily engage in blasphemous and heretical thinking. Reason, like the stomach, must be satisfied. There is an insatiable appetite for being in control of knowledge. The result is not Christianity but an ethical ‘feel good’ religion based on personal presumption and pride. This kind of religion is not true religion, but pious mythology. As the Holy Apostle Paul writes to Timothy: “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3: 5).

To accept the mysteries of God, we are required to take a leap

of faith into another world, where as St Valentin (Sventsitsky) says: “we hear the cherubic hymn sung unceasingly (Isaiah 6...), where we see with new eyes and hear with spiritual ears.” What looks like the normal world is not this world, but is a world that has its own laws, that has its own meaning. It is a world that has spiritual power.

This is clearly demonstrated in the life of St Spyridon of Trimythus. In 325 A.D., St Spyridon, a simple, uneducated shepherd attended the Ecumenical Council of that year. Certain pagan philosophers and masters of rhetoric had also been invited to the council. St Spyridon in his simplicity offered to debate with a certain master of rhetoric, who was renowned for his debating skills. The fathers of the council did not agree, thinking that the rhetorician would make a fool of the saint. However, after much persuasion, they reluctantly agreed to allow St Spyridon to enter the debate against the pagan philosopher. St Spyridon turned to his opponent and said the following words: “In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ hear what I have to say to you”. The philosopher agreed.

St Spyridon continued: “We believe that the Lord who created heaven and earth, also created man and the visible and invisible world. We believe that He begot the Word, Who became flesh, lived among men, suffered, died, rose again and raised with Himself the whole race of mankind. We believe that He again will come on the great Day of Judgment to reward good and evil. We dare not reach out to this mystery with our curious minds. And do not ask how this can be, for such things exceed the power of the human mind.” St Spyridon became silent for a moment. Then turning to the rhetorician he said: “Is this not how you see it?”

To the general astonishment of all gathered, the philosopher, who was experienced in debate, remained silent. And then suddenly he said: “Yes, I do see it that way.” Turning to his fellow philosophers he said: “My friends, until now our debate has been based on rational proof and I have been able to gain the debate against anyone’s rational argument. But now out of the mouth of this elder has poured forth such power that I feel that rational argument is of no effect, for no-one is able to oppose God. For those of you who are able to think this way as I do, believe in Christ and let us follow this elder, for God speaks through him.” With great joy the pagan philosopher accepted the Orthodox faith.

Today we have jurisdictions that have become infected with secularism and fill their libraries with behavioral psychology and sociology, the very tools of humanistic socialism.

A true Christian cannot be secularized, because he is not in essence the same as a non-believer. He follows the path of the Church, which in turn gives him power through the mysteries for his struggle against the enemy of our salvation. He is subject to the laws of the Church, which are totally different from the laws of the secular world. Like the Holy Apostle Paul he can say: “My speech and preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit of power.” (1 Cor 2: 4).

## APOPHTHEGMS BY ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, PART 12

*SOURCE: From the book "475 Apophthegms by the God-Inspired St. Isaac the Syrian," pp. 52-57, published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood.*

### 34<sup>th</sup> Lesson

327. My fellow man, love God not for the future riches which He promises to grant in the other life, but for all that He grants you in this life. The Divine Grace through which we are reborn after we have become dead through sin is more significant than the Grace through which He formed us bodily out of non-existence.

328. Zeal is the guard dog that protects God's law and is considered a virtue. A zealot is as heated as a lit oven and as the Cherubim, he is careful and constantly looks out for the cunning and assaults of the evil spirits.

329. Zeal weakens when a man loses faith in Divine Providence and forgets God.

330. The struggler, when confronted by the world, begins to enjoy praises and falls victim to vainglory and is thus "shipwrecked in calm waters."

331. The virtue of zeal is cooled when: a) the desire for this virtue is reduced, and b) we gain false courage in our abilities, not fearing the demons.

332. Faith is a childish concept within a simple heart. Knowledge examines and discusses things to see if they are true. Knowledge guards the natural laws. Knowledge is followed by fear while faith is followed by hope. Man's knowledge is poor, limited, and deficient. The treasures of faith, though, can be contained in neither the heavens nor earth.

333. He who bases everything on knowledge is able to walk on neither water nor fire. But through the power of faith, many walked on water as well as fire and remained unharmed.

334. Faith has inexhaustible treasures and fills the heart of the faithful with delight. Knowledge is but a simple stepping stone that helps one arrive at faith.

335. A person who became worthy of experiencing and tasting the sweetness of faith and then turned his attention towards human knowledge is like the man who exchanges priceless pearls for a copper penny.

### 35<sup>th</sup> Lesson

336. What great and unspeakable riches emanate from faith! How much courage and joy and hope one experiences in his journey with her! Her burdens are so light and her labors so sweet!

337. Bodily virtues are: a) fasting, b) almsgiving, c) vigilance, and d) purity of the flesh.

338. Virtues of the soul are: a) love, b) humility, c) forgiveness, d) guarding from passions, and e) occupations of the nous with the prayer and with spiritual matters.

339. Human knowledge guides us towards: a) the study of earthly wisdom, b) pursuit and achievement of riches, c) vainglory, d) adornment and beautification of the body, and e) physical rest.

340. Those who possess human knowledge are captured by: a) faint-heartedness, b) sorrow, c) despair, d) fear of demons,

e) cowardice and fear of thieves and death, f) worldly cares, and finally g) pride.

341. Faith renders everything to God because it is inspired by the humility of the Holy Spirit.

342. Human knowledge is prideful because it wanders in the darkness and ignores things that are spiritually superior.

343. Divine knowledge guides us towards: a) fasting, b) vigilance, c) prayer, d) almsgiving, e) study of Holy Scripture, f) struggle with the passions, and g) partaking in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

344. There are three manners of life: a) in accordance with nature, b) against nature, and c) above nature. In the first one, a person works with virtues in a natural way -- in other words, he lives with his soul in mind. In the second one, he goes to the fields to feed the swine, just as the prodigal son in the parable -- in other words, he lives with his flesh. And in the third one, his soul takes great delight in the mysteries of God and rejoices -- in other words, he lives in a spiritual bliss.

345. When a person lives the true spiritual life, he has the Comforter within himself and is thus elevated to the angelic orders, experiencing the supernatural life.

### 36<sup>th</sup> Lesson

346. Knowledge of the natural sciences is provided by the body's five senses and is acquired through study.

347. Spiritual knowledge is perceived through the Holy Spirit and not through our physical senses; it is acquired through purity in life and in associations with others.

348. Supernatural knowledge is preoccupied with the comprehension of God and is acquired through the living faith which grants everything.

349. The souls of the sinners are incapable of perceiving and seeing both themselves and each other. If, however, they cleanse themselves through true repentance, they will then be able to see both angels and demons.

350. When you feel within you the joy of the Holy Spirit, this life's worries and sorrows become sweeter than honey!

351. He who desires the Holy Spirit avoids the world and the world avoids him because within quietness and tranquility, he is fed the bread of the Holy Spirit's Grace, i.e., Holy Communion and the prayer.

352. The soul is unable to feel the delight of the Holy Spirit's Grace due to the passions which cover and, thus, hide the Divine Light. As the Psalmist says, "It is through Your Light that we see light."

353. God's love is the fruit of Holy Communion and the prayer which deadens the will of the flesh and guides to self-denial.

354. Impure thoughts never come to someone with an empty stomach.

355. Satiety and a satisfied stomach desire many evils. Prudence and wisdom, on the other hand, is acquired through down-to-earth humility, toil, labor, and hunger.

356. Those who despise and scorn the path of the Lord are also despised and scorned by God, and they are never granted His Grace.

357. First among all passions is the love of oneself and first among virtues is contempt towards comfort of the body.

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## ON THE RECENT HIERARCHICAL FOLLIES...

*From the Editor*

The Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen has been observing the sad events resulting from the territorial disagreements between the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, and the Archbishop of Greece, Christodoulos. Our amazement over the apparent rift is great and our sorrow even greater. It is disheartening that these two Orthodox leaders (and the corresponding Holy Synods) have permitted a worldly, non-theological issue to become the source of division between Churches and the cause for scandal for many faithful in Greece and elsewhere. We cannot help but to also take note of the efforts by both hierarchs to analyze rules, agreements of the past, and even canons; they are both employing a great number of theological scholars and academicians to scrutinize any and all ecclesiastical laws so that their position be justified and defended to the government authorities of Greece.

We wonder, however, why is it that they both remember ecclesiastical rules and canons only when they engage in a power struggle for the various Metropolis seats? Why is it that not an ounce of the same effort is ever applied when both hierarchs (and especially Patriarch Bartholomew) engage in anti-canonical ecumenical events such as co-prayers with heretics and the never-ending dogmatic accommodation of their Papist coun-

terparts? Why is it that for the shake of false union with other Christian faiths, they are permitting their representatives to daily compromise Orthodox dogma and principles in direct contrast with the Church canons, yet not a single hierarchical voice of dissent is ever heard?

We are of the humble opinion that a Church schism or division is never justified unless it is based on the defense of Orthodox values, principles, dogma, canons, and holy traditions. For some time now, we have all been witnesses to an ongoing compromise of our faith, as noted by the actions of a few hierarchs (even in America), yet we are hard pressed to hear a small voice of dissension, much more application of ecclesiastical rules against the ecumenists. We instead see their glorification for being so *understanding* of the Roman Catholics and continuing success in power centralization, as several of them are slowly giving in to ecumenism, the heresy of all heresies...

We pray for the return of peace among the hierarchs. We pray that events of this type will never be experienced within our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese here in America. We also pray that Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Christodoulos find a compromise in their ongoing power struggle and commence refocusing their might and efforts in the real battle against the enemy of mankind, Satan, for the souls of the flocks which our Lord and Savior has entrusted in their care.

In the meantime, Christ's own words are being loudly repeated in our minds and hearts, over and over again: "*Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?*" [Lk 18:8]



# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

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## ST. MARY MAGDALENE THE HOLY MYRRH-BEARER & EQUAL-TO-THE-APOSTLES

*From the web pages of the Orthodox Church in America*

*Editor's Note: There are few of our saints who, even beyond death, continue to be persecuted, sometimes by well-meaning but greatly misinformed Christians. One such saint who is frequently mischaracterized as having been a harlot (!) even though she lived and died a virgin, is St. Mary Magdalene. This great error is being spread by either the heterodox or the media. For example, even the well-meaning and popular movie "The Passion of Christ" is guilty of this error – it incorrectly implies that the sinful woman taken in the act of adultery and brought before Christ (Jn 8:3) was St. Mary Magdalene. We present a quick overview of her life in a humble effort to correct this error and to pay tribute to this great saint of the Orthodox Church.*

On the banks of Lake Galilee, between the cities of Capernaum and Tiberias, lies the small city of Magdala. In this city, a woman was born and grew up whose name has entered forever into the Gospel account.

The Gospel tells us nothing about the youthful years of St. Mary. St. Mark says that the Lord expelled seven devils from her (but none of them were those of fornication). The Gospel relates that St. Mary followed after the Lord when He went with the Apostles through the cities and villages of Judea and Galilee preaching the Kingdom of God. Together with the pious women, Joanna the wife of Khuza (steward of Herod), Susanna, and others, she served Him from her own possessions (Lk 8:1-3) and undoubtedly, shared with the Apostles the evangelic tasks in common with the other women.

St. Luke indicates that, together with the other women, she followed Christ during His procession to Golgotha; the women were weeping and wailing while He consoled them. The Gospel also relates that she was present on Golgotha at the moment of the Lord's Crucifixion. While all the disciples of the Saviour ran away, she remained fearlessly at the Cross together with the Mother of God and the Apostle John. The evangelists enumerate among those standing at the Cross the mother of the Apostle James the Less, and Salome, and other women followers of the Lord from Galilee. However, they all mention first St. Mary Magdalene; the Apostle John, besides the Mother of God, names only her and Mary Cleopas. This indicates her importance and prominence amidst all the women gathered round the Lord.

She was faithful to Him not only in the days of His glory, but also at the moment of His extreme humiliation and Insult. As the evangelist Matthew relates, she was present at the burial of the Lord. Before her eyes, Joseph and Nikodemos went out to the tomb with His lifeless body; and also before her eyes, they covered over the entrance to the cave with a large stone, behind which went the Sun of Life.

The women rested each in their own home on Sabbath, having simply gathered aromatics to go at dawn Sunday to the grave of the Lord, and, according to the custom of the Jews, to anoint His body with them. The evangelist Matthew writes that the women came to the grave at dawn, or as the evangelist Mark expresses, extremely early before the rising of the sun; the evangelist John, as it were elaborating upon these accounts, says that St. Mary came to the grave so early that it was still dark.

Seeing the stone pushed away from the cave, St. Mary rushed away in fear and

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ran where Peter and John dwelt. Hearing the strange message that the Lord was gone from the tomb, both Apostles ran to the tomb and, seeing the shroud and winding cloths, they were amazed. The Apostles told nobody, but St. Mary stood at the entrance of the tomb and wept. Here, in this dark tomb, still so recently lay her lifeless Lord. Wanting proof that the tomb really was empty, she went down to it; and here a strange light suddenly prevailed upon her. She saw two angels in white garments, the one sitting at the head, the other at the foot, where the Body of Jesus had been placed. She heard the question: "Woman, why weepest thou?" She answered them with the words which she had said to the Apostles: "They have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have put Him."

Having said this, she turned around, and at this moment saw the Risen Jesus standing about the grave, but did not recognize Him. He asked her: "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom dost thou seek?" She answered thinking that she was seeing the gardener: "Sir, if thou hast taken him, tell where thou hast put Him, and I will reclaim Him." But shortly after this moment, and after He called her name "Mary," she immediately recognized the Lord's voice, a voice which was known from the day He healed her. This was the voice in those days and years when, together with the other pious women, she followed the Lord through all the cities and places where His preaching was heard. She gave a joyful shout "Rabbi," which means Teacher.

Respect and love, fondness and deep veneration, a feeling of thankfulness and recognition at His splendor as great Teacher, all came together in this single outcry. She was able to say nothing more and she threw herself down at the feet of her Teacher, to wash them with tears of joy. But the Lord said to her: "Touch me not, for I am still not ascended to My Father;

but go to My brethren and tell them: I ascend to My Father and your Father and to My God and to your God."

She came to herself and again ran to the Apostles, so as to do the will of Him sending her to preach. Again she ran into the house, where the Apostles stayed still in dismay, and announced to them the joyous message "I have seen the Lord!" And aside from the Mother of God (who saw the resurrected Christ first) this was the first preaching in the world about the Resurrection. The Apostles were obliged to proclaim the Glad Tidings to the world, but she proclaimed it to the Apostles themselves.

Holy Scripture does not tell us about the life of St. Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection of Christ, but it is impossible to doubt that if in the terrifying minutes of Christ's Crucifixion she was at the foot of His Cross with His All-Pure Mother and St. John, then, she stayed with them during all the happier time after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. Thus, in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Luke writes that all the Apostles with one mind stayed in prayer and supplication, with certain women and Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Holy Tradition testifies that when the Apostles departed from Jerusalem for preaching to all the ends of the earth, St. Mary Magdalene also went together with them to preach. A daring woman, whose heart was full of remembrance of the Resurrection, she went beyond her native borders and set off to preach in pagan Rome. Everywhere she proclaimed to people about Christ and His Teaching, and when many did not believe that Christ is risen, she repeated to them what she had said to the Apostles on the radiant morning of the Resurrection: "I have seen the Lord!" With this preaching she went throughout Italy.

Tradition relates that in Italy, St. Mary Magdalene visited the Emperor Tiberias (14-37 AD) and proclaimed to him Christ's

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Resurrection. According to tradition, she took him a red egg as a symbol of the Resurrection, a symbol of new life, with the words: "Christ is Risen!" Then she told the emperor that in his Province of Judea was the innocently condemned Jesus the Galilean, a holy man, a maker of miracles, powerful before God and all mankind, executed on the instigation of the Jewish High-Priests and the sentence affirmed by the procurator named by Tiberias, Pontius Pilate. She repeated the words of the Apostles, that believing in the Redemption of Christ from the vanity of life is not as with perishable silver or gold, but rather the precious Blood of Christ is like a spotless and pure Lamb.

The custom of the paschal eggs is attributed to St. Mary, and has since spread among Christians all over the entire world. On an ancient hand-written Greek *ustav*, written on parchment and kept in the monastery library of Saint Athanasios near Thessaloniki, is an established prayer read on the day of Holy Pascha for the blessing of eggs and cheese. In it is indicated that as the Abbot is passing out the blessed eggs, he says: "Thus have we received from the holy fathers, who preserved this custom from the very time of the holy apostles, wherefore the holy equal-unto-the-apostles St. Mary Magdalene first showed believers the example of this joyful offering."

St. Mary Magdalene continued her preaching in Italy and in the city of Rome itself. Evidently, the Apostle Paul has precisely her in view in his Epistle to the Romans (16:6) where, together with other ascetics of evangelic preaching, he mentions Mary (Mariam), who as he expresses "has done much for us." Evidently, she extensively served the Church in its means of subsistence and its difficulties, being exposed to dangers, and sharing with the Apostles the labours of preaching.

According to Church tradition, she stayed in Rome until the arrival of St. Paul, and remained there two more years following his departure from Rome (after his first court judgment). From Rome, St. Mary, already bent with age, moved to Ephesus where unceasingly laboured the holy Apostle John, who wrote with her the first 20 Chapters of his Gospel. There, the saint finished her earthly life and was buried.

Her holy relics were transferred in the 9<sup>th</sup> century to Constantinople, and placed in the monastery Church of Saint Lazarus. In the era of the Crusader campaigns, they were stolen by the Latins, transferred to Rome, and placed under the altar of the Lateran Cathedral. Part of her relics are located in France near Marseilles, where over them at the foot of a steep mountain is erected a splendid church in her honour.

St. Mary loved the Lord Who called her to a new life. She was always faithful to Him, even when the disciples, in fear, deserted Him at His Crucifixion. This is why the Lord, knowing her faithfulness, appeared to her early on and esteemed her worthy to proclaim His Resurrection. St. Mary Magdalene's feast day is July 22nd. May her love for the Lord and her courage in proclaiming His truth be an inspiration for all Christians of our days.

## SOME DETAILS ON TOLLHOUSES

*Edited from "St. Theodora's Journey through the Aerial Toll-Houses," from the Orthodox Information Christian Center*

According to the Church fathers, after each person dies the soul undergoes a series of tests in the regions of the air where evil spirits have their domain. At each of these tests, the demons make manifest all the sins that each person committed during their life. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Gregory, a disciple of Saint Basil the New, saw Blessed Theodora in a vision passing through these torments. Theodora explained that it was a terrible thing, frightening even to recollect. She said that howling black demons with glowing eyes and gnashing teeth attempted to devour her. Angels came and finally death came, and as if through a bitter drink caused her soul to shudder and leave the body. Then with all her good deeds in hand, the angels took her soul through the following toll houses:

**The first torment:** Here souls are tormented for idle speech, that is speaking without thinking, saying vile things, speaking without need or order, and speaking angry, foul, unclean, or blasphemous words. Shameless songs, wild cries, and laughter complete with time and place are exposed. Then the good deeds are needed to counterbalance the sins that were not confessed.

**The second torment:** Here is tested every lying word, failure to keep promises, vain use of God's name, failure to keep vows given to God, and insincere or false confession. As at each station, good deeds and the prayers of one's spiritual father are needed.

**The third torment:** At this station, souls must answer for speaking evil of others and spreading rumors about them. Also, judging the deeds of others, damaging someone's reputation, slander, and laughing at other's deficiencies. Even agreeing with others who do so is judged here as well as having the inclination to commit these sins.

**The fourth torment:** Here demons, who have the faces of sensuous gluttons and despicable drunkards, rush out to punish gluttony. They find fault with eating in the morning without having first prayed and putting on the sign of the cross, or eating before church service is over during the fasts. They reveal all the times that a person was drunk and produce the cups from which they drank and with whom. The transgressions are actually recorded. The holy angels said to Blessed Theodora that being merciful, kind hearted to the needy and beggars, giving help to those who ask, and giving alms, cleanses souls with their good deeds, and can thus easily obtain from God forgiveness for their sins.

**The fifth torment:** This is the station of sloth, where sinners are accused of all those days and hours that they spent in idleness. Here is where judgment takes place of those who did not work but lived in the labors of others. Also, those who

were given wages for a job but never completed the work, those who did not care to praise God and were too lazy to go to church on holidays and Sundays, either to the morning service, Divine Liturgy of other church services, and those accused of despondency and carelessness about the salvation of their souls.

**The sixth torment:** This is the station of stealing that goes all the way back to one's childhood; one is guilty even if the sin stemmed from a lack of reason.

**The seventh torment:** This is the station of avarice and love of money. Those who did not have a love of riches, who were content with what God had given, and those who diligently gave to the needy are helped through this station.

**The eighth torment:** This is the station of usury, that is those who lend money for illegal interest, those who gain riches by exploiting their neighbors, those that take bribes, and those who, by stealing, indirectly acquire what belongs to others.

**The ninth torment:** Next is the torment of injustice. This is the judgment place for those who condemn the innocent and acquit the guilty for the sake of gain, as well as those who do not give the appointed wages to those whom they hire, and the merchants who use false weights and measures, and others who are in some other way unjust.

**The tenth torment:** This is the torment of envy. Here people face the accusation of the lack of love, hatred towards others, unfriendliness, and other manifestations of hatred.

**The eleventh torment:** Here is the station of pride where arrogant spirits accuse souls of vanity and absolute reliance on oneself rather than on God. They also attack those who boasted, disdained others, and failed to give proper honor to their parents, their government, and their superiors appointed by God, and for failure to obey them.

**The twelfth torment:** The torment of anger and ruthlessness. Here is the eldest of the evil spirits: one who sits on his throne full of anger, ruthlessness, and pride. Full of this hostility, he orders his servants to torment and accuse the soul of angry and unfeeling words, angry looks, and for punishing one's children severely. They show the times and the persons involved.

**The thirteenth torment:** Here is the torment of bearing grudges. Merciless accusations await those who return evil for evil and nurture evil thoughts against their neighbors.

**The fourteenth torment:** Here is the torment of murder where, not only such men as robbers are punished, but also those who have in some way wounded another, given him a blow, pushed him angrily, or shoved him.

**The fifteenth torment:** Here is the torment of magic, sorcery, poisoning, and incantations. The spirits here resemble serpents, snakes, and toads. They are frightening and repulsive.

**The sixteenth torment:** Here is the station of fornication where souls are accused of actual fornication as well as amorous daydreaming, impure glances, lustful touches, and passionate stroking. The prince of this torment is clothed in a dirty garment full of stench, befouled by a bloody foam. Here the

demons point out the persons, places and times, while the soul trembles with shame and fear.

**The seventeenth torment:** This is the torment of adultery for the married who did not observe marital fidelity toward each other. Those who committed rape are punished as well as those who have defiled their vows of chastity.

**The eighteenth torment:** This is the station of Sodomite sins. Souls are accused of unnatural sins, incest, and other revolting deeds performed in secret. The prince of this torment is befouled by pus and full of stench that could not be endured. The ugliness, cruelty, and ruthlessness of these demons is unimaginable.

**The nineteenth torment:** Here is found the torment of heresies, where the incorrect reasoning of faith is punished. Also, turning away from the Orthodox confession of faith, lack of faith and doubts about faith, denial of the holy things or a negative attitude towards them, and similar sins are punished.

**The twentieth torment:** This station tests the lack of compassion and cruelty of heart. The prince of this place is terrible, dried up, and depressed. Here the souls of the unmerciful are tormented without mercy. Even if a person performs the most outstanding deeds, mortifies himself by fasting, prays without ceasing, and guards the purity of his body, if he has no mercy, he is cast into the abyss of hell and he receives no mercy for all eternity.

**The importance of confession:** The angels told Blessed Theodora that all Christians go by way of these torment stations but not everyone is tormented if they have confessed their sins fully. Some are moved by a false sense of shame at the time of confession and keep their deeds secret. When a person confesses, repents, and regrets his sins, the sins are wiped out by God's mercy. Then the tormentors of the air open their books and find nothing written and the soul ascends joyfully to the throne of God. The evil spirits are angered by this. If the person is still alive after his confession, the demons attempt again to create new sins. Still others tell some sins to one's spiritual father and other sins to another to avoid one spiritual father's judgment. These kinds of sins are punished for this type of confession and they suffer a great deal in the torment stations.



One word from a humble and [spiritually] experienced man that is painfully born from the depths of his heart, has greater worth than many clever sayings from an external man that come quickly from his educated mouth. His words don't speak truth to the souls of men, for they are fleshy words and not the flames of the fire of Pentecost.

(Blessed Elder Paisios the Athonite, +1994)

## Ἡ Λειτουργία Στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία τὸ Γενάρη τοῦ 1919

ΠΗΓΗ: Απόσπασμα ἀπὸ τὸ ὁμώνυμο ἄρθρο τοῦ Ἀνδρέα Κυριακοῦ στὸ περιοδικὸ «Τὰ Πάτρια» σελ. 4-5, 57-61, 1996.

**Κ**άποτε μοῦ μίλησε ὁ παπποῦς μου γιὰ ἓνα Κρητικὸ παπά, ἀληθινὸ παλληκάρη, ποῦ τὸ Γενάρη τοῦ 1919 λειτούργησε κάτω ἀπὸ τοὺς χιλιόχρονους θόλους τῆς Ἁγία-Σοφιάς! Πρωταγωνιστὴς αὐτοῦ τοῦ συγκλονιστικοῦ γεγονότος τῆς ἐθνικῆς μας ζωῆς, τὸ ὁποῖο δυστυχῶς ἀγνοοῦν πολλοὶ Ἕλληνες, ἦταν ἓνα ἀληθινὸ παλληκάρη, ἓνα βλαστάρι τῆς λεβεντογέννας Κρήτης, τῆς ὁποίας τὰ ἀνδρεία παιδιά ἔδωσαν πάντα τὸ μεγάλο παρὸν σ' ὅλους τοὺς ἀγῶνες τοῦ Γένους, ἀπὸ τὰ πανάρχαια χρόνια ὡς τὶς μέρες μας. Ἀναφερόμαστε στὸν παπα-Λευτέρη Νουφράκη ἀπὸ τὶς Ἀλῶνες Ρεθύμνου, ὁ ὁποῖος ὑπηρετοῦσε ὡς στρατιωτικὸς ἱερέας στὴ Β' Ἑλληνικὴ Μεραρχία, μιὰ ἀπὸ τὶς δυὸ Μεραρχίες ποῦ συμμετεῖχαν στὶς ἀρχὲς τοῦ 1919 στὸ «συμμαχικὸ» ἐκστρατευτικὸ σῶμα στὴν Οὐκρανία. Ἡ Μεραρχία αὐτὴ στὸ δρόμο πρὸς τὴν Οὐκρανία στάθμευσε γιὰ λίγο στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη, τὴν Πόλη τῶν ὀνείρων τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ λαοῦ, ἡ ὁποία βρισκόταν τότε ὑπὸ «συμμαχικὴ ἐπικυριαρχία», ὕστερα ἀπὸ τὸ τέλος τοῦ Α' Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου.

Μιὰ ομάδα Ἑλλήνων ἀξιωματικῶν μὲ ἐπικεφαλῆς τὸ γενναῖο κρητικὸ καὶ μαζί του τὸν ταξίαρχο Φραντζῆ, τὸν Ταγματάρχη Λιαρομάτη, τὸ Λοχαγὸ Σταματίου καὶ τὸν Ὑπολοχαγὸ Νικολάου ἀγνάντευαν ἀπὸ τὸ πλοῖο τὴν πόλη καὶ τὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία, κρύβοντας βαθειὰ μέσα στὴν καρδιά τους τὸ μεγάλο μυστικὸ τους, τὴ μεγάλη ἀπόφαση ποῦ εἶχαν πάρει τὸ περασμένο βράδυ, ὕστερα ἀπὸ πρόταση καὶ ἔντονη ἐπιμονὴ τοῦ λιονταρόψυχου Κρητικοῦ παπα-Λευτέρη Νουφράκη. Νὰ βγοῦν δηλαδὴ στὴν πόλη καὶ νὰ λειτουργήσουν στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία.

Ὅλοι τους ἦταν διστακτικοί, ὅταν ἀκουσαν τὸν παπα-Λευτέρη νὰ τοὺς προτείνει τὸ μεγάλο ἐγχείρημα. Ἦξεραν ὅτι τὰ πράγματα ἦταν πολὺ δύσκολα. Ἡ Ἁγία-Σοφία ἦταν ἀκόμη τζαμί καὶ σίγουρα κάποιον φύλακες θὰ ἦταν ἐκεῖ, κάποιον ἄλλοι θὰ πήγαιναν γιὰ προσευχή, δὲν ἦταν δύσκολο ἀπὸ τὴ μία στιγμὴ στὴν ἄλλη νὰ γεμίσει ἡ ἐκκλησία. Ὑστερα ἦταν καὶ οἱ ἀνώτεροί τους ποῦ δὲν θὰ ἔβλεπαν μὲ καλὸ μάτι αὐτὴ τὴν ἐνέργεια, ἡ ὁποία σίγουρα θὰ προκαλοῦσε θύελλα ἀντιδράσεων ἀπὸ τοὺς «συμμάχους» γιὰ τὴν «προκλητικότητά» της. Ἴσως μάλιστα νὰ δημιουργεῖτο καὶ διπλωματικὸ ἐπίσῳδιο ποῦ θὰ ἔφερνε σὲ δύσκολη θέση τὴν Ἑλληνικὴ κυβέρνησι καὶ τὸν πρωθυπουργὸ Ἐλευθέριο Βενιζέλο. Ὅμως ὁ παπα-Λευτέρης εἶχε πάρει τὴν ἀπόφασή του, ἦταν ἀποφασιστικὸς καὶ κατηγορηματικὸς.

- Ἄν δὲν ἔρθετε ἐσεῖς, θὰ πάω μοναχὸς μου! Μόνο ἓνα ψάλτη θέλω. Ἐσὺ, Κωνσταντῖνε (Λιαρομάτη), θὰ μοῦ κάνεις τὸν ψάλτη;

- Ἐντάξει, παππούλη, τοῦ ἀπάντησε ὁ Ταγματάρχης, ποῦ πῆρε καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν ἴδια ἀπόφαση, κι ὅλα πιά εἶχαν μπεῖ στὸ δρόμο τους.

Τελικά, μαζί τους πῆγαν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι. Τὸ πλοῖο ποῦ μετέφερε τὴ Μεραρχία εἶχε ἀγκυροβολήσει στ' ἀνοιχτά, γι' αὐτὸ ἐπιβιβάστηκαν σὲ μιὰ βάρκα στὴν ὁποία κωπηλατοῦσε ἓνας Ρωμῖος τῆς Πόλης καὶ σὲ λίγο ἀποβιβάστηκαν στὴν προκουμαία. Ὁ Κοσμάς, ὁ ντόπιος βαρκάρης, ἔδεσε τὴ βάρκα καὶ τοὺς ὀδήγησε ἀπὸ τὸ συντομότερο δρόμο στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία. Ἡ πόρτα ἦταν ἀνοιχτὴ λὲς καὶ τοὺς περίμενε. Ὁ Τοῦρκος φύλακας κάτι πῆγε νὰ πει στὴ γλώσσα του, ὅμως τὸν καθήλωσε στὴ θέση του καὶ τὸν ἄφησε ἄφωνο ἓνα ἄγριο κι ἀποφασιστικὸ βλέμμα τοῦ Ταξίαρχου Φραντζῆ. Ὅλοι μπῆκαν μέσα μὲ εὐλάβεια καὶ προχώρησαν κάνοντας τὸ σταυρὸ τους. Ὁ παπα-Λευτέρης ψιθύρισε μὲ μεγάλη συγκίνησι: «Εἰσελεύσομαι εἰς τὸν οἶκον σου, προσκυνήσω πρὸς Ναὸν Ἁγίον σου ἐν φόβῳ...».

Προχωρεῖ γρήγορα, δὲν χρονοτριβεῖ. Ἐντοπίζει τὸ χῶρο στὸν ὁποῖο βρισκόταν τὸ Ἱερό καὶ ἡ Ἁγία Τράπεζα. Βρίσκει ἓνα τραπεζάκι, τὸ τοποθετεῖ σ' αὐτὴ τὴ θέση, ἀνοίγει τὴν τσάντα του, βγάζει ὅλα τὰ ἀπαραίτητα γιὰ τὴ Θεία Λειτουργία, βάζει τὸ πετραχήλι του καὶ ἀρχίζει:

- Εὐλογημένη ἡ Βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων.

- Ἀμήν, ἀποκρίνεται ὁ Ταγματάρχης Λιαρομάτης καὶ ἡ Θεία Λειτουργία στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία ἔχει ἀρχίσει. Μακάρι νὰ μᾶς ἀξιώσει ὁ Θεὸς νὰ τὴν ὀλοκληρώσουμε, σκέφτονται ὅλοι, καὶ σταυροκοπιοῦνται μὲ κατάνυξη. Οἱ ἀξιωματικοὶ μοιάζουν νὰ τὰ ἔχουν χαμένα, ὅλα ἔγιναν τόσο ξαφνικὰ καὶ φαίνονται ἀπίστευτα.

Ἡ Θεία Λειτουργία προχωρεῖ κανονικά. Ἡ Ἁγία-Σοφία ὕστερα ἀπὸ 466 ὀλόκληρα χρόνια ξαναλειτουργεῖται! Ὁ παπα-Λευτέρης συνεχίζει. Ὅλα γίνονται ἱεροπρεπῶς, σύμφωνα μὲ τὸ τυπικὸ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ἀκούγονται τὰ «εἰρηνικά», τὸ «Κύριε ἐλέησον», «ὁ Μονογενὴς Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ...», ποῦ γράφτηκε ἀπὸ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν Ἰουστινιανὸ μὲ τὴν προσταγὴ καὶ τὴν φροντίδα τοῦ ὁποῖου χτίστηκε καὶ ἡ Ἁγία-Σοφία. Ἀκολουθεῖ ἡ Μικρὴ Εἴσοδος, τὸ «Τῆ Ὑπερμάχῳ Στρατηγῷ...», ὁ Ἀπόστολος ἀπὸ τὸν Ταξίαρχο Φραντζῆ καὶ τὸ Εὐαγγελικὸ Ἀνάγνωσμα ἀπὸ τὸν παπα-Λευτέρη. Χρὴν νεωκόρου ἐκτελεῖ ὁ Ὑπολοχαγὸς Νικολάου.

Στὸ μεταξὺ ἡ Ἁγία-Σοφία ἀρχίζει νὰ γεμίζει μὲ Τούρκους. Ὁ παπα-Νουφράκης δὲν πτοεῖται καὶ συνεχίζει. Οἱ ἄλλοι κοιτάζουν σαστισμένοι πότε τὸν ἀτρόμητο παπά καὶ πότε τοὺς Τούρκους, ποῦ μέχρι ἐκείνη τὴ στιγμὴ παρακολουθοῦν σιωπηλοὶ μὴ μπορώντας ἴσως νὰ πιστέψουν στὰ μάτια τους, γιὰ αὐτὸ ποῦ γινόταν ἐκείνη τὴν ὥρα μέσα στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία ἦταν πραγματικὰ κάτι τὸ ἀπίστευτο.

Μετὰ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο ἀκολουθεῖ τὸ Χερουβικὸ ἀπὸ τὸν Ταγματάρχη Λιαρομάτη, ἐνῶ ὁ παπα-Λευτέρης τοποθετεῖ τὸ ἀντιμήνσιο πάνω στὸ τραπεζάκι, γιὰ νὰ κάνει τὴν Προσκομιδὴ. Οἱ Τούρκοι συνεχῶς πληθαίνουν. Οἱ ὄρες εἶναι δύσκολες, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνεπανάληπτες, ἐπικές. Ὁ παπα-Νουφράκης συνεχίζει. Βγάζει ἀπὸ τὴν τσάντα ἓνα μικρὸ Ἅγιο Ποτήρι, ἓνα δισκάριο, ἓνα μαχαιράκι, ἓνα

μικρό πρόσφορο κι ένα μικρό μπουκαλάκι με νάμα. Μὲ ἱερὴ συγκίνηση καὶ κατάνυξη κάνει τὴν προσκομιδὴ, ἐνῶ ὁ Λιαρομάτης συνεχίζει νὰ ψάλει τὸ Χερουβικό. Ὅταν ὀλοκλήρωσε τὴν Προσκομιδὴ, στρέφεται στὸν Ὑπολοχαγὸ Νικολάου, τοῦ λέει ν' ἀνάψει τὸ κερὶ γιὰ νὰ ἀκολουθήσει ἡ Μεγάλῃ Εἴσοδος. Ὁ νεαρὸς Ὑπολοχαγὸς προχωρεῖ μπροστὰ μὲ τὸ ἀναμμένο κερὶ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ ὁ παπᾶς βροντοφωνάζοντας: «Πάσαντων ἡμῶν μνησθεῖ Κύριος ὁ Θεός...».

Στὴ συνέχεια ἀκολουθοῦν οἱ «Αἰτήσεις» καὶ τὸ «Πιστεύω», τὸ ὁποῖο εἶπε ὁ Φρατζῆς. Στὸ μεταξύ ἡ Ἁγία-Σοφία, ἔχει γεμίσει μὲ Τούρκους κι ἀνάμεσά τους ὑπάρχουν καὶ πολλοὶ Ἕλληνες τῆς Πόλης, ποὺ βρέθηκαν ἐκεῖ αὐτὴ τὴν ὥρα καὶ παρακολουθοῦν μὲ συγκίνηση τὴ λειτουργία, χωρὶς νὰ τολμοῦν νὰ ἐξωτερικεύσουν τὰ συναισθήματά τους «διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων» δηλαδὴ τῶν Τούρκων. Μόνο κάποιες στιγμὲς δὲν μποροῦν νὰ συγκρατήσουν τὰ δάκρυα, ποὺ τρέχουν ἀπὸ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς τους καὶ γιὰ νὰ μὴν προδοθοῦν φροντίζουν καὶ τὰ σκουπίζουν πρὶν γίνουν «πύρινο» ποτάμι καὶ τότε ποιοὺς θὰ μπορούσε νὰ τὰ συγκρατήσει.

Ἡ Λειτουργία στὸ μεταξύ φτάνει στὸ ἱερότερο σημεῖο της, τὴν Ἀναφορά. Ὁ παπα-Λευτέρης, μὲ πάλλουσα ἀπὸ τὴ συγκίνηση φωνή, λέει: «Τὰ Σὰ ἐκ τῶν Σῶν, Σοὶ προσφέρομεν κατὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ πάντα». Ὅλοι οἱ ἀξιοματικοὶ γονατίζουν καὶ ἡ φωνὴ τοῦ Ταγματάρχη Λιαρομάτη ἀκούγεται νὰ ψέλνει τὸ «Σὲ ὑμνοῦμεν, Σὲ εὐλογοῦμεν, Σοὶ εὐχαριστοῦμεν, Κύριε, καὶ δεόμεθά Σου, ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν». Σὲ λίγη ὥρα ἡ ἀναίμακτη θυσία τοῦ Κυρίου μας ἔχει τελειώσει στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία, ὕστερα ἀπὸ 466 ὀλόκληρα χρόνια!! Ἀκολουθεῖ τὸ «Ἄξιόν ἐστίν», τὸ «Πάτερ ἡμῶν», τὸ «Μετὰ φόβου Θεοῦ πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης προσέλθετε» καὶ ὅλοι οἱ ἀξιοματικοὶ πλησιάζουν καὶ κοινωνοῦν τὰ Ἄχραντα Μυστήρια. Ὁ παπα-Λευτέρης λέει γρήγορα τὶς εὐχὲς καὶ ἐνῶ ὁ Λιαρομάτης ψέλνει τὸ «Εἶη τὸ ὄνομα Κυρίου εὐλογημένον...» καταλύει τὸ ὑπόλοιπον της Θείας Κοινωνίας καὶ ἀπευθυνόμενος στὸν Ὑπολοχαγὸ Νικολάου τοῦ λέει: «Μάζεψέ τα γρήγορα ὅλα καὶ βάλτα μέσα στὴν τσάντα». Ὑστερα κάνει τὴν Ἀπόλυση!

Ἡ Θεία Λειτουργία στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία, ἔχει ὀλοκληρωθεῖ. Ἐνα ὄνειρο δεκάδων γενεῶν Ἑλλήνων ἔχει γίνῃ πραγματικότητα. Ὁ παπα-Νουφράκης καὶ οἱ τέσσερις ἀξιοματικοὶ εἶναι ἔτοιμοι νὰ ἀποχωρήσουν καὶ νὰ ἐπιστρέψουν στὸ πλοῖο. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία ὁμως εἶναι γεμάτη Τούρκους, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἔχουν ἀρχίσει νὰ γίνονται ἄγριοι, ἐπιθετικοὶ συνειδητοποιώντας τί ἀκριβῶς εἶχε συμβεῖ. Ἡ ζωὴ τους κινδυνεύει ἄμεσα. Ὅμως δὲ διστάζουν, πλησιάζει ὁ ἕνας τὸν ἄλλο, γίνονται «ἕνα σῶμα», μιὰ γροθιά καὶ προχωροῦν πρὸς τὴν ἐξοδο.

Οἱ Τούρκοι εἶναι ἔτοιμοι νὰ τοὺς ἐπιτεθοῦν, ὅταν ἕνας Τούρκος ἀξιοματοῦχος παρουσιάζεται μὲ τὴν ἀκολουθία του καὶ τοὺς λέει: «Ντουροῦν χέμεν» (ἀφήστε τους νὰ περάσουν). Τὸ εἶπε μὲ μῖσος. Θὰ ἤθελε νὰ βάνει τὰ χέρια του στὸ αἷμα τους, ὁμως ἐκείνη τὴ στιγμὴ ἔτσι ἔπρεπε νὰ γίνῃ, αὐτὸ ἐπέβαλαν τὰ συμφέροντα τῆς πατρίδας του, δὲν

ἦταν χρήσιμο γι' αὐτοὺς νὰ σκοτώσουν τώρα πέντε Ἕλληνες ἀξιοματικούς μέσα στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία.

Δὲν ξεχνᾷ ὅτι στ' ἀνοιχτὰ τῆς Πόλης βρίσκονται δυὸ ἐτοιμοπόλεμες Ἑλληνικὲς Μεραρχίες κι ἀκόμη ὅτι ἡ Κωνσταντινούπολη βρίσκεται οὐσιαστικὰ ὑπὸ τὴν ἐπικυριαρχία τῶν νικητῶν τοῦ Α' Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου στοὺς ὁποίους βέβαια δὲν συμπεριλαμβάνονται οἱ Τούρκοι.

Στὸ ἄκουσμα αὐτῶν τῶν λόγων οἱ Τούρκοι ὑποχωροῦν. Ὁ παπα-Νουφράκης καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἀξιοματικοὶ βγαίνουν ἀπὸ τὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία κατευθυνόμενοι πρὸς τὴν προκουμαία, ὅπου τοὺς περιμένει ἡ βάρκα.

Ἐνας μεγάλος Τούρκος τοὺς ἀκολουθεῖ, σηκώνει ἕνα ξύλο καὶ ὀρμᾷ γιὰ νὰ χτυπήσει τὸν παπα-Νουφράκη. Διαισθάνεται, ξέρει ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ παπᾶς εἶναι ὁ ἐμπνευστὴς, ὁ δημιουργὸς αὐτοῦ τοῦ γεγονότος. Ὁ ἥρωϊκὸς παπᾶς σκύβει γιὰ νὰ προφυλαχθεῖ, ἀλλὰ ὁ Τούρκος καταφέρνει καὶ τὸν χτυπᾷ στὸν ὦμο. Λυγίζει τὸ σῶμα του ἀπὸ τὸν ἀβάσταχτο πόνο, ὁμως μαζεῦει τὶς δυνάμεις του, ἀνασηκώνεται καὶ συνεχίζει νὰ προχωρεῖ. Στὸ μεταξύ ὁ Ταγματάρχης Λιαρομάτης καὶ ὁ Λοχαγὸς Σταματίου ἀφοπλίζουν τὸν Τούρκο, ποὺ εἶναι ἔτοιμος γιὰ νὰ δώσει τὸ πιὸ δυνατό κι ἴσως τὸ τελειωτικὸ χτύπημα στὸν παπά.

Ἦδη, πλησιάζουν στὴ βάρκα. Μπαίνουν ὅλοι μέσα. Ὁ Κοσμάς μαζεῦει τὰ σχοινιά καὶ ἀρχίζει γρήγορα νὰ κωπηλατεῖ. Σὲ λίγο βρίσκονται πάνω στὸ ἑλληνικὸ πολεμικὸ πλοῖο ἀσφαλῆς καὶ θριαμβευτῆς. Βέβαια ἀκολούθησε διπλωματικὸ ἐπίσποδιο καὶ οἱ «σύμμαχοι» διαμαρτυρήθηκαν ἔντονα στὸν πρωθυπουργὸ Ἐλευθέριο Βενιζέλο, ὁ ὁποῖος ἀναγκάστηκε νὰ ἐπιπλήξει τὸν παπα-Λευτέρη Νουφράκη. Ὅμως κρυφὰ ἐπικοινωνήσε μαζί του καὶ «τὸν ἐπαίνεσε καὶ συνεχάρη τὸν πατριώτη ἱερέα, ποὺ ἔστω καὶ γιὰ λίγη ὥρα ζωντάνεψε μέσα στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία τὰ πιὸ ἱερά ὄνειρα τοῦ Ἔθνους μας».

Αὐτὸ ἦταν σὲ γενικὲς γραμμὲς τὸ ἱστορικὸ τῆς Θείας Λειτουργίας ποὺ ἐγίνε ὕστερα ἀπὸ 446 χρόνια στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία ἀπὸ τὸν ἥρωϊκὸ παπα-Λευτέρη Νουφράκη. Σίγουρα οἱ περισσότεροὶ Νεοέλληνες τὸ ἀγνοοῦμε. Τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ λιονταρόψυχου Κρητικοῦ δὲ λέει τίποτε στὸ νοῦ καὶ στὴν καρδιά μας. Κι ὁμως αὐτὸς ὁ ἀπλὸς παπᾶς, ἀπὸ τὶς Ἀλῶνες Ρεθύμνου, σήκωσε πάνω στοὺς ὦμους του καὶ ζωντάνεψε, ἔστω καὶ γιὰ λίγο, ἕνα ἀπὸ τὰ πιὸ ἐπικά, πιὸ ἱερά, πιὸ ἅγια ὄνειρα.



Ὅταν οἱ ἀνομίες θὰ κυριεύσουν τὸ νοῦ καὶ τὴν καρδιά τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅταν θὰ ἐξαγριωθοῦν τόσο πολὺ ὥστε νὰ λέγουν ὅτι δὲν τοὺς χρειάζεται πλέον ὁ Θεός, ἡ Ἐκκλησία καὶ οἱ Ἱερεῖς, ὅταν θὰ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία καὶ ἡ τρέλλα τοῦ μίσους σὲ ὅλη τὴν Γῆ, τότε θὰ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλος.

Γέροντας Δομέτιος Μανωλάκε (+1975)

## Τί Πρέπει Νά Κάνετε Έάν Κάποιος Οικείος Σας Έχει Πέσει Στήν Παγίδα Τών Αιρέσεων

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**Π**ρῶτα ἀπ' ὅλα πρέπει νά διατηρήσετε τήν ψυχραιμία σας. Naί, ἡ οἰκογένειά σας περνᾷ μία βαριά καί σκληρή δοκιμασία, ἀλλά αὐτό εἶναι κάτι πού μπορεῖ νά διορθωθεῖ. Τό μεγαλύτερο μέρος τῶν ἀνθρώπων πού πιάστηκαν στά δίχτυα τῶν αιρέσεων ἀργά ἢ γρήγορα κατορθώνουν νά ξεφύγουν. Ἀλλά τό κατά πόσο γρήγορα ὁ οικεῖος σας θά ἐγκαταλείψει τήν αἵρεση καί σέ ποία κατάσταση, αὐτό ἐξαρτᾶται ὡς ἐπὶ τό πλεῖστον ἀπό ἐσᾶς καί τὰ ὑπόλοιπα μέλη τῆς οἰκογενείας σας. Πάντως, σέ κάθε περίπτωση, νά εἶστε ἔτοιμοι γιά τό γεγονός ὅτι οἱ προσπάθειές σας δέν θά εἶναι βραχυχρόνιες. Ἐάν δέν μπορέσατε νά βοηθήσετε τὸν οικεῖο σας στή διάρκεια τῶν πρώτων ἐβδομάδων μετὰ τήν πρώτη ἐπαφή του μετὰ τήν αἵρεση, θά πρέπει νά γνωρίζετε ὅτι γιά τήν ἐπιβεβαίωση αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου σέ μία κανονική ζωὴ ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴ μέγγενη τῆς αιρέσεως θά χρειασθοῦν οἱ προσπάθειες ὀλόκληρης τῆς οἰκογενείας γιά ἀρκετοὺς μῆνες ἢ ἴσως καί χρόνια. Ἀλλά γιά νά μπορέσετε νά ἀντεπεξέλθετε στὶς ἀπαιτήσεις μίας τέτοιας προσπάθειας πρέπει νά γνωρίζετε ποία θά πρέπει νά εἶναι ἡ στάση σας καί ἡ συμπεριφορά σας.

Μετὰ τὴν ἀρχικὴ «ἀναγνώριση», μὴν προσπαθήσετε νά τὸν μεταπειάσετε, γιατί αὐτό θά βλάψει τὶς σχέσεις σας ἀκόμη περισσότερο. Σίγουρα θά καταλάβετε ἤδη ὅτι μετὰ τὶς προσπάθειες νά τοῦ ἐξηγήσετε τὸ παράλογο τῆς διδασκαλίας τῆς σέκτας (sect) καί τὴν ἀνόητη ἢ καί βλαβερὴ συμπεριφορά του, τὸ μόνο πού καταφέρνετε εἶναι νά καταλήγετε σὲ καυγάδες καί ὀξυνση τῶν σχέσεων. Πρέπει νά γνωρίζετε ὅτι κατὰ κανόνα οἱ αιρέσεις ἐπιδιώκουν τὴ ρήξη τοῦ νεοπροσηλυτισμένου μετὰ τὸ ἐξωαιρετικὸ περιβάλλον. Τότε, ὅλες οἱ πληροφορίες πού θά λαμβάνει θά προέρχονται ἀποκλειστικὰ καί μόνο ἀπὸ τὴν αἵρεση καί ὁ κοινωνικὸς του κύκλος θά περιορίζεται μόνο στὴν αἵρεση. Μία τέτοια κατάσταση δημιουργεῖ ἰδανικὲς συνθήκες γιά τὸν ἔλεγχο τῆς συνείδησης τοῦ προσηλυτισμένου. Γιά νά προκαλέσουν τὴ ρήξη, οἱ αιρετικοὶ «διδάσκαλοι» ἐκ τῶν προτέρων κηρύττουν ὅτι οἱ οικεῖοι τοῦ νέου τους θύματος εἶναι ἄς ποῦμε «κυριευμένοι ἀπὸ τὸν διάβολο» ἢ ἀρκετὰ προσηλωμένοι στὸν «μάταιο τοῦτο κόσμον ὅπου βασιλεύει τὸ κακό» καί συνεπῶς θά κάνουν ὅτι εἶναι δυνατόν γιά νά ἀναγκάσουν τὸν νεοπροσηλυτισμένο νά «βγεῖ ἀπὸ τὴν ὁδὸ τῆς σωτηρίας», νά ἐγκαταλείψει τὴν νεοαποκτηθεῖσα «ἀληθινὴ οἰκογένεια», νά ἀπαρνηθεῖ τὴ «λυτρωτικὴ γνώση» κ.ἄ. Ἐτσι, μία συναισθηματικὰ φορτισμένη ἀντίδραση ἀπὸ τὴν πλευρά σας θά ἐξυπηρετοῦσε τοὺς σκοποὺς τῆς σέκτας καί θά ἀποτελοῦσε γιά τὸν οικεῖο σας μίαν ἀκόμη ἐπιβεβαίωση τῆς ἀλήθειας τῆς νέας του πίστεως.

Ὅμως, ἐπίσης σὲ καμία περίπτωση δέν πρέπει νά προσποιηθεῖτε ὅτι ἀλλάξατε γνώμη καί ὅτι ἐν τέλει, σᾶς εὐχαριστεῖ ἡ ἀλλαγὴ αὐτὴ πού συνέβη στὸν οικεῖο σας. Αὐτό εἴτε θά ἐνδυναμώσει τὴν ἀφοσίωσή του στὴ σέκτα, εἴτε θά ἀνακαλύψει τὸ ψέμα σας καί θά ἐξαφανίσει καί τὰ τελευταῖα ἐναπομείναντα ψήγματα ἐμπιστοσύνης σ' ἐσᾶς. Συμφωνήστε μαζί του μετὰ τὸν παρακάτω ὄρο: ἐσεῖς δέν θά κριτικάρετε τὴν «ὀργάνωσή» του (ὁ ὄρος «σέκτα» εἶναι φυσικὸ νά τὸν ἐρεθίζει, γι' αὐτὸ προσπαθήστε νά ἀποφύγετε τὴ χρῆση του) καί αὐτὸς δέν θά κάνει προπαγάνδα στὸ σπίτι καί δέν θά προσπαθεῖ νά προσηλυτίσει καί ἄλλα μέλη τῆς οἰκογενείας. Ὅμως μπορεῖτε διακριτικὰ νά ἐπιστήσετε τὴν προσοχὴ τοῦ οικείου σας στὶς προφανεῖς ἀντιφάσεις στὴ συμπεριφορά του καί στὰ λεγόμενά του, χωρὶς ταυτόχρονα νά προσπαθεῖτε νά ἐξηγήσετε αὐτὲς τὶς ἀντιφάσεις: ὁ σκοπὸς σας εἶναι νά τὸν ἀποσπάσετε ἀπὸ τὴ σέκτα.

Γιά νά καταστρώσετε μίαν στρατηγικὴ συμπεριφορᾶς, πρέπει νά κατανοήσετε ὅτι ὁ οικεῖος σας βρίσκεται σὲ ψυχολογικὴ ἐξάρτηση ἀπὸ τὴν ομάδα, ὅτι ἡ ἀληθινὴ προσωπικότητά του ἔχει κατασταλεῖ καί ἀντικατασταθεῖ ἀπὸ μίαν σειράν αιρετικῶν στερεοτύπων συμπεριφορᾶς, συναισθημάτων καί σκέψης. Ὁ σκοπὸς σας εἶναι νά διατηρήσετε μίαν ἐλάχιστη ἔστω ἐπαφή μετὰ τὴν καταπιεσμένη ἀληθινὴ του προσωπικότητα. Σκύψτε πάνω του μετὰ ὑπομονὴ καί συμπάθεια κατανοώντας ὅτι τὸ ἄτομο αὐτὸ πάσχει ἀπὸ προσωρινὴ διαταραχὴ προσωπικότητας, ὅμως σὲ καμία περίπτωση μὴν τοῦ δώσετε χρήματα -- εἶναι σὰν νά δίνετε σὲ ναρκομανὴ χρήματα γιά ναρκωτικά. Ὅτι χρήματα καί νά τοῦ δώσετε θά καταλήξουν στὴ σέκτα.

Προσπαθήστε νά εἶστε προδιατεθειμένος γιά μίαν ἐποικοδομητικὴ λύση τοῦ προβλήματος, νά εἶστε ἤρεμος καί ἀνοικτὸς στὸ διάλογο. Νά δείχνετε σὲ ὅλους μετὰ τὴ συμπεριφορά σας ὅτι ἀναγνωρίζετε τὸν οικεῖο σας τὸ δικαίωμα τῆς ἀναζήτησης, τῶν δικῶν του ἐπιλογῶν, ἔστω καί λανθασμένων, ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ ἴδιος εἶναι πολῦτιμος γιά σᾶς καί νοιάζεστε γι' αὐτὸν ἀνεξάρτητα ἀπὸ τὶς πεποιθήσεις του. Νά βασίζεστε περισσότερο στὴ θέρη καί τὴ στοργὴ πού ἐκφράζει ὁ τόνος τῆς φωνῆς σας, παρά στὸ ὀρθολογικὸ περιεχόμενο τῶν συζητήσεων μαζί του. Στὶς συζητήσεις σας νά προσπαθεῖτε νά τὸν γυρίζετε πίσω σὲ εὐτυχισμένες στιγμὲς τῆς περασμένης του ζωῆς. Νά ἀναπολεῖτε μαζί χαρούμενα ἐπεισόδια τῆς περασμένης ζωῆς σας, ὅταν αἰσθανόσασταν σὰν μίαν οἰκογένεια, ὅταν κάνατε μαζί ἐκδρομὲς καί ταξίδια, ὅλα τὰ πράγματα πού κάνατε μαζί, τὰ σχέδια καί τὰ ὄνειρα πού μοιραζόσασταν. Φυσικὰ, αὐτὸ δέν πρέπει νά τὸ κάνετε τεχνητὰ, ψεύτικα. Νά ἐνεργεῖτε βασιζόμενοι περισσότερο στὴ διαίσθησή σας, νά παρακινεῖστε ἀπὸ ἀγάπη καί συμπόνια. Καί θά ἀνταμείβονται οἱ προσπάθειές σας κάθε φορὰ πού θά βλέπετε τὴν ἀληθινὴ, τὴ γνώριμη προσωπικότητα τοῦ οικείου σας νά ξεπροβάλλει ἔστω καί ἀμυδρὰ μέσα ἀπὸ τὸν ἄγνωστο ζόμπι-ρομπότ, στὸ ὅποιο αὐτὸς μετατράπηκε.

Μία τέτοια τακτικὴ προσβλέπει σὲ δυὸ στόχους. Πρῶτον, νά ἀφήσει τὸν οικεῖο σας ἕναν συναισθηματικὸ «μῖτο

της Ἀριάδνης», με τη βοήθεια τοῦ ὁποίου θὰ μπορούσε σὲ περιπτώσεις κρίσης τῶν ἐνδοομαδικῶν σχέσεων καὶ ἐπανεκτίμησης τῆς συμμετοχῆς του στὴ σέκτα νὰ βγεῖ ἀπὸ τὸν ψυχολογικὸ της λαβύρινθο. Δεύτερον, δὲν θὰ σᾶς βλέπει οὔτε σὰν ἐχθρὸ, οὔτε καὶ σὰν στόχο προσηλυτισμοῦ, γεγονός πού θὰ σᾶς ἐπιτρέψει νὰ ὑλοποιήσετε τὴν ὀνομαζόμενη «παρέμβαση» (intervention). Μὲ τὸν ὄρο αὐτὸν ἐννοοῦμε μία ἐντατικὴ συνεδρία συμβουλευτικῆς ἐξόδου ἀπὸ τὴ σέκτα. Γιὰ τὴν πραγματοποίησιν αὐτῆς τῆς παρέμβασης χρειάζεται τουλάχιστον ἓνας εἰδικὸς ψυχολόγος, εἰδήμων στὴ σεκτολογία, πού νὰ ἔχει ἐντυφήσει στὴν προβληματικὴ τῆς ψυχολογικῆς βίας καὶ τῆς μεταρρύθμισης τῆς σκέψης (ἐλέγχου συνειδήσεως – thought reform), καθὼς καὶ στὴν οἰκογενειακὴ συμβουλευτικὴ. Αὐτὸ εἶναι ἀπαραίτητο, διότι κατὰ κανόνα στοὺς κόλπους τῶν σεκτῶν προσελκύνονται ἄτομα μὲ συναισθηματικὰ προβλήματα (καὶ τέτοια προβλήματα μπορεῖ νὰ ἔχει ὁ καθένας σὲ περιόδους ψυχολογικοῦ στρέψ). Ἔτσι, συχνὰ ἢ ὑποστήριξις πρὸς τὰ θύματα ξεκινᾷ ἀπὸ τὸν ἐντοπισμὸ καὶ τὴν ἐξάλειψιν τῆς πηγῆς αὐτῶν τῶν προβλημάτων, δηλαδή, ἀπὸ τὴ δουλειὰ τοῦ ψυχολόγου.

Ἡ παρέμβαση, γιὰ τὴν ὁποία μιλήσαμε, προϋποθέτει ὅτι τουλάχιστον ἓνα μέλος τῆς οἰκογενείας τοῦ θύματος ἔχει καλὴ γνώση τῶν θεωριῶν συμβουλευτικῆς ἐξόδου. Θὰ ἦταν καλύτερο ἐὰν στὴ διαδικασία ὑποστήριξης τοῦ θύματος τῆς αἵρεσης συμμετεῖχε ὅλη ἢ οἰκογένειά του. Ἀλλὰ γιὰ τὴ σωστὴ ὀργάνωση ὅλων τῶν χειρισμῶν εἶναι πάντα ἀπαραίτητος ἓνας εἰδικὸς ψυχολόγος.

