

# 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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## ON THE 41<sup>ST</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROE VS WADE DECISION

By Fr. Demetrios Carellas, January 22, 2014.

### A Necessary Prelude

I am reaching out to any woman who has had an abortion, but—by God's grace—has repented and had confession. What follows may cause you pain as you read it. I assure you that your tears of repentance and your confession has brought you God's healing grace and forgiveness, so do not allow the evil one to cause you to have doubts about that. If you need reassurance of that forgiveness, please let me know, or—better yet—contact your spiritual father.

For those precious and deeply wounded souls who have yet to repent of their grave sin and seek God's forgiveness, together with all those who share in that soul-destroying sin: doctors, nurses, counselors, parents, relatives, friends, clergy, legal and political figures, I pray that these words will help you to seek forgiveness and healing from God before you depart time and space, when your soul is separated from your body and is in the presence of the living God; for then, it will be too late to repent.

This article is quite limited in its scope and its length. In time, if God so wills, I hope to prepare a much more detailed account of this satanic holocaust and other ungodly actions which are considered "normal" today, as well as give some key facts on the biggest abortion provider in our nation: The ungodly organization known as Planned Parenthood.

† † †

Today, January 22, 2014, marks the 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the U. S. Supreme Court decision which destroyed the soul of our nation; for it legalized

the murder of the most innocent and most defenseless of our brothers and sisters: the child in the womb. Since that darkest of days, there have been an estimated 56,662,169 abortions. In order to get a clearer picture of the horror of these 41 years of legalized infanticide please, carefully look at these ungodly averages:

1,382 million abortions every year  
115,167 abortions every month  
26,577 abortions every week  
3,786 abortions every day  
157 abortions every hour  
2.6 abortions every minute!

How can this be, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ? Why has the womb become a tomb in so many women? How can the killing of pre-born babies be called a "sacred gift" by a member of the Board of Directors of Planned Parenthood; or "sacred ground" by the U.S. House Minority Leader? What would cause the Governor of New York to recently state that "extreme conservatives who are right to life ... have no place in the State of New York"? Why, in the WebMD, the terminology in the pregnancy section talks of a baby's development in the womb, whereas that baby becomes "contents" to be removed in the abortion section? How can people who are pro-abortion get elected to public office, and doctors who perform these murders for profit be allowed to continue to practice medicine? The answer is quite simple: A large percentage of the 75% of our citizens who call themselves Christians have left our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In St. Paul's letter to the Philippians [2:7], he reminds us that our Lord Jesus *emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, and came to be in the likeness of men*. Therefore, by doing so, as one of the hymns in the Feast of the Annun-

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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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

If you wish to receive this periodical, please write or e-mail us with your address. We suggest to all that share our views and wish to assist us to donate **\$24 per annum (\$48 for those outside of the US)**. This amount will greatly assist us in the costs it takes to bring these articles to you, as well as to aid in our other educational and philanthropic activities.

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ciation explains, He has *made God-like the garment* [our human nature] *He has put on. O mystery!* I contend that if we truly believed in Christ, as we should, that decision would have never even been handed down; because such a trial would have never taken place. I further contend, even if it did pass, it would have been very short-lived; because the clergy would have mobilized their flocks to pray and fast, and to admonish all who supported the ungodly law, as well as get it rescinded in a very short time.

I direct the remainder of this article to Orthodox Christians. Why have we—at best—benignly neglected, and—at worse—chosen to be indifferent on this critical issue of legalized abortion, especially, we the Clergy? To my knowledge only one presiding Orthodox hierarch, Metropolitan Tikhon of the OCA, chose to call this past Sunday, 1/19, Respect Life Sunday; and issue an encyclical. How many Orthodox priests or hierarchs gave sermons on abortion this past Sunday, or any Sunday? How many clergy and laity are actively involved in pro-life groups or pregnancy centers? How many Orthodox physicians who perform abortions have been admonished to repent and stop these murders? And if they do not, how many of them, as an act of LOVE for them and their salvation, have been excommunicated until they repent?

In Psalm 105 [106], the holy King and Psalmist David seems to be giving a prophetic account of what is going on today in our nation: *And they sacrificed their sons and daughters to the demons. And they poured out innocent blood,*

*the blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the carved images of Canaan* [Today, Canaan describes the secular humanistic, pleasure oriented, politically correct society in which we live.]. *And with streams of blood was the land polluted with murder, and it was defiled with their works.* [vss. 34-35].

As Orthodox Christians, I believe that it is our sacred duty to be in the front lines of the struggle to stop this slaughter of God's innocent ones. The child in the womb is totally defenseless and unable to speak in support of its sacred right to be born. Therefore, you and I must become their voice, their defenders. At the very least, can't we offer daily prayers to God to deliver us, before these abortions cause the total destruction of our land, as well as the loss of salvation for so many people? A few years ago, I made icon-prayer cards available to many of you. A copy of the card is shown on the next page.



### The Horror of Abortion

If you would like hard copies, please e-mail me your address and the number of cards you desire. Try to offer the prayer at around noon your time.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, although St. Basil the Great uttered these words over 1650 years ago, they are most applicable today in our nation, where: abortion is legal, same-sex marriage is being promoted by the government and the media, homosexual couples are being allowed to adopt children, smoking pot is being legalized, and our youth are being adulterated by what they are being taught in the public schools: *Today, while the overall teachings of*



*the Fathers is under attack and the shipwrecks of Faith are numerous, the mouths of the faithful are silent!*

May our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, through the intercessions of our most beloved Panaghia, give us the grace that we need to become His instruments to SPEAK OUT and DEFEND the life of the pre-born child!

Your unworthy servant in Christ Jesus,  
+Papa Demetri  
[papademetrius3@gmail.com]



Icon-Prayer Card:



**O** Lord Jesus Christ, Who—at the 6th hour of the day—didst shed Thy precious Blood upon the Cross for the salvation of all mankind: receive the souls of all the innocent pre-born babies, who have been, are being, or will be slaughtered today in the hospitals and abortion chambers throughout our nation. And as their untimely deaths have prevented them from receiving the grace of holy Baptism, I entreat Thee to accept their innocent blood as their Baptism (as Thou didst with the early Martyrs); so that they can share eternity with Thee.

To the doctors, nurses, parents and hosts of accomplices responsible for this infanticide, grant tears of repentance; so that they can run to Thee for forgiveness and healing, and thus avoid the eternal death of their souls. I believe that all things are possible with Thee, O Lord. Therefore, I entreat Thee on this day—through Thy divine grace—to convince at least one mother in every state to cancel her abortion and bring her child to full term; and to convince one doctor in every state to repent of his actions, and never again kill a child in the womb.

Receive my prayer, O Lord, even though it is being offered to Thee from such a sinful and unworthy servant; and unite my entreaty with those of all the other brothers and sisters that are crying out today on behalf of all Thy little ones, who are now being formed in the wombs of their mothers. Deliver us and our nation, O Lord, from this shedding of innocent blood! Forgive us! Heal us! Save us! Amen.

## THE “HORROR OF ABORTION” ICON [SEE PG. 2] EXPLAINED

Source: The web pages of “Orthodox Christian Info,” refer to the following website: <http://www.orthodoxchristian.info/>.

**C**hrist our God (bearing the title “O ON” (Ὁ ὄν)) which means “He Who Is” in Greek) is seen looking down from Heaven. His right hand is extended towards the family depicted just below Him, in the characteristic form of blessing. The father of the family is seen supporting and playing with his beloved children, and the mother is seen offering care and the necessities of life.

At the bottom left of the Icon the patience and long-suffering of the unmarried mother who chose to support her baby and suffer hardship or social shame rather than have it killed, is depicted as a mother, nursing her infant whilst bearing the weight of the Cross that she carries daily.

Below the blessed family unit, we see a woman clothed in red, on her knees with hands raised in repentance and tears streaming from her eyes. She has undergone an abortion. In her lap rests the dismembered remains of her murdered baby. The woman is tearfully calling to our Lord for mercy, as she has realized the grave error of her deed. She seeks healing in the sacrament of Confession and repentance. Of course, this equally applies to the irresponsible and unloving father of the child as well.

In contrast to the repentant mother who yearns for mercy, above and to the right of her, is a series of women, who purposely and intently present their infants for slaughter for various worldly reasons; uncontrolled sensuality, hard-heartedness, superficiality and indifference. The children they carry are a nuisance and a bother, affecting their selfish and hedonistic way of life. The children are offered to a queen. She is given the title, “the new Herod”, who was responsible for the slaughter of thousands of infants at the time of the birth of Christ. This evil queen is Abortion. At her feet lay the dismembered bodies of countless innocents.

Above in Heaven, we see the Mother of God (Theotokos), the Ever-Virgin Mary, the Perfect Mother, who is seen nursing the infant Christ. To Her left is our Father among the Saints, Saint Stylianos the protector and patron saint of children. The Mother of God, the Saints and all the heavenly bodies grieve as they look down and see the holocaust below. The Angels weep at this indescribable calamity below.

Behind the evil queen can be seen her servant, the abortionist, murdering another child. Behind the abortionist is the master of the evil queen, the beast, the evil one, who gleefully watches as the mothers offer their children for slaughter, in the process losing their own souls to the beast.

## ON TRIALS AND THE SPIRITUAL LAW

Source: "Elder Joseph the Hesychast: Struggles-Experiences-Teachings," published by Vatopedi Monastery, Mountain Athos, Greece.

The Fathers' saying *give blood and receive the spirit* could be described as the ever-memorable Elder's permanent motto. Intrepid and courageous as he was, he left no room for queries or doubts in his life. But his ardent faith also contributed to this excellent combination, and so the results were always positive. Resolve and daring are the chief characteristics of man's freedom which manifest his will, and with faith in God—which is all that is asked of our rational nature—they arouse and bring down upon us the divine energy which heals what is infirm and completes what is wanting.

With God's help and with the above preconditions, nothing was considered impossible by the Elder; but by those unable to attain to this state, he was misunderstood and regarded as deficient or extreme. To everything that seemed difficult or complex, the Elder had a ready answer: *Where is God?*—which for him meant that, without fail, God will solve the problem. Such an attitude was a basic principle of his, grounded not just in a very profound faith—what the Fathers call *faith of theoria*—but also in the guardianship of the spiritual law, on which he based everything throughout his life. Whatever happened in general, he always judged it on the basis of the spiritual law; and in particular he judged our own personal affairs in this way, when they preoccupied us.

At the beginning of our stay with the Elder, we usually paid quite frequent visits to him so that he could give us advice and see how we were getting on. Naturally, whether or not we told him what was on our minds, he would explain the meaning of events in detail, beginning from the results and analyzing what had led up to them, right back to the initial provocation. He would explain where these things came from, and why they came and to what extent, with such precision that we were astounded at the place the *law of the spirit of life* (Rom 8:2) held within him. Once, when I made a mistake (and how many mistakes are not caused by inexperience!) he gave me as an *epitimia* (spiritual correction) the pointless labour of a long journey. Because I knew that he never did anything without a reason, I did not ask any questions, but he told me of his own accord, *If, along with our repentance, we do not take upon ourselves a corresponding degree of painful toil, we do not "satisfy" the judgement of the spiritual law, and it is possible that some trial will befall us whose outcome is unknown.* I can say that across the whole range of our actions



and affairs, both general and particular, the basis and criterion was the spiritual law. And Abba Mark says, *Real knowledge is patiently to accept affliction and not to blame others for our own misfortunes.*

The Elder was also in the habit of referring frequently to the significance of trials, both as the totality of the various ills by which mankind as a whole is tested, and as events concerning individuals. On the basis of the spiritual law as the expression of God's comprehensive providence, he regarded the misfortunes that befell us providentially as appropriate instruments for our correction, and called them trials. Even though he knew in depth the importance of the benefit derived from these and repeated the patristic saying *take away trials, and no one would be saved* and the statement that they were *sure to come* (Lk 17:1), with detailed precision he would examine the causes and occasions which prompt them, and

teach us how to avoid them as far as possible. His experience centered on this double duty, as he called it: to deal wisely with the causes and occasions of temptations so as to forestall them on the one hand, and on the other—whenever they do occur—to confront them bravely, with faith and in hope of the ensuing benefit. *Unexpected trials are sent by God to teach us to practise the ascetic life, and they lead us to repentance even when we are reluctant.* And again, *The afflictions that come upon us are the result of our own sins.* With these sayings the Elder reminded us of the *professor of the spiritual law*, as he called him,

Abba Mark the Ascetic.

The practical aspect of the life in Christ conceals the most complex mystery in human life. Two titanic forces linked together by man create an immense and unbreakable tug-of-war with man in the middle, each frantically pulling him towards itself in order to win him over. Two loves, standing in opposition and turned towards opposite poles, form the motive power of these two forces: love towards God and love of this world. The victim, man, is not always in a position consciously to discern his own preferences, and this gives rise to retrospective changes. The occasions and causes which serve to awaken human beings who are entangled in these forces are known as trials. Are we to describe them? *If I would count them*, as the Psalmist says, *they are more than the sand* (Pss 139:18). But we should relate just a very little from the experiences of the Elder, who had the capacity to analyze trials with exceptionally subtle discernment.

In general he considered every trial beneficial (cf. Jas 1:2), but he ascribed greater seriousness to them when explaining the particular temptations of negligence and self-conceit,



which he described as devastating. Assuredly, God wills and calls all to follow Him, but not everyone accepts His call. Yet those who have accepted this calling are tested sorely, to the degree that He ordains and in proportion to the knowledge which He has given them. The negative side, which conspires against those called by God, is the love of this world which *is in the power of the evil one* (1 Jn 5:19), which in its crafty and hypocritical way manages to deceive some. As for the others who are not convinced by its deceit, it attempts to stifle their will with open and unconcealed force. The merciless pressure of the *changes* brought about by this evil neighbor of ours does not leave our good intention and good start intact.

There are many causes, known in detail to our Fathers, which give rise to changes: they may be natural, irreproachably stemming from our needs, or they may be acquired, stemming from passions and demons. But whether they come from the one cause or the other, the reality is that they conspire against our will.

In this uninterrupted tug-of-war, trials are constantly present. None of those who sail this stormy sea of life remains untouched by the struggle with them. Inexperience, ignorance, weakness, the weight of the clay of our flesh, our evil past, the passions, our habits and in addition the devil—all these evils change and check our right intention and vitiate our good purpose. *The law of sin which dwells in our members* (Rom. 7:23), which is *the imagination of our heart which is evil from our youth* (Gen 8:21), slackens our progress along the good course marked out by our calling from God and the nobility of our intention. There is now no other way of waking us up and pushing us forward except through the misfortunes which befall us, which are properly called trials and temptations.



Reading spiritual books without the proper instruction, you fear how not to fall into some incorrect thoughts or incorrect ideas and opinions. Your fear, my child, is well justified. Therefore, if you do not wish to suffer such a serious spiritual affliction, do not indiscriminately read all manner of new works, even if they are of spiritual content, but are written by those who have not confirmed their teaching by holiness of life; but rather read such works of the Fathers as have been recognized by the Orthodox Church as being fully well-known and doubtlessly edifying and soul-saving.

St. Ambrose of Optina

## ON MARRIAGE

By Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, from "For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy" (available through Amazon.com).

This is likely one of the finest and most focused quotes on marriage that is so direly needed to be read and understood by all Orthodox couples as well as young men and women who contemplate entering this holy sacrament. Here is what Fr. Alexander tells us:

*"A marriage which does not constantly crucify its own selfishness and self-sufficiency, which does not die to itself that it may point beyond itself, is not a Christian marriage. The real sin of marriage today is not adultery or lack of 'adjustment' or 'mental cruelty.' It is the idolization of the family itself, the refusal to understand marriage as directed toward the Kingdom of God. This is expressed in the sentiment that one would "do anything" for his family, even steal. The family has here ceased to be for the glory of God; it has ceased to be a sacramental entrance into His presence. It is not the lack of respect for the family, it is the idolization of the family that breaks the modern family so easily, making divorce its almost natural shadow. It is the identification of marriage with happiness and the refusal to accept the cross in it. In a Christian marriage, in fact, three are married; and the united loyalty of the two toward the Third, who is God, keeps the two in an active unity with each other as well as with God. Yet it is this presence of God which is the death of the marriage (or rather, transforms Orthodox marriage) as something that is only 'natural.' In other words, it is the cross of Christ that brings the self-sufficiency of nature to its end. But by the cross, joy entered the whole world. Its presence is thus the real joy of marriage. It is the joyful certitude that the marriage vow, in the perspective of the eternal Kingdom, is not taken until death parts, but until death unites us completely."*

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann is rightly claiming that marriage is unintelligible not only outside of the church, but more importantly outside the mission of God. The mission of God is what gives marriage a proper sense of itself. He's exposing one of the realities of our current culture on marriage: Most people think of their own marriage as something that exists "for my spouse and I, so that we might be happy and have our needs fulfilled." Fr. Alexander unequivocally says this is idolatry. It is allowing the marriage to turn in on itself—we look to our marriage to meet our needs and it will always fail and thus so many marriages end in divorce.

Christian marriage does not exist for the benefit of the two people in the marriage, it is for the benefit of the world, that God would be glorified. The main purpose of marriage is not the enjoyment of the two people who are married, the main purpose of marriage is to glorify Christ as we participate in the Mission of God. Anything less is making an idol out of marriage.

## SHOULD THE CHURCH BE IN STEP WITH THE TIMES?

By Archbishop Averky (+1976).

*Know that we must serve, not the times, but God.*  
St. Athanasios the Great, "Letter to Dracontius"

† † †

In step with the times! Behold the watchword of all those who in our time so intensely strive to lead the Church of Christ away from Christ, to lead Orthodoxy away from true confession of the Orthodox Christian Faith. Perhaps this watchword does not always (nor with everyone) resound so loudly, clearly, and openly—this, after all, might push some of them away! The important thing is the practical following of this watchword in life, the striving in one way or another, in greater or lesser degree and measure, to put it into practice.

Against this fashionable, "modern" watchword, perilous to souls however it may be proclaimed or however put into practice, openly or under cover, we cannot but fight—we who are faithful sons and representatives of the Orthodox Church, the whole essence of whose ideology, in the name of which it exists in the world, is not to be "in step with the times," but to preserve an unchanging faithfulness to Christ the Saviour, to the true Orthodox Christian Faith and Church.

Let us recall how the blessed Metropolitan Anthony, founder and first head of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, in his remarkable essay, *How does the Orthodox Faith differ from the Western Confessions?* wrote concerning the profound difference between our Faith and heterodoxy. He finds this profound difference in the fact 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, and to the degree to which they are, compatible with the conditions of contemporary cultural life.

He tells us: "Orthodoxy looks upon Christianity as the eternal foundation of true life and demands of everyone to force himself and life until they attain this standard; whereas heterodoxy looks upon the foundations of contemporary cultural life as an unshakable fact. Orthodoxy demands moral heroism—*podvig*; heterodoxy searches for what in Christianity would be useful to us in our present conditions of life. For Orthodox man, called to eternity beyond the grave, where true life begins, the historically-formed mechanism

of contemporary life is an insubstantial phantom; whereas for the heterodox the teaching concerning the future life is a lofty, ennobling idea, an idea which helps one ever better to construct real life here."

These are golden words, indicating for us clearly and sharply the truly bottomless abyss that separates genuine Christian faith—Orthodoxy—from its mutilation—heterodoxy! In the one is to be found ascetic labor (*podvig*), a turning to eternity; in the other, a strong attachment to the earth, a faith in the progress of mankind on earth.

Further, as Metropolitan Anthony so sharply and justly sets forth, "the Orthodox Faith is an ascetic faith," and "the blessed state which the worshippers of the 'superstition of progress' (to use the felicitous expression of S. A. Rachinsky) expect on earth, was promised by the Saviour in the future life; but neither the Latins nor the Protestants desire to reconcile themselves to this, for the simple reason—to speak frankly—that they poorly believe in the resurrection and strongly believe in happiness in the present life, which, on the contrary, the Apostles call a vapor that shall vanish away (Jas 4:14). This is why the pseudo-Christian West does not wish and is unable to understand the renunciation of this life by Christianity, which enjoins us to fight, having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new man, that is renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him (Col 3:9-10).

"If we investigate all the errors of the West," Vladika Anthony writes further,

"both those which have entered into its doctrinal teaching and those present in its morals, we shall see that they are all rooted in a failure to understand Christianity as ascetic labor (*podvig*) involving the gradual self-perfection of man."

"Christianity is an ascetic religion," concludes this excellent, forcefully and perspicuously-written essay. "Christianity is a teaching of constant battling with the passions, of the means and conditions for the gradual assimilation of virtues. These conditions are both internal-ascetic labors—and given from without—our dogmatic beliefs and grace-bestowing sacramental actions, which have one purpose: to heal human sinfulness and raise us to perfection."

And what do we see now in contemporary "Orthodoxy"—the "Orthodoxy" that has entered into the so-called "Ecumenical Movement"? We see the complete negation of the above-cited holy truths; in other words: renunciation of true Orthodoxy in the interest of spiritual fusion with the heterodox West. The "Orthodoxy" that has placed itself on the path of "Ecumenism" thinks not of raising contemporary





life, which is constantly declining with regard to religion and morals, to the level of the Gospel commandments and the demands of the Church, but rather of “adapting” the Church herself to the level of this declining life.

This path of actual renunciation of the very essence of holy Orthodoxy—ascetic labor, for the purpose of uprooting the passions and implanting the virtues—was taken in their time by the partisans of the so-called “Living Church” or “Renovated Church”. This movement immediately spread from Russia, which had been cast down into the dust by the ferocious atheists, to other Orthodox countries as well. Still fresh in our memory is the “Pan-Orthodox Congress” convened by Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios IV of sorrowful memory in 1923, at which were devised such “reforms” as a married episcopate, remarriage of priests, the abolition of monasticism and the fasts, abbreviation of Divine services, suppression of special dress for clergy, etc.

Notwithstanding the collapse at that time of these impious designs, the dark powers were not, of course, pacified, and continued from that time their obstinate and perseverant activity, finding for themselves obedient tools in the ranks of the hierarchy of various Local Orthodox Churches. At the present time also, by the allowance of God, they have attained great success: almost all the Local Orthodox Churches have already entered into the “Ecumenical Movement,” which has set as its purpose the abolition of all presently-existing churches—including, of course, the Orthodox Church—and the establishment of some kind of absolutely new “church,” which will be completely “in step with the times,” having cast away as useless rags, as something “obsolete” and “behind the times,” all the genuine foundations of true Christianity; and first of all, of course, asceticism, this being the indispensable condition for the main purpose of Christianity: the uprooting of sinful passions and the implanting of Christian virtues.

We have before us, as an example, an official document of this sort, belonging to the Local Church of Serbia: the journal *Theology*, published by the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Belgrade (8<sup>th</sup> year, issues 1 and 2 for 1964). In this journal we find a lead article literally entitled: “The Necessity for the Codification and Publication of a New Collection of Canons of the Orthodox Church.” The author of this article, while cunningly affirming that “the ideal principles of the Church will remain everywhere and always unchanging,” nonetheless attempts to prove that the collection of canons of the Orthodox Church is only the product of a time long since passed into eternity, and therefore that it does not answer to the demands of contemporary life and must be abolished and replaced by another.

This new collection of canons, observe, “must be brought into agreement with the fundamental principles of life,” with which the Church supposedly “has always reckoned.” “Our time,” says this cunning author, “is different in many respects from the time of the Ecumenical Councils, at which these canons were composed, and therefore these canons cannot now be applied.”

Let us look now and see precisely which canons is that this modernist author considers obsolete and subject to abrogation:

—The 9<sup>th</sup> canon of the holy Apostles, which demands that the faithful, after entering church, should remain at the Divine service to the end, and should not cause disorder by walking about the church.

—The 80<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Trullo, which punishes clergy by deposition, and laymen with excommunication, for failure to attend church for three successive Sundays without some important reason.

—The 24<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Trullo, which prohibits clergy and monks from visiting race tracks and other entertainments; to this canon the author adds the entirely naive, strange remark that it was only in earlier times that such amusements were places of depravity and vice, while now they are supposedly “centers of culture and education.”(!)

—The 54<sup>th</sup> canon of the holy Apostles, which prohibits clergy, without unavoidable necessity, from entering a tavern; here again it somehow seems that previously the tavern was some different kind of establishment from what it is now.

—The 77<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Trullo and the 30<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Laodicea, which prohibit Christian men from bathing together with women; why it is necessary to acknowledge these canons too as “obsolete” is completely incomprehensible!

—The 96<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Trullo, which condemns all adornment of oneself with various kinds of finery “for the enticement of unstable souls”—instead of “adorning oneself with virtues and with good and pure morals;” this canon in our times, it would seem, has not only not become “obsolete,” it has become especially imperative, if we call to mind the indecent, shameless women’s fashions of today, which are completely unsuitable for Christian women.

This is sufficient for us to see what purpose it is that the aforementioned “reform” in our Orthodox Church has in view, with what aim there is proposed the convocation of an Eighth Ecumenical Council, about which all “modernists” so dream, already having a foretaste of the “carefree life” that will then be openly permitted and legitimized for all!

***There is a truly bottomless abyss that separates genuine Christian faith—Orthodoxy—from its mutilation—heterodoxy. In the one is to be found ascetic labor, a turning to eternity; in the other, a strong attachment to the earth, a faith in the progress of mankind on earth.***  
Archbishop Averky (+1976)

But let us reflect more deeply upon what is the terrible essence of all these demands for the abrogation of supposedly “obsolete” canonical rules. It is this: these contemporary church “reformers” who now so impudently raise their heads even in the bosom of our Orthodox Church itself (and terrible to say, their number includes not merely clergy, but even eminent hierarchs!) accept contemporary life with all its monstrous, immoral manifestations as an unshakable fact (which is, as we have seen above, not at all an Orthodox, but a heterodox, Western conception!); furthermore, they wish to abrogate all those canonical rules which precisely characterize Orthodoxy as an ascetic faith that calls to ascetic labor, in the name of the uprooting of sinful passions and the implanting of Christian virtues. This is a terrible movement, perilous for our Faith and Church; it wishes to cause, in the expression of Christ the Saviour, *the salt to lose its savor*; it is a movement directed toward the overthrow and annihilation of the true Church of Christ by means of the cunning substitution for it of a false church.

The above-mentioned article in the Serbian theological journal is still discreet, refraining from complete openness. It speaks of the permissibility in principle of marriage for bishops, but in life we hear ever more frequent and persistent talk of far worse—namely, of the supposed inapplicability in our times of all those canonical rules which demand of candidates to the priesthood and of priests themselves a pure and unblemished moral life; or, to speak more simply, of the permissibility for them of that terrifying depravity into the abyss of which contemporary mankind more and more plunges itself.

It is one thing to sin and repent, knowing and acknowledging that one is sinning and is in need of repentance and correction of life. It is something else again to legitimize lawlessness, to sanction sin, lulling thus one’s conscience and thus abolishing the very foundations of the Church. To this we have no right, and it is a most grievous crime before God, the holy Church, and the souls of the faithful who seek eternal salvation.

And for how long, to what limits may we permit ourselves to go on such a slippery path, abrogating the Church canons which uphold Christian morality? Right now in America and, as we hear, in places also in other countries which have accepted contemporary “culture,” there is increasing propaganda for the official abrogation of marriage and the legalization in place of marriage of “free love;” the use of contraceptive pills is being sanctioned for married couples, and even for the unmarried, since marriage supposedly has as its purpose not the procreation of children, but “love;” legal recognition is being prepared for the heinous, unnatural passion of homosexuality, all the way to the establishment for homosexuals of a special church wedding rite (proposal of an Anglican bishop); etc., etc.

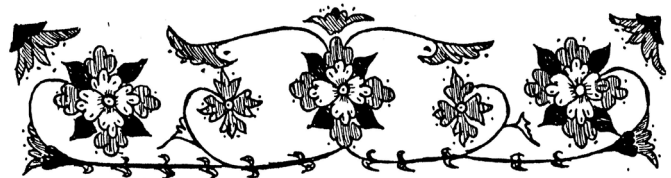
And so? Should our Church too follow this fashionable path, “in step with the times,” so as not to be left behind the march of life? But what kind of “church” will this be that will allow itself all this, or even merely look at it with all-forgiving condescension? It will be no longer a church at all, but a veritable Sodom and Gomorrah, which will not escape, sooner or later, the terrible chastisement of God.

We must not allow ourselves to be deluded and deceived, for we do not need such a “church,” or rather “false church.” We may ourselves be weak, and feeble, and we may often sin, but we will not allow the Church canons to be abrogated, for then it will become necessary to acknowledge the very Gospel of Christ, by which contemporary men do not wish to live, as “obsolete,” as “not answering to the spirit of the times,” and abrogate it!

But the Gospel of Christ, together with all the canons of the Church, as well as the Church ordinances, outline for us that Christian ideal toward which we must strive if we desire for ourselves eternal salvation. We cannot allow a lowering of this ideal for the gratification of sinful passions and desires, a blasphemous abuse of these holy things.

Whatever “reforms” all these contemporary criminal “reformers” may desire, the truly-believing Orthodox Church consciousness cannot acknowledge or accept them. And whatever the apostates from true Orthodoxy, from the ascetic Faith, may do, we will not allow the modernization of our Church, and we will NOT go “in step with the times”!

Amen.



Do not have a single thing to do with schismatics and absolutely nothing with heretics ... As you know I myself have avoided them due to their Christ-hating and heterodox heresy.

**St. Anthony the Great**

Neither the Papist nor the Protestant church can be considered as the True church of Christ. The first was altered by a number of innovations and the accursed despotism (primacy) due to which resulted the schism from the Orthodox. The same goes for the Protestants whose innumerable innovations lead to total anarchy and chaos. Only the Orthodox church maintained the teachings of Christ flawlessly, without a single innovation. Only in the Orthodox church does unity exist. The unity which the Savior was petitioning from the Father saying, *Holy Father keep them in your Name those that you gave me so they can be one just like we were one.* (Jn 17:11)

**St. Nektarios of Aigina**



## ON THE QUESTION OF LIFE-PRESERVING INTERVENTION

By Hieromonk (Priestmonk) Leonty Durkit.

The most frequent medical-moral question today has to do with what is called “life preserving intervention”—commonly known as “heroic” or “extraordinary” attempts to either revive or keep a dying person alive. This is an area in which priests are seldom consulted by family or doctors; yet, because it has to do with the passage from this life to eternity, priests must be involved.

When medical personnel speak of life preserving intervention, they usually mean one of two things: either omission or affirmative action. For example, should we allow a respirator to breathe for our patient, or not? Should we allow for continued artificial hydration and nutrition, or not? In theological terms the same questions can be phrased thusly: is the patient’s life being medically prolonged in order to restore the patient to health? Or, in order to try to defy the natural order? This question applies to even simple and commonplace methods as well as what are considered “extraordinary” methods of intervention.

Three tests are now in use for deciding upon either omission or affirmative action in prolonging life:

(1) The “subject objective test,” when either the patient can act as his own entity or someone with a power of attorney can act for him.

(2) The “limited objective test,” where there is trustworthy evidence of the patient’s own will and testament.

(Some states now permit a “Right to Death” contract, but since each state’s laws are different, pastors should be aware of what the law allows in their home state and whether or not any of their spiritual children have drawn up such a contract.)

(3) Another medical/legal way of looking at this is what is called “Best Interest.” It may take on various meanings—for instance, what is called “medical good”: can a cure be achieved, or is intervention only prolonging the inevitable? Or, “Best Interest” can mean that there is a patient preference about what is being done to him medically; this, however, is often so subjective that it usually isn’t considered to be “admissible best interest.”

“Human as human” is still another way of looking at the question of what should be done to and for a dying patient. This means that one must know the value system of a patient. For example, if a doctor knows that his criti-

cally, perhaps terminally ill patient is an atheist who sees absolutely no value, no “quality,” in pain or suffering of any kind, he may decide not to artificially prolong that person’s life. (On the other hand, a believing Christian usually sees some purifying and refining qualities in a certain amount of suffering.) Professionals believe that this is an important way of preserving the capacity that we, as humans, have.

Sadly, a priest is often brought to a patient’s bedside when all of these questions have already been answered—usually only by the medical personnel without even consulting the family, much less a clergyman. The priest arrives only just in time to give the last sacraments, if indeed he is even notified in time for this. This is not always the fault of a doctor or hospital, however. Often the family does not ask questions, does not want to be involved in decision-making at this time, because they are either emotionally paralyzed at the realization that Mother or Father may now be dying, and/or so spiritually illiterate that they simply “don’t know what to do.”

The point is: someone is going to make the decisions; better that it be a concert between medical staff, family, patient (if possible), and priest. And of these, **the priest should be the**

**most important advisor,** for usually only he can give the vital spiritual theological input; only he will know if the patient is properly prepared for death and eternity—and if he is not yet prepared, it may indeed be appropriate for “extraordinary” measures to be taken, if only to insure the repentance of the dying patient before death occurs.

What are some spiritual guidelines about health, sick-

ness, medicine, and dying that pastors should be teaching their flocks while they are in good health?

We read in the Epistle of St. James these words, which are also repeated at the end of the Divine Liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil: *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of Lights.* One of the gifts we continually pray for is that of good health. Another gift given from above is medical knowledge for the treatment of sickness. And yet, we seldom remember that there is a causal effect between sin and sickness in our lives. St. Paul wrote: *Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* (Rom. 5:12). And: *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our God.* (Rom. 6:23). Therefore, there is a general relationship between



sin and sickness—not to say, however, that a specific sin brings about a specific illness.

Because illness is the result of our fallen, sinful human nature, St. James instructs us: *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* (Jas 5:13-16).

When St. Basil the Great was asked if going to a doctor and taking medicine was in keeping with piety, he replied: *Every art is God's gift to us, making up for what is lacking in nature ... After we were told to return to the earth from which we had come [at the time of the Fall] and we were joined to a pain ridden flesh that is destined to die, and made subject to disease because of sin, the science of medicine was given to us by God in order to relieve sickness, if only to a small degree.*

Therefore, we may certainly have recourse to physicians and medicine; when and how often we go to a doctor thus becomes a matter of common sense so long as we don't forget that *no one can be cured without God*. He who gives himself up to the art of healing must also surrender himself to God, and God will send help. *The art of healing is not an obstacle to piety, but you must practice it with fear of God.* (Sts. Barsanuphius and John).

As a priest I have visited many people in hospitals and nursing homes; I have seen (as every priest has) both a proper and pious use of medicine, and its abuse.

For example, one young mother of four children was hooked up to machines to purify her blood, remove waste products, empty the stomach, help her breathe, and administer six different medications. She had been through exploratory surgery and also had a bone marrow transplant. All of this was done in order to stabilize her body functions and help her to recover. Indeed, after ten days or so, the problem had been successfully diagnosed and treated, and she was released.

These complex procedures had been followed in order to restore her health, not to prolong her life with no hope of improvement. It was truly a pious use of medicine.

At the same time, I was visiting a 96-year old parishioner in a nursing home. For several months he had been bedridden with bedsores, slipping in and out of consciousness. When he began to die, the doctors revived him and put him on artificial nutrition and hydration with NG tubes. This enabled him to “live” (or, rather, continue dying) for a few months. Then, with the onset of pneumonia and because of poor circulation, his feet developed gangrene. The doctors decided that his feet and lower legs should be amputated.

Even though he had signed forms much earlier requesting that no such “extraordinary” attempts be used, the staff felt that artificial feeding and amputation were to his “benefit.” His free will had been removed and the decision-making process was now in the hands of strangers. By God's mercy, he died just hours before the amputation was to take place.

This was a case, it seems to me, where there was no obvious hope of restoring this man's health. What was done was only to unduly and cruelly prolong the act of dying. Only a generation ago he would certainly have died in peace; some time before all these “options” became a topic of consideration by the medical staff.

We must never forget, in this “brave new world” created for us by medical science, that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. It is only in this context that we can decide, with the help of our spiritual father and medical advisors, what is best for our bodies and souls. If we decide to prepare the soul for the death of the body, then so be it. If we should care for the body for the sake of the soul, then so be it. But whatever is done must be what is spiritually best—and that will take some time, prayer, and consultation.

We ought not to fear death, yet we must pray for *a Christian ending to our lives, painless, blameless, with a good defense before the dread judgment seat of Christ.*



Miracles remind us that healing is in the Church and there is no need for Christians to search for wonder-workers and healers outside of their parish. There, in the local church, in one's own parish is the fullness of salvation, every form of healing, and of the Holy Spirit's gifts. Of course, when a parishioner comes to their parish priest the priest can send that person to go to another priest for counseling. And this all with the blessing of the bishop. Together with the parish priest the person can be sent to someone the parish priest considers to be more spiritually developed. But, again, not to expect that other spiritual father to solve their problems in a hocus-pocus, magical method.

Everything that happens in our lives happens by God's will, and this applies to our temptations and problems, and when we pray that we might defeat our temptations, for our spiritual well being, we always end our prayer with the words *may it be as the Lord wills for He knows better than we do what is good for us*. And so, on this day, let us pray that God grant unto us a pure faith which above all means that we might place our trust in Him and His Church and those who have been appointed by the Church to concern themselves with our spiritual well being.

**Bishop Porfirije of Jegar (Serbia)**



## NOTHING IS FEARFUL TO HIM WHO RELIES ON GOD

*A sermon of by Saint John Maximovitch, Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco, to his Orthodox flock in Shanghai, 1937.*

*Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. (Pss 138:7-10)*

† † †



These divinely inspired words of David the Psalmist should be particularly kept in mind today when the entire world is wavering, as it were, and the news about all kinds of tribulations, perils and disasters are brought to us daily.

No sooner does one's attention stop to consider what is happening in one country, than it is deflected by even more severe events which have unexpectedly flared up

in another place; before one has time to grasp them, still new events draw one's attention to a third place making one forget the two former ongoing disasters.

Useless are the conferences where the representatives of different countries try to find the cure for common disasters. They keep reassuring themselves and the others, *saying: Peace, peace! when there is no peace.* (Jer 8:11).

Calamities show no sign of stopping in the countries where they are raging, but they suddenly strike in places where it was considered to be safe. Those who escape from some perils run into others, which are often even worse. *It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.* (Amos 5:19); or, as another prophet said: *And it shall be that he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken.* (Isa 24:18).

Similar things happen in our days. Those setting out to work at peace suddenly become the victims of military actions, which arose where they were least expected. Those escaping from the dangers of war suffer from natural disasters of earthquakes or hurricanes.

Many find their death where they hoped to be safe from it. Others, however, are prepared to better expose their life

to danger, than to languish in the places considered to be safe, in anticipation of some other calamities which might strike there. It seems there is no place on the earth which could be regarded a peaceful refuge from the world disasters. People are faced with political, economic and social woes. *In perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils amongst false brethren,* said Apostle Paul (2 Cor 11:26).

To these perils, today we should add the particularly terrible "perils in the air."

When the Preeminent Apostle himself was exposed to all the perils named by him, he had a great consolation. He knew that he was suffering for Christ, and that Christ would reward him for his endurance: *For I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day.* (2 Tim 1:12). He knew that the Lord, if need be, will give him strength to endure even greater perils, and bravely said: *I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.* (Phil 4:13).

Our present day disasters are terrible for us because they befall us not as a result of the strength of our faith but because we do not endure them for Christ. Hence we do not set our hopes on being crowned for them.

We are made helpless in the struggle with adversities because we are not strengthened by the power of Christ, and rely not on God, but on human power and means. We forget the words of holy Scripture: *Trust ye not in princes, in the sons of men, in whom there is no salvation ... Blessed is he of whom the God of Jacob is his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.* (Pss 145:3, 5), and: *Except the Lord build the house, in vain do they labour that build it.* (Pss 126:1).

We try to find a firm foundation apart from God, and the prophet's words come to pass: *Therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall, a bulge in a high wall, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant.* (Isa 30:13). Woe to those who lean on such walls! Just as the falling wall crushes those who are leaning on it, so are perishing, along with their false hopes, those who relied on them. Those hopes turn out to be a staff of reed. (Ezek 29:6).

Things are different with those who seek God's help. *Our God is refuge and strength, a helper in afflictions which mightily befall us. Therefore shall we not fear when the earth be shaken, nor when the mountains be removed into the heart of the sea.* (Pss 45:1-2).

He who relies on God fears nothing. He will not fear an evil man. *The Lord is my light and my Saviour; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the defender of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?* (Pss 26:1). He is not afraid of the horrors of war. *Though a host should array itself against me, my heart shall not be afraid; though war should rise up against me, in this have I hoped.* (Pss 26:3). He is calm when living at home. *He that*

*dwelleth in the help of the Most High shall abide in the shelter of the God of Heaven.* (Pss 90:1). He is ready to travel by sea. *In the sea are Thy byways, and Thy paths in many waters.* (Pss 76: 19). Daringly, as if on wings, he will fly through the air into distant lands, saying: *Even there shall Thy hand guide me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.* (Pss 138:9). He will *not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the thing that walketh in darkness, nor for the mishap and demon of noonday.* (Pss 90:5-6).

He is not afraid of death, *for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* (Phil. 1:21). *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God* (Rom 8:35-39).

The Lord says: *Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, "Here I am."* (Isa 58:6-9).

O Lord, teach me to do Thy will and hear me on the day when we will call on Thee! Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us according as we have hoped in Thee.

Amen.



## DIFFICULTIES IN CHILDBEARING

*Translation by Fr. Luke Hartung from the book: "Family Life" by Elder Paisios the Athonite, published by the Sacred Hesychastirion of St. John the Evangelist, Souroti, Greece.*

—Geronda, if a woman is not Orthodox, and if she is not able to conceive a child, is it alright for her to wear the belt we have blessed on the holy relics of St. Arsenios? <sup>[1]</sup>

—Does she believe in the power of the Saint or does she think that it will help in some magical way? If she believes in the Saint, it's alright for her to wear it.

For some women who aren't able to conceive children, the spiritual laws are at work, because they didn't start families when they should have. They become very picky, "No, he has this problem and the other guy has these problems." So, they make a promise to someone; but then they see someone

else, so later they say "no" to the one to whom they had originally made a promise—and he, instead of seeing it as a blessing that she left him, goes and commits suicide. What kind of family is a woman like this going to make? Other women aren't able to have children because in their younger years they lived a wild life. Then others are troubled by their diet. Many foods contain lots of drugs and hormones.

There are also couples who, as soon as they marry, immediately want to conceive a child; and if they are held up a little they begin to be tormented. But how are they going to have a child while they are full of grief and stress? If they get rid of the grief and stress, and get their lives in order spiritually, then they'll have a child.

Sometimes God is intentionally slow in giving a child to a couple. Look at Saints Joachim and Anna, the holy ancestors, and the Prophet Zacharias and Saint Elizabeth. In their old age they were given a child, in both cases in order to fulfill God's pre-eternal plan for the salvation of all mankind.

Couples should always be ready to accept the will of God in their lives. Whoever entrusts himself to God, He will not abandon. We do so little, yet look at how much God does for us! With such love and open-handedness He gives us everything! Is there anything that God is not able to do? One couple had five children; but when their children grew up, they all moved away and settled elsewhere, leaving their parents all alone. So they decided to have one more child, to have with them in their old age. And even though the woman was at an age when it was humanly impossible to conceive, they had great faith in God and brought forth a son. So they had their youngest son, whom they had raised and cared for, with them in their old age.

The matter of childbearing is not dependant only upon man, but upon God as well. When God sees humility in a couple who has difficulty conceiving children, He won't just give them one child. He is able to give them a large family. However, when He sees stubbornness and egoism, if He grants them their request, He will give in to their stubbornness and egoism. They must entirely give themselves over to God saying, "My God, You know what is best for me; *Thy will be done.* (Mt 6:10)." Then, that for which they ask will be done. Because when we say *Thy will be done*, and dedicate ourselves in faith to God, then the will of God happens. But we on the one hand say *Thy will be done*, and on the other hand persist in wanting our own will. What can God do then?

† † †

[1] As referred to in his life, in cases of infertility Saint Arsenios would bless a little rope and give it to women to wear so as to be released from infertility. Elder Paisios told us in similar situations to bless a little ribbon upon the holy relics of St. Arsenios and give it to such women to wear.



## Ένας Έναντιόν Όλων, Άγιος Μάρκος ὁ Εὐγενικός

**Τιμούμε τὸν ἅγιο Μάρκο τὸν Εὐγενικό γιατί ἂν δὲν ἦταν αὐτός, ἔμεῖς τώρα θὰ ἦμαστε Φράγκοι!...**

*Τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Φλωρίνης Ἀγυουσίνου Καντιώτου.*

Στις 19 Ἰανουαρίου, ἀγαπητοί μου, ἐορτάζει ὁ ἅγιος Μάρκος Ἐφέσου ὁ Εὐγενικός. Στὰ ἐκκλησιαστικά βιβλία ὑπάρχουν καὶ ἄλλοι Μάρκοι. Ἐνας εἶνε ὁ εὐαγγελιστής, ποὺ ἔγραψε τὸ δεῦτερο Εὐαγγέλιο. Ἄλλος Μάρκος εἶνε ὁ ἀσκητής ποὺ ἔζησε στὴν ἔρημο. Ὁ σημερινὸς λέγεται Μάρκος ὁ Εὐγενικός, καὶ ἦταν μητροπολίτης Ἐφέσου.

Πότε ἔζησε; Λίγο προτοῦ νὰ πέση ἡ Πόλις. Ἡ Πόλις ἔπεσε 29 Μαΐου 1453, ἡμέρα Τρίτη. Μερικὰ χρόνια πρὶν ἔζησε καὶ ἔδρασε ὁ ἅγιος Μάρκος. Ἦταν χρόνια δύσκολα γιὰ τὸ γένος μας. Οἱ Τοῦρκοι εἶχαν κατορθώσει νὰ κυριεύσουν ὅλη τὴ Μικρὰ Ἀσία. Κάψανε σπίτια, ἀτιμάσανε γυναῖκες... Περάσανε τὰ Δαρδανέλλια, ἦρθαν στὴ Θράκη, φτάσανε μέχρι τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολι, καὶ τὴν πολιορκήσαν. Κινδύνευσε ἡ Πόλις νὰ πέση στὰ χέρια τους.

Αὐτοκράτωρ ἦταν τότε ἕνας ἀδελφὸς τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ Παλαιολόγου, ὁ Ἰωάννης Παλαιολόγος. Αὐτὸς συνεκάλεσε στὸ παλάτι σύσκεψι. Μαζευτήκανε στρατηγοί, ναύαρχοι, ὅλοι οἱ μεγάλοι, καὶ ἐσκέπτοντο πῶς θὰ σωθοῦνε ἀπὸ τὸν κίνδυνο τῶν Τοῦρκων. Ὅλοι εἶπαν: Μόνοι μας δὲν μπορούμε· πρέπει νὰ ζητήσουμε τὴ βοήθεια τῶν Εὐρωπαίων.

Ἀλλὰ οἱ Εὐρωπαῖοι (Ἴταλοί, Γάλλοι, Ἴσπανοί, Γερμανοί...) δὲν εἶνε Ὁρθόδοξοι. Πιστεύουν στὸν πάπα, καὶ αὐτὸν προσκυνοῦνε. Ἦταν καὶ τότε ὁ πάπας πανίσχυρος, γιατί ἐξουσίαζε ὄχι μόνο θρησκευτικῶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ πολιτικῶς. Ὅ,τι ἤθελε, ἔκανε. Ἄν ἔλεγε «πόλεμος», πόλεμος γινόταν· ἂν ἔλεγε «εἰρήνη», εἰρήνη. Ἔπρεπε, λοιπόν, νὰ πᾶνε στὸν πάπα καὶ νὰ τὸν παρακαλέσουν νὰ στείλῃ βοήθεια. Σχηματίσθηκε, λοιπόν, μιὰ ἐπιτροπή. Ἐκκλησιαστικά μέλη τῆς ἐπιτροπῆς ἦταν... ὁ πατριάρχης, ὠρισμένοι μητροπολίται, καὶ μεταξὺ αὐτῶν ὁ ἅγιος Μάρκος μητροπολίτης Ἐφέσου.

Τὸν πῆραν μαζί τους στὴν ἐπιτροπή, γιατί ἦταν πολὺ μορφωμένος. Ἦξερε τὴν ἀγία Γραφή ἀπέξω, ἤξερε τοὺς πατέρες, ἤξερε φιλοσοφία· ἦταν ὁ πιὸ

κατάλληλος νὰ κάνῃ συζήτησι μὲ τοὺς δυτικούς. Μπήκαν σὲ καράβι, γιὰ νὰ πᾶνε. Τώρα ἀπὸ τὴν Πόλι φθάνεις στὴν Ρώμη μὲ τὸ ἀεροπλάνο σὲ δυὸ ὥρες. Τότε, ὅμως, ἤθελαν μῆνες νὰ περάσουν τὸ Δαρδανέλλια, τὸ Αἰγαῖο, κάτω ἀπὸ τὴν Πελοπόννησο, γιὰ νὰ φθάσουν ἐκεῖ. Τὰ καράβια ἦταν ἰστιοφόρα.

Ἐκίνησαν, λοιπόν, καὶ ὕστερα ἀπὸ τέσσερις μῆνες φθάσανε στὴν Ἰταλία. Μόλις βγήκανε ἔξω, ὁ πάπας εἶχε τὴν ἀξίωσι, ὅλη ἡ ἐπιτροπὴ τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν Βυζαντινῶν μὲ ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα νὰ περάσουν νὰ τὸν προσκυνήσουν, νὰ πέσουν στὰ πόδια του καὶ νὰ φιλήσουν τὴν παντόφλα του. Αὐτοὶ τί ἀπήντησαν; «Ἐμεῖς ἄνθρωπο δὲν προσκυνᾶμε· τὸ Θεὸ προσκυνᾶμε». Καὶ δὲν ἀσπάσθηκαν τὴν παντόφλα του. Μέχρι καὶ σήμερα, ὅποιος πάει στὴ Ρώμη νὰ δῇ τὸν πάπα, πρέπει νὰ φιλήσῃ ὄχι τὸ χεῖρι ἀλλὰ τὸ πόδι του. Ἐμεῖς ἔχουμε

συνήθεια νὰ φιλᾶμε τὸ χεῖρι τῶν κληρικῶν καὶ τῶν μεγαλυτέρων· ἀλλὰ ἐκεῖ στὴ Ρώμη φιλᾶνε τὴν παντόφλα τοῦ πάπα.

Ἄρχισαν τέλος πάντων οἱ συζητήσεις. Σὲ ὅλα εἶχαν διαφορὲς μεγάλες. Ποιὲς διαφορὲς; Μερικὲς εἶνε οἱ ἐξῆς: Ἐμεῖς στὸ βάπτισμα βυθίζουμε τὸν βαπτιζόμενο στὴν κολυμβήθρα· πρέπει νὰ χωθῇ ὅλο το κορμὶ στὸ νερό, νὰ μὴ μείνῃ τίποτε ἀσκέπαστο. Οἱ Φράγκοι δὲν βυθίζουν τὸ σῶμα· μόνο τὸ ραντίζουν. Ἐνα αὐτό. Τὸ δεύτερο: Ἐμεῖς κοινωνοῦμε σῶμα καὶ αἷμα τοῦ

Χριστοῦ μας. Αὐτοὶ δίνουν μόνο «σῶμα», τὴν ὄστια ὅπως τὴ λένε. Τρίτον: Ἐμεῖς λέμε, ὅτι τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιο ἐκπορεύεται ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς. Αὐτοὶ προσθέτουν, ὅτι ἐκπορεύεται «καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ». Ἐμεῖς ἔχουμε τὸ Χριστὸ ἀρχηγό μας. Αὐτοὶ λένε, ὅτι ὁ πάπας ἔχει τὸ «πρωτεῖο». Αὐτὲς καὶ ἄλλες ἀκόμα διαφορὲς ὑπάρχουν μεταξύ μας. Καὶ σ' αὐτὰ τὰ σημεῖα ἔμεινε ἀνυποχώρητος ὁ ἅγιος Μάρκος.

Στὸ τέλος ὁ πάπας, ὅταν εἶδε τὰ δύσκολα, χρησιμοποίησε βία. Τοὺς ἔθεσε σὲ περιορισμό, τοὺς ἄφησε νηστικούς μέρους ὁλόκληρες, τοὺς τυράννησε. Τότε τὰ μέλη τῆς ἐπιτροπῆς, ὁ ἕνας κατόπιν τοῦ ἄλλου ὑποχώρησαν καὶ ἄρχισαν νὰ υπογράφουν τὴν ἔνωσι. Μόνο ἕνας δὲν ὑποχώρησε. Καὶ αὐτὸς ἦταν ὁ ἅγιος Μάρκος ὁ Εὐγενικός. Ὅταν ὁ πάπας ἔμαθε τὴν ἄρνησί του, εἶπε: «Ἀφοῦ δὲν ὑπέγραψε αὐτός, δὲν κάναμε τίποτα». Δὲν ὑπέγραψε, καὶ κινδύνευσε τὰ μέγιστα τότε. Μὲ δυσκολία κατώρθωσε νὰ φύγῃ





ἀβλαβῆς ἀπὸ τῆ Ρώμῃ καὶ νὰ ἐπιστρέψῃ στὴν Πόλι. Ὅταν ἔφτασε, βγήκε ὁ λαὸς καὶ τὸν ὑποδέχθηκε. Γιατὶ ἦταν ἥρωας. Ἔμεινε ἀνυποχώρητος, ἕνας αὐτὸς ἐναντίον ὄλων.

Τιμοῦμε τὸν ἅγιο Μᾶρκο τὸν Εὐγενικό. Γιατὶ ἂν δὲν ἦταν αὐτός, ἐμεῖς τώρα θὰ ἦμαστε Φράγκοι. Ἀντιστάθηκε αὐτὸς καὶ κράτησε τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο πίστι, ὅπως παλαιότερα ὁ Μέγας Ἀθανάσιος. Οἱ παπικοὶ ἔλεγαν: Ἄν μπορῆς νὰ μετακινήσῃς τὸν Ὀλυμπο, μπορεῖς νὰ κλονίσῃς κι αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τὶς πεποιθήσεις του.

Τι μᾶς διδάσκει ὁ ἅγιος Μᾶρκος; Πρῶτον ἕνα δίδαγμα ἐθνικό. 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 μιὰ φορὰ, γιὰ νὰ μᾶς βοηθήσουν. Δὲν κάνω πολιτική, ἀλλὰ σᾶς λέω

τὴν πιερὰ ἀλήθεια. Ὅταν ἦμεθα 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, φθονοῦν τὴν Ἑλλάδα. Τὶ πρέπει νὰ κάνουμε ἐμεῖς; Νὰ ἔχουμε ὁμόνοια καὶ ἀγάπη, γιὰ νὰ μπορέσουμε νὰ κρατηθοῦμε σ' αὐτὰ τὰ ἐδάφη, ποῦ εἶνε ποτισμένα μὲ αἷμα. Ἀλλὰ κι ἕνα θρησκευτικὸ δίδαγμα. Στὰ χρόνια μας ἔχουν σηκωθῆ πολλοὶ ἄθεοι. Ἄλλοτε στὸν εὐλογημένο τόπο μας δὲν ὑπῆρχε ἄθεος. Τώρα οἱ ἄθεοι φτάσανε μέχρι τὶς στάνες· ἔχουμε καὶ τσοπαναράιους ἄθεους. Ἄν συναντήσετε ἄθεο, ποῦ λέει ὅτι δὲν ὑπάρχει Θεὸς κι ὅτι ὅλα ἔγιναν ἔτσι, νὰ τοῦ πῆτε ἕνα πράγμα: «Τὸ σπιτάκι ποῦ κάθεσαι, ἔτσι μόνο του ἔγινε; Κάποιος τὸ ἔχτισε. Καὶ τὸ σύμπαν, τὸ μεγάλο αὐτὸ σπίτι, ποῖος τὸ ἔχτισε; Ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός!». Κλείστε τ' αὐτιά στοὺς ἀπίστους καὶ ἄθεους. Ἀκόμα κλείστε τ' αὐτιά σας στοὺς αἰρετικούς καὶ μάλιστα στοὺς χιλιαστὲς, ποῦ ἦρθαν ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀμερικὴ μὲ βαλίτσες δολλάρια. Αὐτὸ ποῦ πρέπει νὰ τοὺς ποῦμε ἐμεῖς εἶνε: «Φτωχοὶ εἴμαστε, ἀλλὰ δὲ θὰ πουλήσουμε τὴν πίστι μας. Παραπάνω ἀπὸ τὰ δολλάρια τῆς Ἀμερικῆς εἶνε ὁ Χριστὸς μας. Δὲ θὰ πουλήσουμε τὸ Χριστὸ σὰν τὸν Ἰούδα ἀντὶ τριάκοντα ἀργυρίων!»...

Ἔνας τέτοιος πράκτορας ἦρθε κάποτε στὴ Φλώρινα καὶ ζήτησε ἀπὸ μιὰ γυναίκα—ιδιοκτήτη κινηματογράφου—νὰ τοὺς παραχωρήσει τὴν αἴθουσα, γιὰ νὰ μαζευτοῦν ἐκεῖ ἀπ' ὅλη τὴ Μακεδονία καὶ νὰ

κάνουν συγκέντρωσι. Τῆς ἔδιναν, γιὰ μιὰ ὥρα, πολλὰ χρήματα. Κι αὐτὴ τὴ ἀπήντησε; «Φτωχὰ εἶμαι, ἀλλὰ τὸν κινηματογράφο σ' ἐσᾶς δὲν τὸν δίνω. Ὅλα τα δολλάρια τῆς Ἀμερικῆς νὰ μοῦ δώσετε, δὲ μαγαρίζω τὴν αἴθουσα!»...

Κάτω στὴ Θεσσαλία, κοντὰ στὸν Πηνεῖο, εἶνε ἕνα χωριουδάκι. Εἶχε παπά, χτυποῦσε καμπάνα, πηγαῖναν ὅλοι στὴν ἐκκλησία· εὐλογημένο χωριό. Ἦρθε, ὅμως, ἀπὸ τὴ Γερμανία ἕνας ποῦ εἶχε γίνει χιλιαστής. Αὐτὸς κατώρθωσε σιγὰ – σιγὰ νὰ κἀνῃ καὶ ἕναν δεῦτερο χιλιαστή, σὲ λίγο ἕνα τρίτο... Τώρα τὸ χωριὸ εἶνε ὅλο χιλιαστικό. Ψώριασαν τὰ πρόβατα! Φτάνει ἕνα, γιὰ νὰ ψωριάσῃ ὅλο το κοπάδι!

**Ὅσοι ἀπομείναμε πιστοὶ στὴν παράδοση, ὅσοι δὲν ἀρνηθήκαμε τὸ γάλα ποῦ βυζάξαμε, ἀγωνιζόμαστε, ἄλλος ἐδῶ, ἄλλος ἐκεῖ, καταπάνω στὴν ψευτιά. Καταπάνω σ' αὐτοὺς ποῦ θέλουνε τὴν Ἑλλάδα ἕνα κουφάρι χωρὶς ψυχὴ, ἕνα λουλοῦδι χωρὶς μυρουδιά. Κουράγιο, ὁ καιρὸς θὰ δείξει ποῖος ἔχει δίκιο, ἂν καὶ δὲ χρειάζεται ὀλότελα αὐτὴ ἡ ἀπόδειξη.**

**Φώτης Κόντογλου (+1965)**

πλαστογράφοι τῆς ἀλήθειας. Ἔτσι θὰ εἴστε παιδιὰ τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀθανασίου καὶ παιδιὰ τοῦ Μᾶρκου τοῦ Εὐγενικοῦ. Ἔτσι θὰ κρατήσουμε τὴν πίστι μας ἀπὸ γενεὰ σὲ γενεὰ, δοξάζοντες Πατέρα, Υἱὸν καὶ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα, εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος. Ἀμήν.



Εἶναι προτιμότερο νὰ ἔχει κανεὶς ἕνα φίδι νὰ περιστρέφεται στὰ σπλάχνα του παρὰ νὰ ἔχει φθόνο, ὁ ὁποῖος νὰ σύρεται μέσα του. Διότι, τὸ μὲν φίδι μπορεῖ κανεὶς πολλὰς φορὲς καὶ νὰ τὸ ἐμέση μὲ φάρμακο καὶ μὲ τροφή νὰ τὸ καταπραΰνει. Ὁ φθόνος, ὅμως, δὲν περιστρέφεται στὰ σπλάχνα, ἀλλὰ προσκολλᾶται στὸν κόλπο τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ εἶναι πάθος τὸ ὁποῖο δύσκολα ἐξαλείφεται καὶ τὸ μὲν φίδι ποῦ βρῖσκεται μέσα δὲν θὰ ἔκανε κακὸ στὰ ἀνθρώπινα σώματα ἂν ὑπῆρχε τροφή πλησίον του, ὁ φθόνος ὅμως, κι ἂν ἀκόμα παραθέσει σ' αὐτὸν πλουσιότατη τράπεζα, τὴν ἴδια τὴν ψυχὴ κατατρῶγει, δαγκώνει ἀπὸ παντοῦ, σπαράσσει, ξεσχίζει.

Καὶ δὲν εἶναι δυνατὸ νὰ βρεῖ ὁ φθονερὸς κάποια ἄλλη ἀνακούφιση μὲ τὴν ὁποία νὰ ἀπαλλαγεῖ ἀπὸ τὸ δράμα του ποῦ εἶναι μανία πραγματικὴ παρὰ μόνο μιὰ, τὴν δυστυχία ἐκείνου ποῦ εὐημερεῖ καὶ δι' αὐτὸ τὸν φθονεῖ.

**Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου Χρυσοστόμου**

## Προφητική Ἐπιστολή

*Τοῦ στάρετς Ανατολίου τῆς Ὀπτινα (+1927).*

Ⲭὰ ἔξαπλωθοῦν παντοῦ αἰρέσεις καὶ θὰ πλανήσουν πολλοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Ὁ ἐχθρὸς τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου γένους θὰ ἐνεργεῖ μὲ πονηρία μὲ σκοπὸ νὰ ἐλκύσῃ ἐντὸς τῆς αἰρέσεως ἐὰν εἶναι δυνατὸν ἀκόμη καὶ τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς.

Δὲν θὰ ἀρχίσῃ ἀπ' εὐθείας νὰ ἀπορρίπτῃ τὰ δόγματα τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδος, τὴν θεότητα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀρετὴ τῆς Θεοτόκου, ἀλλὰ θὰ ἀρχίσῃ ἀνεπαισθήτως νὰ διαστρέφῃ τὶς διδασκαλίες καὶ τοὺς θεσμοὺς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τὸ πραγματικὸ νόημά τους, ὅπως μᾶς παρεδόθησαν ἀπὸ τοὺς Ἁγίους Πατέρες ἐν Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι.

Ὀλίγοι θὰ ἀντιληφθοῦν αὐτὲς τὶς πανουργίες τοῦ ἐχθροῦ, ἐκείνοι μόνον οἱ πλέον πεπειραμένοι εἰς τὴν πνευματικὴν ζωὴν. Οἱ αἰρετικοὶ θὰ πάρουν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ θὰ τοποθετήσουν ἰδικοὺς τῶν ὑπηρέτας παντοῦ, οἱ δὲ πιστοὶ θὰ καταφρονῶνται. Ὁ Κύριος εἶπεν: «Ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσσεσθε αὐτούς» καὶ ἔτσι ἀπὸ τοὺς καρποὺς τῶν, ὅπως ἐπίσης καὶ ἀπὸ τὶς ἐνέργειες τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἀγωνίσου νὰ διακρίνῃς αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀληθινοὺς ποιμένας.

Αὐτοὶ εἶναι πνευματικοὶ ληστές, ληλατοῦντες τὸ πνευματικὸν ποίμνιον καὶ θὰ εἰσχωροῦν εἰς τὴν αὐλὴν τῶν προβάτων (τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν) ἀναβαίνοντες ἀλλαχόθεν (καὶ ὄχι ἀπὸ τὴν πύλην), ὅπως ἀκριβῶς προεῖπεν ὁ Κύριος. Θὰ εἰσχωροῦν παρανόμως, μεταχειριζόμενοι βίαν καὶ καταπατοῦντες τοὺς θείους θεσμούς.

Ὁ Κύριος τοὺς ἀποκαλεῖ κλέπτας (Ἰω. 10:1). Πράγματι, τὸ πρῶτο ἔργο ποὺ θὰ κάνουν θὰ εἶναι ὁ διωγμὸς τῶν ἀληθινῶν ποιμένων, ἢ φυλάκισις καὶ ἡ ἐξορία τους, διότι... χωρὶς αὐτὸ θὰ εἶναι ἀδύνατον σ' αὐτοὺς νὰ ληλατήσουν τὰ πρόβατα.

Γι' αὐτὸ παιδί μου, ὅταν ἴδῃς τὴν παραβίασιν τῆς πατερικῆς παραδόσεως καὶ τῆς Θείας Τάξεως εἰς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, τῆς Τάξεως ποὺ ἐγκαθιδρύθη ἀπὸ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν Θεό, γνῶριζε ὅτι οἱ αἰρετικοὶ ἔχουν ἦδη ἐμφανισθεῖ, ἂν καὶ πρὸς τὸ παρὸν μπορεῖ νὰ ἀποκρύπτουν τὴν ἀσέβειά τους.

Ἀκόμη θὰ διαστρέφουν τὴν Ἁγίαν Πίστιν (Ὁρθοδοξίαν) ἀνεπαισθήτως μὲ σκοπὸ νὰ ἐπιτύχουν, καλύτερα νὰ παραπλανήσουν καὶ δελεάσουν τοὺς ἀπείρους στὰ δίχτυα τους.

Ὁ διωγμὸς δὲν θὰ στρέφεται μόνον ἐναντίον τῶν ποιμένων, ἀλλὰ ἐναντίον ὅλων τῶν ὑπηρετῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ, διότι ὅλοι ἐκείνοι ποὺ θὰ κυβερνῶνται ἀπὸ τὴν αἴρεσιν δὲν θὰ ἀνέχονται τὴν εὐσέβειαν. νὰ ἀναγνωρίζῃς αὐτοὺς τοὺς λύκους μὲ ἔνδυμα

προβάτων, ἀπὸ τὶς ὑπερήφανες διαθέσεις τους καὶ τὴν ἀγάπη τους διὰ τὴν ἐξουσία. Θὰ εἶναι συκοφάντες, προδότες, ἐνσπείροντες πανταχοῦ ἔχθραν καὶ κακίαν. Οἱ ἀληθινοὶ ὑπηρεταὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι ταπεινοί, ἀγαποῦν τὸν πλησίον καὶ εἶναι ὑπάκουοι εἰς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν.

Οἱ Μονάζοντες θὰ καταπιέζονται μεγάλως ἀπὸ τοὺς αἰρετικούς καὶ ὁ μοναχικὸς βίος θὰ περιφρονεῖται.

Τὰ Μοναστήρια θὰ λιγοστεύσουν, ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν μοναχῶν θὰ μειωθεῖ καὶ αὐτοὶ ποὺ θὰ μείνουν θὰ ὑποφέρουν ποικίλους ἐκβιασμούς. Αὐτοὶ οἱ ἐχθροὶ τοῦ μοναχικοῦ βίου τέλος πάντων ἔχοντες ἐμφάνισιν μόνον εὐσεβείας, θὰ προσπαθοῦν νὰ ἐλκύουν τοὺς μοναχοὺς μὲ τὸ μέρος τῶν, ὑποσχόμενοι σ' αὐτοὺς προστασία καὶ γῆϊνα ἀγαθά, κακοποιοῦντες τοὺς ἀντιτιθεμένους σ' αὐτοὺς μὲ διώξεις.

Αὐτὲς οἱ κακοποιήσεις θὰ προξενοῦν μεγάλη ἀπόγνωση στοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους, ἀλλὰ ἐσὺ παιδί μου νὰ χαίρῃσαι, διότι ἔχεις ζήσει μέχρι τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν, ἐπειδὴ σύμφωνα μὲ τὸν λόγον τοῦ Κυρίου (Ματθ. 10:32) οἱ πιστοὶ τότε, ποὺ δὲν ἔχουν δεῖξει ἄλλες ἀρετές, θὰ λάβουν στεφάνους μόνον καὶ μόνον ἐπειδὴ ἐστάθησαν στερεοὶ εἰς τὴν πίστιν.

Νὰ φοβῆσαι τὸν Κύριον παιδί μου!

Νὰ φοβῆσαι μήπως ἀπωλέσῃς τὸν στέφανον ποὺ ἐτοιμάσθηκε γιὰ σένα. Νὰ φοβῆσαι μὴν ἀποβληθῆς παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον καὶ τὴν αἰώνιον κόλασιν. Στέκε ἀνδρείως εἰς τὴν πίστιν καὶ ἐὰν εἶναι ἀναγκαῖον νὰ ὑπομένης διωγμοὺς καὶ ἄλλες θλίψεις, διότι ὁ Κύριος θὰ εἶναι μαζί σου, καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι μάρτυρες καὶ ὁμολογητὲς θὰ βλέπουν μὲ χαρὰ τοὺς ἀγῶνάς σου.

Ὅμως ἀλλοίμονον στοὺς μοναχοὺς σ' αὐτὲς τὶς ἡμέρες ποὺ θὰ εἶναι δεμένοι μὲ ὑπάρχοντα καὶ πλοῦτη, οἱ ὅποιοι ἔνεκα τῆς ἀγάπης, τῆς «εἰρήνης» θὰ εἶναι ἔτοιμοι νὰ ὑποταχθοῦν εἰς τοὺς αἰρετικούς. Αὐτοὶ θὰ ἀποκοιμίζονται τὴν συνειδήσιν τους μὲ τὸ νὰ λένε «ἐμεῖς συντηροῦμε καὶ σώζουμε τὸ μοναστήρι, καὶ ὁ Κύριος θὰ μᾶς συγχωρήσῃ». Οἱ ταλαίπωροι καὶ τυφλοὶ, δὲν ἀντιλαμβάνονται ὅτι διὰ μέσου τῆς αἰρέσεως οἱ δαίμονες θὰ εἰσέρχονται στὸ μοναστήρι, τὸ ὅποιον δὲν θὰ εἶναι πλέον τότε ἓνα ἅγιο μοναστήρι, ἀλλὰ γυμνοὶ τοῖχοι ἀπὸ ὅπου ἡ χάρις θὰ ἀποχωρεῖ.

Ἀληθινοὶ Χριστιανοὶ θὰ εὐρίσκονται ἕως τέλους τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, μόνον ποὺ θὰ προτιμοῦν νὰ ζοῦν σὲ ἀπομακρυσμένους καὶ ἐρημικοὺς τόπους.

Ὁ Θεὸς ὅποσδήποτε εἶναι ἰσχυρότερος ἀπὸ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς καὶ ποτὲ δὲν θὰ ἐγκαταλείψῃ τοὺς ὑπηρετάς του. Νὰ μὴ φοβῆσαι τὶς θλίψεις, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον νὰ φοβῆσαι τὴν ὀλέθριον αἴρεσιν, διότι αὐτὸ εἶναι ποὺ μᾶς γυμνώνει ἀπὸ τὴν Θεία Χάρι καὶ μᾶς χωρίζει ἀπὸ τὸν Χριστό.



## Καρδιά Συντετριμμένη

Τοῦ κυρ-Φώτη Κόντογλου, ξημέρωμα 1ης Ιανουαρίου 1950.



**Χ**ρυσὰ χέρια καὶ πολλὰ χαρίσματα μοῦ ἔδωσε ὁ Κύριος. Δὲν τὰ μεταχειρίσθηκα γιὰ νὰ ἀποχτήσω ὑλικά ἀγαθὰ, μήτε χρήματα, μήτε δόξα, μήτε κανενὸς εἴδους καλοπέραση.

Τὰ μεταχειρίσθηκα πρὸς δόξαν τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας του. Ὅχι μόνο τὸν ἑαυτό μου παράβλεψα, μὰ καὶ τοὺς δικούς μου, τὴ γυναῖκα μου, τὰ παιδιά μου καὶ τὰ ἐγγόνια μου τὰ ἀδίκησα, κατὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου. Κανένας ἄνθρωπος δὲν στάθηκε τόσο ἀνίκανος νὰ βοηθήσει τοὺς συγγενεῖς του, ὅσο ἐγώ. Μ' ὅλο πού εἶχα ἓνα ὄνομα καὶ πολλοὺς θαυμαστές, ποτὲ δὲν τὰ μεταχειρίσθηκα γιὰ ὠφέλειά μου, τόσο, ὥστε ν' ἀποροῦν οἱ γνωστοί μου κι οἱ ξένοι. Ἦμουν αὐτοπροσηλωμένος στὸ ἔργο πού ἔβαλα γιὰ σκοπὸ μου, καὶ στὸν σκληρὸν ἀγῶνα γιὰ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη μας. Γιὰ τοῦτο τυραννιστήκαμε καὶ τυραννιόμαστε στὴ ζωὴ μας.

Φτωχὸς ἐγώ, φτωχὰ καὶ τὰ παιδιά μας. Βιοπάλη σκληρή. Μά, μὲ τὴν ἐλπίδα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅλα γαληνεύουν. Ὅλα τὰ θλιβερὰ τὰ περνοῦμε μὲ εὐχαριστία. Ξέρω πὼς ὅσα βάσανα μᾶς ἔρχονται, μᾶς ἔρχονται γιὰτὶ δὲν πέσαμε νὰ προσκυνήσουμε τὸν διάβολο, νὰ καλοπεράσουμε, παρὰ ἀκολουθοῦμε Ἐκεῖνον πού μᾶς δείχνει «τὴν στενὴν καὶ τεθλιμμένην ὁδόν», καὶ σ' αὐτὸν τὸν δρόμο τὸν ἀκολουθοῦμε πρόθυμα.

Ἐχτές, παραμονὴ τῆς Πρωτοχρονιάς, ἦμουν αὐτοπροσηλωμένος στὸ κουβούκλι μας περασμένα τὰ μεσάνυχτα, καὶ συλλογιζόμουν. Εἶχα δουλέψει νυχτέρι γιὰ νὰ τελειώσω μία Παναγία Γλυκοφιλοῦσα, καὶ δίπλα μου καθόταν ἡ γυναῖκα μου κ' ἔπλεκε. Ὅποτε δουλεύω, βρίσκουμαι σὲ μεγάλη κατάνυξη, καὶ ψέλνω διάφορα τροπάρια. Σιγόφελνα λοιπὸν ἐκεῖ πού ζωγράφιζα τὴν Παναγία, κ' ἡ Μαρία ἔψελνε καὶ κείνη μαζί μου μὲ τὴ γλυκεῖα φωνή της.

Βλογημένη γυναῖκα μοῦ ἔδωσε ὁ Θεός, ἃς εἶναι δοξασιμένο τ' ὄνομά του γιὰ ὅλα τὰ μυστήρια τῆς οἰκονομίας του. Τὸν εὐχαριστῶ γιὰ ὅσα μοῦ ἔδωσε, καὶ πρῶτ' ἀπ' ὅλα γιὰ τὴν ἀπλή τὴ Μαρία, πού μοῦ τὴ δώρησε συντροφιά στὴ ζωὴ μου, ψυχὴ θρησκευτικὴ, ἓνα δροσερὸ ποταμάκι πού γλυκομουρμουρίζει μέρα-νύχτα δίπλα σ' ἓνα παλιὸν καστρότοιχο. Τὸ κρουσταλένιο νερὸ του δὲν θολώνει μὲ τὰ χρόνια, ἀλλὰ γίνεται κι' ὀλοένα πιὸ καθαρὸ καὶ πιὸ γλυκόλαλο: «Καλότυχος ὁ ἄνδρας πού ἔχει καλὴ γυναῖκα. Ἡ καλὴ γυναῖκα εὐφραίνει τὸν ἄνδρα της, καὶ θὰ ζήσει εἰρηνεμένα

τὰ χρόνια τῆς ζωῆς του. Καλὴ γυναῖκα, κορῶνα στὸ κεφάλι τοῦ ἀνδρός της. Ἡ ἔμορφιά τῆς καλῆς γυναίκας φεγγοβολᾷ μέσα στὸ σπίτι σὰν τὸν ἥλιο πού βγαίνει καὶ λάμπει ὁ κόσμος». Τέτοια γυναῖκα μοῦ χάρισε κ' ἐμένα ὁ Κύριος.

Ἡ ἔμορφιά δὲν τὴν περηφάνεψε, ἴσια-ἴσια ἡ ταπεινὴ τὴν πλήθυνε, κι ὁ φόβος τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν εὐωδίασε. Ἀνάμεσα στὶς ἔμορφες ξεχώρισε, γιὰτὶ ἡ ἀκαταδεξιὰ δὲν θάμπωσε τὸ κρούσταλλό της, κ' ἡ πονηρία δὲν λέρωσε τὸ σιντέφι τῆς ψυχῆς της. Κοντὰ μου κάθετα καὶ μὲ συντροφεύει, ἡμερὸς ἄνθρωπος. Μαρία ἡ ἀπλή! Ἐκεῖνη πλέκει εἴτε ράβει, κ' ἐγὼ δουλεύω τὴν ἁγιασμένη τέχνη μου καὶ φιλοτεχνῶ εἰκονίσματα πού τὰ προσκυνᾷ ὁ κόσμος. Τί χάρι μᾶς ἔδωσε ὁ Παντοδύναμος, πού τὴν ἔχουνε λιγοστοὶ ἄνθρωποι, «ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπεινῶσιν τῶν δούλων Αὐτοῦ».

Τὸ καλύβι μας εἶναι φτωχὸ στὰ μάτια τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ μολοταῦτα στ' ἀληθινὰ εἶναι χρυσοπλοκώτατος πύργος κ' ἡλιοστάλαχος θρόνος, γιὰτὶ μέσα του σκίηνωσε ἡ πίστη κ' ἡ εὐλάβεια. Κ' ἐμεῖς πού καθόμαστε μέσα, εἴμαστε οἱ πιὸ φτωχοὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς φτωχοὺς, πλὴν μᾶς πλουτίζει μὲ τὰ πλούτη του Ἐκεῖνος, πού εἶπε: «Πλούσιοι ἐπτώχευσαν καὶ ἐπέινασαν, οἱ δὲ ἐκζητοῦντες τὸν Κύριον οὐκ ἐλαττωθήσονται παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ».

Ἀφοῦ λοιπὸν τελείωσα τὴ δουλειά μου κατὰ τὰ μεσάνυχτα, ξάπλωσα στὸ μεντέρι μου, κ' ἡ Μαρία ξάπλωσε καὶ κείνη κοντὰ μου καὶ σκεπάσθηκε καὶ τὴν πῆρε ὁ ὕπνος. Ἐπίασα νὰ συλλογιζόμουν τὸν κόσμο. Συλλογισθήκα πρῶτα τὸν ἑαυτό μου καὶ τοὺς δικούς μου, τὴ γυναῖκα μου καὶ τὸ παιδί μου. Γύρισα καὶ κοίταξα τὴ Μαρία πού ἦτανε κουκουλωμένη καὶ δὲν φαινόταν ἂν εἶναι ἄνθρωπος ἀποκάτω ἀπὸ τὸ σκέπασμα. Κ' εἶπα: Ποιὸς μᾶς συλλογιζεται; Οἱ ἄνθρωποι λένε λόγια πολλά, μὰ δὲν πιστεύουνε σὲ τίποτα, γι' αὐτὸ εἶπε ὁ Δαυὶδ: «Πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης».

Γύρισα καὶ κοίταξα τὸ φτωχικὸ μας, πού εἶναι σὰν ξωκκλήσι, στολισμένο μὲ εἰκονίσματα καὶ μὲ ἀγιωτικὰ βιβλία, χωμένα ἀνάμεσα στ' ἀρχοντόσπιτα τῆς Βαβυλωνίας, κρυμμένο, σὰν τὸν φτωχὸ πού ντρέπεται μὴ τὸν δεῖ ὁ κόσμος. Ἡ καρδιά μου ξεστάθηκε, κρυμμένη καὶ κείνη μέσα μου. Ἐνοίωσα πὼς ἦμουν αὐτοπροσηλωμένος ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμο κ' οἱ λογισμοί μου πὼς ἦτανε καὶ κείνοι κρυμμένοι πίσω ἀπὸ τὸ καταπέτασμα πού χώριζε τὸν κόσμο ἀπὸ μένα, καὶ πὼς ἄλλος ἥλιος κι ἄλλο φεγγάρι φωτίζανε τὸν δικό μας τὸν κόσμο. Κι ἀντὶ νὰ πικραθῶ, εὐφράνθηκε ἡ ψυχὴ μου πὼς μ' ἔχουνε ξεχασμένον, κ' ἡ χαρὰ ἡ μυστικὴ, πού τὴν νοιώθουνε ὅσοι εἶναι παραπεταμένοι, ἀναψε μέσα μου ἡσυχία κι εἰρηνικά, κ' ἡ παρηγοριὰ μὲ γλύκανε σὰν μάλσαμο, ἀνακατεμένη



μὲ τὸ παρὰ πονο.

Καὶ φχαρίστησα Ἐκεῖνον, ποὺ κάνει τέτοια μυστήρια στὸν ἄνθρωπο καὶ ποὺ κάνει πλούσιους τοὺς φτωχοὺς, χαρούμενους τοὺς θλιμμένους, ποὺ δίνει μυστικὴ συντροφιά στοὺς ξεμοναχιασμένους, καὶ ποὺ μεθᾶ μὲ τὸ κρασί τῆς τράπεζάς του ὅσους βάλανε τὴν ἐλπίδα τους σὲ Κεῖνον. Ἄν δὲν ἦμουν φτωχὸς καὶ ξευτελισμένος, δὲν θὰ μπορούσα νὰ ἀξιωθῶ τούτη τὴν πονεμένη χαρὰ, γιατί δὲν ξαγοράζεται μὲ τίποτα ἄλλο, παρεχτὸς μὲ τὴν συντριβὴ τῆς καρδιάς, κατὰ τὸν Δαυὶδ ποὺ λέγει: «Κύριε, ἐν θλίψει ἐπλάτυνάς με». Ἐπειδὴ, ὅποιος δὲν πόνεσε καὶ δὲν ταπεινώθηκε, δὲν παίρνει ἔλεος. Ἔτσι τὰ θέλησε ἡ ἀνεξιχνίαστη σοφία Του. Μὰ οἱ ἄνθρωποι δὲν τὰ νοιώθουνε αὐτά, γιατί δὲν θέλουνε νὰ πονέσουν καὶ νὰ ταπεινωθοῦνε, ὥστε νὰ νοιώσουνε κάτι παραπέρα ἀπὸ τὴν καλοπέραση τοῦ κορμιοῦ κι ἀπὸ τὰ μάταια πάθη τους.

Ὅλοένα, χωρὶς νὰ τὸ καταλάβω, ἀνεβαίνανε τὰ δάκρυα στὰ μάτια μου, δάκρυα γιὰ τὸν κόσμον καὶ δάκρυα γιὰ μένα. Δάκρυα γιὰ τὸν κόσμον, γιατί γυρεύει νὰ βρεῖ τὴ χαρὰ ἐκεῖ ποὺ δὲν βρῖσκεται καὶ δάκρυα γιὰ μένα, γιατί πολλὲς φορὲς δεῖλιασα τὴ φτώχεια καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους πειρασμοὺς, καὶ δικαίωσα τοὺς ἄνθρώπους, ἐνῶ τώρα ἔνοιωσα πὼς δὲν παίρνει ὁ ἄνθρωπος μεγάλο χάρισμα, χωρὶς νὰ περάσει μεγάλον πειρασμό. Κι ἀντρειύτηκα κατὰ τὸ πνεῦμα, κ' ἔνοιωσα πὼς δὲν φοβάμαι τὴ φτώχεια, παρὰ πὼς τὴν ἀγαπῶ. Καὶ κατάλαβα καλά, πὼς δὲν πρέπει ὁ ἄνθρωπος νὰ ἀγαπήσει ἄλλο τίποτα ἀπὸ τὸν πόνο του, γιατί ἀπὸ τὸν πόνο ἀναβρῦζει ἡ ἀληθινὴ χαρὰ κ' ἡ παρηγοριά, κ' ἐκεῖ βρῖσκονται οἱ πηγὲς τῆς ἀληθινῆς ζωῆς.

Ἀληθινά, ἡ φτώχεια εἶναι φοβερὸ θηρίο. Ὅποιος τὸ νικῆσει, ὅμως, καὶ φτάξει νὰ μὴν τὸ φοβάται, θὰ βρεῖ μεγάλα πλούτη μέσα του. Τούτη τὴν ἀφοβία τὴ δίνει ὁ Κύριος ἅμα ταπεινωθεῖ ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Σ' αὐτὸν τὸν πόλεμο ποὺ ἡ ἀντρεία λέγεται ταπεινώση, καὶ τὰ βραβεῖα εἶναι καταφρόνηση καὶ ξευτελισμός, δὲν βαστᾶνε οἱ ἀντρεῖοι τοῦ κόσμου. Ὅποιος δὲν περάσει ἀπὸ τὴ φωτιά τῆς δοκιμῆς, δὲν ἔνοιωσε ἀληθινὰ τί εἶναι ἡ ζωὴ, καὶ γιατί ὁ Χριστὸς εἶπε: «*Εγὼ εἶμαι ἡ ζωὴ*», καὶ γιατί εἶπε «*Μακάριοι οἱ πικραμένοι, γιατί αὐτοὶ θὰ παρηγορηθοῦνε*». Ὅποιος δὲν ἀπελπίστηκε ἀπὸ ὅλα, δὲν τρέχει κοντὰ στὸν Θεό, γιατί λογαριάζει πὼς

ὑπάρχουνε κι ἄλλοι προστάτες γι' αὐτόν, παρεχτὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Κ' ἐκεῖ ποὺ τὰ συλλογιζόμουν αὐτά, ἔνοιωσα μέσα μου ἕνα θάρρος καὶ μία ἀφοβία ἀκόμα πὼς μεγάλη, κ' εἰρήνη μὲ περισκέπασε, κ' εἶπα τὰ λόγια ποὺ εἶπε ὁ Ἰωάνης μέσα ἀπὸ τὸ θεριόψαρο: «*Εβόησα ἐν θλίψει μου πρὸς Κύριον τὸν Θεόν μου καὶ εἰσήκουσέ μου!* Καὶ «*Ἀπὸ τὴν κοιλία τοῦ Ἄδη ἄκουσες τὴν κραυγὴ μου, ἄκουσές τη φωνή μου. Ἄβυσσο ἄπατη μὲ ἔξωσε. Τὸ κεφάλι μου χώνεψε μέσα στὶς σκισμάδες τῶν βουνῶν, κατέβηκα στὴ γῆς, ποὺ τὴν κρατᾶνε ἀμπάρες ἀκατέλυτες. Ἄς ἀνεβῆ ἡ ζωὴ μου ἀπὸ τὴ φθορὰ πρὸς ἐσένα, Κύριε ὁ Θεός μου. Τὴν ὥρα ποὺ χάνεται ἡ ζωὴ μου, θυμῆθηκα τὸν Κύριο. Ἄς ἐρθεῖ ἡ προσευχή μου στὴν ἀγιασμένη ἐκκλησιά σου. Ὅσοι φυλάγονται μάταια καὶ ψεύτικα θὰ παρατηθοῦνε χωρὶς ἔλεος. Μὰ*

*ἐγὼ θὰ σὲ φχαριστήσω καὶ μὲ φωνὴ αἰνέσεως θὰ σὲ δοξολογήσω.*»

Καὶ πάλι δόξασα τὸν Θεὸ καὶ τὸν φχαρίστησα γιατί μ' ἔκανε ἀναίσθητο γιὰ τὶς ἡδονὲς τοῦ κόσμου, τόσο ποὺ νὰ σιχαίνουμαι ὅσα εἶναι ποθητὰ γιὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, καὶ νὰ νοιώθω πὼς εἶμαι κερδισμένος, ὅποτε οἱ ἄλλοι λογαριάζουνε πὼς εἶμαι ζημιωμένος καὶ γιατί πῆρα δύναμη ἀπὸ Κεῖνον νὰ καταφρονήσω τὸν σατανᾶ, ποὺ

παραφυλάγει πότε θὰ λιγοψυχῆσω, κ' ἔρχεται καὶ μοῦ λέγει: «*Πέσε προσκύνησέ με, γιατί θὰ γίνουνε ψωμιὰ αὐτὲς οἱ πέτρες ποὺ βλέπεις*». Καὶ πάλι ξανάρχεται καὶ μοῦ λέγει: «*Ἔ, πὼς χαίρεται ὁ κόσμος! Ἀκοῦς τὸν ἀλαλαγμό, τὶς φωνὲς ποὺ βγαίνουνε ἀπὸ τὰ παλάτια, ὅπου διασκεδάζουνε οἱ φτυχιμένοι ὑποταχτικοί μου, ἄντρες καὶ γυναῖκες; Πέσε προσκύνησέ με καὶ θὰν ἀπλώσεις μονάχα τὸ χέρι σου νὰ τὰ πάρεις ὅλα. Ἐσὺ εἶσαι ἄνθρωπος τιμημένος γιὰ τὴν τέχνη σου γιατί νὰ ὑποφέρεις, σὲ καιρὸ ποὺ αὐτοὶ χαίρουνται ὅλα τὰ καλὰ καὶ τ' ἀγαθὰ, μ' ὅλο ποὺ δὲν ἔχουνε τὴ δική σου τὴν ἀξιοσύνη; Κοίταξε τὴ φτώχειά σου, κι ἂν δὲν λυπᾶσαι τὸν ἑαυτό σου, λυπήσου τὴν καυμένη τὴ γυναῖκα σου, τὸ φτωχὸ τὸ παιδί σου, ποὺ ὑποφέρουνε ἀπὸ σένα!*»

Ἄλλη φορὰ τὸν ἀκουγα, μὲ ὅλο ποὺ δὲν ἔκανα ὅ,τι μοῦ ἔλεγε, μὰ τώρα τὸν ἄφησα νὰ λέγει χωρὶς νὰ τὸν ἀκούω ὁλότελα. Ἐμένα ὁ νοῦς μου ἦτανε σὲ κείνους τοὺς θλιμμένους καὶ τοὺς βασανισμένους, ποὺ



**Ἀρχάγγελος Γαβριὴλ  
τοῦ κυρ-Φώτη Κόντογλου (1895-1965)**

δὲν ἔχουνε ἐλπίδα, καὶ σὲ κείνους ποὺ τρώγανε καὶ πίνανε κείνη τὴ νύχτα, καὶ χορεύανε μὲ τὶς γυναῖκες ποὺ δὲν ἔχουνε ντροπὴ, καὶ σὲ κείνους ποὺ μαζεύουνε πλούτη καὶ ἀδιαφόρετα πράγματα ποὺ δὲν μποροῦνε νὰ τ' ἀποχωριστοῦνε σὰν σιμῶσει ὁ θάνατος, καὶ ποὺ καταγίνονται νὰ δέσουνε τὸν ἑαυτό τους μὲ πιδὸ πολλὰ σκοιινιά, ἀντὶς νὰ τὰ λιγοστεύουνε. Ἐπειδὴ οἱ δύστυχοι εἶναι φτωχοὶ ἀπὸ μέσα τους καὶ ἀδειανοὶ καὶ τρεμάμενοι καὶ θέλουνε νὰ ζεσταθοῦνε καὶ ρίχνουνε ἀπὸ πάνω τοὺς ὄλα αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα, σὰν τὸν θερμασμένο ποὺ ρίχνει ἀπάνω του παπλώματα καὶ ροῦχα, δίχως νὰ ζεσταθεῖ.

Λογαριάζω πὼς οἱ σημερινοὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι πιδὸ φτωχοὶ στὸ ἀπομέσα πλοῦτος, γιὰ νὰ ἔχουν ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ τόσα πολλὰ μάταια πράγματα. Αὐτὰ ποὺ λένε χαρὲς καὶ ἡδονές, τὰ δοκίμασα καὶ ἐγὼ σὰν ἄνθρωπος, καὶ πιστεύω καὶ ἐγὼ πὼς ἦτανε στ' ἀλήθεια χαρὰ καὶ εὐτυχία. Μὰ γλήγορα κατάλαβα πὼς ἦτανε ψευσιτεῖς καὶ φαντασιεῖς ἀσύστατες, καὶ πὼς χοντραίνουνε τὴν ψυχὴ καὶ στραβώνουνε τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς μάτια καὶ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ δεῖ, καὶ γίνεται κακιά καὶ ἀλύπητη στὸν πόνο τ' ἀδερφοῦ τῆς, ἀδιάντροπη, ἀκατάδεκτη, ἄθεη, θυμώτρα, αἰμοβόρα.

Ὅσοι εἶναι σκλάβοι στὴν καλοπέραση τοῦ κορμιοῦ τους δὲν ἔχουνε ἀληθινὴ χαρὰ, γιὰ τὸ δὲν ἔχουνε εἰρήνη γιὰ τοῦτο θέλουνε νὰ βρίσκονται μέσα σὲ φουρτούνα καὶ νὰ ζαλιζονται, ὥστε νὰ θαρροῦνε πὼς εἶναι φτυχισμένοι. Ἡ χαρὰ ἢ ἀληθινὴ εἶναι μία θέρη τῆς διάνοιας καὶ μία ἐλπίδα τῆς καρδιάς ποὺ τὶς ἀξιώνουνται ὅσοι θέλουνε νὰ μὴν τοὺς ξέρουνε οἱ ἄνθρωποι, γιὰ νὰ τοὺς ξέρει ὁ Θεός. Γι' αὐτό, Κύριε καὶ Θεὲ καὶ Πατέρα μου, καλότυχος ὅποιος ἔκανε σκαλούνια ἀπὸ τὴ φτώχεια, καὶ ἀπὸ τὰ βάσανα, καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν καταφρόνηση τοῦ κόσμου, γιὰ ν' ἀνεβεῖ σὲ Σένα. Καλότυχος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ποὺ ἔνοιωσε τὴν ἀδυναμία του ἀληθινά ὅσο γλήγορα τὸ κατάλαβε, τόσο πιδὸ γλήγορα θὰ ἀπογευτεῖ ἀπὸ τὸ ψωμὶ ποὺ θρέφει καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ κρασί ποὺ δυναμώνει, ἂν ἔχει τὴν πίστη του σὲ Σένα ἄλλιως θὰ γκρεμιστεῖ στὸ βάραθρο τῆς ἀπελπισίας. Μὲ τί λόγια νὰ φχαριστήσω τὸν Κύριό μου, ποὺ ἤμουνα χαμένος καὶ μὲ χεροκράτησε, στραβὸς καὶ μ' ἔκανε νὰ βλέπω; Ἐκεῖνος ἔστρεψε τὴν λύπη μου σὲ χαρὰ. «*Διήλθομεν διὰ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος, καὶ ἐξήγαγεν ἡμᾶς εἰς ἀναψυχὴν. Μακάριος ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἐλπίζων ἐπ' Αὐτόν*»!

Ἄδέρφια μου, δώστε προσοχὴ στὰ λόγια μου! Ἐτσι ποὺ βλέπετε, ἔβλεπα καὶ ἐγὼ, καὶ θαρροῦσα πὼς ἔβλεπα μὰ τώρα κατάλαβα πὼς ἤμουνα στραβὸς καὶ κουφὸς καὶ ποδαγρός. Μετὰ χαρᾶς δέχουμε κάθε κακοπάθηση, γιὰ τὴν ἄλλιως δὲν ἀνοίγουνε τὰ μάτια στὸ ἀληθινὸ τὸ φῶς, μήτε τ' αὐτιά ἀκοῦνε τὰ καλὰ μηνύματα, μήτε τὰ πόδια περπατᾶνε στὸ δρόμο ποὺ

πάγει ἐκεῖ ὅπου εἶναι ἡ αἰώνια πολιτεία τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐκεῖ ποὺ βρίσκουνε εἰρήνη καὶ ἀνάπαψη οἱ ἀγαπημένοι του. Ὅποιος δὲν καταλάβει πὼς εἶναι ἀπροστάτευτος καὶ ἔρημος στὸν κόσμο τοῦτον, δὲν θὰ ταπεινωθεῖ: καὶ ὅποιος δὲν ταπεινωθεῖ, δὲν θὰ ἐλεηθεῖ. Ἡ λύπη τῆς διάνοιάς μας σιμῶνει στὸν Θεό. Γι' αὐτό δὲν θέλω καμμιά καλοπέραση καρδιὰ συντριμμένη.

Αὐτὰ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἀναβρῦζανε ἀπὸ μέσα μου κείνη τὴ νύχτα, καὶ τὰ μάτια μου τρέχανε. Δὲν ἤξερε τί συλλογίζομαι κανένας ἄνθρωπος, ἐκεῖ ποὺ ἤμουνα τρυπωμένος, στὸ κουβούκλι μου, οὔτε καὶ ἡ Μαρία ποὺ κοιμότανε δίπλα μου κουκουλωμένη. Ὁ βοριάς ἔκανε μεγάλη ταραχὴ ἀπ' ὄξω, τὰ δέντρα ἀναστενάζανε, θαρροῦσες πὼς κλαίγανε καὶ πὼς παρακαλοῦσανε ν' ἀνοίξω νὰ μποῦνε μέσα νὰ προστατευτοῦνε. Τὸ καντήλι ἔρριχνε τὸ χρυσοκέρινο φέγγος του ἀπάνου στὰ κονίσματα καὶ στ' ἀσημωμένο Εὐαγγέλιο.

Δόξα σοι ὁ Θεός, καλὰ ἤμαστε! Μακάριος εἶναι ὅποιος εἶναι ξεχασμένος. Ὁ κόσμος παραπέρα γλεντᾶ, χορεύει, κάνει ἁμαρτίες μὲ τὶς γυναῖκες, παίζει χαρτιά. Ὁ δυστυχὴς, γιορτάζει τὸν θάνατο τοῦ κορμιοῦ του, ποὺ κάνει τόσα γιὰ νὰ τὸ φχαριστήσῃ. Λες πὼς κερδίσανε τὴν ἀθανασία, τώρα ποὺ ἦρθε ὁ καινούριος χρόνος, ἀντὶς νὰ κλάψουνε πὼς σιμῶνουνε ὀλοένα στὸ τέλος αὐτῆς τῆς πονηρῆς ζωῆς. «*Πάτερ ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἶδασι τί ποιοῦσι*». Τί κάνουνε; Ποῦ πάνε; Σὲ λίγο θὰ καταντήσουνε τὰ κόκκαλά τους σὰν λιθάρια ἄψυχα, θὰ γκρεμιστοῦνε τὰ παλάτια τους, θὰ σβήσῃ καὶ ὅλη τούτη ἡ ὀχλοβοὴ καὶ ἡ φωτοχυσία, σὰν κάποιον πράγμα ποὺ δὲν γίνηκε ποτέ.

Ὡ κατὰδικοι, τί ξεγελιόσαστε; «*Ἴνα τί ἀγαπᾶτε ματαιότητα καὶ ζητεῖτε ψεῦδος*»



Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ σωστό: Νὰ μὴν κατηγορεῖς τὸν ἄλλον γιὰ τὰ σφάλματά του καὶ νὰ μὴν τοῦ τὰ ὑπενθυμίζεις. Τότε τὸν καθίζει στὸ σκαμνὶ ἢ ἴδια ἢ συνειδήσή του καὶ τὸν δικάζει. Μόνον ἔτσι διορθώνεται τὸ κακό. Διαφορετικά, ὅταν ἐσὺ τὸν κατακρίνεις, ἀμύνεται, δικαιολογεῖ τὸν ἑαυτό του, ρίχνει τὶς εὐθύνες του σὲ σένα καὶ σὲ ἄλλους, γίνεται σκληρὸς καὶ τὸ κακὸ ἀντὶ νὰ διορθωθεῖ, χειροτερεῖ.

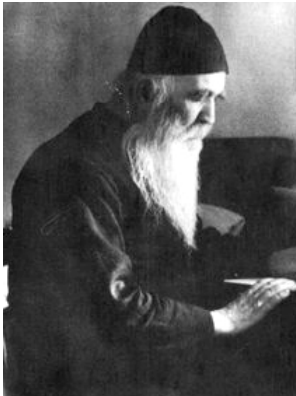
Ἡ ἔξομολόγησις εἶναι ἓνας τρόπος γιὰ νὰ ἔρθῃ ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς τὸν Θεό. Εἶναι προσφορὰ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Θεοῦ στὸν ἄνθρωπο. Τίποτε καὶ κανεὶς δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ στερήσῃ ἀπὸ τὸν ἄνθρωπο αὐτὴ τὴν ἀγάπη.

Ὅσιος Πορφύριος ὁ Κανσοκαλυβίτης (+1991)



## Δέξαι με Ωσπερ τὸν Ἄσωτον Υἱόν...

Ἐπιστολὴ Γέροντος Φιλοθέου Ζερβάκου πρὸς τὸν Ἀρχιμ. π. Χαράλαμπον Βασιλόπουλον.



**Ἀ**γαπητὲ ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀδελφὲ καὶ συλλειτουργγὲ Χαράλαμπε.

Ἐπειδὴ ἔφθασα εἰς βαθύτατον γῆρας, ζητῶ παρὰ τοῦ Οὐρανίου Πατρὸς ἡμῶν τὴν ἀπόλυσιν. Ἐπὶ 82 ἔτη παιδιοῦθεν, ἐν Ἐκκλησίαις καὶ παντὶ καιρῷ ὕμνου καὶ ἠυλόγουν τὸν Θεὸν ἐν ὕμνοις καὶ ὠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς. Ἐπὶ 78 ἔτη ὑπηρετήσα τὸν

Θεὸν καὶ τὴν Ἁγίαν καὶ Ὁρθόδοξον Ἐκκλησίαν ὡς Μοναχός, Ἱεροδιάκονος, Ἱερομόναχος, Ἱεροκήρυξ, Πνευματικὸς καὶ Ἡγούμενος.

Ἀκούων τὸν ἡγαπημένον Μαθητὴν τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰωάννην τὸν Θεολόγον λέγοντα: «Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν... Καὶ ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν, ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτόν» (Ἰωάν. Α΄ Καθολ. 1:8-10). Ταῦτα ἀναγινώσκων καὶ ἀκούων, ἐξετάζων ἑμαυτὸν καλὰ-καλὰ καὶ βαθείᾳ, εὐρίσκω καὶ γνωρίζω καλῶς ὅτι οὔτε ἀρχὴν μετανοίας οὔτε ἀγαθόν τι ἐποίησα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐποίησα κάποιον ἀγαθόν, τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμόν, ἔστι ξένον, τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ. Συναισθανόμενος ὅτι πρῶτος καὶ μεγαλύτερος ἁμαρτωλὸς εἶμαι ἐγώ, ὁ μὴ ποιήσας οὐ δὲν ἀγαθὸν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, πρὸς στιγμὴν ἀπελπίσθην καὶ εἶπον οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἐμοὶ σωτηρία.

Ἄλλ' ἀκούσας τὸν ἴδιον τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν νὰ λέγῃ ἐν Εὐαγγελίῳ: «Οὐ γὰρ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους, ἀλλ' ἁμαρτωλοὺς εἰς μετάνοιαν...» (Ματθ. 9:13), καὶ τὸ «Ἦλθε γὰρ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός» (Λουκ. 19:10). Ἀκούων δὲ καὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καθ' ἡμέραν νὰ ψάλλῃ: «Ὁ ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ καὶ πάσῃ ὥρᾳ, ἐν Οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς προσκυνούμενος καὶ δοξαζόμενος, Χριστὸς ὁ Θεός, ὁ μακρόθυμος, ὁ πολυέλεος, ὁ πολνεύσπλαγχνος, ὁ τοὺς δικαίους ἀγαπῶν καὶ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς ἐλεῶν, ὁ πάντας καλῶν πρὸς σωτηρίαν...», λαμβάνω θάρρος, ἀποδιώχνω μακρὰν τὴν ἀπελπισίαν καὶ πιστεύων καὶ ἐλπίζων ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς θὰ ποιήσῃ ἔλεος καὶ εἰς ἐμὲ τὸν ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἁμαρτήσαντα, ὡς ὁ Δαβὶδ κράζω καὶ βοῶ: Ἐλέησόν με, ὁ Θεός, κατὰ τὸ μέγα ἔλεός Σου, καὶ κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν Οἰκτιρῶν Σου ἐξάλειψον πάσας τὰς ἀνομίας καὶ κακοπραγίας μου. Δέξαι με ὡσπερ τὸν Ἄσωτον υἱόν, τὸν Τελώνην, τὴν Πόρνην, τὸν Δαβὶδ, τὸν Ληστήν, εἰσάγαγέ με εἰς τὸν Οὐράνιόν Σου Νυμφῶνα καὶ σῶσόν με ὡς Ἀγαθός

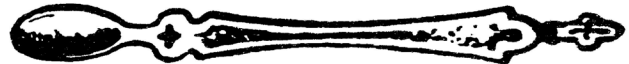
καὶ Φιλάνθρωπος καὶ Ἐλεήμων Θεός...

Μὴ λυπηθῆτε παρακαλῶ διὰ τὸν πρόσκαιρον χωρισμόν, διότι μετ' ὀλίγον θὰ ἴδωμεν ἀλλήλους καὶ θὰ χαρῶμεν τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ Κυρίου, τὴν ὁποίαν οὐδεὶς δύναται νὰ μᾶς τὴν ἀφαιρέσῃ. Θαρσεῖτε, μείνατε ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς ἀγάπης. Στερεοὶ εἰς τὴν ὀρθὴν Πίστιν καὶ τὰς Ἀποστολικὰς καὶ Πατρικὰς Παραδόσεις. Μὴ ἀμνημονεῖτε τῶν Ἁγίων ἐνδόξων Ἀποστόλων, οἱ ὅποιοι ὀλίγοι ὄντες τὸν ἀριθμόν, διὰ τῆς πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης, ἐνίκησαν τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἐκπληττόμενοι ἔλεγον: «Αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη ἢ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν» (Α΄ Ἰωάν. 5:4), καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη πρὸς τὸν Διδάσκαλον ἡμῶν, πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἀκόμη καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ἡμῶν.

Ῥσαύτως μὴ λησμονεῖτε τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν ἐντολήν: «Ταῦτα ἐντέλωμαι ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους», (Ἰωάν. 15:17), «μείνατε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ τῇ ἐμῇ» (Ἰω. 15:9). «Ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστὶ, καὶ ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ Θεῷ μένει καὶ ὁ Θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ» (Α΄ Ἰωάν. 4:16). «Μάθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ὅτι πρῶτος εἶμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ, καὶ εὐρήσητε ἀνάπανσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν» (Ματθ. 11:29), «οὐχὶ μόνον νὰ μάθετε ἀλλὰ καὶ νὰ πράττετε. Καὶ ὅτι ἄνευ ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν. Ὅταν δὲ ὁ Θεὸς μεθ' ἡμῶν οὐδεὶς καθ' ἡμῶν».

Ἐπίσης μὴ λησμονεῖτε νὰ ζητῆτε τὴν βοήθειαν καὶ συμμαχίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, διὰ νὰ νικᾶτε πάντοτε καὶ νὰ μὴ νικᾶσθε. Ὁ Θεὸς θὰ εἶναι πάντοτε μεθ' ἡμῶν.

Μετὰ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφικῆς ἀγάπης,  
+ Ἀρχιμ. Φιλόθεος Ζεοβάκος



**Μ**ὲ τὴν ἀδιάκριτη ἀγάπη τους οἱ γονεῖς ἀποβλάκωνουν τὰ παιδιά τους. Ἐπειδὴ στερήθηκαν αὐτοί, δὲν θέλουν νὰ στερῆσουν τίποτε στὰ παιδιά τους, τοὺς τὰ πηγαίνουν ὅλα στὸ χέρι (μᾶνα ἔλα νὰ μοῦ δέσεις τὸ κορδόνι).

**Ἀ**ν ποτισθεῖ τὸ ξύλο με λάδι δὲν σαπίζει. Ἄν τὰ παιδιά ποτισθοῦν με τὴν εὐλάβεια καὶ τὸ φόβο τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲν ἔχουν ἀνάγκη στὴ μετέπειτα ζωὴ τους. Ὅταν τὰ παιδιά μιλοῦν με ἀναίδεια στοὺς μεγαλύτερους, διώχνουν τὴ χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ (ἀγριεύουν, κάνουν ἀταξίες).

**Τ**ὸ ἀκάθαρτο πνεῦμα δὲν βγάζει στὸ φόρο τις ἄρετες τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ τις ἀδυναμίες του. Ὁ διάβολος μόνον ἂν τοῦ δώσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος δικαιώματα μπορεῖ νὰ τοῦ κάνει κακό. Ὅταν κανεὶς δὲν συμμετέχει στὰ μυστήρια τῆς ἐκκλησίας δίνει δικαιώματα στὸν πειρασμὸ καὶ δέχεται δαιμονικὲς ἐπιδράσεις. Ὁ Διάβολος μπαίνει στὸν ἄνθρωπο, ὅταν ὑπάρχουν ἀκάθαρτα.

**Γέρον Παΐσιος ὁ Ἀθωνίτης (+1994)**



## Τί Σημαίνει ἡ Φράση «Αἰωνία ἡ Μνήμη»

Στὸν **μανάβη Μελέτιο Τζ. ποῦ ρωτᾷ: Τί σημαίνει ἡ φράση «αἰωνία ἡ μνήμη»;**

Ἀγίου Νικολάου Βελμιρόβιτς, «Δρόμος δίχως Θεοῦ δὲν Ἀντέχεται», 130 Ἐπιστολές, Ἔκδ. «Ἐν Πλῶ», σ. 149-151.



Σὲ ταλαιπωρεῖ τὸ ὅτι δὲν ξέρεις τὴ σημασία αὐτῶν τῶν λέξεων, ποῦ ἄκουγες πολλές φορές καὶ ὁ ἴδιος ἔλεγες ἐπάνω ἀπὸ τοὺς νεκρούς. Καὶ καλὰ κάνεις ποῦ ρωτᾷς. Ὅσο καλύτερα γνωρίζει ὁ ἄνθρωπος τὴν ἀρχαία καὶ καλὴ Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη μας, τόσο καὶ περισσότερο τὴν ἀγαπᾷ.

«Αἰωνία ἡ μνήμη» σημαίνει: Αἰώνια νὰ ὑπάρχει ἡ μνήμη γιὰ σένα. Ἄκουσα μία φορὰ πὼς κάποιος στὸν ἐπικήδειο λόγο ἐπάνω ἀπὸ τὸν νεκρὸ φώναξε: «Αἰωνία σου ἡ μνήμη στὴ γῆ!» Παραξενεύθηκα σὲ μιὰ τόσο λανθασμένη ἐρμηγεία τῆς πίστες μας. Μὰ μπορεῖ κάτι νὰ εἶναι αἰώνιο στὴ γῆ, ὅπου ὅλα περνοῦν βιαστικὰ σὰν προσκεκλημένοι σὲ γάμο; Ὅντως, δὲν εὐχόμεστε στὸν νεκρὸ ἐντελῶς μηδαμινὸ πλοῦτο, ὅταν τοῦ εὐχόμεστε νὰ τὸν μνημονεύουν σ' αὐτὸν τὸν κόσμο, ὁ ὁποῖος καὶ ὁ ἴδιος πλησιάζει στὸ τέλος του; Ἀλλὰ ἄς ποῦμε πὼς τὸ ὄνομα κάποιου μνημονεύεται στὴ γῆ ἕως τὸ τέλος τοῦ χρόνου—τί κερδίζει αὐτὸς ἀπ' αὐτό, ἐὰν ἡ μνήμη του στὰ οὐράνια ἔχει ξεχαστεῖ;

Τὸ σωστὸ εἶναι νὰ ἐπιθυμοῦμε τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ νεκροῦ νὰ μνημονεύεται αἰώνια στὴν αἰωνιότητα, στὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ καὶ στὸ Βασίλειο τοῦ Θεοῦ. Τοῦτο καὶ εἶναι τὸ νόημα τῶν λέξεων «αἰωνία σου ἡ μνήμη».

Μιὰ φορὰ καυχῆθηκαν οἱ μαθητὲς τοῦ Χριστοῦ στὸν Δάσκαλό τους λέγοντας: «Κύριε, καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια ὑποτάσσεται ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου» (Λουκ. 10:17). Καὶ ὁ Κύριος τοὺς ἀπάντησε νὰ μὴν χαιρόνται γι' αὐτὸ ἀλλά: «Χαίρετε δὲ ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα ὑμῶν ἐγράφη ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς» (Λουκ. 10:20), δηλαδή νὰ χαιρόνται ἐπειδὴ τὰ ὀνόματά τους εἶναι γνωστὰ καὶ τὰ θυμούνται καὶ τὰ μνημονεύουν στὸ Οὐράνιο Βασίλειο τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ τῆς ζωῆς.

Στὴν Ἁγία Γραφή συχνὰ λέγεται πὼς τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν δικαίων θὰ εἶναι γραμμένα στὸ βιβλίο τῶν ζωντανῶν, ἐνῶ τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν θὰ σβηστοῦν καὶ θὰ ξεχαστοῦν. Ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορία περὶ τοῦ πλουσίου καὶ τοῦ Λαζάρου βλέπουμε ὅτι ὁ Κύριος λέει τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Λαζάρου μὲ τὸ ὀλοκάθαρό Του στόμα, ἀλλὰ ἀποσιωπᾷ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἄδικου πλουσίου. Ὁ Λάζαρος, σημαίνει, ὅτι μπῆκε στὸ Βασίλειο τῶν Οὐρανῶν, καὶ ἔλαβε τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ καὶ τὴν αἰώνια

μνήμη, ἐνῶ ὁ ἁμαρτωλὸς πλούσιος ἔχασε καὶ τὸ βασίλειο καὶ τὴ ζωὴ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα.

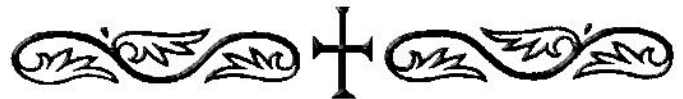
Στὴ Θεϊκὴ ἐπιστήμη καμιά φορὰ τὸ ὄνομα ταυτίζεται μὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπο. Στὴν Ἀποκάλυψη γράφεται: «Καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγένετο σεισμὸς μέγας, ... καὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῷ σεισμῷ ὀνόματα ἀνθρώπων χιλιάδες ἑπτὰ» (Ἄπ. 11:13). Ὑπὸ τὸν σεισμὸ τῆς γῆς πρέπει νὰ καταλάβουμε μεγάλους πειρασμούς, στοὺς ὁποίους οἱ ἑπτὰ χιλιάδες ἀνθρώπων ὑπέκυψαν, ἀποστάτησαν ἀπὸ τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ ἔχασαν τὶς ψυχές τους. Τοῦτο σημαίνει ὅτι δὲν καταστράφηκαν μόνο τὰ σώματά τους—αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐλάχιστης σημασίας—ἀλλὰ οἱ ψυχές καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα. Τὰ ὀνόματά τους στὴν αἰωνιότητα ἐκμηδενίστηκαν καὶ σβήστηκαν ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο τῶν ζωντανῶν.

Ὅποιος ἐπιθυμεῖ ἀθάνατη μνήμη στὴν αἰωνιότητα, ἐπιθυμεῖ εὐαγγελικὸ πρᾶγμα. Ἐὰν κάποιος ἐπιθυμεῖ ἀθάνατο ὄνομα στὴ γῆ, θέλει ματαιόδοξο πρᾶγμα. Νὰ ξέρεις ὅτι πολλοὶ οἱ ὅποιοι ἀθόρυβα καὶ χωρὶς νὰ τοὺς προσέξουν πέρασαν αὐτὴ τὴ ζωὴ, ἀπέκτησαν ἀθάνατο ὄνομα σ' ἐκεῖνο τὸν κόσμο. Νὰ σκέπτεσαι περὶ αὐτοῦ, ἀδελφὲ Μελέτιε, καὶ ὁ Θεὸς θὰ σοῦ ἀποκαλύψει ἀκόμα πολλά. Καὶ ὅταν ἀκούσεις γιὰ τὸ δικό μου θάνατο, πᾶς στὴν προσευχή σου: «Αἰωνία του ἡ μνήμη»!

Εἰρήνη καὶ ὑγεία ἀπὸ τὸν Κύριο,  
+ Νικόλαος



Ἡ ἀδελφότης «**ΟΣΙΟΣ ΠΟΙΜΗΝ**», μὲ τὴν πρόνοια τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ τὴν ὑλικὴ συμπαράσταση διαφόρων Ἑλληνορθοδόξων, διαθέτει **ΛΩΡΕΑΝ** πρὸς ὅλους τοὺς ἐνδιαφέροντας Χριστιανούς τὴν σειρά τῶν ὁμιλιῶν τοῦ εὐγλωττοτάτου **Μητροπολίτου Λεμεσοῦ Ἀθανασίου** ἐπὶ πολλῶν καὶ διαφορῶν θεμάτων. Οἱ ὁμιλίες εἶναι σὲ τύπο mp3. Πρέπει νὰ ἔχετε ἓνα ἠλεκτρονικὸ ὑπολογιστὴ μὲ Windows operating system, ἢ ἓνα ἀπὸ τοὺς mini mp3 players σὰν, π.χ., τὸ δημοφιλὲς iPod.



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 οικονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντες κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «**Ὁσιος Ποιμῆν**».

## A PHYSICIAN'S VIEW ON THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

THE THOUGHT OF ABORTION FOR CONVENIENCE IS REPUGNANT!

*By Dr. Ben S. Carson, professor emeritus of neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University, Tuesday, January 21, 2014.*



Several years ago, I was consulted by a young woman who was 33 weeks pregnant and was on her way to Kansas to get an abortion. I informed her of the multiple options available to her outside of abortion and she decided to go through with the pregnancy even though the child had hydrocephalus and required neurosurgical intervention after birth a few weeks later. She kept the baby and loves the

beautiful child that has resulted.

A couple of decades ago, I came into the pediatric Intensive Care Unit on morning rounds and was told about a four-year-old girl who had been hit by an ice cream truck, and was comatose and exhibiting little neurological function other than reactive pupils. I tested her pupillary reflexes and both pupils were fixed and dilated. The staff indicated to me that this is something that must have just occurred. I grabbed the bed and with some help, transported her quickly to the operating room for an emergency craniotomy. I was met along the way by a senior neurosurgeon who told me I was wasting my time and that at best, we would end up with someone in a vegetative state.

Nevertheless, we completed the operation and a few days later, her pupils became reactive and she eventually left the hospital. I saw her a few years ago walking through the hospital with her own four-year-old little girl. She was neurologically fully intact and told me she had become somewhat of a celebrity because of the experience I just related. What do these two stories have in common? They both involve precious lives that could easily have been discarded.

My entire professional life has been devoted to saving and enhancing lives. Thus, the thought of abortion for the sake of convenience does not appeal to me. I have personally met several people who have told me that their mothers had considered abortion, but happily decided against it.

Most of us instinctively want to protect helpless creatures and sometimes go to great lengths to do so. The television commercials about abused animals are very poignant and as a society, we sometimes delay or cancel large construction projects to protect an “endangered” insect, amphibian or

fish. Yet many of us turn a blind eye to the wanton slaughter of millions of helpless human babies who are much more sophisticated than some of the other creatures, when nothing is at stake other than the convenience of one or both parents. I am not saying that we should abandon our efforts to save baby seals and a host of other animals. Rather I am saying shouldn't we consider adding human fetuses and babies to the list?

Watching the human fetus develop is awe-inspiring. In less than three months from conception, the little hands and feet are quite recognizable and distinct facial features characterize cute, but very tiny human beings. From Day One, neurons of the brain are proliferating at a rate that will yield a staggering 100 billion neurons by birth. In a matter of nine months from conception, we have a living, breathing, eating, vocal human being who just two months later is socially interactive. Some people oppose having pregnant women view ultrasonic pictures of their developing babies because they do not want an emotional bond to develop. Careful unbiased contemplation however, might yield the conclusion that such bonding is essential to the survival of mankind. Successful farmers nourish and protect their growing crops and if conditions threaten their crops, they do what is necessary to protect them. Rather than attack the analogy, think about how much more precious a human life is than a stalk of corn.

It is important to try to understand the emotional state of young women seeking an abortion. Instead of judging and condemning them, we need to provide compassion and support. They need to be provided with easy access to adoption services and information about assistance available to them if they decide to keep the baby. I have visited many warm, inviting facilities around the country that exist solely for the purpose of helping these young women.

It is equally, if not more important, to reach these young women before they become pregnant. Forget about those politically correct people who say all lifestyles are equal and inform those young women about the true consequences of out-of-wedlock birth for those who are not financially independent. We need to make sure they understand that they can provide a much better life for themselves and their children when they plan ahead and value themselves appropriately.

As a society, we cannot be afraid to discuss important social and moral issues. Our heritage as a nation is built on compassion, forgiveness and understanding. Courage is also vitally important because those who stand on godly principles and values will be attacked. Attempting to characterize love and compassion for human life as a “war on women” is deceitful and pathetic. We the people must stop allowing ourselves to be manipulated by those with agendas that do not include regard for the sanctity of life.

## FROM TIME TO ETERNITY, THE INTERNAL MISSION OF OUR CHURCH

By St. Justin Popovich (1873 – 1979).



It is difficult, very difficult, for infinite and eternal life to enter the narrow human soul and the even narrower human body. The imprisoned inhabitants of earth stand with suspicion before everything that is beyond here. Imprisoned in time and place, they cannot bear—whether on account of atavism or inertia—anything beyond time, anything beyond space to enter into them, anything eternal.

They regard such an invasion as an attack, and they respond with war. Furthermore, given the fact that the “rust” of time corrupts man, he does not like the intervention of eternity in his life and he adapts to it with great difficulty. He often regards this intervention as an act of violence, an unforgivable audacity.

At times he becomes a harsh rebel against eternity, because he sees that in the face of it he is insignificant, while at other times he lashes out against it in vehement hatred because he views it through a very human, very earthly, inner-worldly prism. Submerged with the body in matter, tied by the force of weight in time and space, his spirit withdrawn from eternity, the worldly man abhors the difficult excursions towards the beyond and the eternal. The chasm between time and eternity is for him unbridgeable, because he lacks the necessary ability and strength to step over it. Besieged from all sides by death, man mocks those who tell him: “Man is immortal and eternal.” Immortal as regards what? His mortal body? Eternal as regards what? His feeble spirit?

For man to be immortal, he must feel himself immortal in the center of his self-awareness. To be eternal, he must recognize himself as eternal in the center of his self-consciousness. Without this, both immortality and eternity are for him conditions imposed from outside. And if man once had this sense of immortality and the recognition of eternity, this occurred so long ago, that already it has atrophied under the weight of death. And truly, it has atrophied: this is what the whole mysterious structure of human existence tells us. Our whole problem lies in how to rekindle that quenched feeling, how to resurrect that atrophied recognition. People cannot do it, neither can the transcendent gods of philosophy. Only God can do this, He Who incarnated His immortal Self in the human self-awareness and His eternal Self in human

self-consciousness. Christ did precisely this when He became incarnate and became God-Man.

Only in Christ, and in Christ alone, did man feel himself immortal and recognize himself as eternal. Through His Person, the God-man Christ bridged the chasm between time and eternity and reinstated the relations between them. For this reason only that person truly feels himself immortal and truly knows himself to be eternal who organically unites himself with the God-man Christ, with His Body, the Church. Hence, for man and humanity, Christ became the unique crossing and passage from time to eternity. For this reason, in the Church, the Orthodox Church, the God-man Christ became and remained the unique way and the unique guide from time to eternity, from the self-awareness of mortality to the self-awareness of immortality, from the self-knowledge of finitude to the self-consciousness of eternity and the un-extended.

The eternal living personality of the God-man Christ is precisely the Church. The Church is always the personality, and furthermore the theanthropic personality, the theanthropic spirit and body. The definition of the Church, the life of the Church, its purpose, its spirit, its program, its methods—all have been given in that wondrous Person of the God—man Christ. Therefore, **the mission of the Church is organically and personally to unite all its faithful with the Person of Christ;** to make their self-awareness Christ-awareness and their self-knowledge (self-consciousness) Christ-knowledge (Christ-consciousness); for their life to become life in Christ and through Christ; so that not they themselves live in themselves but *Christ lives in them*. (Gal 2:20). The mission of the Church is to secure for her members immortality and eternity, making them *partakers of the Divine nature*. (II Peter 1:4). The mission of the Church is furthermore to create in each member the conviction that the normal condition of the human personality is comprised of immortality and eternity and not temporality and mortality, and that man is a sojourner who through mortality and temporality journeys towards immortality and eternity.

The Church is the theanthropic eternity incarnated in the boundaries of time and space. *It is in this world, but it is not of this world*. (Jn 18:36). It is in this world to elevate this world to the world above, from which she herself came. The Church is ecumenical, catholic, theanthropic, eternal, and for this reason it entails a blasphemy, an unforgivable blasphemy against Christ and the Holy Spirit to make the Church a national institution (*institutio*), to narrow her to the small, finite, and temporal purposes and methods of a nation. Its purpose is supra-national, ecumenical, pan-human: to unite in Christ all people, completely, regardless of nationality or race or social stratum. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus* (Gal 3:28), because *Christ is all, and in all*. (Col 3:11).



The methods of this panhuman-theanthropic union of all people in Christ have been given by the Church in her holy Mysteries and in her theanthropic words (*asceses*, virtues). And truly, the Mystery of Divine Eucharist composes and defines and comprises the method of Christ and the means for uniting all people: through this Mystery man is organically united with Christ and with all faithful. Through the personal exercise of the theanthropic virtues—faith, prayer, fasting, love, meekness, and utter compassion and charity—man makes himself firm in this union, he preserves himself in this holiness, he himself lives Christ as the unity of his personality and as the essence of his unity with the other members of the holy Body of Christ, the Church.

The Church is the personality of the God-man Christ, a theanthropic organism, not a human organization. The Church is indivisible, just like the person of the God-man, just like the body of the God-man. Therefore, it is a fundamental mistake for the indivisible theanthropic organism of the Church to be divided into small ethnic organizations. In their journey through history many local Churches limited themselves to ethnicism, to ethnic purposes and methods... The Church would adapt to the people, whereas the norm is the opposite: the people should adapt to the Church. Our own Church often made this mistake. But we know that these were “tares” of our ecclesiastical life, “tares” which the Lord does not uproot, but which He leaves to *grow together with the wheat until the harvest* (Mt 13:25-28). But our knowledge of this goes for nothing if it is not transformed into prayer that Christ preserve us from becoming sowers and cultivators of such tares.

It is the twelfth hour, it is time for our ecclesiastical representatives to cease being exclusively slaves of ethnicism, and to become **true** hierarchs and priests of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The mission of the Church which is given by Christ and realized by the holy Fathers is: for the awareness and realization to be planted and cultivated in the soul of our people that **each member of the Orthodox Church is a catholic person, an eternal and theanthropic person, that he belongs to Christ and for this reason is a brother of all human beings, and a servant of all men and creatures.** This is the purpose of the Church given by Christ. Every other purpose is not of Christ but of the antichrist.

For our local Church to be the Church of Christ, the catholic Church, she must constantly realize this purpose in our people. By what means can she realize this theanthropic purpose? Once again, the means are none other than the theanthropic ones, because the theanthropic purpose can be

realized only through theanthropic means, never with human means or any other whatsoever. On this point the Church differs essentially from everything human and earthly.

The theanthropic means are none other than the theanthropic *asceses*-virtues. Only the theanthropic virtues exist among them in an organic relation. The one springs from the other, the one completes the other.