Μελετήστε τὸ λεξικὸ τῆς συγκεκριμένης σέκτας καθὼς καὶ τὸ τί πρεσβεύει γιὰ νὰ μπορεῖτε νὰ ἔχετε μία ὀλοκληρωμένη ἀντίληψιν περὶ τίνος πρόκειται νὰ σᾶς μιλήσει ὁ οἰκεῖός σας. Ἐλάτε σὲ ἐπαφὴ μὲ ἄνθρώπους πού τοὺς βρῆκε παρόμοια δυστυχία, καθὼς ἐπίσης μὲ πρῶν μέλη σεκτῶν, μὲ τοὺς ἀρμοδίους ὑπαλλήλους τοῦ κράτους, μὲ δημοσιογράφους, ὄργανα τῆς τάξεως, νομικούς. Ἐκτὸς αὐτοῦ, θὰ πρέπει νὰ συλλέγετε ὅσο τὸ δυνατόν περισσότερες πληροφορίες γιὰ τὴ σέκτα, ἀλλὰ κρυφὰ ἀπὸ τὸν οἰκεῖό σας γιὰ νὰ μὴν τὸν ἐρεθίσετε. Ἀντιγράφετε καὶ καταγράφετε τὰ πάντα, δημιουργεῖτε τὸ δικό σας ἀρχεῖο-βιβλιοθήκη. Ἴσως δὲν θὰ ἦταν ἄσχημο νὰ κρατᾶτε ἡμερολόγιο. Ὅλες οἱ ἐναλλακτικὲς ἐξωαιρετικὲς πληροφορίες θὰ ἐνεργοποιηθοῦν κατὰ τὴν παρέμβαση. Δὲν πρέπει νὰ δίνετε πληροφορίες πού κριτικάρουν τὴ σέκτα σὲ δόσεις, δὲν θὰ ὑπάρξει κανένα ἀποτέλεσμα.

Βασικὰ ἢ διαδικασία ἐξόδου ἀπὸ τὴν αἵρεση μὲ ἐξωτερικὴ ἐπίδραση προϋποθέτει τὴ συμμετοχὴ μεγάλου ἀριθμοῦ ἀτόμων, καὶ πρωταρχικὰ ἐνὸς ψυχολόγου, ὑποβοηθούμενου ἀπὸ τοὺς συγγενεῖς καὶ κοντινοὺς φίλους τοῦ μέλους τῆς σέκτας, πού ὁ ἴδιος ὁ ψυχολόγος θὰ ἔχει ἐκπαιδεύσει κατάλληλα, ἐνὸς εἰδικοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν αἱρέσεων καὶ «εἰδικοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν γεγονότων» (θὰ μπορούσε νὰ εἶναι τὸ ἴδιο πρόσωπο μὲ τὸν ψυχολόγο), καθὼς ἐπίσης καὶ πρῶν μελῶν τῆς αἵρεσης. Σκοπὸς τῆς ομάδος αὐτῆς εἶναι νὰ ἀφυπνίσουν στὸ

μέλος τῆς σέκτας τὴν κριτικὴ σκέψιν καὶ νὰ τὸν καλέσουν νὰ κάνει ξανά τὴν ἐπιλογὴ του, αὐτὴ τὴ φορὰ ὅμως ὄντας πληροφορημένος, δηλαδή, πρὸ ἐλεύθερα. Παράλληλα, οἱ συγγενεῖς καὶ οἱ κοντινοὶ ἄνθρωποι τοῦ θύματος θὰ πρέπει νὰ τὸν βοηθήσουν νὰ ἀπαλλαγεῖ ἀπὸ τὴ συναισθηματικὴ ἐξάρτησιν ἀπὸ τὴ σέκτα, νὰ τοῦ δώσουν ἀληθινὴ ἀγάπην καὶ συμμετοχὴ σὲ ἀντίθεση μὲ τὰ αἰρετικὰ ὑποκατάστατα. Ἔπειτα ἔρχεται ὁ ὀρθόδοξος κατηχητὴς, κατὰ προτίμησιν ἱερωμένος, γιὰ νὰ προτείνει (καὶ ὄχι νὰ ἐπιβάλλει φορτικά) τὴν ἐναλλακτικὴ λύσιν, τὴν ἀληθινὴ θρησκεία καὶ κοσμοαντίληψιν.

Ἡ πλειοψηφία τῶν ἀνθρώπων πού ἐγκατέλειψαν τοὺς κόλπους σεκτῶν ἔχει ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ ψυχολογικὴ ἀποκατάστασιν. Τὸ ζήτημα εἶναι ὅτι τὰ θύματα τῶν σεκτῶν μετὰ τὴν ἐξοδὸν ἀπὸ τὴ σέκτα βρίσκονται μπροστὰ στὰ ἴδια συναισθηματικὰ προβλήματα πού κάποτε τοὺς μετέτρεψαν σὲ λεία τῶν «στρατολόγων» τῆς σέκτας (καὶ πού τόσον καιρὸ τὰ εἶχαν παραμελήσει). Πέρα ἀπ' αὐτό, πολλοὶ βγαίνουν ἀπὸ τὴ σέκτα μὲ διαταραχὲς προσωπικότητος πού ὀφείλονται στὰ ψυχικὰ τραύματα πού τοὺς δημιούργησε ἡ σέκτα. Συνεπῶς, μόνον εἰδικὸς ψυχολόγος, πού ἔχει ἐντυφήσει σὲ θέματα αἱρέσεων, μπορεῖ νὰ τοὺς βοηθήσει.

Ἡ πνευματικὴ ἀποκατάστασιν τῶν θυμάτων αἱρέσεων προϋποθέτει τὴν ἐνεργὸν συμμετοχὴν ἱερέως-πνευματικοῦ καὶ τὴ συναισθηματικὴ στήριξιν ἀπὸ τοὺς πιστοὺς τῆς ἐνορίας. Σταδιακὰ, τὸ ἄτομο αὐτὸ μαθαίνει στὴν προσωπικὴ ἐπικοινωνία μὲ τὸν Θεὸ (τὴ δυνατότητα τῆς ὁποίας ἐκτὸς τῆς σέκτας συνήθως οἱ ἡγέτες τῶν σεκτῶν τὴν ἀρνοῦνται) καὶ γίνεται κοινωνὸς τῆς ἀνεξάντλητης πηγῆς χάριτος καὶ εὐλογίας, τῆς Ἱερᾶς Παραδόσεως τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας. Θὰ βοηθοῦσε ἐπίσης ἢ συναναστροφὴ τοῦ ἀτόμου μὲ ἄλλα πρῶν μέλη τῆς αἵρεσης καὶ ἢ βοήθεια πού θὰ μπορούσε νὰ δώσει ὁ ἴδιος στοὺς εἰδικούς στὶς προσπάθειές τους νὰ μειώσουν τὴν ἀριθμητικὴ δύναμιν τῶν σεκτῶν.

Δὲν θὰ πρέπει νὰ ξεχνοῦμε ἐπίσης καὶ τὰ ζητήματα κοινωνικῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως τῶν ἀτόμων πού ὑπῆρξαν μέλη σεκτῶν καὶ τὰ ὁποία συχνὰ μένουν χωρὶς κοινωνικὸ κύκλο, χωρὶς κατοικία, χωρὶς ἐργασία, ἔχοντας μάλιστα χάσει τὴν συνήθειαν τῆς ἀνεξάρτητης ζωῆς. Στὴν οὐσία, πρέπει νὰ βοηθήσουμε ἓναν ἄνθρωπο νὰ ξαναρχίσει νὰ ζεῖ μέσα στὴν κοινωνία. Στὸ σημεῖο αὐτὸ ἢ βοήθεια νομικῶν καὶ κοινωνικῶν λειτουργῶν εἶναι οὐσιαστικὴ.

Μὴν ἀπελπίζετε. Νὰ προσεύχεστε γιὰ τὸν οἰκεῖό σας πού βρέθηκε στὰ δίχτυα τῆς σέκτας. Ἄς εἶναι γιὰ σᾶς παράδειγμα ἢ Ἁγία-Μόνικα, ἢ μητέρα τοῦ Ἁγίου-Αὐγουστίνου, ἐπισκόπου Ἰππῶνος. Αὐτὸς ὁ ὀρθόδοξος ἅγιος, κορυφαῖος θεολόγος τῆς Δύσεως, ἐζήσε κατὰ τὸν 5ο αἰῶνα καὶ πρὶν βαπτισθεῖ Χριστιανὸς ἐπὶ πολλὰ ἔτη ἦταν μέλος τῆς αἱρέσεως τῶν Μανιχαίων. Ἐπὶ ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ ἔτη ἢ μητέρα του προσευχόταν ἀδιαλείπτως στὸν Θεὸ καὶ ἢ προσευχὴ τῆς μητέρας εἰσακούσθηκε...



## ORTHODOX ECCLESIOLOGY: CONGREGATIONAL OR HIERARCHICAL?

*By an Orthodox Priest*

*From the Editor: In light of on-going efforts by para-church groups such as OCL, the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen considers it proper that we present to our readers the following article on this contemporary on-going disagreement regarding governance of His Church. As our readers are aware, we have been and will continue to be critical of our hierarchy when we note their participation in ecumenical activities which compromise Orthodox dogmas and principles. At the same time, we also stand firm in defense of other positions which, although they appear to promote the Archdiocesan position within the subject argument, they are actually a defense in support of Holy Tradition.*

“Let all respect the deacons as representing Jesus Christ, the Bishop as a type of the Father, and the presbyters [i.e., priests] as God’s high council and as the Apostolic college. Apart from this respect, no church deserves the name.” (St. Ignatios of Antioch [+107], letter to the Trallians)

With this ancient quote from the Spirit-filled writings of the holy “God-bearer,” I am establishing from the onset of this paper that Orthodoxy has always been a hierarchical Church. As you proceed, you will encounter many additional quotes from this holy Church Father – himself taught directly by St. John the Theologian. In this way, you should be able to conclude that this *only true form of Orthodox Ecclesiology* has been firmly established within the Church’s foundation from apostolic times.

During her 2000-year history, many heresies have attacked God’s true Church, both from within and without; and the Holy Spirit has always kept these false teachings from becoming permanent within Her. In fact, each attempt to bring corrupt doctrine into the life of the Church has made Her more adamant in maintaining the purity of the “Faith of the Apostles” – oftentimes to the shedding of blood.

Let us give thanks to God, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for fashioning His Bride with a hierarchical structure; because, through it, the Holy Spirit has preserved the unity of the Faith. Imagine how fragmented the Church would have become if she had been governed by congregationalism during all of the heretical attacks. We only need look at 21<sup>st</sup> Century Protestantism for an example: From the time of Martin Luther until today, over 22,000 different Protestant churches have come into existence, and 5 more are added each week. (Of course the original ‘mother’ for each of them is the heterodox Roman Catholic Church.) Thus, I was deeply saddened recently when I read the comments of a layperson (himself a member of the para-church “OCL” group) that took issue with the fact that the proposed new Archdiocesan Charter

contained the word, “hierarchical.” Unfortunately, he reflects the erroneous thinking of many souls that look upon our Church as a “democratic institution.” The consummate expression of this false teaching was made in the “bottom line” section of a past OCL flyer, in which it was demanded that the word, “hierarchical” be completely omitted from the new Charter!

The Orthodox Church has always been a *Theocracy*, never a democracy. The clergy have always been the governing force of the life of the Church in general, and Her faithful souls in particular. As St. Ignatios explains:

“You must follow the lead of the Bishop, as Jesus Christ followed that of the Father; follow the Presbytery as you would the Apostles; reverence the Deacons as you would God’s Commandments. Let no one do anything touching the Church apart from the Bishop...” (Letter to the Smyrnaeans)

In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Ignatios admonishes the lay people to “live in harmony with the mind of God;” and in order to do this they must “act in agreement with the mind of the Bishop.” He calls upon the priest and deacons to “harmonize with the Bishop as completely as the strings with a harp.” Then, the martyred Bishop compels the “rank and file” (i.e., the laity) to:

*...also form a choir, so that joining the symphony [of the hierarch and clergy] ... [they] may with one voice – through Jesus Christ – sing a song to the Father... [and, through their obedience to the Bishop and clergy, they] may at all times have a share in God. ... Let us, therefore, take care not to oppose the Bishop, that we may be submissive to God... [by showing] obedience with undivided mind to the Bishop and the presbytery...*

In light of the events that have occurred within our Archdiocese over the past several years, these words of St. Ignatios should weigh heavily on our souls. If they do not, then perhaps these fatherly admonitions will pierce through the wall of indifference that has plagued so many of us for so long:

“...He that does anything apart from the Bishop, presbyter or deacon has no pure conscience...” (Letter to the Trallians)

“Therefore, just as the Lord, being one with the Father, did nothing without Him, either by Himself or through the Apostles, so neither must you undertake anything without the Bishop and the presbyters; nor must you attempt to convince yourselves that anything you do on your own account is acceptable...” (Letter to the Magnesians)

“Shun division and bad doctrines. Where the Shepherd [i.e., the Bishop] is, there you, being sheep, must follow.” (Letter to the Philadelphians)

“He who does anything without the knowledge of the Bishop, worships the devil...” (Letter to the Smyrnaeans)

“Do not let yourself be anointed with the foul-smelling doctrine of the prince of this world, for fear that he might carry you off into captivity – away from the [heavenly] life that is in store for you.” (Letter to the Smyrnaeans)

Through the 83 years of our Archdiocese's existence, we have been plagued by the "foul-smelling doctrine" of Congregationalism. Perhaps it entered partially by accident, since at least 18 parishes came into being prior to the formation of the Archdiocese. The pious Greek laymen who helped assemble these communities had no one present to guide them into the Orthodox hierarchical ecclesiology. They brought over priests from Greece, most of whom had neither formal theological training nor the ability to speak English with any fluency. Out of necessity, the lay people elected the "Boards of Trustees" (now called Parish Councils); and they considered these lay groups to be the governing body of their respective parishes. The priest was simply the "hired hand" that did the services and sacraments, and was paid by – and responsible to – the Board. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, this false ecclesiology was allowed to continue and to develop; and has given 'birth' to such *totally uncanonical* activities as the following:

Parish Council members chosen by the majority vote of the 'dues paying members.' *In actuality, the council members are to be chosen by the priest, with the approval of his Bishop.*

Secularly influential and/or wealthy individuals successfully forcing a priest out of his parish, not for teaching heresy or for moral improprieties, but because these few souls do not like the way the priest does things. *Of course, this anomaly has existed even in the years of St. John Chrysostom; but not to the extent it does within our Archdiocese today.*

The formation of para-church groups such as OCL and GOAL. *Their members need to disband immediately, go to Confession, and beg God's forgiveness for causing, whether knowingly or unknowingly, such turmoil in His Church.*

Priests, especially those with several children, being forced to compromise their convictions in order not to offend certain people. *The priest is "reminded" who pays his salary.*

The confusion amongst the 'rank and file' Orthodox Christians brought about by OCL members being very vocal in expressing their total misunderstanding of Orthodox Ecclesiology. *For example, in a recent letter to the "National Herald" newspaper, a person made the following (and several other) incorrect statements:*

*"The Patriarch has ceased to function as a governing authority."*

*"[The Patriarch] can be venerated as a symbol, that is all."*

*The writer "doubts if excommunication carries much force in today's world."*

*"...the Patriarchate has to depend for its sustenance on the voluntary contributions of the faithful. But voluntary contributions are just that, voluntary. They may be increased or dry up, depending on the feelings of the faithful." (This may be true in secular terms. But as citizens of the "New Jerusalem", we have a sacred duty to God to support His Church; and if we hold back – or reduce – that support because of our pride, we will 'pay' dearly on the Day of Judgment.)*

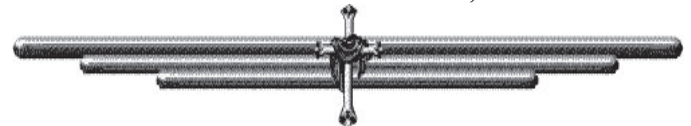
*"The Patriarchate is a symbol. Its major source of strength is*

*the affection, the support, the veneration of the faithful." (No! Its major source of strength is the Holy Spirit, and the many saintly hierarchs that have occupied this sacred throne over the past 2,000 years – some even to the shedding of their blood.)*

The letter has a threatening tone, and – in essence – calls for the Patriarch to "see the limits of his power," to accept his position as a "symbol," and thus force our Archdiocese to continue to flounder in a most un-canonical, congregational ecclesiology.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ! It is time for all of us – clergy and laity – to both repent and return to Orthodox ecclesiology, so that we can become the Church that God wants us to be – one whose primary goal is "to make relics", i.e., saints – one that becomes a living icon of what St. Ignatius describes so eloquently. We are not ready for autonomy until we do this.

Since, at the present time, our Archdiocese does not have the "blood of martyrs" of any local saints, it is even more imperative that we surrender our wills to our Lord Jesus Christ and offer obedience to our hierarchs. Let us run to our Spiritual Fathers and confess our sins. Let us make worship, prayer, fasting, and prostrations a living "presence" in the trenches of our lives. Let us daily read from God's Word, the lives of the Saints, and the writings of our holy Church Fathers. Let us, through God's grace and the continuous practice of the ascetical/sacramental life of our hierarchical Church, **become** the Gospel – living witnesses of God's True Church to this sinful world. And if God so wills, let us also be ready at any moment to shed our blood in defense of His Bride! Grant this, O Lord!



## GOD'S JUDGEMENT

**W**herefore a man can know nothing about the judgments of God. He alone is the One Who takes account of all and is able to judge the hearts of each one of us, as He alone is our Master. Truly it happens that a man may do a certain thing (which seems to be wrong) out of simplicity, and there may be something about it which makes more amends to God than your whole life; how are you going to sit in judgment and constrict your own soul? And should it happen that he has fallen away, how do you know how much and how well he fought, how much blood he sweated before he did it? Perhaps so little fault can be found in him that God can look on his action as if it were just, for God looks on his labor and all the struggle he had before he did it, and has pity on him. And you know this, and what God has spared him for, are you going to condemn him for, and ruin your own soul? And how do you know what tears he has shed about it before God? You may well know about the sin, but you do not know about the repentance.

Saint Dorotheos of Gaza, Discourses & Sayings

## APOPHTHEGMS BY ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, PART 13

*SOURCE: From the book "475 Apophthegms by the God-Inspired St. Isaac the Syrian," pp. 57-61, published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood.*

### 37<sup>th</sup> Lesson

358. Intensity of sorrows cleanses the heart's evil passions.
359. Without God's concession, man is never exposed to troubles. Troubles, labors and pain are granted for the purpose of repentance and for the benefit of the soul.
360. When we are exposed to sorrows and various types of temptations, we must willfully admit that we deserve even worse afflictions. We must never blame other people or the demons or, alas, even God's justice.
361. The various kinds of temptations are allowed so that we may become humble and thus have our sins forgiven through confession. This will in turn permit us to acquire a graceful appearance.
362. Paradise is God's love and the luxury of all beatitudes for which St. Paul writes: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." [1Cor 2:9]
363. The foundation of life is God's love from which Adam fell and as a result was unable to ever feel divine joy.
364. Following the grace of baptism is the grace of repentance. Repentance is the second rebirth, a spiritual renaissance that arises from faith and fear in God.
365. God is love. Whoever lives within His love, reaps life and is able, from this world, to sense and smell the air of Resurrection whereby those who were just and fair delight within.
366. When we acquire God's love, we are then fed with the Heavenly manna which is Christ, Who gave His life for the world; in other words, Holy Communion.
367. Repentance is the boat, fear of God is the rower, and love is the divine harbor.

### 38<sup>th</sup> Lesson

368. God endures all of man's imperfections except one: grumbling. The heart that continually thanks God is filled with divine joy and blessings.
369. Whoever withdraws from God nourishes in his heart hatred towards his fellow man.
370. He who speaks up in defense of a person suffering from an injustice discovers God as his defender.
371. He who quietly and privately corrects his brethren is neither an envious nor an insidious person. He, on the other hand, who attempts to correct his fellow man in front of others is an envious and malicious person.
372. When the prayer captures us, it is not easy for the warmth of our heart towards God to be quenched.
373. As a seaman travels the oceans with a compass as his guide, a Christian walks through life with the prayer as his

guide as he strives to reach the harbor of salvation.

374. The person that finds the precious pearl, Christ, does not desire to acquire anything else in this life.
375. As a cloud darkens the shining light of the sun, similarly idle talk darkens the heart.
376. A heron rejoices and delights when residing in a deserted area, likewise the soul of a monastic receives heavenly joys until its exit from the body when it resides in a hermitage.
377. When heavenly sweetness falls into the soul of a monk from the honey of God's word, she is then uplifted entirely towards God. Otherwise, she can not realize God's consolation.
378. The joy that follows when a time of spiritual law is over is great; it is similar to the warmth of the sun when the clouds clear.
379. Vainglory, while it sweetens us, also destroys us because it allows for all the passions to return within our soul.
380. Idleness and lengthy spiritual discussions bring on darkness in thought. This condition worsens much more in the case of futile and idle discussions.

### 39<sup>th</sup> Lesson

381. The wisdom of the Holy Spirit is much greater than the wisdom of the entire world. Within the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, silence prevails; the wisdom of the world, however, goes astray into idle talk.
382. Upon discovery of the Holy Spirit's wisdom, the soul is filled with humility, meekness and peace.
383. Upon finding worldly wisdom, the soul is filled with pride, agitation of the nous, imprudence, and arrogance.
384. Even the theories and ideas of worldly people are sufficient to instill damage on the soul of a person living in solitude, bringing on agitation in his soul.
385. When your spiritual side is resurrected within you, your attitude towards worldly things deadens and you become fully indifferent towards them; your soul, on the other hand, is warmed within you.
386. When you have great patience, you have attained the joy of consolation within your soul.
387. When the heart is alive, the senses are deadened, and when the heart is deadened, the senses come back to life.
388. When your soul becomes intoxicated with divine joy and delight, your body no longer feels pain and sorrow because it also enjoys the heart's gladness.
389. If you guard your tongue, you enter the joy of the Holy Spirit. If you do not possess a pure heart, you can at least have a clean mouth.
390. Do not be afraid of death; God has prepared the riches of the future life so that He can make you immortal.
391. Do not regret your sorrows and body afflictions; God, taking note of your patience, will take them away from you.
392. When we abandon the labor of prayer, it is impossible for our soul to not fall prey to the passions.

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The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or the Brotherhood of St. POIMEN

## STATISTICS AND STUDY RESULTS ON TELEVISION VIEWING

Children aged 2-5 average 25 hours per week watching TV. Children aged 6-11 average more than 22 hours per week watching TV. Children aged 12-17 average 23 hours per week watching TV. Source: AC Nielsen Co., 1990.

30% of middle-aged men (median age in the study was 39.5) watch TV 3 or more hours per day, while another 61% watch TV 1-2 hours per day. Source: 1989 study by Larry Tucker at Brigham Young University.

“By the time most Americans are 18 years old, they have spent more time in front of the television set than they have spent in school, and far more than they have spent talking with their teachers, their friends or even their parents.” AND “By first grade, most children have spent the equivalent of three school years in front of the TV set.” Quotes from *Abandoned in the Wasteland: Children, Television and the First Amendment*, by Newton Minnow, former Chairman of the FCC, and Craig LaMay, 1995.

62% of fourth graders and 64% of eighth graders say they spend more than three hours per day watching TV. Source: Educational Testing Service study, 1990.

By the time today's child reaches age 70, he or she will have spent approximately seven years watching TV. Source: American Academy of Pediatrics study, 1990.

The typical American child will witness 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of televised violence in his lifetime. Source: American Psychological Association.

“Preschoolers have difficulty separating the fantastic from the real, especially when it comes to television fare; its vividness makes even the fantastic seem quite real.” Quote from “Monitoring TV Time,” by Lillian G. Katz, *Parents*, January 1989.

“Much of what they (children) see on TV represents violence as an appropriate way to solve interpersonal problems, to avenge slights and insults, make up for injustice, and get what you want out of life.” Quote by University of Michigan psychologist Dr. Leonard Eron, whose landmark 22-year study of TV's effects tracked more than 800 people from age 8 to adulthood.

In 1980, the most violent prime-time show on TV registered 22 acts of violence per hour. In 1992 the most violent prime-time show (*Young Indiana Jones*) registered 60 acts of violence per hour. Source: National Coalition on Television Violence.

Half of North America's murders and rapes can be attributed directly or indirectly to television viewing. Source: Seven-year statistical analysis study by Dr. Brandon Centerwall at the University of Washington.

Crime is at least 10 times as prevalent on TV as in the real world. Source: 15-year study by Dr. George Gerbner, Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania.

“Unsupervised television is like letting your children play out on the street at any hour of the day or night with whomever they come across.” Quote by University of Massachusetts psychology professor Daniel R. Anderson in his 1988 study of TV's influence on children's education.

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

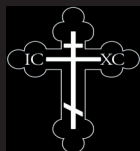
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## THE THREE HERMITS

### AN OLD LEGEND FROM THE VOLGA DISTRICT

By Leo Tolstoy

A Bishop was sailing from Archangel (a town in Russia) to the Solovtsk Monastery; and on the same vessel were a number of pilgrims on their way to visit the shrines at that place. The voyage was a smooth one. The wind was favorable, and the weather fair. The pilgrims lay on deck, eating, or sat in groups talking to one another. The Bishop, too, came on deck, and as he was pacing up and down, he noticed a group of men standing near the prow and listening to a fisherman who was pointing to the sea and telling them something. The Bishop stopped, and looked in the direction in which the man was pointing. He could see nothing, however, but the sea glistening in the sunshine. He drew nearer to listen, but when the man saw him, he took off his cap and was silent. The rest of the people also took off their caps, and bowed.

"Do not let me disturb you, friends," said the Bishop. "I came to hear what this good man was saying."

"The fisherman was telling us about the hermits," replied one, a tradesman, rather bolder than the rest.

"What hermits?" asked the Bishop, going to the side of the vessel and seating himself on a box. "Tell me about them. I should like to hear. What were you pointing at?"

"Why, that little island you can just see over there," answered the man, pointing to a spot ahead and a little to the right. "That is the island where the hermits live for the salvation of their souls."

"Where is the island?" asked the Bishop. "I see nothing."

"There, in the distance, if you will please look along my hand. Do you see

that little cloud? Below it and a bit to the left, there is just a faint streak. That is the island."

The Bishop looked carefully, but his unaccustomed eyes could make out nothing but the water shimmering in the sun.

"I cannot see it," he said. "But who are the hermits that live there?"

"They are holy men," answered the fisherman. "I had long heard tell of them, but never chanced to see them myself till the year before last."

And the fisherman related how once, when he was out fishing, he had been stranded at night upon that island, not knowing where he was. In the morning, as he wandered about the island, he came across an earth hut, and met an old man standing near it. Presently two others came out, and after having fed him, and dried his things, they helped him mend his boat.

"And what are they like?" asked the Bishop.

"One is a small man and his back is bent. He wears a priest's cassock and is very old; he must be more than a hundred, I should say. He is so old that the white of his beard is taking a greenish tinge, but he is always smiling, and his face is as bright as an angel's from heaven. The second is taller, but he also is very old. He wears a tattered, peasant coat. His beard is broad, and of a yellowish grey color. He is a strong man. Before I had time to help him, he turned my boat over as if it were only a pail. He too, is kindly and cheerful. The third is tall, and has a beard as white as snow and reaching to his knees. He is stern, with overhanging eyebrows; and he wears nothing but a mat tied round his waist."

"And did they speak to you?" asked the Bishop.

"For the most part they did everything in silence and spoke but little even to one

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another. One of them would just give a glance, and the others would understand him. I asked the tallest whether they had lived there long. He frowned, and muttered something as if he were angry; but the oldest one took his hand and smiled, and then the tall one was quiet. The oldest one only said: 'Have mercy upon us,' and smiled."

While the fisherman was talking, the ship had drawn nearer to the island.

"There, now you can see it plainly, if your Grace will please to look," said the tradesman, pointing with his hand.

The Bishop looked, and now he really saw a dark streak -- which was the island. Having looked at it a while, he left the prow of the vessel, and going to the stern, asked the helmsman:

"What island is that?"

"That one," replied the man "has no name. There are many such in this sea."

"Is it true that there are hermits who live there for the salvation of their souls?"

"So it is said, your Grace, but I don't know if it's true. Fishermen say they have seen them; but of course they may only be spinning yarns."

"I should like to land on the island and see these men," said the Bishop. "How could I manage it?"

"The ship cannot get close to the island," replied the helmsman, "but you might be rowed there in a boat. You had better speak to the captain."

The captain was sent for and came.

"I should like to see these hermits," said the Bishop. "Could I not be rowed ashore?"

The captain tried to dissuade him.

"Of course it could be done," said he, "but we should lose

much time. And if I might venture to say so to your Grace, the old men are not worth your pains. I have heard say that they are foolish old fellows, who understand nothing, and never speak a word, any more than the fish in the sea."

"I wish to see them," said the Bishop, "and I will pay you for your trouble and loss of time. Please let me have a boat."

There was no help for it; so the order was given. The sailors trimmed the sails, the steersman put up the helm, and the ship's course was set for the island. A chair was placed at the prow for the Bishop, and he sat there, looking ahead. The passengers all collected at the prow, and gazed at the island. Those who had the sharpest eyes could presently make out the rocks on it, and then a mud hut was seen. At last one man saw the hermits themselves. The captain brought a telescope and, after looking through it, handed it to the Bishop.

"It's right enough. There are three men standing on the shore. There, a little to the right of that big rock."

The Bishop took the telescope, got it into position, and he saw the three men: a tall one, a shorter one, and one very small and bent, standing on the shore and holding each other by the hand.

The captain turned to the Bishop.

"The vessel can get no nearer in than this, your Grace. If you wish to go ashore, we must ask you to go in the boat, while we anchor here."

The cable was quickly let out, the anchor cast, and the sails furled. There was a jerk, and the vessel shook. Then a boat having been lowered, the oarsmen jumped in, and the Bishop descended the ladder and took his seat. The men pulled at their oars, and the boat moved rapidly towards the island. When they came within a stone's throw they saw three old men: a tall one with only a mat tied round his waist: a shorter one in

a tattered peasant coat, and a very old one bent with age and wearing an old cassock -- all three standing hand in hand. The oarsmen pulled in to the shore, and held on with the boathook while the Bishop got out. The old men bowed to him, and he gave them his benediction, at which they bowed still lower. Then the Bishop began to speak to them.

"I have heard," he said, "that you, godly men, live here saving your own souls, and praying to our Lord Christ for your fellow men. I, an unworthy servant of Christ, am called, by God's mercy, to keep and teach His flock. I wished to see you, servants of God, and to do what I can to teach you, also."

The old men looked at each other smiling, but remained silent.

"Tell me," said the Bishop, "what you are doing to save your souls, and how you serve God on this island."

The second hermit sighed, and looked at the oldest, the very ancient one. The latter smiled, and said:

"We do not know how to serve God. We only serve and support ourselves, servant of God."

"But how do you pray to God?" asked the Bishop.

"We pray in this way," replied the hermit. "Three are ye, three are we, have mercy upon us."

And when the old man said this, all three raised their eyes to heaven, and repeated:

"Three are ye, three are we, have mercy upon us!"

The Bishop smiled.

"You have evidently heard something about the Holy Trinity," said he. "But you do not pray aright. You have won my affection, godly men. I see you wish to please the Lord, but you do not know how to serve Him. That is not the way to pray; but listen to me, and I will teach you. I will teach you, not a way of my own, but the way in which God in the Holy Scriptures has commanded all men to pray to Him."

And the Bishop began explaining to the hermits how God had revealed Himself to men, telling them of God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

"God the Son came down on earth," said he, "to save men, and this is how He taught us all to pray. Listen and repeat after me: "Our Father.""

And the first old man repeated after him, "Our Father," and the second said, "Our Father,"

and the third said, "Our Father."

"Which art in heaven," continued the Bishop.

The first hermit repeated, "Which art in heaven," but the second blundered over the words, and the tall hermit could not say them properly. His hair had grown over his mouth so that he could not speak plainly. The very old hermit, having no teeth, also mumbled indistinctly.

The Bishop repeated the words again, and the old men repeated them after him. The Bishop sat down on a stone, and the old men stood before him, watching his mouth, and repeating the words as he uttered them. And all day long the

Bishop labored, saying a word twenty, thirty, a hundred times over, and the old men repeated it after him. They blundered, and he corrected them, and made them begin again.

The Bishop did not leave off till he had taught them the whole of the Lord's Prayer so that they could not only repeat it after him, but could say it by themselves. The middle one was the first to know it, and to repeat the whole of it alone. The Bishop made him say it again and again, and at last the others could say it too. It was getting dark, and the moon was appearing over the water, before the Bishop rose to return to the vessel. When he took leave of the old men, they all bowed down to the ground before him. He raised them, and kissed each of them, telling them to pray as he had taught them. Then he got into the boat and returned to the ship. And as he sat in the boat and was rowed to the ship he could hear the three voices of the hermits loudly repeating the Lord's Prayer. As the boat drew near the vessel their voices could no longer be heard, but they could still be seen in the moonlight, standing as he had left them on the shore, the shortest in the middle, and the tallest on the right, the middle one on the left. As soon as the Bishop had reached the vessel and got on board, the anchor was weighed and the sails unfurled. The wind filled them, and the ship sailed away, and the Bishop took a seat in the stern and watched the island they had left. For a time he could still see the hermits, but presently they disappeared from sight, though the island was still visible. At last it too vanished, and only the sea was to be seen, rippling in the moonlight. The pilgrims lay down to sleep, and all was quiet on deck. The Bishop did not wish to sleep, but sat alone at the stern, gazing at the sea where the island was no longer visible, and thinking of the good old men. He thought how pleased they had been to learn the Lord's Prayer; and he thanked God for having sent him to teach and help such godly men. So the Bishop sat, thinking, and gazing at the sea where the island had disappeared. And the moonlight flickered before his eyes, sparkling, now here, now there, upon the waves. Suddenly he saw something white and shining, on the bright path which the moon cast across the sea. Was it a seagull, or the little gleaming sail of some small boat? The Bishop fixed his eyes on it, wondering.

"It must be a boat sailing after us," thought he "but it is overtaking us very rapidly. It was far, far away a minute ago, but now it is much nearer. It cannot be a boat, for I can see no sail; but whatever it may be, it is following us, and catching us up."

And he could not make out what it was. Not a boat, nor a bird, nor a fish! It was too large for a man, and besides a man could not be out there in the midst of the sea. The Bishop rose, and said to the helmsman:

"Look there, what is that, my friend? What is it?" the Bishop repeated, though he could now see plainly what it was -- the three hermits running upon the water, all gleaming white,

their grey beards shining, and approaching the ship as quickly as though it were not moving. The steersman looked and let go the helm in terror.

“Oh Lord! The hermits are running after us on the water as though it were dry land!”

The passengers hearing him, jumped up, and crowded to the stern. They saw the hermits coming along hand in hand, and the two outer ones beckoning the ship to stop. All three were gliding along upon the water without moving their feet. Before the ship could be stopped, the hermits had reached it, and raising their heads, all three as with one voice, began to say:

“We have forgotten your teaching, servant of God. As long as we kept repeating it we remembered, but when we stopped saying it for a time, a word dropped out, and now it has all gone to pieces. We can remember nothing of it. Teach us again.”

The Bishop crossed himself, and leaning over the ship’s side, said:

“Your own prayer will reach the Lord, men of God. It is not for me to teach you. Pray for us sinners.

And the Bishop bowed low before the old men; and they turned and went back across the sea. And a light shone until daybreak on the spot where they were lost to sight.



## THE HOLY FATHERS ON THE THEOTOKOS

Mary’s life should be for you a pictorial image of virginity. Her life is like a mirror reflecting the face of chastity and the form of virtue. Therein you may find a model for your own life... showing what to improve, what to imitate, what to hold fast to.

**St. Ambrose of Milan (+397)**

Was there ever anyone of any breeding who dared to speak the name of Holy Mary, and being questioned, did not immediately add, “the Virgin”? For by such added names the positive proofs of merit are apparent... And to the Holy Mary, Virgin is invariably added, for that Holy Woman remains undefiled.

**St. Epiphanius of Salamis (+403)**

Imagine how resplendently adorned, what a pure and perfect palace of the Almighty must have been the most holy soul and the most pure body of the Mother of God, in whose womb God the Word-Godhead, soul and body-came to dwell! Imagine how eternal, infinite, unchangeable is her holiness! Imagine of what reverence she is worthy, how we should glorify her!

**St. John of Kronstadt (+1908)**

## THE GREAT WAGER BETWEEN BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS

*By Photios Kontoglou, from his book *Mystical Flowers*, Athens, 1977*

*PHOTIOS KONTOGLOU (1896 - 1965), a Greek Orthodox iconographer and author, was born in Aivali, Asia Minor. After traveling around the world he eventually returned to his homeland, but was forced to leave after the Asia Minor catastrophe in 1922 and moved to Athens, Greece.*

*His writings and icon painting distinguished him as a soldier for Christ and struggler for the spirit of Orthodox “Romeosini.” His writings reveal the Christian-Roman/Byzantine Orthodox spirit of the neo-Hellene. His dedication to the traditional Orthodox Byzantine Iconographic Art form, at a time when even iconographers on Mount Athos were using Western prototypes, was instrumental to the reawakening of Orthodox liturgical art forms that was to occur, which we now enjoy.*

On Pascha Monday night, after midnight and before going to sleep, I went out into the little garden behind my house. The sky was dark and covered with stars. It was as if I was seeing it for the first time. A distant psalmody appeared to be descending from it. My lips murmured, very softly: “Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship the footstool of His feet.” A holy man once told me that during these hours the heavens are opened. The air exhaled a fragrance of the flowers and herbs I had planted. “Heaven and earth are filled with the glory of the Lord,” I said.

I could have easily remained there alone until daybreak. I felt as if without a body and without any bond to the earth. Fearing, however, that my absence would disturb those within the house, I returned and lay down.

Sleep had not completely overtaken and I truly do not know whether I was awake or asleep, when suddenly a strange man rose up before me. He was as pale as a dead man. His eyes were wide open and he looked at me in terror. His face was like a mask, like a mummy’s. His glistening, dark yellow skin was stretched tight over his head, displaying the cavities of a dead person’s head. He did not look real – as if he was part of a painting. In one of his hands, he held some kind of a bizarre object which I could not make out; the other hand was clutching his breast as if he were suffering.

This creature filled me with great terror. I looked at him and he looked at me without speaking, as if he were waiting for me to recognize him, strange as he was. And a voice said to me: “It is so-and-so!” And I recognized him immediately. Then he opened his mouth and sighed. His voice came from far away; it came up as if from a deep well.

He was in great agony, and I felt pity for him. His hands, his feet, his eyes -- everything showed that he was suffering. In my despair, I was thinking of helping him, but he gave me a sign with his hand to stop. He began to groan in such a way that I froze. Then he said to me: “I have not come; I have been sent. I shake without stop; I am dizzy. Pray God to have pity



on me. I want to die but I cannot. Alas! Everything you told me before is true. Do you remember how, several days before my death, you came to see me and spoke about religion? There were two other friends with me, unbelievers like myself. You spoke, and they mocked. When you left, they said: 'What a pity! He is intelligent and he believes the stupid things old women believe!'"

"Another time, and other times too, I told you: 'Dear Photios, save up money, or else you will die a pauper. Look at my riches, and I want more of them.' You told me then: 'Have you signed a pact with death, that you can live as many years as you want and enjoy a happy old age?'"

"And I replied: 'You will see to what an age I will live. Now I am 75; I will live past a hundred. My children are free from any needs or wants. My son earns a lot of money, and I have married my daughter to a rich Ethiopian. My wife and I have more money than we need. I am not like you who listen to what the priests say: "A Christian ending to our life ..." and the rest. What have you to gain from a Christian ending? Better a full pocket and no worries ... Give alms? Why did your so merciful God create paupers? Why should I feed them? And they ask you, in order to go to Paradise, to feed idlers! Do you want to talk about Paradise? You know that I am the son of a priest and that I know well all these tricks. That those who have no brains believe them is well enough, but you who have a mind have gone astray. If you continue to live as you are doing, you will die before me, and you will be responsible for those you have led astray. As a physician I tell you and affirm that I will live a hundred and ten years ...'"

After saying all this, he turned this way and that as if he were on a grill. I heard his groans: "Ah! Ouch! Oh! Oh!" He was silent for a moment, and then continued: "This is what I said, and in a few days I was dead! I was dead, and I lost the wager! I was the confused one and now the horror was upon me! Lost, I descended into the abyss. What suffering I have had up to now, what agony! Everything you told me was true. *You, dear Photios, have won the wager!*"

"When I was in the world where you are now, I was an intellectual, I was a physician. I had learned how to speak and to be listened to, to mock religion, to discuss whatever falls under the senses. And now I see that everything I called stories, myths, paper lanterns, well, I now know that it is all true. The agony which I am experiencing now, and this is the truth I live in, it is like a worm that never sleeps; this is the gnashing of teeth."

After having spoken thus, he disappeared. I still heard his groans, which gradually faded away. Sleep had begun to take over me, when I felt an icy hand touch me. I opened my eyes and saw him again before me. This time he was even more horrible and smaller in body. He had become like a nursing infant, with a large old man's head which he was shaking.

"In a short time the day will break, and those who have sent me will come to seek me!"

"Who are they?" I asked.

He spoke some confused words which I could not make out. Then he added: "Over there, where I am, there are also many

who mocked you and your faith. Now they all understand that their spiritual darts have not gone beyond the cemetery. There are both those who have done good to you, as well as all those who have slandered you. The more you forgive them, the more they detest you. Man is evil. Instead of feeling rejoice, kindness makes him bitter because it makes him feel his defeat. The state of these latter people is worse than mine. They cannot leave their dark prison to come and find you as I have done. They are severely tormented, lashed by the whip of God's love, as one of the Saints has said [St. Isaac the Syrian]. The world is something else entirely from what we see! Our intellect shows it to us in reverse. Now we understand that our intellect was only stupid, our conversations were spiteful meanness, our joys were lies and illusions."

"You, who bear God in your hearts, Whose word is Truth, the only Truth, you have all won the great wager between believers and unbelievers. This wager I have lost. I tremble, I sigh, and I find no rest. In truth, *there is no repentance in hell*. Woe to those who walk as I did when I was on earth. Our flesh was drunk, and we mocked those who believed in God and eternal life; almost everyone applauded us. They treated you as mad, as imbeciles. And the more you accept our mockeries, the more our rage increases."

"Now I see how much the conduct of evil men grieved you. How could you bear with such patience the poisoned darts which came from our lips and which called you all hypocrites, mockers of God, and deceivers of the people. If these evil men who are still on earth would see where I am, if only they were in my place, they would tremble for everything they are doing. I would like to appear to them and tell them to change their path, but I do not have the permission to do so, just as the rich man did not have it when he begged Abraham to send Lazarus the pauper. Lazarus was not sent, so that those who sinned may be punished and those who went on the ways of God might be worthy of salvation."

"*He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness yet more; and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy yet more. And he that is righteous, let him do righteousness yet more; and he that is holy, let him be made holy yet more*" (Rev. 22:11)."

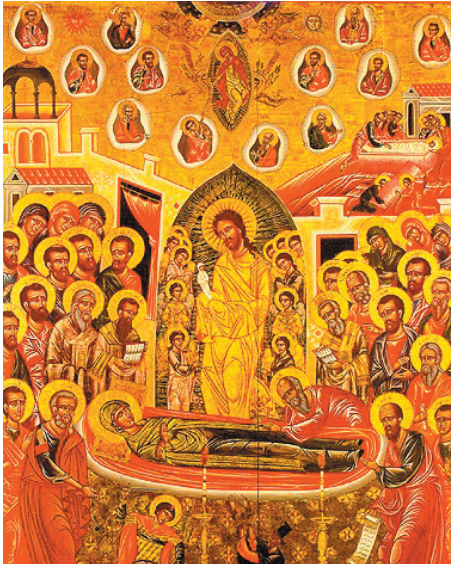
With these words he disappeared.

**Note by the Source Article's Editor:** Earlier in the book (chapter 2), we have quoted the teaching of Blessed Augustine which says that ordinarily it is only the saints who are able to have contact with the living, while ordinary sinners are bound in hell and cannot come out. However, it does happen, as in the present case, that God allows a soul from hell to appear to the living for some special purpose; some similar appearances are recorded in the book "Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave."

As Blessed Augustine writes: "*The dead of themselves have no power to intervene in the affairs of the living*" ("Care for the Dead, ch. 10"), and appear to the living only by God's special allowance. It remains true, nevertheless, that such appearances are very rare, and the vast majority of the appearances of the "dead," most notably those that occur through mediums, are the work of demons masquerading as the dead.

## DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS (Ἡ Κοίμησις τῆς Θεοτόκου)

*Celebrated August 15, from an Orthodox Pamphlet*



The dominions and the thrones, the rulers, the principalities and the powers, the cherubim and the fearful seraphim glorify thy Dominion (Vespers Sticheron, Tone 1).

The sacred Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos marks her repose, which was followed by the translation of her sacred body

three days later into heaven. This feast, therefore, marks her soul being commended into her Son's hands and the short sojourn of her body in the tomb. Unlike the Resurrection of Christ, the mysterious character of her death, burial, resurrection and ascension were not the subject of apostolic teachings, yet they were recorded by the tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church and writings of the Church Fathers.

The Dormition of the Theotokos took place while Apostle Thomas was preaching the gospel in India. The other Apostles had been caught up from various lands on the clouds of heaven, and were transported to Gethsemane, to the bier of the all-blessed Virgin. This was permitted by the will of God, so the faithful might be assured that the Mother of God was bodily assumed into heaven. For just as they were more greatly assured of the Resurrection of Christ, through the disbelief of Thomas, so did they learn of the bodily assumption into heaven of the all-pure Virgin Mary through the delay of Thomas.

On the third day after the burial St. Thomas was suddenly caught up in a cloud in India and transported to a place in the air above the tomb of the Virgin. From that vantage point, he beheld the translation of her body into the heavens, and cried out to her, "Whither goest thou, O all-holy one?" She removed her girdle and gave it to him saying, "Receive this, my friend." And then she was gone.

He then descended to find the other disciples keeping watch over the sepulchre of the Theotokos. He sat down beside them, with the girdle in his hand, greatly saddened that he had not been there when she reposed, as had been the other Apostles. Hence, he said, "We are all disciples of the Master; we all preach the same thing; we are all servants of the one Lord,

Jesus Christ. How, then, is it that ye were counted worthy to behold the repose of His Mother, and I was not? Am I not an Apostle? Can it be that God is not pleased with my preaching? I beseech you, my fellow disciples: open the tomb, that I also may look upon her remains, and embrace them, and bid her farewell!"

The Apostles took pity on St. Thomas and opened the tomb. All were aghast when they found it empty, not realizing that moments before she had been bodily transported to paradise to be the mediatrix of Christians. All that remained were her burial clothes, which emitted a wonderful unearthly fragrance.

The Feast's kontakion speaks of her as an unfailing hope and mediation, reminding us of her intercessory role in paradise. Neither the tomb nor death had power over the Theotokos, who is ever watchful in her prayers and in whose intercessions lies unfailing hope. For as the Mother of Life she has been translated unto life by Him Who dwelt in her ever-virgin womb.



### OF WARS AND TRUST IN GOD

"You will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." [Matthew 24:6,7]

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses. But we will remember the name of the Lord our God" [Psalm 20:7].

"All who take the sword will perish by the sword." [Matthew 26:52]

"He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword." [Revelation 13:9]

"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. [Jeremiah 17:5]

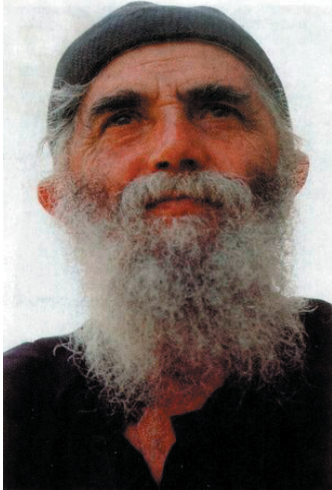
"The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble; And He knows those who trust in Him." [Nahum 1:7]

"Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us." [Psalm 62:8]

## Σημεία Καιρών

Γέρων Παΐσιος

*Μετά από την μπόρα την δαιμονική,  
θά έλθη ή λιακάδα ή Θεϊκή...*



Πίσω από τὸ κοσμικὸ πνεῦμα τῆς σημερινῆς «ἐλευθερίας» καὶ τῆς ἔλειψης σεβασμοῦ πρὸς τὴν Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ, στοὺς μεγαλύτερους, στοὺς γονεῖς καὶ διδασκάλους, καὶ σὲ ὄλους αὐτοὺς ποὺ ἔχουν φόβο Θεοῦ, κρύβεται ἡ πνευματικὴ σκλαβιά, τὸ ἄγχος καὶ ἡ ἀναρχία ποὺ ὀδηγοῦν τὸν κόσμο στὸ ἀδιέξοδο, στὴν ψυχικὴ καὶ σωματικὴ καταστροφή. Πίσω καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ τέλειο σύστημα «κάρτας ἐξυπηρετήσεως»

ἀσφαλείας κομποῦτερ, κρύβεται ἡ παγκόσμια δικτατορία, ἡ σκλαβιά τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου. Διαβάζουμε στὴν Ἀποκάλυψη Ἰωάννου [κεφ. ιγ' 16]: «...ἵνα δώσωσιν αὐτοῖς χάραγμα ἐπὶ τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῶν τῆς δεξιᾶς ἢ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν, καὶ ἵνα μὴ τις δύνηται ἀγοράσαι ἢ πωλῆσαι εἰ μὴ ὁ ἔχων τὸ χάραγμα, τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θηρίου ἢ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ. Ὡδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν· ὁ ἔχων νοῦν ψηφισάτω τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ θηρίου· ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν· καὶ ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτοῦ χξς (= 666)».

Ὁ Ἅγιος Ἀνδρέας ὁ Καισαρείας γράφει τὰ ἐξῆς: «Περὶ τοῦ μιαιροῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου: Καὶ τὴν μὲν ἀκρίβειαν τῆς ψήφου, ὡς καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένα, ὁ χρόνος ἀποκαλύψει καὶ ἡ πείρα τοῖς νήφουσιν·... ἄλλ' οὐκ εὐδόκησεν ἡ Θεία Χάρις ἐν Θεία Βίβλῳ τὸ τοῦ λυμεᾶνος ὄνομα γραφῆναι· ὡς ἐν γυμνασίᾳ δὲ λόγῳ πολλὰ ἐστὶν εὐρεῖν...». [Ἅγιου Ἀνδρέα Καισαρείας, ἐξηγήσεις εἰς τὴν Ἰωάννου Ἀποκ. Σελ. 341-42, κεφ. λη']

Τὸ παράξενο ὁμως, καὶ πολλοὶ πνευματικοὶ ἄνθρωποι, ἐκτὸς ποὺ ὅτι δίνουν δικές των ἐρμηνείες, φοβοῦνται καὶ αὐτοὶ τὸν κοσμικὸ φόβο τοῦ φακελώματος, ἐνῶ ἔπρεπε νὰ ἀνησυχοῦν πνευματικά, καὶ νὰ βοηθήσουν τοὺς Χριστιανούς μὲ τὴν καλὴ ἀνησυχία, καὶ νὰ τοὺς τονῶνουν στὴν πίστη, νὰ νιώθουν ἔτσι τὴν Θεϊκὴ παρηγοριά. Ἄπορῶ! Δὲν τοὺς προβληματίζουν ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ γεγονότα; Γιατὶ δὲν βάζουν ἔστω ἓνα ἐρωτηματικὸ γιὰ τὶς ἐρμηνείες τοῦ μυαλοῦ τους; Κι' ἂν ἐπιβοηθοῦν τὸν ἀντίχριστο γιὰ τὸ σφράγισμα, πῶς παρασύρουν καὶ ἄλλες ψυχές στὴν ἀπώλεια; Αὐτὸ ἐννοεῖται στὸ «...τὸ ἀποπλανᾶν, εἰ δυνατόν, καὶ τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς».[Μᾶρκ. ιγ']

Θὰ πλανηθοῦν αὐτοὶ ποὺ τὰ ἐρμηνεύουν μὲ τὸ μυαλό ἂν καὶ τὰ σημεῖα φαίνονται ξεκάθαρα: «Τὸ θηρίο» στὶς

Βρυξέλλες, μὲ τὸ 666, ἔχει σχεδὸν ρουφήξει ὅλα τὰ κράτη στὸ κομποῦτερ. Ἡ κάρτα, ἡ ταυτότητα, «ἢ εἰσαγωγή τοῦ σφραγίσματος», ὅλα αὐτὰ τι φανερόνουν; Δυστυχῶς, ὁμως, στὸ ράδιο παρακολουθοῦμε μόνο τι καιρὸ θὰ ἔχουμε καὶ τίποτα ἄλλο. Τὶ θὰ μᾶς πῆ ὁ Χριστὸς; «Υποκριταί, τὸ μὲν πρόσωπον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ γινώσκατε διακρίνειν, τὰ δὲ σημεῖα τῶν οὐ δύναστε γνῶναι;» [Ματθ. κεφ. ιστ' 3]

Μετά λοιπὸν ἀπὸ τὴν κάρτα καὶ τὴν ταυτότητα, καὶ γιὰ νὰ προχωρήσουν «τὸ φακέλωμα» πονηρὰ στὸ σφράγισμα, θὰ λένε συνέχεια στὴν τηλεόραση ὅτι πῆρε κάποιος τὴν κάρτα τοῦ δεῖνα καὶ τοῦ σήκωσε τὰ χρήματα ἀπὸ τὴν τράπεζα. Ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη μεριά, θὰ διαφημίζουν «τὸ τέλειο σύστημα» τοῦ σφραγίσματος στὸ χέρι ἢ στὸ μέτωπο μὲ ἀκτίνες λέιζερ, τὸ ὁποῖο δὲν θὰ διακρίνεται ἐξωτερικά, καὶ ποὺ θὰ εἶναι μὲ τὸ 666, τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου.

Δυστυχῶς, καὶ πάλι ὀρισμένοι «γνωστικοὶ» θὰ φασκιώνουν τὰ πνευματικά τους τέκνα σὰν τὰ μωρὰ, δὴθεν γιὰ νὰ μὴ στενοχωριοῦνται: «Δὲν πειράζει αὐτὸ, δὲν εἶναι τίποτα, ἀρκεῖ ἐσωτερικά νὰ πιστεύετε!» Κι' ἐνῶ βλέπουμε τὸν Ἀπόστολο Πέτρο ποὺ ἐξωτερικά ἀρνήθηκε τὸν Χριστὸ, καὶ ἦτο ἄρνησις, αὐτοὶ θὰ ἀρνοῦνται τὸ Ἅγιο σφράγισμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποὺ τοὺς δόθηκε στὸ Ἅγιο Βάπτισμα, «Σφραγίς δωρεᾶς Πνεύματος Ἁγίου». Μὲ τὸ νὰ δέχονται τὴν σφραγίδα τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, θὰ λένε καὶ ὅτι ἔχουν μέσα τους τὸν Χριστὸ!

Τέτοια δυστυχῶς λογικὴ εἶχαν καὶ ὀρισμένοι «γνωστικοὶ» στὰ χρόνια τῶν Ἁγίων Μαρτύρων, ποὺ προσπαθοῦσαν νὰ μεταστρέψουν τοὺς υποψήφιους μάρτυρας, ὅπως ἀναφέρει ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος στὸν λόγο του στὸν Μάρτυρα Γόρδιο: «...πολλοὶ παραλογίζοντοσαν προσπαθώντας νὰ πείσουν τὸν Μάρτυρα νὰ ἀρνηθῆ μόνο μὲ τὰ λόγια, καὶ νὰ κρατήσῃ τὴν πίστη μὲ τὴν ψυχὴ, τὴν ἐσωτερικὴ διάθεση, γιατί ὁ Θεὸς δὲν δίνει προσοχὴ στὴν γλῶσσα ἀλλὰ στὴν διάθεση. Ὁ Μάρτυς ὁμως Γόρδιος ἦταν ἀκαμπτος καὶ ἀπεκρίθηκε: 'οὐκ ἀνέχεται τί γλῶσσα κτισθεῖσα παρὰ Χριστοῦ φθεγγᾶσθαι τί κατὰ τοῦ Κτίσαντος... μὴ πλανᾶσθε Θεὸς οὐ μνηστρίζεται ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ἡμᾶς τοῦ ἡμετέρου κρίνει, ἐκ τῶν λόγων δικαιοῖ, καὶ ἐκ τῶν λόγων καταδικάζει.'»

Ἐπίσης, ἐπὶ Δεκίου, μὲ διάταγμα ζητοῦσε νὰ ὁμολογήσουν τὴν θρησκεία τῶν εἰδωλολατρῶν, καὶ ὅσοι Χριστιανοὶ δὴλωναν καὶ θυσιάσαν στὰ εἰδῶλα, ἐπαιρναν πιστοποιητικὸ, καὶ γλύτωναν τὸ Μαρτύριο. Ὅχι μόνον αὐτοὶ ἦταν ἀρνητὲς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκεῖνοι ὅπου ἔδειναν χρήματα στοὺς εἰδωλολάτρας, στὴν ἐπιτροπὴ, καὶ ἐπαιρναν τὸ πιστοποιητικὸ, χωρὶς νὰ ἀρνηθοῦν, οἱ ὀνομαζόμενοι «λιβελλοφόροι». Καὶ αὐτοὺς ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας τοὺς θεώρησε «ἀποστάτας καὶ πεπτακότας»!

Καὶ ὅλα αὐτὰ ἂν καὶ ἔχουμε τόσα πολλὰ παραδείγματα, ὅπως καὶ τοῦ γενομένου θαύματος τοῦ Ἁγίου Θεοδώρου, ποὺ ἐορτάζομαι κάθε χρόνο, τὸ Σάββατο τῆς Α' ἑβδομάδος τῶν Νηστειῶν. «Ἰουλιανὸς ὁ παραβάτης, γινώσκων ὅτι οἱ Χριστιανοὶ καθαίρονται μᾶλλον διὰ νηστείας τὴν πρώτη

έβδομάδα τῆς Ἁγίας τεσσαρακοστῆς, ἦν καὶ ἡμεῖς διὰ τοῦτο καθαρὰν ἑβδομάδα καλοῦμεν, ἠβουλήθη ἵνα τότε μάλιστα μολύνει αὐτούς· διὸ καὶ προσέταξε κρυφίως ἵνα τεθῶσιν εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν κατ' ἐκείνας τὰς ἡμέρας βρώματα μεμιασμένα ἐκ τῶν αἱμάτων τῶν εἰδωλικῶν θυσιῶν. Ἀλλὰ νεύσει Θεία ἐπιφανεῖς καθ' ὕπνον ὁ Μάρτυς Θεόδωρος εἰς τὸν τότε ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Κων/πόλεως Εὐδόξιον καὶ φανερώσας τὸ πρᾶγμα παρήγγειλεν αὐτῷ ἵνα συγκαλέσει τοὺς πιστοὺς εὐθὺς τὸ πρωῖ τῆς Δευτέρας καὶ ἐμποδίσει αὐτοῖς τῶν βρωμάτων ἐκείνων τὴν χρῆσιν, τὴν ἔλλειπιν τῆς ἀναγκαίας τροφῆς ἀναπληρώσῃ ἐκ τοῦ προχείρου διὰ κολλύβων... Τοιοῦτοτρόπως ὁ μὲν σκοπὸς τοῦ παραβάτου ἐματαιώθη, ὁ δὲ εὐσεβῆς λαός, διαφυλαχθεὶς ἀμόλυντος...» [Ὡρολόγιον τὸ Μέγα σελ. 446]

Τὸ νὰ ἀπέχουμαι ἀπὸ τὰ εἰδωλόθυτα, εἶναι ἐπίσης καὶ κανὼν τῶν Ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων. Πράξ. Ἀποσ. [Κεφ. ιε'] «Συνήχθησαν δὲ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι... ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτοῦ καὶ πορνείας...».

Παρ' ὅλα λοιπὸν αὐτὰ ποῦ ἀνέφερα, ἀκούει κανεὶς δυστυχῶς ἕνα σωρὸ ἀνοησίες τοῦ μυαλοῦ ἀπὸ ὀρισμένους σημερινούς «γνωστικούς». Ἀκοῦμε, λοιπὸν, ὁ ἕνας νὰ λέει «ἐγὼ θὰ δεχθῶ τὴν ταυτότητα μὲ τὸ 666, θὰ βάλω καὶ ἕνα Σταυρὸ», καὶ ὁ ἄλλος νὰ λέει «ἐγὼ θὰ δεχθῶ τὸ σφράγισμα στὸ κεφάλι μὲ τὸ 666 καὶ θὰ κάνω κι ἕνα Σταυρὸ στὸ κεφάλι...» καὶ ἕνα σωρὸ ὁμοιες ἀνοησίες, ποῦ νομίζουν ὅτι θὰ ἁγιασθοῦν μὲ αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο, ἐνῶ αὐτὰ εἶναι πλᾶνες.

Μόνον ποῦ ὅλοι αὐτοὶ δὲν καταλαβαίνουν, ἢ δὲν ξέρουν ὅτι αὐτὰ ποῦ δέχονται ἁγιασμό, αὐτὰ μόνον ἁγιάζονται! Ὅπως, π.χ. τὸ νερὸ, δέχεται ἁγιασμό, καὶ γίνεται ἁγιασμός. Τὰ οὖρα, ὅμως, δὲν δέχονται ἁγιασμό. Ἡ πέτρα, μὲ θαῦμα γίνεται ψωμί. Ἡ ἀκαθαρσία, ὅμως, δὲν δέχεται ποτὲ μὰ ποτὲ τὸν ἁγιασμό. Ἐπομένως, ὁ διάβολος, ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὅταν εἶναι στὴν ταυτότητά μας, ἢ στὸ χέρι, ἢ στὸ κεφάλι μας, μὲ τὸ σύμβολό του, ἢ παρουσία του αὐτὴ δὲν ἀφήνει ποτὲ νὰ ἁγιάζονται οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἔστω κι' ἂν βάλουν καὶ ἕνα Σταυρὸ.

Ἔχουμε τὴν δύναμη τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ, τοῦ Ἁγίου Συμβόλου, τὴν Θεία Χάρη τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μόνον ὅταν ἀρκοῦμεθα στὸ Ἅγιο Σφράγισμα τοῦ Βαπτίσματος, καὶ ἀπαρνούμεθα τὸν σατανᾶ, καὶ συντασσώμεθα στὸν Χριστὸ, καὶ δεχόμεθα τὸ Ἅγιον Σφράγισμα: «Σφραγίς δωρεᾶς Πνεύματος Ἁγίου».