The first among the *asceses*-virtues is the *ascesis* of **faith**. Through this *ascesis* the soul of our people must pass and constantly pass: that is, this soul must be given up to Christ without reservations and compromises, must go deeply into the theanthropic depths, and be elevated to the theanthropic heights. The awareness must be created in our people that the faith of Christ is a supranational, ecumenical and catholic, trinitarian virtue, and that for one to believe in Christ means to serve Christ and only Christ, in all aspects of one's life.

The second is: the theanthropic virtue of **prayer and fasting**. This virtue must become a method of life for our Orthodox people; it must become the soul of its soul, because prayer and fasting are the almighty means given by Christ for purification from every impurity—not only of the human being, but also of society and of the people, and of humanity. Prayer and fasting are able to *cleanse the soul of our people from our impurities and from our sins.* (Mt 17:19-21; Lk 9:17-29). The soul of our people must be identified with the Orthodox life of prayer. Prayer and fasting must be performed not only for individuals, not only for the people, but for everyone and for everything (*in all and for all*): for friends and *enemies, those who persecute and kill us,*



because this is what distinguishes Christians from pagans (Mt 5:44-45).

The third theanthropic virtue is the theanthropic virtue of **love**. This love has no boundaries. It does not ask who is worthy and who is not; it loves everyone: it loves friends and enemies, it loves sinners and criminals (but it does not love their sins and crimes); it *blesses those who curse*, and like the sun it enlightens *both the wicked and the good.* (Mt 5:45-46). This theanthropic love must be cultivated in our people, because by this catholicity Christian love is distinguished from the love of the other self-styled and relative loves: from pharisaical, humanistic, altruistic, ethnic, animal love. The love of Christ is always total love. This love is acquired through prayer, because it is a gift of Christ. And the Orthodox heart prays with intensity: *O Lord of love, give me Thy love for all people and for all things!*

The fourth is: the theanthropic virtue of **meekness and humility**. Only he *who is meek in heart* makes rebellious and wild hearts meek. Only he who is humble in heart humble

proud and haughty souls. To *show meekness towards all people* is the obligation of every true Christian (Tit 3:2). But man becomes truly meek and humble when he makes the meek and humble Lord Jesus the heart of his heart, *He who alone is truly meek and humble of heart.* (Mt 11:29). The soul of the people must be made meek with the meekness of Christ. Every man must learn to pray: *O most meek Lord, make my wild soul meek!* The Lord humbled Himself with the greatest humility: He became incarnate, He became man. If you are Christ's, humble yourself to the utmost, to a worm; incarnate yourself in the pain of every pained person, in the affliction of every afflicted person, in the sufferings of every tortured person, in the grief of every animal and bird. Humble yourself below everyone: be everything to everyone—through Christ and according to Christ. When you are alone, pray: *O Humble Lord, humble me through Thy humility!*

The fifth is: the theanthropic virtue of **patience and humility**. That is, to forbear evil, not to return evil for evil, to forgive with total compassion the curses, the slanders, the wounds. This is Christ's: constantly to feel crucified in the world, persecuted by the world, cursed and spat upon. The world cannot bear Christ-bearing people, just as it could not bear Christ. Martyrdom is the atmosphere in which the Christian bears fruit. We must teach this to our people. **For Orthodox, martyrdom is purification.** It is Christian not only to bear sufferings with joy, but also to forgive with total compassion those who cause them, to pray for them to God, just as did Christ and the Archdeacon Stephen. For this reason, pray: *O long-suffering Lord, give me long-suffering, magnanimity and meekness!*

The mission of our Church then is to make these theandric virtues—*ascetes* the methods of life for the people, to weave the Christ-like theanthropic virtues into the soul and life of the people. In this lies the salvation of the soul from the world and from all soul-corrupting, homicidal, atheistic movements and worldly organizations. Against the “educated” atheism and the gentlemanly cannibalism of contemporary civilization, we must array Christ-bearing personalities, which with the meekness of a sheep will be victorious over the excited passions of the wolves, and with the innocence of doves will save the soul of the people from the cultural and political stench. We must counteract cultural asceticism—which takes place in the name of the rotted and deformed European man, in the name of atheism, of civilization, of the antichrist—with *ascesis* in the name of Christ.

For this reason **the main obligation of our Church is to create Christ-bearing ascetics.** The voice which must be heard in it today is: Go back to the Christ-bearing ascetics, towards the holy Fathers! Go back to the *ascetes* and virtues of the holy Fathers! Go back to the virtues of Saints Anthony and Athanasios, of Saints Basil and Gregory, of Saints John Chrysostom and Damascene, of Saints Sergei and Seraphim

(the Russians), of Saints Savva, Prochor and Gabriel (the Serbs), and others! Because these theanthropic *ascetes*—virtues created Saint Anthony, Saint Gregory and Saint Savva. And today, only the Orthodox *ascetes*—virtues are capable of sanctifying every soul and the soul of our whole people, because the theanthropic purpose is eternal and unalterable, and its means are also eternal and unalterable, because *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.* (Heb. 13:8).

Here is the difference between the human world and the world of Christ: the human one is finite and temporal, while Christ's is unalterable and eternal. Orthodoxy, as the unique bearer and guardian of the perfect and all-radiant Person of the God-man Christ, is realized exclusively with the theanthropic-Orthodox means, the ascetical virtues in grace, not with means lent by Roman Catholicism or Protestantism; this is because Roman Catholicism or Protestantism are Christianities according to the version of the proud European man, and not of the humble God-man. God Himself facilitates this mission of our Church, because in our people there exists a spirit of asceticism, as Orthodoxy created it through the ages. The Orthodox soul of our people inclines towards the holy Fathers, towards the Orthodox Ascetics. The personal, familial, and parochial *ascesis*—especially in prayer and fasting—is characteristic of Orthodoxy. Our people, the Orthodox people, are the people of Christ because, like Christ, they summarize the Gospel in these two virtues: prayer and fasting. They are convinced that every impurity, every impure thought, every impure desire, every impure spirit, can be *chased out of man only by prayer and fasting.* (Mt 17:21). In the depths of their hearts our people know Christ, they know Orthodoxy, they know what it is that makes the Orthodox man Orthodox. Orthodoxy always creates ascetical rebirths; it does not recognize other rebirths.

**The ascetics are the only missionaries of Orthodoxy.** Asceticism is the only missionary school of Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is *ascesis* and life, for this reason only with *ascesis* and life does she reach and realize her mission. Asceticism—personal and ecclesiastical—must be developed; this must be the internal mission of our Church towards our people. **The parish must become an ascetical center.** But this can only be done by an ascetic parish priest. Prayer and fasting, the ecclesiastical life of the parish, the liturgical life—these are the chief means by which Orthodoxy brings about rebirth in people. The parish, the parish community must be reborn, and in Christ-loving and brother-loving and love humbly serve Christ and all people with meekness and humility, with sacrifice and self-denial. This service ought to be saturated and nourished by prayer and a liturgical life. This is fundamental and absolutely essential. **But all of these demand as a prerequisite that our hierarchs, our priests, our monastics become ascetics,** and for this: *Let us beseech the Lord!*



## ORTHODOX HOLY TRADITION THROUGH THE SCIENCES OF ASTRONOMY & MEDICINE

By Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos, from his book "Empirical Dogmatics," edited for length and clarity.



Orthodox tradition differs immensely from non-Orthodox and other religious traditions. In this article we will examine this issue by taking examples from two sciences: astronomy and medicine.

First of all, it should be stressed once more that the Church's tradition is the experience of the God-seeing saints, Prophets, Apostles and Fathers. They lived this experience by the revelation

of God and conveyed it to their spiritual children, and it is recorded in their writings. Thus three factors are very closely linked: the saints who behold God; their illuminated nous, by means of which they share in the experience of revelation; and their writings, in which the experience is recorded in created words and concepts. The basic elements of the tradition are the glorified saints (*glorified=theosis*), who are the bearers of the tradition.

The Fathers of our Fathers in the Old Testament, the Prophets, had *theosis* without the human nature of Christ. Afterwards, the Apostles also had *theosis*, with the human nature of Christ. After Pentecost we have another kind of *theosis* with the experiences that they have after their initial *theosis*, because the same experience of Pentecost continues within the Church and has not come to an end. **Given that the experience of Pentecost has not come to an end, the bishops, who have this experience, are led to the same experience and know what they are talking about.**

Because of the continuity of this tradition, the Orthodox patristic tradition resembles modern biology, chemistry, astronomy and medical science. In this way, the tradition of the Church is continued empirically. What is this parallel experience? The fact that cures continue and people are cured. People continue to learn the truth from astronomy, medical science, and biology; similarly, in Orthodoxy, from the experience of *purification*, the experience of *illumination*, which is the cure of the human personality, and the experience of *glorification (theosis)*, which is the telescope and microscope of Orthodox theology. This is why we believe that we are on the right path and are still within the tradition.

Those who behold God are like scientific astronomers, who examine the star-filled sky and discover stars that are invisible

to the naked eye by using telescopes. Whatever they see they record in their writings. The saints do the same.

We find this holy tradition dotted here and there throughout the writings of the Fathers, but mainly in the writings of St. Symeon the New Theologian, all his disciples and among those referred to as hesychasts. What is this tradition? It is extremely simple, as simple as can be. It is divine vision of the uncreated energy of God and guiding people on the basis of this experience. The vision of the inexpressible reality takes place by means of a special organ, the *nous*, which is illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Those who behold God are in the state of *illumination*. They reach the state of *glorification*, participate in the Light and see the Light. *In Your light we shall see light*. On this point, they resemble astronomers who see stars that are invisible to the naked eye by using special instruments called telescopes. Also, anyone who wishes to confirm the observations of astronomers has to use the same instruments. This means that **any Christian who wishes to verify the experience of the God-seeing saints has to acquire an illuminated nous.**

When there are doubts concerning astronomical writings, we take telescopes and by means of telescopes we confirm the correct interpretation of the books concerning astronomy. One looks, another looks, a third one looks and so it goes on. And all those who check with telescopes, radio telescopes etc., say, "Ah! That is what those notes mean. Did you see it when you looked through the telescope? That is the explanation." And the correct interpretation continues down through the years, because there are people who see and know how to use telescopes and radio telescopes and the equipment with which they measure distance analogous with the speed of light—spectrographs, spectrograms—they even know how to measure material composition, they can even measure speed with them.

Astronomers, through the ages, are thus closely linked with telescopes and writings. In the same way, doctors are closely associated with equipment and operating rooms and with curing people. If, however, astronomers lose their telescopes and start to imagine stars or to speculate about them, they become astrologers. The same can happen to doctors, who, if they lose their equipment, become charlatans... In other words, if astronomers lose their telescopes and no longer know how to handle the various pieces of astronomical equipment, they are reduced to being astrologers instead of astronomers. Given that they have become astrologers, and the others have become sham doctors and pseudo-biologists and so on, are those who are no longer able to handle the scientific equipment of Orthodox theology astronomer-theologians or astrologer-theologians? In other words, true theologians are those who see God, who are like astronomers.

When, however, without their nous being illuminated, Orthodox theologians theologize by using speculation and their

imagination instead, they turn into speculative thinkers and scholastics.

When the astronomer, who has turned into an astrologer because he does not have the right equipment but uses speculation, takes part in a conference of astronomers, his participation in the conference does not in itself convert him into a scientific astronomer. If astronomers forget about astronomical equipment and simply preserve the books about astronomy and misinterpretations begin, will they interpret the books about astronomy correctly, because they have gathered at a conference? Will the conference produce correct astronomy? Will it upgrade astrology to astronomy? Is it the conference that will achieve this? Or will it be a conference of astrologers?

The same can be observed with respect to doctors who are unable to use their instruments and equipment or operating-rooms in order to treat the sick. They are unable to cure people, and cannot be regarded as doctors merely because they attend medical congresses. Doctors have inherited the equipment of medical science, all the tools for surgical operations, from the past. We have X-ray equipment, hospitals, operating rooms, and so on. What if the doctors who know how to use all this equipment disappeared, and untrained folks who dabbled in practical medicine came in from the villages? And if the state made these untrained folks responsible for the universities and they taught the students and ended up being accepted by medical science, then they would start to be dangerous.

Let us suppose that doctors have reached the point of no longer knowing how to use these tools, but use them at random. If the radiologist graduated from the University of Thessaloniki in 1870, that radiologist does not know how to read X-rays; he thus makes bad diagnoses, the surgeon performs bad surgical operations, and so on. So instead of people being cured, 90% die and 10% are cured. Concurrently, let us suppose that in America, France, England, Switzerland and Germany, doctors attend medical schools equipped with the latest scientific knowledge. As such, 60% are cured within those geographical regions, whereby in Greece only 10% are cured. Well, if the Greek doctors have a conference will the success rate increase to 90% or 100%? What is the use of a conference of doctors who do not know medical science? What good does it do?

By analogy, the same happens with bishops who do not have the suitable equipment, an *illuminated nous*, when they participate in a council. They cannot be real theologians and they are unable to know the tradition. They are not illuminated simply because they take part in a council. Illumination comes first, it is the absolute prerequisite.

Let us raise a similar hypothesis. There is a bishop who has received his theological diploma, but would never have received it except that his Metropolitan continuously phoned up all his professors, whereas he deserved no passing grades

at all. If he, together with seventy such bishops, gathers in a conference of bishops called a council, will they make correct decisions? Will the Holy Spirit descend upon them? Or is this a parallel situation with the aforementioned situations in all the sciences of astronomy and medicine? The hypothesis thus takes a rather apparent validity. Perhaps this reveals upon the reader a rather shocking situation in our days. The intent of my article is not to shock its readers; however, as a researcher and historian, when I undertake historical research that leads me into certain discoveries, I am obliged to inform you of the truth, irrespective of its “shock value.”

From this point of view, if Orthodox bishops, who are disciples of those theologians who are not followers of the patristic tradition, ever gather in a council, will the fact that they are meeting together in a conference make them Fathers of the Church? And if we call the conference an Ecumenical Council, can it ever reach a correct decision?

Only if they copy holy Scripture and the patristic texts to the letter, without adding a word of their own, only then is there any hope of them reaching an Orthodox decision, only then. If, however, they add words that are not in holy Scripture and the patristic tradition, it is almost certain that they will produce a decision that is dogmatically incorrect. It is almost certain. Guaranteed!

Scientific astronomers have criteria in order to verify their conclusions. Of course there are books, but there are also telescopes that confirm their observations. The astrologers, who rely on speculation and imagination, have no criteria to separate which group of astrologers are genuine and which are not.

If there is a group of astrologers, do they have the right to denounce another group of astrologers? Can one group say, “We are better astrologers than the others,” and the other group say, “We are better than you,” and even a third one say, “No, we are better than both of you,” and so on. Furthermore, can these group of astrologers “scientifically” argue among themselves? With what criteria?

This exact phenomenon happens in Orthodox theology as well. The God-seeing saints, like scientific astronomers, have secure criteria and, like true doctors, they have successes, because they use suitable instruments and are part of the Orthodox tradition. Heretics, by contrast, resemble astrologers who do not have secure criteria, as each one uses his own speculation, and they do not achieve any success, except by coincidence.

From true success, you can see that something is working correctly. Every science ought to have an aim, and whenever it successfully achieves its aim, it is a proper science which has judgment and knows what it is talking about.

I pose the question: Is theology the only science in which anyone can pick up a book by Bultmann and Cullmann (“contemporary” protestant theologians, *Ed.*) and say whatever he likes without any check? Should there not be some



control in theological matters? Should anyone be able to say whatever he or she likes? I am suggesting that there must be some sort of check. Should such controls not exist, Christianity then, becomes as any other religion, where everyone believes according to his or her imagination.

If there is to be a scientific check on Orthodox theology, as there is in other positive sciences, the details should be described and put into practice, so that there will be sound foundations for the Orthodox tradition, as part of today's world. If such foundations do not exist, and the assertions of the Orthodox cannot be checked, then it is imagination. Because when someone cannot get through the test, there is no tangible sign, nothing to show that the teaching of the Orthodox Church is correct. In such a case, what is the difference between Orthodox theology and the other religions in the world? Just as an Orthodox Christian thinks that he has the right to deny the authenticity of the various religions, in the same way, the other religions have the right to do the same from a scientific point of view.

The teaching of the Church is true, because it is successful, since it leads people to glorification and sanctity, and the confirmation of this experience is the sacred relics. This is where the value of the Orthodox tradition lies. If there is no scientific means of checking the teachings of the Orthodox Church, then one wonders how Orthodox theology differs from other religions. What is the difference? When correct methodology does not exist and speculation prevails instead, and when correct theology does not exist, therapeutic results are not achieved.

The value of the Orthodox tradition lies in the fact that it sanctifies man by uniting him with the God-man Christ, using Orthodox methodology. The Papal Christians recommend their followers to do good works in order to see God and be saved, so they have rejected the *neptic-hesychastic* tradition. The Protestants feel regenerated by God, so they do not have a therapeutic method. The Orthodox know that they need to be cured starting in this life by the grace of God and with their own corroboration, so that they may encounter God in a state of being cured, and this encounter may be Paradise for them, not Hell. This is what being cured means. In the Orthodox Church man reaches *glorification* and his body becomes a sacred relic, something that is not observed in other Confessions and religions. This confirms the truth of the Orthodox faith.

Every science is indeed judged by the end result, not just by the means. Suppose that a doctor begins to carry out a first-of-a-kind surgical operation that cures a patient, and then repeats the same method again, several times, with equal success. Other doctors, who could have once been critical of his technique, when confronted with repeated successes, alter their personal views. After all, if this new method was not a good one, how would it achieve so many successes?

In the Orthodox tradition those who see God—the Prophets, Apostles and saints—are closely associated with each other through their *illuminated nous* and their divinely inspired writings; and that is why people are cured. There are successful cures, people continue to be *purified* and sanctified, to reach *illumination* and *glorification*. Concurrently (and throughout the ages) the interpretation of divinely inspired writings requires divinely inspired commentators, who have the same *illuminated nous* and the same tradition as the divinely inspired writers of holy Scripture and the patristic books.

In the Orthodox Church we have both God-seeing saints, whose *nous* is *illuminated*, and writings, so that holy Scripture is closely linked with holy Tradition. When the “astronomers” (*God-seers*) and the “telescopes” (*illuminated nous* and *glorification—theosis*) are lost, the writings are also misinterpreted. Then the astronomers turn into astrologers who speculate, and their conference becomes a conference of astrologers instead of astronomers...

The conclusion is that **revelation is the manifestation of the Word to human beings, unincarnate in the Old Testament, incarnate in the New Testament.** The Prophets, Apostles and saints are bearers of the revelation, the empirical theologians who behold God. The books of the Old and New Testaments, together with the writings of the Fathers, the dogmas and the whole life of the Church, are the living monuments of the revelation. *Purification, illumination and glorification—theosis* are the essence of the Orthodox tradition, which leads man to glorification, to participation in the mystery of Pentecost.



Let us not tire, brothers, of helping those we love who are departed for the other life. Let us not tire of praying for them, particularly at the Divine Liturgy. For at that time *the common purification of the world is at hand*. For this reason, then, let us pray with courage for the whole world, and let us commemorate our departed together with the Martyrs, the Confessors and the Priests. For we—all the faithful—are one spiritual body, even though some members are “brighter” than others. Let us commemorate them; let us ask forgiveness for them from everywhere—from the petitions, from the gifts offered for them, and from the Saints who are commemorated with them at the time of the Divine Liturgy.

St. John Chrysostom

[On 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, no. 41, and on Not Mourning Bitterly, no. 45]

## LEGEND HAS IT?

### GREEKS SEEK STRENGTH IN THE POWERS OF ELDER PAISIOS THE ATHONITE

By Gordon Fairclough, from the *Wall Street Journal*, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012.

*From the Editor: We are presenting this fairly recent article from a non-Orthodox source in our efforts to exemplify how the recent crisis in Greece and (most importantly) the Elder's writings are becoming of an increasing profound interest to the suffering faithful. There exist assertions or innuendos within this article that neither align with the views of our Brotherhood nor the Orthodox beliefs of our Faith. The article nevertheless points out the increasing signs of an Orthodox renewal among the suffering Greeks, of a sufficient strength that a publication such as the Wall Street Journal has noted and decided to bring to its readers.*

† † †

Legend has it that nearly three decades ago, a bearded Orthodox Christian mystic made an unsettling prediction: Greece in the future would experience a “great disruption and confusion,” followed by hunger and political turmoil. Believers say this grim vision of Elder Paisios, an ascetic monk who died in 1994, was actually a prescient glimpse of the upheaval now gripping this debt-racked country—helping fuel a surge of interest in the Orthodox holy man by Greeks struggling to make sense of a brutal financial crisis.

Elder Paisios, who spent much of his adult life as a hermit on the monastic peninsula of Mount Athos in northeastern Greece, has become a popular sensation—with tales of his prognostications and miracles he is said to have performed posted online and recounted in popular books.

On Saturdays, hundreds of pilgrims line up at Elder Paisios's grave site (see picture), waiting their turn to kneel, pray and kiss the wooden cross that marks his final resting place. They ask for help finding jobs, paying bills and surviving a downturn that has upended their lives.

“Paisios predicted many things, and his prophecies are now coming true,” said Costas Katsaounis, a 41-year-old military officer on a visit to the shrine. “He foresaw the crisis. But he also said it would get better, that we will overcome and prosperity will return. He's helped a lot of people.”

Elder Paisios's fame in some ways echoes that of Michel de Notredame, better known as Nostradamus, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century French apothecary who believers say foretold everything from

the rise of Hitler to the terror attacks of Sept. 11. “Figures like Paisios represent the shaman, the magician of the tribe,” said Alexandra Koronaïou, a sociologist at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens. “They are the incarnation of a transcendental, invisible power.”

With Greece's economy in the fifth year of a grinding recession that is expected to deepen further in 2013, unemployment above 25% and even middle-class families struggling to feed their children, many Greeks feel like their society is teetering on the brink of collapse, and they are seeking solace. That is driving a fresh boom in all things Paisios.

The elder's wizened and bearded face, peering out from below a black cap, adorns devotional banners and cards inscribed with inspirational messages. Bookstores stock dozens of Paisios-related titles, from books detailing his spiritual teachings to volumes filled with his commentary on everything from the coming of the apocalypse to Greece's

retaking of Constantinople, once the seat of Byzantine emperors and now Istanbul. “They sell like crazy,” said Ionnis Aivaliotis, who works at the Zoe religious bookstore in downtown Athens. “Even nonbelievers are starting to read them. It gives people courage to withstand what's coming.”

There is a Paisios diet guide—he was very thin—and a kids' book, “Once Upon a Time, Children, There Was Elder Paisios.” Over the past two years, conservative newspaper *Dimokratia* has sold 350,000 copies of Paisios-related titles—from compilations of his prophecies to his views on education. Other newspapers carry accounts of his reputed miracles.

Elder Paisios, born Arsenios Eznepedis in central Anatolia in 1924, is part of a long tradition of monastic spirituality that believers say confers a power of divination—to see things others cannot, to interpret signs and predict the course of events. Even before his death in 1994, he was well known in religious circles, drawing the faithful to Mount Athos for spiritual guidance and advice. Many expect that he will eventually be canonized. But the recent increase in attention has prompted a backlash from skeptics and drawn cautions from some in the Greek Orthodox Church hierarchy. “People are looking for somewhere to turn,” said the Rev. Vasilios Havatzas, head of the church's charitable operations in Athens.

In a sign of the broad support for Elder Paisios, Greek police arrested 27-year-old Phillipos Loizos for creating a Facebook page that poked fun at Greeks' belief in the miracles and





prognostications of the late monk. He was charged with blasphemy and insulting religion. The blasphemy charge was later withdrawn. Police received thousands of complaints about the page on the social-networking site for Elder Pastitsios, a play on the monk's name. Pastitsio is a traditional baked pasta dish similar to lasagna. An ultranationalist lawmaker condemned the page in Parliament. Mr. Loizos said he was using satire to criticize the commercialization of the monk and his message.

Many of Elder Paisios's purported prophecies resonate. "The people will be so disappointed by the politicians of the two big parties, that they will get sick of them," is one that rings true in an era when voter support for the country's two mainstream parties, blamed for the crisis, has dropped sharply. Some of the elder's reported remarks hint at dark conspiracies—among them that the world is ruled secretly by a cabal of five people. He also predicted national triumphs for Greece, saying that Greeks would defeat Turkey, rule Constantinople and take part of Albania. "Holy people like Elder Paisios are born once in a thousand years," said Nikolaos Zournatzoglou, who has compiled three books of the elder's pronouncements. "He was a gift from God and the Virgin Mary for humanity."

In Souroti, about 20 miles from the northeastern Greek city of Thessaloniki, bus-loads of pilgrims arrived one Saturday recently to see the elder's grave. Young and old, they prayed and took pictures. Some plucked a leaf of basil from a plant growing near the simple cross at his head. Afterward in a gift shop in the basement of the rough-hewn stone church, visitors bought postcards, plaques with images of Elder Paisios and books by and about him, along with icons, crosses and other religious paraphernalia.

"There's a lot of uncertainty now. We don't know what is going to happen," said Anastasia Constantinou, a waitress visiting the shrine who said her family has had to cut back on meat, on driving their car and on other normal activities as their income has fallen amid the downturn. "People find consolation in faith," Ms. Constantinou, 32, said. "Even though everyday life is difficult, Paisios gives strength to people. He helps them hold on."



## THE WORD "ANATHEMA" AND ITS MEANING

By Saint John Maximovitch, from *Orthodox Life*, vol 27, Mar-April 1977, pp 18,19

The Greek word "anathema" consists of two words: "ana", which is a preposition indicating movement upwards and "thema", which means a separate part of some thing. In

military terminology, "thema" meant a detachment; in civil government "thema" meant a province. We currently use the word "theme", derived from "thema", to mean a specific topic of a written and intellectual work.

"Anathema" literally means the lifting up of something separate. In the Old Testament this expression was used both in relation to that which was alienated due to sinfulness and likewise to that which was dedicated to God.

In the New Testament, in the writing of the Apostle Paul it is used once in conjunction with "maranatha", meaning the coming of the Lord. The combination of these words means separation until the coming of the Lord; in other words, being handed over to Him. (1 Cor 16:22).

The Apostle Paul uses "anathema" in another place without the addition of "maranatha." (Gal 1:8-9). Here "anathema" is proclaimed against the distortion of the Gospel of Christ as it was preached by the Apostle, no matter by whom this might be committed, whether by the Apostle himself or an angel from the heavens. In this same expression there is also implied: "let the Lord Himself pass judgment", for who else can pass judgment on the angels?

St John the Theologian in Revelation (22:3) says that in the New Jerusalem there will not be any anathema; this can be understood in two ways, giving the word anathema both meanings: 1) there will not be any lifting up to the judgment of God, for this judgment has already been accomplished; 2) there will not be any special dedication to God, for all things will be the holy things of God, just as the light of God enlightens all (Rev 21:23).

In the acts of the Councils and the further course of the New Testament Church of Christ, the word "anathema" came to mean complete separation from the Church. "The Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes", "let him be anathema", or "let it be anathema," means a complete tearing away from the church. While in cases of "separation from the communion of the Church" and other *epitimia* or penances laid on a person, the person remained a member of the Church (even though his participation in her grace-filled life was limited), those given over to anathema were thus completely torn away from her until their repentance. Realizing that she is unable to do anything for their salvation, in view of their stubbornness and hardness of heart, the earthly church lifts them up to the judgment of God. That judgment is merciful unto repentant sinners, but fearsome for the stubborn enemies of God. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ... for our God is a consuming fire.* (Heb 10:31; 12:29).

Anathema is not final damnation: until death, repentance is possible. "Anathema" is fearsome not because the Church wishes anyone evil or God seeks their damnation. They desire that all be saved. But it is fearsome to stand before the presence of God in the state of hardened evil: nothing is hidden from Him.

## A BEGGAR FOR CHRIST

*From humansarefree.com.*

Meet 98-year old Dobri Dobrev, a man who lost his hearing in the second world war, who walks 10 kilometers from his village in his **homemade** clothes to the city of Sofia, where he spends the day begging for money.

Though a well known fixture around several of the city's churches, known for his prostrations of thanks to all donors, it was only recently discovered that he has donated every penny he has collected—over 40,000 euros—towards the restoration of decaying Bulgarian monasteries and churches and the utility bills of orphanages, living instead off his monthly state pension of 80 euros.

Dobrev's fame is now spreading outside of Bulgaria as his story is disseminated via the Internet.

One resident describes what he knows about *Elder Dobry*: "He is called a saint, an ascetic hermit, a man who doesn't take money, an angel, a divine stranger, a traveler from the past, a beggar. Few Bulgarians have not heard of Good Old Dobry Dobrev, many are those who do not have the faintest idea of the true holiness of his cause. This year Elder Dobry turned 98 and still continues to give selflessly to others his only treasure—kindness and humanity. And at this advanced age he can be spotted from time to time throughout metropolitan streets in search of generous people to implement his cause.

Elder Dobry has been raising money for decades to restore churches throughout Bulgaria. He is not afraid of cold and bad weather, does not worry that he will remain hungry. He is not angry at people's indifference to his work. The old man radiates kindness and meekness. He is ready to kiss the hand of anyone who has dropped a coin into his box, to talk about God with every passerby, to give thanks for the charity.

But Elder Dobry is not a beggar. He does not rely on strangers to save his body, but he wants to save their souls. A man like him cannot be called a beggar who has forgotten his needs and is raising money for a lofty mission, far from the material benefits of life. To donate to the church means to bestow to the generations, to faith in a godly future to build a benevolent Bulgaria. This is what

Elder Dobry thinks he does without expecting gratitude. He respects people. He sees that the world around him is selfish, but he doesn't get upset and instead provides an example with his donations. So many people worship the faith of this man who doesn't take money. We don't know much about Elder Dobry's life. He does not want fame and does not want to divulge details of his daily life. It's enough for him that people know he is a good person who collects money and donates it to the Bulgarian churches and monasteries.

A Sofia visitor recounts his meeting him as follows: "Yes, *Dyado Dobri* (Grandpa Dobri, as the locals call him). I lived in Sofia for six months and traveled by public transport. He

came on the tram every day, one stop after mine. Every day he would sit and someone always recognized him and spoke to him. The man tells some very interesting and heart-warming stories. He never begs for money, people just put money in his little wooden box and he shows them respect. I'm very happy to see he's doing alright and continuing his great cause."

Another past resident of the area recalls the following: "Four years ago, I had the pleasure to meet him and directly delight in his innocent kindness

and simplicity. People from Sofia know him as elder Dobri Dobrev from the village Baylovo. He is a 98-year old elder who could often be seen standing in front of the church of St. Alexander Nevsky or St. Methodius and Cyril and their Five Disciples with his metal cashbox and begging for money. He gives the collected money for renewing monasteries and churches or to poor people.

"I met him at the church of St. Kyriaki, when I was attending the holy Liturgy which was led by several bishops, in presence of the graceful relics of St. Stephen Milutin the King. Simply, he entered through the church gate, stood in front of the relics and, like a young boy, made a few deep bows. That was an amazing scene, especially because of the feeling of unworthiness when God crosses our life-path with one of His righteous men.

Kind eyes, pleasant smile, humble look ... all that makes him bright in the eyes of those who have met him and without hesitation hurry to get a blessing from this sagacious elder."





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## TIME IS ALWAYS OF THE ESSENCE!

From "Orthodox Spiritual Counsels," translated from Greek by the staff of the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men! (1 Cor 16:13).



Once there was a king who had a wicked son. Having lost all hope that his son would ever change for the better, the father condemned him to death. He gave him one month during which he was to prepare for his execution.

When the month was up, the king summoned his son. To his surprise, he saw that the young man had changed noticeably; his face was thin and pale, and his whole body, thinner now, seemed to have suffered immensely.

"How is it that such a transformation has taken place, my son?" asked the king.

"My father and my lord," replied the son, "how is it possible not to have changed since each day brought me closer to death?"

"Well, my child," observed the king. "Because you have obviously come to your senses, I shall forgive you. However, you shall be required to maintain this heightened state of alert for the eventual disposal of your soul for the rest of your life."

"My Father," replied the son, "this is impossible. How will I be able to resist the seduction and countless temptations of the world?"

The king ordered the servants to bring him a pot full of oil and said to his son: "Take this container and, carrying it in your

hands, walk around and cross all of the city streets. You will be followed by two soldiers with sharp swords. If you spill even a single drop of the oil they will take your head off."

The son obeyed. With light, careful steps, he crossed all the city streets, while the two soldiers accompanied him constantly, ready to execute him, as the king had ordered. The young man managed to return without having spilled a single drop of the oil.

Upon his return to the castle, his father asked him:

"My son, what did you observe as you were wandering throughout the city?"

"I was unable to notice anything whatsoever," the son replied.

"What do you mean?" asked the king. "Today was a great celebration. Surely you saw the many benches that were loaded with merchandise, the many coaches, so many people, animals, etc."

"No, I saw absolutely nothing," replied the son. "All my attention was focused on the oil

in the pot. I feared lest I spill a drop and thereby lose my life."

"You concluded well," the king said. "Keep therefore this lesson in mind for the rest of your life. Maintain this same attentiveness towards your soul, as you did today for the oil in the container. Turn your head away from the temporal things of this world and instead focus upon all that involve pure eternal life. For you will be followed, not by armed soldiers, but by death; each day that passes will bring you closer to that last day of your earthly life. Thus, remain vigilant and be very careful to guard your soul from all ruinous temptations."

The son obeyed his father, and lived happily ever after.





# 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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## ON THE DEATH & RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

By St. Gregory the Theologian.

Come in with a Mystery, bringing with me the Day as a good defender of my cowardice and weakness; that He Who today rose again from the dead may renew me also by His Spirit; and, clothing me with the new Man, may give me to His New Creation, to those who are begotten after God, as a good modeller and teacher for Christ, willingly both dying with Him and rising again with Him.

Yesterday the Lamb was slain and the door-posts were anointed; Egypt bewailed her First-born; the Destroyer passed us over; the Seal was dreadful and reverend, and we were walled in with the Precious Blood. Today we have clean escaped from Egypt and from Pharaoh; and there is none to hinder us from keeping a Feast to the Lord our God—the Feast of our Departure; or from celebrating that Feast, *not in the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*, (1 Cor 5:8) carrying with us nothing of ungodly and Egyptian leaven.

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him; yesterday I died with Him; today I am quickened with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him; today I rise with Him. But let us

offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us—you will think perhaps that I am going to say gold, or silver, or woven work or transparent and costly stones, the mere passing material of earth, that remains here below, and is for the most part always possessed by bad men, slaves of the world and of the Prince of the world. Let us offer ourselves, the possession most precious to God, and most fitting; let us give back to the Image what is made after the Image. Let us recognize our Dignity; let us honour our Archetype; let us know the

power of the Mystery, and for what Christ died.

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become God's for His sake, since He for ours became Man. He assumed the worse that He might give us the better; *He became poor that we through His poverty might be rich* (2 Cor 8:9); He took upon Him the form of a servant

that we might receive back our liberty; He came down that we might be exalted; He was tempted that we might conquer; He was dishonored that He might glorify us; He died that He might save us; He ascended that He might draw to Himself us, who were lying low in the Fall of sin.

Let us give all, offer all, to Him Who gave Himself a Ransom and a Reconciliation for us. But one can give nothing like oneself, understanding the Mystery, and becoming for His sake all that He became for ours. Amen.



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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 20<sup>th</sup> 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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## THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

By St. Innocent (Borisov), Archbishop of Kherson.



One of the most significant liturgical actions of the Great Fast takes place when, between the Old Testament readings, the Royal Doors are suddenly opened, the serving clergyman appears with a candle and censer and, making the sign of the cross with them over those present, exclaims: *The light of Christ enlightens all!* It is not surprising that all those present bow their head to

the ground at this moment, for the opening of the Royal Doors represents the opening of the very heavens; the candle and censer signify the fullness of the Holy Spirit; and the appearance of the serving clergyman is like the appearance of an Angel from heaven. Who could be so arrogant as not to bow down before these signs of the grace of God?

The Holy Church, however, seeks from us at this instance not simply a bow of the head or a prostration before the light of Christ. No, in the spiritual sense, it wants the opposite: the bowing of our head before that light, the opening before it of our entire essence, so that in this way we might be illumined with that divine light from head to foot, be completely filled with it, and made light-bearing, just as were the first Christians, about whom the Apostle Paul writes that they *shine as lights in the world* (Phil 2:15).

In order better to enter the Holy Church's intention, let us look at the power and significance of the words pronounced by the serving clergyman.

*The light of Christ enlightens all!* These words suggest, firstly, the insufficiency in us all of the true light. For, if we were light-filled in and of ourselves, we would have no need for enlightenment. Truly, a person not illumined by the Gospel is darkness, deep darkness, as St. Paul teaches. Those who are illumined by the light of science and are called "enlightened" by people would not immediately agree with this. This is because these people who have studied the sciences, due to their hope in the scintillation that the sciences pour upon them, rarely and insufficiently turn their attention to the inner state of their spirit and heart, not seeing in what darkness their soul and conscience are. If, however, they were to look deeply into the quality of their knowledge and, on the other hand, would attentively delve into the true needs of their soul, then they would soon begin to see that the light borrowed from the sciences, no matter how great it might be, is hardly enough to satisfy them; and that, in relation to some of the most important things, the ignorance of which, one might say, makes one less than human, they are as ignorant as the lowest commoner; therefore, exactly like the commoner, they need to be enlightened from above.

*The light of Christ enlightens all!* These words, secondly, suggest the fullness and abundance for everyone of the light of Christ. Indeed, there is no deficiency of it for anyone. It enlightens both the wisest, revealing to them the mysteries of the Kingdom of God which no mind in and of itself can open; and the most foolish, opening in them, instead of a natural intellect, the eyes of the heart, with which they can see what is hidden from the wise and knowledgeable of this world. It enlightens both the richest, teaching them not to exalt in perishable goods, not to be rich in themselves but in God, and to hide their treasure where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, *and where thieves do not break through nor steal* (Mt 6:20); and the poorest, showing them their riches inside



themselves, which are more valuable than the whole world, and teaching them to be poor not only in body but also in spirit, in order to acquire the Kingdom. It enlightens also the very highest ruler, reminding him that there is a Master over him Who demands a strict accounting for every tear shed because of him; and the very lowest servant, comforting him in the knowledge that no one can take away from him his internal freedom of spirit and conscience, and that a virtuous man in bonds is higher than the happiest person in the world and closer to the Savior Who, being the Son of God, for our sake took on the appearance, not of a king, but of a slave and servant of all. It enlightens elders, revealing to them a life that does not age, calling them from earthly wandering to a place where there is rest from every labor. It enlightens youths, encouraging them to battle with the passions and lusts. It enlightens infants, opening their lips to praise the Lord.

*The light of Christ enlightens all!* Pronouncing these words through the mouth of its servant, the Holy Church says, as it were: “Perhaps there are those who, due to their lot at birth or the circumstances of life, being far from the light of the sciences and earthly wisdom, blame their supposedly miserable situation, thinking that they, having only their native wit, are not able, like enlightened men, to achieve the aims of their existence, and must forever remain behind them, not only in time, but even in eternity.

May they not vainly despair and lose courage! The One Who in the sensible world hung the sun and moon in the heavens so they would illumine all equally, the same One did not forget in the spiritual world also to pour out light for the enlightenment of all without exception. Attending church, hearing the Gospel, prophets, and apostles, no matter whether you are a farmer or soldier, a child or an elder, a servant or a laborer, you will learn everything that you need for your salvation, and to enter eternity, where we all must go, prepared for your great calling.”

*The light of Christ enlightens all!* “Perhaps some,” the Church says, as it were, “having been filled with the light from the lamp of science and earthly wisdom, imagine that they do not need any further enlightenment, that they know everything that they need, and can calmly rest with their reserve of knowledge. May they leave behind their dangerous prejudice until they have studied the Gospel and the Cross of Christ, until they have properly comprehended what the prophets and apostles say about man, until they know that which is most essential! Only in the light of Christ can one see God, oneself, and the world in their true appearance. Only according to the indica-

tion of heavenly revelation can one find the path leading to eternal life.”

*The light of Christ enlightens all!* “Therefore,” it is as if the Church says, “each and everyone needs to walk in the light and do deeds of the light. A pagan can say that he did not know how to behave in the world, for he did not have a Gospel in hand; but the Christian is without an excuse! The light of Christ illumined everything for him, showing him his own poverty, and the richness of God’s mercy towards him; our past condition in paradise, and the future condition in the Heavenly Kingdom; the narrow path leading to eternal life, and the broad path leading to perdition; the power of the cross of Christ, and the necessity of bearing one’s own cross. Everything has been illumined, opened, and shown to everyone forever! Therefore everyone must walk in the light, avoid deeds of darkness, and not give themselves up to sleep and carelessness.”

This, my brothers, is the sense of the sacred words: *The light of Christ enlightens all!* The Church repeats them for both our instruction and our warning.

After this it is our task to examine ourselves and discover in which light we are in life: that of Christ or of someone else? Whatever light it is, if it is not of Christ, then for our eternal salvation it is as good as darkness, and even sometimes worse than darkness. For a man caught in the darkness at least either stops or goes slowly groping his way, taking care, if he can, to step into the light. But under a false light a person is calm,

goes along without stopping, allowing himself every kind of movement, changing paths and directions; and, inasmuch as he is led by a false light, like a swimmer at sea, he is exposed to inevitable dangers or goes somewhere from which there is no return. Is this not the same as happens with many intelligent people who, placing their hope in worldly wisdom, scorn the light of Christ? Where do they go, and where do they lead those who follow them? They go and lead others to such an abyss of impiety and vice that one glance into it fills with trembling the heart that has not lost its human feeling.

Beware, my brothers, of this false light, which in our times has especially begun to blind the eyes of many. Remember firmly that Christ alone is our true light, which enlightens every man coming into the world and going out of the world. If you meet a teacher, first try to learn of what light he is. If the light is not of Christ, then no matter who he is, block your ears and heart. For just as in the sensible world there is one sun and no other light besides it, so too in the spiritual world there is one true and life-giving light: our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.



## THE “PERFECT” CHRISTIAN...

A story by Fr. Stefanos Anagnostopoulos, translated from Greek by the staff of “Orthodox Heritage.”

Four to five years ago, I had told you a true story about one of our parish members; I do not know how many of you had heard it or remember it; I would like to go over it again as I believe it is directly related to much of what confronts us, or rather what we, at times, observe in our everyday parish life.

It was around this time of the year when I was visited by an Orthodox man of our parish. He came to speak with me, seeking a new spiritual father, as his priest confessor had passed away. He mentioned his name and his previous spiritual father’s name (a well known priest in our area) and immediately proceeded to describe his view of himself:

—Father, I know I’m a very good Christian; I am humble and a righteous man!

I responded by asking him where or how he had drawn this conclusion. And he answered:

—I have a large family, I’m a department head at a prestigious public sector ministry, I go to church every Sunday, I fast, I do my prayers morning and evening, give alms, and even up to the command that God gives, giving up the tenth from our salary, visit the sick in hospitals, bedridden in homes, fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays and all Lent, confess regularly, commune, and I also...

All this reminded me immediately of the Pharisee, as he pretty much repeated everything that the Pharisee professed.

—I read the New Testament (indeed, the Pharisee also knew the law of God quite well). And I am also very well read, spending lots of time with many fine books. And I do so wherever I go, and wherever I dwell, I’m talking and warning others about the Antichrist and six hundred sixty-six. I cauterize evil, do strict observations in the name of God’s law, and refer to the Gospel to all: my wife, my children, my relatives, my subordinates, my neighbors, my workers, my apartment building’s residents, to all those in the street, everywhere...

I interrupted him from continuing with his self-characterization; I had understood enough. At that moment, God enlightened me, though I am a sinner; and in spite of my miserable, sinful state, I dared tell him the following:

—If you truly care to know yourself, truly comprehend how good of a person you are and the kind of Christian others see in you, and if you think God likes you and your deeds, I am asking you that, upon departing, go seek out there what others think of you. Go and solicit the views of your wife, your children, your apartment building’s residents, relatives, colleagues, etc., and ask them to tell you in all honesty, what

they truly think about you. And also ask them to reveal to you what others mutter behind your back, and what they think about the Christianity that you represent. And if they are reluctant to tell you directly, ask them to provide you with anonymous, typewritten responses. This is the rule that I place upon you. And after you gain responses from all, come back in a few days and see me. Until then, I ask you that you abstain from receiving Holy Communion. Furthermore, upon hearing what others have to tell you, I want you to go to church and stand in front of Christ’s icon and ask Him: “Lord, after all that has been revealed to me by others, if I die today, am I worthy to be an inhabitant of Your Kingdom?”

After my instruction, the man left insulted, in a furious, sad and troubled state. He returned however, after three weeks, a changed man! He fell to his knees and with tears in his eyes confessed, shouting:

—Dear father I am a sinner, worst of them all! I’m selfish, I lack compassion, and I am a malicious man who never displays any understanding towards others. I am an unfair person, gossip second to no one, glutton, prideful, greedy, avaricious, unfaithful, and my daily actions are worse than those of an atheist. And all of my family and friends and associates told me, without any

exception, that I am a hypocrite, a hypocrite of great proportions. And if I die today, there is truly no trace of repentance upon me whatsoever. Soon we will observe the Sunday of Last Judgment, and the content of that Gospel passage has me truly terrified. If I die where will I go? Surely though, I am not destined towards Paradise...



The gate into Paradise is not narrow. There is room for all those who bow humbly, and are not puffed up with pride, as long as they repent and give the burden of their sins to Christ. Then there is plenty of room to pass through the gate. ... The thief on the cross simply said, *Forgive me* and he was saved. Salvation depends on the second, not the minute. Man can be saved with a single, humble thought; or, with a proud one, lose everything.

Spiritual health equals pure thoughts, an enlightened mind, and a purified heart that unceasingly harbors Christ and Panaghia. Watchfulness over ourselves and prayer are a great help in acquiring spiritual health. Prayer is essential for the purification of the soul, and prudence is essential for the preservation of a healthy spiritual condition.

Elder Paisios the Athonite (+1994)





## THE FALL OF THE NOUS

By Anthony of the Desert, from his book “Spiritual Alchemy,” ch. 6 (available through “Church Father Theology,” <http://www.churchfathertheology.com/>).

Generally, the term *nous* speaks of the power of the soul but has also included essence (heart) and energy (thoughts and conceptual images). The Church Fathers mostly referred to the *nous* as the heart and/or the soul, without having excluded other designations. Moreover, the terms *nous* and soul—as well as *nous* and heart, *nous* and intelligence, and *nous* and reason (or attention, as a more subtle form of reason) —are often used interchangeably. However, the more accurate patristic definition of *nous*, as proffered by the early Church Fathers, is “the eye of the soul.” This means the soul’s power and purest part.

The natural state of the *nous* encompasses unification with the *nous* of Christ (which our *nous* pursues through constant remembrance of God) and dispassion, where the *nous* repels every thought that is contrary to God’s love. When sick, the *nous* becomes contaminated by the senses and withdraws from the heart. This demonstrates how the *nous* can be changed by any conceptual image that it accepts, an actuality that results in the defilement of and the leading astray of the entire soul. Thus, the *nous* determines our condition and when sickened the term “darkened” is used to describe its state.

There are three movements of the *nous*:

1. Natural: Where the *nous* gains awareness that it has been the cause of evil and confesses all sins to God.
2. Unnatural: When the *nous* forgets God and fights against others, a state in which the *nous* believes that it has been unjustly treated.
3. Supernatural: Where the *nous* rises and finds the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the *nous* can either be concerned with material things, or derailed by conceptual images of them, or it can identify with the divine and lose configuration and form altogether. That is, the *nous* is either moving toward illness or toward purification, it is never static.

Before the Fall, the *nous* was able to clearly perceive God and the intelligent aspect of the soul expressed these experiences of the *nous* in comprehensible terms. The intelligent power—as *logikillogistikon*, or as the Word (Christ, being the Word or *Logos*) —of the soul submits to the Logos, which occurs as the mind turns what the *nous* experiences into “thinkable” concepts (thoughts, or *logismoi*). This can

be envisioned as God revealing to the *nous* and mind, which then records the revelatory experience in intelligible forms.

Tragically, after the Fall, the *nous* became hidden by the passions, was overcome by darkness, and the intelligent aspect of the soul rose above the *nous* to usurp the *nous*’ position as the dominant inner force. The *nous* sickened, or darkened, and the soul’s intelligent power assumed the role as man’s source of existence. This corruption has manifested as pride, arrogance, and egoism, all of which culminate in judging the sins of others (cf. Mt 7:1-5) as a way by which to institute the intelligent power’s pseudo-superiority.

The need to return the *nous* to its pre-Fall state of purity and single preoccupation with God is readily visible when distinguishing between human and divine knowledge. Human knowledge, being confined to matter, is inferior and useless. Thus, we must exchange matter for spirit through an absolute reliance on God which, in part, requires shunning the temptation to pose scientific or philosophical questions such as “what is truth” and to instead ask “Who (God) is



the truth.” Consider how philosophy mis-believes that only what is uncreated can be immortal, a fallacious precept that aids in explaining philosophy’s errant view of the body as created (material) and mortal and the soul as uncreated (i.e., from the realm of ideas) and immortal. This misconception includes the Platonic

theory of the soul having fallen from the world of ideas and then becoming imprisoned in the human body. According to this incorrect belief the salvation of souls occurs when an “uncreated” soul gravitates back toward God after having been eternally freed from the prison of the body. Orthodoxy espouses the authentic state of reality: humans (a soul and a body) as immortal, from God’s grace rather than as a product of nature, and created yet living eternally either in unity with or separated from God.

Obviously, care must be taken to contrast philosophy, as a product of the mind and human action, with Eastern Orthodox Christianity (revelation from God). Orthodox theology is the Word of God, as opposed to the manufactured words of one’s mind that are unable to speak to the soul. Consequently, “theology” that is taught like a science is usually only understood externally and this kind of doctrine is fraught with uncertainty and questions (since the mind is unable to grasp the divine). Conversely, the most prevalent disease of the West, the spiritual malady of rationalism, merely trusts the conclusions of one’s fallen nature and logical mind; which can be summed up by Rene Decartes’ postulate of “I think,



therefore I am.” Modern rationalism results in the belief that our thoughts are who we are, that we are the sum total of our thoughts, and this compels placing an absolute trust in any and all of the mind’s imaginings—the misguided idea that since they “are us” we must take a stand for and defend them as if they were our own flesh and blood. Moreover, modern rationalism, and its devastating spiritual consequences, is the prime fallacy of today’s worldview in that it is precisely by placing absolute trust in the formulations of the fallen human nature—rather than in divine revelation—that the modern West has come to water down or abandon the once cherished Christian faith; western man has undermined the apostolic faith with his logic.

As has now been evidenced, eventually the corrupted intelligent aspect of the soul will reject God (being unable to any longer apprehend God) or will guide one into mistakenly believing he is a god. This unmasks the fatal danger of attempting to theologize via the fallen human intellect (i.e., by a philosophy and a darkened *nous*, see 1 Cor 2:14). To be ruled by reason exists as the very foundation of all internal and external anomalies, the soul’s intelligent power must be restored to its proper function as the interpreter of the *nous*. Only then can obedience to God’s will ensue, only then will the renouncing of one’s own life become possible, an occurrence that will then facilitate the cure of interior illness and transformation of the inner world.



A genuine friend is one who, when his neighbor is undergoing tribulation, imperturbably and calmly suffers with him: afflictions, needs, temptations and calamities—as if they were his own.

*A faithful friend is a strong defense.* (Eccl 6:14); for when one is faring well, he is a good counselor and wholehearted supporter, and when one is faring badly, he is a most genuine helper and a most sympathetic defender.

Only the diligent keepers of the commandments and genuine initiates of Divine judgments do not abandon friends who are being tested by God’s consent.

Those who despise the commandments and are not initiates of the Divine judgments, when a friend is faring well, enjoy things along with him; but when a friend is tried and is having a hard time, they forsake him—sometimes even to side with his enemies.

**St. Maximos the Confessor**

## REMEMBRANCE OF WRONGS

By St. John Climacus, from “*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*,” Step 9 “*On Remembrance of Wrongs*.”



The holy virtues are like Jacob’s ladder, and the unholy vices are like the chains that fell from the chief Apostle Peter. For the virtues, leading from one to another, bear him who chooses them up to Heaven; but the vices by their nature beget and stifle one another.

Remembrance of wrongs is the consummation of anger, the keeper of sins, hatred of righteousness, ruin of virtues, poison of the soul, worm of the mind. Remembrance of wrongs is shame of prayer, stopping of supplication, estrangement of love, a nail stuck in the soul. Remembrance of wrongs is pleasureless feeling beloved in the sweetness of bitterness, continuous sin, un-sleeping transgression, hourly malice.

This dark and hateful passion, I mean remembrance of wrongs, is one of those that are produced but have no offspring. He who has put a stop to anger has also destroyed remembrance of wrongs; because childbirth continues only while the father is alive.

He who has obtained love has banished revenge; but he who nurses enmities stores up for himself endless sufferings. A banquet of love dispels hatred, and sincere gifts soothe a soul. But an ill-regulated banquet is the mother of boldness, and through the window of love gluttony leaps in.

I have seen hatred break the bond of long-standing fornication, and afterwards remembrance of wrongs, in an amazing way, did not allow the severed union to be renewed. Wonderful sight—a demon curing a demon! But perhaps this is the work not of demons but of Divine Providence.

Remembrance of wrongs is far from strong natural love, but fornication easily comes near it, just as a hidden louse can sometimes be seen in a dove. Remembrance of wrongs is an interpreter of Scripture of the kind that adjusts the words of the Spirit to its own views. Let it be put to shame by the Prayer of Jesus.

The remembrance of Jesus’ sufferings cures remembrance of wrongs which is mightily shamed by His forbearance.

Worms grow in a rotten tree, and malice finds a place in falsely meek and silent people. He who has cast it out has found forgiveness, but he who sticks to it is deprived of mercy.

The forgetting of wrongs is a sign of true repentance. But he who dwells on them and thinks that he is repenting is like a man who thinks he is running while he is really asleep.

## WATCHFULNESS, PRAYER AND CONFESSION

*A Homily by Elder Ephraim of Philotheou, translated from Greek by Fr. Seraphim Bell.*



**M**y beloved children: Today we will say a few things about the great virtue of watchfulness.

As you know, watchfulness is a patristic teaching, it is the experience of the great *neptic* fathers of the Church and of the desert. The word *nepsis* comes from *nepho*, which means to be sleepless, to guard, to inspect, examine, watch over, and keep under surveillance. All these things the fathers sum up in one continuous attention to the nous.

Watchfulness is described as the axe which shatters the large trees, hitting their roots. And when the root is struck, it doesn't spring up again. Thus also when the nous of the man, of the Christian, has heed for the soul, it keeps watch over the heart and the five senses of the soul, the bodily as well as the spiritual. When the nous is awake, when it is attentive, when it keeps watch over the speculations, the thoughts, when it controls the imagination, then the whole man, body and soul, is kept pure. And when the man is rendered pure through watchfulness and spiritual works, his prayers have boldness before God, they cross the sky, they go beyond the stars, they pass through the heavens and draw near to the Divine Throne of Grace, where the blessings of God are granted. And this being the case, the man at prayer is enriched by the grace of God.

The *neptic* fathers tell us that one of our thoughts may rise to heaven and another may descend to hell: *By our thoughts we are improved or defiled.* In other words, a thought which may inattentively attack us, may pollute us, may pleasure us, and is able to render us worthy of hell. A heavenly thought, a thought of self-denial, a brave thought, a thought of prayer and the vision of God, makes us worthy to draw near the Divine throne and to taste of heavenly things. By the thoughts either we will become unclean or we will become better. The beginning of sins starts with our thoughts.

The thoughts come from the five senses, the spiritual as well as the physical. When we allow the sense of sight to be uncontrolled and it carelessly sees anything, this carelessness will become no end of dirty and sinful images. Since these images are placed in the imagination, afterwards they drip the poison of sinful pleasure inside the heart of man. This pleasure is the poison, by which the heart is polluted and then becomes unclean and guilty before the un-sleeping eye of God.

Just like the sense of sight, so it is also of touch, and also of taste and hearing and of smell. And so the five senses cre-

ate analogous sinful images, which render the man unclean before the face of God. Here rests the entire philosophy of the spirit.

All sermons are beneficial, exactly because when a tree which is diseased is pruned, it is cleansed, and thus the word of God helps in the reduction of a passion. However, the teaching of the Fathers concerning watchfulness radically effects the cleansing from the passions. When the axe strikes the root, the entire tree falls down, it withers and is finished. So also when watchfulness takes a place in the life of the Christian; a tree of passion falls, it withers and thus in time, the old man, the man of sin and of passion, the earthly Adam is freed and he becomes *a new man*. For this reason, *neptic* work frees us radically from evil. Here then we must give heed to our life. If we want to cleanse ourselves, we should make sure to enrich our nous by the application of watchfulness.

A part of watchfulness is also noetic prayer. The vision of God is another part of watchfulness. Spiritual warfare is also another part. All these parts, when they are united in an effort of man, in time bring about holiness.

Abba Paphnoutios, a great desert father, was going along one day on his way and there he saw two men committing some sin. The thought of his passion said: "Look what great evil they are doing!" The eye saw them and immediately the thought flared up, trying thereby to attack the purity of the Saint's soul by judging the brother or also by his being tempted. Having watchfulness, however, he was being vigilant, immediately his mind was enlightened and he said to his thought, "They are sinning today, I will sin tomorrow. They will repent, but I know myself to be a hard man, unrepentant, egotistical, and thus, I won't repent. I will be punished since I am worse than these two. And what do I have to do about these careless sinners, since I am a much greater sinner and more passionate?" And speaking in this manner and putting a lock on the provocation of sin, he was saved and didn't judge the brothers who were sinning.

He didn't go very far and an Angel of God appeared before him having a double-edged cutless dripping blood; in other words, a knife which had cut him from both sides, and he says to him:

—Paphnoutios, you see this knife? Do you see that it is dripping blood?

—I see it, Angel of God.

—With this knife I kill by taking the heads of the ones who judge their neighbors. And since you didn't judge, you didn't condemn those who were in fact sinning—not imagining or guessing that they were sinners, but seeing them sin with your own eyes—but you condemned yourself more, for this reason your name has been written in the book of eternal life.

Success. His name is written in eternal life, because he didn't judge the sinners, he didn't condemn the sin of his brother. He would have judged if he hadn't had watchfulness, if he



hadn't been noetically vigilant in guarding his soul. Do you see what his good attentiveness produced? And do you see what harm he would have suffered, if he had been inattentive to the thought and allowed it to work within him? His thought "informed" him that they were in fact sinning; he even saw them commit the sin. In spite of his observations, however, even though the thought had "spoken" to him, the correct thought triumphed and thereby he escaped the shipwreck of his soul.

All of the passions have their own images, their own fantasies and their own pleasures. Murder has one image and another pleasure, gluttony has another and so many other sinful passions have others. All of the pleasures are otherwise poisons which bring about the death of the soul. We must take as our view that, if we want to clean the "inside of the cup," the interior of the soul, our heart, this center of man, we must strive to keep watchful. We should take care to become better; that is, we should be vigilant to always have our hand on the trigger. With the first appearance of the enemy, we should shoot. As soon as an evil thought comes to us, immediately knock it down. A dirty image comes, immediately spoil it. We shouldn't allow it to become more vivid in colors and in appearance, because it will lead us to immediate difficulty. When evil is struck at its root, it is impossible for it to sprout and increase. When such spiritual struggle comes about with diligence, we will cleanse our soul and thereby we will be found clean and with boldness before God.

A pagan priest asked some monks:

—Does your God appear to you? Do you see Him? Does He speak to you?

The fathers said:

—No.

The pagan says:

—If He doesn't speak to you and doesn't appear to you, this means that you don't have pure thoughts. When I pray, my God answers me.

Naturally, God didn't answer the pagan, the demons answered him, but nevertheless the fathers took it as an occasion of benefit and said:

—Indeed, the impure thoughts prevent us sinful men from communicating with God.

Watchfulness does nothing less than cleanses the nous and the heart from every impurity. For this reason, with a little ascetical toil, watchfulness brings about the greatest spiritual

results. When we strive ascetically and aren't mindful of our thoughts, we accomplish nothing.

The Sacred Chrysostom wrote many chapters about prayer and about wakefulness. And in the midst of them he says something very beautiful: *Prayer, he says, is enlightenment of the soul, true consciousness of God, a mediator between God and man, a physician of the passions, an antidote against diseases, medicine against every illness, tranquility of the soul, a guide which carries us to heaven, which doesn't revolve around the earth, which marches towards the apse of heaven. It passes over the buildings, it passes mentally through the air, it walks above the air, it passes over the whole of the stars, it opens the gates of heaven, it surpasses the angels, it transcends the Thrones and Principalities, it passes over the Cherubim and when it has passed through all of the foundation of nature, it comes near to the unapproachable Trinity. There it worships the Divinity. There it is made worthy to become an interlocutor in the Heavenly Kingdom. Through this (prayer), the soul, which is lifted up in the air*



*to the heavens, embraces the Lord in an inexpressible manner, exactly as the baby embraces its mother and with tears cries loudly, desiring the enjoyment of divine milk. But it seeks the things which are necessary and receives a gift superior to all visible nature.*

*Prayer is our venerable representative. It gladdens the heart. It gives rest to the soul. It creates within*

*us the fear of the punishment of hell, the desire for the Kingdom of Heaven. It teaches humility, it grants awareness of sin and in general it adorns man with every good thing, like a robe adorned with all the virtues which enfolds the soul. It brought a gift to Anna, Samuel, and it made known that Prophet of the Lord. This prayer also made Elias a zealot of the Lord. And it became a guide for the descent of the heavenly fire for the sacrifice. For while the priest of Baal was calling all day long to the idol, he, after he lifted up his voice which came from his pure heart and cried out through his mouth and his soul, the fire came down from heaven as a sign of the righteousness of his prayer. Since he was standing like an eagle over the altar with his fierce nature, he offered everything as a sacrifice. But the great servant of God, the zealot Elias, did this, as all that happened then, teaching us by the spirit, that we also crying loudly from the depths of our soul to God, should move the ineffable fire of the Holy Spirit to come down to the altar of our heart and to offer ourselves fully as a sacrifice to God.*

All of the great fathers of the Church, especially the desert fathers, succeeded in becoming worthy of great gifts exclusively



through watchfulness and vision of God [*theoria*]. Keeping vigil all night and coming to the vision of the Light of God.

We have St. Gregory Palamas, the instructor of the desert, the instructor of *neptic* activity, the teacher of noetic prayer. This saint would remain enclosed in his cell for the entire week. He didn't go outside at all. There, on his knees and with hands upraised, he was vigilant about his nous and his heart and he received heavenly theology [literally "theology from above"—*trans.*] by the Holy Spirit. This is the theology which made known to him the Uncreated Light of the Divine Glory, of the Divine Nature.

The Uncreated Light is the glory of the Divine Nature. There was the goal and the conclusion of asceticism and of prayer. When the saints received this Light, they became all Light. And since the light floods the nous and the heart, how could they know less than the mysteries of the secrets which are known only to the angels? Through watchfulness the fathers attained to the pinnacle of the virtues and of the graces. And we, if we are watchful, if we pray, even if we are in the world, and even if we don't attain to similar states, no matter what, we will attain to a condition of purity. When we succeed by watchfulness in not judging our brother, this is no small achievement. We put into practice the commandment of our Christ, which is as follows: *Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* (Mt 7:1-2).

This is the commandment of Christ. It is not the commandment of some saint. It is God's. And therefore, by not judging, we put into practice a Divine commandment. When we do not judge, we will not be judged. Judge, and we will be judged. Sin is widespread. Wherever we turn our eyes and our imagination, we recognize the errors of men. Therefore, if we are inattentive, without watchfulness, we will always be found in the error of violation of this evangelical commandment of not judging our neighbor.

There was a monk in a monastery. The tempter had conquered him in negligence. He didn't do his canon, he didn't go to church, he didn't do his rule of prayer, and thus the fathers, not knowing much about him other than what they observed, regarded him negligent. The hour of death came and the fathers drew near him to see something, which perhaps God would show, in order that they may be benefited. Drawing near to the dying negligent monk, the fathers saw that he was very joyful. They were perplexed and they said in their thoughts:

—Look, why is he peaceful? The negligence which he had in his life doesn't worry him? What happened to the debts

which have been gathered because of sloth? Does his conscience not rebel? Does it not make him worry? Why is it that he doesn't despair?

He continued to be joyful. They compelled him to answer their question:

—Forgive us, brother, we see you doing so-so. We know and you know that you lived in negligence and sloth in monastic duties. Now you are heading to the judgment of Christ, and you should be somewhat sorry, worried, etc. But we see you otherwise, joyful, peaceful, with hope and we question: What is it that supports this state of yours?

He answered them and said:

—You are right, my fathers, that's how it is. I was negligent and didn't do what you did, but one thing I guarded in my life: Not to judge my brother. I read in the Holy Gospel, where the Lord says that the one who does not judge, will not be judged. Thus I tried, at least, not to judge. And I hope in the mercy of God that I will not be judged. For this reason I am departing with faith that God will apply His word to me, in spite of my negligence and slothfulness.

The fathers looked at each other, thought about what they heard and concluded that in fact, this brother was very intelligent and that he masterfully gained his salvation.

If we are watchful, we will not criticize. For without falling into the offense of judging, immediately watchfulness will set up a barrier and the thought of judgment will be prevented from continuing. Then we will experience what Abba Paphnutios experienced. And so we will escape from the

sin of judging and of criticism of the tongue and our names will be written in eternal life. A man who keeps his tongue pure, both inner and outer, that is to say, the inner thought and the tongue, and does this in the knowledge of God, this becomes his guarantee that he is saved. This spiritual attentiveness becomes light and as light, illumines our path towards salvation.

Another illumined path of watchfulness is also our path to sacred confession. The attention illumines it, which urges the man to settle his account with God. And he is guided by the light of watchfulness to this great mystery and there he deposits his entire debt, all the uncleanness of sins. He enters into this mysterious bath and comes out entirely clean. And I say that we must have much joy in our souls when we are accounted worthy to come into this bath. We must celebrate and thank the Lord who allowed this bath on earth, who allowed this authority of *binding and loosening*. Whatever things your spiritual father loosens, God also loosens. Whatever the representative of God forgives, the Lord also forgives. And when the man has been judged



here below, he is not judged above in the great and fearful judgment.

It is a great occasion when one arrives at this bath of holy confession. For this reason, all those who have been accounted worthy of this sacrament and continuously cleanse every soiling of the soul with this spiritual holy mystery of God, should have very great joy; the door of Paradise will always be open for them. And even if death follows, there is no anxiety. *He is prepared and not disturbed.* When the man is prepared, he is not disturbed at the approach of death. He knows that it is not possible for the word of God, which gave this authority, to be wrong. We experience it as a mystery of the Church and we see it in action and in application. When the man makes sacred confession with ardent desire, with humility, and with awareness, he feels the happiness within his soul, the lightness and the elation. A vivid proof that his sins have been forgiven.

And when sins are forgiven, then every anxious and uncertain fear about the next life is removed.

Our thanks to God must be unceasing. Our thanksgiving must never stop, because we are made worthy every time we want to receive this cleansing, and every time we feel a sin, immediately turn the mind to God. *I have sinned Lord, forgive me.* With this *I have sinned Lord, forgive me*, God answers: *My child, you are forgiven; the power of the law is remitted. Proceed to the application of the law.* And the application is beneath the *petraheli* (stole). There, all the sinfulness of man is ended. Forgiveness is so easy! It is very wrong for any man, when such a forgiveness is so easy and so free, and his egotism prohibits him from receiving it; his actions are those of a man who does not want to open the doors of Paradise and walk eternally in the glory of God!

Many men say: "Man should call upon God because of one sin? But this thing is wrong. Where is the love of God? Isn't God a Father?" Yes, He is a Father, but when this opportunity comes for Him to forgive you, why do you turn your back? Why do you not receive His mercy? Why do you refuse His embrace and go far away? Why do you accept the embrace of the devil and not of God? Perhaps your god seeks money or possessions or favors and you don't have all these things and for this reason you don't come to let go of your debt? But this is certainly not so; it is a deception!

God is very rich, as we see also in the parable of the prodigal. The prodigal wanted to depart far away. He demanded that he assume part of the possessions which belonged to him. And God gave him what he was owed as physical gifts. He didn't deprive him of them. However, he squandered these

gifts, the spiritual possessions, living prodigally. And when he arrived at the wretched end, he came to his senses; he came to himself; for he was not himself when all the prodigality reigned. And when he came to himself he said: *How many serve my father and they enjoy the good things of His possessions, and I His child, par excellence His child, am in such misery that I graze pigs and am allotted husks! I will return; He is a Father, He will receive me. I will ask forgiveness and will say to him, do not receive me as Your child, neither restore me to the first adoption, but I will ask Him to become one of His servants. And this will be a great thing.*

Once he thought these things and took on the journey of return, the Father had already come outside of His house and waited with open arms. He accepted him with all His heart and all His soul. He embraced him, He kissed him, He wept from joy, because he was dead and he was restored

to life, he was lost and was found. He made him His child again with all of the original wealth. He forgave everything. He cleansed him of every sin. He clothed him in the original garments. In the end, he gave him everything...

Our Heavenly Father does exactly the same things to anyone of us, who as sinners return to Him. He cleanses us, washes us, gives us the original garments of baptism, gives us son-ship and makes us worthy of His Kingdom. Everything is free. When the prodigal returned, He didn't seek an account, neither did He rebuke him nor did He seek to blame him. He begins at the point of the prodigal son's return; this was sufficient for the Father. Only to say "sinner," to leave

his sins with humility, to understand his mistakes and from then on everything is loosened. But the sinful man doesn't do this. He doesn't return, he isn't humbled. He holds on to his egotism. The most important step is the one that guides man to the confessional! And from then on the sinful ways of past life are finished. However, the tears of egotism hold back the sinful man. And when this comes to his hour of death and the reality of it hits him, then he will repent and he will be remorseful, but he may be too late. In this, God maintains little tolerance and has no respect for the person who refuses to humble his spirit.

As for Lucifer, this great battalion commander, who was once in the first place among all angelic hosts, what was the cause of his fall? What was the cause of the collapse, of the transformation from angels to demons? It was pride and egotism. The error came from these two passions. And as with the angels, so was also with our forbearers. The fall of our forbearers came about from pride and egotism. Because,





before God accomplished the verdict of guilt, he approached the man, Adam, and said to him: *Adam, why did you do this?* Adam didn't seek forgiveness, he didn't say: *God forbid this, I was wrong.* If he had done this, he wouldn't have been evicted out of Paradise and neither would we have all this banishment and suffering today. By not saying *God forbid this, I was wrong* all this plethora of evil came about. And thus now man doesn't say *God forbid this—I was wrong* and remains in his evil. But all this same has to do is to just say it: *God forbid this—I was wrong!* And God will stretch out His arms of forgiveness, and He takes him back in Paradise.

We, as Orthodox Christians, have been made worthy to know this great mystery of sacred confession. We should thus have very great joy; because whenever we fall down upon a sin, into something evil, we can run immediately to correct it and to preserve the health of our souls. And when death comes, we will go to meet the Lord, cleansed, repentant, and returned as prodigal sons. And our Heavenly Father will accept us and will place us within Paradise, the place of eternal bliss, where there is no end to Divine joy and sees no conclusion to that spiritual bliss, which cannot be compared to anything earthly.

And even the holy Apostle Paul, he that went up to the third heaven and saw the eternal good things, in spite of his apostolic and graceful tongue, he remained unable to express with human words the things of Paradise and the life above! Indeed, such is the inexpressible gift of happiness that is attained through sacred confession.

Therefore, my brethren, with much yearning, love, and awareness we must all run to be cleansed, to be made ready and when death follows, to depart in peace. Amen.



Let us love the humble disposition, my child, and if the Lord pities our nakedness and sends us some ability to pray and clothes our soul with some divine garment, we must be cautious lest we soil it out of carelessness: that is, through pride, criticism, negligence, disobedience, etc. But let us make a greater effort to whiten it through good works, especially through humble-mindedness and self-reproach. God is pleased more with these than with great works done with vainglory.

Always have perfect obedience. Obedience is the offspring of humility. Whereas back talk, quarrels, and disobedience are the offspring of pride, which a monk must hate as the cause of his soul's defilement.

Elder Ephraim of Philotheou

## SIMPLIFYING OUR LIFE

By Elder Paisios the Athonite.

Once, when I was staying with a friend in Athens, he asked me to receive a family man, who could only see me in the morning—at dawn—because that was the only time he had available. He arrived in a cheerful mood, praising God in every other word. He was full of humility and simplicity, and begged me to pray for his family. This brother, who was about 38 years old, had seven children. At home, they were eleven souls; because his parents lived with them, and they all shared the same room. He spoke with great simplicity: — The room fits us all if we stand up, but it is a bit tight if we lie down. Thank God, we are now constructing a shed to use as a kitchen; and we are doing fine. Father, at least we have a roof over our head, while other people live in the open air.

The man was an ironer. He lived in Athens and had to leave everyday before dawn, [in order] to arrive in Peiraeus in time for work in a dry-cleaning shop. He was suffering from varicose veins, as a result of having to stand up all that time, and his legs bothered him a lot; but his love for his family made him forget his pain and discomfort. In fact, he pitied himself constantly for not having, as he said, any love in his heart, because he did not do any acts of Christian charity; and praised his wife for being charitable. Apparently, besides taking care of her children and her parents-in-law, she would wash the clothes of some elderly men in the neighborhood, tidy up their homes, and even cook a little something, like soup, for them.

You could see divine Grace depicted on the face of this good family man. He had Christ in his heart and was full of joy, just like his one-room house was filled with heavenly bliss. Compare this man with people who do not have Christ in their heart: they are filled with anxiety. Take two of them and try to fit them in a house large enough for eleven people: they will not find a way to fit.



**We wish to remind our readers to not neglect sending us their annual contribution to help us cover the costs associated with our humble publication. In addition, we kindly request of those who have the financial ability, that they consider sending us an amount over the requested annual contribution of \$24 to assist us with our educational and philanthropic activities.**



## A PASCHAL EPISTLE

*By Saint John Maximovitch, to his Western European and East Asian flock and to all his spiritual children, 1956.*

Let us cleanse our senses and see through the gleaming, Lunapproachable light of Christ's Resurrection.

Now is everything filled—full with light—the heavens, the earth, and the underworld. All is presently bathed in light: Christ is risen from the dead. The heavens make merry, the earth rejoiceth, the underworld exulteth.

The Angels in Heaven hymn Thy Resurrection, O Christ-Saviour. Do Thou make us, on earth, also worthy to glorify Thee with a pure heart.

The Angelic Choir, horrified at seeing Its Creator and Master dead, doth now, in joyous song, glorify Him resurrected. Today doth Adam exult, and Eve rejoiceth; and with them do the Prophets and Patriarchs sing worthy songs to the Creator of all and to our Deliverer, Who did descend into the underworld for our sake.

The Giver of Life doth lead men out of hell this day, and up-lifteth them to Heaven; He layeth low the powers of the enemy and breaketh down the gates of hell by the Divine power of His authority.

On earth, the Angels announce the gladsome tidings to men and declare Christ's Resurrection. Attired in gleaming white robes, the Angels ask the Myrrh-bearing Women: *Why seek ye the Living One amongst the dead? He is risen; He is not here! Come, see the place where the Lord did lie.*

The myrrh-bearing women rush to the Apostles, bearing to them the joyous news. And through the Apostles the Gospel is Christ's Resurrection preached unto the entire world today.

Not all the Apostles immediately saw the risen Christ through spiritual eyes. Two disciples travelling to Emmaus did see Jesus walking with them, but did not recognize Him till such time as He had warmed their saddened hearts; and then were their spiritual eyes opened. Mary Magdalene conversed with Christ in the garden, but neither recognized Him nor was cognizant of the mystery of the Resurrection, until the voice of her beloved Teacher touched her heart and illumined her soul, which had been given to thinking in worldly fashion.

It was the Beloved Disciple John, whose heart was pure and undimmed by timidity, who before all others exalted the light of the risen Christ through spiritual eyes; and with his bodily eyes did he behold the manifested Lord.

Scattering and dispersing the dark and gloomy tempest of sin, Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shone forth, gleaming not in the hearts and souls of the Apostles only, but in those of all who draw near to Him with faith seeking salvation.

*Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed, Christ proclaimed; Blessed are those who have perceived Me not with bodily eyes, but with the eyes of the heart.*

It was with his spiritual eyes that Archdeacon Stephen, the proto-martyr, saw the heavens opened and the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God the Father. It was with eyes of faith that the risen Lord was beheld by Great-martyr George the Trophy-bearer and by all the other martyrs who laid down their earthly lives for Christ, in order that they might receive from Him life eternal. It was upon Him that *podvizhniki* ["athletes"-of-the-spirit] did fix their spiritual gaze; despising earthly pleasures, they were crowned in the heavens with glory unfading.

But neither the Scribes nor the Pharisees, His enemies, saw the resurrected Christ. Nor did the tormentors of the martyrs see Him, strengthening the martyrs. Neither did, nor do, all those whose spiritual gaze is dimmed by unbelief, whose heart is befouled with sins and vices, whose will is directed only toward the earthly, ever see the light of the glory of the risen Christ.

Let us cleanse our hearts from all filth and foulness,

and our spiritual eyes will be enlightened.

The light of Christ's Resurrection will flood and fill our souls, in like manner as the Church of the Resurrection, yearly, throughout the centuries, on Great Saturday, is illumined with light when the Orthodox—and only the Orthodox—Patriarch receives the Heavenly Fire.

Let us lift up our hearts! Let us forsake everything worldly; let us rejoice in this day and be exceeding glad! Christ is risen from the dead, having trampled death by death.

Christ is risen!

Archbishop John, The Pascha of Christ, 1956, Paris



Do not be anxious about unclean thoughts. Consider a basket full of wet clothes. If we leave the clothes in the basket for a long time, they will surely rot; the same will happen to our thoughts. If we do not put them into action, they will disappear by themselves in the course of time.

**Abba Poimen the Great**



## Οἱ Ἐπτά Φράσεις τοῦ Χριστοῦ στὸν Σταυρό

Ἀγίου Νικολάου Βελιμίροβιτς (+1956).



**Θ**έλετε νὰ μάθετε τὴ σημασία ἐκείνων τῶν ἑπτὰ φράσεων τὶς ὁποῖες εἶπε ὁ Κύριος πάνω στὸν σταυρό. Δὲν εἶναι σαφεῖς;

Πρώτη φράση: «**Πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς ὡς γὰρ οἶδας τί ποιοῦσι.**» (Λουκ. 23:34). Μὲ

αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια ὁ Χριστὸς ἔδειξε τὸ ἔλεός Του ἀπέναντι στοὺς ἐκτελεστές Του, τῶν ὁποίων ἡ μοχθηρία δὲν ὑποχώρησε οὔτε ὅταν ὑπέφερε στὸν σταυρό. Τὸ δεύτερο εἶναι ὅτι βροντοφώνησε ἀπὸ τὴν κορυφὴ τοῦ βράχου τοῦ Γολγοθᾶ μία ἀποδεδειγμένη ἀλλὰ ποτὲ καλὰ συνειδητοποιημένη ἀλήθεια, δηλαδή ὅτι αὐτοὶ ποὺ πράττουν τὸ κακὸ ποτὲ δὲν ξέρουν τί κάνουν. Σκοτώνοντας τὸν Δίκαιο στὴν πραγματικότητα σκοτώνουν τὸν ἑαυτό τους καὶ ταυτόχρονα δοξάζουν τὸν Δίκαιο. Καταπατώντας τὸν νόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲν βλέπουν τὴ μυλόπετρα, ἡ ὁποία ἀόρατα κατεβαίνει πρὸς αὐτοὺς γιὰ νὰ τοὺς συνθλίψει. Ἐμπαίζοντας τὸν Θεὸ δὲν βλέπουν τὰ πρόσωπά τους νὰ μεταμορφώνονται σὲ θηριώδη ρύγχη. Διαποτισμένοι ἀπὸ τὸ κακὸ ποτὲ δὲν ξέρουν τί κάνουν.

Δεύτερη φράση: «**Ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, σήμερον μετ' ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ.**» (Λουκ. 23:43). Αὐτὸς ὁ λόγος ἀπευθύνεται στὸν μετανιωμένο ληστή στὸν σταυρό. Πολὺ παρήγορος λόγος γιὰ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς, οἱ ὁποῖοι τουλάχιστον τὴν τελευταία στιγμὴ μετανοοῦν. Τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι ἀπερίγραπτα μεγάλο. Ὁ Κύριος ἐκπληρώνει τὴν ἀποστολὴ Του ἀκόμα καὶ στὸν σταυρό. Ἔως τὴν τελευταία Του πνοὴ ὁ Κύριος σῶζει ἐκείνους ποὺ δείχνουν καὶ τὴν παραμικρὴ ἐπιθυμία νὰ σωθοῦν.

Τρίτη φράση: «**Γύναι, ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου.**» (Ἰωάν. 19:26). Ἔτσι εἶπε ὁ Κύριος στὴν Ἁγία Μητέρα Του ποὺ στεκόταν κάτω ἀπὸ τὸν σταυρὸ μὲ τὴν ψυχὴ σταυρωμένη. Καὶ στὸν ἀπόστολο Ἰωάννη λέγει: «**Ἴδὸν ἢ μήτηρ σου.**» (Ἰωάν. 19:27). Αὐτὸς ὁ λόγος δείχνει τὴ φροντίδα, ποὺ ὁ καθένας χρωστᾶ στοὺς γονεῖς του. Γιὰ δὲς, Ἐκεῖνος ποὺ ἔδωσε ἐντολὴ στοὺς ἀνθρώπους: «**Τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα σου**» (Ἐξ. 20:12) ἐκπληρώνει τὴν ἐντολὴ Του τὴν ὑστατη στιγμὴ.

Τέταρτη φράση: «**Θεέ μου, Θεέ μου, ἵνατί με ἐγκατέλιπες**» (Ματθ. 27:46). Αὐτὲς οἱ λέξεις δείχνουν, τόσο τὴν ἀδύναμη ἀνθρώπινη φύση, ὅσο καὶ τὴν προορατικότητα τοῦ Κυρίου. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος πάσχει, ἀλλὰ κάτω ἀπὸ τὸν ἀνθρώπινο πόνο ὑπάρχει ἓνα μυστήριο. Δὲς, μόνον αὐτὲς οἱ λέξεις μπορούσαν νὰ διαλύσουν τὴν αἴρεση, ἡ ὁποία ἀργότερα τράνταζε

τὴν ἐκκλησία καὶ ἡ ὁποία λανθασμένα κήρυττε ὅτι ἡ Θεία φύση ὑπέφερε στὸν σταυρό. Ὅμως, ἐν τῷ μεταξύ, ὁ αἰώνιος Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἐνσαρκώθηκε ὡς ἄνθρωπος, γιὰ νὰ εἶναι ὡς ἄνθρωπος στὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴ, γιὰ νὰ μπορέσει ὅταν ἔλθει ἡ στιγμὴ νὰ πάσχει γιὰ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ νὰ πεθάνει γιὰ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Γιατί ἂν ἡ Θεία φύση τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔπασχε στὸν σταυρό, θὰ σήμαινε ὅτι ἡ Θεία φύση τοῦ Χριστοῦ θὰ πέθαινε. Καὶ αὐτὸ οὔτε κἄν ἐπιτρέπεται νὰ διανοηθοῦμε. Ἐντρυφήστε ὅσο πιὸ πολὺ μπορεῖτε σ' αὐτὲς τὶς μεγάλες καὶ φοβερὲς λέξεις: «**Θεέ μου, Θεέ μου, ἵνατί με ἐγκατέλιπες.**»

Ἡ πέμπτη φράση: «**Διψῶ!**» (Ἰωάν. 19:28). Τὸ αἷμα Του ἔρρεε. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ διψοῦσε. Ὁ ἥλιος ἦταν κατὰ τὴ δύση του, ἤδη τοῦ χτυποῦσε τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ μαζί μὲ τὰ ἄλλα βασανιστήρια καιγόταν πολὺ. Φυσικὸ ἦταν νὰ διψᾷ. Ἀλλά, Κύριε, διψοῦσες ὄντως γιὰ νερὸ ἢ γιὰ ἀγάπη; Μήπως διψοῦσες ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἢ ὡς Θεός, ἢ καὶ τὸ ἓνα καὶ τὸ ἄλλο; Ἴδου ὁ Ρωμαῖος λεγεωνάριος Σοῦ πρόσφερε ἓνα σπόγγο βρεγμένο στὸ ξύδι. Μιὰ σταγόνα ἐλέους, τὴν ὁποία δὲν αἰσθάνθηκες ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους γιὰ τρεῖς ὁλόκληρες ὥρες κρεμασμένος στὸν σταυρό! Αὐτὸς ὁ Ρωμαῖος στρατιώτης ἀπαλύνει κάπως τὴν ἁμαρτία τοῦ Πιλάτου—τὴν ἁμαρτία τῆς Ρωμαϊκῆς αὐτοκρατορίας—ἀπέναντί Σου, ἔστω καὶ μὲ ξύδι. Γι' αὐτὸ θὰ ἀφανίσεις τὴ Ρωμαϊκὴ αὐτοκρατορία, ἀλλὰ στὴ θέση της θὰ οἰκοδομήσεις νέα.

Ἡ ἕκτη φράση: «**Πάτερ, εἰς χεῖρας σου παρατίθεται τὸ πνεῦμά μου.**» (Λουκ. 23:46). Πού σημαίνει ὅτι ὁ Υἱὸς παραδίδει τὸ πνεῦμα Του στὰ χεῖρα τοῦ Πατρὸς Του. Γιὰ νὰ γίνῃ γνωστὸ, ὅτι ἀπὸ τὸν Πατέρα ἦρθε καὶ ὄχι αὐτεξουσίως, ὅπως τὸν κατηγοροῦσαν οἱ Ἑβραῖοι. Ἀλλὰ ἀκόμα οἱ λέξεις αὐτὲς ἐλέγχθησαν γιὰ νὰ τὶς ἀκούσουν οἱ βουδιστές, οἱ πυθαγόρειοι, οἱ ἀποκρυφιστές, καὶ ὅλοι ἐκεῖνοι οἱ φιλόσοφοι, οἱ ὁποῖοι φλυαροῦσαν περὶ μετοίκησης τῆς ψυχῆς τῶν νεκρῶν ἀνθρώπων σὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους, ἢ ζῶα, ἢ φυτὰ, ἢ ἀστέρια, ἢ μεταλλικὰ στοιχεῖα. Πεταξέτε ὅλες αὐτὲς τὶς φαντασίες καὶ δεῖτε ποῦ κατευθύνεται τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ νεκροῦ Δικαίου: «**Πάτερ, εἰς χεῖράς σου παρατίθεται τὸ πνεῦμά μου!**»

Ἡ ἕβδομη φράση: «**Τετέλεσται...**» (Ἰωάν. 19:30). Αὐτὸ δὲν σημαίνει ὅτι τελειώνει ἡ ζωὴ. Ὅχι! Ἀλλὰ ὅτι τελειώνει ἡ ἀποστολὴ ἢ ἐπικεντρωμένη στὴ σωτηρία τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου γένους. Τελείωσε, καὶ ἐπισφραγίσθηκε μὲ τὸ αἷμα καὶ τὸν ἐπίγειο θάνατο, τὸ θεῖο ἔργο τοῦ μοναδικοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Μεσσία τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Τελείωσαν τὰ βασανιστήρια, ἀλλὰ ἡ ζωὴ μόλις ἀρχίζει. Τελείωσε ἡ τραγωδία ἀλλὰ ὄχι καὶ τὸ δράμα. Στὴ σειρὰ ἔπεται, τὸ μεγαλειώδες ἀξίωμα: νίκη πάνω στὸν θάνατο, ἀνάσταση, δόξα.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!



## Ἡ Ἁγιασμένη Ἐπανάσταση

Τοῦ κυρ-Φώτη Κόντογλου, ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο «Πονεμένη Ρωμοσύνη», Ἐκδόσεις Ἀστήρ.



**Ἡ** Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση εἶναι ἡ πιὸ πνευματικὴ ἐπανάσταση ποὺ ἔγινε στὸν κόσμο. Εἶναι ἁγιασμένη!

Ἡ σκλαβιά ποὺ ἔσπρωξε τοὺς Ἕλληνες νὰ ξεσηκωθοῦνε καταπάνω στὸν Τοῦρκο δὲν ἦταν μονάχα ἡ στέρηση κι ἡ κακοπάθεια τοῦ κορμιοῦ, ἀλλά, ἀπάνω ἀπ' ὅλα, τὸ ὅτι ὁ τύραννος ἤθελε νὰ χαλάσει τὴν πίστη τους, μὴν ἀποδέχονται τοὺς ἀπὸ τὰ θρησκευτικὰ χρέη τους, ἀλλαξοπιστίζοντας τους καὶ σφάζοντας ἢ κρεμάζοντας τους, ἐπειδὴ δὲν ἀρنيότανε τὴν πίστη τους γιὰ νὰ γίνουνε μωχαμετάνοι.

Γιὰ τοῦτο πίστη καὶ πατρίδα εἶχανε γίνεῖ ἓνα καὶ τὸ ἴδιο πράγμα, κ' ἡ λευτεριά ποὺ ποθοῦσαν δὲν ἦτανε μοναχὰ ἡ λευτεριά ποὺ ποθοῦνε ὅλοι οἱ ἐπαναστάτες, ἀλλά ἡ λευτεριά νὰ φυλάξουνε τὴν ἁγιασμένη πίστη τους, ποὺ μ' αὐτὴν ἐλπίζανε νὰ σώσουνε τὴν ψυχὴ τους. Γιατί, γι' αὐτοὺς, κοντὰ στὸ κορμί, ποὺ ἔχει τόσες ἀνάγκες καὶ ποὺ μὲ τόσα βάσανα γίνεται ἡ συντήρησή του, ὑπῆρχε κ' ἡ ψυχὴ, ποὺ εἶπε ὁ Χριστὸς πὼς ἀξίζει περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὸ σῶμα, ὅσο περισσότερο ἀξίζει τὸ ροῦχο ἀπ' αὐτό.

Ἐκεῖνες οἱ ἀπλὲς ψυχές, ποὺ ζούσανε στὰ βουνὰ καὶ στὰ ρημοτόπια, ἦτανε διδαγμένες ἀπὸ τοὺς πατεράδες τους στὴν πίστη τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ γνωρίζανε, μ' ὅλο ποὺ ἦτανε ἀγράμματα, κάποια ἀπὸ τὰ λόγια του, ὅπως εἶναι τοῦτα: «*Τί θὰ ὠφελήσει ἄραγε τὸν ἄνθρωπο, ἂν κερδίσει τὸν κόσμον ὅλο, καὶ ζημιωθεῖ τὴν ψυχὴ του;*» «*Ἡ ψυχὴ εἶναι πιὸ πολύτιμη ἀπὸ τὴ θροφή, ὅπως τὸ κορμὶ ἀπὸ τὸ φόρεμα!*», κ.ἄ.

Γιὰ τοῦτο, κατὰ τὰ χρόνια τῆς σκλαβιάς, χιλιάδες παλληκάρια σφαχτήκανε καὶ κρεμαστήκανε καὶ παλουκωθήκανε γιὰ τὴν πίστη τους, ἀψηφώντας τὴ νεότητά τους, καὶ μὴ δίνοντας σημασία στὸ κορμὶ τους καὶ σὲ τούτη τὴν πρόσκαιρη ζωὴ. Στράτευμα ὀλάκερο εἶναι οἱ ἅγιοι νεομάρτυρες, ποὺ δὲ θανατωθήκανε γιὰ τὰ ὑλικά ἀγαθὰ τούτης τῆς ζωῆς, ἀλλά γιὰ τὴν πολύτιμη ψυχὴ τους, ποὺ γνωρίζανε πὼς δὲ θὰ πεθάνει μαζί μὲ τὸ κορμὶ, ἀλλά θὰ ζήσει αἰώνια. Ἀκούγανε καὶ πιστεύανε ἀτρέπταχα τὰ λόγια τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποὺ εἶπε: «*Μὴ φοβηθῆτε ἐκεῖνον ποὺ σκοτώνει τὸ σῶμα, καὶ ποὺ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ κάνει τίποτα παραπάνω. Ἀλλά*

*νὰ φοβηθεῖτε ἐκεῖνον ποὺ μπορεῖ νὰ θανατώσει καὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴ.*»

Ἡ ἐλευθερία, ποὺ γι' αὐτὴ θυσιαζόντανε, δὲν ἦτανε κάποια ἀκαθόριστη θεότητα, ἀλλά ἦτανε ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστὸς, ποὺ γι' αὐτὸν εἶπε ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος: «*Ὅπου τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Κυρίου, ἐκεῖ εἶναι κ' ἡ ἐλευθερία.*». Κι ἄλλοῦ λέγει: «*Σταθεῖτε στερεὰ στὴν ἐλευθερία ποὺ σὰς χάρισε ὁ Χριστὸς, σταθεῖτε καὶ μὴν πέσετε πάλι στὸ ζυγὸ τῆς δουλείας. Γιατὶ γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία σας κάλεσε. Ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία μὴν τὴν παίρνετε μονάχα σὰν ἀφορμὴ γιὰ τὴ σάρκα σας.*»



**Ὅ**σοι ἀπομείναμε πιστοὶ στὴν παράδοση, ὅσοι δὲν ἀρνηθήκαμε τὸ γάλα ποὺ βυζάξαμε, ἀγωνιζόμαστε, ἄλλος ἐδῶ, ἄλλος ἐκεῖ, καταπάνω στὴν ψευτιά. Καταπάνω σ' αὐτοὺς ποὺ θέλουνε τὴν Ἑλλάδα ἓνα κουφάρι χωρὶς ψυχὴ, ἓνα λουλουδι χωρὶς μυρουδιά. Κουράγιο, ὁ καιρὸς θὰ δεῖξει ποῖος ἔχει δίκιο, ἂν καὶ δὲ χρειάζεται ὀλότελα αὐτὴ ἡ ἀπόδειξη.

Φώτης Κόντογλου (+1965)



**Γ**έροντα, βλέποντας κανεὶς τὶς ἐφημερίδες, τὶς εἰδήσεις, τὸ τί συμβαίνει στὴ γειτονιά μας, στὸν κόσμον ὀλόκληρο, διαπιστώνει ὅτι εἶναι διάχυτος ὁ πόνος. Ὁ πόλεμος, ἡ ἀρρώστια, ὁ καρκίνος, οἱ δοκιμασίες. Γιατί τὰ ἐπιτρέπει ὁ Θεὸς τῆς Ἀγάπης αὐτά;

—Νὰ ξέρετε ὅτι ὁ καλὸς Θεὸς δὲν θέλει νὰ ἐκδικηθεῖ κανέναν. Ὁ Θεὸς δὲν θέλει νὰ γίνεῖ δῆμιος μὲ κανέναν. Ὁ Θεὸς πολλὲς φορὲς συλλαμβάνει καὶ παίρνει τὴν ἀσθένεια τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τὸν βοηθᾷ νὰ ἔρθει πιὸ κοντὰ του. Νὰ μαλακώσει ἡ καρδιά του. Θυμᾶμαι τὸν Γερο-Παῖσιο ποὺ ἔλεγε: «*Πολλὲς φορὲς οἱ δοκιμασίες εἶναι ὅπως τὴ λάσπη καὶ τὸ κερί. Ὅταν ὁ ἥλιος δώσει πάνω στὴ λάσπη, ἡ λάσπη γίνεται πιὸ σκληρὴ. Ὅταν ὁ ἥλιος δώσει εἰς τὸ κερί, τὸ κερί λιώνει. Δὲν γίνεται σκληρό.*» Ἐξαργάται ὁ ἄνθρωπος σὲ ποιὰν ὁμάδα εἶναι καὶ πὼς φτιάχνει τὴ ζωὴ του γιὰ νὰ μπορέσει ἢ δοκιμασία νὰ μὴν τὸν σκληρύνει, ἀλλά νὰ τὸ μαλακώσει, νὰ τὸν ταπεινώσει. Νὰ τὸν φέρει πιὸ κοντὰ στὸν Θεὸ καὶ νὰ καταλάβει τὶς δοκιμασίες, ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἔχει ὀρισμένες δυνατότητες καὶ μόνο. Βλέπετε ἓνας ἄνθρωπος, μιὰ στάλα αἵματος νὰ μπεῖ στὸ μυαλό του, ἀχρηστεύτηκε ὁ ἄνθρωπος.

Γέρων Ἐφραίμ Βατοπαιδινὸς  
Καθηγούμενος Ι.Μ.Μ.Βατοπαιδίου Ἁγίου Ὁρους



## Τὸ Ἅγιον Φῶς Μαρτυρεῖ τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία

*Συνοπτικὴ Παρουσίαση ἀπὸ τὶς ἱστοσελίδες τῆς «Ρομφαίας».*

Συμβολίζει, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀποδεικνύει περιτρανῶς τὸ Μέγα Μυστήριον τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν Ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Κυρίου μας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Μᾶς γεμίζει αἰσθήματα πνευματικῆς, ψυχικῆς καὶ θρησκευτικῆς ἀνατάσεως. Αἱ καρδίαι ὄλων χτυποῦν ἀπὸ πίστιν, θαυμασιμὸν καὶ ἐλπίδα διὰ τὸ Μέγα μυστήριον τῆς Ζωῆς. Πρόκειται διὰ ἀληθινὸν θαῦμα, τὸ ὁποῖον δὲν χωρᾶ καμὴν ἀμφισβήτησιν.

Ἀπὸ τὸ πρῶτὸ τοῦ Μεγάλου Σαββάτου χιλιάδες πιστοὶ τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ προσκυνηταὶ ἀπὸ ὅλα τὰ μέρη τοῦ κόσμου κατακλύζουσι τὸν Ναὸν τῆς Ἀναστάσεως διὰ νὰ παρακολουθήσουν τὴν Τελετὴν τοῦ Ἁγίου Φωτός.

Τὴν 12<sup>ην</sup> μεσημβρινὴν ὁ Ὁρθόδοξος Πατριάρχης τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων συνοδεῖα Ἀρχιερέων καὶ ἄλλων Κληρικῶν φθάνει εἰς τὸ Πατριαρχεῖον. Εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Βῆμα τοῦ Καθολικοῦ καὶ οἱ ἑτεροδόξοι παίρνουν τὴν ἄδειαν διὰ νὰ λάβουν μέρος εἰς τὴν Τελετὴν. Κατόπιν οἱ Ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ Κληρικοὶ ντύνονται μὲ ἄμφια καὶ ὁ Πατριάρχης μὲ τὴν πλήρη Ἀρχιερατικὴν στολὴν. Ὁ Πατριάρχης ἠγεῖται τῆς πομπῆς, ἡ ὁποία ξεκινᾶ ἀπὸ τὸ Ἅγιον Βῆμα τοῦ Καθολικοῦ καὶ βαδίζει τρεῖς φορὰς πέριξ τοῦ ἱεροῦ Κουβουκλίου ὑπὸ τῶν ἤχων τῶν ψαλμωδῶν, οἱ ὁποῖοι ψάλλουν τὸ «Τὴν Ἀνάστασίν σου Χριστέ Σωτήρ...»

Εἶναι ἀναγκαῖον νὰ τονίσουμε ὅτι οἱ ἑτεροδόξοι ἔχουν προκαταβολικῶς ἐρευνήσει ὅλον τὸ ἐσωτερικὸν τοῦ ἱεροῦ Κουβουκλίου, διὰ νὰ πιστοποιήσουν... ὅτι δὲν ὑπάρχει ἀναμμένον κανδήλιον ἢ ἄλλη πηγὴ φωτός. Μετὰ τὴν λιτανεῖαν ὁ Πατριάρχης ἵσταται ἔμπροσθεν τῆς θύρας τοῦ Ἁγίου Κουβουκλίου, ἀφαιρεῖ τὰ ἄμφια καὶ περιμένει μὲ τὸ στοιχάρι, πετραχήλι καὶ τὴν ζώνην. Οἱ ἑτεροδόξοι κάνουν ἔρευνα διὰ νὰ βεβαιωθοῦν ὅτι ἐπάνω του δὲν ἔχει κάτι, τὸ ὁποῖον θὰ ἠδύνατο νὰ δημιουργήσῃ ὑπονοίας, ἢ νὰ κινήσῃ ὑποψίας. Ὅταν ὀλοκληρωθῇ ἡ ἔρευνα, οἱ φύλακες ἀφαιροῦν τὰς σφραγίδας ἀπὸ τὴν θύραν καὶ ὁ Πατριάρχης εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὸ Ἱερὸν Κουβούκλιον μὲ δυὸ δεσμίδας ἐσβησμένα κεριά. Μαζί του εἰσέρχονται εἰς τὸν προθάλαμον ὁ Ἀρμένιος Πατριάρχης καὶ ὁ Δραγομάνος, οἵτινες παραμένουν εἰς τὸν προθάλαμον. Εἰς ὅλον τὸν Ναὸν ἐπικρατεῖ συγκίνησις καὶ ἀγωνία.

Ὁ Πατριάρχης γονατιστὸς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ Ἁγίου Τάφου τοῦ Χριστοῦ προσεύχεται πρὸς τὸν Σταυρωθέντα, κρατῶν δυὸ σβηστὰς λαμπάδας καὶ μὲ ταπεινώσιν καὶ εὐλάβειαν ἀναπέμπων τὴν ἀκόλουθην εὐχήν:

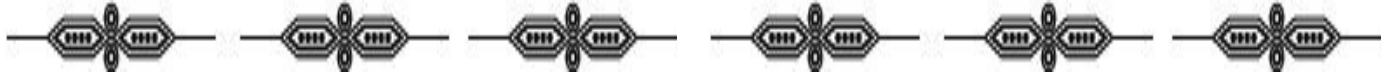
«Δέσποτα Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, ἡ ἀρχίφωτος σοφία τοῦ ἀνάρχου Πατρός. Ὁ φῶς οἰκῶν ἀπρόσιτον, ὁ εἰπὼν ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμπαι, ὁ εἰπὼν γεννηθῆτω

φῶς καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς. Κύριε, ὁ τοῦ φωτὸς χορηγός, ὁ ἐξαγαγὼν ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ σκότους τῆς πλάνης καὶ εἰσαγαγὼν εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν φῶς τῆς σῆς ἐπιγνώσεως, ὁ τὴν γῆν μὲν πᾶσαν διὰ τῆς ἐν αὐτῇ ἐνσάρκου παρουσίας σου, τὰ καταχθόνια δὲ διὰ τῆς εἰς Ἄδην καταβάσεώς σου φωτὸς πληρώσας καὶ χαρᾶς, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα διὰ τῶν ἁγίων σου Ἀποστόλων φῶς καταγγείλας πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. Εὐχαριστοῦμεν σοί, ὅτι διὰ τῆς εὐσεβοῦς πίστεως μετήγαγες ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ σκότους εἰς φῶς καὶ γεγόναμεν υἱοὶ διὰ τοῦ ἁγίου βαπτίσματος, θεασάμενοι τὴν δόξαν σου πλήρη οὐσαν χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας. ἀλλ' ὃ φωτοπάροχε Κύριε, ὁ τὸ μέγα φῶς ὢν, ὁ εἰπὼν, ὁ λαὸς ὁ καθήμενος ἐν σκότει. Δέσποτα Κύριε, τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον. Τὸ μόνο φῶς τοῦ κόσμου καὶ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οὗ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης ἐπληρώθη τὰ σύμπαντα, ὅτι φῶς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐλήλυθας διὰ τῆς ἐνσάρκου σου οἰκονομίας, εἰ καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἠγάπησαν μᾶλλον τὸ σκότος ἢ τὸ φῶς. Σὺ Κύριε φωτοδότα, ἐπάκουσον ἡμῶν τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν καὶ ἀναξίων δούλων σου τῶν τῆ ὥρα ταύτῃ παρισταμένων τῷ παναγίῳ σου καὶ φωτοφόρῳ τούτῳ τάφῳ καὶ πρόσδεξαι ἡμᾶς τιμώντας τὰ ἄχραντα πάθη σου, τὴν παναγίαν σου σταύρωσιν, τὸν ἐκούσιον θάνατον καὶ τὴν ἐν τῷ πανσεβάσῳ τούτῳ μνήματι τοῦ τεθεωμένου σου σώματος κατάθεσιν καὶ ταφήν καὶ τριήμερον ἐξανάστασιν, ἣν χαρμονικῶς ἤδη ἀρξάμενοι ἐορτάζεις, μνεῖαν ποιούμεθα καὶ τῆς ἐν Ἄδου καθόδου σου, δι' ἣς τὰς ἐκεῖσε τῶν δικαίων κατεχομένης ψυχᾶς δεσποτικῶς ἠλευθέρωσας τῇ ἀστραπῇ τῆς σῆς θεότητος φωτὸς πληρώσας τὰ καταχθόνια. Ὅθεν δὴ ἀγαλλομένη καρδίᾳ καὶ χαρᾷ πνευματικῇ κατὰ τοῦτο τὸ ὑπερευλογημένον Σάββατον τὸ ἐν γῆ καὶ ὑπὸ γῆν θεοπρεπῶς τελεσθέντα σοὶ σωτηριωδέστατα μυστήρια σου ἐορτάζοντες καὶ σὲ τὸ ὄντως ἰλαρὸν καὶ ἐφετὸν φῶς ἐν τοῖς καταχθονίοις θεϊκῶς ἐπιλάμψαν ἀναμνησκόμενοι, φωτοφάνειαν ποιούμεθα, σοὺ τὴν πρὸς ἡμᾶς συμπαθῶς γενομένην θεοφανείαν, εἰκονίζοντες. Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τῇ σωτηρίῳ καὶ φωταυγείᾳ νυκτὶ πάντα πεπλήρωται φωτὸς οὐρανὸς τὸ καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ καταχθόνια διὰ τὸ ὑπερφυεῖς μυστήριον τῆς ἐν Ἄδου καθόδου σου καὶ τῆς ἐκ Τάφου σου τριήμερου ἀναστάσεως. Διὰ τοῦτο, ἐκ τοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦτον τὸν φωτοφόρον σου Τάφον εὐλαβῶς λαμβάνοντες, διαδίδομεν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς σὲ τὸ ἀληθινὸν φῶς καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν καὶ δεόμεθα σου, Πανάγιε Δέσποτα, ὅπως ἀναδείξῃς αὐτὸ ἀγιασμοῦ δῶρον καὶ πάσης θεϊκῆς σου χάριτος πεπληρωμένον, διὰ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Παναγίου καὶ φωτοφόρου Τάφου σου. Καὶ τοὺς ἀπτομένους εὐλαβῶς αὐτοῦ εὐλογήσης καὶ ἀγίασης, τοῦ σκότους τῶν παθῶν ἐλευθεριῶν καὶ τῶν φωτεινοτάτων σου σκηνῶν καταξιώσης, ὅπου φῶς τὸ

ἀνέσπερόν της σῆς θεότητος λάμπει. Χάρισαι αὐτοῖς, Κύριε, ὑγίαν καὶ εὐζωίαν καὶ τοὺς οἴκους αὐτῶν παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ πλήρωσον.

Ναί, Δέσποτα φωτοπάροχε, ἐπάκουσόν μου τοῦ ἁμαρτωλοῦ ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ ταύτῃ καὶ δὸς ἡμῖν τέ καὶ αὐτοῖς περιπατεῖν ἐν τῷ φωτί σου καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν, ἕως τὸ φῶς τῆς προσκαιροῦ ζωῆς ταύτης ἔχωμεν. Δὸς ἡμῖν Κύριε, ἵνα τὸ φῶς τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἡμῶν λάμπῃ ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ δοξάζωσι σὲ σὺν τῷ ἀνάρχῳ σου Πατρὶ καὶ τῷ Παναγίῳ Πνεύματι. Εἰς φῶς γὰρ ἔθνῶν ἡμᾶς τέθηκας, ἵνα αὐτοῖς τῇ σκοτία περιπατοῦσι φαίνωμεν. Ἄλλ' ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήσαμεν τὸ σκότος μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ φῶς, φαῦλα πράσσοντες. Πᾶς γὰρ ὁ φαῦλα πράσων μισεῖ τὸ φῶς κατὰ τὸν ἀψευδῆ λόγον σου. Διὰ τοῦτο ὀσημέραι προσκόπτομεν ἁμαρτάνοντες, ἐπειδὴ περιπατοῦμεν ἐν τῇ σκοτία. Ἄλλ' ἀξίωσον ἡμᾶς τὸ ὑπόλοιπόν τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν βιωτεῦσαι πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς διανοίας ἡμῶν. Δὸς ἡμῖν, ἵνα ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατήσωμεν ἐν τῷ φωτί τῶν ἐντολῶν σου. Τὸ τοῦ ἁγίου βαπτίσματος φωτεινὸν ἔνδυμα, ὅπερ διὰ τῶν ἔργων ἡμαυρώσαμεν, λεύκανον, ὡς τὸ φῶς, ὁ ἀναβαλλόμενος τὸ φῶς ὡσπερ ἱμάτιον. Δὸς ἡμῖν ἐνδύσασθαι τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα δι' αὐτῶν τὸν ἄρχοντα τοῦ σκότους τροποῦμεθα, ὃς μετασχηματίζεται εἰς ἄγγελον φωτός. Ναί, Κύριε, καὶ ὡς ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιά θανάτου καθημένοις φῶς ἔλαμψας οὕτω σήμερον λάμψον ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν τὸ σὸν ἀκήρατον φῶς ἵνα τούτου φωτιζόμενοι καὶ θερμαινόμενοι ἐν τῇ πίστει, δοξάζωμεν Σὲ τὸ μόνον ἐκ μόνου τοῦ ἀρχιφώτου φωτός, ἰλαρὸν φῶς εἰς τοὺς ἀτελευτήτους αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν».

Μετὰ τὸ πέρας τῆς εὐχῆς τοποθετεῖ τὸ βαμβάκιον εἰς τὸν Πανάγιον Τάφον καὶ μεθ' αὐτοῦ θανασιὸν τρόπον ἀνάβει. Μετὰ αὐτὸ ἀνάβει τὰ κεριὰ καὶ ἐξέρχεται ἀπὸ τὸ Ἱερὸν Κουβούκλιον. Τὸ σπουδαῖον εἶναι ὅτι τὸ ἅγιον φῶς διὰ ὀλίγα λεπτὰ δὲν ἔχει πυράδα. Δηλαδή ἐὰν εἰς ἀκουμπήσῃ τὸ ἅγιον φῶς εἰς τὰ χέρια του δὲν θὰ καῖ. Πραγματικῶς εἶναι ἐν ἐκ τῶν μεγαλυτέρων Θαυμάτων τῆς Χριστιανοσύνης, τὸ ὁποῖον ἐπαναλαμβάνεται κάθε χρόνον τὸ Μέγα Σάββατον.



Ὅποιος κυνηγάει τὸν πλοῦτο, ἔχει πάντοτε ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ χρήματα. Ὅποιος ἀδιαφορεῖ γιὰ τὸν πλοῦτο, εἶναι πάντοτε πλούσιος. Γιατὶ ἀληθινὸς πλοῦτος δὲν εἶναι τὸ νὰ πλουτίζεις, ἀλλὰ τὸ νὰ μὴ θέλεις νὰ πλουτίζεις. Καὶ νὰ τί ἐννοῶ: Ὑπάρχει πλούσιος ποὺ ἀπ' ὅλους ἀρπάζει, καὶ ὑπάρχει πλούσιος ποὺ σ' ὅλους δίνει. Ὁ ἕνας πλουτίζει μετὰ τὸ νὰ συνάξει, ὁ ἄλλος μετὰ τὸ νὰ προσφέρει. Ὁ πρῶτος σπέρνει στὴ γῆ, ὁ δεῦτερος στὸν οὐρανό. Καὶ ὅσο καλύτερος εἶναι ὁ οὐρανὸς ἀπὸ τῆ γῆ, τόσο καὶ ἡ εὐφορία του εἶναι μεγαλύτερη ἀπὸ τὴν εὐφορία τῆς γῆς. Γι' αὐτὸ ὁ Κύριος μᾶς παραγγέλλει: «Μὴ μαζεύετε θησαυροὺς πάνω στὴ γῆ. Νὰ μαζεύετε θησαυροὺς στὸν οὐρανό». Πουλήστε τὰ ὑπάρχοντά σας καὶ δώστε τὰ χρήματα στοὺς φτωχοὺς. Ἀποκτήστε πορτοφόλια ποὺ δὲν παλιώνουν, πλούτη μόνιμα στὸν κόσμον τοῦ Θεοῦ.

## Ἡ Ἀποδοχὴ μετὰ Εὐχαριστίᾳ τοῦ Θελήματος τοῦ Θεοῦ

*Ἐαυτοὺς καὶ ἀλλήλους καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ παραθώμεθα.*

Στὸ βιβλίον τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου Μαξίμοβιτς ὑπάρχει ἕνας διάλογος ἐνὸς ζητιάνου μετὰ ἕνα διασημὸν θεολόγον. Ὁ θεολόγος ἐπὶ ὀκτὼ ἔτη ἀκατάπαυστα παρακαλοῦσε τὸ Θεὸ νὰ τοῦ φανερώσῃ κάποιον ἀνθρώπον, ποῦ θὰ μπορούσε νὰ τοῦ δείξῃ τὸν πιὸ σίγουρον δρόμον γιὰ τὴ Βασιλείαν τῶν Οὐρανῶν. Κάποια μέρα ποῦ ἔφθασε στὸ ἀποκορύφωμα τῆς προσευχῆς ἄκουσε μιὰ φωνή:

—Πήγαινε καὶ στὴν ἔξοδο τῆς Ἐκκλησίας θὰ βρεῖς τὸν ἀνθρώπον ποῦ ζητᾷς.

Πηγαίνει βιαστικὰ στὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, ὅπου βρίσκει ἕνα γέροντα ζητιάνον μετὰ κουρελιασμένα ῥούχα καὶ πληγωμένα γόνατα καὶ τὸν χαιρετᾷ:

—Καλὸ καὶ εὐτυχισμένο πρωῖνό, γέροντα.

—Ποτὲ δὲν εἶχα κακὸ καὶ δυστυχισμένο πρωῖνό.

Ὁ ἄλλος ἐν ἀμηχανίᾳ διορθώνει:

—Εἶθε νὰ σοῦ στείλῃ ὁ Θεὸς κάθε ἀγαθό!

—Οὐδέποτε μοῦ ἐστάλη κάτι μὴ ἀγαθό!

Ὁ θεολόγος παραξενεύεται καὶ τοῦ λέει:

—Τί συμβαίνει μετὰ σένα, γέροντα; Ἐγὼ σοῦ εὐχομαι κάθε εὐτυχία.

—Μὰ ποτὲ δὲν εἶμαι δυστυχής. Ζῶ σύμφωνα μετὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Γιὰ τὸ ζυγὸ ποῦ μοῦ ἔδωσε ὁ Θεός ποτὲ δὲν δυσανασχέτησα καὶ εἶμαι πάντοτε εὐχαριστημένος.

—Ἀπὸ ποῦ ἦλθες ἐσύ, γέροντα, ἔδω;

—Ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό.

—Καὶ ποῦ τὸν βρήκες;

—Ἐκεῖ ποῦ τὸν ἄφησα, στὴν ἀγαθὴ θέληση.

—Ποιὸς εἶσαι, γέροντα, καὶ σὲ ποῖα τάξη ἀνηκεῖς;

—Ὅποιος κι ἂν εἶμαι, εἶμαι ἱκανοποιημένος μετὰ τὴν καταστάσή μου, γιατί βασιλεὺς εἶναι αὐτὸς ποῦ κυβερνᾷ καὶ διευθύνει τὸν ἑαυτό του.

Ὁ θεολόγος ἀποδέχθηκε τελικὰ πῶς ὁ δρόμος τοῦ ζητιάνου ἦταν ὁ μόνος σίγουρος γιὰ τὸν Οὐρανό, δηλ. ἡ τελεία παραδοσὴ στὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ.



## Ἀτενίζοντας τὸν Ἰησοῦ ἐν Σιωπῇ

Ἀπὸ τὸν Παναγιώτη Σημάτη, Ἐφημερίδα «ΕΡΕΥΝΑ» Αἰγίου, 27 Ἀπριλίου 2005.

Κάθε χρόνο, ὅταν φτάνει ἡ Μεγάλη Ἑβδομάδα, ὁ πιστὸς προσκαλεῖται γιὰ μία ἐπανατοποθέτηση τῆς ζωῆς του μπρὸς στὸ μυστήριο τοῦ πάθους τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Ὁ Χριστὸς μᾶς ἀτενίζει καθηλωμένος ἐκεῖ στὰ μεσοῦρανα, στὸ Σταυρὸ Του, προσκαλώντας μας καὶ προκαλώντας ταυτόχρονα πιστοὺς καὶ λιγότερο πιστοὺς. Καὶ ποιὸς ἄραγε θὰ μπορούσε νὰ διαβεβαιώσει ὅτι προσπέρασε τὸ Σταυρὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὸ αἰώνιο αὐτὸ σκάνδαλο τῆς λογικῆς ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀγγέλων, χωρὶς κλυδωνισμοὺς ἀμφιβολιῶν, χωρὶς κραδασμοὺς στὸ ἐπίπεδο τῶν αὐτονόητων ἐνδοκοσμικῶν βεβαιότητων;

Φέτος ἰδιαίτερα, καὶ ἐνῶ ἀκόμη εἶναι νωπὲς οἱ ἐντυπώσεις ἀπὸ τὰ σκάνδαλα ποὺ ἤρθαν, καὶ ἀπ' αὐτὰ ποὺ θὰ ἔρθουν, θὰ ἀντικρίσουμε καὶ πάλι τὸ Χριστό. Ἴσως φέτος νὰ φαντάζει περισσότερο μόνος. Δεμένος σὰν κακοῦργος, περιτριγυρισμένος καὶ λοιδορούμενος ἀπὸ τὸν ὄγλο καὶ τὸ ἀρχοντολόγι τῆς πολιτικῆς καὶ ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ «καιροῦ ἐκείνου»· μὲ τοὺς μαθητὲς Του ἀποσυναρμολογημένους, διασκορπισμένους καὶ ἀνήμερους νὰ τοῦ προσφέρουν κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἄρνηση τοῦ Πέτρου.

Κι Αὐτὸς σιωπηλός, νὰ ἀτενίζει ὅλους, ὅπως τότε τὸν Πέτρο πρὶν λαλήσει ὁ πετεινός, καὶ νὰ ἀναμοχλεύει μέσα μας ὅλες τὶς ἀρνήσεις κι ὅλες τὶς προδοσίες στὸ πρόσωπό Του, ὅλα τὰ πάθη κι ὅλες τὶς πληγές.

Νὰ μᾶς κοιτᾷ μὲ μίαν ἀπέραντα μεγαλόπρεπη Σιωπὴ—ὄση κι ἡ ἀγάπη Του—ποὺ θεραπεύει τὴν κούφια καὶ ὑβριστικὴ πολυλογία τῶν «ἐκπροσώπων» Του, κάθε μεγαλόστομη καὶ ὑπερφίαλη καπηλεία τῆς Σιωπῆς καὶ τοῦ Πάθους. Μία ἁγιασμένη, πονεμένη Σιωπὴ γιὰ τοὺς πόνους καὶ τὶς ἀποτυχίες τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὅλων τῶν αἰώνων, μυστικὴ φωνὴ στὰ μύχια τῆς ψυχῆς μας. Μία μεγαλειώδης, εὐγλωττη, κατανυκτικὴ Σιωπὴ Ἀγάπης.

«Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐσιώπα». Στὸν πόνο καὶ στὸν θρίαμβο. Καὶ ὅταν ἔκανε τὰ θαύματα, καὶ ὅταν δεχόταν τὰ

ραπίσματα. Καὶ ὅταν εἰσέρχεται θριαμβευτικὰ στὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα «μετὰ βαΐων καὶ κλάδων», καὶ ὅταν ἐρωτᾶται ἀπὸ τὸν ἀρχιερέα Καϊάφα, τὸν Πιλάτο, τὸν βασιλιὰ Ἡρώδη: «Οὐδὲν ἀποκρίνη; οὐκ ἀκούεις πόσα σου καταμαρτυροῦσιν; Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐσιώπα».

Σιωπᾷ ὅταν ὁ ὄγλος καὶ οἱ στρατιῶτες τὸν χλευάζουν, ὅταν τὸν προκαλοῦν λέγοντας: «Σῶσον σεαυτὸν εἰ Υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ Θεοῦ». Ὅταν καταφέρουν στὸ ἅγιο πρόσωπό Του ραπίσματα καὶ μὲ σαρκαστικὴ εἰρωνεία τὸν ἐξωθοῦν νὰ «προφητεῦσει» ποιὸς τὸν ράπισε. Ἀνταποδίδει στὴν παράλογη πρόκληση τῆς ἀνθρώπινης κακότητος τὴν πορφυρὰ Σιωπὴ τῶν σταυρωμένων Του χεριῶν, τὴ ματωμένη καρδιά τῆς Ἀγάπης.

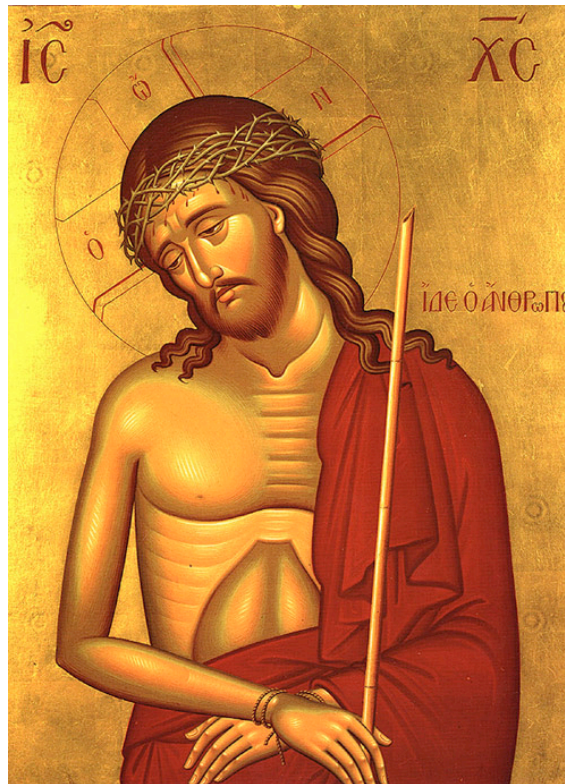
Σιωπᾷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς μπροστὰ στὴν μισαλλοδοξία ἐχθρῶν, στὴν ἀλαζονεία καὶ τὴν ὑποκρισία τῶν «φίλων», γιὰτί οἱ λέξεις δὲν μποροῦν νὰ ποῦν τίποτα περισσότερο ἀπ' ὅσα πολυσήμαντα μαρτυροῦν τὰ πάθη, ὁ Σταυρὸς καὶ ἡ Ἀνάστασή Του.

Ἡ Σιωπὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἶναι διακριτικὴ συνομιλία, ἓνας ἀένας διάλογος ἀγάπης μὲ τὶς ψυχές, ὅταν τὰ λόγια καθίστανται ἀνήμερα νὰ διασπᾶσουν τὰ τεῖχη τοῦ ὀρθολογισμοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀμφιβολίας ποὺ ἔχουν ἐρημητικὰ σφραγίσει τὰ «ῶτα» μας. Ὅταν τὰ πάθη ἔχουν ἀλλοιώσει τὴν «λογικὴ» ψυχὴ μας καὶ τὴν ἔχουν παραδώσει στὸ παράλογό της τυχειότητος, τὸ χαοτικὸ ἐνήδονο κυνήγι τῆς ὁδύνης.

Συνομιλεῖ καὶ τότε «ἐν τῇ σιωπῇ» ὁ Χριστὸς μαζί μας, γιὰτί ὁ ἄνθρωπος ποτὲ δὲν παύει νὰ εἶναι Εἰκόνα τοῦ

Θεοῦ, ποτὲ δὲν χάνει τὴν ικανότητα νὰ διαισθάνεται, νὰ ξέρει, νὰ «καταλαβαίνει πολὺ περισσότερα πράγματα ἀπ' ὅσα μπορεῖ νὰ ἐκφράσει», ἀπ' αὐτὰ ποὺ μπορεῖ νὰ ἀκούσει. Ὁ Σιωπῶν Χριστὸς τοῦ Πάθους, μᾶς ἔχει ἐξασφαλίσει τὸ προνόμιο, ὥστε «νῦν καὶ αἰεὶ» νὰ μπορούμε νὰ ψιθυρίζουμε τὸ «μνήσθητί μου, Κύριε» του ληστοῦ, ἀκόμα καὶ πάνω στὸ σταυρὸ τῆς πιδὸ μεγάλης ντροπῆς, τῆς πιδὸ μεγάλης ἀπελπισίας.

Ὁ Χριστὸς τῆς Σιωπῆς, εἶναι ὁ Χριστὸς τῆς ἀγάπης, ὁ Χριστὸς τῆς ἀναμονῆς, δηλαδὴ ὁ Χριστὸς τῆς ἐλευθερίας: κανένα δὲν ἐξαναγκάζει, μὰ ἀγαπᾷ, σιωπᾷ καὶ περιμένει τὴν μετάνοιά μας. Ἡ σιωπὴ εἶναι ὁ ἐσχατολογικὸς τρόπος μὲ τὸν ὁποῖον μιλεῖ



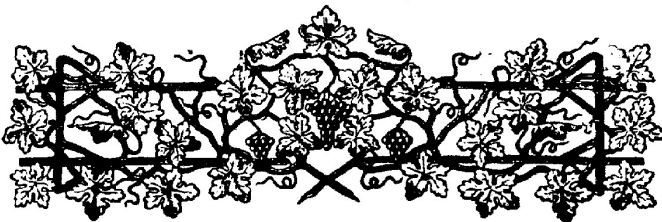
καὶ πράττει ὁ Θεός... Ὅποιος ἀγαπᾷ δὲν φλυαρεῖ...μὰ ὑποφέρει καὶ ὑπομένει.

Ἡ Σιωπὴ τοῦ Λόγου! Τὰ λόγια εἶναι τὰ ἐργαλεῖα τῆς χρονικότητος. Ἡ κατανόηση τῆς οὐσίας τῶν λόγων εἰσάγει στὴν αἰωνιότητα τοῦ ὑπέρ-λόγου, ἐκεῖ ὅπου τὰ λόγια εἶναι περιττά. **Ἡ σιωπὴ εἶναι ἡ γλῶσσα τῆς Βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ.** «*Ἡ σιωπὴ μυστήριόν ἐστι τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ μέλλοντος οἱ δὲ λόγοι ὄργανόν ἐστι τούτου τοῦ κόσμου.*» (Ἰσαὰκ ὁ Σύρος).

Ἡ Σιωπὴ τοῦ Λόγου λογοποιεῖ τὴν παράλογη λογικὴ του πεπτωκότος ἀνθρώπου. Σιωπηλὰ ἀνασκάπτει τὶς καρδιές, ἀποκόπτει τὰ καρκινώματα τοῦ ἄλογου ἐγωῖσμοῦ, δένει τὰ τραύματα, ζωντανεύει τὴν ἐρειπωμένη πίστη, ἐτοιμάζει τὴν ἐξανάσταση.