Ὁ Χριστὸς νὰ μᾶς δίνη καλὴ φώτιση. Ἀμήν.

Ἅγιον Ὅρος Κουτλουμουσιανὸ Κελλί «Παναγούδα», Σάββατο Ἀ' Νηστειῶν 1987.

Μὲ πολὺ πόνου καὶ ἀγάπη Χριστοῦ,

Μοναχὸς Παΐσιος



## Ἡ Προσαρμογὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησιαστικῆς Ποιμαντικῆς

Σεβ. Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἁγίου Βλασίου Ἱεροθέου, ἀπὸ τὴν «Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Παρέμβαση», Μηνιαία Ἐκδοση τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἁγίου Βλασίου, Μάιος 2002

Ἡ ποιμαντικὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἀπασχολεῖ πολλοὺς κληρικούς καὶ Χριστιανοὺς τῆς ἐποχῆς μας, δεδομένου ὅτι ἔχουν ἀλλάξει τὰ κοινωνικὰ πλαίσια στὰ ὁποῖα ἐξησκεῖτο παλαιότερα ἡ ποιμαντικὴ. Εἶναι γεγονὸς ὅτι περάσαμε ἀπὸ τὴν ἀγροτικὴ κοινωνία στὴν βιομηχανικὴ κοινωνία καὶ ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ στὴν ἠλεκτρονικὴ ἐπανάσταση μὲ πολλὰς ἐπιπτώσεις στὴν κοινωνικὴ ζωὴ. Ὅμως στὴν βάση του ὁ ἄνθρωπος παραμένει πάντα ὁ ἴδιος, μὲ τὰ προβλήματά του καὶ τὶς ἀνησυχίες του, ὅπως διατυπώθηκαν τὰ ἐρωτήματα ἀπὸ τὸν Κλήμεντα τὸν Ἀλεξανδρέα: «Τίνες ἦμεν; Τί γεγόναμεν; ποῦ ἦμεν; ποῦ ἐνεβλήθημεν; ποῦ σπεύδομεν; πόθεν λυτρούμεθα; τί γέννησις; τί ἀναγέννησις;» Ὁ ἄνθρωπος πάντα ἀναζητᾶ τὴν λύση αὐτῶν καὶ παρομοίων ἐρωτημάτων.

Παρὰ ταῦτα πολλοὶ διατείνονται ὅτι σήμερα πρέπει νὰ χρησιμοποιήσουμε ἄλλους τρόπους προσέγγισης τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ κυρίως τῆς συγχρόνου νεολαίας μας, ποῦ ἔχει τεράστια προβλήματα. Καὶ βέβαια μέσα στὴν προοπτικὴ αὐτὴ γίνονται πολλὰς προσπάθειες. Δὲν εἶναι εὐκολο νὰ κρίνῃ κανεὶς τὴν ἐσωτερικὴ διάθεση τῶν ἀνθρώπων ποῦ ἀσχολοῦνται μὲ τὸ θέμα αὐτό, γιατί δὲν εἴμαστε κριτὲς διαλογισμῶν, ἀφοῦ ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι Ἐκεῖνος ποῦ γνωρίζει τὴν ἐσωτερικὴ διάθεση κάθε ἀνθρώπου καὶ, βέβαια, Αὐτὸς θὰ κρίνῃ κάθε ἄνθρωπο στὴν Δευτέρα Του Παρουσία. Ἄλλωστε ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος διαβεβαίωσε ὅτι «ἐκάστου τὸ ἔργον ὁποῖον ἐστὶ τὸ πῦρ δοκιμάσει» (Α' Κορ. γ', 13).

Μέσα στὰ πλαίσια αὐτὰ γίνεται συζήτηση γιὰ τὸν ἐκσυγχρονισμό, τὴν ἐκκοσμίκευση καὶ τὴν παραδοσιακότητα. Νομίζω ὅτι οἱ κληρικοὶ πρέπει νὰ κατέχουν τὸν πυρῆνα τῆς Παραδόσεως καὶ αὐτὸς συνίσταται στὴν σωτηρία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μὲ τὴν ἄκτιστη Χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ ἡ προσέγγιση τῶν συγχρόνων ἀνθρώπων πρέπει νὰ γίνεται μὲ ἰδιαιτέρους τρόπους. Δηλαδή εἶναι ἀναγκαῖο νὰ ὑπάρχουν καὶ τὰ δυὸ αὐτὰ στοιχεῖα, καὶ ἡ διατήρηση τοῦ πυρῆνος τῆς παραδόσεως καὶ τῆς εὐρέσεως τοῦ ἰδιαιτέρου τρόπου προσφορᾶς τῆς, καὶ αὐτὸ εἶναι ἀπαραίτητο, γιατί μέσα στὴν Ἐκκλησία ὑπάρχουν διάφορες πνευματικὲς ἡλικίες. Ὁ σκοπὸς βέβαια καὶ τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα ὅλων τῶν μεθόδων εἶναι ἡ θεραπεία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

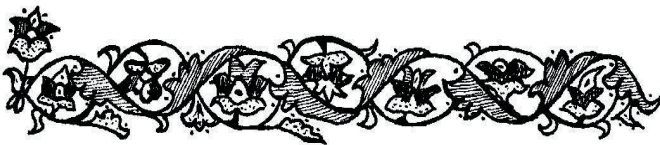
Ὁ Ἀρχιμανδρίτης Γεώργιος, Καθηγούμενος τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Ὁσίου Γρηγορίου τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους, στὸ βιβλίον του «Ἡ ποιμαντικὴ διακονία κατὰ τοὺς ἱεροὺς Κανόνες» γράφει ὅτι μπορούμε, ὅπως τὸ διαγράφουν οἱ ἱεροὶ Κανόνες, νὰ παρομοιάσουμε τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴ κοινωνία μὲ τρεῖς

όμοκέντρους κύκλους. Ο έσωτερικός κύκλος συγκροτείται από εκείνους που μετέχουν της κοινωνίας του Σώματος και Αΐματος του Χριστού, όταν βέβαια έχουν τις απαραίτητες εκκλησιαστικές προϋποθέσεις. Ο άμέσως ευρύτερος κύκλος συγκροτείται από εκείνους τους Χριστιανούς που μετέχουν στην κοινωνία των προσευχών, δηλαδή είναι εκείνοι που δεν μπορούν για λόγους πνευματικούς να κοινωνήσουν, αλλά όμως εκκλησιάζονται και έχουν την δυνατότητα να προσευχηθούν μαζί με όλη την εκκλησιαστική κοινότητα. Και στον έξωτερικό κύκλο είναι οι άκροώμενοι τον λόγο του Θεού που κηρύσσεται μέσα στο εκκλησιαστικό Σώμα, αλλά δεν μπορούν να συμμετάσχουν στην θεία Λειτουργία είτε προσευχόμενοι, είτε κοινωνούντες των Αχράντων Μυστηρίων.

Αυτή ή εικόνα των όμοκέντρων κύκλων μπορεί να βοηθήσει στην κατανόηση του προβλήματος της ποιμαντικής. Ο πνευματικός Πατέρας είναι απαραίτητο να έχει πολλή Χάρη από τον Θεό για να έχει το χάρισμα -- πνευματικό και όχι διανοητικό ή ψυχολογικό -- της διακρίσεως για να γνωρίζει σε ποιο «κύκλο» συγκαταλέγεται ένα μέλος της Έκκλησίας. Και στην συνέχεια μπορεί να προσφέρει την ποιμαντική του διακονία, χρησιμοποιώντας τις κατάλληλες μεθόδους, με σκοπό να τον οδηγήσει στον έσωτερο κύκλο της εκκλησιαστικής ζωής.

Ένας Κληρικός που δεν έχει τις ορθόδοξες προϋποθέσεις να διακρίνει την πνευματική κατάσταση κάθε ανθρώπου που ζει ή προσέρχεται στην Έκκλησία και δεν γνωρίζει ούτε έχει την δυνατότητα να προσφέρει σε άλλους γάλα και σε άλλους στερεά τροφή δεν μπορεί να έξασκήσει ορθόδοξη ποιμαντική. Σε μία τέτοια περίπτωση το γάλα που θα προσφέρει θα είναι ανεπαρκές ή και μολυσμένο, καθώς επίσης ή στερεά τροφή που θα δίδει στους ανθρώπους θα είναι δύσπεπτη.

Θεωρώ, λοιπόν, ότι το πρόβλημα των ημερών μας δεν είναι άπλωσ ή χρησιμοποίηση διαφόρων νέων μεθόδων, όσο οι Κληρικοί οι όποιοι δεν έχουν τις προϋποθέσεις που διαγράφονται από την όλη παράδοση της Έκκλησίας και οι όποιοι δεν έχουν το πνευματικό χάρισμα της διακρίσεως, αλλά και δεν έχουν προσωπική γεύση των δωρεών της θείας Χάριτος.



Ο Χριστός είπε τους έχθρους να αγαπάμε. Το καταλαβαίνεις αυτό; Μεγάλο πράγμα να αγαπάμε όλους και να προσευχόμαστε γι' αυτούς. Πείραξε έναν από σας ο διάβολος. Τόν κάνει ανήσυχο, γκρινιάρη, ταραχοποιό. Άν οι άλλοι δεν είναι έτοιμοι σε προσευχή, ή ταραχή μεταδίδεται σε όλους. Άντίθετα, αν ένας προσεύχεται για τους άλλους, ή ταραχή περιορίζεται. Άκτινοβολεί τη χάρη του Θεού, και δι' αυτού, ή χάρη έξαπλούται σ' όλο το περιβάλλον του και το αγιάζει.

Γέροντας Πορφύριος (+1991)

## Η Αυτόμεμψία

Σεβ. Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου και Αγίου Βλασίου Γεροθέου, από τό βιβλίο του «Πνευματική και Κοινωνική Ζωή».

Έπειδή ή αυτόμεμψία και ως λέξη είναι σχεδόν άγνωστη σε πολλούς Χριστιανούς, γι' αυτό είναι ανάγκη να καθορίσουμε εύθως άμέσως τί έννοούν οι άγιοι Πατέρες, όταν χρησιμοποιούν αυτόν τον όρο.

Όπως ή λέξη μαρτυρεί, αυτόμεμψία είναι τό να μέμφεται κανείς τον έαυτό του, να τον κατακρίνει, να τον θεωρεί ένοχο για κάθε πράγμα και άνάξιο της Του Θεού αγάπης. Ο Μ. Βασίλειος άντι του χαρακτηρισμού αυτού χρησιμοποιεί τον όρο «πρωτολογία», που σημαίνει ότι πρέπει να λέμε έμεις τον πρώτο καταδικαστικό λόγο έναντίον του έαυτού μας, ώστε να μη μάς ένοχλεί ο λόγος του άδελφού μας. Όταν αναλαμβάνουμε επάνω μας τον έκούσιο και ήθελημένο σταυρό της κατά Θεόν λύπης (μεάνοια) τότε άποφεύγουμε τον άκούσιο όδυνηρό σταυρό της κατά κόσμον λύπης. Η λύπη που συχνά αισθανόμαστε στην ζωή μας είναι ύποκατάστατο της μεάνοιας. Η αυτόμεμψία συνδέεται στενά με την μνήμη του θανάτου, την κρίση ένώπιον του άδεκάστου κριτού και την αιώνια κόλαση. Και όλα αυτά γίνονται μέσα σε μιá βαθειά μεάνοια.

Κατά ένα παράξενο τρόπο για τå ανθρώπινα κριτήρια στην άρχή κυρίως της πνευματικής του ζωής βιώνει ο Χριστιανός την φωτιά της κολάσεως, αισθάνεται την φλόγα της κολάσεως να τον περικυκλώνει και να τον κατακαίει. Τότε, άν διαθέτει άνδρεία πνευματική, στέκεται σ' αυτά τå όρια της κολάσεως δηλαδή στα όρια της κατά Θεόν άπελπισίας, έχοντας συγχρόνως μιá μεγάλη έλπίδα στον Θεό. Αυτή ή κατάσταση τον βοηθά να καθάιρεται πραγματικά, να εκδιώκει τον πονηρό διάβολο.

Στις έπιστολές του Άποστόλου Παύλου υπάρχουν μερικές φράσεις αυτόμεμψίας. Όνομάζει ο Άπόστολος τον έαυτό του εκτρωμα, που σημαίνει, κατά την έρμηνεία του Θεοφυλάκτου Βουλγαρίας, «τό άτελες και κολοβόν έμβρυον, όπου άποβάλλει πρό καιρού ή έγγαστρωμένη γυναίκα». Επίσης γράφει ο Άπόστολος «έγώ ειμί ο έλάχιστος των Άποστόλων ός ούκ ειμί ικανός καλεισθαι Άπόστολος, διότι έδίωξα την Έκκλησίαν του Θεού» (Α' Κορ. Ιε' 9).

Όμως αυτή ή καταδίκη του έαυτού μας, ο αυτοεξευτελισμός, δεν είναι ανθρώπινη κατάσταση, ούτε είναι άποτέλεσμα μιáς ψυχολογικής αυτοαναλύσεως ή γνώσεως του έαυτού μας. Γιατί όταν κανείς ψυχολογικά, δηλαδή με ανθρώπινα κριτήρια σταθεί μπροστά στον έαυτό του, τότε μπορεί να φθάσει στην τρέλα και στην σχιζοφρένια. Άλλά και αυτά τå λεγόμενα ψυχολογικά μας προβλήματα μπορούν να μετατραπούν σε πνευματικές καταστάσεις, όταν παύσουμε να κάνουμε διάλογο με τους ανθρώπους και άρχίζουμε διάλογο με τον Θεό.

Πάντως ή αυτογνωσία είναι μιá κατάσταση που έμπνέεται από την Χάρη του Θεού, γι' αυτό δεν δημιουργεί ποτέ ανθρώπινη άπελπισία, αλλά θεία έμπνευση. Αυξάνει την

προσευχή, δημιουργεί κατάνυξη και χορηγεί τις κατάλληλες συνθήκες για να στραφεί ο άνθρωπος με όρμη προς τον Θεό. Ο Απόστολος Παύλος επειδή είδε τον Χριστό, επειδή το άκτιστο Φῶς εισχώρησε στον έσωτερικό του κόσμο, γι' αυτό και έβλεπε την έσωτερική του άκαταστασία. Άρα ή αυτομεμψία δεν είναι μία φθηνή ταπεινολογία, αλλά μία βαθειά συναίσθηση, λόγω της επισκέψεως του θείου Φωτός. Όπως μια άκτινα φωτός όταν εισέρχεται μέσα σ' ένα σκοτεινό δωμάτιο αποκαλύπτει και την τυχόν μικρά σκόνη άερος, έτσι γίνεται με την ενέργεια του άκτίστου Φωτός όταν εισέρχεται μέσα στην ψυχή μας.

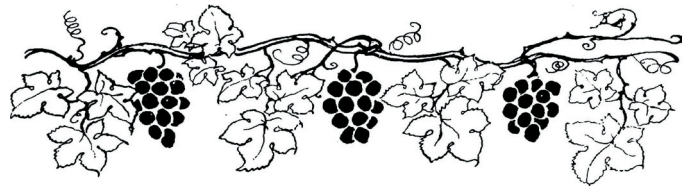
Και όταν λέμε άκτιστο Φῶς έννοοῦμε την ενέργεια της θείας Χάριτος. Βασιζόμενοι στην πείρα των Άγιων λέμε ότι πρωταρχικά λαμβάνουμε πείρα της αιωνιότητος άρνητικά (της αιώνιας κολάσεως). Η άληθινή γνώση του έαυτού μας είναι το πρώτο στάδιο της θεωρίας. Στους βίους των άγιων Προφητών βλέπουμε ότι όσάκις έβλεπαν τον Θεό, έβλεπαν συγχρόνως και την έλεεινότητα του έαυτού τους, συγκρινόμενο με την τελειότητα και την αγιότητα του Θεού.

Ο άγιος Δωρόθεος λέγει ότι οι Άγιοι «όσον έγγίζουσι τῷ Θεῷ, τοσοῦτον άμαρτωλοῦς βλέπουσιν έαυτούς». Ο Άβραάμ όταν είδε τον Θεό αποκάλεσε τον έαυτό του «γῆν και σποδόν». Ο Προφήτης Ησαΐας, μετά την θεωρία πού είχε, έλεγε: «ὦ τάλας και άκάθαρτος εἰμι έγώ». Και ο άγιος Συμεών ο νέος Θεολόγος γράφει ότι εκείνος πού ένόθηκε με τον Θεό και άρχισε να έπιθυμεί σφοδρῶς να φθάσει στην τελειότητα της αγάπης νομίζει ότι ούτε την άρχή της αγάπης εὔρηκε «άλλ' ὡς μη αγαπᾶν τον Θεόν διάκειται, τὸ πλήρωμα της αγάπης μη καταλαβεῖν δυνηθείς, ὅθεν και ὡς έσχατον ήγούμενος έαυτόν πάντων τῶν φοβουμένων τον Θεόν, ανάξιον έαυτόν ήγειται από ψυχῆς και της μετά τῶν πιστῶν σωτηρίας».

Έτσι, ή αυτομεμψία είναι ένα μεγάλο χάρισμα του Θεού. Η ψυχή θεραπεύεται, γιατί άρχίζει να γνωρίζει τον Θεό και τον πραγματικό έαυτό της. Η σύγχρονη ψυχολογία προσπαθεῖ να άπαλλάξει τον άνθρωπο από την συνείδηση της ένοχῆς, ένῶ έμεῖς ζώντας πνευματικά, ακολουθοῦντες την διδασκαλία των άγιων Πατέρων μας, επιδιώκουμε με την βοήθεια της θείας Χάριτος να φορτωθούμε την ένοχή, να την γνωρίσουμε και να κλάψουμε πολὺ γι' αυτήν, ὥστε να θεραπευθούμε.

Η αυτομεμψία, ὡς χάρισμα Θεού, εκδιώκει την θλίψη πού προέρχεται από την άγνοια του έαυτού μας, την ταραχή και δημιουργεί άνάπαυση στις ψυχές μας. Κατὰ τον άγιο Γρηγόριο τον Παλαμᾶ ή αυτομεμψία «συντριβει και πιέζει και τον οἶνον εκθλίβει τον σωτήριο, τον ευφραίνοντα καρδιαν ανθρώπου». Οἶνος είναι ή αγία κατάνυξη πού γεμίζει χαρὰ την ψυχή, αφού την άπαλλάσσει από τὸ βάρος τῶν παθῶν. Έτσι νοιώθουμε έμεῖς οι Όρθόδοξοι την χαρὰ. Όχι ὡς βίωση ένός συναισθήματος, αλλά ὡς βίωση της κατὰ Θεόν αυτομεμψίας, ὡς αἴσθηση της άμαρτίας και ὡς βίωση της μετάνοιας.

Η αυτομεμψία δείχνει την παρουσία του ὀρθοδόξου ήθους. Ο πραγματικός Χριστιανός δεν ζει με ψευδαισθήσεις, δεν διακρίνεται από την άπομακρύνουσα από τον Θεό αὐτάρκεια, δεν κατηγορεῖ τους άλλους, αλλά ένοχοποιεῖ τον έαυτό του, βλέπει την έλεεινή κατάστασή του, τὰ χάλια του και έτσι γίνεται ο κατ' έξοχήν κοινωνικός άνθρωπος, δηλαδή ο φυσικός άνθρωπος άπηλλαγμένος από τὰ δεσμά μιας εὔσεβιστικής νοοτροπίας πού είναι πραγματική σχιζοφρένεια. Ο άγιος Ίσαάκ μᾶς προτρέπει: «έξευτέλισον σεαυτὸν και ὄψεις την δόξαν του Θεού έν σεαυτῷ. Όπου γάρ βλαστάνει ή ταπεινώσις, εκεί ή του Θεού δόξα βρῦει...».



Ένας άδελφός είπε στον Άββᾶ Ποιμένα:

- Τὸ σῶμα μου αδυνατίσει, αλλά τὰ πάθη μου δεν αδυνατίζουν.

- Τὰ πάθη μοιάζουν με άγκαθωτὰ φυτὰ, άποκρίθηκε ο Γέροντας. Αυτό σημαίνει ότι, ὅπως ακριβῶς εκείνος πού θέλει να ξεριζώσει τὰ φυτὰ αὐτὰ, πληγώνει και ματώνει τὰ χέρια του, έτσι και εκείνος πού θέλει να ξεριζώσει τὰ πάθη του, έχει ανάγκη από ιδρώτες και κόπους.

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Ένας άλλος άδελφός ρώτησε τον Άββᾶ Ποιμένα για την άκηδία, και ο Γέροντας άποκρίθηκε:

- Κάθε φορά πού ο άνθρωπος άρχίζει κάτι καλὸ, τον πολεμάει η άκηδία. Δεν υπάρχει, πραγματικά, χειρότερο πάθος άπ' αὐτήν. Αν ὅμως τή συνειδητοποιήσει ο άνθρωπος και ενεργοποιήσει μέσα του την ὑπομονή και τή φιλοπονία, τότε βρίσκει άνάπαυση.

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Έλεγε ο Γέροντας Πορφύριος:

Όταν ή ψυχή είναι ταραγμένη, θολώνει τὸ λογικὸ και δεν βλέπει καθαρά. Μόνο όταν ή ψυχή είναι ήρεμη φωτίζει τὸ λογικὸ, για να βλέπει καθαρά την αίτία κάθε πράγματος. Η ψυχή είναι πολὺ βαθιά και μόνο ο Θεός τή γνωρίζει. Γιατί να κυνηγᾶμε τὰ σκοτάδια; Νά, θὰ άνάψουμε τὸ φῶς και τὰ σκοτάδια θὰ φύγουν μόνα τους. Θὰ άφήσουμε να κατοικήσει σ' ὄλη την ψυχή μας ο Χριστός και τὰ δαιμόνια θὰ φύγουν μόνα τους. Όταν έρθει μέσα μας ο Χριστός, τότε ζοῦμε μόνο τὸ καλὸ, την αγάπη για ὄλο τον κόσμο. Τὸ κακὸ, ή άμαρτία, τὸ μῖσος εξαφανίζονται μόνα τους, δεν μποροῦν, δεν έχουν θέση, να μείνουν. Νά μήν ενδιαφέρεσαι αν σε αγαποῦν, αλλά αν εσὺ αγαπᾶς τὸ Χριστὸ και τούς ανθρώπους. Μόνο έτσι γεμίζει ή ψυχή. Στην ψυχή, πού ὄλος ο χῶρος της είναι κατειλημμένος από τὸ Χριστὸ, δεν μπορεί να μπει και να κατοικήσει ο διάβολος, ὅσο κι αν προσπαθήσει, διότι δεν χωράει, δεν υπάρχει κενή θέση γι' αὐτόν.

## THE MONASTIC VOWS & LAITY'S EQUIVALENT RESPONSIBILITIES

By Archbishop Averky

*Even in Greece and Russia, with their thousands of monasteries and sketes, it is not uncommon to find people of the opinion that monastic life is essentially different from ordinary Christian life. All the more do we hear people today on the subject of fasting and long services: "Oh, that's just for monastics." In this essay by the late Archbishop Averky, titled "On Monasticism," it is clear that the difference is one of degree and not of kind.*

No matter how strict the monastic vows we examined, after acquainting ourselves with their essence we cannot fail to see the error of those laymen who, according to the words of Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov, separate themselves unduly from monastics in matters of morality and spirituality. After all, laymen give vows at their baptism which are no less strict than the monastic vows except that they are of a more general character.

In the face of the All-seeing God and in the presence of witnesses, each layman, before being submerged into the baptismal font and thereby being reborn into a new grace-filled and holy life, gives a solemn promise to "renounce Satan and all his works and all his angels and all his service and all his pride," and to unite himself unto Christ, believing in Him "as King and God." Not only does he give a promise, but then and there he categorically affirms it, resolutely and irrevocably, when he answers the second question of the priest: "Hast thou renounced Satan?" with "I have." And to the question: "Hast thou united thyself unto Christ?" he answers with the same resoluteness: "I have."

In comparison with this vow, which is made by all Christians without exception, the monastic vows simply appear to somehow particularize, reinforce and deepen the vows of baptism. This is why the rite of tonsure into the small schema is called a second baptism, and in performing the small schema the same joyous and exultant chant is sung: "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). And among our God-wise Fathers and teachers of the Church there is the opinion that the monastic tonsure is not only a rite but a sacrament, namely, the sacrament of a second baptism in which the vows of renunciation of Satan and the commitment to Christ are repeated and deepened.

The monk gives a vow of virginity, promising to preserve chastity. Are not laymen committed to chastity before marriage, and within the married state to mutual fidelity and a special marital chastity which, according to the Holy Fathers, consists of a temperate alienation of the spouses from the enslavement of their souls to sensual passion? Also, one should not forget that our Church, while blessing the first marriage of every Christian with a triumphal celebration, has quite a nega-

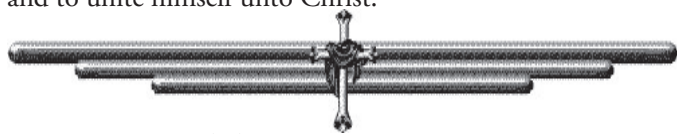
tive attitude and rather unwillingly blesses a second marriage, while for a third marriage there does not even exist a special ceremony, and it is permitted only because it is looked upon as a state preferable to fornication. Those who enter upon a third marriage are denied the Holy Mysteries by the Church for five years, in accordance with the penance set for the sin of sexual excess.

A monk gives a vow of non-acquisitiveness. But are laymen, according to the Gospel, permitted to hoard riches in order to spend them on their own whims and live for their own pleasure? Does not the Gospel condemn the foolish rich man who all his life only dressed himself in fancy clothes and gaily entertained his friends, giving no thought to the fate of the unfortunate poor man Lazarus who lay covered with sores at the gate of his house. Another rich man, who was getting ready to enjoy his wealth, told his soul: "Friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. No, take it easy; eat, drink and be merry!" He did not hear God's strict reproach: "Fool! Tonight you die. Then who will get all your wealth?" (Luke 12:16-22). Again, is the Lord's stern warning: "Verily, I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:24), meant only for monks and not for all Christians? Are not all Christians told: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal," but store them in heaven where they will never lose their value, "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). This is perfectly understandable, for he who hoards his wealth and whose heart becomes attached to it relies more on the power of his wealth than on God, and his wealth occupies that place in his heart which should belong to God. It becomes his idol, a false god instead of the true God. One who loves wealth is a traitor to God: "You cannot serve God and Mammon" (Matt. 6:24).

A monk gives a vow of obedience, renouncing his own will. But are laymen permitted always to follow their own sinful, uninhibited will? Are they not obliged to be obedient to God's commandments, to their spiritual fathers and teachers, and generally to their elders and persons in authority--not only in spiritual but also in secular life? What would happen if each layman began to live according to his own will, his own desires? Indeed, it was not to monks but to all Christians that St. Paul directed his exhortation: "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves" (Heb. 13:17). And likewise St. Peter's exhortation: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (I Peter 2:13-14).

The layman also, if he wants to be a true Christian and succeed in spiritual life, must choose a spiritual father whom he

trusts; he must open his whole soul to him, as a monk before his elder, and guide his entire life with all its actions according to the counsel of his spiritual father. Indeed, that is how all believing laymen acted in better days. And so, from what has been said, it is quite clear that the monastic vows are not something new in Christianity, something unusual, unnatural, creating an abyss between monks and ordinary Christian laymen--not at all. The monastic vows are simply a repetition, together with a refinement and at the same time a deepening of the baptismal vows which each Christian gives in more general words and expressions in approaching the Sacramental Holy Baptism, when he promises to "renounce Satan and all his works and all his angels and all his service and all his pride," and to unite himself unto Christ.



## ABOUT TODAY'S DAY AND TOMORROW'S DAY

*By Saint Nikolai Velimirovic*

**"B**oast not of tomorrow, for you know not what any day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).

Brethren, let us not boast of that which is not in our power. The Lord has placed the times and the years under His power and He disposes of them. Only God Himself alone knows whether tomorrow's day will number us among the living or the dead. Some have died on the eve of their marriage; again, others have descended into the grave on the eve of their coronation with a royal diadem. Therefore, let no one say that tomorrow will be for me the happiest day of my life; tomorrow, I enter into marriage! Or, tomorrow I will be crowned with a royal diadem! Or, tomorrow I am going to a great feast! Or, tomorrow a great gain is coming to me! O, let no one speak of the happiness of tomorrow's day. Behold, yet this night your soul may depart your body and tomorrow you will find yourself surrounded by black demons in the tollhouses! And yet, even this night, a man can be separated from his relatives and friends, from wealth and honor, from the sun and the stars and find himself in a totally unknown company, in an unseen place and at an unexpected judgment.

Instead of boasting of tomorrow's day, it would be better to pray to God to "Give us this day our daily bread." Perhaps today's day may be our last day on earth. That is why it is better to spend this day in repentance for all our past days on earth rather than vainly fantasizing about tomorrow's day, about the day which perhaps will not dawn for us. Vain fantasizing about tomorrow's day cannot bring us any good, but repentance for one day with tears can save us from eternal fire.

O righteous Lord, burn up the insane vanity that is in us. To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.

## OF ST. ABBA MACARIUS THE EGYPTIAN, & HIS CONVERSATION WITH THE DEVIL

*From the web pages of Orthodox America*



**A**nd when the blessed Macarius had heard these things, he plucked up courage, and said unto Satan: By Christ, Who caused thee to make a mockery of the holy angels, explain to me, one by one, each and all of the things which thou earnest, for by this thou shalt be revealed, so that a man may see the insidiousness of thy arts and wiles, and may "learn thy hidden snares, and may recognize the multitude of the burning arrows of thine error,

and may flee from the performance of thy will.

Then the Calumniator answered and said:

"I must reveal unto thee my craftiness, even though I be unwilling so to do, for it is impossible for me to hide from thee any of the things which thou seest; learn thou the use (or reason) of each pot. If I find a man who meditateth continually on the Law of God, I pour out upon him from the pot, which is on my head dizziness and headache, and I restrain him [from this work] thereby. On the man who hath chosen to watch by means of [the recital of] prayers and psalms I pour out from the pot which is on my eyelids a disposition to sleep, and I lead and drive him along by main force into slumber. These, which thou seest that I have on my ears, are prepared for disobedience and the transgression of the Commandments, and by their means I trap those who wish to lead a good life to disobey the word of truth. From those, which hang from my nose, I sprinkle on the young the sweet smell of happiness, and lead them into fornication."

"From those which are on my mouth I throw out flowers, and I incite the ascetic by means of blandishments, and I make to sin those who live a life of abstinence and self-denial by means of such dainty meats and foods according to my desire; and by means of those which are on my mouth I also draw many into the utterance of calumnies, and into filthy talk, and to speak briefly, in each one of these pots is the seed which is most useful for increasing the fruits which are worthy of me, and which may be gathered from the labours of the husbandmen who labour in my vineyard. And from the pots which are hung about my neck I pour out pride, and I enclose with my nets those who are haughty in their minds; and so by means of all these I possess in the world multitudes of subjects who love the things which are mine, that is to say, worldly praise and wealth, which are the things that, by those who are remote



from God, are believed to be good things in the world.”

“And the pots which thou seest hanging from my breasts are full of my imaginings, and with some of these I water the hearts of the children of men, and by means of the drunkenness of the passions I dissipate and destroy the mind which feareth God; and through my error I confound the memory of those men who wish to meditate upon and to think about the things which concern the world to come. And those which hang upon my body are full of want of feeling and perception, and by their means I prepare those who are without understanding to live in a savage and animal manner a life which is characterized by various kinds of brutish habits. And in the pots, which I carry below my body, will be found all things, which are useful and suitable for union with women in fornication, and for filthy wantonness.”

“Those, which are on my hands, are useful in the committal of murders, and by their means, as by hands, is carried out and performed the work of those who are subject unto me voluntarily. And the pots which thou seest hanging from my neck and back have in them the thick darkness of my temptations, wherewith I am able to vanquish those who are so bold as to contend against me; and I lay ambushes behind me, and I rush out to overthrow those who depend upon and who boast in their own strength. And the pots which thou seest hanging on my loins and thighs, and which are arranged downwards to my feet, are full of the snares and nets which I pour out, and with which I make crooked and confound the ways of those who wish to journey on the narrow path of the fear of God; and I impede thereby the goings of those who cultivate ascetic excellence, and I make them to journey on my way which is easy to travel.”

“For I take my seat between the two ways of life and death, and whilst I confound and lead astray those who wish to journey in the way of life, I lead and help on their way those who are traveling on the road of death, and I strengthen them also, and I make them valiant so that they may go forward easily in my paths. And when they are bowed down and labour under my yoke, I sow evil and abominable vices among them like thorns and brambles, and having gathered in from seed of this kind the fruit of such crops which they believe to be pleasant, they deny the way of truth, because evil men are taken in the snares of the filthiness of abominable things.”

“But thou, O Macarius, hast never once inclined thyself to obey me, so that by thine obedience I might be able to find even a little consolation; but thou burnest me up wholly by means of the mighty armour of the humility which thou bearest, and for this reason I hasten to depart to mine own subjects. For thou possessest a good Lord, and thou hast mighty companions, who tranquilly and happily serve God, and who protect thee as a beloved son.”

And when the chosen athlete had heard these things, he made the sign of the Cross over himself, and said:

“Blessed be God, Who hath made those who have put their hopes in Him to make thee a mockery and a laughing-stock, and Who hath preserved me wholly and completely from thy error, so that whilst turning aside from the same I was able to advance in the good fight; and having fought and conquered I shall receive a crown from the good Lord Whom I possess. Flee then, and get thee afar off, O thou who art envious of the things which are good, for Christ will make an end of thee, so that thou mayest not dare to attack any of those who worship Him. For sufficient for thee are those whom thou hast drawn unto thyself by flattery, through thy evil wiles and their own sluggish will, and made to travel on the flat, wide road of destruction. Thou shalt not then dare to draw nigh unto those who of their own will have elected to travel in the narrow, and straight, and troubled, and vexatious way of life, but have fear, and depart from those who dwell in waste places and in deserts.” Now when the blessed man had said these things, straightway the Calumniator disappeared, and the holy man Macarius bowed the knee, and prayed, saying, “Glory be unto Thee, O Christ, Thou Who art the refuge of those who are overtaken by storms, Thou Who art the straight way of those who err, Thou who art the redeemer of those who flee unto Thee for refuge, now, always, and forever and ever! Amen.”



## OUR BATTLE RAGES EVERY DAY, EVERY HOUR

*St. Silouan the Athonite*

If you have upbraided, or passed judgement on, or vexed your brother, your peace is lost. If you have been boastful, or have exalted yourself above your fellow, you have lost grace. If you did not drive away forthwith the wanton thought that came to you, your soul will lose love for God and boldness in prayer. If you are fond of power, or money, you will never know the love of God. If you have followed your own will, then you are vanquished by the enemy and despondency will come upon your soul. If you detest your brother, it means that you have fallen away from God, and an evil spirit has taken possession of you.

But if you will do good unto your brother, you will gain quiet for your conscience. If you subdue your own will, your enemies will be driven off and you will receive peace in your soul. If you forgive your brother the affronts he puts upon you, and love your enemies, then you will receive forgiveness for your sins, and the Lord will give you to know the love of the Holy Spirit. And when you have entirely humbled yourself, you will find perfect rest in God.

## APOPHTHEGMS BY ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, PART 14

*SOURCE: From the book "475 Apophthegms by the God-Inspired St. Isaac the Syrian," pp. 62-66, published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood.*

### 40<sup>th</sup> Lesson

393. Thorn and thistle sprout from uncultivated land and passions are born from an uncultivated soul. We must daily cleanse our heart of all passions so that our good seed does not suffocate.

394. You must endure with joy all involuntary dishonesty and not become agitated; do not despise or hate the person who dishonors you.

395. You should neither offer nor receive anything from a quarrelsome person so that you do not disturb and agitate your soul.

396. Do not overlook God's work while using the excuse of being pleasant towards people.

397. It is improper to neglect the heavenly state (i.e., prayer) and occupy ourselves with worldly deeds.

398. Whoever is unaware on how to work on behalf of the Lord through his spirit and secret deeds, let him perform open works such as almsgiving, etc.

399. Virtue for a monastic is freedom from all bodily things, physical hardship in prayer and uninterrupted remembrance of God.

400. Prayer and not alms and the cares of life are becoming for a monastic.

401. It is as if through a miracle that you exited the world. Do not thus desire to live for the world but for Christ. Endure sorrows and consider them prizes for the bad works of your life.

402. Repentance means to abandon your prior sins and to be sorry for them. Purity means to be merciful on behalf of the entire creation. Perfection means deep humility. In other words, to not care at all for things that you can perceive or comprehend.

### 41<sup>st</sup> Lesson

403. Prayer is when the nous to graduates away from things that can be sensed and starts occupying itself with the future riches.

404. I am humble when I maintain memory of my sins and death, I clothe myself with inexpensive garments, I prefer to occupy the last position and to be employed with lower value jobs. I am humble when I obey willingly and always maintain silence. I am humble when I have a dislike for socializing and prefer to be anonymous and ignored no matter where I am. I am humble when I blame nobody even in my mind, I do not envy my fellow man and I care not for worldly matters or things.

405. I acquire humility through: a) Frequent confession

and Holy Communion, and b) isolation, poverty being in a strange and foreign land, and the Jesus Prayer.

406. Benefiting our fellow may constitute the most perfect of all virtues.

407. He that has acquired love, has acquired God Himself. Whoever has acquired God asks for nothing else except that he be separated from his body.

408. The hope for salvation is so sweet and her works become so easy and light that they can be performed with great warmth and joy in the heart.

409. Apathy is not the inability of sensing your passions but rather an indifference towards them.

410. Pride is the soul's terminal illness.

411. A humble person can not be distinguished among people. He neither desires to be seen nor recognized by others. As he hides and separates himself from the world, he begins to proportionally approach God.

412. A humble person does not desire or want gatherings, commotion, noise, worldly cares or pleasurable foods. He instead prefers poverty, carelessness, peace, leniency and piety. He is likeable, prudent and wise, says very few words, does not get angry, suffers patiently, is bashful, respects everybody and does not wish to know worldly things.

### 42<sup>nd</sup> Lesson

413. The truly humble person awaits God's mercy quietly, while he whispers "Lord, let your most Holy Will be done unto me."

414. The singular joy and pleasure of a humble person is the enjoyment of our Master Christ (i.e., Holy Communion) along with the Diving conversation through the Jesus Prayer and the study of Holy Scriptures.

415. If the soul rests quietly, away from worldly cares of life, then she attains comprehension of God and His creation.

416. The soul was created free of passions. There is no such thing as passions of the soul, but rather causes for passions.

417. Our soul, when enlightened by God, she becomes illuminated and pure. Passions are like an illness for the soul.

418. When the body suffers, our soul suffers along with it. Likewise, the body also suffers and rejoices together with the soul, partaking in her sorrows and joys.

419. Virtue is the soul's naturally healthy state. Passions are illnesses which take away the soul's health.

420. When the soul approaches her naturally healthy state, she is then filled with delight and joy.

421. When our soul frees herself from the body's cares and concerns, she then returns, through the help of the Holy Spirit, to her own heavenly motive.

422. A pure nous is the one that is unaware of evil, just as in animals and babes, but also one that after virtuous deeds elevates himself and meditates on divine matters.

423. If there exists a pure heart, all the senses are pure as well. Our heart is neither polluted nor is she purified easily.

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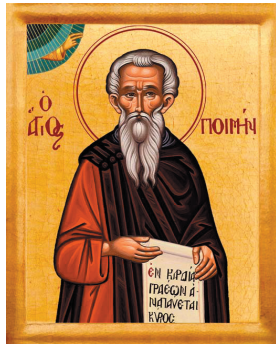
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## ON SORROW

By Harriet Beecher Stowe



**S**orrow is the great birth-  
agony of immortal powers. Sorrow is the great searcher and revealer of hearts, the great test of truth; for Plato has wisely said, sorrow will not endure sophisms, --all shams and unrealities melt in the fire of that

awful furnace. Sorrow reveals forces in ourselves we never dreamed of. The soul, a bound and sleeping prisoner, hears her knock on her cell door, and awakens. Oh, how narrow the walls! Oh, how close and dark the grated window! How the long useless wings beat against the impassible barriers! Where are we? What IS this prison? What IS beyond? Oh for more air, more light! When will the door be opened? The soul seems to itself to widen and deepen; it trembles at its own dreadful forces; it gathers up in waves that break with wailing only to flow back into the everlasting void. The calmest and most centered natures are sometimes thrown by the shock of a great sorrow into a tumultuous amazement. All things are changed. The earth no longer seems solid, the skies no longer secure; a deep abyss seems underlying every joyous scene of life. The soul, struck with this awful inspiration, is a mournful Cassandra; she sees blood on every threshold, and shudders in the midst of mirth

and festival with the weight of terrible wisdom.

**And yet sorrow is godlike.** Sorrow is grand and great, sorrow is wise and far-seeing. Our own instinctive valuations, the intense sympathy which we give to the tragedy which God has inwoven into the laws of Nature, show us that it is with no slavish dread, no cowardly shrinking, that we should approach her divine mysteries. What are the natures that cannot suffer? Who values them? From the fat oyster over which the silver tide rises and falls without one pulse upon its fleshly ear, to the hero who stands with quivering nerve parting with wife and child and home for country and God, all the way up is an ascending scale, marked by increasing power to suffer; and when we look to the Head of all being, up through principalities and powers and principedoms, with dazzling orders and celestial blazonry, to behold by what emblem the Infinite Sovereign chooses to reveal himself, we behold, in the midst of the throne, "a lamb as it had been slain."

**Sorrow is divine.** Sorrow is reigning on the throne of the universe, and the crown of all crowns has been one of thorns. There have been many books that treat of the mystery of sorrow, but only one that bids us glory in tribulation, and count it all joy when we fall into divers afflictions, so that we may be associated with that great fellowship of suffering of which the Incarnate God is the head, and through which He is carrying a redemptive conflict to a glorious victory over evil.

**If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with Him.**

[2 Tim 2:12]

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

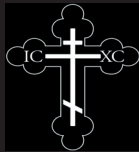
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## COUNSEL FOR YOUTH

*By Daniel Katounakiotis, an Athonite Monk*

To the beloved brothers Constantine and John, I pray from my soul.

With great joy, I recently received your two letters, which I read with great zeal and diligence. It is my duty that I answer and guide you accordingly. I will, however, address my response to both of you, since the two of you are God-loving brothers, and both of you have equal need of spiritual guidance and education. You are therefore obligated not only to ask, but to listen to what the Fathers have said.

It is true that I was distressed, reading in your letter that you have been negligent in your obligations and have fallen away into many childish foolishnesses. I was also overjoyed that you have come to repentance and desire that I instruct you in which road of repentance to take, in order that you may receive the mercy of Our Benevolent God, Whom you have, by your childish misbehavior, seriously grieved.

To offend God and to stray from the straight path of His commandments is not unusual; all human nature easily slips and quite often falls into sin. However, to remain in evil is a grievous mistake, and we must be very careful, for woe unto us if we are found unrepentant at the time of our departure.

Among many of the methods which the devil -- the enemy and destroyer of our souls -- uses to deceive those who correctly practice Orthodox Christianity, particularly youth, is to present another trap, by which he has been able to deceive many young men and completely lead them to perdition.

The evil one first presents this trap under a guise which appears to be good

and sympathetic, making it appear as an enticement to youth, and urging them to freedom, laughter, joking and gesticulations, outspokenness, and finally to the use and misuse of alcohol, all of which do not appear disastrous to the world, but which are characterized as a means of "freedom", by use of political and clever auspices. Thus, getting used to bad habits, youth become filled with passions and are then mocked by demons and men alike. The trap is covered with a heavy shadow and with abstract justifications, making it appear that all these are very small sins and after the passing of this age all of these will be averted; and after all, these are things only hermits and monastics in the mountains should avoid.

If only they could fathom what great slipping away is brought about by these claims, they would want to depart from these pretexts and applicable excuses as from a deadly snake. It is the aim of the baiting Satan to first instill in a youth all these small sins, and thus paralyze his senses, inciting him to joking, indecent pictures, facetiousness and drunkenness, which gives birth to all the passions.

I beg you to ask, with much supervision, a passionate friend, lewd and unrepentant, to tell you how he was driven to such abominable passions. In answer you will learn from him that the main reason and beginning of passions were a result of his first beginnings in carelessness and indifference to the above causes. Just as the carnal passions come from negligence in small things, so also in the spiritual: from childish foolishness a person comes to the level of unrepentance and despair.

It is true that Our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing the slipping away of human nature, receives with open arms the returned sinner. At the same time, however, He says: "Watch and pray, for ye

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Orthodox Heritage may, at times, bring up issues or present articles that some consider controversial. Such material is presented so that a distinction is made between salvation and the 20th century heresy of ecumenism. These are confusing times for the Orthodox faithful, and political correctness must be sacrificed so that His TRUTH be brought forth.

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know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.” He thereby motivates us to be always prepared and to have in our vessels the oil of repentance and every other virtue, so as not to be excluded from the bridal chamber like the foolish virgins. True, there exists repentance, and when a young man is pure and avoids bad company and drunkenness, but deviates slightly, then repentance quickly wipes out the young sins. When, however, through bad habits the body becomes a slave to sin, it becomes very difficult, and out of many, only a few will be able to be liberated from the [enemy’s] sophisticated snares.

Knowing these things, my beloved Constantine and John, from henceforth do not, for God’s sake, surrender yourselves to the paralyzing laxity of your senses, not to flirtations and joking, nor drunkenness and bad companions, from which the fear of God is lost and you are captivated by the demon of self-love and profligacy. But choose rather the virtuous life according to God, imitating your spiritual father in everything. He is the only one who will educate you in the state according to God and will show you forth as heavenly citizens.

In order to travel firmly the path of God you must:

1. Show great obedience, trust and acceptance towards your Superior (spiritual father), always telling him the truth.
2. Stop entirely talkativeness and joking, because, as we have said, where there is talkativeness (outspokenness) the fear of God departs.
3. Have a specific time each evening for prayer, which your Superior will assign.
4. When you are in church, be entirely concentrated on listening to the Divine Liturgy, so that the grace of the Holy Spirit will enter your heart.
5. Keep without fail all the prescribed fasts of the Church,

and do not imitate the ruinous ways of today’s generation.

6. Whenever possible, avoid wine and particularly alcoholic drinks which arouse the carnal passions.

7. When you have free time, spend it by reading Patristic books.

8. Be careful of some spiritual fathers and teachers, who pretend to teach you virtues and repentance but introduce voluptuousness, by doing away with the fasts and discouraging youth from asceticism, temperance and from reading Patristic texts, and also speak against the monastic life. What harm this brings to pious young men is useless to mention, for I have seen many, who were enticed by these deceptive exhortations, become unwitting victims.

9. Have great reverence especially for Our Lady Theotokos, who will always guide you on the path to your salvation.

In closing, I reverently kiss you,

Monk Daniel Katounakiotis

Katounakia, Holy Mountain -- June 19, 1902



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## ON PRIESTS AND CASSOCKS

*By Fr. Epiphanius Theodoropoulos (+1989), from the book «Άρθρα, Μελέται – Επιστολαί» (“Articles, Studies – Letters”), vol. 1, pg. 414, translated from the Greek by the staff of St. POIMEN Brotherhood*

Orthodox Christians, even those who are of a worldly mind and spirit, find little, if any, spiritual comfort among the “progressive” and “modern” priests of our days. We thus make the following odd and strange observation: Priests who are strictly traditional, while serving as the ideal image for our conservative and traditional laity, also enjoy at the same time the immense respect, I dare say even admiration, of worldly laity. The latter even treat them with a great amount of respect which one might say it borderlines on the awe and fear that is usually directed towards our saints.

On the other side of the spectrum, “modernized” clergy exclusively provoke the anxiety and extreme uneasiness of traditionally-minded laity. Furthermore, while they are gladly accepted by the like-minded laity, they actually never gain their esteem and respect which is instead enjoyed only by priests who live a strict, spiritual life and have a traditional appearance.

The phrase “this is a holy man” has often been directed towards the strict and traditional clergy, irrespective of whether this clergy was married or celibate. Additionally, such characterization has been made not only by pious laity but even by those of a secular mind or others who are even indifferent towards religion or religious things. However, it has never been made by anyone, irrespective of their religious devotion, for the “progressive” and “modernized” priests or generally for any clergy that chooses, through their appearance, lifestyle and behavior, to exemplify “the spirit of our days.” This distinction carries many implications...

At this time, it would be proper to note the following: A lay theologian with progressive tendencies conveyed to me the following observation that he made during an American, non-Orthodox, clergy conference that took place in Athens, Greece.

“What can I tell you Father?” he asked. “You are absolutely correct in your thinking. I can not possibly consider these people as any kind of priests! You greet them and feel a complete lack of desire to show any respect, to spontaneously bend down and kiss their hand. You see them on the bus and you develop complete indifference towards jumping up and offering them your seat. Looking at them, I get the impression that I am staring at fancy restaurant waiters!... How very different I feel, though, when I see one of our priests, even if it is a simple monk!...”

One, of course, could easily misinterpret these words as the result of habitual observations, because in Greece we have been accustomed to see only cassock-wearing priests. For this reason, I must also mention a casual observation made

during an interview of a well known European scientist (and published within the columns of the newspaper «Έθνος» -- “Ethnos” – several years ago, on February 17, 1970):

“It is so beautiful,” he said, “to watch a Greek priest and to pick him out from a distance; our clergy, on the other hand, must be literally sitting right next to you to distinguish them as such.”

These words must be repeated and heard over and over again by all those who for “aesthetic” reasons wish to abolish the use of cassocks. This testimony was made by a distinguished scientist and (interestingly enough) reported by a newspaper columnist who is well-known to be in clear favor of “ridding our clergy of their cassocks.” The subject scientist is surely accustomed to seeing his clergy with an outwardly appearance that parallels that of laity; nevertheless, he is inspired and exclaims upon seeing the cassock-wearing Greek priest, that “it is so wonderful to observe a priest dressed in this manner.”

One could, at this point, tell us:

“OK! Let us have different and peculiar attire for the clergy. Such garb, however, must not be so very unique and different from the dress code of laity. Let it be somewhat contemporary. The cassock is so ‘out of step with our times.’ Why should we thus not abolish it? The spirit of our times considers it as completely repulsive...”

Oh, this ancient and everlasting “spirit of our times!” It is exactly because every century and every generation has this same “spirit” (and the same thought process) that our clergy must be imposed upon a world that is flowing forward within a rapidly moving stream, constantly evolving and ever-changing. Science and technology are realizing dizzying leaps on a daily basis. Things of yesterday are unrecognizable by the people of today; things of today will be correspondingly unknown to the people of tomorrow. Thus, a little time passes and everything new and exciting becomes old and boring... It is within this unrestrained flow, these continuous alterations, this perpetual motion, these uninterrupted waves and oscillations, these terrible vibrations of the world that our clergy exists unaltered. Let us permit God’s priest to stand accordingly, as an unmovable rock and a sky-high column of light. He has neither a name nor an age. He is the one and the same from Jesus’ time (if not from the age of Malchizedek) and will be the same through the end of time! He, of course, has flesh, is born, lives and dies and is replaced by others. However, he is the same with the One Whom he represents on earth, even though he exists and has existed at millions of altars. The priesthood is one and the same, and emanates from Him.

This, therefore, is the Orthodox priest, the one and only that lies above place and time, binding together earth and heaven, uniting past, present and future, having been assimilated with the Son of God, possessing an infinite and eternal dimension, and whom we now wish to subjugate to the commands of the “spirit of time” of various generations. At times our

priest may change but that is a process which occurring “naturally” through the forceful and violent nature of generational changes, for even he is subject to the illnesses of our “times.” However, is it not highly improper and awful to insist upon theoretical changes to the very foundation of clergy?

The Orthodox priest is the incarnation of the absolute, the expression of whatever is permanent, stable and motionless, the trumpet of heaven on earth, an icon of incorruptibility, and he who points out to all of us the pathway to eternity. Let us allow him to remain identical and unchangeable throughout the centuries, even in his external appearance, thus serving as a reminder and a symbol of the eternal and immutable Truths that he represents and upon which any type of change or the overshadowing of a social trend can carry no impact.

Let the world’s countenance be altered, let nature’s appearance be infected, but allow our clergy’s form and appearance (yes, their form and appearance) remain unchanged. Let Christ silently proclaim, through our priests, to the intoxicated, staggering, and continuously vibrating and evolving world: In the middle of this universal relativity and fluidity, in the middle of successive turnabouts, alterations, and changes, in the middle of corruption and extreme uncertainty, I remain. The Absolute and Ever-Lasting, the Incorruptible and Unaltered, the One and Only God!



The farmer plows the earth, cleans, sows seed and awaits the mercy of God. If God does not send rains and helpful winds when they are necessary, the farmer’s toils are in vain. It is the same with us. If God doesn’t send the purifying waters of His grace, we remain devoid of fruit; and our works become the fodder of demons. For our passions drown them, and we don’t harvest anything. We must not forget that virtuous deeds, which are not done for the right reason become evil deeds.

If the grace of God doesn’t enlighten man, [then] -- though you say many words -- they will not be beneficial. The person listens to you for a moment, but soon after returns to what holds him captive. If, however, grace works immediately together with your words, then a change is effected at that moment -- corresponding to the person’s disposition. And from that moment on, his life is changed. This happens to those who haven’t hardened their hearing and conscience. On the [other hand], if you speak day and night to those who hear about the good but who disobey and remain in their evil desires -- even if you give them all the wisdom of the Fathers, do miracles before their eyes, turn the flow of the Nile upon them -- there’s no way they will benefit in the slightest...”

Blessed Elder Joseph the Hesychast (+1959)

## SO, YOUR CHILD WANTS TO BE A MONASTIC?

*From the web pages of Orthodox America (this is a slightly condensed talk which was given at the Saint Herman Winter Pilgrimage in Redding, California, in 1984)*

I should like to ask you to think of something you may not have considered before: How would you feel if your son or daughter expressed the desire to enter a monastery? You may be Orthodox and very devout; you may be diligent in attending services and reading spiritual books; you may have tried your best to raise your children in an Orthodox manner; you may even admire monasticism. Nonetheless, how would you really feel?

We live in a time and society quite different from Greece and Holy Russia, where monasticism was a visible and acceptable part of life. It was not uncommon for entire families to make pilgrimages to monasteries. Few people today, however, have any significant exposure to monasticism, and it is little wonder that in our un-Orthodox and even anti-Christian society, the very thought of one’s child becoming a monastic can seem very threatening.

There are a number of reasons one can give for such a reaction. Lack of familiarity breeds fear. Not a few people imagine monasticism to be very grim and even inhuman. They may envision their child locked behind a grating and subsisting for the rest of his or her life on bread and water. The other extreme is an equally erroneous view of a romanticized spiritual state in which the child spends his days floating above the ground in an exalted state of endless holiness. In both cases it is imagined that entering a monastery presupposes leaving behind the human race. The reality of the monastic life is a far cry from either of these extremes. Your son or daughter -- who is always late, leaves socks and soda bottles everywhere and is generally infuriating -- will not turn into an instant anchorite. Anyone who leaves the world for the monastery brings all of his weaknesses and defects with him. He may learn to overcome some of them; others he will have until he dies. In any case, if your child becomes a monastic, he or she will not be living without human warmth and human relationships, and in spite of everything, you will still recognize them as being one of your own progeny.

Whatever your initial reaction to the issue of monasticism and your child, it depends to a great extent on how you as a parent view the Orthodox family and your position as an Orthodox individual in the contemporary secular world. Surrounded as we are by worldly standards and a materialist culture, we forget that Christ calls all of His followers to separate themselves from the world: “**Be not of this world.**” This is the trumpet call of monasticism. With this understanding, you should be more ready to peacefully acquiesce to the son or daughter who has found it in his heart to answer this call by



taking upon himself the monastic yoke.

We are, however, the unfortunate products of our fallen nature, and it is rare that even a pious Orthodox parent is thrilled to hear that their offspring desires to enter a monastery. More often there arise some very strong reactions in the heart which, however innocent and well-intentioned, are nonetheless aspects of our fallen emotional and psychological nature – and a sad reflection of our un-Orthodox background and environment. With this in mind we can examine some of the emotional responses which this issue so often evokes.

Verbally, the various emotions stem from the pivotal question, “Why?” Why does anyone leave the world to enter a monastery? If the reason is legitimate, it is because in spite of all his failings and weaknesses, your child loves God more than anyone or anything in the world -- more than the life you helped shape him for, more than his automobile, more than the school to which you were going to send him, more than his family... And here the very natural feeling of jealousy arises. As parents you may endeavor to replace God as being central in your child’s affections and persuade him to forsake monasticism. If you succeed, you will only make the child unhappy, and if you fail, you’re going to feel very hurt.

Secondly, you may feel estranged or shut out from your child’s life. If your daughter goes to a monastery, and it’s a life you have not shared, you may feel you can’t relate to her. If she married, even if she moved a thousand miles away, you would very likely feel that you were still more a part of her life than if she became a nun and lived 50 miles away. A married daughter would still need advice on how to cope with the children’s illnesses or how to manage a tight budget. On the other hand, if she were in a convent, you could hardly give her advice on how to do Matins, and even if you are Orthodox, you might feel emotionally adrift and very awkward with this suddenly foreign person in black whose life is so different from your own. Then, there is also the fact that most parents look forward to being grandparents; this is a big issue, especially with mothers.

You may feel threatened. You spend your whole life nurturing the well-being of your children; you feed them and worry over them; you help them to discover their abilities and you encourage them to develop their talents. Perhaps your son is a natural musician or your daughter a born lawyer, and you spend your life supporting them -- emotionally and financially -- and preparing them to be successful in the world. And after all these years of effort and anxiety, they suddenly decide they want no part of it, they don’t want the world, nor the life that you envisioned for them. This can be a very threatening and painful revelation. Very often parents feel that in rejecting the world, their child is also rejecting them. This is not necessarily true at all, but this feeling sparks most of the disputes between parents and their children over the issue of monasticism. Here also parents may feel they have failed in some way in their

raising of the child, that he or she should choose such an “aberrant” path in life. This is also a painful thought.

The rather heated emotions which may arise over the issue of monasticism and one’s child frequently result in a barrage of reproaches. The following examples are not in the least hypothetical; they come from a list of actual remarks made by real mothers and fathers, some of whom consider themselves to be devout Orthodox. Their responses illumine the essence of the dispute as it is felt in the heart of those who are Orthodox and yet live in the world. They’ve said that we are not taking responsibility for ourselves; that we are just leaning on someone else so as to avoid having to make our own decisions. They say that if we love our neighbor we should be working to improve society and not dropping out of it into some euphoric dream. We often hear that monasticism is mere ostentation, some kind of fake spirituality: “Why don’t you stick it out in the world like the rest of us, where you have to deal with real life and real problems?” They say monasticism is selfish, egocentric, it divides and ruins the family; monasticism is “financially unstable.” What about your future security? Why don’t you just get a good job and send them all the money?...

While these remarks are quite varied, there is a common denominator, and that is worldliness. They are all rooted in a very worldly orientation. It is the complete and absolute rejection of this perspective on the part of the monastic aspirant which often makes the dispute between parents and child so violent. Although perhaps unconscious, the parents’ message underlying all this is: Conform yourself to the world; fit in; get a secure job; settle down; do what everyone else does; spirituality is fine, but there’s no need to be extreme. We have already seen, however, that Christianity is otherworldly; by its very nature it is extreme: if you lose your life you shall gain it; if you try to hang onto it you will lose it; God became man that men might become gods. What could be more extreme?

**Seek ye first the kingdom of God!** Orthodoxy is the means by which we ascend unto God, through surrendering our own ego and self-will. Orthodoxy means war -- against one’s fallen nature, against the devil, and against the world. This applies to all Orthodox Christians. Even those who live in the world -- who have children and hold jobs -- are required to keep themselves in some sense apart from the world. And there can be no compromise. The world is not and cannot be our home, and whether we choose to marry Christ or an earthly spouse, we can in no sense marry’ the world. We see, however, that it is precisely this desire -- to have both God and the world -- that is at the root of conflict evoked by the child’s entrance into monasticism. Experiencing their own reaction to the child’s rejection of the world may make the parents realize, perhaps as never before, their own attachment to the world, and how unwilling they are to sever themselves

from the values and desires of the anti-Christian society in which they live.

It is especially difficult to struggle against the accepted view of the family which in this country has received a pseudo-religious status; youngsters are often all but worshipped as gods by their parents who see them as fulfilling their own egos. This is not Orthodox; it is, in fact, very destructive of our Orthodoxy which teaches that children are not the possession of their mothers and fathers: they are not playthings of their parents' imaginations. Children are given by God for a time that they may be raised up in the knowledge of Him, and after that, He summons them as He will. The duty of parents is not to prepare children to settle comfortably in the world, but to shepherd their souls, to prepare them to battle against the fallen world. Those who choose to fight in the front lines are those who hear the monastic calling. If your child wants to enlist in that war, he will swear before God and man that despite his sinfulness and frailties that overwhelm him at every hour of the day, he cannot find rest apart from God.

If such is the inclination of your child, do not hold him back, however logical your reasons for wanting to do so may be. If the desire for monasticism is simply a fanciful notion, they will find out soon enough, and nothing will be harmed by their trying. If, however, such a desire has indeed been planted by God as a means of their achieving salvation, don't thwart it by trying to persuade him first to finish school or experience life in the world. Bring to mind the countless number of monastics, both men and women, whose spiritual legacy has so greatly enriched our Holy Orthodox Church. If your child has the desire and determination to follow in their steps, however weakly, bless him and let him go. May this blessing be also unto your own salvation and that of others.



Do not get tired of bringing your nous back every time it wanders. God will see your eagerness and your toil, and will send His grace to collect it. When grace is present, all is done with joy, without toil.

With the prayer, we pass from one joy to another; without the prayer, we pass from one fall to another, from affliction to affliction, and heavy is our remorse. In short, with a little labor and pain in the prayer, we obtain much joy, making mourning, compunction, and tears, along with the sweetness of the presence of God and the immaculate fear of Him, which cleanses and purifies nous and heart.

Elder Ephraim Philotheitis  
From "Counsels from the Holy Mountain,  
the Letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim"

## ALEXANDER PAPADIAMANTIS, A MAN OF FAITH

*From the "Saint Cosmas Aitolos Orthodox Church Bulletin", 09/01*

Alexander Papadiamantis has often been referred to as the "Greek Dostoevsky." He is considered as one of the most important and renowned of modern Greek authors. Until now, his works have remained untranslated, but with the recent publication, "Tales from a Greek Island," it is hopeful that the West will also discover this pious son of the Orthodox Church.

Fr. Philotheos Faros says that only those who are burning with faith can inspire faith in others. In his opinion, Alexander Papadiamantis was one of these. A writer primarily of short stories, Papadiamantis was born on the Aegean island of Skiathos in 1851 and reposed there in 1911. Fotis Kontoglou considered him the most outstanding figure of modern Greek literature. For many years Papadiamantis served as right chanter in Papa Nicholas Planas' church in Athens. Concerning him, Fr. Philotheos writes the following:

"Papadiamantis has a unique importance in Orthodoxy as a writer. He describes real life penetrated by Orthodoxy, and therefore he presents Orthodoxy in a truly existential manner. Papadiamantis is not a theologian in an academic sense, but he is a theologian in an Orthodox sense. He presents theology through life, and he demonstrates in a perfect manner how intellectually unsophisticated people can experience and express theology in a profound yet non-intellectual way."

Papadiamantis' significance, as far as the liturgical life of the Church is concerned, is exceptional, because he shows how everyday life can assimilate the liturgical wealth of the Church, how the one can penetrate the other to such an extent that it is almost impossible to separate them. The life of the simple people Papadiamantis describes revolves around the liturgical calendar. His characters are not idealized and unreal. He does not distinguish them as either good or bad, but he can see both those elements in his characters and love them passionately. In spite of their imperfections he recognizes the image of God in them, whose grace can heal that which is infirm and complete that which is wanting. Papadiamantis' characters are saved by grace, not by merit, and they never cease asking for that grace. They can be mean occasionally, even ruthless, but they are always keenly aware of the presence of God in their lives. Sometimes they worship Him; sometimes they fight Him; but they never lose sight of Him.

From his many works, "Tales from a Greek Island," (translated into English by Elizabeth Constantinides, available at most bookstores) is a worthwhile book for anybody wishing to familiarize oneself with this great writer. The book consists of 12 stories set on the author's native island of Skiathos. Set around the turn of the 20th century, these stories present poignant and rich description of daily life.

## Γιατί Φθάσαμε στη Σφαγή της Σμύρνης

*Του Βλάση Αγκτζίδη, διδάκτωρ Σύγχρονης Ιστορίας, από την εφημερίδα «Καθημερινή», 14 Σεπτεμβρίου 2003*

*81 χρόνια μετά τη μεγαλύτερη τραγωδία που βίωσε ο Έλληνισμός, δεν έχει πλήρως συνειδητοποιηθεί ή σημασία των γεγονότων!*

**Η** 14η Σεπτεμβρίου, ημέρα πυρπόλησης της Σμύρνης, άποτελεί έδω και δυό χρόνια επίσημη επέτειο του Έλληνικού κράτους. Με τον τρόπο αυτό, η μεγαλύτερη τραγωδία που βίωσε ποτέ ο Έλληνισμός έγινε αναπόσπαστο μέρος της συλλογικής εθνικής μνήμης. Η γενοκτονία του Μικρασιατικού Έλληνισμού και η Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή, γενικότερα, έπαψαν να αποτελούν λευκές σελίδες και απαγορευμένη γνώση στο νεοελληνικό μας τοπίο. Παρ' όλα αυτά όμως, η έκταση και η σημασία των γεγονότων δεν έχουν πλήρως συνειδητοποιηθεί. Με την καταστροφή της Σμύρνης ολοκληρώθηκε η γενοκτονία των Χριστιανικών πληθυσμών, που είχε αποφασίσει επισήμως η νεοτουρκική κυβέρνηση το 1911. Παράλληλα, έκλεισε και ο κύκλος της παρουσίας των Ελλήνων στη Μικρασιατική γη μετά 35 αιώνες δημιουργικής παρουσίας. Ειδικότερα, ο Χριστιανικός Έλληνισμός βρέθηκε όριστικά εκτός της Ίωνίας, του Πόντου, της Καππαδοκίας και της Ανατολικής Θράκης. Στις 14 Σεπτεμβρίου του 1922 έκλεισε και άλλος ένας κύκλος: αυτός της θανάσιμης σύγκρουσης του Χριστιανισμού με το επιθετικό Ισλάμ που άρχισε με τη μάχη του Ματζικέρτ πριν από 932 χρόνια. Η μεγάλη αυτή σύγκρουση των θρησκειών στην περιοχή του παλιού Έλληνικού κόσμου μετετράπη σε σύγκρουση εθνών την εποχή που τα νέα κοινωνικά μεγέθη καθορίστηκαν από την εθνική αντίληψη. Ο ισλαμικός κόσμος μετετράπη σε τουρκικό έθνος και ολοκλήρωσε με μεγάλη επιτυχία τον ιερό του πόλεμο, το Τζιχάντ.

Η καταστροφή της Σμύρνης από τα κεμαλικά στρατεύματα είχε έναν πολλαπλό συμβολισμό. Αφ' ενός, το Μισοφέγγαρο κατανικούσε πλήρως τον Σταυρό και αφ' ετέρου το τουρκικό έθνος συνέντριβε το Έλληνικό. Η άπιστη Χριστιανική Σμύρνη, η «γκιαούρ Ιζμίρ» μετατράπηκε σε σωρό καπνίζόντων έρειπιών προς δόξαν του προφήτη Μωάμεθ και του νέου ανταγωνιστή του, του Κεμάλ Άτατούρκ.

Η Μικρασιατική πρόκληση έδωσε στον Έλληνισμό την ευκαιρία για την εθνική του ολοκλήρωση. Η ένταξη στο κράτος των Ελλήνων, των πλέον ανεπτυγμένων Έλληνικών έδαφών θα επιτάχυνε τον μετασχηματισμό της Ελλάδας σε ένα σύγχρονο έθνος-κράτος, θα αύξανε το γεωπολιτικό και οικονομικό της βάρος και, παράλληλα, θα πραγμάτωνε τις ιδέες για χειραφέτηση από την απολυταρχική οθωμανική εξουσία. Η παρουσία της Ελλάδας στην Ίωνία και στην Ανατολική Θράκη και οι προσπάθειες απελευθέρωσης των Ελλήνων στον Πόντο υπήρξαν οι μοναδικές εγγυήσεις για τη σωτηρία των Έλληνικών πληθυσμών που είχαν υποστεί

γενοκτονία από τους Τούρκους έθνικιστές κατά τη διάρκεια του πολέμου με κορύφωση την περίοδο 1916-1918.

Η νίκη των συμμάχων στον Α' Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο, που τοποθέτησε την Ελλάδα στο τραπέζι των νικητών, υπήρξε μία μοναδική ευκαιρία. Η Συνθήκη των Σεβρών (άποτέλεσμα της ήττας των Νεότουρκων έθνικιστών) διευθετούσε εν μέρει τα πραγματικά εθνικά προβλήματα της Οθωμανικής Αυτοκρατορίας. Η Ελλάδα αναδείχτηκε σε σημαντική περιφερειακή δύναμη. Οι συμμαχικές δυνάμεις έχρισαν την Ελλάδα έντολοδόχο στην περιοχή. Η μοναδική σύμπτωση θετικών εξελίξεων έκανε να φαίνεται πραγματοποιήσιμο το όνειρο της απελευθέρωσης των Ελλήνων της Μικράς Ασίας και της Ανατολικής Θράκης.

### ΓΙΑΤΙ ΗΤΤΗΘΗΚΑΜΕ

Τί συνέβη όμως και το έφικτο μετετράπη σε εφιάλτη;

Κατ' αρχάς άλλαξε το διεθνές τοπίο. Η επανάσταση των μπολσεβίκων στη Ρωσία και τα ιδιαίτερα συμφέροντα κάποιων από τους συμμάχους μας, όπως των Γάλλων και των Ιταλών, οδήγησαν στην ενίσχυση του εθνικιστικού κινήματος του Μουσταφά Κεμάλ. Παρ' όλη όμως την αλλαγή, οι Έλληνες παρέμειναν η σημαντικότερη στρατιωτική δύναμη στην Έγγυς Ανατολή. Οι Τούρκοι έθνικιστές δεν κατάφεραν σε καμιά στιγμή της Ελληνοτουρκικής στρατιωτικής σύγκρουσης να παρατάξουν περισσότερους στρατιώτες και να διαθέσουν καλύτερο εξοπλισμό από τον Έλληνικό στρατό. Εξάλλου, ένα μέρος των κεμαλικών δυνάμεων το αποτελούσαν άτακτες ένοπλες συμμορίες.

Η αύξηση της κεμαλικής δυναμικής προκλήθηκε αποκλειστικά από τη στάση της Έλληνικής πλευράς, η οποία μεθοδικά υποβάθμισε τη δική της πολιτική και στρατιωτική παρουσία στο Μικρασιατικό μέτωπο. Κατ' αρχάς, ο έντεινόμενος διχασμός στην Αθήνα μεταξύ βενιζελικών και βασιλικών μετέφερε άλλοις το κέντρο βάρους και τις προτεραιότητες της Ελλαδικής πολιτικής ήγεςίας. Η προκήρυξη εκλογών από τον Βενιζέλο, εν μέσω πολέμου, επέτρεψε στο μέτωπο των βασιλικών και των κομμουνιστών να διευρύνει την αντιπολεμική του δράση. Στη συνέχεια, μετά τη νίκη των αντιπολεμικών, ακολουθήθηκε μία ολοκληρωτικά άνορθολογική πολιτική, τόσο στον τομέα της στρατιωτικής διαχείρισης της Μικρασιατικής κρίσης, όσο και στα ζητήματα της έξωτερικής πολιτικής. Η πολιτική της νέας Έλληνικής κυβέρνησης επέτρεψε στον Μουσταφά Κεμάλ να ισχυροποιηθεί στρατιωτικά και να αναδειχθεί σε αξιόπιστο συνομιλητή των Μεγάλων Δυνάμεων.

Παράλληλα, η αντιπολεμική κυβέρνηση της Αθήνας υπονόμευσε τις προσπάθειες των ιδίων των Μικρασιατών για δική τους στρατιωτική συγκρότηση με στόχο την αυτόνομη της Ίωνίας. Η απουσία γραμμής άμυνας στη Σμύρνη και η εγκατάλειψη του Μικρασιατικού Έλληνισμού στους νικητές Κεμαλικούς υπήρξαν οι βασικές αιτίες του μεγάλου αριθμού θυμάτων, μετά την άναμενόμενη στρατιωτική ήττα.

## ΟΙ ΓΑΛΛΟΙ ΓΙΑ ΤΗ ΣΜΥΡΝΗ

Ἡ γαλλικὴ στάση στὸ Μικρασιατικὸ ζήτημα ὑπῆρξε κατ' ἔξοχὴν ἀνθελληνική. Οἱ Γάλλοι ἐνθάρρυναν τοὺς κεμαλικούς στὴ σύγκρουσή τους μετὰ τοὺς Ἕλληνας καὶ ἐξέφρασαν ἔμπρακτα τὴν ὑποστήριξή τους. Μὲ τὴ γαλλοτουρκικὴ συμφωνία ποὺ ὑπεγράφη στὴν Ἄγκυρα, τὸ Παρίσι κέρδισε τὴν ἐκμετάλλευση κοιτασμάτων σιδήρου, χρωμίου καὶ ἀσημιοῦ καὶ τὴν προοπτικὴ γιὰ μικτὲς γαλλοτουρκικὲς ἐταιρεῖες γιὰ τὴν κατασκευὴ καὶ ἐκμετάλλευση λιμανιῶν, σιδηροδρομικῶν γραμμῶν κ.λ.π. Ὁ Κεμάλ ἀπὸ τὴν πλευρὰ του κέρδισε τὴν ὑπὸ νόμηση τῆς Συνθήκης τῶν Σεβρῶν μέσω τῆς Γαλλίας, τὴν ὑλικὴ ὑποστήριξη τοῦ στρατοῦ του καί, σὲ κάποιες περιπτώσεις, συμπαρατάξιν τῶν γαλλικῶν δυνάμεων μὲ τὶς κεμαλικές. Γιὰ παράδειγμα, μετὰ τὴν ἧττα τῶν Ἑλλήνων στὰ Μουδανιά, οἱ γαλλικὲς ἀρχὲς ἀφόπλισαν τοὺς Ἕλληνας στρατιῶτες καὶ τοὺς παρέδωσαν στοὺς Τούρκους.

Ἡ γαλλικὴ κυβέρνησις κατέβαλε κάθε προσπάθεια γιὰ ὑποβάθμιση τῶν τουρκικῶν ἐγκλημάτων. Προσπάθησε μάλιστα νὰ ἀποκρύψει τὸ γεγονός τῆς πυρπόλησης τῆς Σμύρνης ἀπὸ τὸν τουρκικὸ στρατὸ καὶ νὰ ἐνοχοποιήσει τοὺς Ἕλληνας. Στις 21 Σεπτεμβρίου τοῦ 1922 ὁ Franklin Bouillon, λίγο πρὶν ἀναχωρήσει γιὰ τὴν κατεστραμμένη Σμύρνη γιὰ νὰ συναντήσῃ τὸν Κεμάλ, καλεῖ στὸ ὑπουργεῖο Ἐξωτερικῶν τοὺς ἀνταποκριτὲς τοῦ διεθνοῦς Τύπου καὶ τοὺς παρακινεῖ: «Τηλεγραφεῖστε στὸν κόσμον ὅλο ὅτι οἱ Ἕλληνες ὀργάνωσαν συστηματικὰ τὶς πυρκαγιὰς στὴ Σμύρνη».

Τὴ φιλοκεμαλικὴ στάση τῶν Γάλλων στηλίτευσε ἀκόμα καὶ ὁ Winston Churchill, ὁ ὁποῖος ἔγραψε: «Παρὰ τὶς προσπάθειες τῶν Γάλλων νὰ ἐλαχιστοποιήσουν τὶς φρικαλεότητες αὐτὲς (τῶν Τούρκων κατὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων στὸν Πόντο καὶ τὴ δυτικὴ Μικρασία) καὶ νὰ ἀποδείξουν, ἐναντίον τῶν Ἑλλήνων παρόμοιες φρικαλεότητες σὲ μικρότερη κλίμακα, ἢ κοινὴ γνώμη, ὅση ὑπῆρχε, στρεφόμεναι ἀποφασιστικὰ ἐναντίον τῶν Τούρκων».

## ΑΝΤΙΚΕΙΜΕΝΙΚΕΣ ΦΩΝΕΣ

Ἀκριβῶς γιὰ τὸ λόγο αὐτόν, οἱ ἀντικειμενικὲς φωνές ἐν μέσω τῆς γαλλικῆς ἀνθελληνικῆς ὑστερίας ἐκείνης τῆς ἐποχῆς ἔχουν ἰδιαίτερο ἐνδιαφέρον. Ὁ Rene Ruaux στὸ βιβλίο του «La Question Orient devant le Parlement» («Τὸ Ἀνατολικὸ Ζήτημα μπροστὰ στὸ Κοινοβούλιο») ἀναφέρει τὴ συζήτηση ποὺ ἔλαβε χώρα στὸ γαλλικὸ Κοινοβούλιο στις 27 Ὀκτωβρίου 1922 γιὰ τὴν τραγωδίαν τῆς Σμύρνης. Ἐνδιαφέρον ἔχει ὅτι ὁ γαλλικὸς Τύπος λειτούργησε ὡς φερέφωνο τῆς γαλλικῆς κυβέρνησις. Ἀνέφεραν ἀπλῶς ὅτι ἐγίνε συζήτηση στὴ Βουλὴ καὶ ἀπέκρυσαν πλήρως τὰ ὅσα παρουσιάστηκαν.

Ὁ Ruaux μᾶς πληροφορεῖ ὅτι ὁ βουλευτὴς Soulier, ἀφοῦ κατέθεσε τὰ στοιχεῖα ποὺ εἶχε γιὰ τὴν ἐνοχὴ τῶν Τούρκων ὅσον ἀφορᾷ τὴν πυρπόληση τῆς πόλης, ἔδωσε τὴν ἐξῆς ἐξήγησι: «Ἀλλὰ γιατί οἱ Τούρκοι ἐβαλαν φωτιά; Πρῶτον: ὑπῆρχαν πολλὰ πτώματα στὴν πόλη καὶ ἡ φωτιά ἦταν μίαν δικαιολογία, μίαν κάθαρση. Δεύτερον: ὅπως καὶ στὸ παρελθόν, ἦταν ἕνας τρόπος γιὰ νὰ λύσουν τὸ πρόβλημα

τῶν μειονοτήτων. Γι' αὐτούς, ὅπως ἀναφέρεται στὰ ἐπίσημα κείμενα, ἡ Σμύρνη ἦταν μίαν πόλη τῶν ἀπίστων. Παρὰ τὴν πυρκαγιά, ὄλος ὁ πληθυσμὸς δὲν ἐξολοθρεύτηκε. Εἶχαμε στὴ συνέχεια ἀρπαγές. Μεταξὺ ἄλλων, ὄλων τῶν νέων κοριτσιῶν ἐνὸς γαλλικοῦ οἰκοτροφείου. Ὑπῆρξαν ἄγριες σφαγές. Εἶδαν ἕνα ὄχημα νὰ διασχίζει τοὺς δρόμους σέρνοντας τὸν διευθυντὴ μίαν ἐφημερίδα. Τὸ κεφάλι του χτυποῦσε στὸ κατάστρωμα. Εἶδαν ἀκόμα νὰ πυροβολοῦν καὶ μέσα στὴ θάλασσα γιὰ νὰ σκοτώσουν αὐτούς ποὺ προσπαθοῦσαν νὰ πᾶνε στὰ πλοῖα κολυμπώντας... Ἡ Σμύρνη εἶχε 360.000 κατοίκους ἀπὸ τοὺς ὁποίους οἱ 230.000 ἦταν Χριστιανοί. Ὑπῆρχαν ἐπίσης καὶ 200.000 πρόσφυγες. Ἀπὸ αὐτούς ἔφτασαν στὰ νησιά τοῦ Αἰγαίου καὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα οἱ 250.000. Ὑπάρχουν 75.000 νεκροὶ στὴ Σμύρνη, τὸ λιγώτερο».

## ΤΟ ΤΕΛΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΥΣΟΣΤΟΜΟΥ

Στὴ συνεδρίαση τοῦ γαλλικοῦ Κοινοβουλίου, ὁ Soulier ἀναφέρθηκε καὶ στὸν τρόπο θανάτωσης τοῦ Μητροπολίτη Σμύρνης Χρυσόστομου: «Ἀνέφεραν στὸ γαλλικὸ προξενεῖο ὅτι ἀπειλεῖται ὁ μητροπολίτης Χρυσόστομος. Ὁ Γάλλος πρόξενος Graillet ἔστειλε ἕνα ἀπόσπασμα νὰ τὸν ὀδηγήσῃ στὴ γαλλικὴ ἐκκλησία Sacre Coeur ἢ στὸ προξενεῖο. Αὐτὸς ἀρνήθηκε καὶ εἶπε: “Εἶμαι στὸ μέσον τῶν πιστῶν μου. Ὅφειλω νὰ παραμείνω μ' αὐτούς...” Καθὼς ἀναχωροῦσε τὸ ἀπόσπασμα, ἔφτασε μὲ αὐτοκίνητο ἕνας Τούρκος ἀξιωματικὸς καὶ τοῦ ζήτησε νὰ τὸν ἀκολουθήσῃ. Τὸν ὀδήγησαν στὴν ἄκρην τῆς εὐρωπαϊκῆς συνοικίας μπροστὰ σ' ἕνα κουρεῖο. Τὸν σκέπασαν μ' ἄσπρη ποδιά, μὲ σκοπὸ νὰ βλέπουν καλύτερα ὅλοι οἱ περαστικοί. Καὶ ἐκεῖ, κύριοι, ἔλαβε χώρα ἕνα τῶν πλέον φρικτῶν ἐγκλημάτων, ἀπ' αὐτὰ ποὺ ἡ ἱστορία τῶν μαρτύρων ἔχει ἀρκετά. Τοῦ ἔκοψαν τὰ γένια, τὸν μαχαίρωσαν, τοῦ ἔκοψαν τ' αὐτιά, τὴ μύτη. Γυναῖκες καὶ ἄνδρες ἐλάμβαναν μέρος σ' αὐτὸ τὸ βασανιστήριον. Ὀδήγησαν στὴ συνέχεια τὸν γέροντα στὴν τουρκικὴ συνοικία, τὸν κομμᾶτιαν καὶ τὸν ἔρριξαν στὰ σκυλιά».

## ΠΡΟΣΧΕΔΙΑΣΜΕΝΗ ΓΕΝΟΚΤΟΝΙΑ

Ἡ καταστροφὴ τῆς Σμύρνης καὶ ἡ σφαγὴ τοῦ Χριστιανικοῦ πληθυσμοῦ, Ἑλληνικοῦ καὶ Ἀρμενικοῦ, ὑπῆρξε μίαν πράξιν προσχεδιασμένης γενοκτονίας. Ὅλα τὰ κριτήρια ποὺ ἀναφέρονται στὴ Σύμβαση τοῦ Ὄργανισμοῦ Ἠνωμένων Ἐθνῶν ποὺ ψηφίστηκε τὸ 1948 «γιὰ τὴν πρόληψη καὶ τὴν τιμωρίαν τοῦ ἐγκλήματος τῆς γενοκτονίας» τὰ συναντοῦμε στὴ σφαγὴ τῆς Σμύρνης. Βέβαια, ὅλη ἡ ἐκστρατεία ἐξόντωσης τῶν Χριστιανικῶν πληθυσμῶν ποὺ πραγματοποιήσαν οἱ Τούρκοι ἐθνικιστὲς, βασίστηκε πάνω στὴν πρακτικὴ τῆς γενοκτονίας. Ὅμως, στὴν περίπτωσιν τῆς Σμύρνης οἱ μέθοδοι ἐξόντωσης ἀποκαλύφθηκαν καὶ ἡ βία ποὺ ἀσκήθηκε κορυφώθηκε. Παράλληλα, ἡ Σμύρνη ἀποκαλύπτει καὶ ὅλες μας τὶς ἀντιφάσεις. Ἡ ὑποβάθμιση τῶν γεγονότων -- ἀκόμα καὶ ἡ αἰτιολόγησι τῆς γενοκτονίας -- δὲν ἦταν ἀσυνήθιστο γεγονός στὴ μετὰ τὸ '22 Ἑλλάδα. Αὐτό, ὅμως, εἶναι ἕνα ἄλλο θέμα ποὺ σχετίζεται μὲ τὴν ἐθνικὴ μας ἀλλοτρίωσι καὶ τὴν ἰδιότυπην νεοελληνικὴν ἰδεολογίαν.

## Πνευματικός Λιμών Αγίου Ιωάννου Μόσχου

*Φιλοκαλία τῶν Νηπτικῶν καὶ Ἀσκητικῶν*

**Ζ**οῦσε ἓνας ἐνάρετος ἀναχωρητῆς πού παρακαλοῦσε τὸ Θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἔλεγε: «Κύριε, γνώρισέ μου ποιά εἶναι τὰ κρίματά σου».

Πολλές φορές λοιπόν, ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς αἴτησης του αὐτῆς, ἐπέδειξε καὶ πολὺ ἄσκησις ὁ ἐνάρετος ἀναχωρητῆς, καὶ ἔτσι ὁ Θεὸς τὸν πληροφοροῦσε πὼς αὐτὸ εἶναι ἀδύνατο στοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Ἐπειδὴ αὐτὸς πάλι ἐπέμενε μὲ τὴν ἄσκησις παρακαλώντας τὸ Θεοῦ, θέλοντας ὁ Θεὸς νὰ πληροφορήσει τὸν γέροντα, ἐπέτρεψε νὰ μπῆ σ' αὐτὸν λογισμὸς, ὥστε νὰ φύγει καὶ νὰ ἐπισκεφθεῖ κάποιον μοναχό, πού ἔμενε ὄχι καὶ λίγα σημεῖα μακριά. Ἐτοίμασε τὴ μηλωτὴ του λοιπὸν καὶ ξεκίνησε.

Στέλνει τότε ὁ Θεὸς ἄγγελο, μετασχηματισμένο σὲ μοναχό, πού συναντᾷ τὸ γέροντα καὶ τοῦ λέει: «Ποῦ πηγαίνεις, καλόγερε;»

Ὁ γέροντας τοῦ λέει: «Στὸ τάδε ἀναχωρητή», λέει ὁ ἄγγελος, ὁ δὴθεν μοναχός.

«Καὶ ἐγὼ πρὸς αὐτὸν πηγαίνω· ὡς περπατήσαμε λοιπὸν μαζί», λέει ὁ γέροντας.

Ἀφοῦ βάδισαν τὴν πρώτη μέρα, φτάνουν σ' ἓναν τόπο ὅπου ζοῦσε ἓνας ἄνδρας φιλόχριστος πού τοὺς δέχθηκε καὶ τοὺς ξεκούρασε. Κατὰ τὴν ὥρα τοῦ φαγητοῦ, ὁ φιλόχριστος τοὺς πρόσφερε σὲ ἀργυρὴ πιατέλα, καὶ μετὰ τὸ φαγητό, παίρνοντας ὁ ἄγγελος τὴν πιατέλα, τὴν ἐξαφάνισε στὸν ἀέρα. Ὁ γέροντας μόλις τὸ εἶδε, στενοχωρήθηκε.

Μετὰ ἀναχωρώντας μαζί περπάτησαν τὴ δευτέρα μέρα καὶ σὲ κάποια στιγμή ἔφτασαν σ' ἓνα τόπο, ὅπου ζοῦσε ἓνας ἄλλος φιλόχριστος καὶ ὑπερβολικὰ φιλομόναχος, πού μὲ διάθεση φίλου τοὺς φιλοξένησε καὶ τοὺς ἔπλυνε τὰ πόδια. Τὸ ἄλλο πρωὶ ἔφερε τὸν μονογενῆ γιὸ πού εἶχε γιὰ νὰ πάρει ἀπ' αὐτοὺς εὐλογία. Ὁ ἄγγελος, σφίγγοντας τότε τὸ φάρυγγά του, τὸν ἐπνιξε. Ὁ γέροντας μόλις τὸ εἶδε ἔμεινε ἐκπληκτος, ἀλλὰ τίποτα δὲν εἶπε.

Τὴν τρίτη λοιπὸν ἡμέρα περπάτησαν γιὰ πολλὴ ὥρα καὶ δὲ βρῆκαν κανένα νὰ τοὺς ὑποδεχθεῖ, γι' αὐτὸ μπῆκαν σὲ μία αὐλὴ ἔρημη ἀπὸ πολὺ καιρὸ καὶ ἀφοῦ κάθισαν κάτω ἀπὸ τὴ σκιά τοῦ τοίχου, ἔφαγαν ἀπὸ τὰ παξιμάδια πού ὁ γέροντας εἶχε. Καθὼς ἔτρωγαν, βλέπει ὁ ἄγγελος κάποιον τοῖχο ἔτοιμο νὰ πέσει. Σηκώθηκε τότε καὶ ἀφοῦ ζώστηκε, ἄρχισε νὰ γκρεμίζει τὴν ἀψίδα καὶ πάλι νὰ τὴν κτίζει.

Τότε μὴ ἀντέχοντας ἄλλο ὁ γέροντας τὸν ὄρκισε λέγοντας: «Ἄγγελος εἶσαι, δαίμονας εἶσαι, πές μου τί εἶσαι; Γιατί τὰ ἔργα πού κάνεις ἀνθρώπου δὲν εἶναι».

Τοῦ ἀπαντᾷ ὁ ἄγγελος: «Τί ἔκανα;»

Καὶ τοῦ λέει ὁ γέροντας: «Χθὲς καὶ προχθὲς μᾶς ὑποδέχθηκαν οἱ φιλόχριστοι ἐκεῖνοι καὶ μᾶς ξεκούρασαν· καὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς ἐξαφάνισες τὴν πιατέλα, τοῦ ἄλλου ἐπνιξες τὸ παιδί καὶ ἐδῶ πού δὲ βρήκαμε καμιά φροντίδα κάθεσαι καὶ κτίζεις».

Τότε τοῦ λέει ὁ ἄγγελος: «Ἄκουσε, καὶ ἐγὼ θὰ σοῦ πῶ. Ὁ πρῶτος πού μᾶς δέχθηκε εἶναι ἄνδρας θεοφιλῆς καὶ σύμφωνα μὲ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ διοικεῖ τὰ ὑπάρχοντά του· ἐκεῖνη ἢ πιατέλα τοῦ ἔμεινε ἀπὸ ἄδικη κληρονομία καὶ γιὰ νὰ μὴ χάσει λοιπὸν τὸ μισθὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν ἐξ αἰτίας ἐκεῖνης τῆς πιατέλας, νά, τὴν ἐξαφάνισα. Καὶ τώρα εἶναι τὸ ἔργο του καθαρὸ. Καὶ ὁ ἄλλος πού μᾶς φιλοξένησε εἶναι ἄνδρας ἐνάρετος, καὶ ἂν ζοῦσε ὁ μικρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐπρόκειτο νὰ γίνετο ἐργαλεῖο τοῦ Σατανᾶ, καὶ ἔτσι νὰ ξεχαστοῦν οἱ ἀγαθοεργίες τοῦ πατέρα του. Γι' αὐτό, ὅπως ἦταν τρυφερό, τὸ ἐπνιξα, γιὰ νὰ σωθεῖ καὶ ἐκεῖνος καὶ τὸ ἔργο του νὰ μείνει χωρὶς στίγματα μπροστὰ στὸ Θεοῦ.»

Τοῦ λέει τότε ὁ γέροντας: «Ἐδῶ γιατί τὸ κάνεις αὐτό;»

Καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ ἀπαντᾷ: «Ὁ κύριος τῆς αὐλῆς αὐτῆς εἶναι κακὸς ἄνθρωπος καὶ ζητᾷ πολλοὺς νὰ κακοποιήσει· εἶναι φτωχὸς καὶ ἐξ αἰτίας αὐτοῦ δὲν μπορεῖ. Ὁ παπποὺς του ὅταν ἐκτιζε τὸ σπίτι, στὴν ἀψίδα αὐτὴ πού οἰκοδόμησα ἔβαλε χρήματα. Γιὰ νὰ μὴ βρεῖ λοιπὸν τὰ χρήματα μὲ ἀφορμὴ τὸ κτίσιμο καὶ κακοποιήσει αὐτοὺς πού ἐπιθυμεῖ, νά, σήκωσα τὴν ἀψίδα καὶ τοῦ ἀφήρεσα τὴν πρόφασιν. Πήγαινε λοιπὸν καὶ σὺ τώρα στὸ κελὶ σου καὶ σταμάτα ν' ἀναζητᾷς τὰ κρίματα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Γιατί, ὅπως εἶπε τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο, «τὰ κρίματα τοῦ Κυρίου εἶναι ἄβυσσος μεγάλη».

Ἀφοῦ εἶπε αὐτὰ ὁ ἄγγελος ἐξαφανίσθηκε. Τότε ὁ γέροντας ἐρχόμενος στὸν ἑαυτὸ του ἐπέστρεψε στὸ κελὶ του, δοξάζοντας τὸ Θεοῦ...



**Η**πραγματικὴ ταπεινώσις οὔτε ταπεινολογία ἔχει, οὔτε ταπεινοσημία, οὔτε βιάζει τὸν κάτοχό της νὰ φρονεῖ ταπεινὰ ἢ νὰ μέμφεται τὸν ἑαυτὸ του γιὰ νὰ δείξει ταπεινώσις. Κι αὐτὰ βέβαια, σὰν διάφοροι τρόποι, εἶναι ἀφορμὲς καὶ σχήματα ταπεινώσεως, ἐν τούτοις ἢ ταπεινώσις εἶναι χάρις καὶ δωρεὰ πού δίνεται ἀνωθεν. Ὅπως λένε οἱ Πατέρες, ὑπάρχουν δυὸ εἰδῶν ταπεινώσεις: νὰ θεωρεῖ τὸν ἑαυτὸ του κατώτερο ὄλων καὶ νὰ ἀποδίδει Στὸ Θεοῦ τὰ κατορθώματα. Τὸ πρῶτο εἶναι ἡ ἀρχή, τὸ δεύτερο τὸ τέλος. Ὅποιος τὴν ἐπιζητεῖ, θὰ τὴν ἀποκτήσει ἂν ἔχει μέσα του μὲ γνώση καὶ συλλογίζεται τὰ ἐξῆς τρία: ὅτι εἶναι ὁ πιὸ ἁμαρτωλὸς ἀπ' ὅλους, πιὸ αἰσχροὺς ἀπ' ὅλα τὰ κτίσματα, ἐπειδὴ βρίσκεται στὸ πάρα φύση, καὶ πιὸ ἐλεεινὸς κι ἀπὸ τοὺς δαίμονες, ἀφοῦ ἐγίνετο δούλος σ' αὐτούς.

Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Σιναΐτης

**Η**αὐτομεμψία ὅταν τοποθετηθεῖ σὰν νοερὸ βᾶρος πάνω στὸ λογιστικὸ μέρος τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ πολυκαιρίσει, συντριβεῖ τότε καὶ τὰ πάθη καὶ γεμίζει τὴν καρδιά ἀπὸ ἀξιομακάριστη χαρά, ἀφοῦ τὴν ἐλευθερώσει ἀπὸ τὸ φοβερὸ βᾶρος τους. Γι' αὐτὸ εἶναι μακάριοι ὅσοι πενθοῦν, γιατί αὐτοὶ θὰ παρηγορηθοῦν.

Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς

## Τὸ Ἀδιάλυτο Χέρι

Από τὸν Γέροντα π. Γαβριήλ Διονυσιάτη (+1983)

Ὁ μακαριστός, Ἁγιορείτης Γέροντας π. Γαβριήλ Διονυσιάτης σ' ἓνα βιβλίο του ἀναφέρει τὰ ἐξῆς: Εἶναι βαρὺ ἀμάρτημα ἡ ἱεροκατηγορία καὶ ὁ χλευασμὸς τῶν λειτουργῶν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας. Κατὰ τὴν μακρὰ περίοδο (70 χρόνια), ποὺ ἔζησα στὸν εὐλογημένο αὐτὸ τόπο, στὸ Ἅγιο Ὄρος, εἶδα πολλές τιμωρίες ἐξ αἰτίας αὐτῆς τῆς ἀμαρτίας. εἶδα καὶ σὲ ἓνα χειρόγραφο, στὴν βιβλιοθήκη τῆς Μονῆς μας, τὴν ἐξῆς διήγηση.

Σ' ἓνα χωριό, ἓνας γέροντας ἱερέας, ἐνῶ ἦταν σὲ ὅλα τὰ ἄλλα καλὸς καὶ ἰδιαίτερα φιλακόλουθος, ὑπέπιπτε στὸ πάθος τῆς μέθης. Ὅταν ἔβγαινε ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησία, κατευθυνόταν ἀπὸ τὸ πάθος του πρὸς τὰ καφενεῖα. Ἐκεῖ, μετὰ ἀπὸ 2-3 ποτηράκια ἀλκοόλ, ἔχανε τὸν ἑαυτό του. Ζαλιζόταν. Συναισθανόμενος ὁμως τὴν θέση του, σηκωνόταν καὶ τρικλίζοντας ἔπαιρνε τὸν δρόμο γιὰ τὸ σπίτι του. Σ' αὐτὸν τὸν δρόμο ὁμως εἶχε ὁ ἀδελφός του κατάστημα. Καὶ ὅταν τὸν ἔβλεπε νὰ περνᾶει σὲ τέτοια κατάσταση, ἔβγαινε στὴν πόρτα τοῦ μαγαζιοῦ του, καὶ ὄχι ἀπὸ λύπη, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἀπὸ εὐθιξία, τὸν ἐφασκέλωνε ἀπὸ πίσω μὲ τὸ δεξὶ του χέρι (τὸν ἐμουτζωνε, ὅπως λέμε).

Μετὰ ἀπὸ λίγο καιρὸ συνέπεσε νὰ πεθάνει ὁ εὐθικτος αὐτὸς ἀδελφός τοῦ ἱερέως. Ὅταν ὕστερα ἀπὸ τρία χρόνια ἀνοίξαν τὸν τάφο του γιὰ τὴν ἀνακομιδὴ, βρῆκαν τὸ δεξὶ του χέρι ἄλιωτο. Τὸν ξανάθαψαν καὶ μάλιστα σὲ ἄλλο σημεῖο. Ἀλλὰ πάλι βρέθηκε τὸ δεξὶ του χέρι ἀκέραιο. Τότε μὲ συμβουλὴ τοῦ ἄλλου ἐφημερίου ἱερέως, ἐπῆραν τὸ ἀδιάλυτο χέρι καὶ τὸ ἐξέθεσαν στὸν νάρθηκα τοῦ ναοῦ, γιὰ νὰ τὸν συγχωρήσουν οἱ συγχωριανοί του, γιὰ τυχόν λιποβαρῆ ζυγίσματα ἢ ἄλλες ἀδικίες, συνηθισμένες σ' ὅσους ἀσχολοῦνται μὲ τὸ ἐμπόριο. Ἀλλὰ καὶ πάλι, μετὰ ἀπὸ ἄλλο ἓνα ἔτος ἐπανενταφιασμοῦ, βρέθηκε τὸ χέρι ἀδιάλυτο.

Τότε, κατὰ θεῖα νεύση ἓνας ἄλλος ἔμπορος, ποὺ εἶχε τὸ κατάστημά του ἀπέναντι, ἀνέφερε στὸν ἐφημέριο τὸ γεγονός τοῦ καθημερινοῦ φασκελώματος καὶ τοῦ χλευασμοῦ τοῦ γέροντα ἱερέα ἀπὸ τὸν ἀδελφό του. Ὅποτε κατάλαβε ὁ καλὸς ἐκεῖνος ἱερέας, ποῖα ἦταν ἡ αἰτία. Καὶ ἀφοῦ προσκάλεσε τὸν γέροντα συλλειτουργό του, τὸν παρώτρυνε, νὰ κάνει τρισάγιο καὶ νὰ διαβάσει πάνω ἀπὸ τὸ ἀδιάλυτο χέρι τὴν συγχωρητικὴ εὐχή.

Καὶ μόλις αὐτὸ ἐγίνε, ἀμέσως τὰ σαρκώδη μέρη τοῦ ἄλυτου χεριοῦ διαλύθηκαν καὶ ἔμειναν τὰ ὀστά γυμνά. Χρειάζονται σχόλια; Ἡ ὅποια κατάκριση, τὰ σχόλια, οἱ ἱεροκατηγορίες, οἱ χειρονομίες εἰς βάρος ἱερέων, εἶναι πολὺ μεγάλες ἀμαρτίες. Γιατί οἱ ἱερωμένοι εἶναι λειτουργοὶ τοῦ Κυρίου, Χριστοῦ Κυρίου. Καὶ ὁ Θεὸς λέγει: «Μὴ ἄπτεσθε τῶν χριστῶν μου. Καὶ ἐν τοῖς προφήταις μου μὴ πονηρεύεσθε.»

## Ἡ Δύναμη Τῆς Προσευχῆς

Ἀπόσπασμα Κειμένου ἀπὸ τὸ Βιβλίο «Οἱ Περιπέτειες Ἐνὸς Προσκυνητῆ»

Ὁ προσκυνητὴς ἔβγαλε ἓνα βιβλίο ποὺ εἶχε μαζί του στὸ ταξίδι καὶ ποὺ ὀνομάζεται «Ἀμαρτωλῶν Σωτηρία», εἰς τὸ ὅποιο ὑπάρχουν διηγήσεις θαυμασίων πραγμάτων.

Καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ διαβάσει μίαν ὠραιότατη διήγηση γιὰ κάποιον Ἀγαθόνικο, ἓναν ἀφοσιωμένο εἰς τὸν Θεὸ ἄνθρωπο, ὁ ὁποῖος ἀπὸ τὴν παιδικὴ του ἡλικία εἶχε διδαχθεῖ ἀπὸ τοὺς εὐσεβεῖς γονεῖς του νὰ λέγει κάθε μέρα μπροστὰ εἰς τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς Μητέρας τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν προσευχὴ ποὺ ἀρχίζει μὲ τὰ λόγια: «Θεοτόκε Παρθένε, χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη Μαρία...» Καμμιά ἡμέρα δὲν παρέλειψε νὰ πεῖ τὴν προσευχὴ αὐτή. Ἀργότερα, ὁμως, ὅταν εἶχε ἐνηλικιωθεῖ καὶ ἔφτιαξε τὴν δική του ζωὴ, ἀπορροφήθηκε ἀπὸ τὶς φροντίδες καὶ τὶς φασαρίες τῆς ζωῆς ὥστε νὰ ἀραίωσει σιγὰ - σιγὰ τὴν προσευχὴ αὐτή, μέχρις ὅτου, στὸ τέλος, τὴν σταμάτησε ἐντελῶς.

Μίαν ἡμέρα, ὁμως, συνέβη νὰ φιλοξενήσει γιὰ μία νύκτα ἓνα προσκυνητὴ ὁ ὁποῖος τοῦ εἶπε ὅτι ἦταν μοναχὸς ἀπὸ τὴν Θηβαΐδα τῆς Αἰγύπτου καὶ ὅτι εἶχε δεῖ ἓνα ὄραμα εἰς τὸ ὁποῖο διατάχθηκε νὰ πάει νὰ βρεῖ τὸν Ἀγαθόνικο καὶ νὰ τὸν ἐπίπληξει γιὰ τὸ γεγονός ὅτι εἶχε σταματήσει τὴν συνηθισμένη προσευχὴ του πρὸς τὴν Μητέρα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὁ Ἀγαθόνικος ἀπήντησε ὅτι ἐπὶ τόσα χρόνια ποὺ ἔλεγε τὴν προσευχὴ αὐτὴ δὲν εἶδε κανένα ὄφελος οὔτε κανένα ἀποτέλεσμα. Εἰς αὐτὰ ὁ ἐρημίτης ἀπήντησε λέγοντας: «Θυμήσου, τυφλὲ καὶ ἀγνώμων ἄνθρωπε, πόσες φορὲς αὐτὴ ἡ ἀπλή προσευχὴ σὲ βοήθησε καὶ σὲ ἔσωσε ἀπὸ καταστροφές. Θυμήσου, πᾶς μιὰ φορά, ὅταν ἦσουν πολὺ νέος, σώθηκες κατὰ τρόπο θαυμαστὸ ἀπὸ βέβαιο πνιγμό. Δὲν θυμᾶσαι, ἀκόμη, ὅτι μίαν ἐπιδημίαν κάποτε, ποὺ ἔστειλε εἰς τὸν τάφο ἓνα σωρὸ φίλους σου, ἐσένα δὲν σὲ ἔθιξε καθόλου; Ξέχασες, ὅταν κάποτε ποὺ ὀδηγοῦσατε μίαν ἄμαξα μ' ἓνα φίλο σου, πέσατε κ' οἱ δυὸ, ἐνῶ δὲ αὐτὸς ἔσπασε τὸ πόδι του ἐσὺ ἔμεινες σώως καὶ ἀβλαβής; Λησμονεῖς, ὅτι ἓνας συνηλικιώτης φίλος σου, ποὺ ἦταν ὑγιὴς σὰν σίδερο, τώρα κάμποσο καιρὸ, εἶναι κατάκοιτος ἄρρωστος καὶ δυστυχισμένος, ἐνῶ ἐσὺ εἶσαι ὑγιὴς καὶ δὲν ξέρεις τί θὰ πεῖ ἄρρώστια;

Γενικά, ὑπενθύμισε εἰς τὸν Ἀγαθόνικο, ἓνα σωρὸ εὐεργεσίες τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τέλος συνεπλήρωσε λέγοντας: «Γνώριζε ὅτι ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ κακὰ ἀπεσοβήθησαν ἀπὸ σένα, χάρις στὴν προστασία τῆς Παναγίας Μητέρας τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐξ αἰτίας αὐτῆς τῆς μικρῆς προσευχῆς διὰ μέσου τῆς ὁποίας ὕψωνες κάθε μέρα τὴν ψυχὴ σου σὲ ἔνωση μὲ τὸν Θεό. Ἀπὸ ἐδῶ καὶ εἰς τὸ ἐξῆς πρόσεχε, μὴ παραλείπεις τὴν προσευχὴ καὶ τὴν ἀνάμνηση τῆς Βασιλίσσας τῶν Οὐρανῶν κι αὐτὴ ποτὲ δὲν θὰ σὲ ἐγκατάλειψει.»

Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψη τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων γιὰ τὴν ἔκδοση τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οἰκονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντάς κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὁσιος Ποιμῆν».

## ON THE EVER-VIRGINITY OF OUR LADY THE THEOTOKOS AND THE “PURE MARRIAGE”

*By Fr. P.A.F., translated from Greek by the staff of the St. POIMEN Brotherhood*

Several heterodox Christians claim that our Lady the Theotokos had other children besides our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and in this manner they refuse to accept her Ever-Virginity. Cohabitation and preservation of one's purity is considered to be an impossible feat by all of them.

In the Lives of the Saints of the Holy Orthodox Church, however, one finds an ample number of examples that prove this is quite possible; there exist some saints who lived their whole life with their spouse while guarding their purity, and other saintly couples lived together for a shorter time period until they departed to join monasteries. These couples, through their strong will and with a supernatural volition, equipped with a perfect and absolute obedience to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, spiritually “castrate” themselves. Their goal is to devote their entire existence to Christ and to His Church, through a life-long dedication to His divine deeds and for the salvation of many immortal souls. They thus live under the same roof as brother and sister, spending their whole life in the service of His Church, and for the glory of God and the benefit of Church members.

It is understood that they keep their lifestyle in absolute secrecy and that their Spiritual Father is the only one who knows of it. He is the one who hears their confession on a regular and frequent basis and guides them accordingly. Naturally, the world believes that they are barren and thus with no children. Furthermore, having no children, they dedicate considerable effort towards caring for the orphans, the widows, and other needy people in their community. This type of lifestyle is called “pure marriage.” The corresponding custom is quite old and rare. Its origin is found in ancient times and it is believed to be followed by a few faithful even in our days.

The Byzantine Emperor Markianos and his Empress Poulheria had a pure marriage, as well as many other saintly couples throughout the Church's history. The Holy Orthodox Church commemorates Sts. Markianos and Poulheria each year on February 17th. This saintly couple was also instrumental in the overall formation and gathering of the Fourth Oecumenical<sup>(1)</sup> Synod during the proceedings over which they presided (see Minaion<sup>(2)</sup>, September 10th).

Within the Great Synaxarion of the Orthodox Church (by Victor Matthew, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Transfiguration, Krozini Kouvara, Attica, Greece, 2nd edition, 1956) we find the following regarding pure marriages.

On January 1st (pg. 36):

- The priest Anastasios and his Presvytera Theognosia who

lived this way for 40 years when St. Basil the Great discovered them and revealed their saintly lifestyle to his synod for their spiritual benefit.

- The Venerable Martyrs Joulian and his wife Vasilissa. They both became monastics prior to their martyrdom.

On February 17th (pg. 45):

- The aforementioned Emperor Markianos and his Empress Poulheria.

On March 5th (pg. 77):

- The martyr Konon and his wife Anna. They were forced into marriage by their parents but agreed to live as brother and sister.

On March 12th (pg. 200):

- St. Theophan of Sigrianis, the Confessor and his wife Monahi who later on mutually agreed to become monastics.

On March 19th (pg. 304):

- The holy martyrs Chrisanthos and his wife Tharia. Chrisanthos was forced into marriage by his father with the idolater (at the time) Tharia, so that his life could be spared when it became known that he was baptized into the Christian faith. Subsequently, though, St. Chrisanthos converted his wife into the Christian faith, had a pure marriage with her and they worked together tirelessly to spread Christianity. When discovered, they were both led into martyrdom.

On March 26th (pg. 443):

- Saint Malchos the Monastic and his wife, a beautiful and pure young lady, who were forced into marriage by Acharinos, an Ethiopian chieftain of robbers. They went through the motions of a wedding which was never consummated. Later on, escaping their Ethiopian captors, Malchos arranged for the girl's acceptance in a nunnery, and thereafter the lives of both were given over to the Lord.

On May 22nd (pg. 504):

- St. John Vladimyr the King of the Serbo-Bulgarians.

On October 12th (pg. 205):

- St. Theosevios of Arsinoe, Cyprus, the ascetic. After he and his wife became monastics, he had led the life of a recluse in mountains and caves and holes in the ground, in fasting, vigil and prayer.

On October 29th (pg. 527):

- The venerable martyr Anastasia the Roman who was forced into marriage with an idolater man but was nevertheless able to preserve her virginity and purity. She is often mentioned on December 22nd.

On November 5th (pg. 147):

- Sts. Galaktion and Episteme the Martyrs. These two holy spouses, having integrally conserved their virginity, embraced the monastic life and endured all the austerities and privations which go with it. Seized by Governor Ursus and interrogated on their faith, they suffered multiple tortures. They were cruelly beaten, sharp-pointed reeds were driven under their fingernails, and then came their martyrdom by the sword.

Saint Galaktion was thirty years old, and Saint Episteme was sixteen years old.

On November 17th (pg. 448):

- Sts. Zacharias and Maria.

On November 22nd (pg. 515):

- Sts. Cecilia and Valerian the Martyrs. Saint Cecilia was martyred in Rome at an uncertain date and was buried, out of respect to her noble origin, with the Bishops of Rome, in the cemetery of Callisto. Saint Valerian likewise received the crown of martyrdom at an unknown date and was buried in the catacombs of Pretestatus.

On December 12th:

- St. John of Kronstadt the Russian. He married Elisabeth, daughter of the Archpriest K. P. Nevitzki and, after his ordination, he was appointed as priest at Saint Andrew's Cathedral, in Kronstadt where he served throughout the fifty-three years of his ministry. He lived with his wife as brother and sister.

On December 22nd (pg. 541):

- Saint Anastasia the Healer and Great Martyr. She was the daughter of Pretexastus and Phaustia who instructed her in the Christian faith. She was married to a profligate and ungodly young man, named Publius Patricius. Having become a widow soon after her marriage, she went in secret to the dwellings of the poor and the prisons of the martyrs, and procured requisites for all, cleaning their wounds, loosening their chains, and caring for their infirmities. She was thus surnamed Pharmacolytria -- the Healer. Upon being discovered, the Saint was seized by the servants of Diocletian, and after many tortures, her martyrdom was ended by fire around 290 AD.

On December 31st (pg. 702):

- The Venerable Melania the Roman was wed with a pious man. They had two children and then spent their lives living as brother and sister. Later in her life, she erected a monastery which contained about fifty virgins whom the Saint directed, but so humbly that she was like the servant of all.

From the above examples we note very few saintly couples that lived together throughout their life. Irrespective of their small number, though, it is apparent that it is indeed possible for married couples to reside under the same roof and still preserve their virginity throughout their life. Our conclusion is thus that, if this possible for ordinary people, how much more likely is it for the Mother of our Lord whom Archangel Gabriel greeted with the words "Hail, thou who art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" [Lk:1:28], to preserve her virginity while residing under the same roof with the Elder Joseph.

While the examples of the various saints that had pure marriages are taken out of the Synaxarion of the Greek Orthodox Church, it is most certainly the case that other Patriarchates surely have various examples of a similar nature. This could and should become the topic of a potential cooperative effort to compile a complete list of all Orthodox Saints that had

pure marriages.

It is my humble prayer that others, more able than myself, undertake this endeavor as their efforts will surely find favor with the Ever-Virgin Mary and rewarded by her Son and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The least amongst His priests,

Fr. P. A. F.

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(1) *Constantine Cavarnos has made the wise suggestion to spell Ecumenical as Oecumenical when it refers to the Church Synods or the Church Oecumenical, in order to distinguish them from the heretical, ecumenical movement of our days – Editor.*

(2) *Book of the Church's monthly services – Editor.*



## THE VALUE OF READING THE LIVES OF SAINTS

*By Dr. Constantine Cavarnos, series of "Modern Orthodox Saints," vol. 12, Blessed Hermit Philaretos of the Holy Mountain*

**C**leave to the saints, for they who cleave to them shall be made holy.

St. Clement of Rome

**J**ust as painters in working from models constantly gaze at their exemplar and thus strive to transfer the expression of the original to their own artistry, so too he who is anxious to make himself perfect in all kinds of virtue must gaze upon the lives of the saints as upon statues, so to speak, that move and act, and must make their excellence his own by imitation.

St. Basil the Great

**B**lessed is he who plants in his soul good plants, that is, the virtues and the lives of the saints.

St. Ephraim the Syrian

**T**o admire the labors of saints is good, to emulate them wins salvation.

St. John Chrysostom

**A** person is touched more profoundly and benefits more by reading one beautiful life of a saint than by discourses and philosophies.

Agapios Landos of Athens

**F**or the Christian, there is no teaching that is more efficacious than reading the life of a saint, especially one who has lived in his own time.

Photios Kontoglou



## SPIRITUAL PEOPLE AND THE BAIT OF PIETISM

*Orthodox Christian Witness, September, 2001, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1*

*Brethren, I beseech you, mark them that cause divisions and scandals contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by fair words and flattering words deceive the hearts of the guileless. [Romans 16:17-18]*

What are these “divisions?” The 15th Canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople (861 AD), tells us:

“As for those persons, who, on account of some heresy condemned by holy Councils or Fathers, withdraw themselves from communion with their president (who is preaching heresy publicly, and teaching it openly in church), such persons not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from any and all communion with the one called a bishop before any conciliar or synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honor which befits them among Orthodox Christians. For they have defied not bishops, but false bishops and false teachers; and they have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions.”

There can be a senseless and evil division in the Church, but there can also be a good division, i.e., when that separation is from heresy. The Church teaches us that it is the heresiarchs that have already caused division through their separation from the Truth. But what are we to say when “spiritual” men do not separate themselves from a bishop that preaches heresy? How can this be?

Satan wars against all men and seeks their destruction. The more illustrious the man, the greater is Satan’s accomplishment when he brings about his fall. If a seemingly righteous man falls into a personal sin, that sin affects him alone, and perhaps a few others; but if a righteous man falls into heresy, all that follow him are separated from Truth and grace. For the student of Church History there are many examples by which we learn this. One example of a righteous ascetic who was ensnared by the passion of ambition and became a heretic and later repented of his heresy through the prayers and admonition of a saint is found in the Life of Saint Ioannikios the Great, whose feast we celebrate on the 4th of November.

When heresy still prevailed and one disturbance after another harassed those who venerated Christ’s image because of the Emperor Theophilus, the majority of the bishops and abbots fled the heretical plague. Abandoning their sees, they were greatly distressed, wandering about the mountains like strangers and paupers. So it happened that Eustratius, the shepherd of the Monastery of Agaurinus, left his post and moved about

from place to place for the sake of Christ, and the champions of the heresy of iconoclasm entrusted the presidency and abbacy of that monastery to a certain Anthony from the same monastery, who had consented with the heretics. Although Saint Ioannikios had often instructed and warned the aforementioned Anthony and had even thrice rebuked him, he did not desist from this accursed heresy. Finally, the Saint went up a fourth time to censure him, exhorting him again and declaring the right way to him. The Saint said, “Although I have helped you several times as much as I was able by putting forth my hand and disputing with you, Anthony, you have resisted the truth. I know that your end has drawn near and that a period of forty days remains to you to pass through a difficult trial; however, if you bear this salutary chastisement with joy, you shall be saved.” Then convinced by the Saint’s words and renouncing his heresy, Abbot Anthony replied, “By your prayers, venerable father, I will endure it,” and soon after he was suddenly struck with great pain in half of his body, and was lifted up as if dead by those who found him. After the fortieth day he reposed in peace. [Life of St. Joannicius the Great, Chapter 36]

In our days, the days of false prophets and false teachers, World “Orthodoxy” has a multitude of “spiritual” people who know how to say beautiful and true things about the life of prayer and spiritual struggle; but when anyone asks them about matters pertaining to the Faith, they say that such things adversely affect the spiritual life and Christians ought not to be occupied with them... Since these people do not struggle for the Faith, they do not offend anyone, and they are on good terms with everyone. The majority say good things about them, and even call them saints. Nevertheless they work great evil upon innocent and well-disposed souls by convincing them to close their eyes and to unquestioningly follow the Ecumenists. They thus become the most effective allies of Ecumenism. This terrible heresy could never take root without them, because they disarm precisely those who could be the most vital combatants for Orthodoxy. This is what Saint Isidore of Pelusium says about them:

“Just as fishermen hide the hook with bait and covertly hook the fish, similarly, the crafty allies of heresy cover their evil teachings and corrupt understanding with pietism and hook the more simple, bringing them to spiritual death.”

Thus, those who follow the teachings of heretical spiritual fathers who are part of and defend ecumenistic behaviors do so at great peril to their souls. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.



The truth is in Orthodoxy. I have lived it, and I know it by the grace of God. There are many lights that man sees and that make an impression on him, but only one is the true light.

Blessed Elder Porphyrios (+1991)

## APOPHTHEGMS BY ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, PART 15

*SOURCE: From the book "475 Apophthegms by the God-Inspired St. Isaac the Syrian," pp. 66 - 71, published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood.*

### 43<sup>rd</sup> Lesson

424. We see the angels in their pronounced essence through our physical eyes, while in their lighter, unsubstantiated essence through our soul or through our intellect.

425. We see the demons either through our physical eyes or through the eyes of our soul when they approach us with the natural and ever-present intent of harming us.

426. Angels impart and communicate to us clean and pure thoughts while the demons pass on dirty and foul thoughts. Each of them gives what they exclusively have within themselves.

427. The angels are successively enlightened by the Holy Spirit. It is also so for those Christians who are pure and free of passions, serving and glorifying God.

428. Without the intercession of the angels we would be unable to comprehend God's Mysteries, which are not even fully revealed to all of the angelic orders!

429. Since God is love, how is it possible for Him to tempt us? Those who are at fault in God's love experience the greatest temptation and hell! This is because the sorrow from repentance is unbearable for those who have sinned in God's love. This is exactly what happened to Judas.

430. Why is it that I caused such great sorrow to God, Who has loved me so much? This is the true hell of a sinner.

431. The souls of sinners, without ever being deprived of God's love, suffer in hell due to their lack of repentance while in life; this suffering is equivalent to the fire of an inferno.

432. How can we be certain that our sins have been forgiven? a) When our conscience no longer censures us within our heart for our sins, and b) With all of our heart, we have developed hatred towards our past sins, and we perform obvious deeds that are the opposite of them.

### 44<sup>th</sup> Lesson

433. Strong and powerful is the person who is pleased and grateful for temporary afflictions and sorrows, because within them is hidden the life and glory of his victory.

434. Illumined is the person who came to know the bitterness that exists in this world's "sweetness" and is always occupied with the salvation of his soul.

435. Prudent and wise is the person who exerts an effort to exit this life while still alive and to thus earn the everlasting one.

436. Foolish is the person who constantly exerts an effort to gain more in this temporary life.

437. Self-denial is to develop a dislike and hatred for this life, climbing the cross, so that we dedicate our life and die while desiring the fruits of the future life.

438. The world is a harlot who attempts with her charms to attract and draw us near her, stripping us of every virtue, and

then dumping us in the street in our hour of death.

439. When we do not separate ourselves from worldly matters, our good will becomes indolent and languid.

440. The beginning of God's path is a) fasting, b) all night vigils, and c) continuous prayer.

441. Languid and indolent is the person who neglects fasting and all other spiritual struggles.

442. Fasting is the holy path of God and the foundation of every virtue. It is the crown of those who abstain and have temperance. It is the jewel of virginity and holiness. It is the mother of prayer. It is the forerunner of every virtuous act and deed.

443. It is only physical labor that does not correct the passions of our soul and does not result in the peace, calmness and tranquility of the soul.

444. We will never be able to recognize our passions if we do not deny association with the world and the scattering of our thoughts.

### 45<sup>th</sup> Lesson

445. When tears increase, it is then that a Christian progresses in God's love. As we approach and return to the world, our tears lessen.

446. There are tears that dry up the body and then there are tears that nourish and delight us.

447. He who acquires a new heart and a new spirit, in other words, spiritual needs and wants, that person associates with Christ.

448. The reasons for visions and revelations are: a) That these are due to God's love for his people, and b) That these are for the purpose of consolation, encouragement and instruction of the ill... They are granted from God's mercy and towards three classes of people: a) For those who are simple and harmless, b) for the perfect ones and the saints, and c) for those who possess warm zeal towards God, have forgotten and completely denied the world, and for the purpose of not falling into despair when they draw near death as a result of hunger or an incurable disease.

449. A person is pure in heart when he sees all people as good. A good eye is unable to see anything cunning and wicked. Pure in heart is also the person whose simplicity and innocence parallel that of a babe.

450. Our soul is dead and we ought to weep for her. Let us seek of the Lord to grant us the grace of tears and mourning. "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted."

451. When someone wishes to be dispassionate and is unable to mourn, he should keep busy with the study of Holy Scriptures.

452. He who becomes worthy of attaining continuous prayer has reached the end of all virtues and becomes a dwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is because when the Holy Spirit dwells within us, it never ceases to pray, whether we are eating, sleeping, or doing something else, and especially when we keep silent.