Μέσα στὴν σιωπὴ συντελεῖται ἡ θεανθρώπινη συνάντηση. «*Ἰδού, ὁ Νυμφίος ἔρχεται ἐν τῷ μέσῳ τῆς νυκτός.*» Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖ, στὴ σιγὴ τῆς ἡσυχίας, «*τῶν ὑπερφυῶν γένεται ἀγαθῶν καὶ ὑπερκοσμίων ἀπολαύει καλῶν, καὶ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀγάπης καθίσταται χώρημα καὶ οὕτω ἐρωτοληπτεῖται καὶ χαίρει καὶ εὐθυμεῖ.*» (Ἄγ. Κάλλιστος). «*Ὁ φίλος τῆς σιωπῆς προσεγγίζει τὸν Θεὸ καὶ συνομιλῶντας μυστικὰ μαζί Του, φωτίζεται ἀπ' Αὐτόν.*» (Ἰωάννης Κλίμακος).

Ὅσοι αὐτὴ τὴν Μεγάλην Ἑβδομάδα κατορθώσουμε —ἀτενίζοντες τὸν Ἰησοῦ—ν' ἀφουγκραστοῦμε ταπεινὰ τὴ πολυφθογγὴ Σιωπὴ Του, ἀποφασίσουμε «ἐν μετανοίᾳ» νὰ ἐναποθέσουμε στὰ χέρια Του τὴν ζωὴ μας καὶ μποῦμε στὴ σιωπὴ τοῦ «ὄλβιου» τάφου, θὰ μᾶς χαρίσει ἄλλη μία φορὰ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου Του τὴν «ἐκ νεκρῶν Ἀνάσταση».



## Οἱ Συνέπειες τῆς Μαγείας

Γέρων Κλεόπας, «Γεροντικό Ρουμάνων Πατέρων Ἐκδόσεις», Ὁρθόδοξος Κυψέλη.



Ὅσοι ἀσχολοῦνται μὲ τὰ μάγια ἢ τρέχουν στὶς μαγεῖες, διαπράττουν μεγάλη ἁμαρτία ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἐναντίον τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, διότι ἀφήνουν τὸ Θεὸ καὶ ζητοῦν βοήθεια ἀπὸ τὸ διαβολο.

Ἀρνοῦνται τὶς προσευχὲς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ μπαίνουν στὰ σπίτια τῶν μάγων. Ἐγκαταλείπουν

τοὺς λειτουργοὺς τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ πηγαίνουν στοὺς ὑπηρέτες τοῦ σατανᾶ. Δηλαδή, ἀφήνουν τὸ ζῶν ὕδωρ, τὸν ἱερέα καὶ τὴ σωτηρία χάρι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ γιὰ τὰ ἐμπαθῆ καὶ ἀνθρώπινα ἐνδιαφέροντά τους ζητοῦν τὴ συμπαράσταση τῶν μάγων, ποὺ εἶναι ἐχθροὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἀρνοῦνται τὴν ἀλήθεια καὶ δέχονται τὸ ψεῦδος, διότι ὅλα τὰ μαγικά λόγια καὶ ἐπικλήσεις εἶναι ψεύδη καὶ δαιμονικὲς ἀπάτες.

Μία τέτοια μεγάλη ἁμαρτία δὲ συγχωρεῖται στοὺς ἐνόχους οὔτε στὸν παρόντα αἰῶνα οὔτε στὸ μέλλοντα, ὅπως λέγει ὁ Χριστός, ἐὰν δὲν μετανοήσουν σ' ὅλη τους τὴ ζωὴ. Ἐναντίον αὐτῶν τῶν μάγων ξεσποῦν κάθε εἶδους κακίες καὶ κίνδυνοι. Πρῶτα πρῶτα τοὺς ἐλέγχει ἡ συνείδηση, διότι ἄφησαν τὸ Θεὸ καὶ ἀκολούθησαν τὸ διαβολο.

Κατόπιν κανονίζονται νὰ ἀπέχουν ἀπὸ τῆς Θεῆς Κοινωνίας πολλὰ ἔτη, ἀπὸ 7 ἕως 15, καὶ ἀκόμη μέχρι 20. Ἐκτὸς ἐὰν τοὺς οἰκονομήσει διαφορετικὰ ὁ πνευματικὸς, ἀνάλογα μὲ τὴν εἰλικρίνεια τῆς μετανοίας τους. Αὐτοὶ ποὺ τρέχουν στοὺς μάγους, ἀποβάλλουν ἀπὸ τὴν ψυχὴ τους τὴ χάρι τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ βάζουν στὸ σπῆτι τῆς καρδίας τους τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ σατανᾶ. Ἀρνοῦνται τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ ἐνώνονται μὲ τὸ διάβολο. Ὅλοι αὐτοὶ δὲν πρέπει νὰ ὀνομάζονται Χριστιανοί, ἀλλὰ ἀποστάτες.

Τιμωροῦνται ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ μὲ ἀσθένειες, καὶ μάλιστα ἀνιάτες, μὲ οἰκογενειακὰ προβλήματα, μὲ ζημιὲς καὶ διενέξεις, μὲ πτωχεῖα καὶ φοβερὸ θάνατο. Καὶ ἐὰν δὲν ἐξομολογηθοῦν μὲ δάκρυα, δὲ θὰ σωθοῦν. Ἐνῶ ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησία ἀποβάλλονται τελείως, δηλαδή χωρίζονται ἀπὸ τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ παραδίνονται μὲ τὴ θελήσῃ τους στὰ χέρια τοῦ νοητοῦ ἐχθροῦ.

Ἐὰν πεθάνουν στὴν ἁμαρτία τους αὐτῆ, δὲν κηδεύονται ἀπὸ Ὁρθόδοξο ἱερέα, ἀλλὰ ὅπως οἱ εἰδωλολάτρες καὶ οἱ ἀρνητὲς τῆς πίστεως, ὀδηγοῦνται στὴν αἰώνια τιμωρία τους, στὰ βάσανα τῆς κολάσεως. Αὐτὲς λοιπὸν εἶναι ὁ φοβερὲς συνέπειες τῆς μαγείας.

**Να μὴ κάνεις κανένα ἔργο, χωρὶς νὰ τὸ σφραγίζεις με τὸν Τίμιο Σταυρὸ!**

Ὅταν ἀναχωρεῖς γιὰ ταξίδι, ὅταν ἀρχίζεις τὸ ἔργο σου, ὅταν πηγαίνεις νὰ διδάξεις στὸ σχολεῖο σου, ὅταν εἶσαι μόνος σου ἢ καὶ μὲ ἄλλους μαζί, σφράγισε μὲ τὸν παντοδύναμο Σταυρὸ τὸ μέτωπό σου, τὸ σῶμα σου, τὴν καρδιά σου, τὰ χεῖλη σου, τὰ μάτια σου, τὰ αὐτιά σου καὶ ὅλα τὰ μέλη σου νὰ τὰ σφραγίζεις μὲ τὸ σημεῖο τῆς νίκης τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἄδου. Καὶ τότε μὴ φοβᾶσαι ἀπὸ τὰ μαγικά ἢ τὰ ξόρκια καὶ τοὺς μάγους.

Διότι ὅλα αὐτὰ λύνονται ἀπὸ τὴ δύναμη τοῦ Σταυροῦ, ὅπως τὸ κερί λιώνει μπροστὰ στὴ φλόγα τῆς φωτιᾶς καὶ ὅπως φεύγει ἡ σκόνη στὸν ἄνεμο!



## Οἱ Δώδεκα Ἀναχωρητές

Πηγή: *Οἱ Ἀόρατοι Ἐρημίτες τοῦ Ἄθωνα, Βλασίου μοναχοῦ Ἀγιορείτου, Ἐκδόσεις ΤΕΡΤΙΟΣ.*

Ὅπωςδήποτε πολλοὶ ἐκ τῶν ἀναγνωστῶν τοῦ παρόντος πονήματος θὰ ἔχουν ἀκούσει ἢ διαβάσει ἔστω καὶ μία διηγήσιμ για τοὺς ἀόρατους ἐρημίτες τοῦ Ἄθωνα. Ἄλλοι τοὺς ὀνομάσαν «ἀοράτους ἀσκητές», ἄλλοι «γυμνοὺς ἀσκητές», ἄλλοι «μυστικὸν γέροντες», ἄλλοι πάλι «ἀφανεῖς ἀναχωρητές». Πρόκειται για ὀμάδα ἀσκητῶν, οἱ ὁποῖοι εἶναι ἑφτά, κατ' ἄλλους δώδεκα καὶ κατ' ἄλλους δέκα, οἱ ὁποῖοι διατρίβουν στὶς ἐρημικότερες περιοχὲς τῆς ἀθωνικῆς ἐρήμου, καὶ εἶναι ἀόρατοι ἀπὸ τὰ μάτια τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ἐμφανίζονται μόνο σὲ ὅποιον αὐτοὶ θέλουν, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον ἀπλὸ καὶ ἀπονήρευτο μοναχὸ ἢ καὶ σὲ εὐσεβῆ καὶ εὐλαβῆ προσκυνητῆ πὺν ἔχει καθαρὸ καὶ Χριστιανικὸ βίον.

† † †

**Δ**ώδεκα ἀναχωρητῆς ἅγιοι, σοφοὶ καὶ πνευματικοὶ ἄνθρωποι, συγκεντρώθηκαν κάποτε καὶ ζήτησαν νὰ ὀμολογήσει ὁ καθένας ὅσα κατόρθωσε στὸ κελί του καὶ ποιά ἦταν ἡ πνευματικὴ του ἄσκηση.

Ὁ πρῶτος, ὁ μεγαλύτερος στὴν ἡλικία, εἶπε:

«Ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τῆ στιγμῆ πὺν ἄρχισα νὰ ζῶ ἡσυχαστικὴ ζωὴ, σταύρωσα ὄλο τὸν ἑαυτό μου ἀπέναντι στὰ ἔξω-τερικὰ πράγματα, ἔχοντας



στὸν νοῦ μου αὐτὸ πὺν εἶναι γραμμένο: *Νὰ σπάσουμε τοὺς δεσμοὺς πὺν μᾶς συνδέουν μαζί τους καὶ νὰ ρίξουμε ἀπὸ πάνω μας τὸν ζυγὸ τους.* Ἔτσι, ἔκανα ἕνα τεῖχος ἀνάμεσα στὴν ψυχὴ μου καὶ στὰ σωματικὰ πράγματα καὶ ἀναλογίσθηκα ὅτι, ὅπως αὐτὸς πὺν εἶναι μέσα ἀπὸ τὸ τεῖχος δὲν βλέπει αὐτὸν πὺν στέκεται ἔξω, με τὸν ἴδιο τρόπο καὶ σὺ μὴ θελήσεις νὰ βλέπεις τὰ πράγματα πὺν ἔχουν σχέση με τὰ ἔξω. Ἀλλὰ νὰ ἔχεις στραμμένη τὴν προσοχὴ σου στὸν ἑαυτό σου, ἀναμένοντας κάθε μέρα με ἐλπίδα τὸν Θεό.

Ἔτσι θεωρῶ τὶς πονηρὲς ἐπιθυμίες φίδια καὶ ἀπόγονους ἀπὸ ὀχιές, καὶ ὅταν τὶς αἰσθάνομαι νὰ ξεφυτρώνουν στὸ νοῦ μου, τὶς ξηραίνω με φοβέρες καὶ ὀργή. Ἀκόμη, δὲν σταμάτησα ποτὲ νὰ τὰ βάζω με τὸ σῶμα μου καὶ με τὴν ψυχὴ μου, για νὰ μὴν ἔκτραποῦν σὲ τίποτε ἀνάρμοστο».

Ὁ δεύτερος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τότε πὺν ἀρνήθηκα τὸν κόσμον, εἶπα στὸν ἑαυτό μου: Σήμερα ἀναγεννήθηκες, σήμερα ἄρχισες νὰ

δουλεύεις στὸν Θεό, σήμερα ἄρχισες νὰ κατοικεῖς ἐδῶ σὰν ξένος. Ἔτσι κάθε μέρα νὰ αἰσθάνεσαι, σὰν ἕνας ξένος καὶ ὅτι αὔριο θὰ φύγεις».

Ὁ τρίτος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τὸ πρῶτὸ ἀνεβαίνω στὸν Κύριό μου, καὶ ἀφοῦ τὸν προσκυνήσω, πέφτω με τὸ πρόσωπο κάτω καὶ ἐξομολογοῦμαι τὰ ἁμαρτήματά μου. Ἔπειτα κατεβαίνοντας προσκυνῶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους του καὶ τοὺς παρακαλῶ νὰ ἱκετέψουν τὸν Θεὸ για μένα καὶ για ὀλόκληρη τὴν κτίσιμ. Ἀφοῦ τὸ κάνω αὐτό, κατεβαίνω στὴν ἄβυσσο καὶ ὅ,τι κάνουν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, ὅταν πηγαίνουν στὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα, πὺν σχίζουν τὰ ἐνδύματά τους καὶ κλαῖνε καὶ πενθοῦν για τὴ συμφορὰ πὺν βρῆκε τοὺς πατέρες τους, αὐτὸ κάνω κι ἐγὼ. Περιπλανιέμαι στοὺς τόπους τῆς κόλασιμ, βλέπω τὰ δικὰ μου μέλη (δηλαδὴ τοὺς ἐκεῖ ἄλλους Χριστιανούς) νὰ βασανίζονται καὶ κλαῖνε μ' αὐτοὺς

πὺν κλαῖνε».

Ὁ τέταρτος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ ἔτσι νιώθω, σὰν νὰ κάθομαι με τὸν Κύριο καὶ τοὺς Ἀποστόλους του στὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν. Εἶπα στὸν ἑαυτό μου: Ἀπὸ δῶ καὶ πέρα κανέναν συγγενὴ νὰ μὴν ξέρεις, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε νὰ βρίσκεσαι μ' αὐτούς, νὰ τοὺς ἀναζητᾶς καὶ νὰ μιμνεῖσαι τὸν καλὸ τρόπο τῆς ζωῆς τους, ὅπως ἡ Μαρία πὺν καθόταν κοντὰ στὰ πόδια τοῦ

Κυρίου καὶ ἄκουγε τὰ λόγια του: *Νὰ γίνετε ἅγιοι, γιατὶ ἐγὼ εἶμαι ἅγιος. Νὰ γίνετε σπλαχνικοὶ καὶ τέλειοι, ὅπως ὁ Πατέρας σας εἶναι τέλειος. Νὰ διδασχεῖτε ἀπὸ μένα ὅτι εἶμαι πρῶτος καὶ ταπεινὸς στὴν καρδιά».*

Ὁ πέμπτος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ κάθε φορὰ βλέπω ἀγγέλους νὰ ἀνεβαίνουν καὶ νὰ κατεβαίνουν για τὴν πρόσκλησιμ τῶν ψυχῶν. Καὶ πάντοτε, περιμένοντας τὸ τέλος μου, λέω: Εἶναι ἔτοιμη ἡ καρδιά μου, Θεέ μου».

Ὁ ἕκτος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ καθὼς κάνω τὴν πνευματικὴ μου ἐργασία στὸ κελί, νομίζω ὅτι ἀκούω ἀπὸ τὸν Κύριο αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια: *Νὰ κοπιᾶστε για μένα κι ἐγὼ θὰ σᾶς ἀναπαύσω, ἀκόμη λίγο νὰ ἀγωνιστεῖτε καὶ θὰ σᾶς δείξω τὴ σωτηρία καὶ τὴ δόξα μου. Ἄν με ἀγαπᾶτε, ἄν εἴσατε παιδιὰ μου, σὰν Πατέρα πὺν παρακαλάει, νὰ αἰσθανθεῖτε για μένα σεβασμό, ἄν εἴστε ἀδελφοί μου, νὰ με σεβαστεῖτε ὅπως ἐκεῖνον πὺν ὑπέμεινε πολλὰ για σᾶς. Ἄν εἴσατε πρόβατά μου, νὰ ἀκοῦστε τὴ φωνὴ τοῦ ποιμένα, ἄν*

εἶστε δοῦλοι μου, νὰ ἀκολουθήσετε τὰ παθήματα τοῦ δεσπότη σας».

Ὁ ἕβδομος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ αὐτὰ τὰ τρία μελετῶ συνεχῶς καὶ λέω ἀδιάκοπα στὸν ἑαυτό μου: Πίστη, ἐλπίδα, ἀγάπη, γιὰ νὰ χαίρομαι μὲ τὴν ἐλπίδα, νὰ στηρίζομαι μὲ τὴν πίστη, καὶ μὲ τὴν ἀγάπη νὰ μὴ λυπήσω ποτὲ κανένα».

Ὁ ὄγδοος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ βλέπω τὸν διάβολο νὰ πετάει ζητώντας ποιὸν νὰ καταπιεῖ. Ὅπου κι ἂν πάει, βλέπω μὲ τὰ ἐσωτερικὰ μάτια, καὶ ἀναφέρομαι ἱκετευτικὰ στὸν Δεσπότη μου Χριστὸ ἐναντίον του, ὥστε νὰ μείνει ἄπρακτος καὶ νὰ μὴν μπορέσει νὰ κάνει τίποτε σὲ κανένα, ἰδίως σ' αὐτοὺς ποὺ φοβοῦνται τὸν Θεό».

Ὁ ἔνατος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ ὅταν κάνω τὴν πνευματικὴ μου ἐργασία, βλέπω τὴν ἐκκλησία τῶν νοερῶν δυνάμεων κι ἀνάμεσά τους τὸν Κύριο τῆς δόξας νὰ λάμπει περισσότερο ἀπ' ὅλους. Ὅταν μὲ βρεῖ ἀκηδία, ἀνεβαίνω στοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ βλέπω τὴν ἔξοχη ὠραιότητα τῶν ἀγγέλων κι ἀκούω τοὺς ὕμνους ποὺ ἀνυψώνουν ἀκατάπαυστα στὸν Θεό, καθὼς καὶ τὴ μελωδία τους. Ὑψώνομαι μὲ τοὺς ἤχους καὶ τὴ φωνὴ καὶ τὴ μουσικότητά τους, ὥστε νὰ νιώσω αὐτὸ ποὺ εἶναι γραμμένο: «Οἱ οὐρανοὶ διηγοῦνται τὴ δόξα τοῦ Θεοῦ» καὶ ὅλα τὰ ἐπίγεια τὰ θεωρῶ στάχτη καὶ σκουπίδια».

Ὁ δέκατος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ πάντοτε βλέπω κοντά μου τὸν φύλακα ἄγγελό μου καὶ προσέχω τὸν ἑαυτό μου, ἔχοντας στὸ μυαλό μου αὐτὸ ποὺ ἔχει γραφεῖ: Ἔβλεπα μπροστά μου τὸν Κύριο πάντοτε, ὅτι στέκεται στὰ δεξιά μου, γιὰ νὰ μὴν κλονισθῶ ἀπὸ τὴ θέση μου.

Φοβοῦμαι λοιπὸν αὐτὸν ποὺ παρακολουθεῖ τὴν πορεία μου. Διότι τὸν βλέπω κάθε μέρα νὰ ἀνεβαίνει στὸν Θεὸ καὶ νὰ παρουσιάζει τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὰ λόγια μου».

Ὁ ἐνδέκατος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ προσωποποίησα τὶς ἀρετές, ὅπως π.χ. τὴν ἐγκράτεια, τὴ σωφροσύνη, τὴ μακροθυμία, τὴν ἀγάπη κι ἔστησα τὸν ἑαυτό μου ἀνάμεσά τους ὥστε νὰ μὲ περικυκλώσουν αὐτές. Κι ὅπου κι ἂν πάω, λέω στὸν ἑαυτό μου: Ποῦ εἶναι οἱ παιδαγωγοί σου; Μὴν ἀδιαφορήσεις, μὴν ἀκηδιάσεις, ἀφοῦ παντοτινὰ αὐτές τὶς ἔχεις δίπλα σου, ὅποια ἀρετὴ θέλεις κοντά σου εἶναι, καὶ καλὰ λόγια θὰ ποῦν στὸν Θεὸ γιὰ σένα, ὅτι δηλαδὴ βρῆκαν σὲ σένα ἀνάπαυση».

Ὁ δωδέκατος εἶπε:

«Ἐσεῖς, Πατέρες, ἔχοντας φτεροῦγες ἀπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸ, ἀποκτήσατε οὐράνια ζωὴ. Κι αὐτὸ καθόλου παράξενο δὲν εἶναι, σὰς βλέπω νὰ στέκεστε ψηλὰ λόγῳ τῶν ἔργων σας καὶ νὰ ἐπιδιώκετε τὰ οὐράνια. Μὲ δύναμη μάλιστα μετακινεῖστε ἀπ' τὴ γῆ ἐσεῖς ποὺ ἀποξενωθήκατε ἐντελῶς ἀπ' αὐτήν. Πῶς νὰ

σὰς ὀνομάσω; Ἐπίγειους ἀγγέλους ἢ οὐράνιους ἀνθρώπους; Ἐγὼ κρίνοντας τὸν ἑαυτό μου τόσο ἀνάξιο ἀκόμη καὶ νὰ ζεῖ, βλέπω μπροστά μου τὶς ἁμαρτίες μου. Ὅπου κι ἂν πάω, ὅπου κι ἂν στραφῶ τὶς βλέπω νὰ προχωροῦν πρὶν ἀπὸ μένα.

Στὰ καταχθόνια καταδίκασα τὸν ἑαυτό μου. Λέω: Θὰ εἶμαι μαζί μ' αὐτοὺς ποὺ μοῦ ἀξίζει. Μ' αὐτοὺς ὕστερα ἀπὸ λίγο θὰ μὲ κατατάξουν.

Βλέπω ἐκεῖ θρηνητικὲς κραυγὲς καὶ δάκρυα, ποὺ δὲν σταματοῦν ποτὲ καὶ εἶναι ἀνεκδιήγητα. Βλέπω κάποιους νὰ τρίζουν τὰ δόντια καὶ νὰ πηδοῦν μ' ὄλο τους τὸ σῶμα καὶ νὰ τρέμουν ἀπ' τὸ κεφάλι μέχρι τὰ πόδια. Πέφτω μὲ τὸ πρόσωπο κάτω καὶ ρίχνοντας στάχτη στὸ κεφάλι μου ἱκετεύω τὸν Θεὸ νὰ μὴ δοκιμάσω ἐκεῖνες τὶς συμφορές. Βλέπω καὶ μία θάλασσα ἀπὸ φωτιὰ νὰ παφλάζει καὶ νὰ φυσομανάει ἐδῶ κι ἐκεῖ καὶ νὰ βρυχιέται, σὲ σημεῖο ποὺ νὰ νομίζει κανεὶς ὅτι τὰ κύματα τῆς φωτιᾶς φτάνουν μέχρι τὸν οὐρανὸ. Καὶ μέσ' τῆ φοβερῆ αὐτῆ θάλασσα ἀμέτρητους ἀνθρώπους ριγμένους ἀπὸ ἄγριους ἀγγέλους, καὶ ὅλοι μαζί ἐκεῖνοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι μὲ μιὰ φωνὴ νὰ βγάζουν δυνατὲς κραυγὲς καὶ νὰ κράζουν μὲ ἰσχυροὺς θρήνους καὶ φωνὲς τέτοιες, ποὺ κανεὶς δὲν ἔχει ἀκούσει. Σὰν ξερὰ χόρτα ὅλοι νὰ καίγονται, καὶ οἱ οἰκτιρμοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ νὰ φεύγουν μακριὰ ἀπ' αὐτοὺς, γιὰ τὶς ἁμαρτίες τους.

Τότε θρηνῶ τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων, πῶς τολμᾷ νὰ μιλήσει ἢ νὰ δίνει τὴν προσοχή του σὲ κάτι ἐφήμερο, ἀφοῦ τόσο μεγάλα κακὰ περιμένουν τὸν κόσμο. Μὲ τέτοιους λογισμοὺς κρατῶ τὸ πένθος στὴν καρδιά μου, κρίνοντας τὸν ἑαυτό μου ἀνάξιο γιὰ τὸν οὐρανὸ καὶ τὴ γῆ, καὶ πραγματοποιεῖται σὲ μένα ὁ λόγος τῆς Γραφῆς: Τὰ δάκρυά μου ἔγιναν γιὰ μένα ψωμὶ μέρα καὶ νύχτα».

Αὐτὰ εἶναι τὰ κατορθώματα τῶν σοφῶν καὶ πνευματικῶν Πατέρων. Μακάρι κι ἔμεῖς νὰ δεῖξουμε στοὺς ἄλλους μιὰ ζωὴ ἄξια νὰ τὴν θυμῶνται, γιὰ νὰ εὐχαριστήσουμε τὸν Δεσπότη μας Χριστὸ, ἀφοῦ γίνουμε τέλειοι καὶ ἀψεγάδιαστοι.



Τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο δὲν συμβιβάζεται μὲ τὴν κοσμικὴ λογική. Ὅταν διαβάξεις τὴν Ἁγία Γραφή καὶ δὲν καταλαβαίνεις, μὴν φοβάσαι ὅτι σου χρειάζεται θὰ σὲ φωτίσει ὁ Θεός. Ἐφάρμοσε αὐτὰ ποὺ καταλαβαίνεις.

Ἡ σωματικὴ κούραση—χωρὶς μέτρο—ἀγριεῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπο. Καὶ τὸ πιὸ ἥρεμο ἄλογο, ἂν τὸ κουράσεις ὑπέρβαρα κλωτσάει.

Ὅσο ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀδειάζει ἀπὸ ἐγωισμό, τόσο γεμίζει ἀπὸ τὴ θεία χάρη.

Γέρων Παΐσιος Ἀθωνίτης



## SECULARISM IN CHURCH, THEOLOGY, AND PASTORAL CARE

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos (edited for length).

Secularism is the loss of the true life of the Church, the alienation of Church members from the genuine Church spirit. Secularism is the rejection of the ecclesiastic ethos and the permeation of our life by the so-called “worldly spirit.”

It should be stressed that secularization of the Church members is a grave danger. The Church has several enemies; the worst and most dangerous one is secularization, which eats up the marrow of the Church. The Church itself, of course, is under no real danger, since it is the blessed Body of Christ, but the threat exists for the members of the Church. To be accurate, we would say that secularism, which consists of the adulteration of the way of life and of true faith, is related to the passions and, naturally, has been lurking in the Church since the beginning of its existence. In Paradise, Adam attempted to interpret God’s commandments rationally. Even after Pentecost there were cases of some Christians adopting an anthropocentric way of thinking and living. Gnostics and others are the obvious proofs of this.

For the most part, secularism started after the cessation of the persecutions. During the persecutions, Christians believed and lived in truth. When Christianity became the official state religion, an adulteration of the Christian faith and way of living began. Anachoreticism (withdrawal from the world, *Ed.*), and later monasticism, developed as a reaction to this secularization. As the Holy Scripture illustrates, especially in the Epistles of the holy Apostles, all Christians lived monastically in the ancient Church. Secularism developed as a consequence of people being attracted to Christianity out of expediency, and the development of monasticism came as a response to that. Monasticism is not something alien to the Church but rather life according to the Gospel, which some Christians wanted to live in perfection and thus elected this way of living. It can be argued that even the most eccentric monk constitutes a healthy reaction to the secular spirit that plagues Christians of our age.

Before proceeding to see how we experience secularism in Church, theology, and pastoral care, I would like to examine more closely the secular spirit and the meaning of the world (*cosmos*) in the biblical-patristic tradition, since the word *cosmos* constitutes the main concept of the term *secularism*.

### The Double Meaning of the Word *Cosmos*

The word *cosmos* (world) has two meanings in the Bible and in the works of the Holy Fathers. The first is that *cosmos* is the creation of God, the entire creation; the second meaning is that of the passions and everything that characterizes the spirit of the flesh that lacks the Holy Spirit.

To begin with, *cosmos* (world) is the creation. It is called such because it is an ornament, a jewel (*cosmema* in Greek). In the Orthodox tradition, we say that the world is a positive

work of God. It is not a copy of some other real world, the world of ideas; nor is it a downfall from the true world or a creation of a lesser God. The phrase in the Creed—*I believe in one God, Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of everything visible and invisible*—was articulated to counter a teaching of certain ancient heretics that claimed that the world is a creature of a lesser God. So the world is a creation of God, an ornament, a jewel. God created the world with His uncreated energy, for God is creator by energy and not by substance. It is characteristic that at the end of creation, the Bible notes . . . *and God saw that it was good*.

The second meaning of the word *cosmos* (world) is sin, passions of the flesh, the spirit of the flesh, the spirit that is deprived of the Holy Spirit’s life and energy. We encounter the word *cosmos* in this sense several times in the Bible. Saint John frequently uses the word *cosmos* to denote God’s creation, the entire creation. In other cases, he uses it to denote the passions of the flesh, everything that keeps man away from God, or man’s life outside of God. A typical passage is the following: *For all that is in the world . . . but is of the world*. (1 Jn 2:16). John does not ask us not to love the creation, God’s creation, but rather the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the arrogance of life, which constitute in reality what is called the world. Saint Gregory Palamas teaches that the *cosmos* as a creature of God is neither to be held in contempt nor to be hated. In this meaning, the world has to be used by man for his maintenance. There is a danger, however, when someone views the world as a creature of God also to view it as the devil’s deception; for the devil truly knows how to utilize the world to deceive man.

In the Holy Scripture, it is said that the devil is king of the world. Interpreting this term, Saint Gregory Palamas points out that God, who created the world, is the real king of the world. The devil is called such because he dominates the world of injustice and sin. In discussing man’s departure from the world, St. Basil the Great says that it is not an escape from the world or the soul’s exit from the body, as argued by the ancient philosophers; but rather it is the absence of attachment by the soul to the body. Naturally, when the Fathers refer to the body, they do not mean the body as such but rather the carnal spirit, the passions of the flesh and the adoration of the body.

It is in this context that the Fathers discuss the world. Theophrastus of Philadelphia says, *I call “world” the love of material objects and of the flesh*. He who is liberated from these becomes akin to Christ and acquires His love. More generally, to quote Saint Isaac the Syrian, *when we want to name all passions, we call them world*. It is exactly this meaning of the word *world* that is used in the term *secularism* and that we will employ hereafter. Secularism is man’s distortion by the spirit of the flesh and the passions. When our life is permeated by passions, by the world of injustice, and when we pursue such a life within the Church and try to be theologians in such a manner, this is secularism. Secularism is life’s estrangement

from God, our not pursuing communion and unity with Him, our attachment to earthly matters, and our viewing of all things and issues in our life away from God's will. One could claim that secularism is a synonym for anthropocentrism.

In what follows, we will analyze the term *secularism* in the above framework, obviously extending its dimensions.

### Secularism in the Church Life

It should be emphasized that when we talk about secularism in the Church, in theology, and in pastoral care, we do not imply that the Church, theology, and pastoral care become secular and are destroyed. That would imply that the true life and man's true way of therapy are lost. Instead, it is the members of the Church that become secular and, therefore, view the Church, theology, and pastoral care differently. However, throughout the centuries, there are Church members who preserve the truth regarding the Church, theology, and Orthodox pastoral care.

### Secularism in Church

The Church is Christ's body. It is not a human organization but the God-man body of Christ. The Church's purpose is to guide its members to *deification*, the principal objective of man's creation.

An important excerpt illustrating the objective of the shepherds of the Church can be found in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Christians of Ephesus. The Apostle says: *And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.* (Eph 4:11–13). According to Saint Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain, in the phrase *the knowledge of the Son of God* Saint Paul does not mean the knowledge of God which is achieved through the viewing of created things and the divine Scriptures; the impure can also possess such knowledge; instead he refers to the supernatural knowledge of the Son of God, arrived at through divine illumination and glorification, and granted solely to the perfect ones, those purified from the passions of the flesh and of the soul. It is this knowledge that he wishes all Christians to arrive at. Also, the phrase *to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* conveys the concept of deification.

The true Church's existence is demonstrated by its success in curing man. We know from the teaching of the holy Fathers that the Church is the spiritual health center, the spiritual hospital that cures man. When we refer to illness and cure, we mean that the *nous* (in Orthodoxy, *nous* is not intellect

but is best described as "is the eye of the soul," *Ed.*) is ill and is cured. The *nous'* cure is not independent of purification, illumination, and deification. The Church's goal is to cure this gnostic center so that man can acquire the knowledge of God that constitutes his salvation. Therefore, the existence of the true Church can be seen in the degree of success, in the results of the therapy. If it cures man, if it makes a correct diagnosis of the disease, and if it knows the way and method of therapy, then it is the true, not the secular, Church.

An example revealing a church's degree of success in curing is the presence and existence of holy relics. The holy relics are a proof of man's cure. When the *nous* is purified and illumined and when man attains deification, then he is entirely divinized, because God's Grace is transported from the soul to the body. The relics of the saints, which are everlasting, fragrant, and miraculous, are proof that the method and way of therapy are preserved, that



the Church leads man to deification. That is why it has been pointedly argued that the aim of the Church is to create relics, in the sense that it seeks to guide man to deification. A church that does not produce relics demonstrates that it does not lead man to deification and, hence, it does not possess the true method for man's therapy.

Secularism in the Church is directly related to the loss of the Church's true objective. A church not inspired by what has been said above, that is a Church that does not cure man but is concerned with other matters, is a secularized church. It is in this sense

that we refer to secularism in the Church.

We can say that the Church becomes secular when it is considered to be a *religious organization*. There is an enormous difference between the Church and religion. Religion speaks about an impersonal God who inhabits the heavens and manages the world from up there. Man, through various rituals, has to appease God and establish communication with Him. But the Church is the Body of Christ who assumed human nature, and in this way there exists a communion between man and God in the Person of Christ. Of course, it cannot be precluded that some Christians within the Church are experiencing God from a religious perspective. This, however, occurs in the lower stages of spiritual life; it constitutes spiritual immaturity, and there is definitely a willingness and tendency for man to go on maturing spiritually so that he arrives at communion and unity with God. A secularized Church, however, simply satisfies the so-called religious feelings of man and nothing more. It is noted for its beautiful ceremonies, and it neglects the entire *neptic* and therapeutic wealth owned by the Church.



Further, the Church is secularized when it is viewed as an *ideological field* and ideological system, unrelated to life. Ideological systems are inspired by abstract ideas and are imbued with idealism, which has the characteristics of all anthropocentric systems that are based on philosophy and are against materialism. Ideas do not have much of a relation to life, to man's transformation. Idealism is created by man's rationality and is presented in the form of arguments and ideas. The Church does not function as an ideological field. It does not simply have some ideas, be it the best and most perfect ones, which it uses to counter other ideas. The Church has the life, indeed the true life, which is a fruit of man's communion with God and the transcendence of death.

The secularized Church is occupied with human thought and abstract ideas. The real and true Church, however, is like true medicine, and in particular surgery. A surgeon can never engage in philosophy and culture, can never meditate while performing a surgical operation. In front of him he has a patient he wants to cure, to bring back to full health. Likewise the Church, having in front of her a patient, can never meditate or philosophize. The Church itself experiences the mystery of Christ's Cross and assists man in experiencing the same in his personal life. The experience of the Cross mystery is the deepest repentance through which the *nous* is transformed. From the contrary-to-nature motion it acquires movement according to nature and above nature.

Furthermore, the Church becomes secular when it is downgraded to a *social organization*, like so many other organizations in society. It is often claimed that the Church is a **supreme institution**. But the Church cannot be considered the institution of any nation, even its supreme institution. When a revolution ends up in a bureaucracy, it loses its value, and this brings about its downfall. The same is true of the Church. Being the spiritual hospital that cures man, the Church cannot be considered an institution in support of society, appropriate for citizen taming.

Unfortunately, today some view the Church as a necessary organization, useful for society, its role valued according to its social usefulness. For many the Church is viewed as Prometheus, with police in the role of Epimetheus; that is, the Church is good enough as society's assistant in order to avoid police intervention. When the Church fails, the police step in. Certainly one cannot dismiss Church benefaction in such matters. A cured Christian causes no troubles to the police. But we should not see the Church presence only in this field because then we refer to a secularized Church.

Others, unfortunately, accept the Church as a mere decorative element. They need it to decorate various ceremonies and to brighten them with its presence; or they may believe that the Church's presence is required to demonstrate a wide social consensus. Not even the atheists reject such a church. However, such a secularized church causes despair to the atheists as well. They may need it for the time being, because

it serves them well, but they will face a grave disappointment when they, too, need the true presence of the Church.

Today there is a general tendency to view a secular Church as more useful for modern social needs. There is also a growing tendency to adjust sermons and Church teaching to these social needs, the needs of a society functioning in anthropocentric ways, because we fear society's rejection. Protestants and, generally, the western "churches" have succumbed to this temptation, and that is why they have spread much despair to those seeking therapy, to those seeking the true Church for a cure.

Overall, a Church that crucifies instead of being crucified, that experiences worldly glory instead of the glory of the Cross, a Church that falls to, instead of overcoming Christ's three temptations in the desert, is a secularized church. Such a Church is destined to accommodate a fallen society and to encourage it to **remain in its fallen state; it spreads disappointment and despair to those who seek something deeper and more substantive.**

### Secularism in Theology

Theology is the voice and faith of the Church, the *logos* of God (*theo-logia* in Greek). It is assumed that someone who talks about God must know God. In the Orthodox Church, the knowledge of God is not intellectual but spiritual, that is, it is connected to man's communion with God. In Saint Gregory Palamas' teaching, the vision of the Uncreated Light is closely connected to man's deification, to man's communion with God and the knowledge of God. That is why theology is identical to the vision of God and the theologian is identical to the God-seer. Someone who talks about God, even reflectively, can be called a theologian and this is why the Fathers attribute the term *theologian* to the philosophers as well. However, from an Orthodox standpoint a theologian is someone who witnessed the glory of God or, at least, accepts the experience of those who reached deification.

In this sense, theologians are the God-seers, those who achieved deification and received the Revelation of God. Saint Paul is one such theologian. He went up to the third heaven, and on several occasions he describes and reveals his apocalyptic experiences. This occurs to such an extent that Saint John Chrysostom, talking about Saint Paul and about the fact that in his Epistles there are greater mysteries than in the Gospels, argues that "Christ declared more important and unspoken things through St. Paul than through Himself."

Saint Paul, as he himself says in the third person, was captured *up to the third heaven*. (2 Cor 12:2). Saint Maximos the Confessor's interprets that the three heavens are in reality the three stages of spiritual life. The first heaven is the end of practical philosophy, which is the purification of the heart, the expulsion of all thoughts from the heart. The second heaven is natural *theoria*, that is, the knowledge of the inner essences of beings, when man through God's Grace becomes worthy of knowing the inner essences of beings: ceaseless

inner prayer. The third heaven is *theoria*, theology, through which, and by divine Grace and the capture of the *nous*, one reaches, as is possible, the knowledge of God’s mysteries and knows all the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, theology is the third heaven, which is a fruit, an outcome of the purification of the heart and the illumination of the *nous*.

All these are related to another teaching by Saint Maximos the Confessor. According to this teaching, all that is seen needs to be crucified and all the thoughts need to be buried, and then the *logos* rises within ourselves and man ascends to *theoria* and becomes a true theologian. This means that Orthodox theology is closely tied to Orthodox asceticism; it cannot be conceived of outside Orthodox *ascesis*. The heretics, on the other hand, tried and still try to make theology in other ways, with impure heart and reflection, not through natural *theoria*, and mystical theology. For this reason, they failed and were expelled from the Church of Christ.

When theology is not a part of this framework, as presented by all the holy Fathers, then it is not Orthodox but secular. This secular theology is encountered in the west, where they analyze and interpret Holy Scripture through their own human and impure intellect, outside of the correct prerequisites presented by the holy Fathers.

A typical example of secular theology, functioning outside the traditional patristic framework, is so-called “scholastic theology,” which was developed in the west between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries. It was termed “scholastic” from the various schools cultivating it. Its main feature was that it relied heavily on philosophy, particularly that of Aristotle, and it attempted to rationally explain everything related to God.

Scholastic theology tried to rationally comprehend God’s Revelation and to harmonize theology and philosophy. In the Orthodox Church, as expressed by the holy Fathers, we state that faith is God’s Revelation to man. We accept faith from hearsay not to comprehend it later, but to purify the heart, achieve faith through *theoria*, and experience Revelation. Scholastic theology, on the other hand, accepted something *a priori* (based on theoretical deduction rather than empirical observation, *Ed.*) and then struggled to comprehend it by means of rational arguments. It is characteristic what Anselm of Canterbury, the founder of scholasticism, has said: “I believe in order to comprehend.” The scholastics started by *a priori* accepting God and then trying to prove His existence by rational arguments and logical categories.

Secular theology, which is a function of scholasticism, manifests itself in several ways today. One is the way we base the entire mode of theology on reason and thought. We think about Orthodox faith, we rationalize about the truths of faith, or we simply form a history of theology. We have almost reached the point of viewing theology as a philosophy about God, ignoring the whole therapeutic method of our Church.

Another way of experiencing Barlaamism and scholasticism is the fact that we have limited theology to aesthetics. We might write several books and undertake long analyses on Orthodox art, study the schools of iconography, and accept the great value of Byzantine art, while simultaneously treating with contempt and overlooking *ascesis*, the hesychastic method, that is the foundation of every Orthodox art. **Purification, illumination, and deification are the basis of all the Orthodox Church’s arts, acts and mysteries.**



Another way we manifest secular theology is that we seek the rebirth of the Church’s liturgical life without simultaneously discovering and living the ascetic life of the Church. We discuss the continual communion of the Sacraments without simultaneously relating this effort to the stages of spiritual perfection, which are purification, illumination, and deification. We make a

great effort so that people can logically comprehend the Divine Liturgy, without making a parallel effort to experience the spirit of Orthodox worship. We seek to abolish the iconostasis so that laymen can peer into the altar, without asking the reason why the Church instituted the iconostasis and the secret reading of prayers.

Overall, when our theology is not tied to the so-called hesychastic life, when it is not ascetic, then it is secular, it is scholastic theology, it is Barlaamist theology—even if we seem to be fighting western theology and struggle to be Orthodox.

**Secularism in Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care is not unrelated to and independent of the Church and theology. Pastoral care is the work of the Church that aims at admitting man to Her Body, at making him Her true member; it is the Church’s method of guiding man to deification, which is the Church’s deeper objective. Further, pastoral care is not unrelated to theology, for the true theologians are true shepherds, and those who shepherd in an Orthodox way do so theologically. Therefore, what we have said so far about the Church and theology applies to pastoral care as well. The true Shepherds of the Church are the dei-



fied, those who partake, to various degrees, in the deifying energy of God or those who accept the deified and follow their teaching. Thus, we either are deified or accept those who are and exercise pastoral care with their aid.

Moses reached deification by Grace; he saw God in His glory and then undertook the heavy task of the pastoral guidance of the people. As Saint Gregory of Nyssa says, before seeing God, Moses was unable to separate two Hebrews fighting with each other; after the vision of God, Moses was able to guide a difficult and uncompromising people. It is indicative that Moses passed the experience of deification on to the people through his guidance and the laws.

The same can be observed in all church life. Saint Gregory the Theologian views pastoral care as the most difficult science, and he definitely ties it to man's deification. For this reason, he desired that the shepherds be previously cured in order to be able to guide their spiritual children to therapy and deification.

The Sacred Canons of the Church present the pastoral method and are medicine to cure man. If we view the Canons as legal schemes and structures, we fail to recognize their true place within the Church. The Canons presuppose man's illness, which is the darkening of the *nous*, and they aim at man's health, which is the illumination of the *nous* and deification. According to Saint Basil the Great, there are five stages for those who repent: those who stay outside the Church, crying and asking to be forgiven by the Christians; those who attend and listen to the Divine Word but leave the Church at the time the catechumens do; those who stay at the narthex of the Church and attend the Divine Liturgy on their knees; those who stay within the main Church, remain there and pray with the rest of the faithful without, however, partaking in the holy Communion; and finally, those who partake in the Body and Blood of Christ. These stages illustrate that every sin, which constitutes the darkening of the *nous*, is a repetition of Adam's sin and degradation from true life. In this sense, repentance is the struggle for man to become a member of the Church.

The existence of the iconostasis should be viewed within this perspective. In older times, there were no iconostases—everyone had a visual communion with the goings-on **because the entire holy Temple was a place for believers, for true Church members**. There was a substantial separation between the narthex and the main Temple. When someone sinned, he could not attend the Temple or pray with the believers. Thus, a class of repenters existed who were essentially in the catechumen state. Later, however, as a consequence of secularism in faith, those in repentance were allowed in the Temple, but iconostases were erected. Of course, we should not pay too much attention to external manifestations such as the iconostasis. The Church's true pastoral care does not consist of external activities, of psychological rest and relaxation, but rather of an effort to purify the heart and illumine the *nous*.

Unfortunately, today we can talk about secularism in pastoral care also. There is an attempt to use modern psychology, among other methods, in the pastoral guidance of people. There are some who employ the results of psychology to help people. It is not such a bad thing for someone to know psychological methods. However, someone who knows himself and by God's Grace monitors the way his inner passions act, who studies the Holy Scriptures and the holy Fathers, and who is guided by a deified Spiritual Father can obtain real knowledge about other people, for in essence the problems of all men are the same. Employing modern psychology to guide people is a secularized view of pastoral care, and it is harmful for the following reasons.

It is harmful when, at the same time, our Church's entire ascetic and hesychastic method is ignored. We ignore the hesychastic tradition as expressed in ascetic writings, such as the Ladder of Saint John the Sinaite. It is a pity for us to ignore a healthy tradition possessed by our Church that aims not at psychoanalysis but at psychosynthesis, when our psyche, through fragmentation caused by the passions, experiences schizophrenia.

It is also harmful when we maintain an anthropocentric position and believe that man's health can be brought about by the method of listening and talking. Man's soul, created by God in order to attain deification, does not find rest with moralistic advice and humane external support. As we have said, the illness lies deeper, in the *nous*. It does not consist of certain suppressed and traumatic experiences of the past, but in the darkening and mortification of the *nous*. Therapy and illumination of the *nous* cannot be achieved by anthropocentric methods, advice, and psychoanalysis.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that secularism is the Church's gravest danger. It is what adulterates her true spirit, her true atmosphere. Of course, we must repeat that it adulterates not the Church, for the Church is the real and blessed Body of Christ, but the members of the church. Therefore, we should more properly refer to the secularization of the members of the Church.

The Church is the jewel of the world, the charity of mankind. When, however, this jewel of the world is permeated by the so-called secular spirit, when Christians, the members of the church, instead of belonging to this jewel, instead of becoming the light of the world, are inspired by the world in the sense of the passions and become the world, and then they experience secularism. This secularism does not lead to deification. It is an anthropocentric view of our life. The Church should enter the world to transform it rather than the world entering the Church to secularize it.

A secularized Church is completely weak and unable to transform the world, and secularized Christians have failed at all levels.

## ON THE TRADITION OF LONG HAIR AND BEARDS

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Anyone looking at photographs and portraits of clergy in Greece, Russia, Rumania, and other Orthodox countries taken in the early twentieth century will notice that almost without exception both the monastic and married clergy, priests and deacons, wore untrimmed beards and hair. Only after the First World War do we observe a new, modern look, cropped hair and beardless clergy. This fashion has been continued among some of the clergy to our own day. If one were to investigate this phenomenon in terms of a single clergyman whose life spanned the greater part of our century one would probably notice his style modernize from the first photographs up through the last.

There are two reasons given as an explanation for this change: it is said, "One must conform to fashion, and we cannot look like peasants!" Or even more absurd, "My wife will not allow it!" Such reasoning is the "dogmatic" line of modernists who either desire to imitate contemporary fashion (if beards are "in," they wear beards, if beards are "out," they shave), or are ecumenically minded, not wanting to offend clergy in denominations outside the Orthodox Church. The other reason is based on a passage of Holy Scripture where Saint Paul states, *Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?* (I Cor 11:14). In answer to the first justification, true Orthodox tradition directly condemns modernism and ecumenism. It is necessary however to deal in more detail with the argument that bases its premise on Holy Scripture.

Orthodox Christian piety begins in the Holy Tradition of the Old Testament. Our relationship to the Lord God, holiness, worship, and morality was formed in the ancient times of the Bible. At the time of the foundation of the priesthood the Lord gave the following commandments to the priests during periods of mourning, *They shall not make baldness upon their head* (a pagan practice), *neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh* (Lev 21: 5), and to all men in general, *Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard.* (Lev 19:27). The significance of these commandments is to illustrate that the clergy are to devote themselves completely to serving the Lord. Laymen as well are called to a similar service though without the priestly

functions. This outward appearance as a commandment was repeated in the law given to the Nazarene, *All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.* (Num 6:5).

The significance of the Nazarene vow was a sign of God's power resting on the person who made it. To cut off the hair meant to cut off God's power as in the example of Samson [*There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarene unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.* (Judg 16:17)]. The strength of these pious observances, transmitted to the New Testament Church, were observed without question till our present times of willfulness and the apostasy resulting from it. Why, one might ask, do



those Orthodox clergymen, while rejecting the above pious ordinances about hair, continue to observe the custom of granting various head coverings to clergy, a practice which also has its roots in the ancient ordinances of the Old Testament (cf. Exod 24:4-6) and the tradition of the early Church (see Eusebius and Epiphanius of Cyprus concerning the miters worn by the Apostles John and James)?

The Apostle Paul himself wore his hair long as we can conclude from the following passage where it is mentioned that "head bands," in Slavonic, and "towels" touched to his body were placed on the sick to heal them. The "head bands" indicate the length of his hair (in accordance with pious custom) which had to be tied back in order to keep it in place (cf. Acts 19:12). The historian Egezit writes that the Apostle James, the head of the church in Jerusalem, never cut his hair (*Christian Reading*, Feb. 1898, p.142, in Russian).

If the pious practice among clergy and laity in the Christian community was to follow the example of the Old Testament, how then are we to understand the words of Saint Paul to the Corinthians cited earlier (I Cor 11:14)? Saint Paul in the cited passage is addressing men and woman who are praying (cf. I Cor 11:3-4). His words in the above passages, as well as in other passages concerning head coverings (cf. I Cor. 11: 4-7), are directed to laymen, not clergy. In other passages Saint Paul makes an obvious distinction between the clerical and lay rank (cf. I Cor. 4:1, I Tim. 4:6, Col. 1:7, and others). He did not oppose the Old Testament ordinance in regard to hair and beards since, as we have noted above, he himself observed it, as did Our Lord Himself, Who is depicted on all



occasions with long hair and beard as the Great High Priest of the new Christian priest hood.

In our passage noted previously, *Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?* (I Cor 11:14), Saint Paul uses the Greek word for “hair.” This particular word for hair (κομᾶ) designates hair as an ornament (the notion of length being only secondary and suggested), differing from the anatomical or physical term for hair. Saint Paul’s selection of words emphasizes his criticism of laymen wearing their hair in a stylized fashion, which was contrary to pious Jewish and Christian love of modesty. We note the same approach to hair as that of Saint Paul in the 96th canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council where it states: *Those who arrange and dress the hair of their head by contriving to plait or wave it in a fashion which has disastrous effects on beholders, and hence offers a lure to unbolstered souls, we undertake to treat them in a fatherly fashion with a suitable penance.*

In another source, “The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary,” we read the following concerning the Old Testament practice: “To an extent, hair style was a matter of fashion, at least among the upper classes, who were particularly open to foreign [pagan] influence. Nevertheless, long hair appears to have been the rule among the Hebrews (cf. Ezek. 8:3), both men and women” (cf. Cant 4:1; 7:5). Thus we observe that cropped or stylized hair was the fashion among the pagans and not acceptable, especially among the Christian clergy from most ancient times up to our contemporary break with Holy Tradition. It is interesting to note that the fashion of cropped or stylized hair and shaved beards found its way into the Roman Catholic and Protestant worlds. So important had this pagan custom become for Roman clergy by the 11th Century that it was listed among the reasons for the Anathema (!) pronounced by Cardinal Humbert on July 15, 1054 against Patriarch Michael in Constantinople which precipitated the Western Church’s final falling away from the Orthodox Church: “While wearing beards and long hair you [Eastern Orthodox] reject the bond of brotherhood with the Roman clerov. since they shave and cut their hair.”



I am proud of the cassock I wear and consider it more valuable and seemly than every other kind of garment, even than the royal purple robes of kings. I consider myself unworthy to dress in such a modest, honorable and holy garb, which was honored by numberless monastic Saints, monk martyrs, confessors and Saints. I am saddened by and pity those clerics who reject the cassock and who shave their beards.

**Elder Philotheos (Zervakos) of Paros**

## RAISING CHILDREN

*By St. Porphyrios the Kapsokalyvite (+1991).*

What saves and makes for good children is the life of the parents in the home. The parents need to devote themselves to the love of God. They need to become saints in their relation to their children through their mildness, patience and love. They need to make a new start every day, with a fresh outlook, renewed enthusiasm and love for their children. And the joy that will come to them, the holiness that will visit them, will shower grace on their children. Generally the parents are to blame for the bad behavior of the children. And their behavior is not improved by reprimands, disciplining, or strictness. If the parents do not pursue a life of holiness and if they don’t engage in spiritual struggle, they make great mistakes and transmit the faults they have within them. If the parents do not live a holy life and do not display love towards each other, the devil torments the parents with the reactions of the children. Love, harmony and understanding between the parents are what are required for the children. This provides a great sense of security and certainty.

A psychological state is created in a child as a result of its parents that accompanies it throughout its life. Its later behavior and its relationships with others are directly connected with the experiences that it carries with it from its childhood years. The child grows up and develops, but at bottom it does not change. This is manifested even in the smallest expressions of life. For example, you get a craving for food and want to eat. You take something and eat it, then you see something else and you want that. You feel hungry and think that if you don’t eat you’ll feel faint and you’ll start to tremble. You’re afraid you’ll lose weight. This is a psychological state that has its explanation. Perhaps you never knew your father or your mother, and you feel deprived and hungry, poor and weak. And this psychological reality is expressed by way of reflex as a weakness of the body.

Parents, especially the mother, often cause hurt to a child for some act of misbehavior by scolding it excessively. The child is then wounded. Even if you don’t scold the child outwardly but bristle with anger inwardly or look fiercely at the child, the child understands. The child believes that its mother doesn’t love it and asks, ‘Do you love me, Mummy?’ The mother answers, ‘Yes, dear,’ but the child is not convinced. It has been wounded. The mother loves it, she’ll caress it later, but the child will pull its head away. It refuses to be caressed, regarding this as hypocrisy because it has been wounded.

Another thing that harms children is over-protectiveness, that is, excessive care or excessive anxiety and worry on the part of the parents.

## THIS WAS FROM ME (A LETTER FROM GOD)

By St. Seraphim of Viritsa.



Have you ever thought that everything that concerns you, concerns Me, also? You are precious in my eyes and I love you; for this reason, it is a special joy for Me to train you. When temptations and the opponent [the Evil One] come upon you like a river, I want you to know that This was from Me.

I want you to know that your weakness has need of My strength, and your safety lies in allowing Me to protect you. I want you to know that when you are in difficult conditions, among people who do not understand you, and cast you away, This was from Me.

I am your God, the circumstances of your life are in My hands; you did not end up in your position by chance; this is precisely the position I have appointed for you. Weren't you asking Me to teach you humility? And there, I placed you precisely in the "school" where they teach this lesson. Your environment, and those who are around you, are performing My will. Do you have financial difficulties and can just barely survive? Know that This was from Me.

I want you to know that I dispose of your money, so take refuge in Me and depend upon Me. I want you to know that My storehouses are inexhaustible, and I am faithful in My promises. Let it never happen that they tell you in your need, "Do not believe in your Lord and God." Have you ever spent the night in suffering? Are you separated from your relatives, from those you love? I allowed this that you would turn to Me, and in Me find consolation and comfort. Did your friend or someone to whom you opened your heart, deceive you? This was from Me.

I allowed this frustration to touch you so that you would learn that your best friend is the Lord. I want you to bring everything to Me and tell Me everything. Did someone slander you? Leave it to Me; be attached to Me so that you can hide from the "contradiction of the nations." I will make your righteousness shine like light and your life like midday noon. Your plans were destroyed? Your soul yielded and you are exhausted? This was from Me.

You made plans and have your own goals; you brought them to Me to bless them. But I want you to leave it all to Me, to direct and guide the circumstances of your life by My hand, because you are the orphan, not the protagonist. Unexpected failures found you and despair overcame your heart, but know That this was from Me.

With tiredness and anxiety I am testing how strong your faith is in My promises and your boldness in prayer for your relatives. Why is it not you who entrusted their cares to My providential love? You must leave them to the protection of My All Pure Mother. Serious illness found you, which may be healed or may be incurable, and has nailed you to your bed. This was from Me.

Because I want you to know Me more deeply, through physical ailment, do not murmur against this trial I have sent you. And do not try to understand My plans for the salvation of people's souls, but uncomplainingly and humbly bow your head before My goodness. You were dreaming about doing something special for Me and, instead of doing it, you fell into a bed of pain. This was from Me.

Because then you were sunk in your own works and plans and I wouldn't have been able to draw your thoughts to Me. But I want to teach you the most deep thoughts and My lessons, so that you may serve Me. I want to teach you that you are nothing without Me. Some of my best children are those who, cut off from an active life, learn to use the weapon of ceaseless prayer. You were called unexpectedly to undertake a difficult and responsible position, supported by Me. I have given you these difficulties and as the Lord God I will bless all your works, in all your paths. In everything I, your Lord, will be your guide and teacher. Remember always that every difficulty you come across, every offensive word, every slander and criticism, every obstacle to your works, which could cause frustration and disappointment, This is from Me.

Know and remember always, no matter where you are, that whatsoever hurts will be dulled as soon as you learn, in all things, to look at Me. Everything has been sent to you by Me, for the perfection of your soul. All these things were from Me.



We should not think it strange that Christians endure affliction and various forms of sorrow, patiently awaiting through many trials and temptations whatever their Master gives. For they have heard Him say: *Truly I tell you, that you who are near Me shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. Yet after a little while I will visit you through the Paraclete and drive away your despondency; I will renew you with thoughts of heavenly life and peace with sweet tears, of which you were deprived for a short time when you were being tested. I will give you the breast of My grace, as a mother feeds her baby when it cries. When your strength fails in battle I will fortify you with power from on high, and I will sweeten you in your bitterness. I will look upon you, and your hearts will rejoice at My secret visitation; your affliction will be turned to joy, and no one shall take that joy from you.* (cf. Jn. 16:20-22).

St. John of Karpathos



## ON NOETIC PRAYER

*By Protopresbyter John S. Romanides from "The University Lectures."*

If you are ever present at a Roman Catholic or Protestant gathering, you will notice that as a rule they are accustomed to saying extemporaneous prayers. This practice mainly stems from a very careful reading of the Old and New Testament that took place when the Protestants revolted against the papacy. Protestants of that time read the passages in the New Testament that describe the Holy Spirit coming and praying within the believer, and concluded that the believer is gently prompted how to pray by the Holy Spirit Who has come to dwell in him. Protestants believe that the act of prayer proves that the Holy Spirit has touched someone, since the Holy Spirit Who dwells within that person gently prompts him and inspires him to pray. This interpretation was common among Protestants during the age of their Reformation and they have preserved it until the present day. In other words, they believe that when someone wants to pray, the Holy Spirit will come to gently prompt that person and to inspire him, so that he will pray correctly.

But in Orthodox tradition something else happens. Every time Scripture mentions the Holy Spirit praying within someone, every time it says that the Holy Spirit prays within a prophet or within an apostle, it is not talking about prayer using the rational faculty (*logiki proseuchi*), but about prayer using the nous (*noera proseuchi*). This worship is not reasonable worship, but noetic worship.

So on the one hand, there is reasonable worship that is offered to God when we use our rational faculty (*logiki*) to read or chant the Church services. The Divine Liturgy is an example of reasonable worship, as are all the Church services with printed texts. On the other hand, there is noetic worship, which is a qualitatively higher form of worship. Man does not offer God noetic worship on his own initiative. He offers noetic worship to God, because at a certain stage in his spiritual development the Holy Spirit came to him, and to his heart in particular, and transferred the worship of God from his brain to the place of the heart. From now on, this person's worship of God becomes noetic worship in the region of the heart. The mind (*dianoia*) keeps an eye on the prayer of the heart, but it does not participate in it using the forms of rational thought. It

simply eavesdrops on the Holy Spirit's prayer in the heart. This is what is meant by the Holy Spirit praying in the human heart.

As we said earlier, man becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, and his heart in particular becomes the place for this temple's sacrificial altar, when the Holy Spirit begins to pray noetically within him. And man can sense this happening. He is then able to listen to the Holy Spirit saying the prayer and his heart is then able to serve like a priest and respond like a chanter. And so he experiences an inner mystical priesthood. This is when he becomes a member of the royal priesthood. This is when he becomes an active member of the Body of Christ and an active member of the Church. After all, the Holy Spirit is the One Who has introduced him to the Mystical Body of Christ, which is in fact the Church. When

a Christian received Chrismation in the Early Church, Chrismation was the very confirmation that sealed the fact that this Christian had become a member of the Body of Christ.

Now when someone who has the prayer of the Holy Spirit active in his heart desires to pray using his ability to reason, he can do so and pray using words that are different from what he alone hears in the chamber of his heart. But he can also allow himself to repeat or



articulate what he hears being said in his heart.

But it is not within Orthodox tradition to make up extemporaneous prayers, (especially during the Divine Services! We are never allowed to "make up" prayers during the Divine Services!) unless you are in this spiritual state. If you do not have noetic prayer, you should pray with your mind using prayers from the Church services (alone!), because extemporaneous prayer is quite dangerous spiritually for those who have not reached the spiritual stage that corresponds to praying extemporaneously. The Comforter, that is, the Holy Spirit, is the One Who knows how to pray correctly and Who teaches man how to pray correctly. Someone who has been taught by the Holy Spirit how to pray correctly is also able to teach others to do the same.

Christ spoke about this state when He said, *The Holy Spirit will come and dwell in you. And I will also come with the Holy Spirit and with My Father, and We will dwell in you.* Christ clearly says this and tells us how this will take place. He tells us: *Ask and it shall be given you.* He speaks about prayer. He speaks about love. And if you put this all together, what

conclusion do you come to? Christ is talking about a state in which He and the Holy Spirit come and dwell in the believer. Will the believer recognize it when this is taking place within him? Or perhaps he will not recognize it or be aware of it while it is happening? In other words, when the Holy Spirit enters a human being, does He come without being observed, or *with observation*? Or perhaps the Holy Spirit will come because some bishop or priest said so?

I remember when I was a newly ordained priest, I also used to repeat what St. Paul says: *We are the temple of the Holy Spirit*, and *if you destroy this temple*, and so forth. We used to discuss this and talk about it over and over again, moralizing on St. Paul's words. But when the Apostle Paul said, *we are the temple of the Holy Spirit, we are the Body of Christ*, and *you have the Holy Spirit within you*, and the rest, he intended his words for the parish of Corinth. If you carefully read this entire passage, you will see to what kind of believer he is referring. Since he says, *I want all of you to speak in tongues*, he is referring to those believers who speak in tongues. In other words, St. Paul is referring to those who possess various forms of noetic prayer.

In their sermons, priests often say, "dearly beloved Christians, you know you really should not get upset. Look at what St. Paul says: The Holy Spirit is within us and guides us and the Spirit knows our needs and how to pray, and so on and so forth." In other words, they give a sermon and talk about some kind of prayer of the Holy Spirit within the believer, but the believer cannot sense this prayer. He is unaware of its activity within him. He cannot detect it inwardly. He does not hear it being said from within.

But when St. Paul talks about this prayer of the Holy Spirit, is he talking about prayer that can be perceived, or about prayer that cannot be perceived? Does the Apostle Paul really speak in such a vague way about some ill-defined prayer of the Holy Spirit? Is he really so vague about our participation in the Body of Christ? Or does he give us the basic concrete facts taken from experience that explain how this all comes about? In other words, when St. Paul talks about prayer and participation in the Body of Christ, is he talking about something that is sensed noetically and perceived inwardly in a palpable way? Or is he talking about something that is neither noetically sensed nor inwardly perceived?