453. A person becomes worthy of spiritual prayer when he constantly guards God's commandment, because Christ dwells within him.

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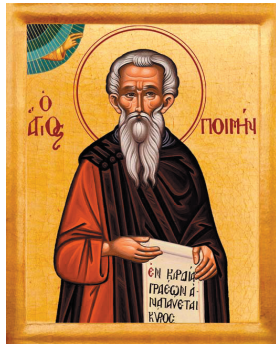
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## FORSAKEN U.S. ROOTS...

Did you know that 52 of the 55 signers of the Declaration of Independence were deeply committed Christians? The other three all believed in the Bible as the divine truth, the God of Scripture, and His personal intervention.

That same Congress formed the American Bible Society. Immediately after creating the Declaration of Independence, the Continental Congress voted to purchase and import 20,000 copies of scripture for the people of this nation.

Patrick Henry, who is called the firebrand of the American Revolution, is still remembered for his words, "Give me liberty or give me death." But in current textbooks the context of these words is deleted. Here is what he actually said: "An appeal to arms and the God of hosts is all that is left us. But we shall not fight our battle alone. There is a just God that presides over the destinies of nations. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone. Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God. I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death." These sentences have been erased from our textbooks. Was Patrick Henry a Christian? The following year, 1776, he wrote this: "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great Nation was founded not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For that reason alone, people of other faiths have been afforded freedom of worship here."

Consider these words that Thomas Jefferson wrote on the front of his well-worn Bible: "I am a real Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus. I have little doubt that our whole country will soon be rallied to the unity of our Creator." He was also the chairman of the American Bible Society, which he considered his highest and most important role.

On July 4, 1821, President Adams said: "The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected in one indissoluble bond the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity."

Calvin Coolidge, our 30th President of the United States reaffirmed this truth when he wrote: "The foundations of our society and our government rest so much on the teachings of the Bible that it would be difficult to support them if faith in these teachings would cease to be practically universal in our country."

William Holmes McGuffey is the author of the McGuffey Reader, which was used for over 100 years in our public schools with over 125 million copies sold until it was stopped in 1963. President Lincoln called him the "Schoolmaster of the Nation." Listen to these words of Mr. McGuffey: "The Christian religion is the religion of our country. From it are derived our notions on the character of God, on the great moral Governor of the universe. On its doctrines are founded the peculiarities of our free institutions. From no source has the author drawn more conspicuously than from the sacred Scriptures. For all these extracts from the Bible I make no apology."

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

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## ARCHBISHOP AVERKY HIS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE OECUMENICAL ORTHODOX CHURCH

*By Blessed Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose),  
reprinted from The Orthodox Word, Vol. 17,  
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*Alas! His golden lips have been silenced!*

Too often have we Orthodox Christians grown used to "taking for granted" the great men in our midst, of not valuing them as we ought until they have departed from us; and even then not evaluating them properly, and letting their significance and teaching slip away from us into oblivion.

Archbishop Averky was one of the last giants of 20th-century Orthodoxy, not merely of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, but of the whole Orthodox Church.

Born Alexander Pavlovich Taushev on October 19 (Nov. 1) 1906, in Kazan, Archbishop Averky was of a noble family. His father was a government official whose duties took him to many parts of Russia, allowing young Alexander to have a first-hand acquaintance with the heart of Holy Russia, its monasteries and holy places. The memory of these places remained with him all his life, even though he left his homeland while still a young teenager. Even at that tender age he was attracted to books of a spiritual nature, such as *Unseen Warfare*, and already from the age of seven or eight he began to feel an alienation from the ordinary life of the world and a subconscious attraction towards the monastic life.

In the midst of the civil war that followed the Revolution of 1917, the Taushev family left Russia in 1920 with great grief of soul. The family settled in the Bulgarian city of Varna, where Alexander attended school until 1926. The chief religious influence for him at this time was the local parish church and its priest, Father John Slunin.

Then, in 1925, a bishop came to Varna who was to give Alexander's life its direction: Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, a strict monk, a man of prayer, and a theologian in the true Patristic tradition. After meeting him, the young student resolved to undertake the monastic way of life. With Archbishop Theophan's blessing, he attended the Theological Faculty of the University of Sophia and upon

graduating from it with brilliant success in 1930, he went to Carpatho-Russia (in Czechoslovakia) with the intention of becoming a monk and serving the Church. Tonsured a monk there in 1931, and ordained priestmonk the next year, he served several parishes and assisted the abbot of the monastery of St. Nicholas near the village of Iza. Soon he also undertook responsibilities as editor of the diocesan periodical and teacher

of catechism in secondary schools.

When Carpatho-Russia was occupied by the Magyars in 1940, Father Averky went to Belgrade and served under Metropolitan Anastassy, Chief Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, conducting courses in religious subjects both for seminarians and laymen.

When the Synod of Bishops moved to Munich in 1945, he followed it and continued his work of the religious education of youth. In 1950 he was appointed by the Synod as chairman of its Mis-



Archbishop Averky  
(1906-1976)

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Orthodox Heritage may, at times, bring up issues or present articles that some consider controversial. Such material is presented so that a distinction is made between salvation and the 20th century heresy of ecumenism. These are confusing times for the Orthodox faithful, and political correctness must be sacrificed so that His TRUTH be brought forth.

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sionary Education Committee. When he came to America in 1951 he was invited to the newly-organized Holy Trinity Seminary at Jordanville, New York to teach New Testament, Liturgics, and Homiletics. In 1952 he became Rector of the Seminary, in 1953 Bishop of Syracuse, and in 1960, at the death of Archbishop Vitaly, Abbot of Holy Trinity Monastery. In these positions he continued until his death his life's work of enlightening the Orthodox faithful, both the future pastors of the seminary (about 100 priests came from the seminary in these years) and all those who read the Monastery's publications, which were all solid works of Orthodox piety and theology. His sermons appeared frequently in the Monastery's bimonthly publication, Orthodox Russia, and his own books included textbooks on Homiletics and the interpretation of the New Testament (2 volumes), collections of his sermons and articles, and works on the life and letters of his beloved Abba, Archbishop Theophan.

All of the writings of Archbishop Averky bear one and the same character of love for God's truth, righteous zeal in expressing it, and urgent exhortation to others to follow it.

The abundance with which his golden lips gushed the sweet honey of the pure teaching of Orthodoxy, especially in his most fruitful last years, has perhaps helped to hide from us the rarity and even uniqueness of his teaching in our evil days. We have grown so used to his flaming and bold words that we have not noticed that he was virtually the only hierarch of any Orthodox church writing in any language with such boldness and uprightness in defense of Orthodoxy.

In earlier centuries the Church had many Holy Fathers writing in defense of Orthodoxy against the numerous heresies which attacked her singly or together; but in our days, when Orthodox Christians are losing the savor of Orthodoxy and virtually all the Local Orthodox Churches are giving in to the

apostasy of our times, his voice was almost the only one to continue speaking the truth with such vigor and boldness, even amid the many infirmities of his old age. Truly, he was a champion of Orthodoxy in our age when faith is growing cold.

His view of the contemporary world was sober, precise, and entirely inspired by the Sacred Scripture and Holy Fathers of the Church. He taught that we live in the age of the Apostasy, the falling away from true Christianity, when the "mystery of iniquity" has entered its final stage of preparation for the "man of sin," Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2:3-12). Archbishop Averky traced the development of this Apostasy in particular from the time of the schism of the Church of Rome (1054 AD), through the era of Humanism, the Renaissance and Reformation, the French Revolution, 19th-century materialism and communism, culminating in the Russian Revolution of 1917 (which removed the last great barrier to the working of the mystery of iniquity and the coming of Antichrist). See his book, True Orthodoxy and the Contemporary World, pp. 18-21; the quotes that follow are all from this book.

In such an age, he writes, "to be a true Orthodox Christian in our days, ready unto death to preserve one's faithfulness to Christ the Saviour, is much more difficult than in the first centuries of Christianity." Although often open (in the lands under communist control), the persecution against Christianity today is more often hidden. "Under the covering of a deceptive outward appearance that looks good and leads many into error, in actuality there is occurring everywhere today, a hidden persecution against Christianity... This persecution is much more dangerous and frightful than the previous open persecution, for it threatens a complete devastation of souls, a spiritual death." He often quoted the words of St. Theophan the Recluse about the latter times: "Although the name of Christian will be heard everywhere, and everywhere there

will be churches and church services, all this will be only an appearance; within there will be a true apostasy.”

In fulfillment of these words in our own days, Archbishop Averky writes, “The Christian world, it is sad to say, presents today a frightful, cheerless picture of the most profound religious and moral decadence.” The temptation of worldly comfort and prosperity drive God away from the soul. “The servants of Antichrist more than anything else strive to force God out of the life of men, so that men, satisfied with their material comfort, might not feel any need to turn to God in prayer, might not remember God, but might live as though He did not exist. Therefore, the whole order of today’s life in the so-called ‘free’ countries, where there is no open bloody persecution against faith, where everyone has the right to believe as he wishes, is an even greater danger for the soul of a Christian (than open persecution), for it chains him entirely to the earth, compelling him to forget about heaven. The whole of contemporary ‘culture,’ directed to purely earthly attainments and the frantic whirlpool of life bound up with it, keeps a man in a constant state of emptiness and distraction which give no opportunity for one to go at least a little deeper into his soul, and so the spiritual life in him gradually dies out.” All of contemporary life, on the public level, is a preparation for the coming of Antichrist: “All that is happening today on the highest level of religion, government, and public life... is nothing else than an intense work of preparation by the servants of the coming Antichrist for his future kingdom,” and this work is being done as much by “Christians” as it is by non-Christians.

After painting such a grim picture of the present and future, Archbishop Averky calls on Orthodox Christians to struggle against the spirit of this world that lies in evil. “All who in the present day desire to preserve faithfulness to Christ the Saviour must guard themselves especially against every attraction towards earthly goods and against being deceived by them. It is extremely dangerous to give oneself over to every desire, to make a career for oneself, to make a name for oneself, to obtain authority and influence in society, to acquire wealth, to surround oneself with luxury and comfort.”

To those willing to struggle to preserve their faith, Archbishop Averky offers a sober and inspiring path of confession. “Now is the time of confession -- of a firm standing and if need be, even to death for one’s Orthodox faith, which is being subjected everywhere to open and secret attacks, oppression, and persecution on the part of the servants of the coming Antichrist.” We must be true Christians, not give in to the spirit of the times, making the Church the center of our lives. Give thanks to God for the existence of our Russian Church Outside of Russia, “which has not tainted itself by submitting to the dark powers of Antichrist that are acting in the contemporary world.” We must be “its faithful and devoted children, and at the same time, its missionaries and fighters for the true faith of Christ, both in the non-Orthodox environment that surrounds us and among the Russian people

who have fallen away or are falling away from it” (27). We must lead a conscious life of prayer, nourished by the reading of Scripture and the Holy Fathers and by frequent confession and reception of Holy Communion.

The path ahead of us, despite the deceptive promises of modern “progress,” is a path of suffering: “The Lord has clearly said that it is not ‘progress’ that awaits us, but ever greater tribulations and misfortunes as a result of the increase of lawlessness and the growing cold of love; when He comes, He will scarcely find faith on earth (St. Luke 18:8).”

The strength of the true Christian in the terrible times ahead is the apocalyptic expectation of the Second Coming of Christ: “The spirit of a constant expectation of the Second Coming of Christ is the original Christian spirit, which cries out in prayer to the Lord: Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:20). The spirit opposed to this is undoubtedly the spirit of Antichrist, which strives by every means to draw Christians away from the thought of the Second Coming of Christ and the recompense which follows on it. Those who give in to this spirit subject themselves to the danger of not recognizing Antichrist when he comes and of falling into his nets. Precisely this is the most frightful thing in the contemporary world, which is filled with every possible deception and temptation. The servants of Antichrist, as the Lord Himself has forewarned us, will try, ‘if possible, the deceive the very elect’ (St. Matthew 24:24). The thought of this, however, should not oppress or crush us, but on the contrary, as the Lord Himself says, “Then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh (St. Luke 21:28).”

It is such a man, a true Holy Father of these latter times, filled with the Christian apocalyptic expectation of Christ’s Second Coming and with the sober Orthodox spirit of preparedness for it, who is the author of a patristic commentary on the culminating book of the New Testament Scriptures, the Revelation of St. John the Theologian. Although his interpretation of the book is based solidly on the early Fathers of the Church, the very fact that he himself is so much in their spirit, and in the spirit of St. John, is a pledge for us of the accuracy of his commentary, as well as of the fact that it can speak not merely to our curious minds, but also and above all to our believing hearts. Archbishop Averky was an Orthodox scholar in the unbroken tradition of patristic thought which has come down to us from the ancient Fathers to our own days, and which he imbibed most of all in his own teachers, the 19th-century St. Theophan the Recluse (†1894) and the 20th-century Theophan of Poltava (†1940), a modern day cave dweller and an unblemished teacher of the Orthodox moral and spiritual life, he is also an unrivaled theological and patristic guide for us.

There are few saints left in our pitiful times. But even if we do not see about us now such upright and righteous ones as he, his teaching remains with us and can be our guiding beacon in the even darker days ahead which he foresaw, when the Church may have to go into the wilderness, like the Woman of the Revelation (ch. 12)—the Church of the last times.

## IS “HALLOWEEN” JUST HARMLESS FUN?

*From a pamphlet by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia*

The “feast of Halloween,” celebrated by many in America, is rapidly finding its way in many parts of our world. It is portrayed as harmless fun for children. This could not be any further from the truth! Halloween is normally regarded as one more occasion for a party, one more opportunity for a good time without the least inquiry as to its meaning or origins. It is hardly a surprise when we consider that the greatest feasts of Christianity such as Pascha (Easter) and the Nativity of Christ (for which our ancestors prepared with fasting, prayers and tears) are now to so many, simply dates for eating, drinking and the exchanging of gifts. Be warned: Halloween is not what it appears to be! Its seemingly innocent manifestations represent a memory of an ancient celebration deeply rooted in paganism and demonology; furthermore, it continues to be a form of idolatry in which Satan, the angel of death is worshipped.

Known also as All Hallows Eve, the feast of Halloween began in pre-Christian times. It was originally a Celtic festival celebrated widely among the peoples of the British Isles and northern France. These pagan peoples believed that life was born from death. On this night, a certain deity whom they called Samhain, their lord of Death, was honoured at their New Year’s festival (end of October). On that night, Samhain was believed to lead hosts of evil spirits into the world. Samhain is also identified as the Grim Reaper, the leader of the ancestral ghosts. On the evening of the festival, a huge bonfire built from oak branches, which they believed to be sacred, was ignited in a high place. Upon these, fire sacrifices of crops, animals and even human beings were burned as an offering in order to appease their demon lord. It was also believed that Samhain, being pleased by their faithful offerings, allowed the souls of the dead to return to their homes for a festal visit on this day. Thus they believed that cold, dark creatures filled the night, wandering and begging amongst the living. It is from this belief that the practice of wandering about in the dark dressed up in costumes imitating ghosts, fairies, leprechauns, elves, smurfs (a German nature spirit), and other assorted demons, grew up. It is important to note that the ‘souls of the dead,’ or ghosts, are in fact demons cunningly mimicking the attributes of departed loved ones as much as is necessary to delude the observer. Any attention paid to such illusions is destructive! The dialogue of “trick and treat” is also an integral part of this system of beliefs and practices. It was believed that the souls of the dead who had entered into the world of darkness, decay and death, and therefore into total communion with and submission to the demon Samhain, bore the affliction of great hunger on their festal visit. Out of this grew the practice of begging for “treats” (offerings). If these “treats” were not forthcoming, then the wrath and anger of Samhain would

be unleashed through a system of “tricks” (curses).

From an Orthodox Christian viewpoint, participation in these practices at any level is idolatrous, and a genuine betrayal of our God and our Holy Faith. To do so by dressing up and going out would be to willfully seek fellowship with the ‘dead’ whose lord is also known as Satan, the Evil One, who stands against God. Or, to participate by submission to the dialogue of “trick or treat” is to make offering, not to innocent little children, but to the lord of Death, whom they unknowingly serve as proxy for the ‘dead.’

In the days of the early Celtic Church, which was strictly Orthodox, the Holy Fathers attempted to counteract this pagan New Year festival by establishing the Feast of All Saints on the same day (in the East the Feast of All Saints is celebrated on the Sunday following Pentecost). As is the custom of the Church, the faithful Christians attended a Vigil Service in the evening and in the morning a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It is from this that the term Halloween developed. The word has its roots in the Old English of All Hallow E’en, i.e., the Eve commemorating all those who were hallowed (sanctified). The people who remained pagan and therefore anti-Christian and whose paganism had become deeply intertwined with the occult, satanism and magic reacted to the Church’s attempt to supplant their festival by increased fervour on this evening. In the early middle ages, Halloween became the supreme and central feast of the occult, a night and day upon which acts of witchcraft, demonism, sorcery and satanism of all kinds were practiced. Many of these practices involved desecration and mockery of Christian practices and beliefs. Costumes of skeletons developed as a mockery of the Church’s reverence for Holy Relics; Holy things were stolen, and used in perverse and sacrilegious ways. The old practice of begging became a system of persecution designed to harass Christians who were, by their beliefs, unable to participate by making offerings to those who served the lord of Death.

As Orthodox Christians, it is important to be aware of how these anti-Christian, pagan and demonic practices have crept into our society and our very lives as innocent, fun, and playful diversions. Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to the “narrow path,” to the bearing of our own Cross, to the difficult road of rejecting sin and embracing righteousness. By refraining from this hidden demon worship, we set ourselves apart from the world, perhaps even are mocked and laughed at for such stupidity and simple-mindedness. “How can children having fun be related to demonic activity?” they may ask. In the face of all this we must also remember that Satan is the “father of lies,” the great deceiver and he will go to any lengths to trap us into choosing to follow him rather than our Lord, even if we do so unwittingly and in ignorance. Know this: the devil exists; evil spirits exist! Our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world in order to destroy “him that had the dominion of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14). Remember that many martyrs were tortured and killed rather than allow themselves to be coerced



into tossing a little incense on a pagan altar. When we willingly participate in the sacrifice to the lord of death as a “harmless” social custom, we ourselves make a mockery of the witness of those martyrs. Instead, as Orthodox Christians, we are given the opportunity on this night to remember the feast of the Holy Unmercenary, Saints Cosmas and Damianos, celebrated on November 1<sup>st</sup>. God has provided us with His Saints as a powerful weapon against the snares of Satan, even in the midst of such a deception. We should take full advantage of this weapon and turn our hearts and minds away from the celebration of death and onto the remembrance of God, Who is “wonderful in His saints.” Another weapon given to us by Christ is the power of Prayer and Fasting. In Christ’s own words, “by prayer and fasting” (Matt. 17:21) we can overcome evil.

We take great pains to protect our children and ourselves from disease and harm. We teach them good nutrition, hygiene and personal safety. We discourage them from engaging in fornication, substance abuse and other immoral and dangerous acts. Why do we allow them to dabble in darkness? Even if Halloween was good, clean, innocent fun, to what benefit-spiritual, intellectual or otherwise- is this for a Christian? Let’s teach our children to surround themselves with what is good and to “walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8). Let’s show them that the hope of the Christian life is to be delivered from death into life with God for eternity! We are Orthodox Christians. We are called to be not of this world. We were instructed by our Saviour to pray: “deliver us from the evil one.” Halloween is the celebration of the evil one. Who could possibly support it?

What do the Holy Scriptures and Holy Fathers say on the subject? Here are just a few pertinent quotes.

“Abstain from all appearance of evil” [1 Thessalonians 5:22].

“Care should be taken to see that the children of Priests shall not give any mundane spectacles, nor witness any. This, in fact, has ever been preached to all Christians, to the effect that wherever there are blasphemies they ought not to approach” [Canon XVII of Carthage].

“That one must not join the heathen in celebration of holidays and festivals, and share in their Godlessness” [Canon XXXIX of Laodicea].



## ON THE PROPER USE OF OUR MONEY AND POSSESSIONS

Whether we go to Paradise or to hell doesn’t depend on whether we have a lot or a little money, but the way we use the money we have. Money, possessions and all material goods are not our own, but God’s. We simply are responsible for the way in which they will be used. We must know that God will ask an account from us for every last cent, whether or not we used it according to His will.

(Blessed Elder Porphyrios, +1991)

## WILL THE HETERODOX BE SAVED?

*By Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory (+1985), from a pamphlet by Fr. Nektarios Serfes, Boise, ID (originally published in “Orthodox Life,” Vol. 34, No. 6, Nov.-Dec., 1984, pp. 33-36)*

**Question:** “If the Orthodox faith is the only true faith, can Christians of other confessions be saved? May a person who has led a perfectly righteous life on earth be saved on the strength of his ancestry, while not being baptized as Christian?”

**Answer:** “For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth [struggleth], but of God that showeth mercy” (Rom. 9:15-16). In the Orthodox Church we have the path of salvation indicated to us and we are given the means by which a person may be morally purified and have a direct promise of salvation. In this sense, St. Cyprian of Carthage says that “outside the Church there is no salvation.” In the Church is given that of which Apostle Peter writes to Christians (and only Christians): “According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:3-8). And what should one say of those outside the Church, who do not belong to her? Another apostle provides us with an idea: “For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth” (1 Cor. 5:12-13). God “will have mercy on whom He will have mercy” (Rom 9:18). It is necessary to mention only one thing: that to “lead a perfectly righteous life,” as the questioner expressed it, means to live according to the commandments of the Beatitudes -- which is beyond the power of one, outside the Orthodox Church, without the help of grace which is concealed within it.

The question: Can the heterodox, i.e., those who do not belong to Orthodoxy -- the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church -- be saved, has become particularly painful and acute in our days.

In attempting to answer this question, it is necessary, first of all, to recall that in His Gospel the Lord Jesus Christ Himself mentions but one state of the human soul which unfailingly

leads to perdition, i.e., blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:1-32). The Holy Spirit is, above all, the Spirit of Truth, as the Saviour loved to refer to Him. Accordingly, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is blasphemy against the Truth, conscious and persistent opposition to it. The same text makes it clear that even blasphemy against the Son of Man, i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God Himself may be forgiven, as it may be uttered in error or in ignorance and, subsequently may be covered by conversion and repentance (an example of such a converted and repentant blasphemer is the Apostle Paul -- see Acts 26:11 and I Tim. 1:13. If, however, a man opposes the Truth which he clearly apprehends by his reason and conscience, he becomes blind and commits spiritual suicide, for he thereby likens himself to the devil, who believes in God and dreads Him, yet hates, blasphemes, and opposes Him.

Thus, man's refusal to accept the Divine Truth and his opposition thereto makes him a son of damnation. Accordingly, in sending His disciples to preach, the Lord told them: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16), for the latter heard the Lord's Truth and was called upon to accept it, yet refused, thereby inheriting the damnation of those who "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thes. 2:12).

The Holy Orthodox Church is the repository of the divinely revealed Truth in all its fullness and fidelity to apostolic Tradition. Hence, he who leaves the Church, who intentionally and consciously falls away from it, joins the ranks of its opponents and becomes a renegade as regards apostolic Tradition. The Church dreadfully anathematized such renegades, in accordance with the words of the Saviour Himself (Matt. 18:17) and of the Apostle Paul (Gal. 1:8-9), threatening them with eternal damnation and calling them to return to the Orthodox fold. It is self-evident, however, that sincere Christians who are Roman Catholics, or Lutherans, or members, of other non-Orthodox confessions, cannot be termed renegades or heretics -- i.e., those who knowingly pervert the truth... \* They have been born and raised and are living according to the creed which they have inherited, just as do the majority of you who are Orthodox; in their lives there has not been a moment of personal and conscious renunciation of Orthodoxy. The Lord, "Who will have all men to be saved" (I Tim. 2:4) and "Who enlightens every man born into the world" (Jn. 1:43), undoubtedly is leading them also towards salvation in His own way.

With reference to the above question, it is particularly instructive to recall the answer once given to an inquirer by the Blessed Theophan the Recluse. The blessed one replied more or less thus: "You ask, will the heterodox be saved?... Why do you worry about them? They have a Saviour Who desires the salvation of every human being. He will take care of them. You and I should not be burdened with such a concern. Study yourself and your own sins... I will tell you one thing, however: should you, being Orthodox and possessing the Truth in its fullness, betray Orthodoxy, and enter a different faith, you

will lose your soul forever."

We believe the foregoing answer by the saintly ascetic to be the best that can be given in this matter.

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(\*) The Greek word for "heresy" is derived from the word for "choice" and hence inherently implies conscious, willful rejection or opposition to the Divine Truth manifest in the Orthodox Church.



## THE REASON FOR THE CREATION OF SINFUL PEOPLE

*By St. John Damaskinos, translated from Greek by the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. POIMEN*

**Question:** Why does God create (even though He knows from the beginning) those who will become sinful and not repent?

**Answer:** God, through His goodness and kindness, creates all of His creatures out of nothing and foreknows all that will transpire during their life. If naturally these creations were not to exist, they would neither be evil and sinful nor would He know of them prior to their creation. This is because knowledge refers to those that exist while foreknowledge applies to events and people that will take place or exist; in other words, creation of a person precedes that person's good or evil existence. Now, if our omnipotent God -- although He knew that such evil people were to come into existence -- prevented their creation as a result of His foreknowledge and because they were to be sinful and unrepentful, we would then have evil defeating God's goodness, and this could never be.

God creates all of His creations, including people, good; every single person then becomes a good or a bad person as a result of their own actions and their own free will. Therefore, even though our Lord said: "...but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born..." [Mt 26:24], He said it not in criticism of His creation, but rather the evil which was committed by the creation out of that person's free will and carelessness. Because it was that person's carelessness and recklessness that spoiled and discarded the Creator's benefaction in a manner similar to a person that accepts riches and authority from a king, and then proceeds to abuse this power and become a tyrant towards his benefactor. The king, then, once he subdues him, will punish him after he observes that the person insists on retaining his abusive, tyrant-like authority to the end.

## Ἡ Θεομήτωρ στοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους

Ἀπὸ τῆς ἱστοσελίδος τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ περιοδικοῦ «Ρωμοσύνη»



Ἡμεῖς λέει ὅτι ὅταν ἀνέβηκε ἡ Θεομήτωρ στοῦ ὄρους τῶν Ἐλαιῶν γιὰ νὰ προσευχηθεῖ, ἔγειραν τὰ δέντρα καὶ τὴν προσκύνησαν. Ἐπίσης, κατὰ τὴν γενικὴ ἁγιορείτικη παράδοση, ἡ Κυρία Θεοτόκος μετὸν Ἅγιο Ἰωάννη τὸ Θεολόγο, ταξίδευε μετὰ πλοῖο ἀπὸ τὴν Παλαιστίνη στὴν Κύπρο, γιὰ νὰ ἐπισκεφεῖ τὸν Ἅγιο

Λάζαρο (τὸν ἀναστημένο ἐκ νεκρῶν). Λόγω ὅμως μεγάλης τρικυμίας καὶ μετὰ ὑπερφυσικὸ τρόπο, τὸ πλοῖο βρέθηκε στὸν Ἄθω καὶ συγκεκριμένα στοῦ λιμάνι τοῦ Κλήμεντος, στὴ Μονὴ Ἰβήρων. Ἐκεῖ οἱ κάτοικοι τοῦ Ἄθω, ὀδηγούμενοι ἀπὸ τὴ θεία Πρόνοια, ἔσπευσαν νὰ ὑποδεχθοῦν τὴν μητέρα τοῦ Κυρίου μας Παναγία καὶ ἀφοῦ ἄκουσαν τὴ διδασκαλία τῆς δέχθηκαν τὸ Χριστιανισμό. Λέγεται ἐπίσης ἀπὸ τὴν παράδοση, ὅτι ὅταν πλησίαζε τὸ πλοῖο τῆς Παναγίας τὸ Ἅγιο Ὄρος, καταστράφηκε τὸ μεγάλο ἄγαλμα τοῦ Διὸς ποὺ βρισκόταν στὴν κορυφὴ τοῦ Ὄρους καὶ τὰ ὑπόλοιπα εἰδῶλα συνετρίβησαν. Ἡ κορυφὴ τοῦ Ἄθω καὶ ὅλα τὰ δέντρα καὶ τὰ σπιτία ἐκλείναν καὶ προσκύνησαν πρὸς τὸ μέρος τοῦ λιμανιοῦ Κλήμεντος ὅπου ἔμπαινε τὸ καράβι τῆς Παναγίας. Τὴν ἀφίξη τῆς Θεοτόκου στοῦ Ὄρους ἀναφέρουν οἱ κώδικες Λ' 66 καὶ Ι' 31 τῆς Λαυριώτικης βιβλιοθήκης.

Ὅταν οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἔβαλαν κλῆρο τὶς περιοχὲς στὶς ὁποῖες θὰ κηρύξουν, ζήτησε καὶ ἡ Παναγία νὰ πάρει κλῆρο γιὰ νὰ κηρύξει τὸ εὐαγγέλιο. Ὁ κλῆρος ἔδειχνε τὴν περιοχὴ Ἰβηρίαν. Ὁ ἀρχάγγελος Γαβριὴλ ὅμως παρουσιάστηκε καὶ εἶπε στὴν Παρθένο ὅτι ἡ πραγματικὴ περιοχὴ στὴν ὁποία θὰ βρεθεῖ θὰ εἶναι ἡ Μακεδονία καὶ τὸ Ὄρος Ἄθως. Ὅταν μπῆκε τὸ καράβι στοῦ λιμάνι καὶ ἔγινε μεγάλη ἀναταραχὴ στοῦ Ὄρους, τότε οἱ κάτοικοι ἤρθαν καὶ ρωτοῦσαν τὸν Ἰωάννη, πῶς ἔγιναν ὅλα αὐτὰ καὶ ἀπὸ ποιά δύναμη. Καὶ αὐτὸς τοὺς ἐξήγησε καὶ τοὺς κήρυξε τὸν λόγο τοῦ Θεοῦ μιλώντας τοὺς στὰ Ἑλληνικά, ἐνῶ ἦταν Ἑβραῖος.

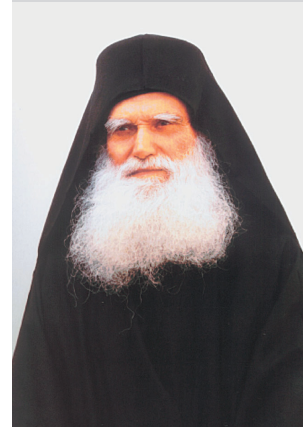
Ἡ Παναγία, εὐχαριστημένη ἀπὸ τὴν ὁμορφιὰ τοῦ Ὄρους καὶ τὸν κλῆρον ποὺ τῆς δόθηκε, προσευχήθηκε στὸν Χριστὸ λέγοντας: «Υἱέ μου καὶ Θεέ μου, εὐλόγησον τὸν τόπον τοῦτον καὶ κλῆρον μου. Καὶ ἐπίχεσον ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔλεός σου καὶ φύλαξον ἀβλαβῆ ὡς τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου καὶ τοὺς κατασκηνούντας ἐν αὐτῷ, διὰ τὸ ὄνομά σου τὸ Ἅγιον καὶ Ἐμόν, ὥστε διὰ μικροῦ κόπου καὶ ἀγῶνος τῆς

μετανοίας ἀφεθῆναι αὐτοῖς ἁμαρτήματα αὐτῶν.» Ἐμπλησον αὐτοὺς παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἀναγκαίου ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ καὶ ζωῆς αἰωνίου ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι καταξίωσον, δόξασον ὑπὲρ πάντα τόπον, τὸν τόπον τοῦτον καὶ θαυμάστωσον παντοιοτρόπως, πλήρωσον αὐτὸν ἐκ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν Οὐρανόν, τῶν κεκλημένων τῷ ὀνόματί σου καὶ πλάτνον τὰ σκηνώματα ἐν αὐτῷ ἀπὸ ἄκρον ἕως ἄκρου αὐτοῦ. Ἀπάλλαξον αὐτοὺς τῆς αἰωνίου κολάσεως καὶ σῶσον ἐκ παντὸς πειρασμοῦ, ὁρατῶν καὶ ἀοράτων ἐχθρῶν καὶ πάσης αἰρέσεως καὶ εἰρήνευσον τῷ ὀρθοδόξῳ δόγματι.»

Τότε ἀκούστηκε φωνὴ ἀπὸ τοὺς Οὐρανοὺς ποὺ ἔλεγε: «Ὅσα ἤτησας καὶ προσεύξω Μήτηρ μου, οὕτως ἔσται σοὶ πάντα, ἐὰν καὶ αὐτοὶ τὰ ἐντάλματά μου φυλάξωσιν! Ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν καὶ ἐξῆς ἔστω ὁ τόπος οὗτος κλῆρος Σὸς καὶ περιβόλαιον Σὸν καὶ Παράδεισος, ἔτι δὲ καὶ λιμὴν σωτηρίας τῶν θελόντων σωθῆναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ προσφυγὴ καὶ καταφύγιον καὶ ἀτάραχος λιμὴν τῆς μετανοίας τῶν πεφορτισμένων μετὰ πολλὰς ἁμαρτίας.»



### Γιὰ τὴν Εὐχή



Σ' ἓνα λαϊκὸ ἀδελφὸ ποὺ ἤρρωθεσε τὸν Γέροντα Ἐφραίμ Κατουνακιώτη γιὰ τὴν εὐχή, ἐκεῖνος τοῦ εἶπε τὰ ἐξῆς. Ἀφιέρωσε μισὴ ὥρα τὸ εἰκοσιτετράωρο γιὰ νὰ λές τὴν εὐχούλα. Ὅποτε μπορεῖς. Καλύτερα τὸ βράδυ. Νὰ τὴν λές χωρὶς νὰ κρατᾷς κομποσχοῖνι, ἱκετευτικά, παρακλητικά, κλαψιάρικα: «Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ ἐλέησόν με».

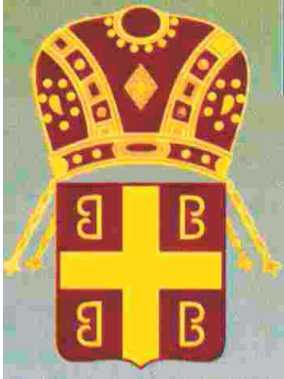
Καλλιέργησε αὐτὸ καὶ θὰ δεῖς τί καρπὸ θὰ βγάλει. Ἀπὸ μισὴ ὥρα, θὰ γίνῃ μία ὥρα. Καὶ πρόσεξε ἐκεῖνη τὴν ὥρα. Ἡ τὸ τηλέφωνο θὰ χτυπήσει, ἢ θὰ ἔρθει ἡ σκέψη ὅτι αὐτὴ τὴν δουλειὰ πρέπει νὰ τὴν κάνω τώρα, ἢ ὕπνος θὰ σοῦ ἔρθει, ἢ καμιά βλασφημία θὰ σὲ κτυπήσει. Τίποτε. Κλεῖσε τὸ τηλέφωνο. Τελείωσε τὶς δουλειές σου καὶ κάνε αὐτὸ ποὺ σοῦ λέω γιὰ μισὴ ὥρα καὶ θὰ δεῖς.

Φύτεψες ἓνα δενδράκι κι αὔριο ἢ μεθαύριο θὰ κάνει καρπὸ. Καὶ ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ Ἅγιος Βασίλειος ἀπὸ αὐτὸ ἄρχισαν καὶ ἔγιναν φωστῆρες τῆς οἰκουμένης. Ὁ Ἅγιος Συμεὼν ὁ Νέος Θεολόγος ἀπὸ κοσμικὸς εἶχε ἐμπειρία τοῦ ἀκτίστου Φωτός. Κοσμικὸς ἦταν.

Πόσοι κοσμικοὶ φαίνονται ἔτσι ἐξωτερικά, καὶ κατὰ βάθος εἶναι καλόγεροι...

## Ίστορικά Παράδοξα: Ο Άγνωστος Υιός του Κωνσταντίνου ΙΑ΄

Ιωάννης Ε. Ζενκίνης, Εισαγγελέυς Έφετών, από την εφημερίδα «Εστία», 18-19 Μαΐου, 1995



**Η**δυναστεία των Παλαιολόγων είναι η τελευταία δυναστεία η οποία έβασίλευσε εις την Βυζαντινήν Αυτοκρατορίαν. Τελευταίος Αυτοκράτωρ του Βυζαντίου είναι ο Κωνσταντίνος Παλαιολόγος. Ουτός, εκ της νομίμου συζύγου του Σοφίας, απέκτησε ένα και μόνον υιόν, τον Ιωάννην Παλαιολόγον, οστις ήτο διάδοχος του Βυζαντινού θρόνου.

Μετά την άλωση της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως υπό των Τούρκων (1453), η αυτοκράτειρα Σοφία, επιθυμούσα να σώση με κάθε τρόπον την μόνην παρηγορίαν και έλπίδα των Έλλήνων, τον υιό της Ιωάννην, παρέδωσε αυτόν εις την έμπιστον θαλαμηπόλον Ειρήνην, διά να τον μεταφέρει με μικρόν ίστιοφόρον εις την Ιταλίαν, φοβουμένη ότι εάν ο Ιωάννης πέση εις τας χείρας των Όθωμανών, αυτοί θα τον έφόνευον διά να εξαλείψουν τον τελευταίον νόμιμον άπαιτητήν του θρόνου του Βυζαντίου.

Εις τον κόρφο του κατά την αναχώρησίν του έκρυψε πάπυρον, εις τον όποιον με τα ίδια της τα χέρια έγραψεν: «Ιωάννης Χριστιανός» (άντι Παλαιολόγος) και του είπε: «Παιδί μου να μη φανερώσης την καταγωγή σου εάν δέν γίνεις 30 χρονών. Μοῦ τό υπόσχεσαι;». «Ναί, μητέρα», άπήντησεν ο μικρός Ιωάννης, «τό υπόσχομαι». Η αυτοκράτειρα Σοφία, άκολουθώς, έδηλητηριάσθη διά να μη γίνη σύζυγος του κατακτητού Μωάμεθ του Β΄. Η Έλλάς έκλαυσε με πικρά δάκρυα την άλωση της Βασιλίδος των πόλεων και μέσα από τα θολωμένα από τα δάκρυα μάτια της είδε τό καράβι να άποπλή από τον Κεράτιον κόλπον, τον βαμμένον με τό αίμα των τελευταίων προμάχων των ιδεωδών του Έθνους και να πηγαίνη μακριά εις την Δύσιν, τον τελευταίον ένσαρκωτήν των όνειρων. Άλλά μέσα εις τα πληγωμένα σπλάχνα της έκρυψε ζωντανήν την Έλπίδα. Πάλι με χρόνια με καιρούς... πάλι δικά μας θάναι...

Ο Ιωάννης Χριστιανός έφθασε μετά περιπετειώδες ταξίδι εις την Βενετίαν. Έκει έγνωρίσθη με φιλέλληνα και ένθουσιώδη Γερμανόν άξιωματικόν. Έν συνεχεία, ο Ιωάννης μετά του Γερμανού άξιωματικού και της θαλαμηπόλου Ειρήνης μετέβη εις την Βιέννην. Έκει άπέθανεν η Ειρήνη και εκεί ο Ιωάννης έγνωρίσθη με τον στρατιωτικόν κόσμον της Βιέννης, τον όποιον κατέκτησε με την στρατιωτικήν του μόρφωσην, τον ισχυρό του χαρακτήρα, τον έπιδέξιον χειρισμόν της σπάθης, και τό ήγεμονικό του παράστημα. Ο

Ιωάννης, ο υιός του Κωνσταντίνου Παλαιολόγου, ζητούσε πολεμικάς περιπετείας. Έπειδή όμως ο τότε βασιλεύς της Γερμανίας Φρειδερίκος ο Γ΄ απέφευγε τους πολέμους, ο Ιωάννης έζήτησε πολεμικήν δράσιν εις την Γαλλίαν, όπου ο βασιλεύς Κάρολος ήγωνίζετο έναντίον των Άγγλων. Ο Ιωάννης κατατάσσεται ως άξιωματικός του ίππικού της φρουράς του βασιλέως. Εις μίαν μάχην μεταξύ Άγγλίας και Γαλλίας τό 1459 και εις κρίσιμον στιγμήν, ο Ιωάννης προτείνει σχέδιον κυκλωτικής κινήσεως. Η μάχη έκερδήθη. Ο βασιλεύς τον προσλαμβάνει ύπασπιστήν του και τον προάγει εις ταγματάρχην. Ούτω ο Ιωάννης εισέρχεται εις την αύλην του βασιλέως της Γαλλίας Καρόλου.

Ο Άγγλο-Γαλλικός πόλεμος έτελείωσε και η Γαλλία συνήψε συμμαχίαν με τό ισχυρό τότε κατά θάλασσαν Ηνωμένον Βασίλειον της Νορβηγίας και Δανίας. Ο βασιλεύς της Δανίας έπεσκέφθη τό Παρίσι και εις μίαν δεξίωσιν ένώρισε τον Ιωάννην. Του έκαμε ιδιαίτεραν έντύπωσιν τό ότι, τόσον νέος έφερε τον βαθμόν του ταγματάρχου. Και του είπεν: «Ο Δανικός στρατός θα ήτο εύτυχής να είχεν ένα άξιωματικόν της άξίας σας, ταγματάρχα». Ο Ιωάννης, κολακευόμενος, του άπήντησε: «Και εγώ θα ήμουν εύτυχής να ύπηρετήσω τον σύμμαχον στρατόν της Δανείας, Μεγαλειότατε». Τότε ο βασιλεύς του έπρότεινε να παραιτηθή και να μεταβή εις την Δανίαν. Ο Ιωάννης του είπεν: «Όχι χωρίς την άδειαν του βασιλέως των Γάλλων, εις τον όποιον όφείλω εύγνωμοσύνην». Ο Δανός βασιλεύς έζήτησε από τον Κάρολον την άδειαν, την όποιαν ουτός έδωσε. Και έντός όλίγων ήμερών ο Ιωάννης με τον βασιλέα της Δανίας μετακόμισεν εις νέον τόπον.

Ταχέως ο Ιωάννης έγινε τό καύχημα του Δανικού στρατού και τό ίνδαλμα του βασιλικού ζεύγους. Έστάλη επί κεφαλής στρατού εις την πρωτεύουσαν της Σουηδίας, διά να καθυποτάξη τους Σουηδούς έπαναστάτας. Έπέτυχεν εις την άποστολήν του και άνηγόρευσε τον βασιλέα του, βασιλέα Σουηδίας και Γοθθίας.

Ο βασιλεύς, άντικρύζων τον Ιωάννην που έπέστρεψε νικητής, έσυρε την βασιλικήν του σπάθην, περιέζωσεν αυτήν εις την μέσην του Ιωάννου και τον ώνόμασε στρατηγόν του Ηνωμένου Βασιλείου. Έγιναν δέ προς τιμήν του και έορταί. Η μονογενής κόρη του βασιλέως της Δανίας, Μαρία όνόματι, άγάπησε τον Ιωάννην. Ο βασιλεύς, προς άποφυγήν σκνδάλου, έσκέφθη, με λύπην του, να άπομακρύνη τον Ιωάννην από τα άνάκτορα.

Πρό της άπομακρύνσεως, ο βασιλεύς έζήτησεν από τον Ιωάννην να του είπη λεπτομερείας της καταγωγής του και γενικώς διά την πορείαν της ζωής του. Ο Ιωάννης άπήντησεν: «Μεγαλειότατε, λυπούμαι, αλλά όρκος ίερός με αναγκάζει και με δεσμεύει να μη φανερώσω τίνος υιός είμαι». Τότε ήτο 29 έτών. Ο βασιλεύς έκπληκτος και θυμωμένος λέγει: «Ούτε και εις έμέ, που σε άνέδειξα; Και σε πήρα στο σπίτι μου, σαν παιδί μου; Μήπως τό μυστικό είναι τέτοιο που σε κάνει να ντρέπεσαι για την καταγωγήν

σου;». «Κάθε άλλο», άπαντά ό υιός του Κωνσταντίνου Παλαιολόγου. «Άπεναντίας ύπερηφανεύομαι διά τους γονείς μου και τους προγόνους μου».

Η περιέργεια του Δανού βασιλέως έχει έξαφθή εις τό έπακρον. Όρκίζεται εις τό ξίφος του ότι δέν θα άποκαλύψη τό μυστικόν του στρατηγού του, όποιο και άν είναι. Ό Ιωάννης πείθεται. Δίδει τό έγκόλπιον εις τόν βασιλέα λέγων: «Έδω είναι γραμμένη ή καταγωγή μου». Ό Δανός βασιλεύς διαβάξει τό ιδίόχειρον σημείωμα της Αύτοκρατειρας μητρός του «Ιωάννης Χριστιανός». Έκπληκτος και με άκράτητον συγκίνησιν άγκαλιάζει τόν Ιωάννην και του λέγει: «Συ είσαι ό μικρός υιός του ένδόξου εκείνου Αύτοκράτορος; Συ είσαι ό πρίγκηψ και διάδοχος της Βυζαντινής Αύτοκρατορίας; Διατι άπέκρυπτες τουτο επί τόσα έτη;».

Ό Ιωάννης διηγείται πρός τόν βασιλέα την ζωήν του και τόν ιερών πρός την μητέρα του όρκον. Μετ' όλίγας ήμέρας ό βασιλεύς άνήγγειλεν εις τόν λαόν τους γάμους του Ιωάννου Χριστιανού Παλαιολόγου μετά της κόρης του Μαρίας και την άνάρρησιν αυτου εις τόν Δανικόν θρόνον. Απόγονος του Ιωάννου Παλαιολόγου ήτο και ό βασιλεύς της Ελλάδος Γεώργιος ό Α'.

Ό Δανός ιστορικός Λόγκβορν, ό Γερμανός τοιοϋτος Ντοϋργκεν και οι ήμέτεροι Γιαλαμάς, Σγάτζος και Τριανταφύλλου, κατόπιν έρευνών, καταλήγουν ότι ή βασιλική οικογένεια της Ελλάδος εκ των Βυζαντινών Αύτοκρατόρων έχει την προέλευσιν.

Όταν εις τας 3 Ιουνίου του 1863, ό ήρωϊκός πυρπολητής Κανάρης πρόσφερε τό Στέμμα εις τόν πρίγκηπα της Δανίας Γεώργιον, δέν έν γνώριζεν ότι ή μοίρα της φυλής ξανάδιδε τό Στέμμα της Ελλάδος εις έναν πρίγκηπα μίας μακρινής χώρας, εις τό αίμα του όποιου έρρεε τό αίμα των Έλλήνων Βυζαντινών Αύτοκρατόρων!



### Άπό τό Μέγα Γερωνικόν

Όταν μάθει ό άνθρωπος να μέμφεται τόν έαυτό του, όπου κι' άν βρθεϊ, έχει δύναμη να ύπομένει, έλεγε συχνά ό όσιος Ποιμίν.

Και άλλοτε πάλι:

Γιά να νοιώσει καλά τό γραφικό ρητό, «πάντα καθαρά τοίς καθαροίς» πρέπει να αισθάνεται ό άνθρωπος τόν έαυτό του χειρότερο από όλα τά κτίσματα.

Πώς μπορώ να νοιώσω τόν έαυτό μου χειρότερο από τό φονιά; ρώτησε κάποιος άδελφός.

Όταν ειπής στο λογισμό σου, έξήγησε ό Γέρον, πώς αυτός έκανε μόνο αυτήν την άμαρτία, ένω έγω σκοτώνω κάθε μέρα συνανθρώπους μου με την προαίρεση.

## Η «Παρεξηγημένη» Βυζαντινή Μουσική

Άπό τόν Γεώργιο Καρρά, Συντάκτη της «Orthodox Heritage»

Ένα πρωϊ, λοιπόν, ξυπνάς σε κάποια γωνειά της Άμερικης με διάθεση να βουτήξεις στον έαυτό σου... Αυτό που λέμε έσωτερική αναζήτηση ή έστω ανάγκη για περισυλλογή. Άποφασίζεις λοιπόν να πās στην Έκκλησία, πιστεύοντας ότι τό κλίμα της μπορεί να σε προδιαθέσει προκειμένου να τό κάνεις αυτό πιο εύκολα. Πές, ως ποϋμε, ότι ή μέρα που πήρες την άπόφαση είναι Κυριακή, όποτε είναι παρα πάνω από βέβαιο ότι άν θα φτάσεις στην Έκκλησία πριν τις 10 – 10:30, θα πέσεις πάνω σε Λειτουργία... Λοιπόν τό κάνεις. Δέν ξέρεις όμως τι σε περιμένει...

Πλησιάζεις στα σκαλιά και ήδη από τά ήχεία άκοϋς κάποιοι να καυγαδίζουν στα μεγάφωνα... μεγαλοφώνως... σε τύπο χορωδίας... και άκολουθούμενοι από αυτό τό σατανικό άρμόνιο... Μόνο που μέσα στην μεγάλη φασαρία δέν καταλαβαίνεις τι λένε... Έλληνικά είναι αυτά; Άραμαϊκά; Έβραϊκά; Άλλά μάλλον όχι... Ποϋ και ποϋ πιάνεις κανένα Έλληνικό. Μπαίνεις μέσα άνήσυχος να δεις τι έχει συμβει έν ώρα Λειτουργίας στο ναό κι εκεί είναι που διαπιστώνεις ότι δέ συμβαίνει τίποτε περισσότερο από μερικους κύριους και κυρίες που προσπαθούν... πάση θυσία... να «ψάλλουν»...

Κι έδω αρχίζεις να αναρωτιέσαι: Μα καλά κανεις δέν τους άκούει; Πώς μπορουν να άντέξουν μέχρι τό τέλος της Λειτουργίας όσοι μπαίνουν; Νιαουρίσματα, κορώνες, κορδέλες, μουρμουρητά που δέ βγάζεις άκρη τι λένε, θεατρικές κινήσεις σα να βρίσκονται σε πάλκο κι ένα ύφος... χιλίων καρδινάλιων...

Δέν είναι όλοι βέβαιο. Άσφαλώς δέν είναι όλοι οι ψάλτες έτσι. Είναι όμως πολλοί αυτοί που είναι έτσι. Τελικά ύπάρχει κάποια λύση στο πρόβλημα; Πώς είναι δυνατό αυτή ή τόσο δύσκολη και τόσο όμορφη τέχνη της βυζαντινής μουσικής να μην έχει κάποια προστασία, κάποια ύποστήριξη έστω από τους μουσικούς!

Στ' αλήθεια, δέ θα άναφερθώ τόσο στο θέμα των φωνητικών ικανοτήτων. Υπάρχουν άνθρωποι στα ψαλτήρια που δέν έχουν ιδιαίτερες φωνητικές ικανότητες, έχουν όμως μεράκι γι' αυτό που κάνουν, δέν τό κάνουν για επίδειξη, δέν άντιμετωπίζουν τό ψαλτήρι ως σκηνη θεάτρου, ούτε κρυφοκοιτάζουν στο έκκλησιασμα για να δουν άν τους παρακολουθούν κι' άν τους θαυμάζουν. Ότι ψάλλουν, έστω τό λίγο που ξέρουν, άν είναι έμπειρικοί, τό λένε με την καρδιά τους κι' αυτό μετρά. Γιατι αυτό είναι που συμπαρασύρει τόν κόσμο, όταν τελικά άποφασίζει να πάει μία μέρα στην Έκκλησία, για να προσευχηθει ή να προσεγγίσει λίγο περισσότερο την ψυχή του.

Αυτό που πιστεύω ότι χρειάζεται σήμερα, ώστε να άκουσσει ή βυζαντινή μουσική κατ' αρχήν από τό χωρο στον όποιο άνήκει, δηλαδή την Έκκλησία, όπως και της άξίζει, είναι να κατανοήσει ό ψάλτης, είτε ό γνώστης αυτής

είτε ἔστω ὁ ἔμπειρικός, ὅτι δὲν εἶναι τραγουδιστής. Δὲν κοπιάζει γιὰ τὴν προσωπική του ἀνάδειξη, ἀλλὰ γιὰ νὰ δημιουργήσει ἕνα κλίμα κατάνυξης, μέσα στὸ ὅποιο ὁ ἄνθρωπος ποὺ θὰ τὸν ἀκούει θὰ μπορεῖ νὰ μεταφέρεται μυστικά σὲ χώρους ἐσωτερικῆς ἀναζήτησης. Ἡ βυζαντινὴ μουσικὴ ἐξᾴλλου εἶναι μουσικὴ γραμμένη γιὰ τὸ Θεὸ καὶ ὅτι σχετίζεται μὲ Αὐτόν. Εἶναι ἕνας ἀπὸ τοὺς πιὸ εὐχάριστους τρόπους προσέγγισής Του. Ὅποιος λοιπὸν ἀναλαμβάνει νὰ ἐκτελέσει τὸ ἔργο αὐτὸ πρέπει κατ' ἀρχὴν νὰ ἐπιτρέψει στὸ ἐκκλησίασμα νὰ ἀκούει τὰ λόγια. Δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ τὰ μασάει ἢ νὰ τὰ μουρμουρᾷ ἢ νὰ τὰ νιαουρίζει ἔνρινα καὶ κανεὶς νὰ μὴν καταλαβαίνει τίποτα. Οὔτε χρειάζεται νὰ ἐπιδεικνύει φωνητικὲς ἰκανότητες μὲ δίλεπτες κορῶνες, τίς περισσότερες φορές φάλτσες, ἀφοῦ γίνονται πρωῖ-πρωῖ, ὅταν ὁ λαϊμὸς δὲν ἔχει ἀκόμα ἀνοίξει καὶ σὲ τόνους ποὺ οὔτε ὁ Παβάρotti δὲ θὰ ἐπιχειροῦσε. Ὅλα αὐτὰ κουράζουν τὸν κόσμον καὶ καταστρέφουν τὴ γλυκύτητα καὶ τὸ νόημα τῆς βυζαντινῆς μουσικῆς.

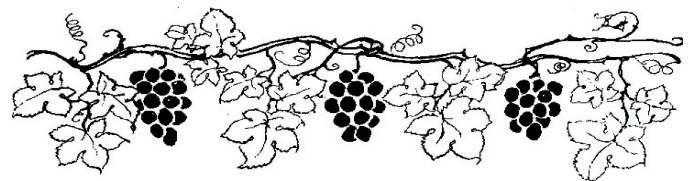
Πέραν ὅμως ἀπὸ αὐτὸ, ἡ βυζαντινὴ μουσικὴ εἶναι μία τέχνη. Μία μουσικὴ ἀνώτερη σὲ δυσκολία σὲ σχέση μὲ κάθε ἄλλη γιὰ τὴν ἐκμάθησή της, ἀλλὰ καὶ γι' αὐτὸ περισσότερο εὐέλικτη στοὺς ἤχους ποὺ μπορεῖ νὰ παράγει, μέσω τοῦ πολυτεμαχισμοῦ τῶν διαστημάτων τῶν κλιμάκων ποὺ διαθέτει. Ἦχους ποὺ συχνὰ ξαφνιάζουν τὸ αὐτὶ ποὺ δὲν εἶναι ἐξοικειωμένο μὲ αὐτήν.

Τὸ θέμα εἶναι ἀρκετὰ μεγάλο. Τὸ εἶδος αὐτὸ τῆς μουσικῆς πρέπει νὰ βγεῖ μπροστὰ καὶ νὰ ἀκουστεῖ σὲ εὐρύτερο κοινὸ ἀπὸ αὐτὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ νὰ πάρει τὴ θέση ποὺ πραγματικά της ἀξίζει. Καὶ γιὰ αὐτὸν τὸν λόγο θὰ ἀναφερθῶ σὲ λίγες λεπτομέρειες ποὺ ἴσως δὲν εἶναι καὶ τόσο γνωστὲς σὲ ὅλους μας.

Ἡ βυζαντινὴ μουσικὴ εἶναι ἡ θρησκευτικὴ μουσικὴ τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας ποὺ καλλιεργήθηκε ἀπὸ τοὺς χριστιανικοὺς πληθυσμοὺς στὴν Ἀνατολικὴ Ρωμαϊκὴ (Βυζαντινὴ) Αὐτοκρατορία. Χρησιμοποιεῖ ὡς κλίμακες ὀκτώ (8) ἤχους (τρόπους), οἱ ὁποῖοι ὑποδιαιροῦνται σὲ τέσσερις πρώτους καὶ τέσσερις πλάγιους. Ἀναπτύχθηκε μονοφωνικά καὶ χωρὶς ὀργανικὴ συνοδεία, ἐπειδὴ ἡ χρῆση τῶν ὀργάνων ἦταν ἀπὸ πολὺ νωρὶς ἀπαγορευμένη στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία γιὰ δογματικούς λόγους. Κατὰ τὸν 8<sup>ον</sup> αἰῶνα, ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός, ἀναπτύσσοντας τὴν πρὸ αὐτοῦ μουσικὴ γραφὴ, καθιερώνει τὴ λεγόμενη ἀγγιστροειδῆ συμβολικὴ παρασημαντικὴ, ἡ ὁποία ἀποτελεῖ ἀπλούστευση τῆς προηγουμένης. Ἐπίσης κωδικοποίησε τὸ λειτουργικὸ μέλος καὶ προσέθεσε τέσσερις (4) νέους ἤχους στοὺς τέσσερις ἀρχικούς. Ὁ Ἰωάννης ὁ Κουκουζέλης, φημισμένος βυζαντινὸς μαῖστωρ τῶν ἀρχῶν τοῦ 13<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνα, ἐπεξηγεῖ περαιτέρω τὴ μουσικὴ σημειογραφία, ἡ ὁποία ἀποτελεῖ τὴ λεγόμενη παλαιὰ βυζαντινὴ μουσικὴ σημειογραφία καὶ ἡ ὁποία (ὅπως καὶ ἡ προηγούμενη) ἀποτελοῦσε ἕνα στενογραφικὸ σύστημα μουσικῆς γραφῆς. Οἱ φθόγγοι τῆς βυζαντινῆς μουσικῆς (πα, βου, γα, δι, κα,

ζω, νη) καθιερώθηκαν στὶς ἀρχὲς τοῦ 19<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνα ἀπὸ τὸν Πατριάρχη Χρῦσανθο, ὁ ὁποῖος ἐκσυγχρόνισε τὴ βυζαντινὴ μουσικὴ στὴ μορφή ποὺ ἀκούγεται σήμερον στὶς ὀρθόδοξες ἐκκλησίες. Προσπάθειες ποὺ ἔγιναν στὶς τελευταῖες δεκαετίες τοῦ 19<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνα γιὰ εἰσαγωγή καὶ καλλιέργεια τῆς πολυφωνικῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς μουσικῆς, κυρίως μὲ μεταγραφή ὕμνων ἀπὸ τὴν ὀρθόδοξη ρωσικὴ ἐκκλησία, δὲν εὐδοκίμησαν καὶ περιορίστηκαν σὲ ὅλη τὴ διάρκεια τοῦ 20<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνα σὲ λίγες ἐκκλησίες τοῦ ἑλλαδικοῦ χώρου.

Αὐτὴ, λοιπὸν, εἶναι ἡ βυζαντινὴ μουσικὴ. Καὶ αὐτὴν πρέπει νὰ σεβαστοῦμε καὶ ὀφείλουμε νὰ τὴν καλλιεργήσουμε ἔτσι ὅπως ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλοι οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας θὰ ἀπαιτοῦσαν ἀπὸ ὅλους μας!



### Γιὰ τὸ 1940, Ἀπὸ τὸ Στόμα τῶν Ξένων

**Κ**ανεὶς δὲν τολμοῦσε νὰ προεῖπη, ὅτι οἱ Ἕλληνες ποὺ 500 χρόνια π.Χ. εἶχαν ρίξει στὴν θάλασσα τοὺς παντοκράτορες Πέρσες, θὰ ἐπαναλάμβαναν κατὰ τὸ 1940 αὐτὸ τὸ κατόρθωμα. Καὶ ὅμως οἱ Ἕλληνες κατέπληξαν τὸν κόσμον μὲ ἕνα νέο Μαραθῶνα.

*ΕΠΙΘΕΩΡΗΣΗ, Γκάβελγκαντε*

**Π**ρώτη ἡ Ἑλλάς μᾶς ἐδίδαξε πὼς οἱ ἐλεύθεροι ἄνθρωποι μποροῦν νὰ εἶναι γενναῖοι, καὶ ὅτι καμιά ἡττα δὲν εἶναι παντοτινὴ. Ὁ μικρὸς αὐτὸς λαὸς ἀπεδείχθη ἀντάξιος τῆς ἱστορίας του.

*ΑΛΜΠΙΕΡΤ ΚΑΜΥ*

**Ἡ** χώρα μας, στὴν ὁποία τιμᾶται ἰδιαίτερος ἡ ἀνδρεία, Ἐπαρακολουθεῖ μὲ θαυμασμὸ τὸν ἀγῶνα τῶν Ἑλλήνων στὴν Ἀλβανία. Μᾶς συγκινεῖ τόσο πολὺ ὥστε παραμερίζοντας κάθε ἄλλο αἶσθημα φωνάζουμε: ΖΗΤΩ Η ΕΛΛΑΣ.

*ΗΜΕΡΑ, Ταπωνικὴ ἔφημερίδα 7 Δεκεμβρίου 1940.*

**Ἐ**πολεμήσατε ἄοπλοι ἐναντίον ἐνόπλων καὶ ἐνίκησατε. Μικροὶ ἐναντίον μεγάλων καὶ ἐπικρατήσατε. Δὲν ἦταν δυνατόν νὰ γίνῃ ἀλλιῶς γιατί εἴσθε Ἕλληνες. Ὡς Ρῶσοι καὶ ὡς ἄνθρωποι σᾶς εἴμαστε εὐγνώμονες, γιατί χάρη στὶς δικές σας θυσίες κερδίσαμε τὸν ἀπαιτούμενο καιρὸ νὰ προετοιμάσουμε τὴν ἄμυνά μας. Ἕλληνες, σᾶς εὐγνωμονοῦμε.

*ΡΑΔΙΟΦΩΝΙΚΟΣ ΣΤΑΘΜΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΜΟΣΧΑΣ*

**Ο** θαρραλέος ἀγῶνας αὐτοῦ τοῦ λαοῦ τοῦ σχετικὰ μικροῦ ἔθνους, γιὰ τὸ δικαίωμα νὰ ζεῖ χωρὶς ἐπεμβάσεις ἀπὸ δικτατορικὰ ἔθνη προκαλεῖ σεβασμὸ καὶ θαυμασμὸ ὄλων τῶν λαῶν ποὺ ἀγαποῦν τὴν ἐλευθερία.

*ΔΙΑΚΥΡΗΣΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΑΝΙΚΗΣ ΓΕΡΟΥΣΙΑΣ*

*3 Ἀπριλίου 1941*

## THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS WITH THE THEOTOKOS

*By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, from his book "Saint Gregory Palamas as a Hagiorite"*

Every saint loves the Panagia. Sainthood is not understood without this Theotokophilia. It occurs because the saints, after tasting the love of God, communing of the Body and Blood of Christ, and experiencing the gifts of the incarnation of Christ, feel the need to give thanks also to that person who was the cause of this great joy. It is well known that the saints are very sensitive and are therefore grateful for even the smallest gifts which they receive, and much more for the great gift of the deification of human nature, which came about in the womb of the Theotokos. She gave her flesh to the Son and Word of God for his incarnation.

This is also the case with St. Gregory Palamas. However, the saint felt love for the Panagia also for other reasons. He was granted to see her in his life, he was her protégé. We shall give some details to demonstrate this truth, as his biographer and fellow monk, Philotheos Kokkinos, Patriarch of Constantinople, describes them.

The first indication is the fact that from an early age he was given into the protection of the Theotokos by his father. Before his father died, St. Gregory's mother asked him to ask the emperor to protect his children. That saintly man not only did not accept her words, but rebuked her in a way and said to her: "I do not leave my children to some earthly rulers, but I leave my children to this Mistress of all, the mother of the king of heaven." And indeed at the time when he said these things he was looking at the icon of the Theotokos which was in front of him. St. Philotheos says in his biography of St. Gregory that the words of his holy father came true, because the Theotokos herself persuaded the emperor to take care of the orphan children, but also later "she was seen to be their protectress and guide, and in every way the saviour of both their souls and their bodies."

The second circumstance which shows that his father's prophetic words were actually fulfilled and the Theotokos was a wonderful sponsor, governess and guide, came from the period of his studies. At the beginning of his studies the saint had difficulty in memorizing. Then he placed a restriction on himself not to come near the books and not to begin reading without first having knelt three times before the icon of the Theotokos, saying a prayer at the same time. When he did this work every day he succeeded very easily in memorizing and reciting the lessons. But if he sometimes forgot to follow this rule, "even the recitation failed right away." At the same time, as St. Philotheos says, the Panagia persuaded the emperor to be the guardian of the children and to assume all their per-

sonal expenses. Furthermore the emperor showed particular sympathy, for he invited them to come to see him and talked with them in a kind and loving way.

The third sign is from the period of his asceticism on Mount Athos. Immediately after he came to the Holy Mountain he gave himself over with great zeal to asceticism, fasting, vigil and unceasing prayer. It is significant, according to the information of St. Philotheos Kokkinos, that he prayed unceasingly to the Theotokos. He prayed day and night to God, projecting the Mother of God "as guide, protector and mediator, all the time bringing before his eyes her aid and her countenance, with words and prayers and noetic movements, and pondering the way of obedience with her guidance." So in the first two years the saint was praying constantly to God, with the Panagia as his guide and mediator. The prayer which he was saying at that time was "enlighten my darkness."

During a great stillness, while his nous had turned inward and to God, John the Evangelist appeared to him, not in a dream, but in a vision, and assured him that he had been sent "as a messenger from the Queen beyond," to find out why he was constantly praying: "enlighten my darkness, enlighten my darkness." St. Gregory replied that, since he is a passionate man, he was praying to be enlightened by God to be conformed to His saving will. Then John the Evangelist said: "Do not be afraid, do not doubt... the Queen of all is giving the order through us: 'I myself will be your help'." And when again St. Gregory asked when the Theotokos would be his help and ally, in the present or future life, then the Evangelist replied: "both before and now, in both the present and the future."

This appearance of St. John the Evangelist, sent by the Most Holy Theotokos, was revealed by St. Gregory himself years later to his fellow-monk Dorotheos, later Metropolitan of Thessaloniki. It is characteristic that the Theotokos heard the prayer and assured him that, just as long ago, so also now and in the future, she would be his helper and defender, and moreover, that she was filling him with divine gifts.

The fourth sign is the revelation which the Theotokos herself made to St. Gregory. It was at the time when he had returned to the Lavra, but he was staying at St. Sabbas frontisterion outside the Monastery of the Great Lavra. He once prayed for himself and his escort to the Panagia, "the usual governor and deliverer," that both their guidance and their journey toward God might be unimpeded, but also that they might have what they needed for their nourishment, in order not to be very much occupied with collecting supplies and neglect prayer. Then the Panagia, the Queen of all, appeared in a vision, "dressed modestly and purely," just as the holy icons present her. Many saints had appeared and were following her. Then the Theotokos turned and gave them the order to serve St. Gregory and his escort: "From now on you are to be stewards and distributors of the necessities for Gregory and his escort."

And St. Gregory was assured that from then on “all that was necessary for our bodily needs was offered us without effort wherever we happened to be.”

From what we have said it is clear that St. Gregory Palamas had a close relationship and communion with the Theotokos. All the things that he writes about her, which we shall see further on, are obviously not dry, intellectual thoughts and reasoning conjectures, but experiences of the Panagia. This explains his great love for her. We can also see the progressive manifestation and revelation of the Theotokos. At first, through his father’s prayer, she took up his protection. Then she showed him clearly that he must trust in her, for she would protect him throughout his studies. Then, through John the Evangelist, she assured him that she would be his helper and protector, and finally she herself was revealed personally. Throughout his life the saint was convinced that he had the protection and help of the Theotokos, and therefore he struggled with strength and courage, expounded the theology of the Church in an orthodox way and defeated the heresies of his time.



### MORE... FORSAKEN ROOTS IN THE UNITED STATES

In 1782, the United States Congress voted this resolution: “The Congress of the United States recommends and approves the Holy Bible for use in all schools.”

Of the first 108 universities founded in America, 106 were distinctly Christian, including the first, Harvard University, chartered in 1636. In the original Harvard Student Handbook, rule number 1 was that students seeking entrance must know Latin and Greek so that they could study the scriptures: “Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life, John 17:3; and therefore to lay Jesus Christ as the only foundation for our children to follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments.

James Madison, the primary author of the Constitution of the United States, said this: “We have staked the whole future of our new nation not upon the power of government; far from it. We have staked the future of all our political constitutions upon the capacity of each of ourselves to govern ourselves according to the moral principles of the Ten Commandments.”

Today, we are asking God to bless America. But, how can He bless a Nation that has departed so far from Him? Prior to September 11, He was not welcome in America.

## FORGOTTEN CHRISTIANS OF THE EAST

By Theodore G. Karakostas, *Orthodox Christian News Service*, September 16, 2001

The attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington are a reminder of the existence of evil in the world. It is very clear that Islamic extremism has made its way to America and Europe. In 1995, there were a series of bombings in France related to the civil war in Algeria between the military government and Fundamentalists.

Yet, for the past 1,400 years, Eastern Christians have lived with, endured, and coped under Sharia (Islamic law). The first Islamic conquests took place during the last decade of the rule of Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610-641). Syria, Egypt, and Palestine were lost to Christianity. Christian leaders such as Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem made deals with Caliph Omar for the protection of his flock and of Christendom’s Holy places.

Despite Islam’s claim of tolerance, Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Coptic, and other Eastern Christians found themselves under terrible conditions. While not immediately forced to convert, Christians were forced to submit and to accept their new rulers as their masters. Economic pressures and discrimination contributed to the eventual conversion of millions of Christians to Islam.

The losses of Eastern Christianity continued following the invasions of Byzantium that were begun by the Seljuk Turks in August 1071. Steadily, Greek Christians were converted to Islam and adopted Turkish and Arabic as their languages. In 1453, Sultan Mehmed II achieved one of Islam’s most notorious conquests when he conquered Constantinople and defeated the Christian Empire’s last Emperor Constantine Paleologos.

Europe eventually made peace with the Sultan at the expense of Christian Greeks, Serbs, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, and Armenians. Christian boys were kidnapped and taken to the Janissaries for conversion to Islam and political indoctrination. Women were taken into harems, churches were converted into mosques and Christians were forced to acknowledge the superiority of their rulers. “Zakat,” a special tax was imposed on Christians. Disputes between Christians and Muslims were heard in Islamic Courts.

At the dawn of the twentieth Century, there were still millions of Christians in the Turkish Ottoman Empire. In 1915, the Young Turks began a process of slaughtering one and a half million Armenian Christians. Furthermore, the Greeks of Pontus and Asia Minor were likewise targeted for extermination.

In 1919, the Greek Army liberated the ancient city of Smyrna. Smyrna is one of the seven Churches that St. John wrote to in the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible. The



Greek and Armenian Christians who sought their right to self determination were denied not only by Turkish Muslims such as Muftapha Kemal and Nouredin Pasha, but by the western powers looking to protect their economic and geo-strategic interests at the expense of the Eastern Churches. In September 1922, the Metropolitan of Smyrna, Chrysostomos was butchered and thrown into the sea. French soldiers who witnessed this horror did not intervene.

In fact, the French, Italians, British, and Americans armed the Turks while denying the Greek army the means to effectively fight Kemal's forces. In 1923, Asia Minor was ethnically cleansed when over one million Greeks were expelled upon the orders of Mustapha Kemal. The region where the Seven Ecumenical Councils took place was cleansed of Christianity.

On September 6, 1955 the Turkish government (now secular but as fanatical and anti-Christian as its predecessors) sponsored a vicious pogrom against the Greeks of Constantinople. Most Greeks fled the former Christian Capital and there are only 2,500 left today. Over the past eight years, there have been four bombings of the Ecumenical Patriarchate by fundamentalist extremists. There is no coverage of this in western media just as the slaughter of Turkey's Christian populations is virtually unknown by most westerners.

Since 1984, over two million Christians in the Sudan have been killed in genocidal assaults by the country's Fundamentalist regime. There have been wide reports that black Christians are literally slaves who are purchased like property, owned, and then sold. Yet, the United States, Europe, NATO, and CNN have been rather quiet.

In Egypt, the ancient Coptic Church has been suffering for centuries. Christians are discriminated against, beaten, terrorized, and murdered while their Churches are desecrated and destroyed. When Fundamentalists embarked on a terror campaign against western tourists a few years ago, these attacks were widely reported. The Copts were not mentioned.

Armenian Christians have been fighting for their survival in Nagorno Karabakh against Azerbaijan since 1988. The Armenians were almost annihilated as a result of the Turkish Genocide, yet western companies are looking to placate Turkey by lobbying to prevent recognition by the United States of the Armenian genocide and are interested in oil in areas like Azerbaijan which leads them to oppose the humanitarian interests of Armenia.

The last decade has been a painful one for Eastern Orthodox Christians. The 1990's began happily enough with the collapse of Communism and the liberation of Orthodox Churches in Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia. However, when Serbs reacted to the revival of fascism in Croatia and of Islamic Fundamentalism in Bosnia, and proceeded to defend themselves they were condemned by the entire world.

It was during the Bosnian war that the Clinton administration chose to allow mass murderers like Osama Bin Laden, Afghanistan, Saudia Arabia, and Turkey to invade the Balkans to fight the Serbs who were seeking to fulfill their right to self determination. The madness of the West's policy in the Balkans reached its apogee when it declared war on Christian Serbia in 1999 and NATO proceeded to bomb not only military targets but civilian targets such as monasteries, hospitals, and trains. Furthermore, the use of depleted uranium by NATO has been the cause of cancer and leukemia among soldiers and civilians.

In December 1998, the Clinton administration announced it would not bomb Iraq during the month of Ramadan when Muslims fast. This was despite claims by the administration that Baghdad was developing weapons of mass destruction. Yet on Orthodox Easter 1999, NATO bombs continued to fall on Serbia without interruption.

It must be noted that Osama Bin Laden, the architect of mass murder and human suffering had established a base in Albania, Bosnia (whose government is said to have given him a passport) and NATO-occupied Kosovo. In fact, the detaching of Kosovo from Serbia by NATO is the West's most recent sacrifice of Eastern Christianity.

It should be noted that there is tolerance for Christianity in the Islamic world. Iran has a large Armenian community and allows its Christians to be elected to Parliament and to be sworn in on a Bible. Syria has long been known for its tolerance of Christianity. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch is located in Damascus and has a flock of at least half a million or so. Iraq likewise tolerates its Christian communities. In Palestine, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate recently received the support of the Palestinian leadership against the intervention of the Israelis in its recent election.

Over the last several years, there have been various anti-Orthodox commentaries in the western media. The Serbs in particular have been demonized. Some writers have accused Greece of being "Muslim hating." This is particularly bizarre in light of the history of suffering that Orthodox Christians have experienced.

The attack on the World Trade Center was an act of barbarism. Religion should not be confused with political extremism. Yet, barbaric acts like this by religious fanatics are routine for Eastern Christians struggling to survive in some Muslim countries. It is my fervent wish and hope that America will recognize the fanatical zealots and what they are capable of, and that America and Europe will finally not only acknowledge Eastern Christianity and its bloody experiences, but it will stop sacrificing the Eastern Churches and their flocks to the likes of Turkey, (which has a strong fundamentalist movement and an Islamic partner in government), Egypt, Bosnia, and others.

## APOPHTHEGMS BY ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAN, PART 16

*SOURCE: From the book "475 Aphophthegms by the God-Inspired St. Isaac the Syrian," pp. 71-74, published by Orthodox Kypseli, translated from the Greek by St. POIMEN Brotherhood.*

### 46<sup>th</sup> Lesson

454. When we become worthy of God's perfect love, we then attain the perfection of gifts from the Holy Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, etc.

455. We know that we have reached the stage of God's perfect love when, as we maintain constant memory of God, we feel great love towards Him, and from such great love our eyes pour tears. This is because whoever loves God is never short of tears.

456. It is a gift from God for someone to dedicate himself to Him and to conduct himself virtuously. When, however, we start thinking that we are doing God a favor by laboring on His behalf, God then rejects and dismisses us and we are then delivered to dishonorable passions.

457. It is quite apparent that we never really win in the various struggles that we engage; it is rather, our Lord Who wins through us and we are simply the recipients of the victory as a gift. It is for this reason that we must thank God for setting us apart from the world and enabling us to know the grace of His Immaculate Mysteries (i.e., the Holy Sacraments). Thus, we become protected from falling again into pride and the passions that bring us dishonor.

458. We must avoid all causes and motives of passions and instead to adhere and persist on our prayer rule and the frequent reception of Holy Communion until we spiritually mature.

459. When we avoid the causes for passions and, in the process, those who are unaware of our motives become scandalized, we are not responsible for their scandal. This is because nobody is able to serve God and, concurrently, enjoy the favor of all people.

460. Cleansing from passions results in the soul's health and the spiritual joy that we feel when we receive Holy Communion. We then are able to better concentrate on prayer and the study of our Lord's words.

### 47<sup>th</sup> Lesson

461. Nothing frees us from the demon of lust, just as we are equally unable to alone cure an ill person, no matter how much we attend to their needs.

462. He who has tasted the sweetness of hesychia (quiet and tranquility) avoids conversations with people.

463. Arsenios, run away, keep silent, remain quiet. And even if you believe that observing and conversing with brethren is beneficial for you, it is best that you withdraw from them as coinciding with them will not profit you.

464. If you wish to acquire love for your fellow man, then remove yourself away from him. Your heart will then burn

brightly with love towards him and you will see him as an angel of light. Do you want to be desired? For a few days, draw near to those who love you.

465. It is truly astonishing how much sweetness a soul experiences through the attentiveness on the Jesus Prayer and the study of Holy Scriptures which delight, bring joy and cleanse the soul. Only those who occupy their time with them are cognizant of the immense benefit.

466. Silence is the mystery of the future life; words, on the other hand, are the instrument of this world. Silence and prayer liken us to the angels.

467. Love, through the soul's health, can be acquired. The soul, however, can never become healthy unless she guards the Lord's commandments. The same way by which medication acts upon an ill body, God's commandments act upon an ill soul. The soul must fully gain her health before she becomes a dwelling of the Holy Trinity.

468. Some acquire the health of their soul through obedience to God's commandments and others through Divine Grace, as was the case for the thief on the cross.

469. Those who live by their flesh, they only attend to matters of the flesh and are unable to please God.

### 48<sup>th</sup> Lesson

470. Those with the old spirit and mind, in other words those who are full of passions, are incapable of walking in Christ's path. Their earthly spirit is God's enemy because it never subjugates itself to God.

471. A soul that has not defeated the passions will never have boldness during prayer.

472. We must ask with contrition for the forgiveness of our sins and the humility of our soul. If our soul is not healed from the illness of wickedness and malice, and thus acquire her natural health, it is impossible for her to desire spiritual gifts and virtues.

473. A blind person is unable to perceive and comprehend sunshine or the brightness of a diamond as well as a person who has his eyesight, no matter how much one attempts to explain it. Similarly, he who is capable of observing within himself God's glory and theoria and to delight in them with pleasure, he never asks others about them.

474. There is no perfection in this life. Where and how can perfection become apparent in this world when the sun of our souls finds himself among clouds and passions from sunrise to sunset? And where the weather at times is calm, fair and clear and at other times cloudy and dark? And where we sometimes have joy but other times sorrow and dejection? And he who thinks otherwise, that person resembles a wolf who never walks on the footsteps of the royal path.

475. A tomb is the true and incomparable Sabbath. Our entire humanity rests there, both our soul and our body. Our whole nature and existence rests there, ceasing to be impacted from every sorrow and evil attack.

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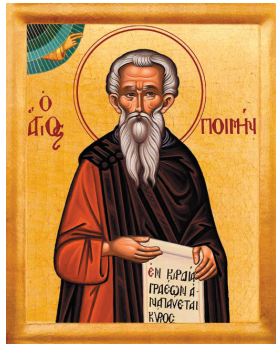
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## UNDOUBTEDLY VERY HARD TIMES ARE COMING

*From: "Orthodox America," The Disease of "Worldliness" vs. the  
Orthodox World-view by Fr. Alexey Young [edited for length]*

Christianity must become the content of the whole of life... We must illuminate all questions with Christianity; it cannot be limited within strict bounds. We must bring the Church to the life which is outside the church building. The Christian cannot close himself up in some kind of shell; he must be pained over the pains of others.

Seeing reality in this way (that is, being really aware of what is happening in the world and not closing his eyes to it as we in the free world so often do, insulated by our temporary freedom and prosperity) [we must speak] in a tone that is urgent and full of crisis constantly saying: The whole world is perishing; let us act, let us start being Christians right now!

With the help of our spiritual fathers, we must identify and root out of ourselves certain qualities that darken the soul, such as superficiality and worldliness, a fascination for that which is "fashionable" and "in," and also we must pull out the weeds of overcorrectness and cowardliness, if they are growing within the garden of our souls. We must wage unseen warfare on these inner vices and seek at all cost to replace these weeds with the flowers of virtues. Archbishop Averky said that we

must develop "moral heroism" -- something that we almost never talk about today -- and he reminded us that "the Orthodox Faith teaches how to construct life according to the demands of Christian perfection, whereas heterodoxy takes from Christianity only those things which are compatible with the conditions of contemporary cultural life."

We must understand that the culture around us is pounding in upon us; it has a certain rhythm, a certain message to give us, this message of self-worship, of relaxing, of letting go, of enjoying yourself, of giving up any thought of the other world, in various forms, whether in music, or in movies, television, or what is being taught in schools. We have to fight back by knowing just what the world is trying to do to us, and by formulating and communicating our Orthodox Christian response to it. With such an attitude -- a view of both the good things and the bad things in the world -- it is possible for us to have and to live an Orthodox worldview, that is, an Orthodox view on the whole of life, not just on narrow church subjects. One is Orthodox all the time, every day, in every situation of life, or one is not really Orthodox at all.

If we can achieve this, then Orthodoxy truly does indeed have a future--perhaps not a glorious future, for undoubtedly very hard times are coming as civilization continues to collapse and the forces of darkness increase. But it does have a future, a future in which many souls will yet be salvaged from the stormy seas of this life.

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

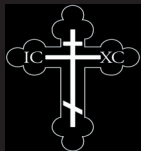
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## THE SHELL OF DEATH: CONCERNING HYPOCRISY

*By St. Nikolai Velimirovich (+1956)*

How beautifully Orthodox Christians in the Balkans decorate their Paschal eggs. They do it to increase the joy of Pascha and to make their guests happier. Sometimes the colored eggs are truly an art. However, if the colored eggs are left to stand too long, they become rotten inside and give off an unbearable odor, or in the end completely dry up. That is, even though beautiful on the outside, the colored shell holds within itself death.

More dreadful is Jesus' picture of the hypocrites who are like "whitewashed tombs, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." (Matthew 23:27) He tells us to "...take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in Heaven." (Matthew 6:1)

The righteousness which is beloved by God, as Jesus revealed on the Mount, is as follows: mercy, prayer, trust and faith in God as the only Master, not worrying about tomorrow, seeking before anything else the Kingdom of God, having faith that you shall receive from God that which you ask Him for, that you will find that which you seek, that you will open a closed door. It is also: not to judge with a sharp judgment and not to measure with a false measurement, so that it is not returned to you likewise; do not seek for the speck in your brother's eye while hypocritically hiding the beam in your own eye; doing unto your fellow man everything you would wish him to do unto you; not being afraid of the narrow but pure and holy path, which leads unto life, but taking flight from the smooth and wide path which leads to death; giving good fruits to God your Host, who planted you like a good tree; not becom-

ing proud of your great deeds, but doing everything "...according to the will of My Father Who is in Heaven;" fulfilling in deed all of Christ's words, and in that way building the house of your eternity as a wise man, who builds his house not on sand but on rock, so that neither flood waters, nor winds, nor storms can harm it. (Matthew 6:7)

The Pharisees, Scribes, and hypocrites, do everything the opposite of these Words and wisdom of God. When they give alms, they do it in meeting places and on the streets, and they don't do it for the glory of God, nor to help the poor, but only to be seen by men. When they pray to God, they pray on the streets, again, only to be seen by men. When they fast, they make their faces look sad, and unkempt, and pale, again so they can be seen by men. Alas, they do everything only to be seen by others, as allegedly being merciful, prayerful, and great fasters.

They do all this, and do it today, for two reasons: that they may receive from men glory and money. With God they do not even reckon, as if He doesn't even exist. In truth, hypocrites are ultimately godless men. Deceived people give them what they want, and that is their pay in full. From God, they have nothing to wait for, because they have not indebted Him with any of their deeds, but have only incurred His wrath. They have "drawn near to Me with their mouths, and with their lips honor Me, but their heart is far from Me." (Isaiah 29:13)

If they are not abiding by the will of God the Father, then they are abiding by the will of "the father of all lies." The father of all lies, the devil, taught them that it is normal, natural and reasonable to do so, and that others before them also did likewise and lived nicely, having received from men glory and riches. That is the trodden-down path of the world, and they should not go down that path, in spite of the world. They,

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wretched as they are, do not feel how much Satan has deceived them with such lies, and how much he has polluted and dried up their hearts that even angels of God turn their faces from the stench of their souls.

All their outward, fixed-up appearance is only a colored shell of death, a whitewashed tomb. When it comes to them that which we call death, alas, all that really comes to them is the confirmation and seal of their already long past, dead soul.

But you, do not be like the hypocrites, Christ taught the people. Do not be like the hypocrites when you give charity. "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." (Matthew 6:2,3) Do not be hypocrites when you pray to God. "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:5-13)

Do not be like the hypocrites when you fast. "But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:16-18) "For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light." (Mark 4:22)

God will reveal to you great secrets at a time when you do not expect it. The prophets and righteous knew this, but the Scribes and Pharisees did not, and still don't. The prophets and righteous feared God, and loved their own people, while the Pharisees and Scribes, the hypocrites, do not fear God, and hate their own people.

Jesus feels compassion for His people. To tears He feels compassion for them whom the Chief Priests and Rulers deceive, abuse, and take advantage of mercilessly. (Matthew 15: 32) In His previous sermon, Christ openly makes war against their

hypocrisy. (Mark 8:2)

As the Son of God dwelled amongst men, and time passed, He increased this war against hypocrisy, abasing it, and the hypocrisy of the religious rulers of that time, abasing them before their very faces, and in front of all His people. He never abased any sinners as much as He abased the hypocrites. Finally, Jesus' abasement of hypocrisy, near the end of His earthly stay, turned into dreadful thundering, which literally startled. It shouldn't surprise those who know, that Jesus did not speak to only one generation, the one during His time, but to all generations to the end of time. While He abased the Jewish hypocrites face to face, He abased all hypocrites of all times and all generations.

Why did Jesus strike so sharply and mercilessly specifically on hypocrisy? It is because hypocrisy is a Satanic lie, Satanic hypocrisy from the beginning; that is the weed that Satan has sown in all of Gods crops on the earth: in man's heart, in his home, in his wedlock, in his company of friends, in his people and nation, in politics and trade, in sadness and in joy, everywhere, in all ages and civilizations. Not one civilization succeeded in rooting out the weed of hypocrisy, but that weed rooted many of them out. If one civilization shone with glory outwardly, like the European and Japanese, that does not mean that they destroyed hypocrisy, but only that they hid it more skillfully underneath their shell on which was not written the name of Jesus Christ as it is written on Paschal eggs in the Balkans. Rather, theirs read: courtesy, manners, sophistication, and words the demons are not afraid of, and the weed of hypocrisy, unhindered, grows rampant.

Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, announced at the beginning two wars: against Satan, and against hypocrisy. The people loved Him, and honored Him with tremendous God-fearing respect, as their Savior. "For He taught them as One having authority, and not as the Scribes." (Matthew 7:29)

## THE GREAT CONTRIBUTION AND VALUE OF ORTHODOX HESYCHASM (\*)

*By Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos Vlachos, from his book "The Picture of the Modern World"*

It is well accepted among Orthodox theologians that sensual pleasure causes tremendous problems in the being of man, for all the tragic seeds of pain and death are hidden in the state of pleasure. When someone carries the cross of asceticism in Jesus Christ, he is freed from the tyranny of sensual pleasure. Therefore, the presence of pain in our life is beneficial, when we confront it with faith, patience, and in God. This implies that an intensive effort and a continuous struggle against our fallen human nature is required. We carry the seeds of tragedy within our existence. Man's fundamental problem is not social evil, but the corruption of human nature. So, we continuously struggle to transform mortal nature into a person according to Christ.

This transformation is achieved through Orthodox hesychasm, which aims at the transcendence of pleasure and pain. It is not an old-fashioned and ungrounded method, but rather a most applicable and modern act. Orthodox hesychasm is closely connected to the cure of man. Today, men seek therapy because they are possessed by the tragedy of sensual pleasure and pain. It is on this point that I see the greatest value of Orthodox spirituality, which differs clearly from any other spirituality of either the Western or the Eastern type.

The fact that the modern world is characterized by the experience of tragedy, related to the enjoyment of sensual pleasure and the experiencing of pain, and that today's man seeks redemption and cure and finds it in Orthodox hesychasm, is something clearly demonstrated by so many people who turn to Orthodox Theology in its authentic expression, both in Greece and in the West. The works of the neptic Fathers of the Church, the reading of the Philokalia, which, in its final form, was completed by St. Nicodemos the Athonite along with St. Makarios Notaras, Bishop of Corinth, spread the works of St. Symeon the new Theologian, of St. Gregory Palamas and many other saints. The study of the works of the 4th century Fathers, through the neptic-hesychastic teaching of the Church, all demonstrate this search by contemporary man. Therefore, we should not just look at the negative conditions, such as the tragedy of sensual pleasure and pain, but also look at the search for a cure and what Orthodox Theology has to offer.

There is still a huge traditional layer of Orthodox life in our people. Unfortunately, however, this layer is sometimes exploited by irresponsible and self-seeking individuals.

In observing contemporary church life, one feels that there are many Christians who, even if they do not have any sound

theological arguments, react against the scholasticism that has entered the sphere of Orthodoxy. Likewise, they react to the Vaticanization which is visible in church administration, to the moralism exhibited in the area of spiritual life, and to the ecumenistic view of matters of church life. They are unable to combine these with the true Orthodox church life, as lived by their ancestors, which they also read about it in the works of the Church Fathers. Many of these people belong to the Old Calendarists. It is essential that we offer Orthodox life in its authentic expression, so that we attribute a correct ontology to their reactions and prevent them from derailing to minor details. This is also necessary in relation to the great movement observed in the West towards Orthodox Theology and Orthodox church life.

I believe that this is the work of the great Fathers of the Church throughout the centuries, for they gave a theological interpretation of all ecclesiastical currents. If there was no St. Symeon the New Theologian in the 11th century, perhaps the views of Stephanos, Metropolitan of Nicomedia, would have prevailed. These were purely cerebral and, I would dare claim, scholastic views. But St. Symeon showed in his works that the basis and purpose of Orthodox church life is man's deification (theosis), which is achieved by the energy of the Holy Spirit and the vision of the Uncreated Light.

In the 14th century, if it were not for the beneficial presence of St. Gregory Palamas, hesychasm might have been considered a heretical deviation from genuine church life according to the Gospel. But St. Gregory Palamas presented authoritatively and clearly the whole theology of hesychasm, what man is, how his union with God is achieved, what deification is, and the relationship between noetic prayer and man's ontology and salvation.

Further on, if the towering figure of St. Nicodemos the Athonite had not dominated the 18th century, the sizeable movement of Athonite monks that reacted to the reforms and the secularism of Orthodox life, and expressed its reaction by refusing to have memorial services on Sunday, would have been considered a heresy. St. Nicodemos, however, demonstrated clearly, in all his writings, that the movement of the so-called Kollyvades was the genuine spirit of the Philokalia, which constitutes the very essence of Orthodox church life.

I believe that if in the beginning of this century, when the calendar problem emerged, there had been a great Father of our Church, such as St. Symeon the new Theologian, St. Gregory Palamas, St. Nicodemos the Athonite, then he would have proved that the popular reaction to the introduction of the new calendar was, in reality, a reaction to the introduction of alien views from the West, a reaction to the secularization of Orthodox Theology. Unfortunately, however, the issue was not viewed in this perspective and they made the mistake of limiting people's attention to the change in the calendar. The same mistake could have been made at the time of St. Gregory

Palamas, if the debate had been confined only to the method of prayer without considering its theology. And this also holds true if, in the age of St. Nicodemus the Athonite, the whole issue had been restricted to the Sunday memorial services and the full meaning of the reaction to the spirit of secularism in Church had been overlooked.

All the above has been said in light of the fact that a deep layer of Orthodox life and conduct exists in Greece today. We have to cultivate and assign theological meaning and significance to this layer, because only in this way will the Orthodox roots of life remain alive in our people. And we must do the same for all the numerous converts to Orthodoxy in the Western world. Today, people in the West love Orthodoxy and are enthusiastic about it, because they read the writings of the neptic Fathers and seek this inner peace and communion with God. They look for this theology which can tell them how to get rid of sensual pleasure and pain.

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(\*) *Hesychasm* in Orthodox Christianity is a type of monastic life in which practitioners seek divine quietness (Greek *hesychia*) through the contemplation of God in uninterrupted prayer. Such prayer, involving the entire human being — soul, mind, and body — is often called “pure,” or “intellectual,” prayer and is commonly referred as the “Jesus prayer.”



There are those who have soft souls and are easily convinced. There are also those who have hard souls and don't yield easily. The difference is as great as that between cotton and iron. The cotton only requires an anointing with words. The iron requires fire and a furnace of temptation to be worked. The man who has a hard character needs to be patient in enduring temptations for there to be a cleansing. When he isn't patient he is like a lamp without oil, which quickly goes out, and is lost.

Active love without submission cannot exist. How can you love and serve if you don't first submit to the other's will? Every movement of active love is service, and so those who obey serve in two ways. On the one hand, they show their faith in the one giving the order; and on the other hand, they show their love through the service rendered.

When you are in the presence of someone whom you know judges you and tempts you, it is almost impossible for him not to bother you, as much as you may try to remain unaffected. After pardoning and praying for him, however, you will recover from the grief of sadness.

Blessed Elder Joseph the Hesychast (+1959)

## “FOR THERE MUST BE HERESIES AMONG YOU” (1 COR. 11:19)

By Archbishop Averky (+1976)

How does one properly understand these words of the Holy Apostle Paul? Does he really approve of dissensions among Christians or recognize them as necessary or desirable? Is he making them the rule? If so, then how can this be compatible with the numerous places in his epistles where he so forcefully and persistently calls Christians to full agreement and unanimity?

“Be of the same mind one toward another” (Rom. 12:16), or “...fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord of mind.” (Phil. 2:2)

Furthermore, not only Apostle Paul, but also other apostles exhorted Christians to be of one mind. Thus, St. Peter directly writes to Christians in his first epistle, “Be ye all of one mind!” (I Peter 3:8) Not only does St. Paul call Christians to oneness of mind, he even warns them of such people who “...cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which they have learned” (Rom. 16:17) and urges them to avoid them, saying “...they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” (Rom. 16:18)

What kinds of “heresies” can there be among true Christians when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself prayed for them to God the Father in His prayer as the high priest: “That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” (John 17:21) See what unity must exist among true Christians: unity according to the image of the oneness of Persons of the Most Holy Trinity!

Can you imagine that among the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity there would be dissension? This is why, before beginning the most important moment of the Divine Liturgy -- the great Mystery of the Eucharist, followed by the partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ by the faithful -- the priest exclaims: “Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess!” the choir then explains whom we are confessing: “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, The Trinity One in essence and indivisible.”

Thus, oneness of mind is made the chief condition for the communion of Christians in the Mystery of the Eucharist. If there is no oneness of mind, what kind of communion can there be in this great Mystery, in which the believer is mysteriously united with Christ and becomes one with Him?

But why do we say before all else, “Let us love?” Because, of course, without true Christian love oneness of mind is impossible, and also because true Christian love entails oneness of mind among Christians. True Christian love is expressed above all by oneness of mind. Where there exists such love, there also exists oneness of mind, and where there is no one-



ness of mind, there consequently is no true Christian love, but only an appearance of it -- only Pharisaism! All this should be considered and seriously taken into account by all those steadfast in "Christian love," and at the same time persistently and forcefully defending, for some reason, their right "to disagree." To this group belong all contemporary modernist theologians who preach ecumenism, or the imaginary "union of all," and not only the union of all "Christians," but also Jews, Moslems, and pagans. In short, it is the union of all heretics, who retain their full right to "disagree," seemingly confirming the teaching of our Holy Orthodox Church, in the person of the Apostle Paul.

To such clearly heretical teaching there is now suddenly added "inter-communion," when people not belonging to the Holy Orthodox Church are allowed to approach the Holy Chalice, directly opposing the order of the Divine Liturgy established by our Holy Church. According to this established practice only the faithful may receive Communion, and even be present in the church during the Mystery of the Eucharist. Everyone else must leave the church when the priest says, "As many as are catechumens, depart."

See how these people who so blatantly violate one of the most important rules of our Holy Church even dare to call themselves "Orthodox" and try, by way of all kinds of false interpretations of the Word of God, to justify their "dissension" with the age-old teaching of the Universal Church of Christ. And what is especially horrible -- they take shelter behind their imaginary "Christian love" for the "dissenters."

O how great is the evil of these contemporary evil-doers, how unlawfully do they misappropriate for themselves the patent on "Christian love," and all those who disagree with them they accuse of a lack of "Christian love," and even fanaticism!

The remarkable success which these "much loving evil-doers" enjoy during our time can be explained only by the fact that contemporary people, among whom are many Orthodox Christians, have departed too far from true faith in God, in Christ, and in the Church. They do not know the Word of God and are unfamiliar with the teaching of the Holy Fathers and the Church's decrees, and it is easy to lead them into error by "smooth words" and "flattery" as the Apostle Paul emphasized even in his time (Rom. 16:18). There are also some among them who have a great weakness for gifts and presents and readily follow after anyone who will give them, not troubling themselves to investigate their teaching, whether "it be of God." (Acts 5:39)

These words of the Holy Apostle Paul, "...for there must be also heresies among you" (I Cor. 11:19), contemporary modernist theologians and ecumenists interpret totally arbitrarily, for their own advantage, not bothering to think that they are adulterating the Word of God and thereby they sin mortally.

This saying of the Apostle Paul is beautifully explained by our truly eminent Orthodox theologian, St. Theophan the Recluse,

who in his time was the rector of a Theological Academy and wrote a complete and remarkably profound commentary on the epistles of the Apostle Paul. Here is how he explains these words [quoting Saint John Chrysostom]: "By the word *heresies* he [Saint Paul] understands here not errors concerning dogmas, but actual (and similar) quarrels. If he were speaking of errors concerning dogmas, however, he would not have given occasion for offense (with the words, "for there must be"). For Christ said, "It must needs be that offenses come" (Mat. 18:7), but at the same time He did not violate our free will and establish this as a necessity and inevitability for us. He foretold the future which happens from the evil will of mankind, not as a result of His prediction but from the arbitrariness of depraved people. Offenses occurred not because He foretold them, but rather He foretold them because they were going to occur. For if offenses occurred out of necessity and not according to the will of those who caused them, then in vain would He have said, "Woe to that man by whom the offense cometh."

"That the Apostle actually called these disturbances and divisions during meals 'heresies' we see clearly expressed by him in the previous sentence. For he said, "I hear that there be divisions among you." He did not stop here however. Desiring to explain what divisions he is referring to, he then says, "For in eating every one take before other his own supper" (11:21). It is evident that he is speaking of these disturbances; but do not be surprised that he calls them divisions (schisms). As I said, he desired to have a greater effect on them by using such an expression. If he had meant dogmatical heresies he would not have spoken to them so briefly. (Saint John Chrysostom, Commentary on the first epistle to the Corinthians)."

As we see, St. Theophan explains the words of the Apostle Paul with the words of the great universal teacher and hierarch, Saint John Chrysostom, and therefore the explanation is especially authoritative for us. From this it is clear that it is in vain that the modernist ecumenists use these words of the Apostle Paul for their own ecumenical purposes. These words of the Apostle Paul refer to particular incidents and disturbances during the agape meals, about which he speaks in the eleventh chapter of this epistle. Therefore there is decidedly no basis for using this saying of the Apostle Paul to justify disagreement concerning dogmas, and especially for justifying union of all Orthodox and non-Orthodox in the Mystery of the Eucharist in the presence of obvious differences of opinion, precluding, according to the clear teaching of the Holy Church, the allowance and possibility of such a union.

This is one of the most characteristic examples of how deceitfully just like sectarians, the contemporary modernist theologians use the texts of the Holy Scriptures, attributing to them meaning which is not there.

And the Apostle Paul could not contradict himself, saying one thing in one circumstance and something else in another.

As we saw above, he clearly and unequivocally condemns differences of opinion among Christians and calls all to absolute oneness of mind and soul. "Fulfill ye my joy," he writes to the Philippians, "that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (Philip. 2:2)

Such should be the case then among all true Christians, for: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephes. 4: 4-6)



## A PRAYER AGAINST EVIL THOUGHTS

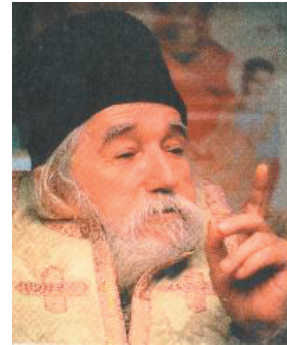
Master, Lord my God, in Whose hands are my lots, help me according to Thy mercy and do not allow me to be destroyed by my iniquities; nor permit me by my will to follow the desires of my flesh against my spirit. I was fashioned by Thee. Do not forsake the works of Thy hands. Turn not Thy face, have pity, do not despise me, neither forsake me, O Lord, for I am weak; and it is to Thee, my protecting God, that I have come for refuge. Heal my soul, I have sinned against Thee. Save me for the sake of Thy mercy, for upon Thee have I cast myself from my very youth. May those who war against me be put to shame, and may those who seek to separate me from Thee through immodest acts, unseemly thoughts, and unprofitable recollections be turned back. Chase far from me every filthiness that is the superabundance of evil. For Thou alone art holy; Thou alone art mighty; Thou alone art immortal --- having unfathomable power against all things. And it is through Thee that every power is given against the Devil and his forces. Unto Thee is due all glory, honor, and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.



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## HOW ONE SHOULD ATTEND TO ONESELF WHILE AT THE DIVINE SERVICES

By Elder Cleopa of Romania (+1998)



Christians should stand in church with faith, fear of God, and attention. They should force themselves as much as possible to pray without distraction and with feeling of heart. Also, Christians have the following duties: to go regularly to church, for whoever often misses the services, except for the sick, are barred from the Holy Mysteries; to be reconciled with

all men and to ask forgiveness of anyone they have hurt; to preserve their purity at least two days before going to church and at least one day after; to come early to the divine services in order to have time to venerate in peace and hear Matins. Every Christian should offer some gift to the Lord according to his ability, even if it is very small, as a sacrifice from the work of his hands. They should give names for commemoration, and ask the priest to take out parts (from the prosphora) for the living and dead members of their families. Christians should stand in church modestly and in good order, the men on the right and the women on the left. They should wear clean and modest clothes, and women should have scarves on their heads. It is forbidden to talk during services without great need. After Divine Liturgy starts, everyone should remain in his place and not move about to venerate the icons. They should follow the Liturgy with pious attention, and listen to the prayers and singing of the choir, the Epistle and Gospel readings, and the sermon. No one should leave the church before the end of the Liturgy without great need. Those who have confessed and prepared for Holy Communion should read the appropriate prayers before Communion in advance, and before they approach the Holy Gifts they should ask forgiveness of all the faithful. After the Liturgy, those who received Communion should read the prayers of thanksgiving, spending the day in spiritual joy and guarding themselves from all temptations. Parents should bring their children to church regularly, taking care that they receive communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. After the end of the divine services, Christians should reverently return to their homes, spending the rest of the day thinking of holy things, reading spiritual books, and visiting the sick. They are also obligated to tell those at home who didn't come to church about what they heard and learned in church from the troparia, readings, and the sermon. These are the most important duties of Christians when they go to church on Sundays and feast days.

## Ἡ Τιμὴ καὶ Προσκύνηση τῶν Ἱερῶν Εἰκόνων

*Χρήστου Κρικῶνη, Καθηγητοῦ Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς Α.Π.Θ., ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀποστολικὴ Διακονία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος*

Τὸ βασικὸ καὶ οὐσιαστικὸ χαρακτηριστικὸ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι ἡ χρῆση, ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ προσκύνηση τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ ὄλων τῶν Ἁγίων. Διότι μὲ αὐτὲς ἐκφράζεται τόσον ὁ ἐγκόσμιος, ὅσον καὶ ὁ ὑπερκόσμιος χαρακτήρας τῆς. Τὴν πραγματικότητα αὐτὴ θέλησαν νὰ τονίσουν οἱ ἐκκλησιαστικοὶ ἐκεῖνοι πατέρες, οἱ ὁποῖοι ὀνόμασαν τὴν πρώτη Κυριακὴ τῆς Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστῆς «Κυριακὴν τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας». Κατ' αὐτὴν ἐορτάζεται ἡ ἐπέτειος τῆς ἀποφασισθείσης ἀναστηλώσεως τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, κατὰ τὸ 843, σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν ἀπόφαση τῆς Ζ' Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου.

Βεβαίως τὴν τιμὴ καὶ προσκύνηση τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων ἐπιβάλλουν καὶ ὑπαγορεύουν διάφοροι λόγοι.

Πρῶτος εἶναι ἡ ἀνάγκη νὰ προσηλωθῇ ἡ σκέψη καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ τῶν πιστῶν στοὺς ἀποδέκτες τῶν προσευχῶν, τῶν δεήσεων καὶ τῶν παρακλήσεών τους, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν αἰνῶν καὶ τῶν εὐχαριστιῶν τους, δηλαδὴ στοὺς εἰκονιζόμενους Ἁγίους. Οἱ πιστοὶ προσευχόμενοι ἐνώπιον τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων ἀναπαύονται ψυχικά, βλέποντες τὶς συγκεκριμένες μορφές τῶν εἰκονιζόμενων Ἁγίων, ἔστω καὶ ὅπως λέγει ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος «ἐν ἐσώπτῳ καὶ ἐν αἰνίγματι», καὶ τοῦτο διότι ἔτσι αἰσθάνονται τὴν παρουσία ἐκείνων στὴ μεσιτεία καὶ στίς πρεσβεῖες τους πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν καὶ τοὺς ἐμπιστεύονται στίς δεήσεις καὶ στὰ αἰτήματα τῶν προσευχῶν τους.

Δεύτερος οὐσιαστικὸς λόγος εἶναι ἡ μεγάλη διδακτικὴ ἀξία τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, ὡς ἐκ τῆς θέσεώς τους στοὺς ἱεροὺς ναοὺς καὶ στὴ θεία λατρεία. Μὲ αὐτὲς διδάσκεται κάθε χριστιανός, πόσον ἐπιβραβεύει ὁ Θεὸς καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία Του ὄλους ἐκείνους, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἔμειναν στὴ γῆ πιστοὶ στὸ θέλημά Του καὶ ἀναδείχθηκαν ἄξιοι τοῦ σταυρικοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ ἀπολυτρωτικοῦ ἔργου τοῦ Θεανθρώπου. Τὴν ἐπιβράβευση αὐτὴ ἐκφράζουν στίς εἰκόνες ἰδιαίτερα ὁ φωτοστέφανος τῶν Ἁγίων.

Τρίτος λόγος εἶναι ἡ πολυμερὴς ἱερότητα τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, ἡ ὁποία ἀπορρέει ἀπὸ διάφορους παράγοντες, μεταξὺ τῶν ὁποίων σημαντικώτεροι εἶναι ἡ θέση τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων στοὺς ἱεροὺς ναοὺς καὶ τὴ θεία λατρεία, ἡ θεολογικὴ διδασκαλία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ὅτι κάθε τιμὴ καὶ προσκύνηση τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, «ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει» καὶ τὰ διάφορα ἱστορικὰ θαύματα, τὰ ὁποῖα ἀπεδόθησαν σ' αὐτές.

Ὁ προσευχόμενος ἐνώπιον τῶν εἰκόνων αἰσθάνεται ὅτι βρίσκεται σὲ ἓνα ζωντανὸ προσωπικὸ διάλογο μὲ τοὺς εἰκονιζόμενους ἁγίους τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἡ εἰκόνα θὰ μπορούσε νὰ παρομοιασθεῖ μὲ τὸν θεοφιλεῖ διερμηνέα τοῦ διαλόγου

αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν μεσάζοντα ἐκεῖνον, ὁ ὁποῖος καθηλώνει ὅλη τὴν ὑπαρξὴ τοῦ προσευχομένου.

Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἡ Ζ' Οἰκουμενικὴ Σύνοδος ἐχαρακτήρισε τὴν τιμὴ καὶ προσκύνηση τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων ὡς «ἐγκριτον θεάρεστον θεσμοθεσίαν καὶ παράδοσιν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, εὐσεβὲς αἴτημα καὶ ἀνάγκην τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτῆς».

Μὲ τὶς εἰκόνες αὐτὲς δὲν παραβιάζεται οὔτε ἀπογυμνώνεται τὸ ἀπερίγραπτον τῆς θεότητος, ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς περιγράφεται μόνον ἡ ἱστορικὴ θεανδρική παράσταση τῆς ἐπὶ γῆς παρουσίας καὶ ζωῆς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Δεδομένου ὅτι ὅλοι οἱ εἰκονιζόμενοι Ἁγιοὶ εἶναι «κατ' εἰκόνα καὶ ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ» ἐκτυπώματα τῆς μιᾶς θεότητος, οἱ ἱερὲς εἰκόνες τους εἶναι ἐκτυπώματα τῆς πνευματικῆς τελειώσεώς τους στὸν κόσμο, σύμφωνα πάντοτε μὲ τὴν διακήρυξη τοῦ Μεγάλου Βασιλείου «ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ προσκύνησις τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει».

Οἱ πρῶτοι εἰκονομάχοι, παρακινούμενοι συστηματικὰ ἀπὸ τὶς κατηγορίες τῶν Ἰουδαϊστῶν, περὶ εἰδωλολατρίας τῶν χριστιανῶν ἐκείνων ποὺ τιμοῦσαν καὶ προσκυνούσαν τὶς ἱερὲς εἰκόνες, μεγαλοποιούσαν κάποιες παρεκκλίσεις καὶ ἀκρότητες καὶ ἐξεμεταλλεύονταν, δυσφημιστικά, κάποια μεμονωμένα περιστατικὰ ἀπλοϊκῶν, ἀγραμμάτων καὶ ἐνίοτε θρησκοπήτων χριστιανῶν ποὺ ἐκτρέπονταν σὲ ὑπερβολὲς καὶ καταχρήσεις τῆς τιμῆς τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία μὲ τὴν ὀρθόδοξη διδασκαλία τῆς ποῦ ἀνέπτυξε γιὰ τὴν τιμὴ καὶ προσκύνηση τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων, ἀντιμετώπισε ἐγκαίρως τὰ φαινόμενα αὐτὰ τῶν μεμονωμένων περιστατικῶν καταχρήσεων. Ἡ ὀρθὴ διδασκαλία τῆς εἶχε ἤδη διατυπωθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸν Μέγα Βασίλειο. Κατὰ τὸ πνεῦμα δὲ τῶν ἀποφάσεων τῆς Ζ' Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου καὶ οἱ εἰκόνες διδάσκουν τὴν κατὰ χάρη ἐξομοίωση τῶν εἰκονιζόμενων Ἁγίων μὲ τὸ Θεό, διὰ τῆς ἀγιότητος τοῦ βίου τους, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἀρμόζει σ' αὐτὲς τιμὴ καὶ προσκύνηση. Σχετικὰ ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνὸς γράφει: «ὁ μὴ προσκυνῶν ἐχθρὸς ἐστὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς Ἁγίας Θεοτόκου καὶ τῶν Ἁγίων, ἐκδικητῆς δὲ τοῦ διαβόλου καὶ τῶν δαιμόνων, ἔργῳ ἐπιδεικνύμενος τὴν λύπην, ὅτι οἱ ἅγιοι τοῦ Θεοῦ τιμῶνται καὶ δοξάζονται, ὁ δὲ διάβολος καταισχύνεται. Ἡ γὰρ εἰκὼν θριάμβωσις ἐστὶ καὶ φανέρωσις καὶ στηλογραφία εἰς μνήμην τῆς νίκης τῶν ἀριστευσάντων καὶ τῆς αἰσχύνης τῶν ἠττηθέντων καὶ καταβληθέντων».

Οἱ πιστοὶ «βλέποντες τὰς ἀναζωγραφήσεις», δηλαδὴ τὶς εἰκόνες, ἀνάγονται «εἰς ἔννοιαν καὶ τιμὴν τοῦ εἰκονισθέντος». Ἐπομένως ἡ εἰκόνα δὲν εἶναι αὐτοσκοπός, ἀλλὰ μέσον, μὲ τὸ ὁποῖο ὁ πιστὸς ἀνάγεται εἰς ἔννοιαν, μνήμην τοῦ θεαρέστου βίου τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου Ἁγίου καὶ ἔτσι προτρέπεται σὲ ὁμοίωσή του, ποῦ ἀποτελεῖ καὶ τὴν τιμὴ τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου Ἁγίου ἢ Μάρτυρος.

Μὲ ὅλα αὐτά, συμπεραίνεται ὅτι ἡ ὁμοιότητα, σχετικὴ ἢ ἀπόλυτη, τῆς ἱστορικῆς, πραγματικῆς μορφῆς τοῦ πρωτοτύπου καὶ τῆς ἐξεικονιζομένης στὴν εἰκόνα, εἶναι κάτι τὸ δευτερεῖον στίς ἐκκλησιαστικὲς εἰκόνες. Τὸ πρωτεῖον

καὶ κύριον σ' αὐτὲς εἶναι ἡ ιδιότητα καὶ ἡ ἰκανότητά τους νὰ ἀνάγουν στὰ πρωτότυπά τους καὶ σ' αὐτὸ συμβάλλει σημαντικὰ ἡ ἐπιγραφή, δηλαδή ἡ ἀναγραφή ἐπάνω τους τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου. Καὶ βέβαια ἡ μορφή τοῦ κάθε εἰκονιζομένου δὲν εἶναι ἐπινοήση τῶν ζωγράφων, ἀλλὰ ὅπως παρατηρεῖ ὁ ἱερός Φώτιος «τῆς γὰρ ἀνέκαθεν ἀποστολικῆς τὲ καὶ πατρικῆς παραδόσεως τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἀδιάπτωτον κήρυγμα, καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ἰδίους καὶ ἱεροὺς θεσμοὺς ἐργαζομένη ταύτην καὶ τεχνιτεύουσα, εἰκονίζει τὲ καὶ μορφοποιεῖ οὐδὲν τῆς ὑλικῆς ἀκοσμίας, ἢ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης περιεργείας, ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐώσα παρρησιάζεσθαι. Ὅλον δὲ τὸ ἔργον ἐαυτῆς δεικνύουσα καὶ ἀποφαίνουσα, καθαρὰς ἡμῖν καὶ ἀκιβδήλους ἐν τοῖς σεπτοῖς εἰκονίσμασι τὰς τῶν πρωτοτύπων ἐμφάσεις ἱεροπρεπῶς τὲ καὶ ἱεροτύπως παρέχεται».

Ἡ εἰκόνα εἶναι, κατὰ τὸν ἱερό Φώτιο, «αὐτόχρομα ἀρχέτυπον» κατὰ τὴν μορφή, τὴν κλήση, τὰ ἰνδάλματα τοῦ ἀρχέτυπου, κυρίως ὁμως κατὰ τὸ βαθύτερο θεολογικὸ της περιεχόμενο καὶ τὴν ἁγιαστικὴ χάρι καὶ εὐλογία τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου, ἢ ὅποια ἐπιφοιτᾷ σ' αὐτὴ ἀδιαλείπτως, ὡς καὶ στὸ ἀρχέτυπο, καὶ μὲ τὴν ὅποια κοινωνοῦν μὲ κάθε τρόπο ὅσοι τιμοῦν τὸ πρωτότυπον καὶ ὅσοι προσκυνοῦν τιμητικὰ τὴν εἰκόνα του.



Πῆγε κάποτε ὁ ἀββᾶς Ἀμμωνᾶς σὲ κάποιον τόπο γιὰ νὰ γευματίσει. Ἐκεῖ κοντὰ ἦταν κι ἓνας ἀδελφός ποὺ εἶχε κακὴ φήμη. Συνέβη μάλιστα νὰ πάει καὶ νὰ μπεῖ στὸ κελὶ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ ἢ γυναῖκα γιὰ τὴν ὅποια τὸν κακολογοῦσαν. Οἱ κάτοικοι τῆς περιοχῆς μόλις τὸ ἔμαθαν, ξεσηκώθηκαν καὶ πῆραν τὴν ἀπόφαση νὰ διώξουν τὸν μοναχὸ ἀπὸ τὸ κελί. Ὅταν πληροφορήθηκαν ὅτι ὁ ἐπίσκοπος Ἀμμωνᾶς βρισκόταν στὴν περιοχὴ τους, πῆγαν καὶ τὸν παρακάλεσαν νὰ πάει μαζί τους. Σὰν τὰ ἔμαθε αὐτὰ ὁ ἀδελφός, πῆρε τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὴν ἔκρυψε μέσα σ' ἓνα μεγάλο πιθάρι.

Κετέφθασε τὸ πλῆθος καὶ ὁ ἀββᾶς Ἀμμωνᾶς ἀντιλήφθηκε τί συνέβη, ἀλλὰ χάριν τοῦ Θεοῦ σκέπασε τὸ γεγονός. Μπήκε λοιπὸν στὸ κελὶ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ, κάθισε πάνω στὸ πιθάρι καὶ διέταξε νὰ ἐρευνήσουν τὸ κελί. Ὅταν ὁμως ἔβγαξαν καὶ δὲν βρῆκαν τὴν γυναῖκα, τοὺς εἶπε ὁ ἀββᾶς Ἀμμωνᾶς: «Τί συμβαίνει λοιπόν; Ὁ Θεὸς νὰ σᾶς συγχωρήσει». Καὶ ἀφοῦ προσευχήθηκε, ἀπομάκρυνε τὸν κόσμον.

Ἐπιασε τότε ἀπὸ τὸ χέρι τὸν ἀδελφὸ καὶ τοῦ εἶπε: «Πρόσεχε τὴν ψυχὴ σου, ἀδελφέ». Καὶ μὲ τὸν λόγο αὐτὸν ἔφυγε.

## «Μίλα Ρωμαῖκα»

*Σεβασμιωτάτου. Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἁγίου Βλασίου Ἱεροθέου, ἀπὸ τὸ περιοδικὸ «Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Παρέμβαση», Ἰούλιος 2004.*

**Τ**ελευταία διάβασα ἓνα βιβλίο γραμμένο ἀπὸ τὸν Γιώργο Βαλέτα μὲ τίτλο «Ἐπὶ τῆς Ρωμοσύνης» καὶ θὰ ἤθελα νὰ παρουσιάσω μὲ συντομία τὸ πρῶτο του κείμενο μὲ τίτλο «Ἡ Ἀνάσταση τῆς Ρωμοσύνης», ποὺ γράφηκε πρὶν πολλὰ χρόνια καὶ τὸ ὅποιο εἶναι χαρακτηριστικὸ καὶ καθοριστικὸ τοῦ ὄλου «πνεύματος» τοῦ συγγραφέα.

Λίγα λόγια κατ' ἀρχὰς γιὰ τὸν Γιώργο Βαλέτα. Γεννημένος στὴν Μυτιλήνη, σπούδασε φιλολογία, ἐργάστηκε στὴν Ἑθνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη καὶ ὑπῆρξε συνεργάτης σὲ διάφορες ἐγκυκλοπαίδειες, διορίστηκε καθηγητὴς στὰ Γυμνάσια, συμμετείχε στοὺς ἀγῶνες τοῦ λαοῦ κατὰ τὴν κατοχὴ, στὴν ἐθνικὴ ἀντίσταση καὶ μετὰ ἀπὸ αὐτὴν, ἐξορίστηκε στὴν Ἐλ Τάμπα καὶ στὰ ξερονήσια τρεῖς περιόδους, καὶ ἀπολύθηκε ἀπὸ τὴν ὑπηρεσία του. Ἐπιμελήθηκε τὴν ἔκδοση διαφόρων κειμένων τῶν μεγάλων λογοτεχνῶν, ἔγραψε, καὶ μετέφρασε πολλὰ κείμενα.

Στὸ κείμενο ποὺ θὰ σχολιάσω καὶ μὲ τὸν τίτλο «Ἡ Ἀνάσταση τῆς Ρωμοσύνης» ἐρμηνεύει τὸν ὄρο καὶ τὰ γνωρίσματα αὐτοῦ ποὺ καλοῦμε ρωμοσύνη μέσα ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀγῶνες τοῦ λαοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ κείμενα διαφόρων ἀνθρώπων τῶν γραμμάτων καὶ τῶν λογοτεχνῶν.

### 1. ΟΡΙΣΜΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΡΩΜΙΟΣΥΝΗΣ

Σὲ ἓνα σημεῖο τοῦ κειμένου του κάνει λόγο γιὰ τὸν ὄρο Ρωμανία. Γράφει: «Τὸ Βυζάντιο, ἀπ' τὸ ὅποιο βγήκε ὁ νέος Ἑλληνισμὸς λεγόταν Ρωμανία καὶ οἱ κάτοικοί του Ρωμαῖοι». Ἀναφέρει μία φράση ἀπὸ τὸ «Χρονικὸ τοῦ Μωρέως»: «Τρία πράγματα ἐχάλασαν τὴ Ρωμανίαν ὄλην: ὁ φόβος, ἡ φιλαργυρία καὶ ἡ κενὴ ἐλπίδα». Ἐπίσης, παραθέτει τὸν λόγο τοῦ Μελετίου Πηγᾶ, λίγα χρόνια μετὰ τὴν ἄλωση τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως: «Ὡ ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, ἄνδρες Ρωμαῖοι... ἐσεῖς εἴσθε τὸ γένος ἐκεῖνο τὸ περιφρονημένο τῶν Ρωμαίων τὸ ὅποιο ἐκυρίευσεν ὄλην τὴν οἰκουμένην μὲ τὴν δύναμιν τῶν ἀρμάτων. Ἐσεῖς εἴσθε ἐκεῖνοι τῶν ὁποίων οἱ πατέρες ἐφώτισαν τὴν οἰκουμένην. Ὡ πόλις ἐσύ, ἐσύ ἢ Πόλις, ἢ ἐπάνω ὄρους κειμένη καὶ μὴ δυναμένη κρυβῆναι... Μὴ ἀπελπίζου ὁ λαὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸ ἔθνος τὸ ἅγιον, βλέποντες πὼς σὲ κακοχυοῦσιν, σκληραγωγοῦσιν οἱ ἀσεβεῖς». Ἀκόμη καταγράφει καὶ τὸν λόγο τοῦ Γερμανοῦ Βυζαντινολόγου Κρουμπάχερ ὅτι τὸ ὄνομα Ρωμιὸς διατηρήθηκε σὲ ὅλους τοὺς χρόνους τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας μέχρι σήμερα, καθὼς ἐπίσης μετὰ τὸν ἐξελληνισμὸ τοῦ ρωμαϊκοῦ κράτους «Ρωμαῖος ἐσήμαινε τὸν Ἑλληνόφωνο πολίτη τοῦ ρωμαϊκοῦ κράτους καὶ στὸ τέλος καθ' ὅλοκληρία τὸν Ἕλληνα».