Let us also examine this same topic through the writings of St. Symeon the New Theologian. He tells us: Here I am again, writing against those who say they have the Spirit of God unconsciously, who think that they have Him in themselves as a result of divine Baptism and who, while they believe they have this treasure, yet recognize themselves as wholly deaf to Him. I am writing against those who, even while confessing they felt nothing whatever in their baptism, still imagine that the gift of God has indwelt and existed within their soul, unconsciously and insensibly, from that

moment up to the present time. Nor are they the only ones, but I am also against those who say they have never had any perception of that gift in contemplation or in revelation, but that they still receive it by faith and thought alone, not by experience, and hold it within themselves as a result of (merely) hearing the scriptures.

When we read the Church Fathers, we learn that it is impossible for someone to be a temple of the Holy Spirit and unaware of it. It is out of the question that such a person would be unable to sense that he is a temple of the Holy Spirit, because *the Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God*. But what does it mean for the Spirit to bear witness to our spirit? Isn't this noetic prayer? Because if it is not noetic prayer, what is it? Is it just the imagination of someone with a high opinion of himself?

There is one and only one interpretation for St. Paul's statement *The Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God*. It refers to noetic prayer. This noetic sensation, this state and this experience that the Holy Spirit awakens in the Christian, is what makes up the Patristic tradition handed down from generation to generation. On the basis of this tradition, a (true) spiritual father can tell when his spiritual child has passed from a state of purification to a state of illumination. Isn't this something that a spiritual father is able to know? And how does he know it? How does a (true) spiritual father know that his spiritual child has reached the stage of illumination? He knows it from what we have just described. So when we talk about theology based on experience, we are talking about piety based on experience, but not pietism. *Theology is experiential piety. It is not just talk. It is really something quite concrete.*



Keep careful watch, to ensure that the enemy does not make off with any who are off guard or remiss; and that no heretic may pervert part of what you have been given. Accepting the faith is like putting into the bank the money we have given you; God will ask you for an account of this deposit.

For the method of godliness consists of these two things, pious doctrines, and virtuous practice: and neither are the doctrines acceptable to God apart from good works, nor does God accept the works which are not perfected with pious doctrines. For what profit is it, to know well the doctrines concerning God, and yet to be a vile fornicator? And again, what profit is it, to be nobly temperate, and an impious blasphemer?

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (+386)



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## YOUR SINS ARE MY SINS, MY SINS ARE YOUR SINS...

*St. Nikolai Velimirovich.*

Love the sinner as well! Do not fly away from the sinners, but go to them without fear.

After all—whoever you may be—you are not much better than they are. Try to love the sinners; you will see that it is easier to love those whom you despise than those whom you envy.

The old Zosim (from the “Brothers Karamazov”) said, “Brothers, don’t be afraid of the sins of a sinner; but love a sinner also—that is the record of love upon earth.”

I know you love St. Peter and St. John, but could you love the sinner Zacchaeus? You can love the good Samaritan but love, please, the prodigal son also!

You love Christ, I am sure; but what about Judas, the seller of Christ? He repented, poor human creature. Why don’t you love him?

Dostojevsky—like Tolstoi and Gogol—emphasized two things: first, there is no great man; secondly, there is no worthless man. He described the blackest crimes and the deepest fall and showed that the authors of such crimes are men just as other men, with much good hidden under their sins.

Servants and vagabonds, idiots and drunkards, the dirty convicts from the Serbian prisons—all those people are God’s sons and daughters, with souls full of fears and hopes, of repentance and longings after good and justice. Between saintliness and vice there is a bridge, not an abyss. The saintliest and the meanest men have still common ground for brotherhood. Your sins are my sins, my sins are your sins.



That is the starting-point for a practical and lucid Christianity. I cannot be clean as long as you are not clean. I cannot be happy as long as you are unhappy. I cannot enter Heaven as long as you are not. What does that mean? It means that you and I are blended together for eternity, and that your effort to separate yourselves from me is disastrous for you and for me.

As long as you look to the greatest sinner in the world and say: “God, I thank thee that I am not as that man,” you are far from Christ and the Kingdom of God. God wants not one good man only; He wants a Kingdom of good men.

If ninety-nine of us are good and saintly but one of our brothers is far from our solace and support, in sin and darkness, be sure God is not among us ninety-nine, but He has gone to find our brother whom we have lost and forgotten. Will you follow him or will you stand self-sufficient?



# 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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## A SANE FAMILY IN AN INSANE WORLD

By Fr. Seraphim Johnson.

*Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons.*

[Deut 4:9]

† † †

### The Fallen World is Insane

God has given all men clear principles for living in the world He created. These principles are most clearly stated in the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church and shown in the lives of the Saints, but they are also written in our hearts, as the Apostle Paul says. They are the truth about the world as it really is. But we don't want to follow these principles because they hinder our living as we want to live. So we have two choices: In the intellectual life, one either conforms desire to truth or truth to desire. That is, we can adjust the way we live to bring it into agreement with the truth that God has revealed to us, or we can distort the truth to make it agree with the way we choose to live. One of these ways is sanity: to live in the real world made by God. The other way is insanity: to live in a fantasy world of our creation.

As Christians, we all would confess that the world is fallen; i.e., it has departed from God and the purpose for which He created it. The world is corrupt, bent, and perverted; it is no longer the true world which God created. But in our lives we act all too often as if this fallen world is the way God meant it to be. We proclaim the truth of the spiritual life with our lips, but in our hearts we are not really too sure that it is real. We are caught up in what our senses tell us, and we have trouble going behind them to see the spiritual

reality of our fallen world, with the result that in our daily lives we forget the truth that this world is not our home. If our senses were reliable, it would not be so dangerous to depend on them, but because of the fall and our disobedience, our senses are corrupted. They do not show us the world as it really is, but rather they filter it through a screen of error and lies. The result is that we live in a world of fantasy. Of course, I don't mean a world like Harry Potter or Star Wars. We know these worlds are fantasies, but we think we live in the "real world." And we don't.

Our fantasies tell us that we can have all the things we want, that we can live however we want, ignoring God and His commandments. God is an abstract concept in this fantasy, rather than the Source of everything and the Ruler of everything. In our blindness, we think we can live in ways He tells us not to, that we can fool Him and hide from Him; as the Psalmist says, *The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.* (Pss 13:1). Now, let us stop and think for a minute. What do we call someone who thinks he is all-powerful? Who thinks he can command the elements? Who thinks he is Napoleon, or Jesus Christ, or Alexander the Great? We call them "insane." Insane because they are living in a fantasy world, a world which is unreal, a world of delusion. And yet when we deny God's created world and live in our own made-up world, are we not just as insane?

This insanity is all around us. It informs the thinking of virtually all the "wise" men and women of this world. Those who have been the leaders of thought in recent centuries, who have laid the foundation for the world in which we live, have chosen to conform truth to their desires, rather than subjecting their desires to the truth. In doing this, they have taught false principles which have

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filtered into the thinking of almost every person in Western culture. As the English scholar C. S. Lewis notes: “There is something which unites magic and applied science while separating both from the ‘wisdom’ of earlier ages. For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men: the solution is a technique; and both, in the practice of this technique, are ready to do things hitherto regarded as disgusting and impious—such as digging up and mutilating the dead.”

The characteristic of many of the founders of our modern world has in fact been uncontrolled sexual passion, expressed as adultery or homosexuality. Margaret Mead and Edward Sapir, the founders of the social science of anthropology, were adulterers and Mead was also a lesbian; they wrote their accounts of the lives of primitive people, supposedly unaffected by the evils of civilization and therefore displaying mankind in its “original” and “proper” form, to support their own immoral lives. Freud, the founder of the modern “talking therapy” psychoanalysis, which acts as a secular substitute for the Church’s Mystery of Confession, engaged in an incestuous relationship with his sister-in-law for years, and based his Oedipus theory on his own sexual perversions. The father of modern economic theory, John Maynard Keynes, was part of a group of active, promiscuous homosexuals, and his economic theories encouraging deficits and debt have guided Western governments for decades. We could go on, citing examples from art, literature, the universities, etc. But the point is clear: the leading thinkers of our civilization chose their desires over the truth. And therefore, the leading thinkers of our civilization were truly and literally insane, out

of touch with reality; and the world they created is insane, because it denies the reality of God and His Will.

There is another fact we need to note about the perverted thinking of these “leading intellectuals.” Homosexuals cannot have children, and adulterers above all do not want to have children. Both are strongly anti-child, because either they cannot have them, or having them might reveal their sinful way of life to the world. This anti-child attitude has several consequences. The first is shortsightedness. Having children is an investment in the future. When you have a child, you are participating in God’s plan for the continuation of the world. And you care about the future. You care what happens to your child, you care what kind of life your child will lead, you care what kind of world your child will live in. But when you have decided against children, your focus is on yourself and your own immediate desires. Who cares about the future, since “in the long run we will all be dead”? This is so vividly clear in Keynesian economic theory, which encourages building up huge debts through spending beyond one’s income so that the present life will be comfortable, but it has no concern for future generations that will inherit these debts.

The anti-child view of life is expressed in another way: children are a burden which we should try to be rid of. If the birth of a child would be inconvenient, the mother should have the right to kill it in the womb through abortion. Once the child is born, the parents should not allow themselves to be inconvenienced by it unduly, but should put the child in day-care as soon as possible, so the mother can return to self-fulfillment through working outside the home. It has become somehow wrong and even “sick” for a mother to prefer to raise her children, rather than to get rid of them as soon as possible and go back to work. Don’t sacrifice for your children; let them sacrifice for you! Again, disciplining children



and raising them to be civilized rather than savages is difficult and time-consuming work. It interferes constantly with the parents' self-fulfillment and enjoyment. So those who have absorbed the anti-child, anti-future way of thinking taught, for example, by the infamous Dr. Spock, ignore raising their children. The child is a burden to be ignored and shunned as much as possible. "Let the schools train them, let their peers train them, let anyone train them, but leave me alone!" And the result is children who have been ruined, who have no sense of being loved, who have no limits, who have no self-control because they have never been controlled. Children who are themselves insane, because they have been raised by insane parents who ignored their God-given responsibility to *train up their children in the way they should go*. (Prov 22:6).

As the social philosophies of these insane thinkers have infiltrated all our institutions—schools and universities, art, movies and literature, political thinking, and even churches—they have taken over the minds of almost everyone living in Western civilization. Their insanity is plainly seen in many of our social policies. For decades we paid unmarried mothers a subsidy from the government, and then we were shocked to find more illegitimate children. We have a whole social and tax system which discourages marriage, and then we wonder why so many people live together without getting married. This is insanity! And, sadly, most Christians share in this insanity. Surveys by the Barna group show that 64% of all American adults and 83% of teenagers think there is no absolute moral truth, but that truth is relative to the individual; i.e., that we should conform the truth to our desires. But even more discouraging is the fact that only 32% of so-called "born again" Christian adults and 9% of "born-again" teenagers in America believe in moral absolutes. I wonder what the figures would be for Orthodox Christians. I fear they would not be much better.

#### The Christian Task is to Restore Sanity

Thanks be to God, though, for He has not abandoned us Orthodox Christians to insanity. Our Lord Jesus Christ was born into this insane world for one reason, and only for one reason: to restore fallen, insane human beings to sanity. True sanity is obedience to God. Sanity is taking your God-given place in the great fabric of creation and fulfilling the tasks God has placed before you. But for fallen, disobedient mankind, this is not possible. Only the God-Man Jesus Christ could restore the possibility of obedience to the fallen creation, and only through obedience can we become sane.

Let us remember that man's body and soul are called equally. Both are to be united to God through virtue: to be sanctified, deified, glorified, and to manifest in this world God's glory and the first fruits of the Kingdom through the transfiguring presence of the Spirit. *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.* (Rom 6:19-20). It is

clear, according to the Apostle's teaching, that the body's proper and natural purpose is to be consecrated to God, to glorify God, and to be a bearer of the Holy Spirit, every bit as much as the soul with which it is united.

Before our Lord Jesus Christ, men created religions of their own to try to make the gods conform to their wishes. All the world's religions are designed either to propitiate angry, capricious gods and keep them from harming people or to attract the gods' favor so they will do what their worshippers want. In either case, they are another attempt to conform the truth to our desires, rather than our desires to the truth. We want to do what we want, but we fear we might offend the gods, so we come up with rituals and sacrifices to buy them off, to make them leave us alone. That way, we hope to be able to get away with living our own way and avoid their punishment. Or we think we can bribe the gods with our prayers, offerings, and rites so that they will do what we want.

Many pagan religions have elaborate spells and rituals which supposedly can compel spirit beings to do what the magician or shaman wants. Their religion manipulates the gods so that they will allow men to live as they wish. Even the apparently higher religions like Buddhism are subtle ways of having one's own will. The Buddhist who follows the higher, purer forms of his religion recognizes no god at all. He is on his own in the world. He may find certain principles of living which will supposedly detach him from the power of the world, but in the end he is living as he wishes with no authority over him. The attraction Islam has for so many people at the present time is of the same sort. It has a set of external acts that must be performed: prayer five times a day, fasting in Ramadan, almsgiving, pilgrimage, avoiding alcohol, etc. These will satisfy Allah, and a man is then free to do what he wants, to be as vicious and power-hungry as he wants.

God saw mankind following all sorts of religions, all of them derived from Satan, all of them in truth ways for human beings to try to conform the world to their desires. When he decided to rescue His fallen creatures, He revealed Himself to selected individuals: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses. God gave the Jews the Law so that they might come to understand His nature and see their own disobedience, and be prepared for our Lord who would show them how to return to obedience. But they turned the Law into just another religion, another system for buying God off. They tabulated the rules, then they made additional rules, so that if you kept their new rules, you wouldn't violate God's rules. And if you kept all the rules, then you were worthy of God's kingdom. But in fact, a Jew does not even have to believe in God; he just has to keep the rules. He can lie and cheat and deceive non-Jews, since the Law does not forbid this, and he is still a good Jew. All religions have the same purpose: follow the rules, and the gods/Allah/spirits will leave you alone and let you do what you want. That is, 98% of your life is your own, to live as

you wish, so long as you give 2% to your rituals. But sadly, this is just more insanity.

Christianity, though, is not one more religion among all these others. Our Lord's purpose was not to give us a set of rules and rites to follow to buy God off. He did not come to show us how to appease God; He came to show us how to please God. Christianity is not a set of rules, but a way of life designed to cure the sickness of disobedience. The purpose of Christianity is to change men's hearts and minds so they are conformed to God and become healthy again as before the Fall. Christianity is not rules; it is life, it is sanity. It makes it possible for us to live a sane life in the world God has made. A Christian can never properly say, "There, I've followed all the rules, so God is in my debt and can't punish me." Insane followers of religions can say this (although they're wrong), but all a sane Christian can ever say is, "I'm a sinner who has fallen short of God's will for me."

Of course, this means that Christianity is hard, because it demands that we conform our wills to the world God has created. It would be so much easier to force the world to obey us! To use our religious rituals or our science to make the world the way we want it! But Christianity says that we have to do the opposite: we have to make ourselves the way God wants us. And we don't want to do that. After all, that's what the Fall was about in the first place: Adam and Eve wanted the world on their terms, not God's. And even after Baptism, we continue to want the world our own way.

Because of this, Christians all through history have busily been converting Christianity into a religion. Seeing that it's hard to transform one's whole life through total obedience to God, they try to adjust Christianity, to make it a set of rules and rituals. Then they can follow the rules, and the rest of life is their own. So we take the need to pray always, and we turn it into reading prayers for 10 minutes in the morning and the evening. We take the need to deny ourselves, and turn it into fasting on Wednesday and Friday (or at least abstaining from certain kinds of food on those days, even though we still eat as much as we want). We take the need to live constantly in God's presence, and turn it into a requirement to go to Liturgy for two hours on Sunday morning. We take the requirement to be holy, even as our God is holy, and turn it into the Ten Commandments. Some of us even use vows and promises to try to force God to do our will. In other words, many Orthodox Christians work hard to turn Christianity into just another system of rules and rituals. When that happens, we stop conforming our wills to God, and we start trying to conform the world to our desires. We take the tremendous gift our Lord has given us—the gift of restoring our relationship with God, of making it possible for us to be what we were created to be—and we destroy it. We turn it into something corrupt and pointless. And we destroy any chance of being healed from the sickness of disobedience. We turn from the hope of sanity and go back

to the insanity of the fallen world. And then we wonder why Christianity doesn't seem to have any power. Why it doesn't seem to make a difference in our lives. And, even worse, we destroy the hope of sanity for our families.

### Creating a Sane Family

We have seen that our task as Christians is to become sane, but if we live in a family, we have an additional task: to make our family sane too. As spouses, we need to help our spouse to sanity; and as parents, we need to lead our children to sanity. But just as we so often lose sight of our quest for sanity in our own lives, even more do we forget about it with our families. And then, as one elder in Greece said: "Just think, parents come and complain about all sorts of problems they face with their sons and daughters. I remind them that whatever they consider to be their child's problem is really not the primary issue. The primary issue is whether their son or daughter has an authentic relationship with the living God. If not, then this vacuum will unavoidably be filled by vices such as drugs, promiscuity, drinking, sloth, you name it. But when they establish a right relationship with God, then all other problems will eventually find their resolution. That's how things work."

So often we parents forget about restoring sanity to our children and settle instead for trying to make them be good. We give them a set of rules we expect them to follow, and then we get angry or sad when they don't follow them. But we do not set before them the real goal of Christian living. Remember, God does not want you or your children to be good, He wants you all to be holy. These are not the same thing at all. Goodness is following the rules, holiness is becoming like God. Deification is the route to sanity. Of course, if you become like God, you will generally be good, although at times your "goodness" will not agree with the world's definition of goodness. But being good will never make you holy.

Parents at home are likely to reinforce this misunderstanding. They stress outward behavior. They want their children to be "good" in public; i.e., not to throw tantrums when they're little, not to drink too much, or use drugs, or drive too fast when they get older. But they don't hold up the ideal of holiness. And even worse, they don't show it in their own lives. Children are very perceptive. They see what really matters to their parents, and all too often they see that the Christian life is not what matters to their parents. They are expected to go to church on Sunday and major feast days, to fast, to say prayers in a rote way morning and evening, not to talk back, and generally not to fight too blatantly with their brothers and sisters. When they get older, they are told not to drink too much, not to give in to sexual temptations, not to drive too fast. And that's it. That's Christianity as far as they are concerned.

These poor children can't see any reason for the rules they're given. They are just arbitrary. Who cares if you eat meat on Friday? Is God some kind of judge who keeps track of your



faults in a big book? That idea is soon outgrown, and then there is no motivation for “being good.” Then the parents wonder why their children are not turning out the way they want them to. Why aren’t they going to church and being good Orthodox Christians? But a better question is: why should they be good Orthodox Christians if they have never been given an understanding of what Orthodox Christianity is? If we raise them to think Christianity is no more than a set of unmotivated rules, imposed arbitrarily by a distant God for Whom we have no feeling and of Whom we have no knowledge, why would we expect them to follow those rules when they are old enough to start thinking for themselves. We have made Christianity just another of the many competing religions, not the way to come to know the living God and become like Him. We have deprived our children of motivation, and they respond by being unmotivated.

So what can we do? The husband and wife have to start with themselves and their mutual relationship. Each of them must keep the true goal of Christianity before their eyes all the time, and they must use all the weapons and tools the Church offers to become sane Christians. They must be on guard all the time, lest they be corrupted and misled by the insanity of the world around them. They must think, study, compare, always asking if this thought or action is compatible with Christian sanity. They must be vigilant and watchful in their own lives, and focus on establishing a living relationship with God, a relationship which is not just intellectual, but which determines how they live in all aspects of their lives.

Along with this focus on their own individual holiness, the husband and the wife must each make it their goal in life to bring their spouse to holiness. Following the ideals of the world, even Christian people marry for completely wrong reasons. Some marry for sexual satisfaction, some marry for companionship, but in almost all cases they marry because they expect to get something from the marriage: support when they are down, understanding, etc. But a Christian should marry, not for what he or she can get, but for what they can give. The purpose of Christian marriage is not to be supported, but to support; not to be encouraged, but to encourage; not even to attain one’s own salvation, but to help another to salvation. Too often a husband and wife act like fleas on a dog: all they want is to draw their own nourishment, not to nourish the other. But as Christians, our first concern must be our spouse’s relationship with the Lord, leading to transfiguration and salvation. Husbands, you need to help your wives become holy! Wives, you need to lead your husbands to become like God! If you are saved without your spouse, what a grief and shame that would be...

This is the major reason the Church discourages, or even prohibits, marriage to non-Orthodox Christians. How can you attain the primary purpose of marriage—mutual holiness—if you do not even have the same goal in life? How can an insane person help you become sane? And can you

really live a sane life when you are yoked to an insane person? Will you not constantly be drawing apart, heading in different directions? Or will you, the Orthodox spouse, in fact be drawn in the direction of the world and insanity?

The husband and wife are crowned in marriage, because God intends them to be a new kingdom on this earth. The husband is the king, the wife the queen; together they are to create an island of sanity in the midst of an insane world. And when they are given children, these are their subjects, to be trained as citizens of the sane kingdom, the Kingdom of God in the larger sense, and the kingdom of the sane family in the narrower sense. There is nothing more important for the father and mother, after their mutual salvation, than the sanity of their children.

To raise sane children in a sane kingdom, you cannot be satisfied with a set of rules. This is itself insanity, since it does not offer a reason for obedience to these rules. The children must be presented from their earliest years with the vision of what it means to lead a sane life, and they must be cautioned to understand that the world around them is insane in its opposition to God. Parents cannot let their children immerse themselves in the music, books, television, and way of life of the fallen world and then think that prayers in the morning and evening, fasting on Wednesday and Friday, and church on most Sundays will make their children Orthodox Christians. If your children are filled with the mythologies of Star Wars or Harry Potter, which are not in any way Christian; if they learn from their friends that sexual purity is “no big deal”; if they fill their waking hours with music which is Satanic in its inspiration, this is what will determine their outlook. And no amount of time in church, fasting, or prayers read from a book will influence them.

We Orthodox Christians have the most amazing, most powerful, most wonderful possibility offered to us: to become like God, to be deified, to be transfigured! But we don’t present that possibility to our children, because we don’t accept it for ourselves. Children are not stupid or blind. They see much more than we want them to see. We pay lip service to sanity, while we pursue the good things of this insane world in our own lives and we think that our children will not notice. But they do! They see what we really care about. And if they see we don’t care about mutual support in the way of deification, they most assuredly won’t care about it either! We wonder why our children are not the Orthodox Christians we would like them to be, when the answer is perfectly plain: we are not the Orthodox Christians we are called to be, and they are simply following our example. If we don’t take the wondrous possibility of deification seriously, no set of rules we try to impose on our children (or ourselves, for that matter) will produce true Orthodox Christians.

Of course, you cannot force another person to holiness. It is always possible that your spouse or child will turn from God for a time or for good. You cannot stop them, if that is

their free choice, but if you have not encouraged them and helped them by modeling for them the true life in Christ, you will answer before God for neglecting what is in fact the primary task He gave you in life. But if you fail to grow in Christ yourself and to lead your spouse and children to growth in Christ, you have no hope of creating a sane family. You will end your days in insanity, and you will bring down your family with you into the insanity of rebellion against God and His creation. What a fall that will be! What a loss! May God grant that all Orthodox Christians keep their focus on His sanity and guide each other into His Kingdom!

### So What Do I Do Now?

**N**ow I am going to do something very risky. After talking about the danger of reducing Christianity to rules, I am going to talk about some very practical things Orthodox Christians can do to become sane. Sanity, after all, is not an abstract state: it is knowing God as a person Who loves us, Who cares for us, and Whom we want to be like. Have you ever watched a little child follow his father or her mother around? They have their little lawn mowers or stoves so they can be like mommy or daddy, and that's a good model for us with God. Copy His life as shown in the Gospels and in the lives of the saints so that you become like Him.

The very first thing you have to do is recognize that the world is insane, and you are infected with insanity too. If you think you're healthy, you can't be cured. But if you know you're sick, out of touch with reality, then there is hope for you to be healed. Knowing the Orthodox Faith and reading books which remind us of the Faith and its true view of the world is essential for recognizing our sickness and being healed from it.

However, academic knowledge alone is not enough to save us. Most of you probably already know a lot of facts about Orthodoxy, but these facts have to become real before they affect you. And the only way they become real is by constant contact with the only doctor who can heal our insanity—our Lord Jesus Christ. His Name is our weapon of healing. It was through this weapon that the Saints were made whole and sane. If you don't know God, you can't become like Him. And the only way to get to know Him is by talking with Him. We need to call on His Name constantly. This means constant prayer during the day.

Prayer can't be just ten minutes morning and evening; it has to be a part of your whole life. Every time you have a moment when you have to wait for something or someone, call on the Lord Jesus Christ. When you are working at manual tasks, call on the Lord Jesus. Call on Him, but remember to stop and listen sometimes, in case He wants to tell you something. You received the grace of the Holy Spirit in Chrismation, and that grace will lead you to constant prayer, if you let it. But you have to cooperate with it. Call on the Holy Spirit to remind you to pray and to guide you in prayer, and then PRAY.

In addition to praying the Jesus Prayer or similar brief prayers calling for God's help, it is vital for the members of a healthy family to be praying for each other. Husbands, pray for your wives. Every time you think of them during the day, say a brief prayer for them. When you know they have a temptation or a special task, pray for them. Wives, do the same for your husbands. Show your love for each other by asking God to help your spouse frequently throughout the day. And pray for your children. Don't just worry about them; pray for them. Let them understand that you pray for them, and ask them to pray for you. Teach them that a family is only held together through mutual prayer. Children, pray for your parents all through the day, but especially when you know they have worries or problems. Bind the family together in love through mutual prayer.

Many Saints' lives give us examples of the power of prayer to create a Christian family. Consider Sts. Gregory and Nonna, the parents of St. Gregory the Theologian and two other children who became saints; Sts. Xenophon and Mary and their children, all of whom were faithful to our Lord in great trials, and all of whom came to sanctity; or Sts. Emmelia and Basil the Elder, parents of St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Peter of Sebaste, St. Macrina the Younger, and St. Naucratus. These and many other saints give us examples of sane family living. We should study their lives and then pray to them for help. They should be our friends, our guides, our confidants as we build our own families.

So we see that we have to go beyond weekly attendance at Liturgy. We have to make our whole week a preparation for union with God in His Holy Mysteries, and in that union we will be united as a family. Holy Communion, Confession, and the Liturgy can only take their rightful place in your life if they are the culmination of a constant effort to grow closer to God, to root out insanity, and to be conformed to the real world God has created. If we take the Lord's Body and Blood without this preparation, while we are still living in insanity, we are more likely to be harmed, as the Apostle says, than to be helped. But with a life of sanity, the Body and Blood of our Lord bring us together with all the sane people who have ever lived, unite us as a family, and prepare us for a life of union with God forever in His Kingdom, the Kingdom of the truly sane.



**W**hoever is at peace in the material world, and is not concerned about the salvation of his soul, is like the senseless birds that don't make a noise from within the egg, so as to break the shell and come out to enjoy the sun—the heavenly flight in the life of Paradise—but instead remain unmoving and die inside the egg shell.

**Blessed Elder Paisios the Athonite, (+1994)**



## THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE

By St. John Maximovitch.

Many people believe that to live according to the faith and to fulfill the will of God is very difficult. Actually—it's very easy. One needs only attend to details, to trifles, and try to avoid evil in the slightest and most trivial things. This is the simplest and surest way to enter the world of the spirit and draw near to God. A man often thinks that the Creator demands great things of him, that the Gospel insists on complete self-sacrifice, the abolition of one's personhood, etc., as a condition of faith. A man is so frightened by this that he begins to be afraid of becoming acquainted with God, of drawing near to God, and hides himself from God, not even wishing to look into God's Word. "If I can't do anything important for God, then I'd just better stay away from things spiritual, stop thinking about eternity, and live 'in a normal way'."

There exists at the entrance to the spiritual realm a "hypnosis of great deeds:" one must either do some big thing or do nothing. And so people do nothing at all for God or for their souls! It is very strange—the more a man is devoted to the little things of life, the less he wishes to be honest or pure or faithful to God in those same little things. And, moreover, each one must adopt a correct attitude toward little things if one wishes to come near to the kingdom of heaven.

**Wishes to come near:** In this is summed up all the difficulties of the religious life. Often one wishes to enter into the kingdom of heaven quite unexpectedly, in some miraculous and magical way, or, by right—through some kind of great feat. But neither the one nor the other is the right way to find the higher world. One does not enter God's presence in some wondrous manner while remaining indifferent on earth to the needs of the kingdom of God and its bright eternity, nor can one purchase the treasures of the kingdom of God by some kind of eternal act, however great that act might be. Yet good deeds, holy deeds are necessary for one to grow into a higher life, a bright will, a good desire, a heavenly psychology, a heart that is both pure and fair.

**A glass of water:** *Verily, verily I say unto you that whosoever offers one of the least of these but a cup of cold water, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward.* In this saying of the Lord is the highest expression of the smallness of the good. "A glass of water"—this is not much.

**Communicating in good spirit:** In every communication between people there must without fail be a good spirit: this spirit is Christ, openly manifest or hidden. "In the name of a disciple:" this is the first step in communicating with another person in the name of Jesus Christ Himself. Many people, not as yet knowing the Lord and the wondrous fellowship in His Name still have among themselves an unselfish, pure and human fellowship which brings them ever closer to the Spirit of Christ.

**The lesser good is necessary:** As a matter of fact, the lesser good is more necessary for mankind than the greater. People can get along with their lives without the greater good; without the lesser they cannot exist. Mankind perishes not from a lack of the greater good, but from an insufficiency of just this lesser good. The greater good is no more than a roof, erected on the brick walls of the lesser good.

The lesser, easier good was left on this earth for man by the Creator Himself, who took all the greater good upon Himself. Whosoever does the lesser, the same creates—and through him the Creator Himself creates—the greater good. Of our little good the Creator makes His Own great good. For as our Lord is the Creator who formed all things from nothingness, so is He more able to create the greater good from the lesser.

Through such lesser, easy work, done with the greatest simplicity, a man is accustomed to the good and begins to serve it with his whole heart, sincerely, and in this way enters into an atmosphere of good, lets down the roots of his life into new soil, the soil of the good. The roots of human life quickly accommodate themselves to this good earth, and soon cannot live without it... Thus is a man saved: from the small comes the great. "Faithful in little things" turns out to be "faithful in the greater."

**Our moral sense:** Lay aside all theoretical considerations that it is forbidden to slaughter millions, women, children, and elderly; be content to manifest your moral sense by in no way killing the human dignity of your neighbor, neither by word, nor by innuendo, nor by gesture. Do not be angry over trifles *against your brother vainly* (Mt 5:22) or in the daily contacts of life speak untruth to your neighbor. These are trifles, small change, of no account; but just try to do this and you will see what comes of it.

**Prayer:** It is hard to pray at night. But try in the morning. If you can't manage to pray at home than at least as you ride to your place of employment attempt with a clear head the "Our Father" and let the words of this short prayer resound in your heart. And at night commend yourself with complete sincerity into the hands of the Heavenly Father. This indeed is very easy.

And give, give a glass of cold water to everyone who has need of it; give a glass filled to the brim with simple human companionship to everyone that lack it, the very simplest companionship...

*O wondrous path of little things, I sing thee a hymn! Surround yourselves, O people, gird up yourselves with little works of good—with a chain of little, simple, easy and good feelings which cost us naught, a chain of bright thoughts, words and deeds. Let us abandon the big and the difficult. That is for them that love it and not for us for whom the Lord in His Mercy, for us who have not yet learned to love the greater, has poured forth the lesser love everywhere, free as water and air.*

## DEMONS OF DARKNESS

Source: *Empirical Dogmatics: The Spoken Theology of Protopresbyter John Romanides*, by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos (quoted text is attributed to Fr. John Romanides).

*For we are not ignorant of his devices!*

[2 Cor 2:11]

† † †

A part from the angels (bodiless hosts) there are demons. The Prophets, Apostles and Fathers have experience of this fact and describe the presence of demons. Appearances of demons are described throughout Holy Scripture, and St. John the Evangelist actually declares that the purpose of the Christ's incarnation is *that He might destroy the works of the devil*. (1 Jn 3:8).

The demons were originally angels, because God did not create evil, but through their pride they fell away from God's glory and became demons. Christ said: *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*. (Lk 10:18). We shall draw attention to a few points that are relevant to the existence of the demons and their method of warfare.

As creatures of God and spirits, the demons are "ethereal beings," but on account of their fall they do not participate in the glory of God as Light, so they are dark beings. All creation shares in the creative and sustaining energy of God, and this includes the demons. "Even the devil has a share in the uncreated energy of God," that is to say, in His uncreated creative and sustaining energy; not in the glorifying energy of God but in the punitive energy.

As a noetic spirit the devil is not bound by time and place, but he is not present everywhere, as is God. He moves at great speed. "The devil, for example, moves so quickly that he can bother a million people, so he will be here, there and in China, though without being present everywhere. Because of his immense ability to move he can be both here and elsewhere. His speed of movement is not restricted by matter. So he is not restricted either by our human body or by our dimensions."

God loves the whole creation, but not everyone shares in the same way in this love. It depends on the therapeutic treatment that each one undergoes. The devil, however, cannot be cured, because he generated evil. "God loves the devil as well. The devil, however, is not going to be saved. God loves everyone. The issue is not that I shall be saved if God loves me. The issue is whether someone undergoes the treatment necessary to enable him to reach the state of illumination, so that, when he stands in sight of the glory of God, he will see the glory of God as Light and not as everlasting fire and outer darkness."

In the West they believe the opposite. "The teaching that Christ loves the devil as well is something that Augustine cannot accept even in his dreams. It is so far from his thoughts." Certainly this love does not lead to salvation, because it does not meet with a positive and free response. The Fathers have

ample knowledge of the existence and energy of the demons from experience. Since they have been freed from the passions and their souls have become subtle, they see both angels and demons. "The Fathers are not speculative thinkers. When they speak about *theoria* they speak with very great precision. They know exactly what they are saying about theology, dogmas and the wiles of the devil..."

The glorified know the demons' thoughts and actions from experience. The Apostle Paul writes: *For we are not ignorant of his devices*. (2 Cor 2:11). "If someone becomes a specialist in the struggle against the devil he is very well aware of how the devil and the demons work."

The devil knew God before the Fall and still sees the glory of God. However, as he is incurable, his nature is darkened and he sees fire. That is why iconographers depict him as dark or black. "The devil is the greatest 'negative theologian', because he sees the glory of God as darkness and fire."

The devil knows Holy Scripture and interprets it from his own perspective, as we clearly see in the temptations of Christ, when he used scriptural passages in accordance with his own opinions. "For the Fathers *illumination* does not mean that someone has studied and knows the Old and New Testaments by heart. The devil also knows the Old and New Testaments by heart. It is not only Christians who know them. The devil can interpret Holy Scripture as much as he likes." Thus the devil becomes a catechist to those who accept him. "I think that perhaps the best catechist and the greatest catechumen who existed then—when catechism was simply intellectual and not purification of the heart—was the devil himself."

The devil's warfare against human beings takes many different forms. "When someone reads the Fathers of the Church he finds there an excellent strategy, according to the devil. Because the devil did not know anything about immutable laws as criteria for legal ethics, truth and so on. The devil did not take account of any laws. He is not someone who wages war as we do today, so to speak. As you know, the Geneva Conventions say that when someone is taken prisoner he must be provided with medical care, that he should eat three times a day, that he should have clean sheets every two to three days and that he should have a pillowcase and not sleep on the floor. And all states have accepted these regulations internationally and war is now waged on the basis of legislation.

Well, before those Conventions, when nations went to war there were no rules. Everyone attacked the enemy as he wished. There were no regulations. The war waged between human beings and the devil is something like that. The devil does not recognize any rule of good behavior in his conflict with man. For that reason it is extremely difficult for someone to become an Orthodox theologian. Why?

The best guide on this subject is St. Symeon the New Theologian, who gives detailed descriptions of these matters. He says that the devil's first concern is without doubt that we

should not even hear the name of Christ or anything about the name of Christ. If, contrary to the devil's hopes, we hear something about Christ and it begins to attract our interest, he then changes tactics. Having lost that battle, he has other strongholds. He wages another type of war, because he has another strategy afterwards for someone who has become a catechumen. He teaches him, 'Stop fasting now.' Then he says, 'Your spiritual father gave you this interpretation for that passage, but there is another better interpretation.' The devil begins teaching him how to interpret Holy Scripture and how to teach about the Person of Christ, and he becomes a teacher of Christianity.

If someone progresses from *purification* to *illumination*, the devil then begins to introduce his own way of enlightening man. 'Leave that now. It is not the nous that should be illuminated: the rational faculty should be illuminated. Set the nous aside and don't pay much attention to those who say that purification means purification of the nous. Purification means purification of the rational faculty. So you ought to go and study, become highly educated, learn philosophy and so on.'

If someone reaches *illumination*, the devil has his technique at every level. Even if a monk arrives at *glorification* he will still try to destroy him then. The Fathers mention examples of glorified people who were brought down. That is why the icon in the *Ladder* of St John Climacus shows a monk at the very top with one foot in Paradise and the devil is dragging him down by the other foot.

I ask the students at the university now, 'Which of you, when you finish your theology degree, will be that kind of theologian?' Because theology and the troparia of the Church draw a parallel between learning theology and strategy and sport.

In sport, particularly in those days, when someone entered the contest, there were no rules of good behavior like those that we have now in competitions. Now we have the umpire with his whistle, who calls 'foul', 'out' and so on. In those days sport was like war, without rules of behavior and without an umpire. And the devil has no umpire, so the Christian is an athlete and a soldier. When someone is going to become a theologian he really ought to take an interest in strategy and sport rather than philosophy. Generally speaking, he will learn more about the struggle from how the generals wage war than he will learn from philosophers. From all this it is clear that no distinction exists in the Fathers between theologians and

spiritual fathers. Theologians are spiritual fathers and spiritual fathers are theologians."

The devil also creates various inspirations and brings thoughts (*logismoi*) or even good feelings. "There are some people who think that, when they feel well disposed towards someone, for instance, when they see someone who is poor and they feel sympathy for him—these are human feelings. And [they think that] when someone has good feelings, we should say that they are inspired by God. Yes, but good feelings can also be inspired by the devil. Inspirations come from many different sources. According to patristic tradition the only unerring feeling that can exist in man is when the Holy Spirit prays within him. Thus, good feelings can proceed from the devil as well, not only from God."

We can distinguish the faith that is a gift of the Holy Spirit from the faith that comes from the devil. "Faith saves. But which faith? The faith that the Holy Spirit gives us. Not

the faith that we offer to God. Because we offer our own faith; we give God our works, everything. Then God comes and gives these same things back to us through the Holy Spirit, and from then on they become spiritual and not demonic. A faith that is not spiritual faith has to become spiritual. A work that is not a spiritual work eventually becomes a demonic work. What was the work of the Pharisee? If the Pharisee were alive today he

would be the best Christian in our parishes, the way they have ended up."

Situations that arise within the Church can also be demonic. "If we have music in Church that provokes demonic feelings, then it is demonic. Not that what provokes erotic love is demonic in itself, but that is not the purpose of the Church. We cannot have romantic relationships with the saints, Christ and the All-Holy Virgin."

The ecstatic states observed among Neoplatonists are demonic. "For the Fathers of the Church Neoplatonic ecstasy is a reality, but it is a gift from the devil, not from the Holy Spirit. The Fathers emphasize this. For that reason we find the Fathers condemning Neoplatonists and religiosity, because they are overwhelmed by demonic energies. That is why they have those strange experiences. Nowadays, of course, serious people do not concern themselves with Platonic mysticism. There are, however, many religious people in the West who are involved in spirituality in that way. Thus success in Platonism is a demonic act, for us at least, by our criteria."





Some ascetic acts may be demonic. “When the Fathers speak about asceticism and self-control, self-control is not only for single people but also for those who are married. That is why we have fasts: so that sometimes we practice self-restraint. Married people also practice self-control, at least by mutual agreement, according to the Apostle Paul’s exhortation, because if it is one-sided this abstinence can be dangerous, as St. Paul says. The devil has many tricks, so it has to be by agreement.” In addition, “Asceticism that does not make progress and stands still becomes demonic because it eventually leads to pride.”

Without a doubt the devil actively attacks people, but he can only produce negative results if they co-operate and respond to the devil’s wiles. Someone becomes the devil’s victim when he retains evil thoughts (*logismoi*) within himself. In the extremely varied warfare waged by the devil, man needs to learn to distinguish simple thoughts from complex thoughts, God’s energy from demonic energies, and the appearance of God’s Light from the devil’s light. “Something that may be considered demonic from the Orthodox standpoint may be considered healthy from another point of view. What Orthodox theology regards as originating from the devil, the newspapers *Apoyevmatini* and *Eleftherotypia* may regard as good for people. The problem for Orthodox Christians is knowing what the criterion should be.”

“Most of all someone needs to learn to distinguish the energies of the devil, so that he can discern which energy influencing him is from God and which energy is from other created things and particularly from the devil. This ability to discern between created and uncreated energies is the basis of the spiritual gift of discerning spirits. One has to distinguish between the energies of the evil spirit and of the Holy Spirit.” Sometimes the devil *transforms himself into an angel of light* (2 Cor 11:14). Demonic light is different from the Light of God. “The uncreated Light never comes from outside. It always comes from within. The demon is external and the light of the devil is external. When the devil reveals light to someone it comes from outside.”

“When the devil appears to man, he appears in conjunction with him, never merged with him. The created light of the devil cannot merge with man. For that reason, when the devil appears he always appears with shape and color, and he is always outside man. It is a light that co-exists, say the Fathers. The devil’s light exists alongside man. When it is the uncreated Light, however, it is without shape, form or color

and amorphous, and it is seen through merging. So someone who is glorified is within the Light and everything around him is within the Light. And the Light shines from everywhere and the Light is pervasive. The devil’s light is limited to one place and is also colored.”

Anyone who has the gift of discernment can immediately perceive delusion and is not deluded. That is why in patristic language the glorified are described as *unerring*, which means that they do not go astray. Discerning spiritual fathers play an important role on this spiritual journey. In any case, a spiritual father ought to be a theologian, in the charismatic sense of the term, as theology is knowledge of God and whoever acquires this knowledge can discern *the spirits, whether they are of God*. (1 Jn 4:1). “The fact that the spiritual father has noetic prayer signifies that he has the gift of discerning spirits and knows the wiles of the devil beyond all doubt. He knows the energies of the devil with amazing accuracy. He is a spiritual father. But this is Orthodox theology. Consequently this means that the spiritual father is inevitably Orthodox; it is impossible for him not to be Orthodox. Obviously the spiritual father ought to be a guide, not someone who speculates about these issues. He should have precise knowledge of these matters and guide his spiritual children with precision. If he speculates he is lost and his followers will be lost. This is inevitable. From the patristic point of view this is virtue. This is also why heresy leads people to Hell.”

The devil incited Adam and Eve to sin, to disobey God’s will, with the result that death came about. This means that the devil, not God, is the creator of death. From that time onwards the devil has dominated man through death. St. Paul, referring to the purpose of Christ’s incarnation, when He assumed a mortal body subject to suffering but free from sin, writes: *He Himself [Christ] likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*. (Heb 2:14-15).

It is clear that the devil is closely linked with death and dominates man, because through fear of death man lives carnally, he is in the grip of selfish love and acquires the passions of love of praise, love of pleasure and love of money. “Satan, who is himself the origin of sin, through death and corruption implicates the whole of humankind and creation in sin and death. To be in the power of death, according to the Apostle Paul, is to be a slave to the devil and a sinner,



because of the inability of the flesh to live in accordance with the law of God, which is unselfish love.”

Christ was victorious over the devil, death and sin through His Cross and Resurrection. As death entered man’s body at the instigation of the devil, victory over the devil and death cannot come about through speculations and rational thoughts, only through the Cross, Tomb and Resurrection of Christ. “It is clear that for St. Paul the bodily Resurrection of Christ is the destruction of the devil, death and corruption. Christ is the first to rise from the dead. If there is no Resurrection there can be no salvation. As death is a consequence of the interruption of communion with God’s life and love, and for that reason man and the creation are held captive by the devil, only a real resurrection can destroy the power of the devil. Central to biblical and patristic thought is a Christology of actual union, which depends on biblical teaching about Satan, death, corruption and human destiny. Satan rules by means of death, completely and physically. His defeat has to be complete and physical. The reinstatement of communion ought not to come about only in the realm of the noetic dimension, but more significantly through the creation of which man is an integral part.”

Consequently Christians overcome the devil, death and sin when they share in Christ’s victory, when they are members of the Church, members of the risen Body of Christ. “Death is the devil’s greatest power and is destroyed within the Body of Christ, where the faithful continuously fight against Satan and struggle to acquire unselfish love. This battle against the devil and this struggle for unselfish love are centered on the collective Eucharistic life of the local parish.”

The Christian’s struggle is essentially against the devil: inwardly against thoughts (*logismoi*) and passions, and outwardly. This is also the struggle of the Church. “The Church’s struggle is not only inward, namely, that it strives against the devil and temptations to enable everybody to attain to illumination. The Tradition itself continuously comes into conflict with things outside the Church. But it is difficult to define what these things outside the Church are. An officer in the Emperor’s army may not be baptized, and may have one foot inside the Church and the other foot outside. The boundaries between the Church and the world are not clear for us Orthodox. We cannot accept as Orthodox the view that Augustine expresses in *The City of God (De Civitate Dei)*, that there is the role of the devil and here is the role of grace. Until we depart to the Lord the devil is with us continuously and struggles to swallow us up.”

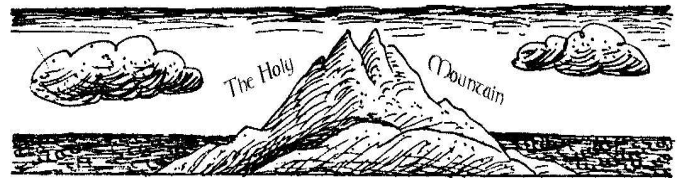
The Christian must be set free from the energies of the demons. This used to happen during catechism, which is why the catechumen used to learn this art of war against the devil. The Fathers laid down the readings from the Gospel from this perspective. During the period of *purification* the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were read. In fact

the Gospel of Mark speaks about fighting demonic energies and its dominant theme is *purification*. This *purification* took place in the period of Great Lent, through the exorcisms, for candidates for baptism, the catechumens. After baptism, which took place on Great and Holy Saturday, the Gospel of John was read, which pays almost no attention to the devil.

“Salvation for humankind and creation cannot come about by means of a simple act of forgiveness of any legalistic record of sins. Nor can it come about by rendering satisfaction to the devil or to God. Salvation can come about through the destruction of the devil and his power.” Anyone who fights the devil by the power of Christ and overcomes him understands his wiles and becomes a real theologian. Orthodox theology is *polemical* and it is interpreted by means of *the art of war*. “Being a theologian means first and foremost that someone is an expert in the wiles of the devil. Illumination and particularly glorification transmit the gift of discerning spirits so that the devil may be put to shame, especially when he resorts to teaching theology and spirituality to those who are beginning to slip out of his hands.”

Any sort of theology that does not know the wiles of the devil is heretical and under the influence of the devil. “The enemy of life and death (the devil) can only be destroyed when Christians are able to say with certitude, *For we are not ignorant of his devices.* (2 Cor. 2:11). Any kind of theology that cannot define precisely the methods and deceptions of the devil is clearly heretical, as such a theology has already been deceived by the devil. That is exactly why the Fathers could affirm that heresy is the work of the devil.”

In any case, participation in the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God depends on warfare against the demons. Otherwise one cannot experience the glory and rule of God. “The glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God reaches man through the expulsion of demons. We have purification, which is essentially the expulsion of demons. When the demons are driven out the glory and rule of God comes.” It follows that “every saint of the Church represents the triumph of faith over the powers of the devil.”



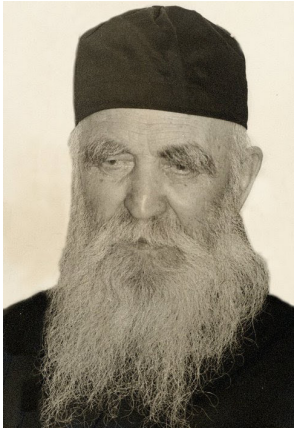
You don’t see how, with every prayer you utter, many demons fall and turn back. You only see how much you are wounded. Know that they also are being beaten, and flee. Each time we show patience, they flee in leaps; and with each prayer they are seriously wounded. So, in time of war, don’t expect that—while you are firing bullets and cannonballs—they’ll retaliate with Turkish Delight and chocolates.

Blessed Elder Joseph the Hesychast, (+1959)



## THE IMPIETY OF PEOPLE HAS REACHED THE HIGH POINT

*By the Holy Elder Philotheos of Paros, written to a General in 1955. [this timeless piece of factual observations and advice remains even more accurate and vital in our days, some 60 years after its authorship]*



The impiety, corruption, senselessness and lack of conscience of people, both lay-people and clergymen, men and women, rich and poor, generals and soldiers, the rulers and the ruled over has reached a high point and is speedily progressing in leaps and bounds till it reaches the greatest precipice.

What is countering this pitiful progression of spiritual impiety? It is: the infinite compassion of

God; His immeasurable mercy and unimaginable long-suffering; the intercessions of His all immaculate Mother and of all the Saints; the little virtue, faith, hope and love of the few people; their prayers and petitions to the Lord for the salvation of the whole world; the lack of evil in the babes and infants (although even the majority of the babies from their birth receive from their evil and corrupted parents as an inheritance and partake of the wickedness, the evil and bad habits of their birth-givers). All the above things **restrain the most just wrath and the most righteous anger of the merciful and infinitely compassionate God.**

But until when? Until the cup is filled, which as it seems, has been filled and has begun to pour out not completely, but little by little. This slow change in God's wrath is again allowed for our benefit. What benefit, you ask? So that we can understand how harsh it is to sin and not repent, and so that fearing we might cease sinning and enraging God, who is our most loving-caring Father, the Provider, the Ruler, the Protector and Granter of all good things.

Unfortunately nothing, nothing at all scares or intimidates us; we have become worse than the irrational beasts because they know their protector and master. Man, however, not only does not know Him, but even blasphemes against Him. When animals happen to pass by a slippery place and slip or fall, they remember the fall and they won't pass by that area again, they might even prefer that someone kill them rather than that they pass by that place.

Man, on the other hand, who is more senseless/foolish than the animals, when he happens to fall in a certain area and becomes wounded, wounded in soul, he does not think of the fall, the harm, but he runs there with pleasure. Have mercy, have mercy O Lord upon such minds. But even if a

father, mother, brother, spiritual father, teacher or priest or spiritual guide is found who advises him, he continues to propel himself to the avenues of fallen and sinful behaviors.

Be careful, guard yourself, depart, don't go to that place, to that person, do not do that sin, it is dangerous, it is a double death of body and soul, it is hell! Most people will not only not accept such counsel, but they even get mad, angry, and are hostile towards the doctor. For these reasons, the people of today's generation, aside from the other sins which they have, also have pride, and being prideful they neither receive counsel, nor correction nor repentance. The teacher, if he is a priest and spiritual father, must be careful to invent medicines and appropriate ways, to correct them. Neither should he be silent, nor should he censure them harshly and abruptly, because strict censures are bruises to prideful and impious ones, and if he abruptly censures them, he will lose them completely.

The teacher must become wise and very discerning, and because no one is wise in this world of himself, he must through fervent prayer ask God, the granter of true wisdom, to give him the gift of wisdom and prudence, like Solomon, to govern souls. Many times with the same medicine one person is healed and the other is harmed—the teacher and the priest must have the gift of discernment. Nevertheless a good, sweet, mild, humble manner benefits the fallen man more...

To the scorners, the hostile, the impious, the lewd and rude people, he should not give the holy things. And, most importantly, **to the heretics after the first and second counsel, let him give up! Amen.**



**M**y blessed child, do not be afraid in the struggle. Nourish your soul with courage and hope. Disregard the adversities that come from the demons. See to it that every fight is crowned with success. In God's eyes nothing is in vain—even the slightest forcefulness is good. Do not lose your nerve at all; fight valiantly; coerce yourself, press yourself, for it is by pressing grapes that sweet wine is made, which gladdens the heart. Courage, my child; we shall prevail with God's help.

**I**f something pushes you to criticism in any matter regarding a brother or the monastery, try to pray about the matter instead, without passing it under the judgement of your reason. If you turn within yourself through prayer, humility, and mourning, you will find a spiritual treasure—just keep pride and criticism far from you.

**Elder Ephraim of Filotheos**  
From "Counsels from the Holy Mountain"



## Πίσω από την Πόρτα του Ναού

Αρχμ. Παύλου Παπαδοπούλου.

Ήταν ο άνθρωπος της παρέας. Πειράγματα, αίσχρολογα, άστεϊσμοί και άλλα πολλά ήταν στον ημερήσιο κατάλογο των κατορθωμάτων του. Τα χρόνια περνούσαν και ποτέ του δεν συνδέθηκε με κάποιους ανθρώπους... ποτέ του δεν έμπιστευτηκε κανέναν. Όλοι τον θέλανε για την παρέα αλλά μέχρι εκεί. Αλλά και ο ίδιος κανέναν δεν έπαιρνε στα σοβαρά, κανέναν δεν αισθανόταν δικό του άνθρωπο, φίλο του, οίκείο του.

Κάπου στα τριάντα του, γνώρισε μία κοπέλα. Την γνώρισε μέσα από μία τυχαία παρέα, διαμέσου γνωστών αγνώστων. Η κοπέλα αυτή είχε κάτι το διαφορετικό, κάτι το «περιέργο». Του κίνησε το ενδιαφέρον. Όταν τύχαινε στην παρέα να βρίσκεται και εκείνη (σπάνια), αυτός σταματούσε τις άνοησίες, σταματούσε τις αισχρότητες τις όποιες οί ύπόλοιποι τον ώθοῦσαν να πράξει για χάριν της παρέας και του κεφιοῦ. Μετά από μερικούς μήνες πήρε το θάρρος και την ζήτησε να βγούνε έξω. Εκείνη δέχτηκε, προσφέροντάς του μία ευχάριστη έκπληξη. Δεν περίμενε να βγει μαζί του ραντεβού...

Από το πρώτο ραντεβού κατάλαβε ότι είχε να κάνει με μία κοπέλα που πίστευε βαθιά στον Θεό. Απ' την άλλη, αυτός στο στόμα του έπιανε κάτι το «έκκλησιαστικό» μόνο για να το κοροϊδέψει και να το κατακρίνει. Τα λόγια της κοπέλας είχαν μία γλυκύτητα. Μιλούσε και νόμιζες ότι σε μιλούσε μία μελωδία. Τα ραντεβού έφευγαν το ένα μετά το άλλο... ή κοπέλα πάντα χαμογελαστή και πρόσχαρη, εκείνος άνησυχος και προβληματισμένος. Του μιλούσε για τον Θεό, του μιλούσε για την ζωή μέσα στην Εκκλησία, του μιλούσε για την γνήσια και ανιδιοτελή αγάπη. Εκείνος αναπαύοταν μόνο στην σιγουριά των ματιών της.

Ποτέ δεν άγγιξε εκείνη την κοπέλα, μέχρις ότου στο τελευταίο τους ραντεβού του είπε:

—Θα ήθελα να προσευχηθείς για έμένα... την άλλη εβδομάδα θα κάνω μία πολύ σοβαρή έγχειρηση στην καρδιά...

Τα λόγια της πάγωσαν το βλέμμα του. Άσυναίσθητα έπιασε τα χέρια της. Του ήταν άδιανόητο ότι μπορεί να την έχανε.

—Ναί, θα προσευχηθώ..., είπε με τρεμάμενη φωνή.

Η κοπέλα σηκώθηκε, τον άσπάσθηκε και έφυγε λέγοντας:

—Θα σε πάρω τηλέφωνο.

Εκείνος δεν είπε τίποτα.

Η ημέρα της έγχειρησης ήρθε. Σηκώθηκε το πρωί ένθουμούμενος ότι θα «πρέπει» να προσευχηθεί. Της το ύποσχέθηκε. Δεν ήξερε πώς. Δεν γνώριζε απ' αυτά τα πράγματα... Θυμήθηκε την μαυροφορεμένη γιαγιά του που τον πήγαινε, όταν ήταν μικρός, σε ένα μοναστηράκι δίπλα στο χωριό του. Ήταν το μοναδικό ίσως μέρος που θεωρούσε άσπιλο, γνήσιο και άγνό. Κίνησε προς τα εκεί.

Ήταν πλέον μεσημέρι, σχεδόν εκείνη η ώρα που η κοπέλα θα έκανε την έγχειρηση. Έσβησε τη μηχανή του αυτοκινήτου και μαζί της έκλεισε και το ραδιόφωνο που τόσο ώρα έπαιζε στους κοσμικούς του ρυθμούς.

Σιωπή. Έκανε να βγει από το αυτοκίνητο προσεκτικά και ακόμα πιο εύλαβικά έκλεισε την πόρτα του αυτοκινήτου. Αυτή η ήσυχία είχε κάτι το ιερό, σαν να έκρουβε κάτι το πολύτιμο. Πρώτη φορά στη ζωή του βίωνε κάτι τέτοιο. Ήσυχία, μέσα στην άνησυχία του. Προχώρησε προς το ναό. Μερικά κεράκια τρεμόπαιζαν στο μανουάλι του έξωνά-



θηκα. Στάθηκε μπροστά στην πόρτα του ναού, ή οποία του έφερε μπροστά του το ήλαρο πρόσωπο της γιαγιάς του. Μικρό παιδί τον έπαιρνε από το χέρι και έρχόταν έδω να ανάψουν τα καντήλια. Τόσα χρόνια όλες αυτές οι ιερές μνημες είχαν πέσει στο σκοτάδι της λήθης... σαν να μην τα είχε ζήσει. Έκανε τον σταυρό του και έπιασε το χερούλι της πόρτας για να μπει στα ένδότερα.

Η πόρτα άνοιξε και μαζί της άνοιξε ή πόρτα της καρδιάς του. Η πόρτα του ναού άνοιξε και μαζί της άνοιξαν και οι βρύσες των ματιών του. Έκλαιγε μέσα στην πρωτόγνωρη αυτή σιωπή. Έκλαιγε βουβά καθώς τα χείλη του άσπαζόταν την εικόνα της Παναγιάς. Ήταν μόνος του στον ναό. Για αρκετή ώρα τα δακρυσμένα μάτια του περιεργαζόταν τις άγιογραφίες, τα προσκυνητάρια, το τέμπλο, τους πολυέλεους, τα στασίδια.

Πήγε και κάθισε στο πρώτο σκαλοπάτι που οδηγούσε προς το πατάρι. Μπροστά του άπλωνόταν μυστικά μία απόκοσμη και συνάμα γνώριμη οίκειότητα. Ένοιωθε

σπίτι του. Ἐνοιωθε μέσα στὸν ναό, σὰν νὰ βρισκόταν μέσα στὴν ἀγκαλιὰ τῆς συγχωρεμένης του μητέρας...

—Θεέ μου, κἄνε καλὰ αὐτὴ τὴν κοπέλα ποὺ τόσο πολὺ σὲ ἀγαπᾷ... βοήθησέ την... βοήθησε καὶ ἐμένα...

Τὰ λεπτὰ περνοῦσαν. Δὲν ἔλεγε νὰ φύγει ἀπὸ ἐκεῖνο τὸ σκαλοπάτι. Καθόταν ἐκεῖ γεμάτος ἀγωνία γιὰ τὴν ἡρεμία ποὺ ἔνοιωθε. Κάτι τοῦ ἔλεγε ὅτι ὅλα θὰ πᾶνε καλὰ. Μετὰ ἀπὸ ἀρκετὴ ὥρα σηκώθηκε, ἀσπᾶσθηκε τὶς εἰκόνες στὰ προσκυνητάρια καὶ ἔφυγε. Μετὰ ἀπὸ δύο ἡμέρες κάποιος συγγενῆς τῆς κοπέλας τὸν πῆρε τηλέφωνο:

—Ὅλα καλὰ πῆγανε... μὴν ἀνησυχεῖς...

Ἔστερα ἀπὸ δύο ἡμέρες πῆγε τὴν εἶδε στὸ νοσοκομεῖο.

—Φαίνεται διαφορετικός..., τοῦ εἶπε μὲ τὸν εἶδε ἢ κοπέλα.

—Σ' εὐχαριστῶ... ἐσὺ μοῦ ἔδειξες τὸν δρόμο πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ...

Ἦταν ἡ τελευταία φορὰ ποὺ τὴν ἔβλεπε. Τὴν φίλησε γιὰ πρώτη καὶ μοναδική φορὰ, στὸ μέτωπο, τῆς χαμογέλασε καὶ ἔφυγε.

Πέρασαν πολλὰ χρόνια ἀπὸ τότε. Καὶ νὰ ποὺ ἦρθε ἡ ὥρα νὰ φύγει ἀπὸ αὐτὴν τὴν ζωὴ, σὲ βαθιὰ γεράματα, ἐκεῖνος ὁ νέος. Ἐκοιμήθη καθισμένος στὸ σκαλοπάτι τοῦ ναοῦ ποὺ τότε εἶχε δακρῦσει... Ἐκοιμήθη μετὰ ἀπὸ χρόνια μέσα στὸ μοναχικὸ ρᾶσο, λέγοντας τὴν εὐχή...

Ὅλα ἄρχισαν μέσα ἀπὸ μία κοσμικὴ παρέα. Μεταμορφώθηκαν μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν οὐράνια παρέα τῆς Χάρης τοῦ Θεοῦ. Καὶ ὅλα ξαναρχίζονται τώρα, μέσα σὲ Φῶς, μέσα σὲ Ἀγάπη, μέσα στὴν αἰωνιότητα... πίσω ἀπὸ τὴν πόρτα τοῦ ναοῦ.

Εὐλίην πόρτα, κλειστὴ καὶ σιωπηλὴ, σοῦ μιλοῦσε γιὰ ὅλα ἐκεῖνα ποὺ εἶχε δεῖ καὶ ἀκούσει. Κι ἐκεῖνος, ὁ μοναχός, πλέον ἀκίνητος, σοῦ ἔγνεφε γιὰ τὰ λάθη ποὺ ἔκανε, γιὰ τὴν μετάνοια ποὺ ἔζησε, γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη ποὺ ἔδωσε καὶ ἔλαβε, γιὰ τὶς ἡμέρες τῆς σιωπῆς ποὺ βίωσε σὰν σὲ πανηγύρι...



**Μ**ὴ φοβᾶσαι, ἀδελφέ μου, νὰ μείνεις μοναχός μετὰ τὸν ἑαυτό σου! Μὴ καταγίνεσαι ὀλοένα μετὰ χίλια πράγματα, γιὰ νὰ τὸν ξεχάσεις! Γιατὶ ὅποιος ἔχασε τὸν ἑαυτό του, κάθετα μετὰ ἴσκιους καὶ μετὰ φαντάσματα μέσα στὴν ἔρημο τοῦ θανάτου. Ἀγάπησε τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὶς πεθαμένες σοφίες τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Περισσότερο ἀπὸ κάθε τιμὴ καὶ δόξα ἐτούτου τοῦ κόσμου. Καὶ μοναχὰ τότε, θὰ χαίρεσαι σὲ κάθε ὥρα τῆς ζωῆς σου. Κανένας δρόμος δὲν βγάζει στὴν εἰρήνη τῆς καρδιάς, παρὰ μόνον ὁ Χριστός, ποὺ σὲ καλεῖ πονετικά καὶ ποὺ σοῦ λέγει: «*Εγὼ εἰμὶ ἡ ὁδός*».

**Φώτης Κόντογλου**

## Ῥωμιοσύνη καὶ Ὁρθοδοξία

*Τοῦ Φώτη Κόντογλου, ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο «Παναγία καὶ Ὑπεραγία», τῶν ἐκδόσεων «Ἀρμός».*



**Ἡ** Ῥωμιοσύνη εἶναι ζυμωμένη μετὰ τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, γι' αὐτὸ Χριστιανὸς καὶ Ἕλληνας ἦταν τὸ ἴδιο.

Ἡ Ῥωμιοσύνη καὶ ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία εἶναι ἓνα πρᾶγμα. Γιὰ νὰ μὴν πάρω τοὺς

πολὺ παλιούς, παίρνω δυὸ τρεῖς ἀπὸ ἐκείνους ποὺ ἀγωνισθήκανε γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία τῆς Ἑλλάδας, ποὺ ὅποτε μιᾶνε γιὰ τὴν λευτεριά, μιᾶνε καὶ γιὰ τὴν θρησκεία. Ὁ Ρήγας Φεραῖος λέγει: «Νὰ κάνουμε τὸν ὄρκο ἀπάνω στὸ Σταυρό». Ἔνας ἄλλος ποιητῆς γράφει:

«Γιὰ τῆς πατρίδας τὴν ἐλευθερία,  
γιὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν πίστη τὴν ἀγία,  
γι' αὐτὰ τὰ δυὸ πολεμῶ,  
μ' αὐτὰ νὰ ζήσω ἐπιθυμῶ.  
Κι ἂν δὲν τὰ ἀποχτήσω,  
τί μ' ὠφελεῖ νὰ ζήσω;»

Οἱ ἀγράμματοι ποιητῆς τῶν βουνῶν, μέσα στὰ τραγούδια ποὺ κάνανε, καὶ ποὺ δὲ θὰ τὰ φτάξει ποτὲ κανένας γραμματιζούμενος, μιᾶνε κάθε τόσο γιὰ τὴν θρησκεία μας, γιὰ τὸ Χριστό, γιὰ τὴν Παναγία, γιὰ τοὺς δώδεκα Ἀποστόλους, γιὰ τοὺς ἁγίους. Πολλὲς παροιμίες καὶ ρητὰ καὶ λόγια ποὺ λέγει ὁ λαός μας, εἶναι παρμένα ἀπὸ τὰ γράμματα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας.

Ἡ Ῥωμιοσύνη εἶναι ζυμωμένη μετὰ τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, γι' αὐτὸ Χριστιανὸς καὶ Ἕλληνας ἦταν τὸ ἴδιο. Ἀπὸ τότε ποὺ γινήκανε Χριστιανοὶ οἱ Ἕλληνες, πήρανε στὰ χέρια τους τὴ σημαία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τὴν κάνανε σημαία δική τους: **Πίστις καὶ Πατρίς!**

Ποτάμια Ἑλληνικὸ αἶμα χυθῆκανε γιὰ τὴν πίστη τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀπὸ τὰ χρόνια τοῦ Νέρωνα καὶ τοῦ Διοκλητιανοῦ, ἕως τὰ 1838, ποὺ μαρτύρησε ὁ ἅγιος Γεώργιος ὁ ἐξ Ἰωαννίνων. Ποιὰ ἄλλη φυλὴ ὑπόφερε τόσα μαρτύρια γιὰ τὸ Χριστό; Αὐτὸ τὸ ἀκατάλυτο ἔθνος ποὺ ἔπρεπε νὰ πληθύνει καὶ νὰ καπλαντίσει τὸν κόσμον, ἀπόμεινε ὀλιγάνθρωπο γιὰ τὸ ἀποδεκατίσθηκε ἐπὶ χίλια ὀχτακόσια χρόνια ἀπὸ φυλὲς Χριστιανομάχες.

Ἀγιασμένη Ἑλλάδα! Εἶσαι ἁγιασμένη, γιὰ τὴν εἶσαι βασανισμένη. Κι ἡ κάθε γιορτὴ σου μνημονεύει καὶ ἓνα μαρτύριό σου. Τὰ πάθη τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὰ ἔκανες δικὰ σου πάθη, τὰ μαρτύρια τῶν ἁγίων εἶναι τὰ δικὰ σου μαρτύρια!...



## Χωρίς την Ανάσταση του Χριστού δεν θα Υπήρχε Χριστιανισμός!

Άγιος Ιουστίνος Πόποβιτς.

Ἐάν υπάρχει μία ἀλήθεια στην ὁποία θὰ μπορούσαν νὰ συνοψισθοῦν ὅλες οἱ εὐαγγελικὲς ἀλήθειες, ἡ ἀλήθεια αὐτὴ θὰ ἦταν ἡ ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Καὶ ἀκόμη, ἐάν υπάρχει μία πραγματικότητα στην ὁποία θὰ μπορούσαν νὰ συνοψισθοῦν ὅλες οἱ καινοδιαθηκικὲς πραγματικότητες, ἡ πραγματικότητα αὐτὴ θὰ ἦταν ἡ ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Μόνο στην ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐξηγοῦνται ὅλα τὰ θαύματά Του, ὅλες οἱ ἀλήθειές Του, ὅλα τὰ λόγια Του, ὅλα τὰ γεγονότα τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης.

Μέχρι τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ὁ Κύριος δίδασκε γιὰ τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ἔδειξε ὅτι ὁ Ἰδιος ὄντως εἶναι ἡ αἰώνια ζωὴ. Μέχρι τὴν ἀνάστασή Του δίδασκε γιὰ τὴν ἀνάσταση τῶν νεκρῶν, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ἔδειξε ὅτι ὁ Ἰδιος εἶναι πράγματι ἡ ἀνάσταση τῶν νεκρῶν. Μέχρι τὴν ἀνάστασή Του δίδασκε ὅτι ἡ πίστη σ' Αὐτὸν μεταφέρει ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ἔδειξε ὅτι ὁ Ἰδιος νίκησε τὸ θάνατο καὶ ἔτσι ἐξασφάλισε στοὺς θανατωμένους ἀνθρώπους τὴν μετάβαση ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου στὴν ἀνάσταση.

Μὲ τὴν ἁμαρτία ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐγίνε θνητὸς καὶ πεπερασμένος· μὲ τὴν ἀνάσταση τοῦ Θεανθρώπου γίνεται ἀθάνατος καὶ αἰώνιος. Σ' αὐτὸ δὲ ἀκριβῶς ἐγκείται ἡ δύναμη καὶ τὸ κράτος καὶ ἡ παντοδυναμία τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀναστάσεως. Καὶ γιὰ αὐτὸ, χωρὶς τὴν ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ δὲν θὰ ὑπῆρχε κανὸ Χριστιανισμός.

Μεταξὺ τῶν θαυμάτων, ἡ ἀνάσταση τοῦ Κυρίου εἶναι τὸ μεγαλύτερο θαῦμα. Ὅλα τὰ ἄλλα θαύματα πηγάζουν ἀπὸ αὐτὸ καὶ συνοψίζονται σ' αὐτό. Ἀπ' αὐτὸ πηγάζουν ἡ πίστη καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη καὶ ἡ ἐλπίδα καὶ ἡ προσευχὴ καὶ ἡ θεοσεβεία. Αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖο καμιά ἄλλη θρησκεία δὲν ἔχει· αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖο ἀνυψώνει τὸν Κύριο ὑπεράνω ὅλων τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν θεῶν. Αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖο κατὰ τρόπο μοναδικὸ καὶ ἀναμφισβήτητο δείχνει καὶ ἀποδεικνύει ὅτι ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἶναι ὁ μόνος ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς καὶ Κύριος σὲ ὅλους τοὺς ὄρατους καὶ ἀόρατους κόσμους.

Τὸ ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος πιστεύει ἀληθινὰ στὸν Ἀναστάνα Κύριο τὸ ἀποδεικνύει μὲ τὸ νὰ ἀγωνίζεται κατὰ τῆς

ἁμαρτίας καὶ τῶν παθῶν καὶ ἐάν μὲν ἀγωνίζεται, πρέπει νὰ γνωρίζει ὅτι ἀγωνίζεται γιὰ τὴν ἀθανασία καὶ τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ. Ἐάν ὅμως δὲν ἀγωνίζεται, τότε μάταιη ἡ πίστη του! Διότι, ἐάν ἡ πίστη τοῦ ἀνθρώπου δὲν εἶναι ἀγώνας γιὰ τὴν ἀθανασία καὶ τὴν αἰωνιότητα, τότε τί εἶναι; Ἐάν μὲ τὴν πίστη στὸ Χριστὸ δὲν φθάνει κανεὶς στὴν ἀθανασία καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ θανάτου νίκη, τότε πρὸς τί ἡ πίστη μας; Ἐάν ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἀναστήθηκε, τοῦτο σημαίνει ὅτι ἡ ἁμαρτία καὶ ὁ θάνατος δὲν ἔχουν νικηθεῖ. Ἐάν δὲ δὲν ἔχουν αὐτὰ τὰ δύο νικηθεῖ, τότε γιὰτί νὰ πιστεύει κανεὶς στὸ Χριστό; Εκείνος ὅμως ὁ ὁποῖος μὲ τὴν πίστη στὸν Ἀναστάνα Χριστὸ ἀγωνίζεται ἐναντίον κάθε ἁμαρτίας του, αὐτὸς ἐνισχύει σιγὰ-σιγὰ μέσα του τὴν αἴσθησι ὅτι ὁ Κύριος πραγματικὰ ἀναστήθηκε, ἄμβλυσε τὸ κέντρο τοῦ θανάτου, νίκησε τὸ θάνατο σὲ ὅλα τὰ μέτωπα τῆς μάχης.

Χωρὶς τὴν ἀνάσταση δὲν ὑπάρχει οὔτε στὸν οὐρανὸ οὔτε κάτω ἀπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸ τίποτε πῶς παράλογο ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμο αὐτὸ οὔτε μεγαλύτερη ἀπελπισία ἀπὸ τὴ ζωὴ αὐτὴ, δίχως ἀθανασία. Σ' ὅλους τοὺς κόσμους δὲν ὑπάρχει περισσότερο δυστυχισμένη ὑπαρξὴ ἀπὸ τὸν ἄνθρωπο ποὺ δὲν πιστεύει στὴν ἀνάσταση τῶν νεκρῶν.

Γι' αὐτὸ, γιὰ τὴν ἀνθρώπινη ὑπαρξὴ, ὁ Ἀναστημένος Κύριος εἶναι τὰ «πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν» σ' ὅλους τοὺς κόσμους: Ὁ,τι τὸ Ὡραῖο, τὸ Καλὸ, τὸ Ἀληθινὸ, τὸ Προσφιλές, τὸ Χαρμόσυνο, τὸ Θεῖο, τὸ Σοφὸ, τὸ Αἰώνιο. Αὐτὸς εἶναι ὅλη ἡ Ἀγάπη μας, ὅλη ἡ Ἀλήθειά μας, ὅλη ἡ Χαρά μας, ὅλο το Ἄγαθὸ μας, ὅλη ἡ Ζωὴ μας, ἡ Αἰώνια Ζωὴ σὲ ὅλες τὶς αἰωνιότητες καὶ ἀπεραντοσύνης. Ἀμήν.



Πρῶτα-πρῶτα τὰ παιδιὰ ἀντιγράφουν ἐμᾶς καὶ μάλιστα ἀπὸ μωρὰ. Ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ καὶ πέρα θὰ πρέπει νὰ ἐνεργοῦμε ἐπάνω τους ὅπως στὰ ρολόγια. Ὅσο παίρνει τὸ ἐλατήριό τους, τὰ κουρδίζουμε γρηγορὰ. Μετὰ σιγὰ-σιγὰ, προσέχοντας νὰ μὴ σπάσουμε τὸ ἐλατήριό τους μὲ τὸ ζόρισμα.

Ὅσο κανεὶς ἀπομακρύνεται ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό, τόσο πῶς δύσκολα γίνονται γι' αὐτὸν τὰ πράγματα. Μπορεῖ κανεὶς νὰ μὴν ἔχει τίποτε, ὅταν ὅμως ἔχει τὸ Θεό, δὲν θέλει τίποτα.

Γέρων Παΐσιος Ἀθωνίτης



## Τὸ Πάρισμο τῆς Πόλης - Μέρος 1<sup>ο</sup>

Φώτης Κόντογλου.

Σὰν γυρίσανε λοιπόν οἱ ἀπεσταλμένοι τοῦ Σουλτάνου καὶ τοῦ πήγανε τὴν ἀπόκριση τοῦ Παλαιολόγου, πὼς δὲν παραδίνει τὴν Πόλη, ἀποφάσισε μὲ κάθε τρόπο νὰ τὴν πατήση.

Στὶς 24 Μαγιοῦ πρόσταξε τοὺς τελάληδες καὶ διαλαλήσανε στὸ στρατόπεδο πὼς στὶς 29 θὰ γινότανε τὸ μεγάλο γιουροῦσι (ἔφοδος) ἀπὸ στεριά καὶ ἀπὸ θάλασσα. Στὶς 26 καὶ στὶς 27 τὴ νύχτα, οἱ Τοῦρκοι ἀνάψανε τόσες φωτιές καὶ τόσα φανάρια, καὶ τέτοιες ἀγριοφωνές καὶ βουητὸ ἔβγαιναν ἀπ' τὸ στρατόπεδό τους, ποὺ οἱ Χριστιανοὶ νομίσανε πὼς φτάζανε πιά τὰ συντέλειά τους.

Τὴ Δευτέρα, στὶς 28 Μαγιοῦ, ὁ σουλτάνος εἶπε καὶ διαλαλήσανε νὰ τομιαστοῦνε οἱ στρατιῶτες γιὰ τὸν μεγάλο πόλεμο, νὰ λουστοῦνε ἑφτὰ φορὲς καὶ νὰ νηστεύουνε. Τοὺς ἔβγαλε κ' ἓναν λόγο καὶ τοὺς εἶπε πὼς σὰν πάρουνε τὴν Πόλη θὰ τοὺς τὴν ἀφήσῃ τρεῖς μέρες καὶ τρεῖς νύχτες, καὶ πὼς θὲ νᾶνε δικά τους ὅ,τι βροῦνε μέσα, χρυσάφι, ἀσήμι, φορέματα, ἄντρες, παιδιά καὶ γυναῖκες καὶ πὼς ὅσοι εἶνε γιὰ νὰ σκοτωθοῦνε, καθὼς γίνεται πάντα στὸν πόλεμο, αὐτοὶ δὲ μποροῦνε νὰ ξεφύγουνε, γιατί εἶνε γραμμένο ἀπὸ πρὶν ἀπάνω στὸ κούτελό τους, ὅπως λέγει ὁ «Προφήτης» καὶ πὼς θὰ πᾶνε στὸν «Παράδεισο» νὰ τρῶνε καὶ νὰ πίνουνε παντοτεινὰ μαζί μὲ τὸν «Προφήτη», καὶ νὰ κοιμοῦνται μὲ τίς πιὸ ὁμορφες γυναῖκες. Οἱ Τοῦρκοι ἐνθουσιαστήκανε ἀπὸ τὰ λόγια του καὶ βάλανε κάτι φωνές, ποὺ πολλὲς γυναῖκες ἀποβάλανε.

Ἀπ' τὸ πρῶν εἶχανε στὸ στρατόπεδό τους μεγάλο σῦρε-φέρε. Οἱ ντελάληδες τριγυρίζανε μὲ τοῦμπανα καὶ μὲ ζουρνᾶδες καὶ λέγανε: «Γειά σας, παιδιά τοῦ «Προφήτη», αὔριο θὰ πιάσουμε τόσους Χριστιανούς, ποὺ θὰ πουλάμε δυὸ γιὰ ἓναν παρὰ καὶ θὰ κάνουμε τὰ γένεια τους σκοινιά γιὰ νὰ δέσουμε τοὺς σκύλους μας. Τὶς γυναῖκες τους καὶ τίς κόρες τους θὰ τίς ἀτιμάσουμε!»

Ὅλη κεῖνη τὴν ἡμέρα τὰ κανόνια δουλέψανε ἀκατάπαντα, μὰ οἱ Χριστιανοὶ καταφέρνανε καὶ βουλώνανε τὰ γκρεμισμένα τειχιὰ μὲ πέτρες καὶ μὲ χῶμα ἢ τὰ χτίζανε κιόλας. Πρὸς τὸ βράδυ οἱ Τοῦρκοι μεθύσανε καὶ κάνανε σὰν τρελλοί. Ἀνάψανε μεγάλες

φωτιές στὴ στεριά καὶ ἀμέτροντα φανάρια στὰ καράβια, κ' ἡ ἀναλαμπὴ ἔπεφτε ἴσαμε πέρα ἀπάνω στὴ στεριά τῆς Ἀνατολῆς. Ζουρνᾶδες καὶ τουμπελέκια χαλούσανε τὸν κόσμον, ντερβισάδες χορεύανε, πῶλεγες πὼς ἀνοίξε ἡ γῆ καὶ βγήκανε οἱ δαιμόνοι.

Οἱ Χριστιανοὶ εἶχανε πέσει στὴν προσευχὴ. Μέρα νύχτα οἱ ἐκκλησιές ἦτανε γεμάτες κόσμον, τὸ πιὸ πολὺ γυναῖκες, κοπέλλες καὶ γρηές ἀλαλιασμένες, ποὺ λέγανε πὼς ἦτανε διάβολοι μεταμορφωμένοι οἱ ἄγριοι αὐτοὶ ἀνθρώποι ποὺ διψοῦσανε τὸ αἷμα τους. Ὁ κόσμος πίστευε πιά πὼς ἔφταξε ἡ μέρα ποὺ θὰ κουρσεύανε οἱ Τοῦρκοι τὴν Πόλη, καὶ νὰ γίνουνε ὅσα προφήτεψε ὁ Ἅγιος Κωνσταντῖνος, ποὺ τὸν βλέπανε στ' ἄγαλμα καβαλλάρη κοντὰ στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία κ' ἔδειχνε μὲ τὸ χέρι κατὰ τὴν Ἀνατολή, σημεῖο πὼς ἀπὸ κεῖ θᾶρθῃ ὁ Τοῦρκος ποὺ θὰ πάρῃ τὴν Πόλη.

Κι' ἄλλη προφητεία ἔλεγε πὼς, σὰν βασιλέψῃ ἓνας βασιλιάς, ποὺ θὰ λένε Ἑλένη τὴ μητέρα του, στὶς μέρες του θὰ σκλαβωθῇ ἡ Πόλη. Κι' ἄλλη τρίτη προφητεία πῶλεγε, πὼς ἅμα δείξῃ σημεῖο τὸ φεγγάρι στὸν οὐρανό, σὲ λίγες μέρες ἡ Πόλη θὰ χαλαστῇ.

Λοιπὸν καὶ τὰ τρία αὐτὰ σημάδια εἶχανε ξεδιαλυθῇ. Γιατὶ καὶ τὸ βασιλέα τὸν λέγανε Κωνσταντῖνο κ' εἶχε μητέρα Ἑλένη, μὰ καὶ τὸ φεγγάρι εἶχε δείξει σημεῖο. Στὶς 22 Μαγιοῦ, τὴν πρώτη ὥρα τῆς νύχτας, τὸ φεγγάρι, ἀντὶ νᾶβγῃ στοργγυλό, βγήκε σὰν δρεπάνι καὶ στάθηκε ἔτσι ἴσαμε τρεῖς ὥρες μέσα στὸν οὐρανό, ποὺ ἦτανε καθαρὸς σὰν κρούσταλλο. Ὑστερα λίγο λίγο γιόμισε ὁ γύρος του καὶ στὶς ἕξι ὥρες τῆς νύχτας εἶχε γίνῃ ὀλοστοργγυλό. Αὐτὸ τὸ σημεῖο εἰδοποίησε τὸν Παλαιολόγο πὼς ἤγγικε τὸ τέλος τῆς βασιλείας του. Οἱ Χριστιανοί, σὰν τῶδανε, κόπηκε τὸ αἷμα τους.

Ὁ βασιλιάς πρόσταξε νὰ κάνουνε λιτανεῖα καὶ βγάλανε τίς εἰκόνες καὶ μπροστὰ πηγαίνανε οἱ δεσποτάδες, οἱ παπάδες κ' οἱ καλογέροι κι ἀπὸ πίσω ὅσος κόσμος δὲν ἦτανε στὶς πόστες, κ' ὅλοι λέγανε «Κύριε ἐλέησον!» Τὴ Δευτέρα τὸ βράδυ συναχτήκανε οἱ πολεμάρχοι, οἱ στρατιῶτες κ' ὅλος ὁ λαὸς καὶ τοὺς μίλησε ὁ βασιλιάς νὰ μὴ χάσουνε τὴν ἐλπίδα τους στὸ Θεὸ καὶ στὴν Παναγία.

Τὰ λόγια του μᾶς τὰ κράτησε ὁ φίλος του ὁ Φραντζῆς, κ' εἶνε σὰν συναξάρι: «Ἕμεῖς, εὐγενέστατοι ἄρχοντες κ' ἐκλαμπρότατοι Δήμαρχοι καὶ γενναιοτάτοι συστρατιῶται καὶ πᾶς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ τίμιος λαός.



Είξεύρετε, ὅτι ἐφθασεν ἡ ὥρα καὶ ὁ ἐχθρὸς τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν θέλει στενοχωρήσει ἡμᾶς μετὰ πάσης τέχνης καὶ μηχανῆς, ... ἵνα, εἰ δυνατόν, ὡς ὄφισ τὸν ἰὸν ἐκχύσει καὶ ὡς λέων ἀνήμερος καταπίῃ ἡμᾶς. Διὰ τοῦτο λέγω καὶ παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς ἵνα στήτε ἀνδρείως καὶ μετὰ γενναίας ψυχῆς, ὡς πάντοτε ἕως τοῦ νῦν ἐποιήσατε, κατὰ τῶν ἐχθρῶν τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν. Παραδίδωμι δὲ ὑμῖν τὴν ἐκλαμπροτάτην καὶ περίφημον ταύτην πόλιν καὶ πατρίδα ἡμῶν καὶ βασιλεύουσαν τῶν πόλεων!

Αὐτὸς ὁ ἀλιτήριος Ἀμηρᾶς πεντήκοντα καὶ ἐπτὰ ἡμέρας ἄγει σήμερον ἀφοῦ, ἐλθὼν, μᾶς ἠπειλήσε. Τώρα δέ, ἀδελφοί, μὴ δειλιάσετε. Ἡμεῖς γὰρ πᾶσαν ἐλπίδα εἰς τὴν ἄμαχον δόξαν ἀνεθέμεθα, ἐκεῖνοι δὲ εἰς τὰ ὄπλα. Διό, ὃ συστρατιῶται, γίνεσθε ἔτοιμοι καὶ στερεοὶ καὶ μεγαλόψυχοι διὰ τοὺς οἰκτιροὺς τοῦ θεοῦ. Μιμηθῆτε τοὺς ποτε τῶν Καρχηδονίων ὀλίγους ἐλέφαντας, πῶς τοσοῦτον πλῆθος ἵππων Ῥωμαίων τῆ φωνῇ καὶ θεῶ ἐδίωξαν· καὶ ἐὰν ζῶον ἄλογον ἐδίωξε, πόσον μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς οἱ τῶν ζῶων καὶ ἀλόγων ὑπάρχοντες κύριοι, καὶ οἱ καθ' ἡμῶν ἐρχόμενοι ἵνα παράταξιν μεθ' ἡμῶν ποιήσωσιν, ὡς ζῶα ἄλογα, καὶ χεῖρονες εἰσιν. Αἰ πέλται ὑμῶν καὶ ῥομφαῖαι καὶ τὰ τόξα καὶ ἀκόντια πρὸς αὐτοὺς πεμπέτωσαν παρ' ὑμῶν. Καὶ οὕτως λογίσθητε ὡς ἐπὶ ἀγρίων χοίρων καὶ πληθὺν κυνήγιον, ἵνα γνώσωσιν οἱ ἀσεβεῖς ὅτι οὐ μετὰ ἀλόγων ζῶων, ὡς αὐτοί, παράταξιν ἔχουσιν, ἀλλὰ μετὰ κυρίων καὶ αὐθέντων αὐτῶν καὶ ἀπογόνων Ἑλλήνων καὶ Ῥωμαίων.»

Πολὺ μεγάλο παράπονο ἔχουν τὰ λόγια, ποὺ λέγει γιὰ τὴν Παναγιὰ καὶ γιὰ τὴν Πόλη, τὴν ἀγαπημένη τῆς πολιτεία. Θαρρεῖς πῶς μοιρολογᾷ τὴν κόρη του: «Τὸ καταφύγιον τῶν Χριστιανῶν· ἡ ἐλπίς καὶ ἡ χαρὰ πάντων τῶν Ἑλλήνων· τὸ καύχημα πάντων ὅσοι ζῶσιν ὑπὸ τὴν ἡλίου Ἀνατολήν. Ζητεῖ δὲ (ὁ Ἀμηρᾶς) πῶς νὰ εὔρη καιρὸν νὰ ἀφανίσῃ ὡς ῥόδον τοῦ ἀγροῦ τὴν ποτὲ περιφανῆ καὶ ἀνθίζουσαν ταύτην τῶν πόλεων βασιλεύουσαν.»

Ἔστερα γυρίζει καὶ λέγει στοὺς Βενετσάνους, ποὺ στεκόντανε στὰ δεξιά του: «Ἐνετοὶ εὐγενεῖς, ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ἐν Χριστῷ, ἄνδρες ἰσχυροὶ! Τὴν σήμερον παρακαλῶ νὰ ὑπερασπισθῆτε μεθ' ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σας τὴν πόλιν ταύτην, γνωρίζοντες, ὅτι δευτέραν πατρίδα καὶ μητέρα ἔχετε αἰώνως.»

Στὸ τέλος γυρίζει καὶ λέγει σ' ὅλο τὸ λαό: «Καιρὸν δὲν ἔχω νὰ σᾶς εἶπω περισσότερα. Ἴδου τὸ

τεταπεινωμένον μου τοῦτο σκῆπτρον εἰς τὰς χεῖρας πάντων ὑμῶν ἀνατίθημι. Φυλάξατέ το μετ' εὐνοίας! Πολὺ δὲ παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς νὰ δείξητε τὴν πρέπουσαν εὐπειθειαν...»

Ὁ βασιλιὰς ἔκλαιγε, ἔκλαιγε κι' ὁ λαὸς καὶ φώναζε: «Ἄς πεθάνουμε γιὰ τὴν πίστη τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ γιὰ τὴν πατρίδα μας!» Ἀγκαλιαζόντανε καὶ συγχωρονιόντανε. Ἔστερα τραβήξανε στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία. Κόσμος, παλαβωμένος ἀπ' τὸ φόβο, τὴν εἶχε γιομίσει κι' οἱ καμάρες ἀντιλαλούσανε ἀπὸ τὸ θρήνο. Οἱ γυναῖκες κλαίγανε σιγανά, τὰ παιδιὰ ξεφωνίζανε κι' ὄλοι τρέμανε σὰν τὰ καλάμια. Ποιὰ καρδιὰ δὲ θὰ ῥάγιζε! «Εἰ καὶ ἀπὸ ξύλον ἄνθρωπος ἦ ἐκ πέτρας ἦν, οὐκ ἐδύνατο μὴ θρηνηῖσαι.»

Οἱ διάκοι λέγανε μπροστὰ στὴν Ἁγία Πόρτα τὰ Εἰρηνικά, μὰ ἡ ὄχλοβοὴ δὲν ἄφηνε ν' ἀκουστῆ ἢ φωνὴ τους. Σὰν ἀρχίσανε οἱ ψαλτάδες, τὸ Κοινωνικὸ «Εἰς μνημόσυνον αἰώνιον ἔσται δίκαιος, ἀλληλούϊα», ὁ βασιλιὰς τραβήξε κατὰ τὸ τέμπλο, ντυμένος μὲ τὰ τριμμένα ροῦχα του, δακρυσμένος, μαραζωμένος, μὲ γένεια καὶ μαλλιά ἀχτένιστα σὰν βαρυποινίτης, κι' ἔπεσε στὰ γόνατα μπροστὰ στὰ εἰκονίσματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς Παναγιᾶς μ' ἀναστεναγμούς, μουρμουρίζοντας: «Ἐκύκλωσαν αἰ τοῦ βίου μὲ ζάλαι ὡς περ μέλισσαι κηρίον, Παρθένε, καὶ τὴν ἐμὴν κατασχοῦσαι καρδιάν κατατιτρώσκουσι βέλει τῶν θλίψεων.»

Καὶ σὰν ἐβγήκε ὁ Πατριάρχης μὲ τὸ ποτήρι, πῆγε καὶ μετάλαβε κι' ἔστερα γύρισε κατὰ τὸ λαὸ κι' εἶπε: «Χριστιανοί, συγχωρήστε τὶς ἁμαρτίες μου, κι' ὁ Θεὸς ἄς συγχωρήσῃ τὶς δικές σας!» Κι' ὁ κόσμος μὲ μιὰ φωνὴ φώναζε: «Συγχωρεμένος!»

Μέσα στ' Ἅγιο Βῆμα, ὁ Πατριάρχης, σκυμμένος ἀπάνω στὰ τίμια δῶρα, μνημόνευε: «Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, τῆς πόλεως, ἐν ἣ παροικοῦμεν, καὶ πάσης πόλεως καὶ χώρας, καὶ τῶν πίστει οἰκούντων ἐν αὐταῖς. Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, πλεόντων, ὁδοιπορούντων, νοσοῦντων, καμνόντων, αἰχμαλώτων. Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, τῶν μεμνημένων τῶν πενήτων, καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας ἡμᾶς τὰ ἐλέη σου ἐξαπόστειλον.»

Σὰν τελείωσε ἡ λειτουργία, ἦτανε νύχτα. Ὁ βασιλιὰς πῆγε στὸ παλάτι καὶ κάθησε λίγη ὥρα γιὰ νὰ συγχωρεθῆ μὲ τοὺς δικούς του καὶ μὲ τοὺς ὑπηρέτες του. «Ἐν τῇδε τῇ ὥρᾳ τίς διηγῆσεται τοὺς τότε κλαυθμοὺς καὶ θρήνους, τοὺς ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ;»





Καὶ σὰν τοὺς ἀποχαιρέτισε, καβαλλίκεψε τ' ἀλόγο του μαζί με τὴ συνοδεία του καὶ ἐπιθεώρησε τὸ κάστρο γιὰ νὰ δῆ ἂν εἶνε στὸν τόπο του ὁ καθένας. Ὅλοι βρισκόντανε στὶς πόστες τους, κ' οἱ πόρτες ἦτανε καλὰ ἀμπαρωμένες.

Φτάνοντας στὴν πόρτα Καλιγαρία, ἀνέβηκε μοναχὸς ἀπάνω στὸ κάστρο, ἔχοντας μαζί του τὸ Φραντζῆ, τὸν μπιστεμένο φίλο του, κ' ἀκούσανε ἀπ' ὄξω βουὴ καὶ φωνὲς πολλές, κ' οἱ φύλακες τοὺς εἶπανε πὼς ἀπὸ τὴν ὥρα ποὺ νύχτωσε οἱ Τοῦρκοι ἔτσι βουίζανε, γιὰτὶ κουβαλοῦσανε κοντὰ στὸ κάστρο τὶς μηχανές καὶ τὶς σκάλες. Τὴν ὥρα, ποὺ φώναξε πρώτη φορὰ ὁ κόκκορας, ἔφταξε ὁ βασιλιάς στὴν πόρτα τοῦ Ἁγίου Ῥωμανοῦ. Στὸ δεύτερο λάλημα τοῦ πετεινοῦ ἄρχισε ὁ πόλεμος.

Οἱ Τοῦρκοι ξαμολυθήκανε ἀπὸ παντοῦ, σὰν ἄγρια

βουβάλια, βγάζοντας ἀφροὺς ἀπ' τὰ στόματά τους. Τέτοιο οὐρλιασμα καὶ ποδοβολητὸ ἔβγαινε ἀπὸ κεῖνο τ' ἀμέτρητο κοπάδι καὶ τόσο μεγάλο πατιρντὶ κάνανε τὰ τούμπανα, οἱ ζουρνάδες κ' οἱ ντερβισάδες, π' ἀντιλαλήσανε ὀλοτρόγυρα τὰ βουνά, σὰ νὰ γκρεμνίζόντανε. Τοῦτοι, ποὺ κάνανε τὸ πρῶτο ρεσάλτο, ἦτανε οἱ πιὸ πολλοὶ Χριστιανοί, ποὺ δουλεύανε στὸ σουλτάνο μετὰ τὸ στανιό, καὶ τοὺς ἔρριξε πρῶτους στὴ φωτιά, γιὰ νὰ πάρουνε ὅλη τὴ μπόρα.

Κουβαλοῦσανε σκάλες ἀναρίθμητες καὶ τὶς ἀκουμποῦσανε στὸν τοῖχο, μὰ οἱ Ἕλληνες τοὺς γκρεμνίζανε καὶ ρίχνανε μεγάλες πέτρες ἀπὸ πάνω τους καὶ τοὺς σκοτώνανε. Τὸ χαντάκι γιόμισε σκοτωμένους καὶ λαβωμένους.

Ὅσοι γλυτώνανε, θέλανε νὰ στρίψουνε πίσω, μὰ οἱ γενιτσάροι τοὺς λιανίζανε μετὰ τὰ γιαταγάνια, ὅπου, βλέποντας πὼς κ' ἔτσι κι ἄλλοιῶς θὰ πεθαίνανε, γυρίζανε καὶ πολεμοῦσανε. Στὸ μεταξὺ ἄρχισε νὰ γλυκοχαράζη καὶ νὰ σβύνουνε τᾶστρα ἕνα ἕνα.

Σὰν τσακισθήκανε τοῦτοι οἱ πρῶτοι, χυμίζανε ἄλλοι πειδὸ λυσσασμένοι, σὰν τὰ πεινασμένα λιοντάρια ποὺ πέφτουνε ἀπάνω σε λάφια.

Κι' αὐτοὶ στεριώσανε πλῆθος σκάλες κ' ἀνεβαίνανε ἀπάνω μ' ἀλαλαγμὸ πολύν. Μὰ πάλι οἱ Χριστιανοὶ τοὺς γκρεμνίσανε καὶ μετὰ τὶς σαγίτες καὶ μετὰ τὰ μικρὰ κανόνια ποῦχανε, σκοτώσανε τὸσους Τοῦρκοι, ποὺ στοιβαστήκανε ὁ ἕνας ἀπὸ τὸν ἄλλον σὰν σακκιά.

Δὲν προφτάξανε νὰ φχαριστήσουνε τὸ Θεὸ κ'

ἔπεσε ἀπάνω στὸ κάστρο τρίτο κοπάδι, τὸ πειδὸ μανιασμένο μετὰ φωνὲς φοβερὲς καὶ μετὰ τούμπανα, κατὰ τὰ συνηθισμένα. Αὐτοὶ ἦτανε τ' ἄνθος, οἱ διαλεχτοὶ τοῦ σουλτάνου, οἱ γενιτσάροι, οἱ σουμπασίδες καὶ τέλος οἱ πειδὸ ἀντρειωμένοι Τοῦρκοι.

Μ' ὅλο ποὺ οἱ Ἕλληνες ἦτανε τσακισμένοι ἀπ' τὴν κούραση, μπορέσανε καὶ βαστάξανε καὶ τούτῃ τὴ φορὰ. Κάψανε τὶς μηχανές, τσακίσανε τὶς ἀνεμόσκαλες, μ' ἕναν λόγο τέτοιο φονικὸ κάνανε, ποὺ γιὰ μιὰ στιγμή οἱ Τοῦρκοι δειλιάσανε καὶ λίγο ἔλειψε νὰ γυρίσουνε τὶς πλάτες.

Μὰ ὁ σουλτάν Μεμέτης ἔπεσε ὁ ἴδιος ἀπάνω τους μετὰ τὸ γιαταγάνι στὸ χέρι, κ' ἄλλους ἔσφαξε, ἄλλους πλήγωνε. Τὸ ἴδιο κάνανε κ' οἱ ἀξιωματικοὶ του μετὰ τὰ καμουτσιὰ καὶ μετὰ μεγάλες φωνές, σὰ νὰ σαλαγοῦσανε κανένα κοπάδι καμῆλες. Οἱ ζεμπέκηδες

βγάλανε πάλι μιὰ φωνὴ ἴσαμε τὸν οὐρανὸ, δίνοντας κουράγιο ὁ ἕνας στὸν ἄλλο κ' ὠρμήσανε ἀπάνω στὸν τοῖχο. Οἱ πιὸ ἄφοβοι κ' οἱ πιὸ δυνατοὶ ἀνεβαίνανε ὁ ἕνας ἀπάνω στοὺς ὤμους τ' ἄλλουνοῦ κ' ἔτσι κάνανε σκάλες καὶ φτάνανε ἴσαμε τὸ φρύδι τοῦ τοίχου, πῶξωνε τὸ μεγάλο κάστρο ἀπ' ἔξω, καὶ ποὺ ἦτανε χαμηλότερο. Κι' ἅμα

βρεθήκανε κάμποσοι ἀνεβασμένοι ἐκεῖ ἀπάνω, γίνηκε πόλεμος σκληρὸς καὶ σκοτωμὸς ἀλύπητος κ' ἀπὸ τὶς δυὸ μεριές. Οἱ Ῥωμοὶ ἄρχισανε νὰ παραδίνουνε. Τότε ὅμως ὁ Θεόφιλος Παλαιολόγος κ' ὁ Δημήτρης Κατακουζηνὸς ὠρμήσανε καὶ γκρεμνίσανε τοὺς Τοῦρκοι καὶ τοὺς σκοτώσανε.

Ὁ βασιλιάς ἔτρεξε πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ μέρος κ' ἐπίασε καὶ φώναξε γιὰ νὰ τοὺς δώση καρδιά: «Ἀδέσφια μου, βαστάτε γερά, γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ! Βλέπω πὼς οἱ ὄχτροι δειλιάζουνε καὶ διασκορπίζονται, γιὰτὶ δὲν ἔρχονται μετὰ τάξη, ὅπως συνηθίζουμε!»

Τότες ἄρχισανε νὰ χτυπᾶνε οἱ καμπάνες σ' ὅλη τὴν πολιτεία. Θρῆνος καὶ κλαυθμὸς ἔβγαινε ἀπὸ παντοῦ. Οἱ γυναῖκες καὶ τὰ παιδιὰ εἶχανε γίνει σὰν κερένια ἀπὸ τὸ φόβο τους, ὅσο ἀκούγανε ἐκεῖνες τὶς φωνές, ποὺ δὲ βγαίνανε ἀπὸ λαρύγγια ἀνθρώπινα, μὰ ἀπὸ θηρία. Ἄντρες καὶ γυναῖκες ἦτανε γονατιστοὶ καὶ κλαίγανε καὶ παρακαλοῦσανε τὸ Θεὸ νὰ τοὺς λυπηθῆ.

Στὸ μεταξὺ οἱ Τοῦρκοι πολεμοῦσανε μετὰ τὴν ἴδια καὶ περισσότερη μανία. Ὁ μεγάλος τράκος γινότανε κοντὰ στὴν πόρτα τοῦ Ῥωμανοῦ, ποὺ βρισκότανε



ὁ Παλαιολόγος, καὶ ρίχνανε σαγίτες ἀμέτρητες σὰν τὸν ἄμμο τῆς θάλασσας καὶ κάμποσες μπάλλες μὲ τὰ κανόνια. Τὸ μεγάλο κανόνι, ποὺ τὸ λένε χωνεῖα οἱ παλιοὶ ἱστορικοί, σφεντόνιζε κάθε τόσο κι' ἀπὸ μιὰ κοτρῶνα ποῦχε βάρους διακόσες λίτρες.

Ὁ Βενετσάνος Νικολὸς Μπάρμπαρας λέγει πὼς οἱ μπάλλες κ' οἱ πέτρες κ' οἱ σαγίτες, ποῦχανε πέσει μέσα στὴ χαμηλὴ μάντρα τοῦ κάστρου, ἦτανε νὰ φορτώσης ἀπάνου ἀπὸ ὀγδόντα καμήλια, κ' ὅσες εἶχανε πέσει μέσα στὸ χαντάκι ἦτανε γιὰ νὰ φορτώσης ἴσαμε εἴκοσι καμήλια. Μιὰ ἀπ' αὐτὲς τὶς μπάλλες ἄνοιξε μιὰ σκισμάδα στὴ μάντρα τοῦ χαμηλοῦ κάστρου καὶ σήκωσε τέτοιον καπνὸ καὶ τέτοιο χῶμα, ποὺ δὲ φαινότανε τίποτα.

Οἱ Τοῦρκοι, βοηθούμενοι ἀπ' τὸν καπνὸ, μπήκανε στὸ μικρὸ κάστρο ἴσαμε καμμιά τρακοσαριά, μὰ οἱ Χριστιανοὶ γλήγορα τοὺς διώξανε καὶ κόψανε τοὺς πιὸ πολλοὺς. Αὐτὸ δυνάμωσε γιὰ λίγο τὴν καρδιά τους. Μὰ σὲ λίγο ξαναμπήκανε πάλι οἱ Τοῦρκοι, καὶ τούτη τὴ φορὰ γιόμισε ὁ τόπος, ἀπάν' ἀπὸ τριάντα χιλιάδες. Ἦτανε μεθυσμένοι ἀπ' τὸ αἶμα, κι' ἀνεβαίνανε ποδοπατώντας καὶ σπρώχνοντας ὁ ἓνας τὸν ἄλλον σὰν ἀγριοκάτσικα. Βγάζανε τέτοια γαυγίσματα, πῶλεγες πὼς εἶνε ἡ κόλαση. Κι' ἀφοῦ σκοτωθήκανε πολὺ πλῆθος, κρατήσανε τὸ μικρὸ τὸ κάστρο καὶ σὲ λίγο εἶχανε ἔμπει μέσα στὴν πρώτη μάντρα περισσότεροι ἀπὸ ἑβδομήντα χιλιάδες. Οἱ σκοτωμένοι κειτόντανε κουβάρες σὰν σακκιά.

Ἀπάνω σ' αὐτὰ πληγώθηκε στὸ ποδάρι ὁ στρατηγὸς Γιουστινιάνης. Μὲ μιὰς μαθεύτηκε τούτη ἡ δυστυχία ἀπὸ τὴν μιὰ ἄκρη ὡς τὴν ἄλλη κι' ὅλοι μαραθῆκανε. Ὁ βασιλιάς ἔφταξε, καὶ βλέποντας τοὺς στρατιῶτες φοβισμένους καὶ τὸ Γιουστινιανὸ νᾶνε σαστισμένους καὶ νὰ θέλῃ νὰ τραβηχτῆ ἀπ' τὸ κάστρο, τοῦ λέγει: «Ἀδερφέ μου, τί κάνεις; γύρισε πίσω στὴν πόστα σου γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ· ἡ λαβωματιά σου δὲν εἶνε βαρειά. Ἀπάνω σε τούτη τὴ στιγμή μᾶς ἀφήνεις πῶχουμε περισσότερο τὴν ἀνάγκη σου; στὰ χέρια τὰ δικά σου κρέμεται ἡ Κωνσταντινούπολη!» Μὰ ὁ Γιουστινιανός, ποὺ στάθηκε πάντα παλληκάρι, εἶχε πάθει μεγάλη ταραχὴ κ' ἔφυγε. Πέρασε στὸ Γαλατᾶ καὶ κεῖ πέρα πέθανε σὲ λίγες μέρες.

Οἱ Τοῦρκοι καταλάβανε πὼς κάτι ἔτρεχε στὸ μέρος τῶν Γραικῶν καὶ πήρανε τὰ μπρός. Τότες ἓνας γενίτσαρος φοβερός, Χασάνης Λουπαδίτης λεγόμενος, πήδηξε πρῶτος ἀπάνω στὸ μεγάλο κάστρο, βαστώντας μὲ τόνα χέρι τὸ σκουτάρι του (ἀσπίδα) ἀπάν' ἀπὸ τὸ κεφάλι του κι' ἀπὸ τᾶλλο τὸ σπαθί του. Ἀπὸ πίσω του σκαλώσανε εὐθύς καμμιά τριανταριά σύντροφοί του.

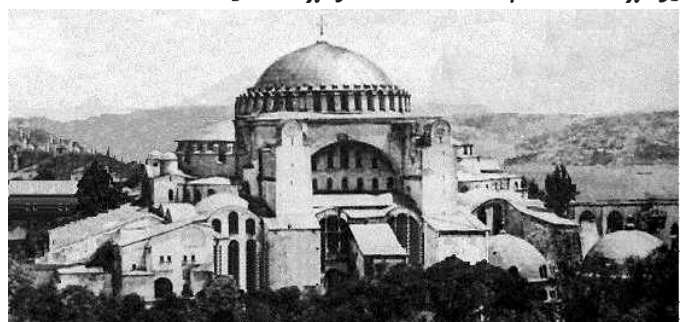
Οἱ Χριστιανοὶ γκρεμίσανε τοὺς μισοὺς κι' ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χασάνης ἔπεσε χάμω, βαρεμένος ἀπὸ τὶς πέτρες,

ποὺ ρίχνανε βροχὴ οἱ Γραικοί. Μ' ὅλα ταῦτα πάλι ξανασηκώθηκε ἀπάνω στὸ γόνατό του καὶ πολέμαγε. Μὰ τοῦπεσε τὸ σκουτάρι κ' εὐθύς γιόμισε τὸ κορμί του ἀπὸ σαγίτες καὶ ξεψύχησε. Ὡς νὰ σκοτωθῆ αὐτός, εἶχανε ἀνεβῆ πολλοὶ Τοῦρκοι στὸ μεγάλο κάστρο. Μέσα στὴν ὄγλοβοὴ κάποιοι ἀπὸ δαύτους κατεβήκανε ἀπὸ μέσα καὶ βγάλανε τὶς ἀμπάρες. Τότες ἀκουστήκανε ἀπὸ παντοῦ φωνὲς φοβερές: «Ἡ Πόλη πατήθηκε!» Ὁ κόσμος ἔτρεχε στὴ θάλασσα νὰ γλυτώσῃ.

Κεῖνη τὴν ὥρα ἔβγαине ὁ ἥλιος. Οἱ Τοῦρκοι μπαίνανε σὰν ποτάμι ἀφρισμένο ἀπὸ τὰ κάστρα κι' ἀπὸ τὴν πόρτα. Οἱ Χριστιανοὶ ἀπελπισμένοι πέφτανε μὲ σφαλιχὰ μάτια ἀπάνω τους, κ' ἔγινε τέτοιος σκοτωμός, ποὺ τὸ αἶμα ἔτρεχε νὰ κολυμπήσῃ δαμάλι. Ὁ βασιλέας, παραμιλώντας ἀπ' τὴν ἀπελπισία του, χύμηξε στὴν πόρτα μὲ τὰ παλληκάρια του κ' ἔπεσε μέσα στὸ πειδὸ πηχτὸ τουρκομάνι, βαρώντας μὲ τὸ σπαθί του. Ὁ Δὸν Φραγκίσκος ὁ Τολεδάνος, πῶλαχε νᾶνε στὸ δεξιὸ του χέρι, ἔχασε τὸ σπαθί του καὶ χύθηκε καὶ ξέσκιζε τοὺς Τούρκους μὲ τὰ νύχια καὶ μὲ τὰ δόντια.

Ὁ Θεόφιλος Παλαιολόγος, βλέποντας ματωμένο τὸ βασιλέα, ἔβαλε μιὰ φωνὴ κ' ἔκραξε κλαίγοντας: «Θέλω ν' ἀποθάνω κι' ὄχι νὰ ζήσω!» Ὁ Γιάννης ὁ Δαλμάτης κι' ἄλλοι πολλοὶ ἐκεῖ βουλιάζανε καὶ χαθήκανε. Ὁ βασιλιάς, βλέποντας πὼς ἀπόμεινε μονάχος ζωντανός, φώναξε: «Δὲν ὑπάρχει Χριστιανὸς νὰ κόψῃ τὸ κεφάλι μου!» Τὴν ἴδια τὴν στιγμή τὸν βαρέσανε δυὸ Τοῦρκοι, ὁ ἓνας στὸ πρόσωπο κι' ὁ ἄλλος στὸν ὄμο. Τὸ κορμί του κύλησε κι' ἀνακατεύτηκε μέσα στὸ σωρὸ πῶφραξε τὴν πόρτα...

[Συνεχίζεται στὸ ἐπόμενο τεῦχος]



Τὸ ἐπ' ἐμοί, ἐνόσω ζῶ καὶ ἀναπνέω καὶ σοφρονῶ, δὲν θὰ παύσω πάντοτε, νὰ ἡμῶ μετὰ λατρείας τὸν Χριστόν μου, νὰ περιγράφω μετ' ἔρωτος τὴν φύσιν, καὶ νὰ ζωγραφῶ μετὰ στοργῆς τὰ γνήσια Ἑλληνικὰ ἔθνη. Ἐὰν ἐπιλάθωμαί σου, Ἱερουσαλήμ, ἐπιλησθεῖ ἡ δεξιὰ μου· κολληθεῖ ἡ γλῶσσά μου τῷ λάρυγγί μου, ἐὰν οὐ μὴ σου μνησθῶ, ἐὰν μὴ προανατάξωμαί σοι ὡς ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς εὐφροσύνης μου.

**Ἀλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης**  
«Λαμπριάτικος Ψάλτης»



## Ἡ Παναίρεσις τοῦ Οἰκουμενισμοῦ

Τοῦ κ. Μιχαήλ Ε. Μιχαηλίδη, Θεολόγου, Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος, 4/4/2014.

Στὴν ἐποχή μας, εἶναι πιά γεγονός, κορυφώνεται ἡ αἵρεση τοῦ «οἰκουμενισμοῦ», μὲ τὸν κατακλυσμὸ τῶν ἀνεπίτρεπτων καὶ ἀντορθόδοξων ἐκδηλώσεων, περιστατικῶν καὶ παραβιάσεων τοῦ δόγματος καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν Κανόνων τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας. Ἐχουν πυκνώσει σὲ τέτοιο βαθμὸ οἱ διαχριστιανικὲς καὶ διαθρησκειακὲς συνάξεις καὶ συνελεύσεις συμπροσευχῆς καὶ διαλόγου—μὲ πρωτοπόρο τὸ «Παγκόσμιο Συμβούλιο Ἐκκλησιῶν»—ὥστε μὲ τὸ ζύμωμα τῶν ἑκατοντάδων προτεσταντικῶν καὶ ἄλλων, κατ' ὄνομα, χριστιανικῶν ομάδων, νὰ μὴ ξέρει κανεὶς ποῦ βαδίζει καὶ ποῖο Θεὸ πιστεύει!

Ἐὰν ὁ διαχριστιανικὸς οἰκουμενισμὸς μοιάζει μὲ πρόχειρο θεατράκι, ὁ διαθρησκειακὸς οἰκουμενισμὸς εἶναι τραγωδία. Ἐὰν μὲ τοὺς ἑτερόδοξους ὑπάρχουν κάποια σημεῖα ἐπαφῆς, μὲ τοὺς ἀλλόθρησκους τὸ θρησκευτικο-θεολογικὸ χάσμα, εἶναι ἀγεφύρωτο. Μ' αὐτοὺς δὲν ὑπάρχει κανένα περιθώριο συνεννόησης.

Πῶς εἶναι δυνατὴ συνεννόηση μὲ μιὰ τρομοκρατικὴ, γιὰ παράδειγμα, θρησκεία, ὅπως ἀποδεικνύεται ὁ μουσουλμανισμὸς μὲ την... διδασκαλία του γιὰ τὸ «τζιχάντ»; Μὲ τοὺς ἑτερόδοξους πάλι, τοὺς παπικούς (ἢ ρωμαιοκαθολικούς), τοὺς προτεστάντες, μὲ τὶς ἑκατοντάδες αἰρετικὲς παραφυάδες, τοὺς Ἀγγλικανούς, τοὺς Μορμόνους, ἢ τοὺς ἀντίχριστους χλιαστές (Γιεχωβάδες), ἢ ἀπόσταση ποῦ μᾶς χωρίζει, εἶναι ἀνάλογη μὲ τὴ βαρῦτητα τῆς αἰρετικῆς τους διδασκαλίας. Κατὰ τὸν Παῦλο: «Φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοί, ἐμωράνθησαν» (Ρωμ. 1: 22), καὶ κατὰ τὸ θεόπνευστο βιβλίον τοῦ Ἰωβ, ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι: «Ὁ δρασσομένης τοὺς σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτῶν». (Α΄ Κορ. 3:19).

Καὶ μιὰ καὶ ἀναφερόμαστε στοὺς Ἀγγλικανούς, τελευταία εἶδηση ἀναφέρει ὅτι οἱ τῆς Ἀγγλικανικῆς «ἐκκλησίας» συσκέπτονται—μετὰ τὴν πρωτοπορεία τους στὴν παγκόσμια διαστροφή τῆς ὁμοφυλοφιλίας, νὰ γράψουν κάποια «ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἀκολουθία» γιὰ τὰ νέα «ξεύγη»!... Μετὰ ἀπ' αὐτά, ἀναρωτιέται κανεὶς, ἂν πρόκειται γιὰ «Ἀγγλικανικὴ ἐκκλησία», ἢ «δαμονικὴ ἐκκλησία»!

Πῶς κατάντησε ἡ «γῆραια Ἀλβιών»! Ἀπὸ «χώρα τῆς Βίβλου», ἔγινε χώρα τῆς μασωνίας, τῆς μαγείας, τῆς ὁμοφυλοφιλίας καὶ πάσης διαστροφῆς. Εἶναι ἀπὸ χρόνια σβησμένες οἱ λυχνίες ὄλων τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἐκκλησιῶν. Μία εἶναι ἡ ἀληθινή, ἡ ἀγία, ἡ ἀποστολικὴ καὶ ἡ καθολικὴ Ἐκκλησία: Ἡ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ. «Αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον, μετὰ μίαν καί, δευτέραν νουθεσίαν παραιτοῦ, εἰδὼς ὅτι ἐξέστραπται ὁ τοιοῦτος, καὶ

ἀμαρτάνει ὧν αὐτοκατάκριτος.» (Τίτ. 3:10-11). Οἱ διασκέψεις δὲν πρέπει νὰ γίνονται γιὰ τὶς διασκέψεις! Ἡ θαυμάσια προσευχὴ τῆς Θείας Λειτουργίας τοῦ Μ. Βασιλείου, ἅς γίνει καὶ δική μας προσευχή: «Τοὺς πεπλανημένους ἐπανάγαγε, καὶ σύναψον τῇ ἀγίᾳ σου Καθολικῇ καὶ Ἀποστολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ». Καὶ ὁ Κύριος ξέρει πότε θὰ κάμει τὸ θαῦμα Του. Σύνθημά μας: **Ὅλοι στὸ Χριστὸ διὰ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας.**



## Τὸ Νόημα τῆς Ἄλωσης τῆς Πόλης σὲ Ἐξι Προτάσεις

Ἀπὸ τὸν μεγάλο Βυζαντινολόγο Σέρ Στήβεν Ράνσιμαν.

- (1) Ἡ τραγωδία ἦταν τελικὴ.
- (2) Στὶς 29 Μαΐου, 1453 ἕνας πολιτισμὸς σαρώθηκε ἀμετάκλητα.
- (3) Ἄφησε μιὰ ἐνδοξη κληρονομία στὰ γράμματα καὶ στὶς τέχνες.
- (4) Ὁ πολιτισμὸς αὐτὸς ἔβγαλε χῶρες ὀλόκληρες ἀπὸ τὴν βαρβαρότητα καὶ προσέφερε σὲ ἄλλες τὴν ἐκλέπτυνση τῶν ἠθῶν.
- (5) Ἐπὶ 11 αἰῶνες ἡ Κωνσταντινούπολη ἦταν τὸ κέντρο ἑνὸς κόσμου φωτός.
- (6) Τώρα ἔγινε ἡ ἔδρα τῆς θηριωδίας, τῆς ἀμάθειας, τῆς μεγαλόπρεπης ἀκαλαισθησίας!



Ἡ καρδιακὴ προσευχὴ βοηθάει ὄχι μόνο τοὺς ἄλλους ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν ἑαυτὸ μας, γιὰ τὴν βοηθίαν νὰ ἔρθει ἡ ἐσωτερικὴ καλοσύνη. Ὅταν ἐρχόμαστε στὴν θέση τοῦ ἄλλου, ἐρχεται φυσιολογικὰ ἡ ἀγάπη, ὁ πόνος, ἡ ταπείνωση, ἡ εὐγνωμοσύνη μας στὸν Θεὸ μὲ τὴν συνεχῆ δοξολογία, καὶ τότε ἡ προσευχὴ γιὰ τὸν συνάνθρωπό μας γίνεται εὐπρόσδεκτη ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ καὶ τὸν βοηθάει.

### Γέροντας Παΐσιος ὁ Ἁγιορείτης (+1994)

Ἡ προσευχὴ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὄπλο, χωρὶς τὸ ὁποῖο ὅ,τιδήποτε κι ἂν κάνει ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅσοδήποτε κι ἂν ἀγωνισθεῖ, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ κατορθώσει τίποτε. Ὅλα ὅσα κάνει, ἐπιδιώκει καὶ ἐργάζεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, κατευδώνονται καὶ πραγματοποιοῦνται μὲ τὴν χάρη καὶ τὴν βοήθεια τοῦ Θεοῦ.

### Γέροντας Εὐσέβιος Ματθόπουλος (+1929)

Ἄθρα καὶ κεκρυμένως καὶ οὐδενῶς ὀρῶντος Ἀπροσεύχεσθα!

Ἅγιος Κύριλλος Ἀλεξανδρείας (+444)

## ON THE RECENT EVENTS IN JERUSALEM AND THEIR ECCLESIOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

*By a Greek Orthodox Priest.*

What is one to make of the recent events in Jerusalem commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the meeting of Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI, during which the Patriarch of Constantinople, along with the Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and other hierarchs of the Patriarchate, met with the Pope of Rome to conduct joint prayer services and issue joint statements? What problems, if any, do these meetings and statements pose to us as Orthodox Christians and to our Orthodox Faith? And, what, in the final analysis, is the essential theological problem at stake here?

These are some of the questions that many faithful ask, and they deserve a thorough answer in return. This short article will attempt to provide some answers, or at least the beginnings of such answers.

Those who would see in these ecumenical gatherings an overwhelmingly positive development speak of them as “exchanges of generosity, goodwill and hope,” and “exchanges in the spirit of Christian love” which are “true expressions of the faith of the Apostles, the Fathers, and the Orthodox.” The champions of these gatherings never fail to admit that “although there are serious differences” between the Orthodox Church and Catholicism “which must not be overlooked, nevertheless our faith demands that we join together and witness to our shared Christian commitments.” This is how a well-known American Orthodox theologian referred to the Jerusalem event and I believe he is accurately repeating the general conception among supporters.

If, however, we are to understand the meaning of these events in a spiritual and theological manner, we must go beyond the tired clichés and overused platitudes and examine the underlying ecclesiology which is either being implied or being expressed by the Patriarch and his supporters during these meetings. It is quite easy, and unfortunately quite common even among Orthodox Christians, to be satisfied with the flowery language of love and reconciliation and not pay attention to the deeper significance of the theology being expressed in word and deed. If we are to avoid such a pitfall and assist others in the same, we must acquire an Orthodox mindset and judge these important matters within the Orthodox framework and criteria.

The underlying problem here that few discuss is the ecclesiological implications of the Patriarchate and its supporters’ new view of the Church. If the Jerusalem meeting and the accompanying gatherings (such as those in Paris, Boston and Atlanta) are judged to be *destructive* of Church unity and

to *undermine* the mission of the Church, it is not, of course, because of the flowery language of love and understanding incessantly used on all sides, but because they are not grounded in the Orthodox Faith, in Orthodox ecclesiology. If, however, our representatives in these meetings are not expressing an Orthodox teaching on the Church, what are they expressing?

Unfortunately, there is no shortage of previous statements by hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople one could reference in order to answer this question. Citing them is both beyond the scope of this article and unnecessary, for in remarks made by the Patriarch of Constantinople in his first speech given in Jerusalem on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the essence of the new ecclesiology is clearly articulated:

**The One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church**, founded by the “Word in the beginning,” by the one “truly with God,” and the Word “truly God”, according to the evangelist of love, unfortunately, during her engagement on earth, on account of **the dominance of human weakness** and of impermanence of the will of the human intellect, **was divided in time**. This brought about various conditions and groups, of which **each claimed for itself “authenticity” and “truth.”** The Truth, however, is One, Christ, and the One Church founded by Him.

Both before and after the great Schism of 1054 between East and West, our Holy Orthodox Church made attempts to overcome the differences, which originated from the beginning and for the most part from factors outside of the environs of the Church. Unfortunately, **the human element dominated**, and through the accumulation of “theological,” “practical,” and “social” additions **the Local Churches were led into division of the unity of the Faith**, into isolation, which developed occasionally into hostile polemics.

Note that the Patriarch states:

1. The One Church **was divided in time**.
2. That this division was the result of **the dominance of human weakness**. It is not stated, but it follows that this human weakness was stronger than the Divine Will for the Church He founded.
3. That the various groups, parts of the One Church, which resulted from this division **each “claimed” to be the authentic and true Church**. The implication here is that none of them, including the Orthodox Church, can rightfully lay claim to being exclusively the One Church.
4. And, yet, somehow, in spite of these competing groups all exclusively claiming authenticity and truth, **the Church is one**. Once again, it follows from all that is said that this oneness exists only **outside** of time, since the Church, as he said, was **divided in time**.



In order to gain a total picture of the new ecclesiology being presented, we should add to these views on the Church the Patriarch(ate)'s stance vis-à-vis Catholicism, which was on exhibit in both word and deed throughout the Jerusalem event. In all of the promotional material and patriarchal addresses, Catholicism—which synods of the Church and saints have for centuries now considered to be a **heretical parasynagogue**—is considered to be a Local Church, the Church *in* Rome. Likewise, the current Pope is considered to be a “contemporary successor of the early apostle [Peter] and current leader of the ancient church [of Rome].” The Patriarch has also referred to the current Pope as his brother bishop, co-responsible for the good governing of the One Church. He considers the sacraments performed by the Pope and his clerics as the self-same mysteries of the One Church. Thus it is not surprising that he views the Church as **divided in history and yet somehow still one**, if only outside of history.

What can we now say of this image of the Church presented by the Patriarch? We can say that:

1. It is in total harmony with the Second Vatican Council's new ecclesiology as laid out in the conciliar documents *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*.

2. It is entirely at odds with the vision of the Church presented in relevant conciliar documents of the Orthodox Church, such as the decisions of the Council of 1484, the Patriarchal Encyclicals of 1848 and 1895, and in the writings of those Holy Fathers who have expressed the mind of the Church on the subject, such as Sts. Gregory Palamas, Nectarius of Pentapolis, Mark of Ephesus, Paisius Velichkovsky, and many others.

The Patriarch and his supporters are aligning themselves and attempting to align all of Orthodoxy with the ecclesiological line drawn during the Second Vatican Council. This new ecclesiology allows for a division of the Church “in time,” such that the Orthodox Church and Catholicism are considered “two lungs” of the One Church—yet nevertheless divided. In this ecclesiology, the universal Church includes both Catholicism and all other Christian confessions. It is supposed that the Church is a communion of bodies that are more or less churches, a communion realized at various degrees of fullness, such that one part of the Church, that under the Pope, is considered “fully” the Church, and another part of the Church, such as a Protestant confession, “imperfectly” or only “partially” the Church. Thus, this ecclesiology allows for participation in the Church's sacraments outside of her canonical boundaries, outside of the one Eucharistic assembly, which is antithetical with a properly understood “Eucharistic ecclesiology.”

Hence, the ecclesiology expressed in word and deed by the Patriarch of Constantinople and the ecclesiology of Vatican II converge in the **acceptance of a divided Church**, or a Church rent asunder by the heavy hand of history. It might be characterized as ecclesiological Nestorianism, in which the Church is divided into two separate beings: on the one hand the Church in heaven, **outside of time**, alone true and whole; on the other, the Church, or rather “churches,” on earth, **in time**, deficient and relative, lost in history's shadows, seeking to draw near to one another and to that transcendent perfection, as much as is possible in “the weakness of the impermanent human will.”