Ὁ Βαλέτας λέγει ὅτι ἡ λέξη Ρωμοσύνη εἶναι «ἐξαγιασμένη μέσα σὲ ἀγῶνες, αἵματα καὶ μαρτύρια», καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ὄρος «ἐκφράζει ἓνα ἀπ' τὰ λαμπρότερα στάδια τῆς μακραίωνης

ιστορικής συνέχειας του Έλληνισμού, που σε σύγκριση με τα προηγούμενα έχει το προνόμιο και την υπεροχή της λαογέννητης αυτοδυναμίας, που της εξασφαλίζει άντοχή, διάρκεια και άστειρευτο ανανεωτικό δυναμισμό». «Η Ρωμιοσύνη είναι Έλληνισμός, ο Έλληνισμός όμως δεν είναι Ρωμιοσύνη». Η Ρωμιοσύνη έχει «δική της ψυχολογία, δική της θρησκεία, δική της γλώσσα, δικό της λαογέννητο πολιτισμό, κρατώντας όσα στοιχεία της χρειαζόταν από την Αρχαιότητα και το Βυζάντιο και διασώζοντας τη συνείδηση της αρχαίας της καταγωγής».

## 2. Η ΣΥΖΗΤΗΣΗ ΓΙΑ ΤΟΝ ΟΡΟ ΡΩΜΙΟΣΥΝΗ

Κεντρικό σημείο του άρθρου του Βαλέτα είναι η όλη συζήτηση που έγινε μετά την δημοσίευση του βιβλίου του Αργύρη Έφταλιώτη, με τίτλο «Ιστορία της Ρωμιοσύνης», στην δημοτική γλώσσα, το οποίο περιέγραφε την ιστορία κατά την διάρκεια «του Βυζαντινού Έλληνισμού», και την συνέχειά του μέσα στην Τουρκοκρατία, μέχρι την επανάσταση του Εικοσιένα.

Μετά την δημοσίευση του βιβλίου αυτού ξεσηκώθηκε μία αντίδραση από κύκλους του λεγομένου λογιολατρισμού έναντι του όρου Ρωμιοσύνη και βεβαίως ανεδείχθησαν και οι υπερασπιστές όχι μόνον του βιβλίου του Αργύρη Έφταλιώτη, αλλά και του όρου της Ρωμιοσύνης.

Τρεις μεγάλοι της επιστήμης, ο γλωσσολόγος Γ. Χατζιδάκης, ο ιστορικός Γ. Σωτηριάδης και ο λαογράφος Ν. Πολίτης «ξεσηκώθηκαν για να ρίξουν τη Ρωμιοσύνη απ' τον θρόνο που την ανέβασε ο φωτεινός εργάτης της Ίδεας Αργύρης Έφταλιώτης», αλλά εμφανίσθηκαν και δυο μεγάλοι λογοτέχνες μας που υποστήριξαν τον Έφταλιώτη, όπως θα δούμε στην συνέχεια, ήτοι ο Κωστής Παλαμάς και ο Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος.

Όπως παρατηρεί ο Βαλέτας, μετά το Εικοσιένα κυριάρχησαν «ο λογιολατρισμός, σαν πνευματικό οικοδόμημα του μεγαλοϊδεατισμού», αλλά και «της προγονοπληξίας», οι οποίοι «κυνήγησαν με πείσμα και τυφλό φανατισμό τόσο τον όρο, όσο και την έννοια της Ρωμιοσύνης». Με αυτόν τον τρόπο «διασπούσε ανιστόρητα την ιστορική συνέχεια του Έλληνισμού, καταργούσε τη ρωμαιοκρατία και το Βυζάντιο, αποξένωνε το νέο Έλληνισμό από την άμεση καταγωγή του, από τις ρίζες του, που βυθίζονται στα άπώτερα Βυζαντινά και Έλληνιστικά χρόνια».

Μέσα στο «πνεύμα» αυτό ο Χατζιδάκης και ο Σωτηριάδης, καθώς επίσης και αργότερα ο Πολίτης, υπεστήριξαν την άποψη ότι το όνομα Έλλην – Έλλάς – Έλληνικός χρησιμοποιούνταν πάντοτε σε όλη τη μακραίωνα Έλληνιστική ιστορία και ότι «οι λέξεις Ρωμιός – Ρωμιοσύνη – ρωμαϊκός είναι χυδαιολογίες».

Στις απόψεις αυτές αντέδρασε με δυναμικότητα και

έπιχειρήματα ο μεγάλος εθνικός μας ποιητής Κωστής Παλαμάς, που υποστήριξε την άποψη ότι ο Έλληνικός λαός απογύμνωσε το όνομα Ρωμιός από την πρώτη του σημασία και έννοια, όπως αυτό έγινε και με την λέξη «Κλέφτης», και το χρησιμοποίησε ως όνομά του. Έτσι, τώρα «λεγόμαστε Έλληνες για να ρίχνουμε στάχτη στα μάτια του κόσμου, πραγματικά, Ρωμιού». Και συνεχίζει στο άρθρο του: «Το όνομα (Ρωμιοσύνη) κάθε άλλο είναι παρά για ντροπή. Αν δεν το περιζώνει αγριλιάς στεφάνι από την Όλυμπια, το ανυψώνει στέμμα ακάνθινο, μαρτύριο και θυμάρι μοσχοβολᾶ και μπαρούτη». Το όνομα Έλληνας είναι «γιορτιάτικο και όνομα» και «κάπως πιο δυσκολορίζωτο από το Ρωμιός». Ο Κωστής Παλαμάς γράφει: «Ρωμιός και Ρωμιοσύνη δεν είναι και τα δυο παρά τα νέα ονόματα του Έλληνας και του Έλληνισμού». Η Ρωμιοσύνη, κατά τον Κωστή Παλαμά ήταν η μητέρα που ανέστησε τον νέο Έλληνισμό. Και γράφει για την Ρωμιοσύνη σε σχέση με τον Έλληνισμό: «Όμως, κάποιο αγνότερο και πιο βαθύ αίσθημα γλωσσικό, κάτι το ποιητικό και μουσικά χρωματισμένο, κάτι το φτερωτό, λεβέντικο για μᾶς και ανάλαφρο, που νομίζω δεν το έχει ο Έλληνισμός με όλη τη βαρειά του ασάλευτη μεγαλοπρέπεια».

**Γι' αυτό και αίτημα της εποχής μας πρέπει να είναι: «Μίλα ρωμαϊκά» δηλαδή λέγε τον λόγο της ειλικρίνειας, της αλήθειας, της ντομπροσύνης, την γλώσσα που ξεπερνᾶ τὸν θάνατο και τὴν μιζέρια!**

Ο Κωστής Παλαμάς πέρασε το «πνεύμα» της Ρωμιοσύνης και στα ποιήματά του, όπως «ο Δωδεκάλογος του Γύφτου», «η Φλογέρα του Βασιλιά» κ.λ.π.

Υπερασπιστές του όρου Ρωμιοσύνη ανεδείχθησαν πολλοί λογοτέχνες μας. Μαζί με τον Κωστή Παλαμά υπεράσπισε τον Αργύρη Έφταλιώτη ο Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος, ο οποίος υποστήριξε την άποψη ότι με τον όρο Ρωμιοσύνη έννοείται ο νέος Έλληνισμός που είναι ισοδύναμος με τον αρχαίο κόσμο, αλλά έχει δική του φυσιογνωμία, γλώσσα, θρησκεία, πολιτισμό. Έγραφε ο Ξενόπουλος: ο Έφταλιώτης «θέλει να παρουσιάσθωμεν, ότι είμεθα Νεοέλληνες και με το αληθινόν όνομά μας, δηλαδή Ρωμιού. Θέλει να αφιερωθώμεν αποκλειστικῶς εις τὰς ιδίας μας δυνάμεις, να απαλαχθώμεν από κάθε αρχαίαν πρόληψιν, από κάθε ανόητον όνειρον, να αναπτύξωμεν ιδίας ἀρετάς, να καλλιεργήσωμεν τὴν εθνικὴν μας γλῶσσαν, να γνωρίσωμεν τὸν εθνικὸν μας βίον, να τὸν ἐγκολπωθώμεν, να τὸν ἀγαπήσωμεν, να ἀπομακρύνωμεν κάθε ἐμπόδιον ἀπὸ τὴν φυσικὴν ἐξέλιξιν μας και να χωρήσωμεν ἀναβαπτισμένοι πρὸς τὴν πρόοδον, πρὸς τὴν ζωὴν».

Ο Βαλέτας μνημονεύει και άλλους που είχαν το «πνεύμα» της Ρωμιοσύνης, όπως τον Καρκαβίτσα, τον Βλαχογιάννη, τον Παπαδιαμάντη που «ἀνασταίνουν τὸ λαϊκὸ ιστορικὸ στοιχείο, οἱ δυὸ πρῶτοι τὸ ιστορικὸ, τὸ Κλέφτικο και Σουλιώτικο και ὁ τρίτος τὸ θρησκευτικὸ, τὸ βαθιὰ λαϊκὸ με τοὺς πανηγυριῶτες και τὶς μαυρομαντηλοῦσες, στὰ φτωχὰ

ξωκκλήσια και στὰ ρόδινα ἀκρογιάλια». Γιατί ἡ δύναμη τῆς Ρωμοσύνης, κατὰ τὸν Βαλέτα, πού ἐκδηλώθηκε στὴν Τουρκοκρατία, κράτησε τὴν ἐθνικὴ μνήμη καὶ τὴν ἐθνικὴ συνείδηση, δημιούργησε θεσμούς καὶ πολιτισμὸ καὶ θαυματουργήσε μὲ τὸ ἐμπόριο, τὴν ναυτιλία, τὴν κλεφτουριά, τὸ δημοτικὸ τραγούδι, ἰδίως τὸ κλέφτικο. Ἡ Ρωμοσύνη «εἶναι ἡ γλῶσσα, τὰ ἦθη, ἡ θρησκεία». Ἐπίσης, μνημονεύει καὶ ἄλλους ποιητὲς πεζογράφους, ζωγράφους. Ἀναφέρεται στὴν ἀντίσταση τοῦ λαοῦ κατὰ τὴν Γερμανικὴ κατοχή. Διεξοδικῶς δὲ ἀναφέρεται στὸ ἔργο τοῦ Ρίτσου στὸ ὁποῖο ἐκφράζεται «ἡ ἰδέα τῆς Ρωμοσύνης, μὲ τὴν ἔννοια τοῦ λαοῦ πού ἀγωνίζεται καὶ δὲν λυγᾶ, εἶναι ἡ δύναμη πού τὸ ἐμπνέει καὶ τὸ καταξιώνει».

### 3. ΤΑ ΓΝΩΡΙΣΜΑΤΑ ΤΗΣ ΡΩΜΙΟΣΥΝΗΣ

Σὲ ὄλο τὸ κείμενό του ὁ Βαλέτας περιγράφει τὰ γνωρίσματα τῆς Ρωμοσύνης, ὅπως τὸ εἶδαμε καὶ σὲ ὅσα ἀναφέραμε πρὸ πάνω. Εἶναι τὰ ἦθη καὶ τὰ ἔθιμα τοῦ λαοῦ, οἱ παραδόσεις, πού σηματοδοτοῦνται ἀπὸ τὴν ὀρθόδοξη πίστη καὶ τὴν Ἑλληνικότητα ὅπως συνδέθηκαν κατὰ τὴν πορεία τῶν αἰώνων.

Στὴν ἀρχὴ τοῦ κειμένου του γράφει ὅτι «ἡ βαρεῖα καὶ πολυσήμαντη λέξη «Ρωμοσύνη» πού γεμίζει τὸ στόμα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴ κάθε Ἑλληνα, εἶναι ἡ ἐθνικολαϊκὴ συνείδηση τοῦ Νέου Ἑλληνισμοῦ. Συμβαδίζει μὲ τὴν Πίστη. Εἶναι ὁ ἐθνισμὸς στὴ φυλετικὴ καὶ ψυχικὴ του διάσταση. Ἀνεβαίνει τοὺς αἰῶνες μὲ τὸ φωτοστέφανο τῆς ἀγιοσύνης καὶ τὴν σπάθα τῆς παλληκαριάς, φορτωμένη λαϊκότητα, ἱστορία καὶ δόξα, χωρὶς ν' ἀποσταίνει, χωρὶς νὰ σταματᾶ, πληθαίνοντας σὲ κάθε σκαλί τῆς ἱστορίας τὶς δάφνες τῆς καὶ πλαταίνοντας τὸ ἀγωνιστικὸ τῆς ἀπολυτρωτικὸ περιεχόμενο. Ἡ Ρωμοσύνη εἶναι ἡ φλεγόμενη βᾶτος τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ, ἀνάβει, φλογίζει, φωτίζει, λαμπαδιάζει, μὰ δὲν καίεται».

Καὶ πρὸς τὸ τέλος τοῦ κειμένου του, ἀναφερόμενος στὴν γλῶσσα τοῦ Ψυχάρη, γράφει ὅτι ἡ λέξη Ρωμοσύνη μπορεῖ νὰ ἐκφράζη αὐτὸ πού δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἐκφράση ἡ λέξη Ἑλλάδα, Ἑλληνας, Ἑλληνικός. «Κι' αὐτὸ πού δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἐκφράσει εἶναι τὸ λαϊκὸ στοιχεῖο, τὴ λαϊκὴ ψυχὴ, τὴ λαϊκὴ συνείδηση, τὴ λαϊκὴ ζωὴ, τὴ λαϊκὴ γλῶσσα, τὴ φτωχολογία, τὴν Παναγιά, τὴν τιμὴ, τὸ σπίτι, τὸ κριθαρένιο ψωμί, τὸ καπνισμένο τσουκάλι, τὴ λαϊκὴ ἀντίθεση καὶ ἀγωνιστικότητα μπροστὰ στὸ καταστημένο, τὸ ἐπίσημο, τὸ ἀριστοκρατικὸ, τὸ καλλιεργημένο, τὸ κοινωνικὰ ἀποστασιωμένο καὶ πάνω ἀπ' ὅλα τὸν καημὸ, τὸ πάθος τῆς Ρωμοσύνης».

Ὁ Διονύσιος Σολωμὸς εἶδε τὴν Ρωμοσύνη σὰν «μητέρα μεγαλόψυχη στὸν πόνο καὶ τὴν δόξα». Καὶ ὁ Κωστής Παλαμᾶς τὴν χαρακτηρίζει «πολύπαθη» καὶ γεννήτρα τῆς βασιλίσσας τῆς ἐλευθερωμένης δηλαδὴ Ἑλλάδας» μὲ τὸ στίχο του: «Κρυμμένη στὴν πολύπαθη τὴ Ρωμοσύνη, σὰ νὰ ξανοίγω τὴ βασιλίσα Ἑλλάδα».

Ὁ Κωστής Παλαμᾶς ὑποστηρίζοντας τὸν Ἀργύρη Ἑφταλιώτη καὶ ἀντικρούοντας τοὺς ἀντιπάλους του, μεταξὺ τῶν ἄλλων καὶ γιὰ νὰ παρουσιάση τὴν δύναμη τῆς

Ρωμοσύνης χρησιμοποίησε τὴν προτροπὴ τοῦ λαοῦ: «μίλα ρωμαίικα». Κατὰ τὸν Πολίτη ἡ φράση αὐτὴ λέγεται γιὰ νὰ διακρίνεται ἡ κοινὴ Ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχαία.

Ὁ Βαλέτας, ὁμως, ἀναλύοντας αὐτὴν τὴν προτροπὴ τοῦ λαοῦ «μίλα ρωμαίικα» λέγει τὰ ἑξῆς ἀξιοπρόσεκτα:

«Ὅταν ὁ λαὸς λέγει «μίλα ρωμαίικα», ἀναφέρεται ὄχι μόνον στὴ γλῶσσα, ἀλλὰ καὶ στὴ σαφήνεια, τὴν εἰλικρίνεια, τὴν παρρησία (ντομπροσύνη), τὴ γνησιότητα, τὴν ἀληθινὴ καὶ πηγαία χωρὶς προσποίηση, ἐπιτήδευση, περιστροφὲς ἀκκισμοὺς Ἑλληνικότητα. Πέρ' ἀπ' αὐτὰ ὁμως ἐκφράζει ἡ πολυσήμαντη, ἀναντικατάστατη καὶ ἀμετάφραστη, ὅπως εἶπαμε, αὐτὴ λέξη κάτι τὸ ἥρωικό, τὸ σεπτὸ καὶ τὸ ἅγιο, συμβολίζει τὴ ρίζα καὶ τὴ φύτρα τοῦ νέου Ἑλληνισμοῦ, τὶς περιπέτειες καὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνες του, τὴ θέλησή του νὰ ζήσει, νὰ δημιουργήσει καὶ νὰ ἐπιβληθῆ σὰν ἐλεύθερος λαός, μακριὰ ἀπὸ κάθε καταναγκασμὸ καὶ βιασμὸ αὐτῆς τῆς θέλησεῶς του».

Ἡ Ρωμοσύνη εἶναι ἓνας ἰδιαίτερος πολιτισμὸς, μιὰ ἰδιαίτερη παράδοση πού συνδέει στενὰ τὴν Ὀρθόδοξη πίστη συνδυασμένη μὲ τὴν Ἑλληνικότητα, πού δημιουργεῖ ἓνα «πνεῦμα» καὶ μιὰ δύναμη γιὰ νὰ φλογίζει τὸν ἄνθρωπο, προκειμένου νὰ ἀντιδρᾷ ἀνθρώπινα καὶ θεϊκὰ σὲ κάθε δοκιμασία καὶ κάθε πρόβλημα τῆς ζωῆς του. Αὐτὸ τὸ «πνεῦμα» μπορεῖ νὰ μεταφερθῆ καὶ νὰ ἀναγέννηση καὶ ἄλλους πολιτισμούς.

Λέγεται αὐτὸ γιατί μερικοὶ ἰσχυρίζονται ὅτι ἡ Ρωμοσύνη τελικὰ μπορεῖ νὰ καταλήξῃ καὶ νὰ γίνῃ ἓνας ἰδιότυπος ἐθνικισμὸς. Ὅμως ἡ Ρωμοσύνη ὡς σύνθεση Ἑλληνικότητας καὶ Ὀρθοδοξίας ἔχει μέσα της τὴν οἰκουμενικότητα, ἀφοῦ τόσο ὁ Ἑλληνισμὸς ὅσο καὶ ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία διακρίνονται ἀπὸ τὸ οἰκουμενικὸ καὶ πλήρως καθολικὸ «πνεῦμα» τους. Ἐτσι, τὸ «πνεῦμα» τῆς Ρωμοσύνης μεταφέρεται καὶ σὲ ἄλλους πολιτισμούς, ἢ μᾶλλον καλύτερα βοηθᾷ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ὅπου γῆς, νὰ ἀντιμετωπίσουν τὰ δικά τους προβλήματα μὲ τὴν δύναμη αὐτοῦ τοῦ «πνεύματος».

Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ αἶτημα τῆς ἐποχῆς μας πρέπει νὰ εἶναι : «Μίλα ρωμαίικα» δηλαδὴ λέγε τὸν λόγο τῆς εἰλικρίνειας, τῆς ἀλήθειας, τῆς ντομπροσύνης, τὴν γλῶσσα πού ξεπερνᾷ τὸν θάνατο καὶ τὴν μιζέρια!



Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψη τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων γιὰ τὴν ἐκδοση τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οικονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντας κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὅσιος Ποιμῆν».

## ST. THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE ON PRAYER, PART 1 OF 3

*From the Letters of St. Theophan the Recluse (Source: Orthodox Christian Information Center)*



**B**orn as George Govorov (1815-1895), St. Theophan became a monk in 1845. After serving as a headmaster, professor and rector he became rector of the St. Petersburg Seminary in 1857. During his travels he learned French, Greek, Arabic and Hebrew. In 1859 as an archimandrite he was consecrated bishop of the St. Alexander Nevski Lavra in St. Petersburg. In 1866 he requested permission

to retire to the Vysha Monastery in Tambov, which was accepted and he was appointed abbot of that monastery. He remained there for the rest of his life becoming a recluse in 1872. During his reclusion he wrote a great many books and had a vast correspondence. Most of his manuscripts are preserved at the St. Panteleimon Monastery on the Holy Mountain.

### The Art and Science of Prayer (from Letter 15)

You write that you prayed fervently and at once you were calmed, receiving an inner assurance that you would be released from oppression; and then, indeed, it was so...

Recall how you prayed and always strive to pray this way, so that prayer comes from the heart and is not just thought by the mind and chattered by the tongue.

I won't conceal the fact that, though once you prayed from the heart, it is hardly possible to pray that way constantly. Such prayer is given by God or is inspired by your Guardian Angel. It comes and goes. It does not follow, though, that we should give up the labor of prayer. Prayer of the heart comes when one makes an effort; to those who do not strive, it will not come. We see that the Holy Fathers made extraordinary efforts in prayer, and by their struggles they kindled the warm spirit of prayer. How they came to this prayerful state is illustrated in the writings they have left us. Everything they say about striving in prayer makes up the science of prayer, which is the science of sciences. The time will come when we will study this art\*. But now, since it came up in our correspondence, I touch on it only in passing. Let me add: There is nothing more important than prayer; therefore, our greatest attention and most diligent attention must attend it. Grant us, O Lord, zeal for such an effort!

(\* see the classic work *The Art of Prayer* (Faber & Faber)

### Wandering Thoughts during Prayer (from Letter 31)

Thoughts wander when one is reading spiritual works and during prayer. What should one do? No one is free from this.

There is no sin in it, only vexation. Having wandering thoughts becomes a sin when one willingly allows flightiness of mind. But if thoughts scatter involuntarily, what fault can there be? There is fault, though, when one notices thoughts wandering and, taking no action, one wanders along with them. When we catch our thoughts wandering off, we must bring them back to their proper place at once.

To be free from the tendency to have wandering thoughts during prayer, one must concentrate and pray with warmth. Before prayer, one should prepare for such an effort by making prostrations and by a moment of reflection.

Accustom yourself to pray your own prayers. For instance: it is the essence of evening prayer to thank God for the day and everything that happened, both pleasant and unpleasant; to ask forgiveness for all wrongs committed, promising to improve during the next day; and to pray that God preserve you during sleep. Express all this to God from your mind and from your whole heart.

The essence of morning prayer is to thank God for sleep, rest and regained strength and to pray that He will help us do everything to His glory. Express this to Him with your mind and with your whole heart. Along with such prayers in the morning and evening, present your greatest needs to the Lord, especially spiritual needs. Besides spiritual needs, present your worldly cares, saying to Him as would a child: "See, O Lord, my sickness and weakness! Help and heal!" All this and the like can be spoken before God in your own words, without the use of a prayer book. Try this and, if it works, you may leave the prayer book altogether; but if not, you must pray with the prayer book, otherwise you might end up with no prayer at all.

### Spiritual Coldness (from Letter 40)

You have correctly determined that the enemy of our fundamental striving for prayer, and, therefore, our chief enemy, is a [spiritual] cooling. Oh, what a bitter and wretched state it is! But realize that not all decrease in the heat of fervor is pernicious chill. Some comes from weakness, other from disease of the body. Neither is bad; both will pass.

Disastrous cooling down is caused by falling away from God's will, through our own willful passion for anything ungodly. Willful passion runs counter to our conscience, which tries to enlighten and to keep us from ungodly desires. Willful passion kills the spirit and cuts off spiritual life. This you must fear most of all—as fire, as death itself. Willful passion is caused by a loss of the fear of God and by inattention to oneself. These, then, you must watch for in order to avoid such a terrible evil. As for those times when a cooling down comes involuntarily, due to sickness or weakness of body, one law applies: Endure, without changing your appointed rule, even if it is completely without savor. For those who endure patiently, cold feelings pass, and the usual warm and heartfelt fervor quickly returns.

Please, hold it in your mind and make it a rule, never to let cooling arbitrarily steal away your fervor. In case of unavoidable cooling, make it another rule to drag and to keep dragging through your established prayer rule, with the assurance that this dry performance of deeds will soon bring back life and warmth to your prayer.

#### Brief Prayers (from Letter 42)

Zealous Christians have a certain technique that they apply to secure the continual remembrance of God more firmly. It is the constant repetition of a short prayer, ordinarily either, "Lord, have mercy," or "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner." If you haven't heard this, then listen now. If you have never done this, begin now.

#### Time Will Bring a Constant Remembrance of God (from Letter 43)

Be encouraged! Take up prayer more readily and continue without interruptions—and you will soon achieve your desired goal. Soon a reverent attention to the One God will be established, and with it, inner peace. I say soon, not now, or in a day or two. Months may be required, sometimes, even years. Ask the Lord and He will help.

#### Worldly Cares (from Letter 49)

There is a widely-accepted misconception among us that when one becomes involved in work at home or in business, immediately one steps out of the godly realm and away from God-pleasing activities. From this idea, it follows that once the desire to strive toward God germinates, and talk turns toward the spiritual life, then the idea inevitably surfaces: one must run from society, from the home—to the wilderness, to the forest.

Both premises are erroneous!

Homes and communities depend on concerns of daily life and society. These concerns are God-appointed obligations; fulfilling them is not a step toward the ungodly, but is a walking in the way of the Lord.

All who cleave to these erroneous premises fall into the bad habit of thinking that once they accept worldly obligations, they no longer need strive towards God.

I see that these misconceptions have trapped you also. Cast them aside and grasp the concept that everything you do, in and outside your home, concerning social life, as a daughter, as a sister, as a Muscovite—is godly and God-pleasing. There is an appointed commandment for everything in our lives. How can the fulfillment of commandments be displeasing to God? Your misconceptions truly make them ungodly, because you fulfill your daily tasks with an attitude contrary to the one God intended you to have.

You complete godly deeds in an ungodly manner. They are needlessly lost and tear your mind from God. Correct this and, from now on, approach daily matters with the knowledge that to fulfill them is a commandment. Administer them as administering God's law.

Once you adjust yourself to this outlook, no worldly duty will distract you from God. Instead, it will bring you close

to Him. We are all servants of our God. God has assigned to each his place and responsibilities, and He watches to see how each approaches his assignment. He is everywhere. And He watches over you. Keep this in mind and do each deed as if it were assigned to you directly by God, no matter what it is.

Do your housework in this manner: When someone comes to visit, keep in mind that God has sent you this visitor, and is watching. When you have to leave your house, keep in mind that God has sent you out on an errand, and is watching. Will you complete it as He wishes?

By orienting yourself to God at all times, your chores at home and responsibilities outside the house will not distract your attention from God, but, on the contrary, will keep you intent on completing all tasks in a God-pleasing manner. All will be performed with the fear of God, and this fear will keep your attention on God unswervingly.

To determine which duties inside and outside the family are God-pleasing, take the books in which these matters are discussed as your guides. Be careful to distinguish between concerns prompted by frivolity, passions, flattery and worldliness, from those that are correct, appropriate and honorable.

Of course, having expressed the firm determination to live in a God-pleasing manner, you will need no prompting to discriminate between godly tasks and ungodly ones.



## ON ECUMENISM

By Dr. Constantine Cavarnos

Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement has degenerated more and more into an anarchical, truth-despising and canon-despising activity. As such, it cannot but have the strong condemnation of it by enlightened, pious Orthodox Christians. For they take their Faith with the greatest seriousness, regarding it as the only Truth -- the Truth that leads to salvation."

[from "Fr. George Florovsky on Ecumenism," p. 15]

We must all rise to our responsibility to our holy Orthodox Faith, and *speak out* that *we do not accept* the Decree of the recent Synod of Balamand, and *we will not accept* the Decrees of any other Pseudo Synod that might be convoked in the years ahead.... The time has come for all faithful Orthodox Christians *to speak out* and *promptly put to an end* this spurious form of Orthodoxy known as "*ecumenistic Orthodoxy*." It is a *betrayal* of the Holy Orthodox Church, a *negation* of its essence.

[from *Victories of Orthodoxy*, pp. 80-81, emphasis his]

This latter statement was made on 03/16/97, by this world-renowned Orthodox scholar and layman, during a lecture at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Annunciation in Atlanta, GA.



## THE MIRACULOUS POWER OF TRUE HUMILITY

By E. K. Hellige, from *Orthodox America*

This is a story a priest once told me from his pastoral experience. It took place nearly fifty years ago, in Germany, in the city of Ravensburg. After the end of the Second World War, many Russian Orthodox countrymen, especially youth, were literally on the streets, without a roof, without work, without any defense. These were those whom the Germans had brought during the war to work in Germany; they were called Osterbeiter.

Tormented by hunger and their desperate circumstances, some of these youths resorted to stealing food from stores and homes. Those that were caught were sent to jail.

The priest, Fr. Andrei, was informed that a whole group of these fellows were in jail. After inquiring what days and times visitors were permitted, he went to visit them as soon as possible.

In the large reception room of the prison, there were already Roman Catholic priests, Protestant pastors, and representatives of other faiths talking to groups of prisoners. At his request, the Orthodox youths were brought in; it was a fairly sizeable group. Their faces were sullen and mistrustful.

Fr. Andrei put on his vestments. After saying a few words to the youth, he read the preparatory rule for Holy Communion. He then began to confess them.

All of them, without exception, approached for confession. Many of them were still sobbing and shedding tears of repentance as they stepped aside for the next prisoner.

They all then began the service. Among the prisoners were a few that were familiar with the prayers and chants. The jail room was rapidly transformed into a temple of God!

They all prayed fervently, as members of other faiths looked on attentively and with interest at what was going on in that corner of the room. All of the Orthodox youth partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, many with tears.

After the service, the youths surrounded Fr. Andrei and one after the other began telling him the story of their life, or asked for advice on how to resolve their particular problem. The meeting was brought to a halt by the prison police; visiting hours were over. Reluctant to part, the youths embraced him upon leaving; in their eyes one could already see joy and hope. They waved their hands and wiped away tears with their fists. (Their hope was justified; not long afterwards they were all released.)

Fr. Andrei began to take off his vestments. Some Roman Catholic monks approached him, as well as other pastors and priests. "We all witnessed your ministry to these prisoners, and we are all amazed," they said. "We come here regularly. We bring Bibles, books, money and gifts to the prisoners. We conduct long discussions with them, but their hearts and souls remain closed to us. They are cold and indifferent to all that

we do and say to them. We see you here for the first time. Tell us, how is it that all your prisoners so readily and eagerly, even tearfully, agreed to have confession and participate in a church service and to receive the Holy Mysteries? What did you tell your prisoners, when they were brought to you? After all, you had never met them before."

Fr. Andrei was silent. . . They all insisted: "Come, Batiushka. What did you say to the youth?" They all asked. "What did you say?"

Fr. Andrei then responded and told them the words which he conveyed to the imprisoned youth – he simply told them the honest truth: "Brothers, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, our Lord who rose from the dead, sent me here to you, to this prison. I am an ordained servant of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, which our Lord Jesus Christ established on earth through His grievous sufferings and the shedding of His innocent blood for the sake of us sinners. Brothers, know this, by all rights it is not you that should be prisoners here but I, for all my many sins. Let us pray. Let us repent together."

When Fr. Andrei finished this story, tears streamed down his cheeks...

May every true Orthodox Christian raise his hand in the sign of the Cross in eternal memory of mitred-archpriest Fr. Andrei Nakonechny, who, through his humility of wisdom, brought to repentance many lost rational sheep and returned them to the fold of their Holy Mother Church. Fr. Andrei reposed September, 1983, in Seattle where he was rector of St. Nicholas Church. He is buried in the cemetery of Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville.



### ON LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

My child, always justify your brother and reproach yourself. Never justify your deeds. Learn to say, "Bless"---in other words, "Forgive me"---and humility will dwell within you. Have patience and overlook your brother's faults, remembering God's forbearance towards your own faults. Love as Jesus loves you and as you want others to love you. Hold on to silence, constant prayer, and self-reproach, and then you will see how much mourning and tears and joy you will feel. But if you fail to hold on to them, in other words, if you neglect to apply them, then coldness and dryness will replace the above graces.

Love the brethren. Your love will show when, despite all your brother's weaknesses, you count them as nothing and love him. Love will keep you from all sins. Think of nothing but your own sinfulness. Reproach yourself constantly---this is the best path.

From the book "Counsels from the Holy Mountain,"  
the Letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim

## PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

By St. John of Kronstadt



**I**a sinful soul, confess to our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, all of my evil acts which I have done, said or thought from baptism even unto this present day.

I have not kept the vows of my baptism, but have made myself unwanted before the face of God.

I have sinned before the Lord by lack of faith and by doubts concerning the Orthodox Faith and the Holy Church; by ungratefulness for

all of God's great and unceasing gifts; His long-suffering and His providence for me, a sinner; by lack of love for the Lord, as well as fear, through not fulfilling the Holy Commandments of God and the canons and rules of the Church.

I have not preserved a love for God and for my neighbor nor have I made enough efforts, because of laziness and lack of care, to learn the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Holy Fathers.

I have sinned: by not praying in the morning and in the evening and in the course of the day; by not attending the services or by coming to Church only half-heartedly, lazily and carelessly; by conversing during the services, by not paying attention, letting my mind wander and by departure from the Church before the dismissal and blessing.

I have sinned by judging members of the clergy.

I have sinned by not respecting the Feasts, breaking the Fasts, and by immoderation in food and drink.

I have sinned by self-importance, disobedience, willfulness, self-righteousness, and the seeking of approval and praise.

I have sinned by unbelief, lack of faith, doubts, despair, despondency, abusive thoughts, blasphemy and swearing.

I have sinned by pride, a high opinion of myself, narcissism, vanity, conceit, envy, love of praise, love of honors, and by putting on airs.

I have sinned: by judging, malicious gossip, anger, remembering of offenses done to me, hatred and returning evil for evil; by slander, reproaches, lies, slyness, deception and hypocrisy; by prejudices, arguments, stubbornness, and an unwillingness to give way to my neighbor; by gloating, spitefulness, taunting, insults and mocking; by gossip, by speaking too much and by empty speech.

I have sinned by unnecessary and excessive laughter, by reviling and dwelling upon my previous sins, by arrogant behavior, insolence and lack of respect.

I have sinned by not keeping my physical and spiritual passions in check, by my enjoyment of impure thoughts, licentiousness and unchastity in thoughts, words and deeds.

I have sinned by lack of endurance towards my illnesses and sorrows, a devotion to the comforts of life and by being too

attached to my parents, children, relatives and friends.

I have sinned by hardening my heart, having a weak will and by not forcing myself to do good.

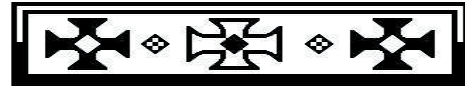
I have sinned by miserliness, a love of money, the acquisition of unnecessary things and immoderate attachment to things.

I have sinned by self-justification, a disregard for the admonitions of my conscience and failing to confess my sins through negligence or false pride.

I have sinned many times by my Confession: belittling, justifying and keeping silent about sins.

I have sinned against the Most-holy and Life-creating Mysteries of the Body and Blood of our Lord by coming to Holy Communion without humility or the fear of God.

I have sinned in deed, word and thought, knowingly and unknowingly, willingly and unwillingly, thoughtfully and thoughtlessly, and it is impossible to enumerate all of my sins because of their multitude. But I truly repent of these and all others not mentioned by me because of my forgetfulness and I ask that they be forgiven through the abundance of the Mercy of God.



### WISDOM FROM ABBA POIMEN

"For someone to teach another, he must be healthy in his soul and free of passions," says Abba Poimen. "There is no use in building the house of another, while your own is being destroyed."

"He who teaches others, without putting to practice any of that which he teaches," the same Father further says, "is like a spring which irrigates and flows over all that is around it, while it is filled with every sort of dirt."

Abba Poimen, was once approached by a learned theologian who wanted to dialogue about the spiritual life and heavenly things. Abba Poimen kept silent. His disciple was disturbed and told his old master afterwards that the theologian enjoyed great prestige and had traveled far to meet with him. Abba Poimen replied: "He dwells on heights and speaks of heavenly things; but I belong to the lower regions and speak of earthly things. If he had spoken about the passions of the soul, I would certainly have answered him. But when he talks about what is spiritual, I don't understand it."

The theologian was operating out of a spirituality from above. He began immediately to speak about God and spiritual things. St. Poimen operated out of a spirituality from below. For him, confronting one's desires and inordinate inclinations was the only path to God. It is like the monk who was rebuked by a brother monk for having a long discussion with a peasant woman on the rearing of turkeys. "You should have been talking to her instead about her spiritual life," he told him. His companion humbly replied: "But her whole life is in those turkeys."

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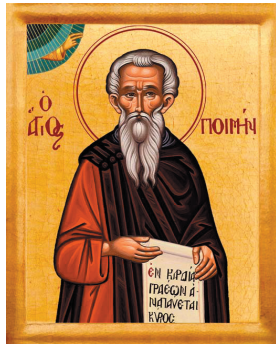
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## ABOUT THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE APOSTLES

*“What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands... we proclaim now to you” (1 St. John 1:1 – 1:3)*

Behold, such is the apostolic preaching! The apostles speak neither as worldly sages, nor like philosophers and even less as theoreticians who make suppositions about something in order to discover something.

The apostles speak about things which they have not sought but which unexpectedly surrounded them; about the fact which they did not discover but, so to speak, unexpectedly found them and seized them. They did not occupy themselves with spiritual researches nor have they studied psychology, neither did they, much less, occupy themselves with spiritism.

Their occupation was fishing - one totally experiential physical occupation. While they were fishing, the God-Man [Jesus] appeared to them and cautiously and slowly introduced them to a new vocation in the service

of Himself.

At first, they did not believe Him but they, still more cautiously and slowly with fear and hesitation and much wavering, came toward Him and recognized Him.

Until the apostles saw Him many times with their own eyes and, until they discussed Him many times among themselves, and until they felt Him with their own hands, their experienced fact is supernatural but their method of recognizing

this fact is thoroughly sensory and positively learned. Not even one contemporary scholar would be able to use a more positive method to know Christ.

The apostles saw not only one miracle but numerous miracles. They heard not only one lesson but so many lessons they could not be contained in numerous books. They saw the resurrected Lord for forty days: they walked with Him, they conversed with Him, they ate with Him, and they touched Him. In a word, they personally and first handedly had thousands of wondrous facts by which they learned and confirmed one great fact, i.e., that Christ is the God-Man, the Son of the Living God, the Man-loving Savior of mankind and the All-Powerful



Judge of the living and the dead.

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

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## THE WORD BECAME FLESH!

*A sermon by St John of Kronstadt on the Nativity of Christ*

The Word became flesh; that is, the Son of God, co-eternal with God the Father and with the Holy Spirit, became human – having become incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. O, wondrous, awesome and salvific mystery! The One Who had no beginning took on a beginning according to humanity; the One without flesh assumed flesh. God became man – without ceasing to be God. The Unapproachable One became approachable to all, in the aspect of a humble servant. Why, and for what reason, was there such condescension [shown] on the part of the Creator toward His transgressing creatures – toward humanity which, through an act of its own will, had fallen away from God, its Creator?

It was by reason of a supreme, inexpressible mercy toward His creation on the part of the Master, Who could not bear to see the entire race of mankind – which, He, in creating, had endowed with wondrous gifts – enslaved by the devil and thus destined for eternal suffering and torment.

And the Word became flesh!... in order to make us earthly beings into heavenly ones, in order to make sinners into saints; in order to raise us up from corruption into incorruption, from earth to heaven; from enslavement to sin and the devil – into the glorious freedom of children of God; from death – into immortality,

in order to make us sons of God and to seat us together with Him upon the Throne as His royal children.

O, boundless compassion of God! O, inexpressible wisdom of God! O, great wonder, astounding not only the human mind, but the angelic [mind] as well!

Let us glorify God! With the coming of the Son of God in the flesh upon the earth, with His offering Himself up as a sacrifice for the sinful human race, there is given to those who believe the blessing of the Heavenly Father, replacing that curse which had been uttered by God in



the beginning; they are adopted and receive the promise of an eternal inheritance of life. To a humanity orphaned by reason of sin, the Heavenly Father returns anew through the mystery of re-birth, that is, through baptism and repentance. People are freed of the tormenting, death-bearing authority of the devil, of the afflictions of sin and of various passions.

Human nature is deified for the sake of the boundless compassion of the Son of God; and its sins are purified; the defiled are sanctified. The ailing are healed. Upon those in dishonour are boundless honour and glory bestowed.

Those in darkness are enlightened by the Divine light of grace and reason.

The human mind is given the rational power of God – we have the mind of Christ (Cor. 2, 16), says the Holy Apostle Paul. To the human heart, the heart of Christ is given. The perishable is made immortal. Those naked and wounded by sin and by passions are adorned in Divine glory. Those who hunger and thirst are sated and assuaged by the nourishing and soul-strengthening Word of God

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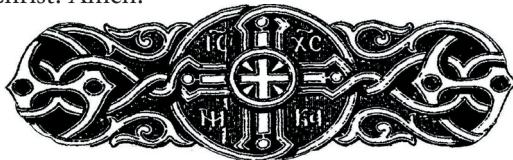
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and by the most pure Body and Divine Blood of Christ. The inconsolable are consoled. Those ravaged by the devil have been – and continue to be – delivered.

What, then, O brethren, is required of us in order that we might avail ourselves of all the grace brought unto us from on high by the coming to earth of the Son of God? What is necessary, first of all, is faith in the Son of God, in the Gospel as the salvation – bestowing heavenly teaching; a true repentance of sins and the correction of life and of heart; communion in prayer and in the mysteries [sacraments]; the knowledge and fulfillment of Christ’s commandments. Also necessary are the virtues: Christian humility, almsgiving, continence, purity and chastity, simplicity and goodness of heart.

Let us, then, O brothers and sisters, bring these virtues as a gift to the One Who was born for the sake of our salvation – let us bring them in place of the gold, frankincense and myrrh which the Magi brought Him, as to One Who is King, God, and Man, come to die for us. This, from us, shall be the most pleasing form of sacrifice to God and to the Infant Jesus Christ. Amen.



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## ON FASTING

*By St. John Chrysostom, extracted from his homilies “On Fasting”*

Fasting is a medicine. But medicine, as beneficial as it is, becomes useless because of the inexperience of the user. He has to know the appropriate time that the medicine should be taken and the right amount of medicine and the condition of the body which is to take it, the weather conditions and the season of the year and the appropriate diet of the sick and many other things. If any of these things are overlooked, the medicine will do more harm than good. So, if one who is going to heal the body needs so much accuracy, when we care for the soul and are concerned about healing it from bad thoughts, it is necessary to examine and observe everything with every possible detail.

Fasting is the change of every part of our life, because the sacrifice of the fast is not the abstinence but the distancing from sins. Therefore, whoever limits the fast to the deprivation of food, he is the one who, in reality, abhors and ridicules the fast. Are you fasting? Show me your fast with your works. Which works? If you see someone who is poor, show him mercy. If you see an enemy, reconcile with him. If you see a friend who is becoming successful, do not be jealous of him! If you see a beautiful woman on the street, pass her by.

In other words, not only should the mouth fast, but the eyes and the legs and the arms and all the other parts of the body should fast as well. Let the hands fast, remaining clean from stealing and greediness. Let the legs fast, avoiding roads which lead to sinful sights. Let the eyes fast by not fixing themselves on beautiful faces and by not observing the beauty of others. You are not eating meat, are you? You should not eat debauchery with your eyes as well. Let your hearing also fast. The fast of hearing is not to accept bad talk against others

and sly defamations.

Let the mouth fast from disgraceful and abusive words, because, what gain is there when, on the one hand we avoid eating chicken and fish and, on the other, we chew-up and consume our brothers? He who condemns and blasphemes is as if he has eaten brotherly meat, as if he has bitten into the flesh of his fellow man. It is because of this that Paul frightened us, saying: "If you chew up and consume one another be careful that you do not annihilate yourselves."

You did not thrust your teeth into the flesh (of your neighbor) but you thrust bad talk in his soul; you wounded it by spreading dis fame, causing unestimatable damage both to yourself, to him, and to many others.

If you cannot go without eating all day because of an ailment of the body, beloved one, no logical man will be able to criticize you for that. Besides, we have a Lord who is meek and loving (philanthropic) and who does not ask for anything beyond our power. Because he neither requires the abstinence from foods, neither that the fast take place for the simple sake of fasting, neither is its aim that we remain with empty stomachs, but that we fast to offer our entire selves to the dedication of spiritual things, having distanced ourselves from secular things. If we regulated our life with a sober mind and directed all of our interest toward spiritual things, and if we ate as much as we needed to satisfy our necessary needs and offered our entire lives to good works, we would not have any need of the help rendered by the fast. But because human nature is indifferent and gives itself over mostly to comforts and gratifications, for this reason the philanthropic Lord, like a loving and caring father, devised the therapy of the fast for us, so that our gratifications would be completely stopped and that our worldly cares be transferred to spiritual works. So, if there are some who have gathered here and who are hindered by somatic ailments and cannot remain without food, I advise them to nullify the somatic ailment and not to deprive themselves from this spiritual teaching, but to care for it even more.

For there exist, there really exist, ways which are even more important than abstinence from food which can open the gates which lead to God with boldness. He, therefore, who eats and cannot fast, let him display richer almsgiving, let him pray more, let him have a more intense desire to hear divine words. In this, our somatic illness is not a hindrance. Let him become reconciled with his enemies, let him distance from his soul every resentment. If he wants to accomplish these things, then he has done the true fast, which is what the Lord asks of us more than anything else. It is for this reason that he asks us to abstain from food, in order to place the flesh in subjection to the fulfillment of his commandments, whereby curbing its impetuosity. But if we are not about to offer to ourselves the help rendered by the fast because of bodily illness and at the same time display greater indifference, we will see ourselves in an unusual exaggerated way. For if the fast does not help us when all the aforementioned accomplishments are missing so much is the case when we display greater indifference because

we cannot even use the medicine of fasting. Since you have learned these things from us, I pardon you, those who can, fast and you yourselves increase your acuteness and praiseworthy desire as much as possible.

To the brothers, though, who cannot fast because of bodily illness, encourage them not to abandon this spiritual word, teaching them and passing on to them all the things we say here, showing them that he who eats and drinks with moderation is not unworthy to hear these things but he who is indifferent and slack. You should tell them the bold and daring saying that "he who eats for the glory of the Lord eats and he who does not eat for the glory of the Lord does not eat and pleases God." For he who fasts pleases God because he has the strength to endure the fatigue of the fast and he that eats also pleases God because nothing of this sort can harm the salvation of his soul, as long as he does not want it to. Because our philanthropic God showed us so many ways by which we can, if we desire, take part in God's power that it is impossible to mention them all.

We have said enough about those who are missing, being that we want to eliminate them from the excuse of shame. For they should not be ashamed because food does not bring on shame but the act of some wrongdoing. Sin is a great shame. If we commit it not only should we feel ashamed but we should cover ourselves exactly the same way those who are wounded do. Even then we should not forsake ourselves but rush to confession and thanksgiving. We have such a Lord who asks nothing of us but to confess our sins, after the commitment of a sin which was due to our indifference, and to stop at that point and not to fall into the same one again. If we eat with moderation we should never be ashamed, because the Creator gave us such a body which cannot be supported in any other way except by receiving food. Let us only stop excessive food because that attributes a great deal to the health and well-being of the body.

Let us therefore in every way cast off every destructive madness so that we may gain the goods which have been promised to us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Whatever gentleness you use in speaking with others, that very same gentleness will Christ use with you. With whatever measure you measure out to others, with that very same measure will He apportion out to you. Just as you forgive the failings of others, He forgives yours. With whatever love and gentleness you seek Him, likewise will He appear to you.

*Monastic Wisdom:  
The Letters of Elder Joseph the Hesychast.*

## THE CHURCH OF GREECE ON FREEMASONRY

*The Official Statement of the Church of Greece (1933)*

It is clear from the following statement that Orthodox Christians must disavow the masonic movement and resign from it if they have joined it in ignorance of its goals. Albert Pike, a famous 33<sup>rd</sup> degree Mason and head of the Southern masonic Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry (also termed by a number of well known masonic authors as the *Plato* of Freemasonry, and even the masonic *Pope*), in his *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (published in 1871) tells us that "Every masonic Lodge is a temple of religion; and its teachings are instruction in religion." (p. 213) "Masonry, around whose altars the Christian, the Hebrew, the Moslem, the Brahim, the followers of Confucius and Zoroaster, can assemble as brethren and unite in prayer to the one God who is above all the Baalism." (p. 226) "Masonry, like all religions, all the Mysteries, conceals its secrets from all except the Adepts and Sages or Elect and uses false explanations and interpretations of its symbols to mislead those who deserve only to be misled." (p. 105 )

### The Official Statement

The Bishops of the Church of Greece in their session of October 12, 1933, concerned themselves with the study and examination of the secret international organization, Freemasonry. They heard with attention the introductory exposition of the Commission of four Bishops appointed by the Holy Synod at its last session; also the opinion of the Theological Faculty of the University of Athens, and the particular opinion of Prof. Panagiotis Bratsiotis which was appended thereto. They also took into consideration publications on this question in Greece and abroad. After a discussion they arrived at the following conclusions, accepted unanimously by all the Bishops.

Freemasonry is not simply a philanthropic union or a philosophical school, but constitutes a mystagogical system which reminds us of the ancient heathen mystery-religions and cults from which it descends and is their continuation and regeneration. This is not only admitted by prominent teachers in the lodges, but they declare it with pride, affirming literally: Freemasonry is the only survival of the ancient mysteries and can be called the guardian of them; Freemasonry is a direct offspring of the Egyptian mysteries; the humble workshop of the masonic Lodge is nothing else than the caves and the darkness of the cedars of India and the unknown depths of the Pyramids and the crypts of the magnificent temples of Isis; in the Greek mysteries of Freemasonry, having passed along the luminous roads of knowledge under the mysteriarchs Prometheus, Dionysus and Orpheus, formulated the eternal laws of the Universe!

Such a link between Freemasonry and the ancient idola-

trous mysteries is also manifested by all that is enacted and performed at the initiations. As in the rites of the ancient idolatrous mysteries, the drama of the labors and death of the mystery god was repeated, and in the imitative repetition of this drama the initiate dies together with the patron of the mystery religion, who was always a mythical person symbolizing the Sun of nature which dies in winter and is regenerated in spring, so it is also, in the initiation of the third degree, of the patron of Freemasonry, Hiram and a kind of repetition of his death, in which the initiate suffers with him, struck by the same instruments and on the same parts of the body as Hiram. According to the confession of a prominent teacher of Freemasonry Hiram is "as Osiris, as Mithra, and as Bacchus, one of the personifications of the Sun."

Thus Freemasonry is, as granted, a mystery-religion, quite different, separate, and alien to the Christian faith. This is shown without any doubt by the fact that it possesses its own temples with altars, which are characterized by prominent teachers as "workshops which cannot have less history and holiness than the Church" and as temples of virtue and wisdom where the Supreme Being is worshipped and the truth is taught. It possesses its own religious ceremonies, such as the ceremony of adoption or the masonic baptism, the ceremony of conjugal acknowledgement or the masonic marriage, the masonic memorial service, the consecration of the masonic temple, and so on. It possesses its own initiations, its own ceremonial ritual, its own hierarchical order and a definite discipline. As may be concluded from the masonic agapes and from the feasting of the winter and summer solstices with religious meals and general rejoicings, it is a physiolatric religion.

It is true that it may seem at first that Freemasonry can be reconciled with every other religion, because it is not interested directly in the religion to which its initiates belong. This is, however, explained by its syncretistic character and proves that in this point also it is an offspring and a continuation of ancient idolatrous mysteries which accepted for initiation worshippers of all gods. But as the mystery religions, in spite of the apparent spirit of tolerance and acceptance of foreign gods, lead to a syncretism which undermined and gradually shook confidence in other religions, thus Freemasonry today, which seeks to embrace in itself gradually all mankind and which promises to give moral perfection and knowledge of truth, is lifting itself to the position of a kind of super-religion, looking on all religions (without excepting Christianity) as inferior to itself. Thus it develops in its initiates the idea that only in masonic lodges is performed the shaping and the smoothing of the unsmoothed and unhewn stone. And the fact alone that Freemasonry creates a brotherhood excluding all other brotherhoods outside it (which are considered by Freemasonry as "uninstructed," even when they are Christian) proves clearly its pretensions to be a super-religion. This means that by masonic initiation, a Christian becomes a brother of



the Muslim, the Buddhist, or any kind of rationalist, while the Christian not initiated in Freemasonry becomes to him an outsider.

On the other hand, Freemasonry in prominently exalting knowledge and in helping free research as “putting no limit in the search of truth” (according to its rituals and constitution), and more than this by adopting the so-called natural ethic, shows itself in this sense to be in sharp contradiction with the Christian religion. For the Christian religion exalts faith above all, confining human reason to the limits traced by Divine Revelation and leading to holiness through the supernatural action of grace. In other words, which Christianity, as a religion of Revelation, possessing its rational and superrational dogmas and truths, asks for faith first, and grounds its moral structure on the super-natural Divine Grace, Freemasonry has only natural truth and brings to the knowledge of its initiates free thinking and investigation through reason only. It bases its moral structure only on the natural forces of man, and has only natural aims.

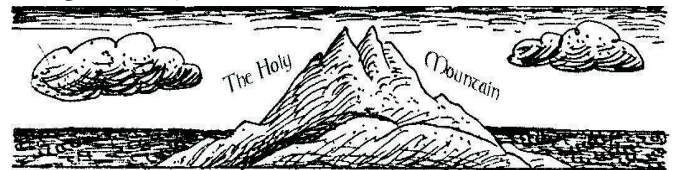
Thus, the incompatible contradiction between Christianity and Freemasonry is quite clear. It is natural that various Churches of other denominations have taken a stand against Freemasonry. Not only has the Western Church branded for its own reasons the masonic movement by numerous Papal encyclicals, but Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian communities have also declared it to be incompatible with Christianity. Much more has the Orthodox Catholic Church, maintaining in its integrity the treasure of Christian faith proclaimed against it every time that the question of Freemasonry has been raised. Recently, the Inter-Orthodox Commission which met on Mount Athos and in which the representatives of all the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches took part, has characterized Freemasonry as a “false and anti-Christian system.”

The assembly of the Bishops of the Church of Greece in the above mentioned session heard with relief and accepted the following conclusions which were drawn from the investigations and discussions by its President His Grace Archbishop Chrysostom of Athens:

Freemasonry cannot be at all compatible with Christianity as far as it is a secret organization, acting and teaching in mystery and secret and deifying rationalism. Freemasonry accepts as its members not only Christians, but also Jews and Muslims. Consequently clergymen cannot be permitted to take part in this association. I consider as worthy of degradation every clergyman who does so. It is necessary to urge upon all who entered it without due thought and without examining what Freemasonry is, to sever all connections with it, for Christianity alone is the religion which teaches absolute truth and fulfills the religious and moral needs of men. Unanimously and with one voice all the Bishops of the Church of Greece have approved what was said, and we declare that all the faithful children of the Church must stand apart from Freemasonry. With un-

shaken faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ “in whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His Grace, whereby He abounds to us in all wisdom and prudence” (Ephes. 1, 7-9) possessing the truth revealed by Him and preached by the Apostles, not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in the partaking in the Divine Sacraments through which we are sanctified and saved by eternal life, we must not fall from the grace of Christ by becoming partakers of other mysteries. It is not lawful to belong at the same time to Christ and to search for redemption and moral perfection outside Him. For these reasons true Christianity is incompatible with Freemasonry.

Therefore, all who have become involved in the initiations of masonic mysteries must from this moment sever all relations with masonic lodges and activities, being sure that they are thereby of a certainty renewing their links with our one Lord and Savior which were weakened by ignorance and by a wrong sense of values. The Assembly of the Bishops of the Church of Greece expects this particularly and with love from the initiates of the lodges, being convinced that most of them have received masonic initiation not realizing that by it they were passing into another religion, but on the contrary from ignorance, thinking that they had done nothing contrary to the faith of their fathers. Recommending them to the sympathy, and in no wise to the hostility or hatred of the faithful children of the Church, the Assembly of the Bishops calls them to pray with her from the heart in Christian love, that the one Lord Jesus Christ “the way, the truth and the life” may illumine and return to the truth who in ignorance have gone astray.



**I**f a person is to change, the grace of God must come; but in order for the grace of God to come, man must be humbled.

**C**ontinue along your path. The devil will come with his tempting thoughts and will tug at your sleeve, so as to disorient you. Don't turn to him, don't start a conversation with him, and don't oppose him. In this way, the devil will get bored and will leave you alone.

**E**very person who insults us, wrongs us, slanders us, who wrongs us in any way, is a brother who fell into the hands of the worker of evil, the devil. When we challenge this brother, we must feel great sorrow for him --- sympathize with him, and beseech God fervently and quietly to strengthen us during the difficult hour of our trial and to have mercy on our brother, who became a victim of the devil. God will help us as well as him.

Blessed Elder Porphyrios (+1991)

## A MIRACLE BY ST. SPYRIDON

*From the web pages of Holy Orthodoxy (<http://holyorthodoxy.tripod.com>)*



Approximately thirteen hundred years after his repose, Saint Spyridon's (feast day December 12<sup>th</sup>) body remains incorrupt on the island of Corfu, generating an untold number of miracles. What is significant about this extraordinary miracle, and possibly shocking to some of our Christians, is the fact that God or His Saints do not necessarily accept the offerings or the prayers of heretical and deluded Christians.

In 1716, the Turks had the island of Corfu under a tight siege. They had 50,000 troops and a good number of ships surrounding the island, cutting its lifeline from land and sea.

The barbarian armies were concentrated at the far walls of the city. Pizani, a general of the forces of the Venetian Republic, was anxiously anticipating the oncoming enemy attack (Corfu and the nearby islands were occupied by Italy at the time). At daybreak on August 11, 1716, St. Spyridon, the patron saint of the island, appeared in front of the enemy lines holding a glistening sword in his right hand. His austere and grandiose appearance horrified the aggressors who began to recede. The Agarenes, panic-stricken by the most awesome presence and fearless attack of the Saint, abandoned weapons, machinery and animals running for their lives. This great miracle became known throughout the island. The Turks had left behind 120 cannons, a good amount of weapons, ammunition, animals and food.

After this powerful, surprising and most obvious miracle, the Venetian ruler Andrew Pizani, a Papist, wanted to erect a Papist altar in the Orthodox Church of St. Spyridon (forever pushing for this was also the Papist Cardinal of the island). However, St. Spyridon appeared to Pizani in a dream saying, "Why are you bothering me? The altar of your faith is unacceptable in my Temple!" Naturally Pizani reported this to the Papist Cardinal who answered that it was nothing but an evil fantasy of the devil who wanted to nullify the noble deed. After this Pizani was very much encouraged, so he ordered the necessary materials to commence construction of the altar. The materials were piled up outside of the temple of St. Spyridon. When the Orthodox priests of the temple and the Greek leaders of the island realized this, they were cut to the heart. They asked to meet with Pizani to beg him to put a stop to this.

Pizani's response was quite disheartening. He bluntly said, "As the ruler, I will do whatever I please!" At that moment, the Orthodox community of the island turned their eyes to their Saint beseeching him to put a stop to this abomination.

That same night, St. Spyridon appeared to Pizani as a monk and told him, "I told you not to bother me. If you dare to go through with your decision, you will surely regret it, but by then it will be too late."

The next morning Pizani reported all this to the Papist Cardinal who now accused him of being not only faithless but "yellow." Again, after this, the ruler mustered up enough courage to order the construction of the altar.

The Papists of the island were celebrating their triumph while the Orthodox were deeply grieved. Their grief could not be comforted and with tears they begged for the Saint's intervention to save them from the Papist abomination. The Saint heard their prayers and intervened dynamically. That evening, a terrible storm broke out unleashing a barrage of thunderbolts on Fort Casteli, the base of Pizani and his ammunition barracks. The entire fort ended up in a holocaust. Nine hundred Papist soldiers and civilians were instantly killed from the explosion, but not a single Orthodox -- who were not allowed in the fort after dark -- was harmed. Pizani was found dead with his neck wedged between two wooden beams. The body of the Papist Cardinal was found thrown a great distance from the fort. But the most amazing fact is that the same night and at the same hour another thunderbolt struck in Venice targeting the compound of Pizani, burning his portrait that hung on the wall. Strangely enough, nothing else was damaged. Also, the guard of the ammunition barracks saw the Saint draw near him with a lit torch. He was carried by the Saint near the church of the Crucified without a single scratch!



There are those who have soft souls and are easily convinced. There are also those who have hard souls and don't yield easily. The difference is as great as that between cotton and iron. The cotton only requires an anointing with words. The iron requires fire and a furnace of temptation to be worked. The man who has a hard character needs to be patient in enduring temptations for there to be a cleansing. When he isn't patient, he is like a lamp without oil, which quickly goes out and is lost.

When you want to learn the will of God, abandon your own will completely -- along with every other thought or plan; and, with much humility, ask God in prayer for His understanding...

Blessed Elder Joseph the Hesychast (+1959)

## Τὰ Χριστούγεννα τῆς Γενιάς μας....

ΠΗΓΗ: Από τὴν «Εκκλησιαστική Παρέμβαση», Δεκέμβριος 2003, διήγηση Σ.Μ.Π., καταγραφή Α.Κ.

**Τ**ὰ Χριστούγεννα εἶναι μία γιορτὴ φορτωμένη ἀναμνήσεις. Καὶ δὲν θὰ μπορούσε νὰ εἶναι διαφορετικά. Τὸ γεγονός τῆς Γεννήσεως ἕνα θαῦμα· ὁ ἑορτασμός του ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησία θαυμάσιος, μοναδικός· ἂν προσθέσουμε καὶ τὸ ὅτι τὰ χρόνια ἐκεῖνα μόνον ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας γιόρταζε τὰ Χριστούγεννα, καταλαβαίνετε γιατί ὑπάρχουν τόσες ἀναμνήσεις. Καὶ ὅταν λέγω ὅτι μόνον ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας γιόρταζε Χριστούγεννα, ἐννοῶ ὅτι δὲν εἶχε γίνει ἀκόμη ἡ μεγάλη αὐτὴ καὶ παγκόσμια γιορτὴ τῆς Χριστιανοσύνης ἀντικείμενο ἐκμετάλλευσης κάθε λογῆς κερδοσκοπῶν.

Τὰ κάλαντα τὰ λέγαμε ἐν χορῶ, ὅλα τὰ παιδιά τοῦ σχολείου μπαίναμε στὴν σειρά καὶ κάναμε τὴν διαδρομὴ ἀπὸ τὸ Γυμνάσιο ἕως τὸν Ἅγιο Δημήτριο, ψάλλοντας τὸ «Καλὴν ἡμέραν ἄρχοντες...», ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλα, ὅπως:

«Δόξα Θεῷ, Δόξα Θεῷ, τὰ δῶρα τῶν μάγων,  
χρυσὸς καὶ κασία, ξενίζει ἢ φάτνη τὸν Θεόν,  
ἀγάλου, ἄχραντε Μαρία, σκιρτήσατε λαοὶ Σιών».

Συμμετεῖχαν ὅλοι οἱ μαθητὲς καὶ μαθήτριες, μὲ τοὺς ὁμαδάρχες τους καὶ τὴν σημαία τοῦ σχολείου. Ἐνα παιδί κρατοῦσε ἕνα πανεράκι, στολισμένο μὲ δάφνη καὶ βέργια, καὶ ἔρριχνε μέσα κανεὶς ὅ,τι εἶχε εὐχαρίστηση καὶ δυνατότητα. Ἡ γιορτὴ στὸ Σχολεῖο ἦταν λαμπρὴ καὶ περιλάμβανε ὕμνους, ποιήματα καὶ ἕνα θεατρικὸ γιὰ τὴν Γέννηση.

Τὸ πρωτὶ τῶν Χριστουγέννων ὅλοι στὸν Ἅγιο Δημήτριο, μὲ καινούρια ρούχα, μετὰ ἀπὸ νηστεία μῆς ἐβδομάδος – τόσο μᾶς κρατοῦσαν τοῦλάχιστον ἐμᾶς τὰ παιδιά. Πηγαίναμε μὲ σειρά καὶ στὴν Ἐκκλησία ὅλο τὸ σχολεῖο. Στὸν δρόμο τραγουδοῦσαμε χριστουγεννιάτικα τραγούδια. Σωπαίναμε στὰ σκαλιά τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Σωπαίναμε καὶ μέσα στὴν Ἐκκλησία, καὶ ἂν ὄχι ἀπὸ ἐσωτερικὴ κατάνυξη, πάντως ἀπὸ τὸν φόβο τῶν δασκάλων. Εἶχε, θυμᾶμαι, κάποιος μιά βέργια ἀπὸ μουριά, μιά λούρα, καὶ τὴν ἔβαζε στὰ μαλλιά τοῦ θορυβοποιῦ, τὴν ἔστριβε καὶ τράβαγε μὲ δύναμη, τὴν βέργια, τὰ μαλλιά καὶ τὸν ψιθυριστή!

Λειτουργῶ ἐνθυμοῦμαι τὸν πάπα-Σιδέρη (πάπα-Γιάννη Σιδέρη) καὶ δεσπότη τὸν Γερμανό. Καὶ οἱ δυὸ ἱεροπρεπεῖς, ἐμποιοῦσαν σεβασμό. Ψάλτες εἶχαμε τότε τὸν Σταῦρο τὸν Αὐγεράκη καὶ τὸν Νίκο τὸν Σπανό. Καλοὶ ψάλτες! Ἐνθυμοῦμαι καὶ τὸν ἀείμνηστο τὸν Γιῶργο τὸν Νόβα, στεκόταν δεξιά τοῦ δεσπότη καὶ ἔψαλε δυνατὰ, ἀλλὰ καὶ γλυκά. Δὲν ξέρω ἂν ἦταν διαφορετικοὶ οἱ καιροί, ἢ ἐμεῖς σκληρόναμε τώρα, ἀλλὰ, θυμᾶμαι, ἂν καὶ παιδί τότε, ἢ Θεία Λειτουργία μᾶς ἀνέβαζε στοὺς οὐρανοὺς!

Κοινωνοῦσαμε ὅλα τὰ παιδιά. Στὴν προετοιμασία γιὰ τὰ Χριστούγεννα ἦταν ὀπωσδήποτε καὶ ἡ ἐξομολόγηση. Ἐξομολόγηση στὸ Δημοτικὸ! Ὅταν ἦμασταν στὸ δημοτικὸ ἢ ἐξομολόγηση λάμβανε κάπως διαφορετικὸ χαρακτήρα – ἀργότερα ἔμαθα ὅτι ὀνόμαζαν αὐτὸ πού κάναμε «ῶρα εἰλικρίνειας» ἢ κάπως ἔτσι. Θυμᾶμαι ὅτι καθόμασταν

ὅλοι ἀνακούρκουδα, μὲς στὴν Ἐκκλησία, ὅλα παιδιά τοῦ δημοτικοῦ, καὶ ὁ Κατηχητὴς μας, ὁ Γιάννης ὁ Ποῦλος, πού ἀργότερα ἔγινε Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος στὴν Ἁγία Τριάδα τῆς Νέας Ὑόρκης, μᾶς ρωτοῦσε διάφορα ἀμαρτήματα, καὶ ὅποιος εἶχε τὸ θάρρος, σήκωνε δειλὰ-δειλὰ τὸ χέρι καὶ ἔλεγε «ἐγὼ τὸ ἔκανα», καὶ ρωτοῦσε τότε ὁ Κατηχητὴς: «γιατί, παιδάκι μου, τὸ ἔκανες αὐτό;», καὶ τὸ παιδί συνέχιζε, ἀνάλογα καὶ μὲ τὸ θάρρος του, καὶ ἐξέφραζε τὴν ἀδυναμία του νὰ ἀντισταθῇ ἢ κάτι ἄλλο. Οἱ ἀμαρτίες πού μᾶς ρωτοῦσε, ἀπ' ὅ,τι θυμᾶμαι ἦταν: ποιὸς εἶπε ψέματα, ποιὸς μούτζωσε, ποιὸς ἔφτυσε κλπ.

Καὶ ἀφοῦ θυμῆθηκα δασκάλους καὶ κατηχητὲς, θὰ ἀναφέρω καὶ ἀλί τὴν δασκάλα μας, γιὰ τὴν ὁποία φυλάω παντοτινὴ εὐγνωμοσύνη, τὴν Φωτεινὴ Μακρή. Αὐτὴ μᾶς ἔμαθε γράμματα, τρόπους, προσοχή, σεβασμό. Πάντοτε, μὰ πάντοτε τὴν μνημονεύω μὲ εὐγνωμοσύνη.

Ἐ, μετὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησία, ἐμεῖς τὰ παιδιά πηγαινο-φέρναμε τὰ χριστουγεννιάτικα πεσκέσια – πίττες, κουραμπιέδες, γλυκά – στὰ συγγενικά καὶ φιλικὰ μας σπίτια, καὶ ἀνάλογα λαμβάναμε καὶ κανὰ φραγκάκι. Ὅλα τὰ σπίτια ἀνοικτὰ. Ἡ πρώτη ἐπίσκεψη στοῦ Ἀνδρέα τοῦ Κοζώνη, γιατί ἡ σύζυγός του, ἡ ἀείμνηστη Ἰουλία, ἔδιδε δίφραγκο!

Τὸ γιορτάσι κρατοῦσε μιά ἐβδομάδα. Ὁ πάπα-Γιάννης ὁ Σιδέρης ἐρχόταν καὶ στὸ σπίτι μας, νὰ ψάλλῃ τὸ «ὕψωμα» καὶ μεῖς τὰ παιδιά χαιρόμασταν καὶ ὅλο γελοῦσαμε...

Νὰ θυμηθῶ καὶ τὰ Φιλόπρωχα Ταμεῖα τῶν Ἐνοριῶν – τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου εἶχε τότε πρόεδρο τὴν Ἰουλία Κοζώνη – πού μοίραζαν τὶς ἡμέρες ἐκεῖνες, ὅπως γίνεται καὶ σήμερα ὅπως παρακολουθῶ, ρούχα, τρόφιμα, γλυκίσματα. Σὲ πολλὲς οἰκογένειες ἔστελναν ἐμᾶς τὰ παιδιά νὰ τὰ παραδώσουμε, γιατί μᾶς δέχονταν πιὸ ἄνετα, πιὸ «ἀξιοπρεπῶς». Ἦταν καὶ ἄλλες γυναῖκες στὰ φιλόπρωχα: ἡ Νίτσα ἢ Μόσχου, ἢ Θεοδώρα Κρυάλου-Κοτίνη, ἢ Φρόσω ἢ Κουμπίου καὶ πολλὲς ἄλλες κυρίες πού, συγγνώμη, δὲν μπορῶ νὰ τις θυμηθῶ ὅλες τώρα.

Τὶ νὰ πρωτοθυμηθῶ; Μιά χρονιά γύρω στὸ '46, ἤμουν τότε στὰ δεκαεπτὰ, ἦλθε ὁ ἀδελφός μου ὁ μέγας – ἦταν τότε εικοσιπέντε χρονῶν – ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀθήνα γεμάτος δῶρα γιὰ τὴν οἰκογένεια. Μαζί του εἶχε φέρει καὶ ἕνα μικρὸ σβουράκι, τὸ «πάρτα ὅλα». Τὸ παρουσίασε στὸ οικογενειακὸ τραπέζι μας καὶ θέλησε νὰ μᾶς δείξῃ πῶς παίζεται. Ὁ ἀείμνηστος πατέρας μου – πῶς τὸ θυμᾶμαι! – σηκώθηκε γεμάτος θυμὸ καὶ τὸ πέταξε· δὲν ἤθελε νὰ μπῆ στὸ σπίτι του ἢ διαφθορά! Naί, τὸ θεώρησε διαφθορά, γιατί εἶχε σχέση μὲ τὴν τύχη. Καὶ χαρτί ποτὲ δὲν παίξαμε στὸ σπίτι μας! Ἦταν καλὸς ὁ πατέρας μου καὶ νοικοκύρης.

Τὰ Φῶτα ὅλοι μαζί στὸ λιμανάκι μας... βούλιαζε ἀπὸ τὸ πλῆθος! Κόσμος πολὺς. Στὰ Φῶτα τοῦ '40 δὲν βρέθηκε ὁ σταυρός· ἔμεινε στὸν πυθμένα τοῦ λιμανιοῦ. Ὁ δεσπότης μας, ὁ Γερμανός, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ κόσμος ὅλος, εἶπε ὅτι κάτι κακὸ θὰ συμβῆ. Τὴν ἴδια χρονιά σὲ ἕνα σπιτάκι στὸ «καινούριο χωριό», στὸ Κεφαλόβρυσο, δάκρυσε ἡ Παναγία. Ὅλοι πήγαμε μὲ δέος νὰ προσκυνήσουμε. Κάναμε καὶ ἀγρυπνία. Ἦταν ἡ χρονιά πού μπῆκαν οἱ Ἴταλοι...

## Εἰς τὸ Γενέθλιον Τοῦ Κυρίου Ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

Ἀπόσπασμα λόγου τοῦ ἐν Ἁγίοις Πατρός ἡμῶν Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου

**Ἄ**λλὰ τί νὰ πῶ; Γιὰ ποιὸ πράγμα νὰ μιλήσω; Μένω ἔκπληκτος μπροστὰ στὸ θαῦμα. Ὁ «Παλαιὸς τῶν ἡμερῶν» ἔχει γίνει παιδάκι. Ὁ καθισμένος σὲ θρόνο ψηλὸ κι ὑπερυψωμένο τοποθετεῖται σὲ φάτνη. Ὁ ἀνηλάφητος κι ἀσύνητος καὶ ἀσύμμικτος καὶ ἀσώματος ἀγκαλιάζεται ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπινα χέρια. Αὐτὸς ποὺ ἔσπασε τὰ δεσμὰ τῆς ἀμαρτίας τυλίγεται μὲ σπάργανα, ἐπειδὴ αὐτὴ εἶν' ἡ θέλησή Του. Γιατί θέλει νὰ μετατρέψει τὴν ἀτιμία σὲ τιμὴ, νὰ ντύσει τὴν ἀδοξία μὲ δόξα. Νὰ προβάλει ὡς ἐνάρετο ἦθος ἐκεῖνο ποὺ ἀποτελοῦσε ὑπέρτατη προσβολή. Ἔτσι, λοιπὸν, ἀναλαμβάνει τὸ δικό μου σῶμα γιὰ νὰ μπορέσω ἐγὼ νὰ ὑποδεχθῶ τὸ Λόγο Του. Καὶ παίρνοντας τὴ σάρκα μου μοῦ χαρίζει τὸ Πνεῦμα Του, ὥστε μὲ τὴ δοσοληψία αὐτὴ νὰ μοῦ προμηθεύσει τὸ θησαυρὸ τῆς ζωῆς. Παίρνει τὴ σάρκα μου γιὰ νὰ μὲ ἀγιάσει. Μοῦ δίνει τὸ Πνεῦμα Του γιὰ νὰ μὲ ἀπελευθερώσει.

Ἄλλὰ τί νὰ πῶ; Γιὰ ποιὸ πράγμα νὰ μιλήσω; «Ἴδου ἡ Παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει.» Καὶ ποιὸν γέννησε; Ποιὸν; Τὸν κυρίαρχο τῆς φύσης. Ἡ φύση τὸ διακηρύττει. Τὸν γέννησε ὅπως Ἐκεῖνος θέλησε νὰ γεννηθεῖ. Ὁ τρόπος τῆς γέννησης δὲν ἦταν ὁ συνηθισμένος φυσικὸς τρόπος, ἀλλὰ Ἐκεῖνος, ὡς κυρίαρχος τῆς φύσης, ὄρισε ἕναν ἀλλιώτικο τρόπο. Νὰ δείξει ἤθελε πὼς ἀκόμα κι ὅταν γίνεται ἄνθρωπος δὲν γεννιέται ὅπως οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἀρμόζει στὸ Θεό. Λοιπὸν, προῆλθε ἀπὸ τὴν Παρθένο ποὺ ὑπερνίκησε τοὺς φυσικοὺς νόμους, ποὺ ξεπέρασε τὴν ἀναγκαιότητα τοῦ γάμου. Ὁ ὑπέρτατος ἀρχηγὸς τῆς ἀγιοσύνης ἔπρεπε νὰ ῥθει στὸν κόσμον μονάχα μέσα ἀπὸ καθαρὸ κι ἅγιο τοκετό. Γιατί Αὐτὸς εἶναι ποὺ τότε ἀπὸ ἄσπιλο χῶμα ἔπλασε τὸν Ἀδὰμ κι ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀδὰμ χωρὶς συμμετοχὴ γυναίκας, δημιούργησε γυναίκα. Ὅπως, λοιπὸν, ὁ Ἀδὰμ χωρὶς τὴν συμμετοχὴ γυναίκας παρήγαγε γυναίκα, ἔτσι καὶ σὰν σήμερα ἡ Παρθένος, χωρὶς τὴν συμμετοχὴ ἄντρα γέννησε ἄντρα. «Γιατί εἶναι ἄνθρωπος», λέει, «καὶ ποιὸς θὰ τὸν ἀναγνωρίσει»; Ἐπειδὴ, λοιπὸν, τὸ γυναικεῖο γένος εἶχε ὑποχρέωση πρὸς τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα, μιὰ καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀδὰμ δημιουργήθηκε ἡ γυναίκα χωρὶς συνδρομὴ γυναίκας, γι' αὐτὸ ἀκριβῶς σὰν σήμερα γέννησε ἡ Παρθένος χωρὶς τὴ συνδρομὴ ἄντρα, γιὰ νὰ ξοφληθεῖ τὸ χρέος τῆς Εὐας πρὸς τοὺς ἄντρες.

Προκειμένου, δηλαδή, νὰ μὴν ὑπερηφανευθεῖ ὅτι μόνος του δημιούργησε τὴ γυναίκα ὁ Ἀδὰμ, γι' αὐτὸ ἀκριβῶς ἡ Παρθένος γέννησε ἄντρα χωρὶς νὰ νυμφευθεῖ, γιὰ νὰ φανεῖ, μὲ τὴν ἀναλογία αὐτὴ τοῦ θαύματος ἡ φυσικὴ ἰσοτιμία τῶν δύο φύλων. Ὅπως, μάλιστα, ὅταν πῆρε ὁ Θεὸς τὴν πλευρὰ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ γιὰ νὰ πλάσει τὴν Εὐά, δὲν τὸν ἄφησε λειψὸ, ἔτσι καὶ ὅταν ἔπλασε τὸν ἔμψυχο ναὸ Του ἀπ' τὴν Παρθένο, δὲν κατάργησε τὴν παρθενία Τῆς. Ἀκέραιος ἔμεινε ὁ Ἀδὰμ καὶ

μετὰ τὴν ἀφαίρεση τῆς πλευρᾶς του. Ἀφθαρτὴ ἔμεινε κι ἡ Παρθένος μετὰ τὸν τοκετό.

Ὁ Θεὸς δὲν δημιούργησε ναὸ Του ἀπὸ κάποια ἄλλη ὕλη, οὔτε ἔπλασε ἕνα ἀλλοιώτικο σῶμα γιὰ νὰ περιβληθεῖ, μήπως θεωρηθεῖ ὅτι προσβάλλει τὸ ὑλικὸ ἀπὸ τὸ ὁποῖο ἦταν πλασμένος ὁ Ἀδὰμ. Κι ἐπειδὴ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐξαπατημένος ἀπὸ τὸ διάβολο ἔγινε ὄργανό του, γι' αὐτὸ ἀκριβῶς κι ὁ Θεὸς περιμάζεψε αὐτὸ τὸν ξεπεσμένο ἔμψυχο ναὸ. Ἔτσι ὥστε νὰ βοηθηθεῖ ὁ ἄνθρωπος κοινωνώντας μὲ τὸ δημιουργὸ Του καὶ νὰ μπορέσει νὰ ἀπομακρυνθεῖ ἀπὸ τὴ συντροφιά τοῦ διαβόλου. Ὅμως καὶ ὅταν γίνεται ἄνθρωπος δὲν γεννιέται ὡς κοινὸς ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλὰ γεννιέται ὡς Θεός. Γιατί ἂν προερχόταν ἀπὸ ἕνα συνηθισμένο γάμο, ὅπως λόγου χάρι ἐγώ, οἱ περισσότεροι δὲν θὰ πίστευαν πὼς εἶναι Θεός. Τώρα ὅμως, γι' αὐτὸ ἀκριβῶς γεννιέται ἀπὸ Παρθένο. Γι' αὐτὸ κατὰ τὴν γέννησή Του διατηρεῖ τὴ μήτρα τῆς ἀναλλοίωτη καὶ διαφυλάττει τὴν παρθενία τῆς ἀφθαρτῆ. Νὰ μὲ ἀναγκάσει ἔτσι θέλει ὁ ἀσυνήθιστος τρόπος τῆς γέννησης, νὰ παραδεχθῶ πέρα γιὰ πέρα τὴν τέλεια θεότητα Του.

Λοιπὸν κι ἂν κάποιος εἰδωλολάτρης, κι ἂν κάποιος Ἑβραῖος μὲ ρωτᾷ πὼς γίνεται ὁ Χριστὸς ἂν καὶ Θεὸς ὡς πρὸς τὴν φύση Του, νὰ ἔχει πάρει σάρκα ἀνθρώπου, θὰ τοῦ ἀπαντήσω μ' αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο. Θὰ τοῦ παρουσιάσω ὡς ἀπόδειξη τοῦ ἰσχυρισμοῦ μου τὴν ἄσπιλη σφραγίδα τῆς παρθενίας. Δὲν μπορεῖ παρὰ νὰ ἴναι Θεὸς Αὐτὸς ποὺ νικᾷ τὴ φυσικὴ τάξη. Δὲν μπορεῖ παρὰ νὰ ἴναι ὁ πλάστης τῆς μήτρας κι ὁ δημιουργὸς τῆς παρθενίας Αὐτὸς ποὺ γεννήθηκε μὲ τρόπο ἀμόλυντο καὶ οἰκοδόμησε γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτὸ Του ναὸ, ἄγνωστο πὼς, ἀλλὰ πάντως μὲ τὸν τρόπο ποὺ Ἐκεῖνος θέλησε...



## Ὁ Γέρον π. Ἰωσήφ, ὁ Διακριτικὸς Πνευματικὸς καὶ Ἠσυχαστὴς

Τοῦ Γιάννη Δ. Πατρικοῦ, ἀπὸ τὶς ἱστοσελίδες τοῦ περιοδικοῦ «Πληροφόρηση», Ἰανουάριος 2004

*Ἀπὸ τὸν Συντάκτη:* Ὅσοι ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας εἶχαν τὴν εὐλογία νὰ ἐπισκεφθοῦν τὴν ἐν Ἀριζόνα Ἱ.Μ. Ἁγίου Ἀντωνίου, εἶναι πιθανὸν νὰ γνώρισαν ἢ καὶ νὰ ἔλαβαν τὴν εὐλογία ἐνὸς συχνοῦ ἐπισκέπτη ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑλλάδα, τοῦ Γέροντος Ἰωσήφ καὶ γιὰ τὸν ὁποῖο ἀφιερώνουμε τὸ παρὸν ἄρθρο στὴν πρώτη ἐπέτειο τῆς κοιμήσεώς του. Αἰωνία του ἡ μνήμη!

**Ἐ**κοιμήθη ἐν Κυρίῳ τὴ Δευτέρα 22 Δεκεμβρίου 2003 καὶ κηδεύθηκε τὸ μεσημέρι τῆς ἐπομένης στὴν Ἱ. Μ. Παναγίας Ὁδηγήτριας Πορταριάς, ὅπου ἱερουργούσε ἀπὸ τὸ 1979 συνεχῶς, ὁ μακαριστὸς Γέρον π. Ἰωσήφ, μιὰ ὄντως ὀσιακὴ μορφή.

Ο γέρον π. Ίωσήφ, κατά κόσμο Τριαντάφυλλος Παπακωνσταντίνου, γεννήθηκε στὸν Πτελεὸ Μαγνησίας τὸ 1917 καὶ ἦταν τὸ πρῶτο παιδί τῶν εὐλαβῶν καὶ πολὺ πιστῶν Γεωργίου καὶ Ἑλένης Παπακωνσταντίνου, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἐνστάλαξαν στὴν ψυχὴ του γνήσια ὀρθόδοξα βιώματα.

Μετὰ τὴν ἐγκύκλια μόρφωση τοῦ Δημοτικοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Σχολείου, καταπιάσθηκε μὲ τὶς ἀγροτικὲς ἐργασίες βοηθώντας τὸν πατέρα του. Ἀλλὰ στὰ 18 του χρόνια ὁ θεῖος πρὸς τὸ Χριστὸ ἔρωτας ἔθελε τὴ νεανικὴ ψυχὴ του καὶ ὑποστᾶς τὴ θεία ἀλλοίωση ἀποφάσισε νὰ γίνεῖ μοναχός. Ἔτσι, μεταβὰς στὴν ἱστορικὴ Ἱ. Μονὴ Μεταμορφώσεως τοῦ Σωτῆρος Φλαμουρίου, ἐντάχθηκε στὴ μοναστικὴ συνοδεία αὐτῆς, καρεῖς μοναχός μὲ τὸ ὄνομα Τιμόθεος ἀπὸ τὸν ἡγούμενο ἀείμνηστο γέροντα π. Δοσίθεο Μαχαιρίτσα, ὀσιακὴ καὶ φωτισμένη μορφή, πού ἔδωσε ἰδιαίτερη φήμη πνευματικότητας καὶ ἀσκητικῆς ζωῆς στὴν Ἱ. Μονὴ Φλαμουρίου.

Στὸν Ἑλληνοϊταλικὸ πόλεμο ἐπι-στρατεύθηκε καὶ πολέμησε ἥρωικὰ στὴν πρώτη γραμμὴ τῶν βουνῶν τῆς Πίνδου καὶ τῆς Β. Ἠπείρου γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία τῆς πατρίδας. Μὲ τὴν ὑποχώρηση, λόγῳ τῆς εἰσβολῆς καὶ κατοχῆς τῶν Γερμανῶν, ἐπέστρεψε στὴ Μονὴ τῆς μετάνοιᾶς του. Κατὰ τὸν ἐμφύλιο ἢ Ἱ. Μονὴ Φλαμουρίου κατελήφθηκε ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀντάρτες, οἱ ὁποῖοι κατεπάτησαν τὸ «ἄβατο» τῆς μονῆς καὶ ἡ συνοδεία τοῦ π. Δοσίθεου, μὴ μπορώντας νὰ συμβιώσει ἀνεχόμενη αὐτὴ τὴ φοβερὴ κατάσταση, κατέβηκε στὸ μετόχι τῆς στὰ Μελισσάτικα. Ὁ π. Τιμόθεος κινδύνευσε σοβαρὰ ἀπὸ δυὸ ἀντάρτες, οἱ ὁποῖοι τὸν συνέλαβαν, γιὰ νὰ τὸν ἐκτελέσουν, ἀλλὰ καθ' ὁδὸν τοὺς ξέφυγε καὶ γλύτωσε.

Μετὰ τὴν κοίμηση τοῦ π. Δοσίθεου, λόγῳ καρδιακοῦ νοσήματος (1950), ἐξελέγη ἡγούμενος ὁ πνευματικὸς π. Διονύσιος Γεροβασίλης, μὲ ἀκόλουθο γραμματέα τὸν π. Τιμόθεο. Ὁ τότε Μητροπολίτης Δημητριάδος μακαριστὸς Δαμασκηνός, ἀφοῦ τὸ 1959 ὄρισε ἡγούμενο τὸν π. Ἰγνάτιο, ἤθελε νὰ ἐγκαταστήσει κοντὰ στὴ Μονὴ παιδικὲς κατασκηνώσεις ἀγοριῶν-κοριτσιῶν. Τοῦτο ἐρχόταν σὲ ἀντίθεση μὲ τὴν ἡσυχαστικὴ διάθεση καὶ βιοτὴ τῶν μοναχῶν τοῦ Φλαμουρίου καὶ ἐκλόνισε τοὺς πατέρες τῆς μονῆς, ἰδιαίτερα δὲ τὸν π. Τιμόθεο, ὁ ὁποῖος δεχόταν πιέσεις ἀπὸ τὸ Δαμασκηνὸ νὰ ἀναλάβει ὑπεύθυνα καθήκοντα πού ἀπὸ ταπεινὴ, ἢ ὁποῖα τὸν διεῖπε καθ' ὅλη τὴ ζωὴ του, δὲν ἤθελε νὰ δεχθεῖ καὶ γι' αὐτὸ ἀποφάσισε νὰ φύγει. Μετέβη στὴν Ἱ. Μονὴ Λομβάρδας Πάρου, στὸν πνευματικὸ του π. Φιλόθεο Ζερβάκο, μεγάλη ὀσιακὴ μορφή, γιὰ νὰ τὸν συμβουλευθεῖ.

Ὁ π. Φιλόθεος τοῦ συνέστησε νὰ μεταβεῖ στὴ Ν. Σκῆτη τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους καὶ νὰ ἐνταχθεῖ στὴ συνοδεία τοῦ π. Ίωσήφ τοῦ ἡσυχαστοῦ τοῦ Σπηλαιώτου, μεγάλου διδασκάλου τῆς

νοερᾶς προσευχῆς καὶ ὁσίου ἀνδρός, ὁ ὁποῖος διέκρινε τὶς ἀρετὲς τοῦ π. Τιμοθέου καὶ συνέστησε στὸν ὑποτακτικὸ του π. Ἐφραίμ νὰ τὸν πάρει μαζί του ὡς ὑποτακτικὸ. Ἔτσι ἔγινε, καὶ ὁ π. Τιμόθεος ἀκολούθησε τὸν γέροντά του π. Ἐφραίμ στὴν Ἱ. Μ. Φιλοθέου, πού ἐπ'ἀνδρωσαν, ἔγινε μεγαλόσχημος μοναχός μὲ τὸ ὄνομα Ίωσήφ, καὶ τὸ 1975 χειροτονήθηκε ἱερομόναχος. Κάνοντας ὑπακοὴ στὸ γέροντά του μετέβη στὴν Ἱ. Μ. Ἀρχαγγέλων, στὰ Λιμενάρια Θάσου, καὶ τὸ 1979 ἤλθε στὴν Ἱ. Μ. Ὁδηγήτριας, στὴν Πορταριά, γιὰ νὰ ἐκτελεῖ ἱερατικὰ καθήκοντα. Ὁ γέρον π. Ίωσήφ ἦταν ὀσιακὴ μορφή, κατανυκτικὸς λειτουργός, ἀπόλυτα ἀκριβῆς στὴν τήρηση τοῦ τυπικοῦ τῶν ἱερῶν ἀκολουθιῶν καὶ τοῦ χρόνου διάρκειας αὐτῶν. Ἡ Θεία Λειτουργία ἦταν ἡ ζωὴ του, τὴν τελοῦσε καθημερινὰ καὶ ἀνύψωνε τὸ ἐκκλησίασμα νοερὰ καὶ προσευχητικὰ σὲ οὐράνιες σφαῖρες θεοῦ μεγαλείου καὶ εὐλαβείας. Κατὰ ἐμπιστευτικὴ ἀποκάλυψη του στὴν ἀείμνηστη

γερόντισσα Μακρίνα, τῆς ἐκμυστηρεῦθηκε πὼς πολλὲς φορές λειτουργώντας ἔβλεπε συλλειτουργοῦντες ἀγγέλους.

Ὁ γέρον π. Ίωσήφ ὑπῆρξε, παράλληλα, χαρισματικὸς καὶ διακριτικὸς πνευματικὸς, καὶ γι' αὐτὸ τὸν λόγο εἶχε πολλὰ πνευματικοπαῖδια, ἄνδρες, γυναῖκες, νέους, οἱ ὁποῖοι εὗρισκαν ἀπαντοχὴ καὶ λύσεις στὰ προσωπικὰ καὶ οἰκογενειακὰ τους προβλήματα, ἐνσταλάζοντας στὴν ψυχὴ τους αἰσιοδοξία, ὑπομονή, πίστη, ἀγωνιστικὴ διάθεση.

Διακρινόταν γιὰ τὴ μεγάλη ταπεινὴ, τὴν τήρηση τοῦ μοναχικοῦ του κανόνα, τὴν ὑπακοὴ στοὺς γέροντές του, τὴν ἀσκητικὴ ζωὴ του, τὴν ἔλλειψη ἰδίου θελήματος καὶ τὴ μεγάλη προσήνεια πρὸς ὅλους πού ζητοῦσαν τὴν πνευματικὴ του συμπαράσταση. Ἦταν φιλεῦσπλαχος καὶ ἀρωγὸς τῶν πτωχῶν, τοὺς ὁποῖους βοηθοῦσε χρηματικά, χωρὶς νὰ τὸν παίρνουν εἶδηση. Ἀπαράμλλη χαρακτηρίζεται ἡ ἐργατικότητά του. Τὰ χέρια του «ἐπιάναν» σὲ κάθε ἐργασία.

Κατὰ διαστήματα, ἰδιαίτερα πρὶν ἀπὸ τὶς σαρακοστὲς, μετέβαινε στὴν Ἱ. Μ. Φιλοθέου, «γιὰ νὰ γεμίσει τὶς μπαταρίες» τῆς ψυχῆς του μὲ τὸ ἀγιορείτικο ἀσκητικὸ πνεῦμα. Κατὰ τὰ τελευταῖα του χρόνια μετέβαινε στὴ Β. Ἀμερική, ὅπου εὗρίσκετο ὁ γέροντάς του π. Ἐφραίμ, καὶ δεχόταν τὶς συμβουλές του. Ἔτσι τὸν περασμένο Νοέμβριο τὸν πέρασε στὴν Ἱ. Μονὴ Ἁγίου Ἀντωνίου Ἀριζόνας, ὅπου ἐγκαταβιώνει ὁ π. Ἐφραίμ, ἀλλὰ ἐπέστρεψε κουρασμένος. Εἶχε, βέβαια, κάποιο πρόβλημα ὑγείας. Εἶχε βηματοδότη.

Ὁ γέρον π. Ίωσήφ ἔφυγε ἀπὸ κοντὰ μας γεμίζοντας αἰσθήματα χαρμολύπης ὅλους αὐτοὺς πού τὸν γνώρισαν καὶ τὸν ἀγάπησαν πολὺ· αἰσθάνονται λύπη, γιατί δὲν τὸν ἔχουν πλησίον τους, χαρὰ δέ, διότι συνεχίζει νὰ λειτουργεῖ τὸν Κύριό μας στὸ θυσιαστήριο τῆς Ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ, πρεσβεύοντας γιὰ ὅλους μας.



## Η Ματαιότης

Από τον Μπάριμπα-Βασίλη Μερκούρη



Αν αυτή τη στιγμή ξεσκεπάζαμε μία πλάκα ενός εὐπρεπέστατου τάφου και βρισκόταν κάποιος να μᾶς μιλήσει, πρώτη λέξη που θὰ ἔβγαζε θὰ ἦταν ματαιότης... Και ἔτσι λοιπὸν ἀρχίζω:

Ἄνθρωπε στάσου δυὸ λεπτά και πρόσεξε κι ἐμένα  
θὰ σοῦ μιλήσω συμβουλές που ἴναι καλές για σένα.  
Μὲ βλέπεις κόκκαλο γυμνὸ μὰ δίχως φαντασία  
και λές δὲν ἤμουν τίποτα δὲ δίνεις σημασία.  
Μὰ κάποτε στὰ χρόνια μου εἶχα κι ἐγὼ τὸ κάλος  
και βάδιζα περήφανος σὰν φουσκωμένος γάλος.  
Κι εἶχα κι ἐγὼ τὴ δόξα μου σοφία τοῦ Σωκράτη  
τοῦ Ἡρακλῆ τὴ δύναμη πολύφημου στὰ κράτη,  
εἶχα μαλλιά μεταξωτὰ και μάγουλα σὰν μῆλα  
και φρύδια που δὲν βρίσκονται σὰν τῆς ἐλιάς τὰ φύλλα,  
εἶχα καρδιά τοῦ λέοντος και μπράτσα σιδερένια,  
ἀκούραστα τὰ πόδια μου και στήθη μαρμαρένια,  
εἶχα τὴ γλώσσα τ' ἀηδονιοῦ μάτια μεγάλα μαῦρα  
και μερικοὶ μου λέγανε ὅλα μαζί που τὰ ἴβρα  
γι' αὐτὸ κι ἐγὼ χαιρόμουνα πὼς ἤμουν τῆς γῆς ὁ φάρος  
και μὲ τὸ νοῦ λογάριζα πὼς δὲν ὑπάρχει χάρος.  
Μὰ πότε δὲν κατάλαβα περάσανε τὰ χρόνια  
και φύγανε τὰ νιάτα μου σὰν τοῦ Μαρτιοῦ τὰ χιόνια.  
Τὸ γλέντι κι ὅλες οἱ χαρὲς περνοῦσαν στὸν ἀέρα  
κι ὅλη ἡ ζωὴ μου φάνηκε πὼς ἦτανε μία μέρα.  
Σὰν ἔνωσα γεράματα θυμᾶμαι τὰ παλιά μου  
μου φάνηκε παράξενο πὼς ἀσπρίσαν τὰ μαλλιά μου.  
Τὸ φῶς ἀπὸ τὰ μάτια μου μικραίνει λιγοστεύει  
κι ὁ νοῦς μου πὼς ἐγέρασα ἀκόμα δὲν πιστεύει.  
Τὰ πόδια μου ἀδυνατίσαν, τὰ χέρια δὲν κινιοῦνται,  
τὰ δόντια μου χαλάσανε κι αὐτὰ παραπονιοῦνται.  
Κατάλαβα τὸ θάνατο σὲ λίγο τελειώνω  
και τότε βάζω μία φωνὴ και κλάματα και πόνο.  
Ποιὸς μάγος θέλει τὴ ζωὴ και ποιὸν γιατρὸ νὰ πάρω  
και ποιὸς μπορεῖ και δύναται που νὰ νικάει τὸ χάρο;  
Θὰ τοῦ χαρίσω χτήματα και λίρες ὅσες θέλει  
γιατί τοῦ χάρου τὸ σπαθὶ νὰ σπάσει και τὰ βέλη.  
Κανεις δὲ μου ἀποκρίθηκε, κανεις δὲ μου εἶπε ξέρει  
νὰ μου γλυτώσει τὴ ζωὴ και νιάτα νὰ μου φέρει.  
Λοιπὸν μία μέρα τ' Ἀπριλιοῦ, χωρὶς νὰ περιμένω,  
κάποιος χτυπάει τὴν πόρτα μου μὲ τρόπο ἀγριεμένο.  
Ἦταν ψηλὸς κατάμαυρος φωνάζω τί νὰ κάνω  
και μία φωνὴ μὲ τρόμαξε μου λέει σήκω ἀπάνου  
μου ξέσκισε τὰ σπλαχνικά και πῆρε τὴν ψυχὴ μου.

Ἀμέσως πᾶν' τὰ πλούτη μου μαζί μὲ τὴ στολὴ μου  
και τώρα τὰ χωράφια και πᾶν' και τὰ παλάτια  
τὰ ρόδινα τὰ μάγουλα, ἡ γλῶσσα και τὰ μάτια.  
Σκουλήκια ἴφαγαν τὸ κορμὶ τῆς ὁμορφιάς τὸ σῶμα,  
ἐνῶ μὲ λάσπη γίναμε, γινηκαν πάλι χῶμα.  
Οἱ φίλοι και οἱ συγγενεῖς δὲ θέλω νὰ μὲ κλαῖνε  
θέλω κερὶ μνημόσυνο συγχώρεση νὰ λένε,  
ὅπως μὲ βλέπεις ἄνθρωπε ἔτσι θὰ καταντήσεις  
σ' αὐτὴ τὴν πρόσκαιρη ζωὴ μαθὲς νὰ καζαντίσεις,  
ὅταν γεράσω νὰ μὴ λές θὰ κάνω καλωσύνης  
τότε θὰ πάω στὴν ἐκκλησιὰ πολλές ἐλεημοσύνης  
ὁ χάρος εἶναι λαίμαργος δὲν ἔχει προθεσμία  
δὲν ἔχει φίλους, οὐδὲ χαρὲς ἐξαίρεση καμμία  
παίρνει τίς μάνες τῶν παιδιῶν, λεβέντες που γλεντᾶνε,  
ἀπὸ τὴν κούνια τὰ μωρά, γυναῖκες που κεντᾶνε.  
Νὰ σκέφτεστε τὸ θάνατο ἑφτὰ φορὲς τὴν ὥρα,  
ὑπῆρχαν κι ἄλλοι στὴ ζωὴ μὰ δὲν ὑπάρχουν τώρα.  
Σὲ βῆμα πρόσεξε τοῦ Σατανᾶ τὸ βρόχι  
μὴν ἀδικήσεις ὀρφανούς, γυναῖκες χίλιες ὄχι  
πιστὰ τοὺς νόμους φύλαξε χωρὶς καμιά προσθήκη  
τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ Μωυσῆ τὴ νέα διαθήκη  
νὰ μὴ δουλεύεις Κυριακὴ, οὔτε γιορτὲς Ἁγίων  
νὰ ἴχεις ἀμόλυντη ψυχὴ και καθαρὸ τὸ βίο,  
νὰ μὴν πηγαίνεις πονηρά, μὴ βλαστημάς τὰ θεῖα  
νὰ δίνεις περιφρόνηση τοῦ Σατανᾶ τὴ βία,  
τὴ μέρα τὰ μαθήματα και πρὶν ὁ ἥλιος δύσει  
μὲ κάθε τρόπο τοῦ Θεοῦ νὰ τὰ ἴχεις ὅλα σβῆσει.  
Ἐλεημοσύνη, προσευχὴ, ἀγάπη και νηστεία  
αὐτὰ θὰ σώζουν τὴν ψυχὴ, μὴ λές πὼς εἶναι ἀστεῖα.  
Ἄγάπα τὸν πλησίον σου, ποτὲς κακὸ μὴν κάνεις,  
γιατί ἄργά ἢ γρήγορα θὰ σβῆσεις, θὰ πεθάνεις.

+ + +

*Και τώρα ἀναγνώστα μου,  
τί σκέφτεσαι νὰ κάνεις,  
τὰ λόγια που σοῦ μίλησα  
στὸ νοῦ σου νὰ τὰ βάλεις,  
γιατί αὐτοῦ που εἶσαι ἤμουνα  
κι ἐδῶ που εἶμαι θὰ ἴρθεις..*



Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψη τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων για τὴν ἔκδοση τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οικονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντας κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὁσιος Ποιμῆν».

## ST. THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE ON PRAYER, PART 2 OF 3

*From the Letters of St. Theophan the Recluse (Source: Orthodox Christian Information Center)*

### Prayer Rule (from Letter 47)

You ask about the prayer rule. Yes, because of our weakness, it is proper to have a prayer rule. For one thing, it controls excessive zeal. The great men of prayer had a prayer rule and kept to it. Every time, they began prayer with the established prayers, and then, if self-initiated prayer came, they turned to it from reciting prayers. If they needed a prayer rule, then we need one even more! Without formal prayers, we would not know how to pray correctly at all. Without them, we would be completely without prayer.

Nevertheless, we should not collect too many prayers. A few prayers, correctly read, are better than many prayers raced through. And, of course, it is hard to keep from rushing when, in our eagerness to pray, we have gathered more prayers than we can handle.

For you, it is quite adequate to complete the morning and evening prayers as they are found in the prayer book. Always strive to complete them with as much attention and feeling as possible. To do this successfully, make an effort in your spare time to read them with extra care, attention and feeling, so that when you are at prayer, you will be familiar with the holy thoughts and feelings contained in them. Praying does not mean repeating a certain number of words of prayer; praying is reproducing the contents of the prayers within ourselves, so that they flow as if from our own mind and heart.

Having contemplated their meaning and reacted deeply, make an effort to learn the prayers by heart, so when it is time for prayer, you will not have to fumble with books and lighting. If you learn prayers by heart, you will not be distracted by what your eyes see, and you will be able to hold your mind's attention more steadily upon God.

You will see for yourself how beneficial this is. Learning prayers by heart ensures that at all times and in every circumstance the prayers are with you, and this means a great deal.

Having so prepared yourself to stand at prayer, strive to keep your mind from drifting away and strive to keep your feelings from turning cold and indifferent. Always strain to pay attention and to nurture warmth. After reading each prayer, do as many prostrations as you feel necessary, or say the usual short prayer (that is, the Jesus Prayer). Your prayers, no doubt, will take longer this way, but they will grow in strength.

Particularly at the end of your prayer rule, spend additional time saying your own prayers. Ask for forgiveness for involuntary inattention during prayer and surrender yourself to God's care for the whole day.

We must continue to hold our attention on God during the day. To support our attention, I have said more than once: Remember God through a briefly worded prayer.

At times, it is very fruitful to substitute a few psalms for the short prayer psalms you have reflected upon thoroughly and memorized. You can do this during free moments and throughout the day's activities. Repeating memorized psalms is an ancient Christian custom that was developed and brought into the monastic rule in the fourth century by Saints Pachomius and Anthony [the Great].

After spending the entire day in such a prayerful attitude, take even more time in the evening to concentrate at prayer and increase your prostrations. Intensify your supplications to God and, having again dedicated to God's care, bed down with a brief prayer on your lips and fall asleep with it, or with the repetition of a psalm.

Which psalms to learn? Memorize those that drop into your heart when you read them. Different people are moved by different psalms. Begin with Psalm 50, then Psalms 102 and 145, the antiphons for the Liturgy; also, the psalms from the Preparation for Communion (Psalms 22, 2:3, 115); as well as Psalm 69, Psalm 4 (the first psalm of [Great] Compline [during the first week of Great Lent]), the psalms for the Hours, and the like. Read the Psalter and choose.

Having memorized all this, you will be totally armed for prayer. When a disturbing thought comes to mind, rush to the Lord with a brief prayer or some psalm, especially, "O God, be attentive unto helping me" (Psalm 69), and the disturbing cloud will immediately vanish.

That summarizes prayer rules.

But I repeat: Remember, all of this is a guide. The heart of the matter is: Stand with reverence before God, with the mind in the heart, and strive toward Him with longing.

### A Prayer Rule of Brief Prayers (same Letter)

It occurs to me to add this: You may substitute prostrations, the brief prayer and your own words of prayer for your whole prayer rule.

Stand and begin to do prostrations by saying, "Lord, have mercy," or some other prayer expressing your needs, or by glorifying God or thanking Him. To avoid laziness, you must repeat a definite number of prayers, or set a specific length of time for prayer, or both.

Such a prayer rule is imperative because we have a certain, strange quirk about us. When we are busy in the world, hours pass as minutes. But when we stand at prayer, a minute does not go by, and it seems as though we have prayed for hours. Time distortion brings no harm when we complete a full, established prayer rule from our prayer book. But when we pray with only prostrations and the brief prayer, such distortion can be a great temptation and can cause us to stop prayer, having only begun, leaving us with the delusion that our prayer was completed as prescribed. To avoid falling into this kind of deception, the good men of prayer invented the prayer rope. The prayer rope is used by those who plan to pray independently of the prayer book. It is used by saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner," and pulling

one knot through your fingers.

Say it again and move another knot, and so on with each prayer. You may make a prostration, from the waist or to the ground as you desire, at each prayer. Or for small knots, you may do a bow from the waist; large knots, prostrations. The whole rule consists of a fixed number of prayers and prostrations, interspersed with prayers in your own words.

Speeding up the repetition of prayers and prostrations is another danger. After you determine a set number of prayers, it is a good idea to guard yourself from haste by setting a definite length of time in which to complete the prayer rule. If you find you have rushed the prayers, fill the time with more prayers and prostrations.

The number of prayers to substitute for a fixed service of liturgical prayer is listed at the end of the Horologion in two tables, one for the zealous, and another one for the slothful or those who are busy. The Startsi [Elders] who still live among us in hermitages and special cells, at Valaam and Solovki for instance, do all their services on the prayer rope. This is how you go about it: See how long it takes you to read through your morning and evening prayers; then count out on the prayer rope how many prayers you can do in that length of time, and as many times as you can complete the prayer rope, that should be your rule, following this method. Work out your prayer rope rule outside of your regular prayer time, but with the same attention you would give to regular prayer. You should then proceed with your actual prayer rule at its appointed time, standing and with prostrations.

Reading this, don't think that I am pushing you toward monasticism. I myself first learned of prayer with the prayer rope, not from a monk, but from a layman, for many lay people pray this way. And you too will profit by this. When prayers from the prayer book become tedious and uninspiring, you may use the prayer rope for a day or two, then return to your memorized prayers.

Again I repeat: The essence of prayer lies in lifting the mind and heart to God. Prayer rules are only aids to this end. We weak ones cannot do without them.

#### **Hard Work is Essential (from Letter 48)**

You write that you are having trouble controlling your thoughts; they scatter easily, and praying does not proceed as you wish; and that, in the midst of the day, in the midst of toil and association with others, there is little remembrance of God.

Instantaneous prayer life is impossible. You must make a strong effort to control your thoughts, at least to some degree. Prayer does not come about as you expect -- by just wishing for it, and, suddenly, there it is. This does not happen.

## THE UNCHANGING CALL TO PERFECTION

*By an Orthodox faithful in Australia, from "Orthodox America"*

Since the dawn of Christianity, our Holy Fathers have given us examples of the God pleasing life that leads to salvation and eternal joy. This life is not based on human logic or reason, but on personal struggle, that is, asceticism and a deep internal life in the heart, where each movement contrary to the commandments is crushed and, with God's help, eventually uprooted from the soul.

The path of asceticism is not limited to a chosen few whose exceptional spiritual capabilities lift them high above ordinary mortals. To walk this path does not demand what is beyond the limits of human endurance. All Christians are called to lead an ascetic life according to their strength -- a life of struggle against the passions, sin and the spirit of worldliness which so easily diverts those inexperienced in the spiritual life from the narrow path to salvation.

Such a call to spiritual struggle and an adherence to the age-old traditions of the Church, is often challenged by contemporary Orthodox youth with the question: "But isn't this the twentieth century?" The implication here is that the demands of Christianity must be adapted to the changing times. It is clear, however, to anyone who carefully examines the world that the changes witnessed by the passage of centuries have been minimal. Only the scenery, like a backdrop in the theater of life, has become different. It is true, the widespread amorality and disregard for religion in the world today often undermine the best of intentions. But a study of ancient Rome would quickly prove that the task of Christian perfection was no less challenging at that time than it is today. The struggle against the world -- with all its dazzling enticements -- is a timeless battle waged by each and every Christian desiring the crown of eternal life. Only consider: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). Not a single letter of our Lord's commandments has changed over the centuries, and it never will.

One excuse after another is offered by those who attempt to justify their avoidance of the ascetic path: "It is only for monastics and clergy; laymen shouldn't be so fanatic." We have only to look at the writings of the Holy Fathers to see that this is a lame excuse indeed. Writing in the fourth century, St. John Chrysostom "used to say constantly that the life of the monks does not differ from the life of married people. God's commandments are common to all, and the call to heavenly blessings and the Glory of God in the Kingdom of Heaven is directed to all people, monastics and married. When the Lord spoke to the multitudes, those who were listening to Him were not monks. Purity of heart, humility, spiritual mourning, almsgiving, fortitude during times of persecution and grief in order to acquire the Kingdom of Heaven are the features of the





way our Lord indicated to the Israel of grace and were directed to farmers, fishermen, simple folk, and heads of households who brought with them wherever they went their children and their problems, which were just like ours today.”

Centuries later, another Holy Father, Bishop Theophan the Recluse, wrote: “Marital life does not close the gate of Heaven. It need not create obstacles to spiritual perfection. Perfection lies not in any external regime but in interior dispositions, feelings and intentions. Try to plant them in your heart. Read the Gospels and the Epistles and consider how a Christian should live, then do the same.”

There are some who decline to step onto the ascetic path for fear of stumbling: “We cannot struggle today; there are no sure guides; we will only fall into delusion.” Such reasoning can hardly be justified. Although we cannot pretend to have the personal guidance of God-bearing elders, we have today a wealth of spiritual books. Let us benefit from the rich spiritual treasures they contain. Even secular knowledge is not without benefit when put to proper use. Modern science and philosophy teach an important lesson: despite all the advanced technology and progress, our understanding and control of the natural world -- let alone the spiritual (psychic) world -- is superficial and limited. No reasonable scientist would dispute the fact that today far more is not known than is known and that the gap is increasing. Progress has opened our eyes to our ignorance and insignificance. Glory be to God! Yet the answers to all questions concerning life, death and eternity are contained in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and are explained for us by the Holy Fathers.

Those who boldly take up arms in the battle for spiritual perfection are often accused of being prideful, it must be admitted that the demon of pride is one of the most tenacious. Those who feel this passion inflame their hearts as they strive to please God, should, however, not be discouraged into abandoning the struggle, for this is often its disguised purpose. Hear what St. John of the Ladder says:

“I am vainglorious when I fast, and when I relax the fast in order to be unnoticed, I am again vainglorious over my prudence. When well-dressed, I am quite overcome with vainglory and when I put on poor clothes, I am vainglorious again. When I talk I am defeated and when I am silent I am again defeated by it. However I throw this prickly-pear, a spike stands upright.”

This “prickly-pear,” this passion of vainglory is never far from us. Recognizing this, we have all the more reason to beg the Lord’s mercy, seeing how far we are from perfection. At the same time, just because we are plagued by prideful thoughts does not mean that we should surrender from the battle until such a time as we have, in our opinion, made sufficient progress on the path of righteousness. Such thoughts arise either from laziness and false humility, or from the envying devil who, seeing an Orthodox Christian take up the unconquerable

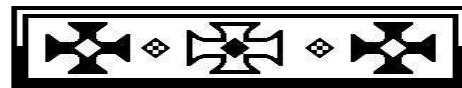
weapons of prayer and fasting, pounces on the struggler in a bid to divert him from this honorable course.

Let us not be ashamed to be zealous for the Lord’s glory. To desire spiritual perfection is praiseworthy. Our Lord Himself calls us to this: “Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:~8). Those who step boldly upon the ascetic path to perfection must, however, be prepared to encounter many obstacles. When this occurs it is comforting to recall the countless numbers of men and women who have been confronted by similar and much greater obstacles: criticism, slander, ostracism by friends and relatives, even imprisonment, torture, and shameful death. Such seemingly insurmountable difficulties are conquered most easily by a spirit of meek acceptance of God’s perfect and holy will, by the patient carrying of one’s cross. Here is the path which leads most swiftly heavenward.

Now is the time of our salvation. Now is the time to put on our armor: “The breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God” (Eph. 6:11-17). Pray that the Lord deepen your understanding of the Holy Scriptures. Read the Holy Fathers. Try to increase your concentration during divine services. Prepare yourself regularly to communicate of our Lord’s Body and Blood. Temper your desires, for worldly distractions: theater, television, parties... Avoid books or pictures which incite impure thoughts. And if you feel oppressed by the spirit of the world, take courage in knowing that “where evil abounds, there Grace abounds still more” (Rom. 5:20).

The time is drawing near when there may no longer be spiritual books, priests, open churches. We must fortify ourselves now while there is still time; this will give us the necessary strength to resist the pressures to conform to the ways of the world.

Our life is short. Let us rouse ourselves to answer the call to perfection and be an example inspiring others to join us on the path to salvation. St. Seraphim of Sarov said, “Acquire the Spirit of peace, and a thousand souls around you will be saved.” Our Lord Jesus Christ, His Most Holy Mother and all the Saints stand on our side. If they be for us, who can be against us?



**N**o one would be a pagan if we were such Christians as we ought to be -- if we kept Christ’s commandments, if we endured injury, if we allowed advantage to be taken of us, if we blessed while being reviled, if we did good while being treated badly. If this were the general practice among us, no one would be so brutish as not to rush to embrace the true faith.

Saint John Chrysostom  
Homily 10 on the First Epistle to Timothy

## GUARDING THE SENSE OF TASTE

*By St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain, from his book "A Handbook of Spiritual Counsel"*

Sumptuous eating is harmful to all without exception, but especially to the young. The reason for this is obvious. The natural warmth of the young person is enhanced when it receives the fatty matter of various foods. The heavy foods consumed draw out the heavy excretions of digestion in the stomach. These in turn are converted into substances and blood and eventually into fatty tissue. The abundance of food creates a fat body that is susceptible to the forceful temptations of one's sexuality.

Thus treated and exposed the poor body becomes a flaming fire, a Babylonian furnace. If the young body is a wild and untamed animal even when it lacks essential nourishment, imagine what it is like when it is well fed! All young people know this because they experience these passions on a daily basis. This is why St. Gregory the Theologian said: "Its own evil is sufficient for the body. Why add to the existing fire any additional fuel, or any more nourishment to the beast? It will only become more difficult to control and more violent (forceful) than the mind." Solomon too said: "It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury" (Proverbs 19:10). In interpreting this passage, St. Basil considered the body of a young person to be "a fool." He then asks: "What is more senseless than the body of a young person prone to easy temptations?"

Now if you cannot avoid these fatty foods completely, then set a discipline for yourself to eat only once a day, as many spiritual persons, hierarchs, and even worldly leaders do. In this manner the body is kept lighter and healthier and the mind is clearer and more capable of advancing upon divine thoughts. Even then, it is important not to overeat.

### The Three Degrees of Eating

According to St. Gregory the Sinaite there are three degrees in eating: temperance, sufficiency, and satiety. Temperance is when someone wants to eat some more food but abstains, rising from the table still somewhat hungry. Sufficiency is when someone eats what is needed and sufficient for normal nourishment. Satiety is when someone eats more than enough and is more than satisfied. Now if you cannot keep the first two degrees and you proceed to the third, then, at least, do not become a glutton, remembering the words of the Lord: "Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger" (Luke 6:25).

Remember also the rich man who ate in this present life sumptuously every day, but who was deprived of the desired bosom of Abraham in the next life, simply because of this sumptuous eating. Recall how he longed to refresh his tongue with a drop of water. St. Basil not only did not forgive the young people who ate to satiety but also those who ate until satisfied; he preferred that all eat temperately. He said, "Nothing subdues and controls the body as does the practice of temperance. It is this temperance that serves as a control to those youthful passions and desires."

St. Gregory the Theologian has also noted in his poetry: "No satiety has brought forth prudent behavior; for it is in the nature of fire to consume matter. And a filled stomach expels refined thoughts; it is the tendency of opposites to oppose each other." Job, too, assuming that one could fall into sin through eating, offered sacrifice to God for his sons who were feasting among themselves. "And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said: "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts" (Job 1:5-8).

In interpreting this passage Olympiodoros wrote: "We learn from this that we ought to avoid such feasts which can bring on sinfulness. We must also purify ourselves after they have been concluded, even if these are conducted for the sake of concord and brotherly love as in the case of the sons of Job."

Surely then, if the sons of Job were not at a feast but in prayer or some other spiritual activity, the devil would not have dared to destroy the house and them, as Origen interpreted the passage: "The devil was looking for an opportunity to destroy them. Had he found them reading, he would not have touched the house, having no reason to put them to death. Had he found them in prayer, he would not have had any power to do anything against them. But when he found an opportune time, he was powerful. What was the opportune time? It was the time of feasting and drinking." Do you see then, dear reader, how many evils are brought forth by luxurious foods and feasting in general?

### To Avoid Overeating and Other Sins of the Tongue

When eating and drinking, always remember the Psalm: "What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the Pit?" (Psalms 30:9). St. Basil has advised that we recall this verse in order to help us avoid overeating and overdrinking, as he has interpreted it in the following manner:

"What is the need for robustness of flesh and an abundance of blood if their future is to be delivered over to the common corruption of the body? For this reason I constrain and deprive my body, otherwise my blood becomes so robust and overzealous that it makes my flesh to sin. Do not therefore flatter your body with sleep and baths and soft beds, but always recall the saying: 'What profit is there for my blood if I go down to the Pit?' Why do you care for the lesser thing that will later become corrupt? Why do you bother to make yourself fat? Do you not know that the fatter you make your body so much heavier will be the soul's prison?"

In this sense of the mouth are also included all those sins which are enacted by the tongue: condemnation, slander, mocking, insults, unreasonable excommunications, curses, reprimands, obscene talk, and all the other idle and vain words. From all these we must guard ourselves as much as possible, for as you know, we must give an account for every vain and idle word, according to the Sacred Scriptures (Matthew 12:36).

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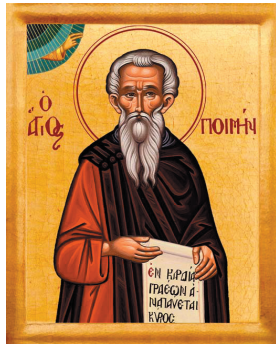
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## ECUMENISM VS. UNIVERSALITY

*By Professor George Mantzaridis, Christian Ethics, (Thessaloniki, Pournara, 2002), pages 275, 277 & 279 [Μαντζαρίδη, Γεωργίου, Χριστιανική Ἠθική (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πουρναρά, 2002), σ. 275, 277 & 279], translated by Joseph Hostetler*

Contemporary ecumenism seeks first of all the union of the Christian world and not the preservation of its identity. It is interested in the body of Christians and not the body of Christ. That is why whatever has to do with the body of Christ -- Christ Himself and the Church, which is set forth in Christology and ecclesiology -- is relegated to a secondary position. Ecumenism sees neither Christology nor ecclesiology theologically from above, but ventures to create Christology and ecclesiology using the contemporary secularized anthropology and sociology. The “from below” Christology, as well as the ecclesiology “of branches,” confirm this state of things.

...Here is found the main difference between contemporary ecumenism and the universality or ecumenicity of the indivisible Church. The Orthodox Church persists in the truth of Christology, for this offers the base for true anthropology. Heretical anthropology distorts anthropology, in addition to ecclesiology. There cannot exist a healthy body of the Church, when the faith concerning her head, Who is Christ, has been altered. Nor can there be healthy cells in a body which has a mutated head. The contribution of the

Orthodox Church, which was present at the formation of the contemporary ecumenical dialogue, has not yielded any substantial result. . . It could be said, on the contrary, that within Orthodox circles, a certain theological minimalism has been cultivated in the name of some kind of ecumenical cooperation and overture.

...The universality of the Church is the universality of the Spirit of God. Contemporary ecumenism is a movement of good-willed people. The first [universality] unites all those who live within it. The second [ecumenism] keeps divided all those that follow it. The methodology of contemporary ecumenism leads naturally to not only confessional, but also religious syncretism. The abandonment of the catholic truth of the Church... naturally expands into wider religious syncretism in order to achieve the fullest possible religious synthesis. It follows that [ecumenism] is not carried out as an authentic dialogue of Christian love and truth, but as an attempt at blending together Christian and other religious truths. Indeed, it might even be claimed [by those who hold this position] that any other position held within this perspective would conceal a racist attitude.

...Having lost diachronic unity with the Tradition and the Fathers, and having come to understand “catholicity as mere ecumenicity or global universality, ”with Rome as the center, Roman Catholicism “set aside the Church’s charismatic dimension and eschatological perspective,” thereby realizing “the secularization or “religionization” of Christianity!