In this ecclesiology, the tumultuous and injurious divisions of human history have overcome the Church “in time.” The human nature of the Church, being divided and rent asunder, has been separated from the Theanthropic Head. This is a Church on earth deprived of its ontological nature and **not** “one and holy,” no longer possessing **all the truth** through its hypostatic union with the divine nature of the Logos.

This ecclesiology is, without doubt, at total odds with the belief and confession of the Orthodox in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

**T**hat which is required of every Orthodox [Christian] is to pass on the **good uneasiness to the heterodox**, in order that **they may understand that they are in delusion**, so as not to **falsely be at peace** with their thoughts and be deprived in this life of the rich blessings of Orthodoxy and in the next life the much greater and eternal blessings of God.

**Elder Paisios the Athonite (+1994)**

The Church of Christ, as the Apostle Paul supremely defined it, is *His body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all* (τὸ σῶμα Αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι πληρωμένου). The fullness of Christ is identified with the Body of Christ which is, like Christ when He walked on earth *in time*, as *Theanthropos*, visible and indivisible, being marked by divine-human characteristics. As Vladimir Lossky has written, *all that can be asserted or denied about Christ can equally well be applied to the Church, inasmuch as it is a theandric organism*. It follows, then, that just as we could never assert that Christ is divided, neither could we countenance the Church ever being divided. (cf. 1 Cor 1:13).

The Church, it goes without saying, was founded, established, spread, and exists to this day *in time* (and will exist until the Second Coming, and beyond). This is so because the Church is the Theanthropic Body of the Christ, who entered *into time*, walked, died, rose, ascended and is to return again *in time*. The Church is the continuation of the Incarnation *in time*. And just as our Lord was seen and touched and venerated in the flesh, *in time*, so too does His Body, the Church, continue—**united and holy**—*in time*. If we were to accept the division of the Church, we would be accepting the nullification of the Incarnation and the salvation of the world. As this new ecclesiology of a “divided church” ultimately annuls man's salvation, it could be rightly considered as heresy.

Our belief in the unity and continuity of the Body of Christ, our confession of faith, this dogma of the Church, is based on nothing less than the divine promises of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when he said such words as these:

“When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you *into all truth*.” (Jn. 16:13).

“I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock [of faith] I will build my church; and *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.” (Mt 16:18).

“Lo, *I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*.” (Mt 28:16).

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; *I have overcome the world*.” (Jn 16:33).

Likewise, from the mouth of Christ, the divine Apostle Paul, we hear more promises of the indivisibility and invincibility of the Church:

“And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is His body, *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*.” (Eph 1:22-23).

“The house of God, which is the church of the living God, *the pillar and ground of the truth*.” (1 Tit 3:5).

“There is *one body*, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (Eph 4:5).

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” (Heb 13:8).

And, from the Apostle of Love, John the Theologian, we read that it is our faith in the God-man and His divine-human Body that is invincible and victorious over the fallen spirit of this world, which is above all, a spirit of division:

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith*.” (1 Jn 5:4).

So, then, has not the Spirit of Truth led His Church into “all truth”? Or, are we as Orthodox only advancing a “claim” of authenticity and truth? Has He not guarded His Church so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it? Or, has “human weakness” overcome Christ’s Body? Has He not remained with us, guiding us even until today and on to the end of time? Or, does He no longer exist as One “in time”? Has not our faith in the God-man overcome the world and the spirit of division? Or, is it, as the Patriarch supposes, that the “human element” and “human weakness” has overcome our faith and the unity of the Body of Christ?

To better understand the impossibility of both the Orthodox Church and Catholicism maintaining the identity of

the One Church while being divided over matters of faith, let us look briefly at the marital union. In marriage, a man and a woman are united *in Christ*. There exists a three-fold unity, or a unity between two persons in a third Person. This is no mere human accord. This is a theanthropic unity, a manifestation of the mystery of the Incarnation and thus of the Church, according to the divine words of the Apostle Paul: *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church*. (Eph 5:32).

All unity in the Church is theanthropic. Indeed, truly united human beings are only to be found in the Church, for in the Church alone does man *put on* divine-humanity (Gal. 3:27), the human nature of Christ. As the fallen, unredeemed human nature is hopelessly broken and divided within itself, separated from the principle of his unity, God, man can only be united by “putting on” a new human nature, the human nature of the God-man, which takes place in the mysteries, first of which is baptism. Therefore, we are restored to

unity in ourselves, between ourselves and with God only through unity with the God-man in His human nature, in His Body, the Church.

Has there been division? Has the “marriage” fallen apart? Know that first one of the two persons ceased to exist “in Christ,” fell away from Christ, and only then from the other. This human division is necessarily preceded by a break in communion with the Divine

Person in which the two persons were united. Something similar can be said on the ecclesiastical plane.

The Patriarch maintains that even though “the Local Churches were led into division of the unity of the Faith” and “the One Church was divided in time,” nevertheless both the Orthodox Church and Catholicism are united to Christ and manifest this unity with Him in common sacraments. This is impossible, however, for if both were united to Christ, they would **necessarily** be united to one another, since they find their unity *in Christ*. Simply put: if we are both *in Christ*, we are united. If we are divided, we can’t **both** be *in Christ*. In terms of ecclesiology, this means that both can’t be “the Church.”

From the moment that one holds that the Church is divided, he can no longer hold that the members of the Church are united to the theanthropic nature of the Body of Christ. The Church that is envisioned is necessarily a merely human organism, in which the “dominance of human weakness and of [the] impermanence of the will of the human intellect” reigns and brings division.

“**B**ut if,” they say, “we had devised some middle ground between the dogmas (of the Papists and the Orthodox), then thanks to this we would have united with them and accomplished our business superbly, without at all having been forced to say anything except what corresponds to custom and has been handed down (by the Fathers).” This is precisely the means by which many, from of old, have been deceived and persuaded to follow those who have led them off the steep precipice of impiety; believing that there is some middle ground between the two teachings that can reconcile obvious contradictions, **they have been exposed to peril.**

St. Mark of Ephesus (+1444)



We can also see this truth evidenced in the words of the Apostle of Love, the beloved Evangelist, John the Theologian. He states that *if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.* (1 Jn 4:20). Similarly, since love unites us to God, if we say that we are united with God but divided from our brother, we do not speak the truth. Furthermore, on the ecclesiastical plane, if we say that the “churches” are **both** united with God but are divided between themselves, we do not speak the truth. For, if both are united to God they would also be united to one another, since unity in the Church is *in and through Christ*.

Based on this new teaching from the Patriarch(ate), some maintain that a “false union” has already been forged. Most dismiss this claim straightaway. It is true that the common cup, at least officially and openly, was not at stake in Jerusalem or immediately anywhere. However, a type of “false union” has undeniably been established on the level of ecclesiology. For, when the mysteries of a heterodox confession are recognized *per se*, as the very mysteries of the Church, and, likewise, their bishops are accepted and embraced as bishops of the One Church, then have we not already established a union with them? Have we not a union both in terms of recognizing their “ecclesiality” (i.e., the One Church *in Rome*) and in adopting a common confession of faith with respect to the Church?

If we recognize their baptism as the one baptism, it is inconsistent not to recognize the Eucharistic Synaxis in which their baptism is performed. And if we recognize their Eucharist as the One Body, it is both hypocritical and sinful not to establish Eucharistic communion with them immediately.

It is precisely here that the untenable nature of the Patriarchate’s stance becomes apparent. The fact that the Church has never accepted inter-communion with Catholicism witnesses not to just some tactical decision or conservative stance, but to her self-identity as the One Church and to her view of Catholicism as heresy. If this were not the case, it would be as if we are playing with the mysteries and the truth of the Gospel. As St. Mark of Ephesus famously expressed it, the “cutting off of the Latins” was precisely because the Church no longer saw their “church,” their Eucharistic assembly, as if in a mirror, as expressing the “Catholic” Church in Rome. Their identity was no longer that of the Church, but of heresy.

From all that has been written here, it should be clear that there are eternal consequences from every new departure from “the faith once delivered,” and the new ecclesiology is no exception. By ignoring the contemporary voices of the Church—from St. Justin Popovich to the Venerable Philotheos Zervakos, to the Venerable Paisios the Athonite—those who went to Jerusalem espousing the new ecclesiology are leading their unsuspecting followers out of the Church

and those already outside further away from entry into the Church.

This new ecclesiology is the spiritual and theological challenge of our day to which every Orthodox Christian remains indifferent to his own peril, for it carries with it soteriological consequences. In the face of a terribly divisive and deceptive heresy, we are all called to confess Christ today, as did our ancient forbearers in the days of Arianism. Our confession of faith, however, is not only in His Person in the Incarnation, but His Person in the *continuation* of the Incarnation, the Church. To confess the faith today is to confess and declare the unity of His divine and human natures in His Body, the one and only Orthodox Church—*unmixed, unchanged, undivided and inseparable* (ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως). [Oros of the Fourth Ecumenical Council].



## ON TRIALS AND THE SPIRITUAL LAW

Source: “The Elder Joseph the Hesychast (+1959): Struggles, Experiences, Teachings.”

The Fathers’ saying *spill your blood and receive the spirit* could be described as the ever-memorable Elder’s permanent motto. Intrepid and courageous as he was, he left no room for queries or doubts in his life. But his ardent faith also contributed to this excellent combination, and so the results were always positive. Resolve and daring are the chief characteristics of man’s freedom which manifest his will, and with faith in God—which is all that is asked of our rational nature—they arouse and bring down upon us the divine energy which heals what is infirm and completes what is wanting.

With God’s help and with the above preconditions, to the Elder nothing was considered impossible; but by those unable to attain to this state, he was misunderstood and regarded as deficient or extreme. To everything that seemed difficult or complex, the Elder had a ready answer: *Where is God?*—which for him meant that without fail, God will solve the problem. Such an attitude was a basic principle of his, grounded not just in a very profound faith—what the Fathers call *faith of contemplation*—but also in the guardianship of the spiritual law, on which he based everything throughout his life. Whatever happened in general, he always judged it on the basis of the spiritual law; and in particular he judged our own personal affairs in this way, when they preoccupied us.

At the beginning of our stay with him, we usually paid quite frequent visits to him so that he could give us advice and see how we were getting on. Naturally, whether or not we told him what was on our minds, he would explain the meaning of events in detail, beginning from the results and analyzing what had led up to them, right back to the initial provocation. He would explain where these things came from, and why they came and to what extent, with such precision that we were astounded at the place the *law of the spirit of life* (Rom 8:2) held within him. Once, when we made a mistake (and how many mistakes are not caused by inexperience!) he gave me as a penance the pointless labor of a long journey. Because I knew that he never did anything without a reason, I did not ask any questions, but he told me of his own accord: *If we do not arouse a corresponding pain through arduous asceticism along with our repentance, we do not satisfy the judgment of the spiritual law, and it is possible that we may get some trial which we do not know how it will turn out.* I can say that across the whole range of our actions and affairs, both general and particular, the basis and criterion was the spiritual law. As Abba Mark says, *real knowledge is patiently to accept affliction and not to blame others for our own misfortunes.*

The Elder was also in the habit of referring frequently to the significance of trials, both as the totality of the various ills by which mankind is tested, and as events concerning individuals. On the basis of the spiritual law as the intellect of God's comprehensive providence, he accepted *educative episodes* as appropriate instruments for our correction, and called them trials. Even though he knew in depth the importance of the benefit derived from these and repeated the patristic saying *take away trials, and no one would be saved* and the statement that they were *sure to come* (Lk 17:1), he would examine with minute accuracy the causes and occasions which prompt them, and taught us how to avoid them as far as possible. His experience centered on this double duty, as he called it: to deal wisely with the causes and occasions of trials so as to forestall them on the one hand, and on the other—whenever they do occur—to confront them bravely, with faith and in hope of the ensuing benefit. *Unexpected trials are sent by God to teach us to practice the ascetic life, and they lead us to repentance even when we are reluctant.* And again: *The afflictions that come upon us are the result of our own sins.* With these sayings the Elder reminded us of the “professor of the spiritual law,” as he called him, Abba Mark the Ascetic.

The practical aspect of the life in Christ conceals the most complex mystery in human life. Two titanic forces linked together by man create an immense and unbreakable tug-of-war with man in the middle, each frantically pulling him

towards itself in order to win him over. Two loves, standing in opposition and turned towards opposite poles, form the motive power of these two forces: love towards God and love of this world. The victim, man, is not always in a position consciously to discern his own preferences, and this gives rise to retrospective changes. The occasions and causes which serve to awaken human beings who are entangled in these forces are known as trials. Are we to describe them? *If I would count them,* as the Psalmist says, *they are more than the sand.* (Pss 139:18). But we should relate just a very little from the experiences of the Elder, who had the capacity to analyze trials with exceptionally subtle discernment.

In general he considered every trial beneficial (cf. Jas 1:2), but he ascribed greater seriousness to them when explaining the particular **temptations of negligence and self-conceit,**



which he described as **devastating.** Assuredly, God wills and calls all to follow Him, but not everyone accepts His call. Yet those who have accepted this calling are tested sorely, to the degree that He ordains and in proportion to the knowledge which He has given them. The negative side, which conspires against those called by God, is the love of this world which *is in the power of the evil one* (1 Jn 5:19), which in its crafty and hypocritical way manages to deceive some; as for the others who are not convinced by its deceit, it attempts to stifle their will with open and un concealed force. The merciless pressure of the “changes” brought about by this evil neighbor of ours does not leave our good intention and good start intact.

There are many causes, known in detail to our Fathers, which give rise to changes: they may be natural, stemming from needs of ours which are not reprehensible, or they may be acquired, stemming from passions and demons. But whether they come from the one cause or the other, the reality is that they conspire against our will.

In this uninterrupted tug-of-war, trials are constantly present. None of those who sail this stormy sea of life remains untouched by the struggle with them. Inexperience, ignorance, weakness, the weight of our flesh of clay, our evil past, the passions, our habits and in addition the devil—all these evils change and check our right intention and vitiate our good purpose. *The law of sin which dwells in our members* (Rom 7:23), which is *the imagination of our heart which is evil from our youth* (Gen 8:21) slackens our progress along the good course marked out by our calling from God and the nobility of our intention. There is now no other way of waking us up and pushing us forward except for **contractual afflictions,** which are properly called trials.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF FATHERS

*Excerpted from an article by Stephen F. Duncan, Ph.D., professor of Family & Human Development Specialties, MSU Extension Service, from the parish newsletter of Saint Lawrence Orthodox Parish, Felton, CA.*



American society is now coming to the close of an era when many secular authorities discounted the role of fathers in families. Recently, scientists have discovered fathers. There are two major trends in American fatherhood today: father absence and father involvement.

A large and increasing number of children are being raised without the continued presence of a father. While

the number of American families since 1970 has risen 20 percent, the number of mother-only families has increased by 51 percent. The most extensive study to date on this topic concluded, that “Children who grow up in a household with only one biological parent are worse off, on average, than children who grow up in a household with both of their biological parents, regardless of the parents’ race or educational background, regardless of whether the parents are married when the child is born, and regardless of whether the resident parent remarries.”

In pre-industrial revolution times, fathers “played a central role in the family. Prior to the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, fathers were intimately involved in the daily lives of their children. Fathers taught their children how to work and worked along side of them, especially sons. Fathers were also responsible for teaching their children spiritual values and to read and write, if they were literate themselves.” With industrialization and urbanization came the separation of the work sphere from the family residence for most families. Fathers typically left home to work in factories and were separated from their families not just for eight hours, but often for 14–16 hours. This work away from home hindered their role in domestic affairs. Fathers more often were “absentee managers” and became more emotionally distant.

More recently, a new kind of father is emerging, resembling more closely those of pre-industrial eras. This father still plays a major breadwinner role but is also more involved in domestic tasks and caring for children. Father involvement makes a real difference. Kids do better when their relationship with Dad is close and warm.

### Dads & Babies

Children form attachments to fathers as well as mothers from age 7–13 months. By 15 months, a greater percentage of children would respond with “Daddy” when shown their father’s picture than would respond to their mother’s picture. During the first weeks in a baby’s life, when moms are usually at home, dads become the child’s “most significant other.” It is through the father that the baby first learns about comings and goings, transitions, separations and non-mother nurturing.

Fathers are as capable as mothers of caretaking, demonstrating competence, and being sensitive to a child’s needs. Fathers are actually better at keeping a baby’s attention.

Children whose fathers were actively involved with them during the first eight weeks of life managed stress better as elementary students.

Premature infants whose fathers spent more time playing with them had better mental development by age 3, whether their father resided in the same house or not.

Play is a more prominent part of father-child than mother-child relations. Fathers are more likely to initiate rough and tumble play while mothers are more likely to initiate organized games and teaching. Children prefer Dad as a play partner, but more often go to Mom in stressful situations.

### Modeling

Sons of nurturing fathers are more likely to model and internalize their modes of thinking and problem-solving. A close and warm relationship with Dad fosters a daughter’s sense of competence especially in math skills, and a secure sense of femininity.

Fathers play a major role in preparing children for life outside the family. Fathers’ emotional support of Mom greatly influences the general well-being of children.

### Later Development

On average, when compared with children of less involved fathers:

(1) Children of highly involved fathers show increased cognitive competence, increased empathy, enhanced school performance, greater motivation to succeed, enhanced social development and self-esteem, less sex-stereotyped beliefs, stronger gender identity and character, and more intrinsic motivation.

(2) Children of highly involved fathers have fewer psychological and behavioral problems, are less likely to become delinquent, and are less likely to use drugs.

### Personal & Family Benefits

Fathers also benefit personally from their involvement. Men’s sense of personal happiness and satisfaction is more strongly linked to their family roles than their work roles. Men who invest in children have better overall health and lower levels of psychological distress. Involved fathers tend to be more giving and caring when they reach middle age.

And, contrary to expectation, involved fathers can actually achieve high levels of job success. For instance, in one four-decade study, involved fathers were more likely to have advanced in their occupations, when compared with less involved dads.

In two-parent families, when Dad is actively involved with the kids, Mom's stress level goes down, and both parents feel more fulfilled. This has a positive impact on the parents' marriage and on the children.

### Being a Great Dad

Being a dad today is more complicated than it used to be. Dads were once expected to "bring home the bacon" while Moms raised the children. Nowadays, the message is different. Dads should still be a major breadwinner, but more is expected, regardless of whether or not Mom works outside the home. He should be willing to change diapers, dress children, cook meals, clean house, volunteer at school and help do all those things that his wife used to be expected to do alone. There is a clear message out there: Dad, you ought to be a more involved father, and Mom, you need to let Dad get involved.

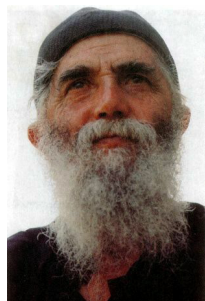
### Final Tips

Nurture your marriage first, prioritize fatherhood, get involved with your child from the beginning, learn the fatherhood craft, have regular one-on-one time with each child, show affection often, take kids to work, stay connected when you have to be away, and teach them. Connect with your child at all levels. Fathering is essential for our children's spiritual, intellectual and psychological growth and development.



## WORK IS A BLESSING

*By Elder Paisios the Athonite, from the book "Family Life," published by the Sacred Hesychastirion of St. John the Evangelist, Souroti, Greece (2002).*



—Geronda, in the old days they would say, "Better to wear out your shoes rather than blankets." What did they mean?

—They meant, "Better to wear out your shoes by working than to stay in bed and be lazy." Work is a blessing, a gift of God. It gives energy to the body, refreshment to the nous. If God had not given us

work, man would have become idle. Hard workers do not stop even in old age. If they stop working while they still have strength, they end up suffering from depression; this is death for them. I remember one little old man in Konitsa, almost ninety years old, who worked continuously. He finally died out in the fields, two hours from home.

Besides, the state of bodily comfort which some people seek is never permanent. They may forget their stress for a time—have their food, their sweets, their baths, their leisure. But, as soon as this is over, they seek another form of comfort. They are constantly anxious because everything leaves them wanting; they feel an emptiness, and their souls seek to be filled. He who wearies from work, however, has a constant joy, spiritual joy.

—Geronda, what if you have back problems and aren't able to do just any work?

—Fine, but doesn't the back need exercise? Doesn't work that exercises the back help? Listen, I'll tell you: "If someone eats, drinks, and sleeps but doesn't work, he starts unraveling; he wants to sleep all the time because his body and nerves slacken. Little by little he comes to the point where he can't do anything. As soon as he walks a little, he falls apart. Instead, if he works a little and moves around, his hands and feet become stronger. Notice that those who love work don't sleep much, and they don't sleep from fatigue—they might not get any sleep for a time, yet they keep their strength: work has seasoned them, and they became strong in body.

Especially for a young person, work is health. I have observed that some pampered children become tough and seasoned when they go into the military. The military is good for them. Naturally, this happened more in the old days. Today they are afraid to push the soldiers, because with a little strain the veins are constricted and they suffer from nervous shock. I tell parents to pay someone to allow their children to work for them, to promote their health—this serves to give them a job they like, so that they will learn to like work in general. For, a young person who is energetic also has brains, and if he doesn't work he will become lazy. Of course, when he sees others succeeding he is confused by his egoism and can't take pleasure in anything. He constantly has disturbing thoughts and his mind is muddled. Later the devil goes to him and says: "Loser! What a good-for-nothing you are! So and so became a professor, and that other guy has his own business making good money, but where will you end up?" This makes him feel hopeless. If he had worked, however, he would have acquired confidence in himself, in a good sense of the word. He would see that even he is able to get along, and his mind would stay occupied on his job and free him from disturbing thoughts. That way it's a win-win.



## THE DANGER OF DELUSION DURING PRAYER

By St. Ignatios Brianchaninov, Bishop of the Caucasus and Stavropol (+1867), from "On the Prayer of Jesus," ch. 16.



I offer fathers and brothers my poor advice, begging them not to reject it. Do not force yourself prematurely to the discovery within yourself of the action of the prayer of the heart. Prudent caution is most necessary, especially in our time when it is almost impossible to find a satisfactory spiritual guide in these matters, when the

ascetic must himself force his way gropingly by the direction of the writings of the holy Fathers to the treasury of spiritual knowledge, and also must gropingly select for himself what is suited to his needs.

While living according to the commandments of the Gospel, attentively practice the prayer of Jesus according to the method of St. John of the Ladder, combining prayer with weeping, having as the beginning and end of prayer repentance. In its own time, as it is only known to God, the action of the prayer of the heart will be revealed of itself. Such action, revealed by the touch of the finger of God, is more excellent than that which is acquired by vigorously forcing oneself by means of material aids. It is far more superior in many respects. It is far more extensive and voluminous, far more abundant. It is quite safe from delusion and other dangers. He who receives in this way sees in what he receives only the mercy of God, a gift of God, while he who attains by the vigorous use of material aids, though seeing the gift of God, he cannot fail to see his own effort and labor, he cannot fail to see his own mechanical aid which he has used, he cannot fail to ascribe to it special importance. This "subtle way" of the common man's spirit is a considerable defect, a considerable obstacle, a considerable hindrance to the development of spiritual proficiency. For the development of spiritual proficiency there is no end, no limits. An insignificant, unnoticed hope or trust in something outside God can stop the advance of progress and proficiency, in which faith in God is leader, guide, legs and wings. *Christ for the believer is all*, said St. Mark. (Philokalia—Spiritual Law, chapter 4).

Of those who have used with special diligence the material aids very few have attained success, but very many have deranged and harmed themselves. With an experienced spiritual guide, this use of the material aids incurs little danger; but with the guidance of books it is very dangerous

since it is so easy, through ignorance and imprudence, to fall into delusion and other kinds of spiritual and bodily disorder. Thus some, on seeing the harmful consequences of indiscreet labor and having only a superficial and confused idea of the prayer of Jesus and the circumstances that accompany it, attributed these consequences not to ignorance and imprudence but to the most holy prayer of Jesus itself. Can anything be sadder and more disastrous than this blasphemy, this delusion?

In teaching the prayer of the heart the holy Fathers did not say exactly in which part of the heart it ought to be performed, probably because in those times there was no need for such instruction. St. Nikiforos says, as of something well-known, that the power of speech is located in the breast and that when this faculty is aroused to participation in the prayer, the heart is also aroused to such participation. It is difficult for those who know something thoroughly in all its details to foresee and anticipate with a solution all the questions and problems that may arise from complete ignorance. Where ignorance sees darkness, knowledge finds nothing obscure. In later times a vague reference to the heart in the patristic writings caused great perplexity and a wrong practice of prayer in those who without a spiritual guide and without studying with due care the writings of the Fathers, on the basis of superficial ideas snatched from a hasty reading, decided to engage in the artistic prayer of the heart, putting all their hope and trust in the material aids to its practice. A definite explanation of this subject has therefore become indispensable.

The human heart has the shape of an oblong bag, which widens upwards and narrows towards the base. It is fastened by its upper extremity, which is opposite the left nipple of the breast, but its lower part, which descends towards the end of the ribs, is free; when shaken, this shaking is called the beating of the heart. Many, having no idea of the arrangement of the heart, think that their heart is where they feel its beating. In undertaking on their own the practice of the prayer of the heart and in trying to lead their breathing into their heart, they direct it to just that part of the heart and cause carnal excitement there. Then when this greatly increases the beating of the heart they invite it to themselves and thrust on themselves a wrong state and delusion.

The monk Basil and the elder [St.] Paisios Velichkovsky say that many of their contemporaries harmed themselves by misusing material aids. And in later times, cases of derangement caused in this way were frequently met. In fact they are met even now, although the disposition to practice the prayer of Jesus has decreased almost to a vanishing point. One is surely bound to meet them. They are the inevitable consequence of ignorant, self-directed, conceited, premature and proud zeal, and finally of a complete lack of experienced spiritual guides.

The monk Basil, referring to St. Theophylact and other Fathers, affirms that the three powers of the soul, the power of speech (or reason), the power of fervor, and the power of desire are disposed thus: the power of speech (reason), or the spirit of the man is present in the breast and in the upper part of the heart; the power of fervor in the middle part; and the power of desire or natural cupidity in the lower part. He who tries to set in motion and warm the lower part of the heart, sets in motion the power of cupidity which, on account of the nearness to it of the sexual parts and on account of their nature, sets in motion those parts. The most violent burning of carnal desire thus follows an ignorant use of a material aid. What a strange phenomenon! An ascetic apparently engages in prayer, but the occupation produces lust which it ought to mortify. And ignorance, having misused a material aid, ascribes to the prayer of Jesus what it ought to ascribe to misuse.

The prayer of the heart springs from the union of the mind with the spirit, which were separated by the fall and are united by the grace of redemption. In the human spirit are concentrated feelings of conscience, humility, meekness, love for God and one's neighbor, and other similar properties. During prayer, the action of these properties needs to be united with the action of the mind. All of one's attention should be directed to this end. This union is affected by the finger of God Who alone can heal the wound of the fall. But the practicer of prayer shows the sincerity of his will to receive healing by his constant perseverance in prayer, by shutting his mind in the words of the prayer, and by exterior and interior activity according to the commandments of the Gospel, which render the spirit capable of union with the mind of the person praying. In addition to this, the artistic direction of the mind towards the seat of speech in the upper part of the heart helps to some extent. Generally speaking, excessive exertion in the use of this material aid is harmful as it arouses material warmth. Warmth of flesh and blood should have no place in prayer.

On account of its soul-saving effect upon us of prayer in general, and of the remembrance of God or the prayer of Jesus in particular, as means to remaining in constant union with God and to constantly repulsing the attacks of the enemy, engagement in the prayer of Jesus is especially hateful to the devil. Those who pray in the name of the Lord Jesus are liable to special persecution by the devil. *All the labor and all the care of our adversary*, says St. Makarios the Great, *consists in trying to divert our thought from the remembrance of God and from love for Him. To this end he uses the charm of the world, and draws us away from the true good to false, unreal goods.* Therefore, he who has consecrated himself to the true service of God must especially guard himself against letting his thoughts wander by the unceasing prayer of Jesus and must on no account allow himself to be mentally idle.

Without paying any attention to the thoughts and images that make their appearance, he must constantly return to prayer by the name of Jesus as to a harbor or haven, believing that Jesus indefatigably takes care of that servant of His who keeps near Him constantly by the unwearying remembrance of Him.

*The wicked demons*, says St. Nilos the Sinaite, *at night try to disturb the spiritual workers themselves, but during the day they do so through men by surrounding him with calumnies, adversities and mishaps.* This order in the satanic struggle is soon observed in actual experience by every practicer of prayer. The demons tempt by thoughts, by mental images, by the remembrance of the most needed objects, by reflections on apparently spiritual subjects, by arousing anxiety and worry and various fears and apprehensions, and by other manifestations of unbelief. In all the varied conflicts of the demons, a sense of disturbance or agitation always serves as a true sign of the approach of fallen spirits, even though the action produced by them has an appearance of justice.

To ascetics living in solitude and praying vigorously, devils appear in the form of monsters, in the form of tempting objects, sometimes in the form of radiant angels, martyrs, saints and even Christ Himself. One should not fear the threats of the devils, and towards all apparitions in general one should maintain an attitude of extreme incredulity. In such cases, which however are rare, our foremost duty is to have recourse to God, to surrender ourselves wholly to His will and to ask for His help. We should, in conclusion, pay no attention to the apparitions and not enter into relations or conversation with them, regarding ourselves as unfit to deal with hostile spirits and unworthy to converse with holy spirits.



With the prayer [i.e. the Jesus Prayer], man becomes like a child. It brings him back to the simplicity and innocence that Adam had in Paradise before the fall. Through the prayer, you sanctify the place you are sitting and the work you are doing. Prayer arranges all things. It enables you to walk on water. It eliminates distances between you and others. It changes the will of others. It gives courage, faith, and patience in life.

#### Blessed Elder Amphilochios of Patmos (+1970)

Apt silence bridles anger; moderation in food bridles aimless desire; and the single-phrased Jesus Prayer bridles unruly thought.

Fear is the son of Faith and the shepherd of Commandments. He who is without faith will not be found worthy to be a sheep of the Lord's pasture.

Ilias the Presbyter



## LORD JESUS CHRIST

*From the Newsletter of the Orthodox Community of St. John of Kronstadt, Bath, England; March 1991.*

### LORD

On Mount Sinai, at the burning bush, the Lord revealed Himself to Moses as the Saviour of Israel. He did not give Moses a lecture on the divine nature: He ordered him to pull the Israelites out of Egypt and bring them back to that same mountain. From then on, Israel has known the Lord as its Saviour because it had experienced that salvation.

Fifty days after Passover, the Lord brought them all to Sinai to give them the Law: this is commemorated in the "Jewish Feast of Pentecost." The Law changed the descendants of Jacob from a group of immigrant settlers and slaves into a people. To this day, the people of Israel know the Lord as Saviour, and themselves as the people who are bound to the Lord by His commandments.

This also concerns us Christians: whenever we use the name "The Lord" for God, we refer to the first of the Ten Commandments: *I am the Lord thy God, Who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.* Any thought, any reflection on God, must concentrate on these two aspects of the relationship: He is the Saviour, we keep the commandments.

Why did God have to reveal Himself in this way? Because Israel had no way of knowing the Lord unless He pulled them out of Egypt. At the last moment, before they were irretrievably assimilated into the pagan culture of Egypt, God pulled them out. And this remains the same not only for the Jews, but also for us Christians today. At the last minute, before we become assimilated by the pagan culture which surrounds us, the Lord has to pull us out, and make us into a people who no longer conform to the standards and the way of life of this society. He has to make us into a people shaped by His will. There is a simple alternative for all human beings: either we will be shaped by God's will, or we will be pagans.

### JESUS

The name Jesus, to us, means *Salvation*. When the Son of God became a human being, He completed what had been revealed on Mount Sinai. The same Lord, the same Saviour, came among us and dealt in a definitive way with sin and death. To such an extent that not only we, Christians, but the Jews themselves acknowledge that something happened to the Torah two thousand years ago; it was then when the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, the part of the Law which deals with the Levitical priesthood and the animal sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple ceased to be relevant, except as imagery in the Bible to make us understand the ways of the Lord. Events clearly substantiated the claims of Saint Stephen during his trial before the Sanhedrin. Many Jews have acknowledged

that the Lord had allowed the role of the Levitical priesthood to lapse "de facto" since the destruction of the Temple. Why should a substantial part of the Torah—the priesthood—turn out to have been a mere prefiguration of another, and higher, priesthood?

The reason is to be found in St. Paul's letter to the Hebrews: through His sacrifice on the Cross, Jesus entered through the veil into the Holy of Holies; He became *our high priest after the order of Melchizedek*. The salvation He brings is explained by the third part of His Name: Christ.

### CHRIST

The Messiah is David's successor who has come to bring all nations to obey the Lord, the God of Israel. From the moment Jesus came into this world, the days of the false gods were numbered. Once the Messiah has come, there is no longer room in the world for the rule, and side by side, of the God of Israel and the demonic forces of paganism. The latter will collapse by the power of the grace of Jesus, by the victory of His Cross, Resurrection and outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The collapse of pagan religions does not rely on the use of violence and persecution; Jesus does not win through inquisitions. The Righteous One does not use the weapons of the evil one. Neither does He tolerate relativism: there is no prayer we can share with the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Shintoist, because one cannot mix the worship of the Lord with the cult of their deities. Because of their Covenant with the Lord, both Jews and Christians have the duty to stay away from the "interfaith" syncretism which is becoming part of our culture.

### LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME, A SINNER!

This simple but radical faith, this relationship with the Incarnate Lord, challenges us with personal questions:

1. What is my personal Egypt which I have to leave behind? Before I can receive the Lord's life-giving commandments, are there involvements from which I must break free? The most insidious ones are cultural ones: the values of a non-Christian society around us.

2. Egypt reveals itself for what it is once we have heard the Law of Sinai. As St. Paul pointed out, before the Law taught us, we did not discern sin, nor did we know what the requirements of holiness were. A Christian community which neither knows its Bible nor takes its distances from pagan culture cannot be truly Christian, let alone evangelize.

3. Jesus, the Risen Lord, empowers me by His Holy Spirit. If the power of the Holy Spirit is not obviously at work in my life, it is time I prayed in my heart: *Lord, Thou strengthenest me with Thy Body and Blood and Thy Holy Spirit in the Divine Liturgy. Grant me to come worthily to the communion of Thy pure Body and precious Blood and release the power of Thy Holy Spirit in my life.*

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## NO TEARS FOR TWO YEARS...

*By Archimandrite Gregory, Abbot of Docheiariou Monastery, translated from Greek by the staff of the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.*

Helen lived in Karpenisi and had married a very tough and cruel man who would beat her at the slightest provocation that he perceived; his violence (mostly kicks) towards Helen would parallel the neighborhood kids kicking their favorite soccer ball, as hard as possible. Her life was indeed difficult, yet she persevered with her only consolation being her closeness to the Mother of God. Her suffering and her affection for the Holy Mother encouraged and motivated her to serve in the Monastery of Panaghia Prousiotissa (in the island of Karpenisi) during the annual August fast for the Glorious Lady, the Theotokos, taking care of the Church and the other cleaning needs of the monastery.

Helen described to us the following story: During an early period of my marriage, I worked for a doctor, cleaning and taking care of his office; the job paid well and the doctor was always prompt in his payments to me; he was, however, a very tough and difficult boss, not unlike my husband. One day, I was picking up the office garbage-can to throw away its contents in the outside dumpster; suddenly, as I approached the dumpster, I heard a soft cry. I opened the lid and saw a baby covered in blood. "Holy Mother," I exclaimed, "what am I to do? I cannot possibly take the baby to the doctor as he is the one who has apparently thrown it in the dumpster believing it to be dead; and taking the baby home would infuriate my husband—he would 'crucify' me as a Paschal lamb."

I picked up the infant, kissed it, and, wiping the blood from his little body, I wrapped him in my bosom, trying to warm him up; it was a frosty winter day. When I arrived home, alone, I said to myself: "God is with me, I will keep him and nothing will happen." I washed him, wrapped him in an old shirt, crossed him and getting on my knees in front of the icon of the Mother of God, I prayed intensely: "Holy Panaghia Prousiotissa, send your grace upon this child and keep him from crying and revealing his presence." And the miracle happened. The baby did not cry for two whole years! I kept him in secret and fed him when nobody was around; and, he would sleep under our bed each and every night, always in quiet. When my husband would come home, my anxiety for his discovery would elevate, my heart rate would increase, but the baby remained my own little secret, for well over two years.

As time passed, my little boy started crawling. One afternoon during lunch, the baby made its way to the table and revealed his presence to my husband. Just as my husband saw him, his eyes widened and lit up as those of a lion, and with a stern voice he screamed: "What is that?" I crossed myself and proceeded to reveal my two-year secret. His disposition then changed, as by a miracle, he was moved beyond any of my expectations; he did not only express his full understanding but accepted my little angel boy as if it was his own.

Many years have passed since then, my husband has fallen asleep and this child is now married and works in Karpenisi. And from all of my children, he happens to be the only one that looks after me, during these, my difficult elderly years; my other children have pretty much forgotten their mother...

# 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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## HOLY PRIESTHOOD & SPIRITUAL THERAPY

By Bishop Hierotheos Vlachos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos and St. Vlassios; excerpt from his highly esteemed book "Orthodox Psychotherapy."

The priest has a double task. One is to perform the sacraments and the other is to heal people so that they can worthily approach and receive Holy Communion. We have further pointed out that there are many priests who are priests outwardly and perform their function unhindered but in essence have defiled the priesthood, and that this is apparent from the fact that they are not able to heal. They perform the sacraments, and the gifts are sanctified through them, but they cannot cure others or save their own souls.

On the other hand, there are laymen and monks who do not have the sacramental priesthood but can heal people because they have spiritual priesthood. We should like to dwell briefly on this point.

Through baptism and the effort to keep Christ's commandments all Christians have put on Christ, and in this way we share the royal, prophetic and high priestly office of Christ.

This teaching is recorded in the texts of the New Testament. In the Book of Revelation John the Evangelist writes: *To him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and has made us kings and priests to his God and Father...* (Rev 1:5). The Apostle Peter says: *You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people.* (1 Pet 2:9). And the Apostle Paul writes to the Christians of Rome: *I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* (Rom 12:1).

In many Fathers too we find this teaching that every person is a priest of Christ in the sense which we defined and will develop further later on. St. John Chrysostom presents Abraham too as a priest because *where there is fire, an altar and a knife, why do you doubt his priesthood?* Abraham's sacrifice was twofold. He offered both his only-begotten son and the ram, *and above all, his own will.* With the blood of the ram he sanctified his right hand, with the slaying of the child (which he had decided to do) he sanctified his soul. *Thus he was ordained a priest, by the blood of his only-begotten, by the sacrifice of the lamb.* Just after this, St. John Chrysostom exhorts his listeners: *So you too are made king and priest and prophet in the laver: a king, having dashed to earth all the deeds of wickedness and slain your sins, a priest in that you offer yourself to God and sacrifice your body, and are yourself being slain also.*

All the faithful baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity and living according to the will of the Holy Trinitarian God are priests, they have spiritual priesthood. We prefer the expression *spiritual priesthood* to other terms like *general* or *lay* priesthood, because clergy and lay people alike can have this priesthood, and because not all the baptized have it, but only those who have become the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity. The faithful who have noetic prayer have spiritual priesthood, especially those who have reached such a degree of grace as to pray for the whole world. This is the spiritual service on behalf of the world. The prayers of these people who sacrifice themselves, praying on behalf of all, sustain the world and heal men. Therefore by prayer they become exorcists, driving out the demons which rule in human societies. This is the great work of those who pray unceasingly for the whole world.



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St. Gregory of Sinai wrote about this spiritual priesthood, which is also the essential foundation of the sacramental priesthood. For as we have said, those of the faithful who were healed and had noetic prayer were chosen to receive the special grace of the priesthood as well. According to St. Gregory, noetic prayer is *the mystical liturgy of the mind*. A person who possesses the gift of noetic prayer senses the operation of grace within him, which is purifying, illuminating and mystical. All who reach this state are priests. *A true sanctuary is a heart that has been freed from evil thoughts and receives the operation of the Spirit, for everything in that heart is said and done spiritually.*

This passage from the holy Father prompts me to say that the spiritual priesthood is that which is to be consummated in another age, in the kingdom of heaven. Without wishing to dwell on the subject of the ineffaceable or non-sacramental priesthood, we stress the truth that the sacramental priesthood is for the benefit of the laity, to serve its needs, while the spiritual priesthood is that which will continue to be celebrated at the heavenly altar in the life to come. All who have spiritual priesthood are *true clergy now and forever*. This priesthood can include all categories of men, and naturally also of women. Therefore it is not very important that in the Orthodox tradition women cannot receive sacramental priesthood. They have the possibility of being the *true clergy*.

Elsewhere St. Gregory of Sinai is explicit: *All devout kings and priests are truly anointed in baptismal renewal just as those of old were anointed symbolically*. The priests of the Old Testament were *truly symbols of our truth*, but *our kingdom and priesthood are not the same in character and form*.

When a man's nous has been discovered, when he has been freed from his captivity and received the Holy Spirit,

it is *spiritual priesthood* and then he celebrates a mystical liturgy in the sanctuary of his soul and partakes of the lamb in betrothal with God. In this spiritual priesthood he eats the Lamb of God in the spiritual altar of his soul, but at the same time he becomes like the lamb. Thus we understand well that when noetic prayer is working in us, there is an unceasing divine liturgy which nourishes our whole existence. St. Gregory of Sinai writes: *The noetic work of the nous is a spiritual liturgy. Like a betrothal before the coming delight which surpasses all understanding, this liturgy is performed by the nous, which mystically sacrifices the Lamb of God on the altar of the soul and partakes of it. To eat the Lamb of God on the inner altar of the soul means not only to apprehend it, or partake of it, but also to become like it in the future life. Here we enjoy the words of the mysteries, but there we hope to receive their very substance.*

The same saint also writes that the kingdom of heaven is like the tabernacle fashioned by God for Moses, *for in the world to come it too will have two veils*. And all the *priests of grace* will enter the first tabernacle, but only those will enter the second tabernacle who are henceforth to celebrate *in the darkness of theology hierarchically in perfection* having Jesus as the first celebrant and bishop before the face of the Trinity. Therefore all who have acquired the gift of theology as we explained it above, that is, all who after natural *theoria* have entered the divine darkness, are themselves priests of God; they constitute this true and spiritual priesthood. And since they are the spiritual priesthood, they can heal the sick.

Nikitas Stethatos teaches that if any priest, deacon, or even monk participates in divine grace with all the presuppositions set down by the Fathers, *he is a true bishop* even if he has not been ordained a bishop by men. On the contrary,

anyone who is uninitiated in the spiritual life is *falsely named even if by ordination he is set over all the others in rank and mocks them and behaves arrogantly*.

Probably what we quoted earlier, that *all who constitute the spiritual priesthood can heal the sick*, was not well received. However, the teaching of St. Symeon the New Theologian on this point is very revealing. The saint writes that the power of binding and loosing sins belonged only to the bishops, who had received it by succession from the Apostles. But when *the bishops became good for nothing, this awesome function passed to priests who led a blameless life worthy of the grace of God*. When the priests too, along with the bishops, fell into spiritual error, *this function was transmitted to the chosen people of God, namely the monks, not that it was taken away from the priests and bishops, but they estranged themselves from it*.

According to St. Symeon, the power of binding and loosing sins was not given *simply because of their ordination*. The laying on of hands only gave the metropolitans and bishops permission to celebrate the Eucharist. The power to remit sins was given *only to those of the priests and bishops and monks who could be numbered among the disciples of Christ on account of their purity*.

We believe that St. Symeon developed this teaching in the first place in order to emphasize that the sacrament of priesthood did not magically transmit the authority to forgive men their sins if one did not have inner spiritual priesthood; secondly, to show the wretched state of the clergy of that time; thirdly, to underline the value of the spiritual priesthood, which lies in noetic prayer and vision of God and these unfortunately, then as now, were neglected; and fourthly because he himself had personal experience of this: his spiritual father, who had not been ordained by a bishop, had the grace of the Holy Spirit and was able to forgive sins.

Nevertheless his spiritual father, Symeon the Pious, did not overlook the sacrament of ordination. St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: *I know that the grace of binding and loosing sins is given by God to those who are sons by adoption and his holy servants. I too was a disciple of such a father who had not received the laying on of hands on the part of men but who through the hand of God, that is, the Spirit, enrolled me among the disciples and ordered me to receive the laying on of hands by men according to the prescribed form I who for a long time had been impelled by the Spirit toward such a reality*. He continues: *Having heard the commandments of Christ, he became a partaker of His grace and of His gifts and received from Him the power to bind and loose, kindled by the Holy Spirit*.

When we speak of remission of sins we should understand it mainly as the curing of passions. Thus we see clearly today that *gifted* monks heal us without having sacramental priesthood. Being clear-sighted, they perceive the problem which

is troubling us, they give us a remedy and a method of healing, and so we are cured of what was inwardly disturbing us. The existence of such holy men is a comfort for the people.

### Our Search for Therapists

We come now to the search for therapists. Since we have been made aware of spiritual illness and of the great value of priest-therapists, we must search for them in order to be freed from the ulcers in our souls. A really great effort is needed in order to find these true leaders of the people, the doctors of our souls and bodies, since certainly many bodily illnesses are of spiritual origin.

In his homily on the New Sunday Gospel, St. Gregory Palamas advises: Let every Christian after attending church on Sunday *diligently seek* someone who, imitating the Apostles who were in the upper room after the Crucifixion, remains *completely enclosed most of the time, desiring to be with the Lord in silent prayer and psalmody as well as in other ways*. Let him approach him then, let him enter his house with faith *as a heavenly place having within it the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit*. Let him sit with the man who lives there, let him remain with him as long as he can, asking *about God and the things of God*, learning with humility and appealing for his prayer. Then, says the saint, *I know that Christ will come to him invisibly and grant inner peace to the pondering of his soul and increase his faith and give him support, and in time to come will enroll him in the kingdom of heaven*.

It is necessary to seek out such a spiritual father. On this point it is worthwhile to listen to what St. Symeon the New Theologian has to say. Ask God, he says, to show you a man *who is able to direct you well, one whom you ought to obey*. We should show obedience to the man whom God shows us *mystically in person or outwardly through His servant*, and revere him *as if he were Christ himself*. We should show our dispassionate spiritual father the kind of confidence and love that a sick person shows to his doctor, expecting treatment and healing from him. Rather we should have even more confidence and love, in view of the difference between the soul and the body. Christ himself is present in the spiritual father. He is *the mouth of God*.

Further on, St. Symeon matches the Apostles' attitude towards Christ to the attitude which we should have towards our spiritual father, because it is in that way that our soul can be healed. As the Apostles followed Christ, let us do so also. When people dishonor and pour scorn on our spiritual father, we must not abandon him. And as Peter took his sword and cut off the ear, *take the sword and stretch forth your hand and cut off not only the ear but the hand and the tongue of him who attempts to speak against your father or to touch him*. **If you deny him, weep like Peter. If you see him crucified, die with him if you can. If that is not possible, do not join with the traitors and evil men. If he is released from imprisonment, return to him again and vener-**

ate him the more, like a martyr. If he dies from ill treatment, then boldly seek his body and pay him more honor than when you attended on him while he was alive, and so anoint it with perfumes and give it a costly burial.

It is very characteristic that the spiritual father, the therapist, is put in the place of Christ. St. Symeon also uses a type of prayer in which one asks to find a suitable spiritual guide who will offer us spiritual healing:

*O Lord, who desirest not the death of a sinner but that he should turn and live, Thou who didst come down to earth in order to restore life to those lying dead through sin and in order to make them worthy of seeing Thee the true light as far as that is possible to man, send me a man who knows Thee, so that in serving him and subjecting myself to him with all my strength, as to Thee, and in doing Thy will in his, I may please Thee the only true God, and so that even I, a sinner, may be worthy of Thy Kingdom.* If a Christian prays in this way, God will show him the spiritual father suitable for him, to tend the illnesses and wounds of his soul.

Certainly one should not overlook the fact that such therapists, both in St. Symeon's time and today, are rare. He says: *In truth those who have the skill properly to direct and heal rational souls are rare, and especially so at the present time.*

In conclusion it should be said that it is necessary to seek out and find such scientific doctors, therapists, or even nurses, in order to be spiritually healed. There is no other way of healing. God is our true Healer, but so are the friends of Christ, the saints in whom dwells the Trinitarian God Himself.



He who is obedient, is an imitator of Christ, and he who is proud and talks back is an imitator of the devil. So, let us be careful: Whom are we imitating? Christ or the devil?

The only hope of salvation from the delusions and the heresies, the innovations and the traps of wicked people and of the devil is prayer, repentance and humility.

Christians must be true, both in word and deed. Unfortunately today, with sin super-abounded and super-exceeded, most people call the light darkness and the darkness light; they characterize truth as falsehood and falsehood as truth; the sweet is now bitter and the bitter has become sweet. Most importantly, good is characterized as evil and evil as good. We find such people in all ranks of society except for a few select people, for whose sake and through whose intercessions our Lord grants His mercy upon us.

Having Christ as ally and armed with the weapons of Faith, Love and humble-mindedness and the Precious Cross, we will defeat the invisible and visible enemies.

**Elder Philotheos Zervakos (+1980)**

## HOW DO WE MEET GOD?

*Elder Porphyrios: Testimonies and Experiences, by Klitos Ioannides.*

In our question of "How can we, who live in the world, in the bustle, turmoil and schizophrenia of contemporary life, meet God," Elder Porphyrios told us the following story, presented here in brief:

Shortly after he was appointed chaplain to the Church of St. Gerasimos in the Athens Polyclinic, by *Omonia Square*, he had a problem at the time of the Liturgy. Directly across the street from the Church was a store that sold gramophones and records. The shopkeeper played records on the gramophone in order to attract customers. He played them so loudly, however, that Elder Porphyrios could not bear it. He had reached the point where he thought of resigning even though he wanted the post very much.

In this situation, as throughout his whole life, Elder Porphyrios did not put his own wants first, but with much prayer and humility, asked God to show him what he should do.

Therefore, following three days of fasting and prayer he found a notebook that belonged to the son of a Church council member, in the corner of the Church. He was a student at the University. It was a physics notebook, -Lord, we always marvel at your works- which gave Elder Porphyrios the solution to his problem.

Leafing through the pages, he found some notes that referred to acoustic waves. Studying it, he had a thought. If you throw a pebble into a lake, the water is disturbed and circles form. If, on the other hand, you threw a rock into another section of the lake, new bigger circles are created which neutralize the first circles.

This was the answer from God that Elder Porphyrios was waiting for. The next day, he tried to concentrate all his spiritual and mental powers into the prayers and the acts of the Divine Liturgy. Thus, on the basis of the reasoning he had done about the lake, he formed circles in his mind and his heart that canceled out the circles that were formed by the gramophone. It no longer disturbed nor distracted him from the Divine Liturgy.



It is a great art to succeed in having your soul sanctified. A person can become a saint anywhere. He can become a saint in *Omonia Square*, if he wants. At your work, whatever it may be, you can become a saint through meekness, patience, and love. Make a new start every day, with new resolution, with enthusiasm and love, prayer and silence—not with anxiety so that you get a pain in the chest.

**St. Porphyrios (+1991)**



## ON THE PUSILLANIMITY HERESY

By Fr. John Bockman (+2000), archpriest and teacher.

Pusillanimity, a virtually obsolete word, is the name of a heresy rampant in the world today. Most people have never heard of it, but it has some important thought elements which make it useful in pursuing the spiritual life. Therefore, Orthodox Christians should consider it carefully. Pusillanimity denotes spiritual cowardice, lack of “manly” strength, spiritual inertia, a certain diminution of faith and trust in God. Before we clarify the nature of this heresy, let us examine the background of its applicability to today’s social and religious environment.

A recent forum called *Global Fashion: American Commercial Culture in the World* sponsored by the Center for Arts and Culture met on November 3, 1999. A participant named Todd Gitlin of New York University advanced the proposition that the United States is exporting “revolutionary values” around the world. He described it as “a brash culture that knows no boundaries.”

The world seems to be demanding whatever the American culture has to offer, good, bad, or indifferent, but it is also protesting against some elements of it. We know, for example, that Moslem fundamentalists call America “the Great Satan” for reasons that should be obvious. People abroad who are resisting American culture feel that American culture is like a typhoon, a force that is not only unavoidable, but also terribly destructive.

American culture’s current effect on foreign languages and therefore on ideas, mores, and attitudes is phenomenal. But it’s not just the whole secular world that has been influenced by American popular culture. The Orthodox world and we Orthodox faithful ourselves have also been affected by it. Radio, television, the movies, newspapers and magazines have gradually conditioned the mind and hearts of people everywhere to sensationalism, commercialism, secularism, materialism, and to what amounts to paganism.

If we have personally experienced a true spiritual conversion sometime in our life, and are struggling against our passions, we are aware that these harmful spiritual effects are a serious problem in our spiritual life, and that to remain true to our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ we must take vigilant measures to minimize those effects in our life. The struggle of a truly converted Orthodox Christian will be in large part a struggle against the American secular world and its value system.

At this point we must observe that Holy Baptism alone does not magically bring about a total conversion. It gives us the grace and spiritual strength necessary to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in making a full conversion, but the eventual outcome depends on whether we individually choose to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we may say that in any given Orthodox community there will be those who have

been converted, those who are being converted, and those who have not yet begun to be converted. People baptized as babies, for example, must sooner or later undergo voluntary conversion in cooperation with the Holy Spirit if they are to become truly Orthodox.

Among the effects of American popular culture is the tendency to give in to this state which we are calling pusillanimity, that is, to spiritual cowardice or a lack of spiritual courage. Those Orthodox patriarchs, hierarchs, priests, and people who believe that in our day it is impossible to arrive at the height of virtue achieved by the saints of old are on dangerous spiritual ground. If they teach this, they are heretics and we must avoid them.

At least one chief hierarch of an American Orthodox jurisdiction, for example, has said publicly that Americans will not tolerate long services. (It is true, of course, that some Americans will not tolerate long services, but can that reasonably be said of all? Look at us!) Therefore, rather than attempting to teach and encourage personal self-discipline, endurance, and spiritual strength-building, this hierarch prescribes a limit of 45 minutes on the Divine Liturgy. That policy requires that the Liturgy and Homily be shortened, greatly reducing the educative powers of the Liturgy and the preaching. This robs the faithful who don’t understand they are being robbed. This conditions the laity to demand one compromise of Orthodox practice after another, causing great detriment to the integrity of Orthodoxy.

The heresy of pusillanimity proposes that since we are not living in the time of the apostles, and are not in the immediate physical presence of the Saviour, it is impossible for us to become holy in the way the apostles were holy. It is impossible for us to pray and fast and attend services the way the early Christians and great saints of later centuries did. It is said that only the destitute and starving poor actually fast today, and that only out of necessity. That only the old *babushkas* and *yiayias* really spend time praying. Therefore, it is argued, the Church should abandon or greatly restrict the Orthodox fasts and the numbers and length of the services for the vast majority of people. And since only monks, generally unmarried and unskilled in business and management, are allowed by the Canons to become bishops, the Church must remove the restriction against the episcopal ordination of married men. They say the Church has to get the “best educated” men in the episcopate.

Arguments such as these accommodate the spiritual weaknesses of pusillanimous Orthodox clergy and laity alike. Already widowers and unmarried men are being chosen bishops in New Calendar jurisdictions who have never spent more than a few hours in a monastery, but are tonsured as monks pro forma in a great big hurry. Soon some secularized Orthodox women can be expected to start clamoring for the priesthood and the episcopate. These are or will be violations of the Holy Canons and blasphemies against the Holy Spirit. The next

thing you will see is agitation for an “ecumenical council” to add Canons which will nullify the Canons of past centuries. No true Ecumenical Council had ever abrogated the Canons of previous ecumenical councils, and never will.

Why is pusillanimity a heresy? It is a heresy because it denies the continuous and continuing presence and operation of the Holy Spirit in the Church. It minimizes the Holy Spirit, and minimizes Jesus Christ Who sent the Holy Spirit upon the Church to keep it from error. Pusillanimity is the belief that one cannot obey the Gospel as did people of old. It is the claim that there are no spiritual fathers left in the world today. It is the belief that the Church of Christ has not yet been established, but awaits the concurrence of world religions, many of which deny the divinity of Christ and other basic Orthodox dogmas.

St. Symeon the New Theologian who lived in the last half of the tenth and into the first decades of the eleventh century did much to expose this heresy. His times were much like ours. Many people had become dissatisfied with what the Church had become. It is worthy of note that the beginning of the second millennium occurred during St. Symeon’s time. The West especially was wracked with religious dissent. The so-called Great Schism occurred shortly after St. Symeon’s repose. Out of the religious confusion the West developed scholasticism which in turn resurrected the philosophy of the pagan Greeks. It wanted to “save” the Church by turning back, not to Christ, but to the pagan, Aristotle. Scholasticism pushed Western Christianity in a direction away from the early Church and away from the Holy Fathers. Out of it grew the Roman Catholic Church and its papal monarchy which has proceeded on an increasingly rationalistic and innovative course. It is noteworthy, however, that the philosophical basis of Roman Catholicism has begun to break down at this, the end of the twentieth century.

The Eastern Orthodox Church was also tempted to move toward a Byzantine form of scholasticism in imitation of the West. For a time, two opposing theologies faced each other in Byzantium. One was abstract and philosophical like Western Scholasticism. The other, championed by St. Symeon, strove to restore theology to its pristine form as “wisdom infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul after its thorough purification through rigorous asceticism and a state of constant repentance.” St. Symeon was so successful in defeating Scholastic tendencies among Orthodox theologians of his time, that the Church designated him as one of only three men titled Theologians: St. John the Theologian, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. Symeon the New Theologian.

It is very important for Orthodox people to know that this wandering away from True Orthodox theology has occurred again and again in history. Again and again someone gets the idea that the Church is out of step, too old-fashioned, and needs to be “saved from oblivion” by being brought into harmony with contemporary life. This idea prevailed several times in

Russia. Russian seminarians started to go to the West where they picked up scholastic ideas and brought them home. Russian Orthodox seminaries started to teach Western theology as though it were Orthodox, and they came to be unfamiliar with the Tradition of Orthodox spirituality. St. Paisius Velichkovsky rescued the Russian Church at one point. Finally along came the Communist state, and weak, pusillanimous churchmen felt they had to compromise with the state to “save” the Church. The Church became in effect an arm of the Communist government. Sanctity in Russia had to go underground into the Catacomb Church.

When Greece finally achieved independence from the Turks, Greek hierarchs started to fraternize with the Anglicans and to send theological students to Western Europe where they absorbed Roman Catholic theology. The result was adoption of the New Calendar and growing accommodation to the Western world and its theological errors. It is only in our time that the Greek Church is beginning to recover from this Western Captivity under such people as Father John Romanides of America and Greece and Bishop Hierotheos Vlachos of Greece.

There is never anything that man can do to save the Church. Only the Lord can save the Church. And we ask it in a hymn at the end of every Divine Liturgy. What we can do is remain faithful to His word and to the Holy Spirit who operates in the Church through the Holy Mysteries. We can struggle by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving to cooperate with the Holy Spirit by holding fast to the traditions of Holy Orthodoxy.



There are those of whom I speak and who are called heretics by me. They are the ones who say that in our present age there is no one in our midst who is able to observe the commandments and be like the holy fathers....Those who declare this is impossible have fallen not into one particular heresy but into all of them, so to speak – a heresy surpassing all others in its impiety and greatest blasphemy. They are buried underneath it....The one who speaks in such a manner turns all of Scripture upside down....These antichrists affirm, “It is impossible, impossible.” Why then is it impossible? Tell me. In what other way did the saints shine on earth and did they become lamps of the world? If it were impossible, they would never have succeeded in it. For they were men like us, and possessed no more than we do except a will directed toward the good. They had zeal, patience, humility, and love for God. Therefore, acquire all this and your soul which today is as hard as rock shall become a fountain of tears inside you. However, if you refuse to suffer such anguish and affliction, at least do not say that all this is impossible.

**St. Symeon the New Theologian**  
*Discourse XXIX: “The Heresy of Pusillanimity”*

## WHEN ALEXANDRIA APOLOGIZED

*On the restoration to ecclesiastical order of one of the greatest Orthodox saints.*

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1998 the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria sent out an apology. Here is what they wrote:

*The Holy Spirit has enlightened the gathered members of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa, under the leadership of H.B. Petros VII, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa, more than a century since Saint Nektarios, the great Teacher and Father of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Church was expelled from the Church of Alexandria, to reach the following decision:*

*Taking into account the resolution of the Church to rank Saint Nektarios amongst the saints because of his innumerable miracles and his acceptance within the religious conscience of Orthodox Christians throughout the world, we appeal to the mercy of the ever-charitable God.*

*We hereby restore the ecclesiastical order of the Saint of our Century, Saint Nektarios, and grant to him all due credits and honors. We beseech Saint Nektarios to forgive both us, unworthy as we are, and our predecessors, our brothers of the Throne of Alexandria, for opposition to the Saint and for all which, due to human weakness or error, our Holy Father, Bishop of Pentapolis, Saint Nektarios, suffered.*

**PETROS VII Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa.**

† † †

What led to this apology? Let's find out...

St. Nektarios, known for his countless miracles of healing, and as, "A Saint for our Time," was born in 1846 in Thrace. When he was fourteen, he left his home and traveled to Constantinople in search of work and study. There, St. Nektarios lived a very modest life constantly praying to Christ and believing that He would provide everything he needed to live. Many acts of kindness were shown to St. Nektarios by his neighbors and townspeople, and it was through them, and by the grace of God, that St. Nektarios became an accomplished academic at the age of twenty-one. By this time, too, St. Nektarios was considered a theological scholar and a devout Christian. Upon completing his studies, he left Constantinople and entered a monastery in Chios.

Some time later, the Patriarch Sophronios of Alexandria, Egypt, offered St. Nektarios a scholarship to study theology at the University of Athens. Upon completing studies at the university, St. Nektarios was ordained to the priesthood to serve in Cairo, Egypt, where he became quite popular as a preacher and confessor. Within five months of his ordination, the Metropolitan of Nubia blessed St. Nektarios with the title of archimandrite, and two months later he was appointed to the high position of Patriarchal Trustee.

It was in January of 1889 that the Metropolitan Nilos suddenly passed away. As the seat was under the Patriarchate of Alexandria, Patriarch Sophronios nominated St. Nektarios to fill the vacancy. Therefore, on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1889, St. Nektarios was

ordained a bishop and began to serve his congregation with humility and an oath to never succumb to the temptations of this world. He served as bishop until countless rumors and false accusations were brought up against him. Patriarch Sophronios became subjected to unbearable pressure regarding the rumors circulating about Metropolitan Nektarios (including the rumor that Nektarios wanted to become patriarch instead of Sophronios). Soon after, Sophronios stripped Metropolitan Nektarios of his authority and duty as bishop. Upon this humbling and confusing experience, St. Nektarios returned to Athens where he continued to serve God by preaching and teaching in its many churches.

In the beginning this was difficult because so many lies and rumors had hurt his reputation in the eyes of the people. But over time, love won. His popularity among the people in Athens again gained him popularity, and led to his appointment as dean of Rizarios Ecclesiastical School in Athens, where he dedicated fourteen years of his wisdom and loving care, until his body forced him to retire on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1908. Once a new dean was found and instated as his replacement, St. Nektarios retreated to the island of Aegina, to the monastery that he helped to establish years before.

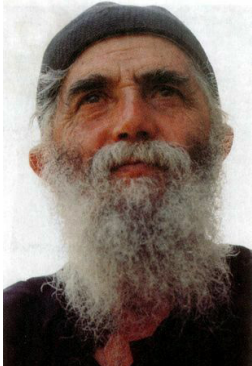
With his return to Aegina, the monastery began to receive countless visitors who sought to be in the presence of St. Nektarios' pious and loving nature. While there, St. Nektarios witnessed the completion of the building of the chapel on the grounds, which he first started in July of 1906. On June 2, 1908, the chapel was dedicated to the Holy Trinity, and he began to settle in and plan for the building of his simple home on the grounds. Throughout the years that he spent in Aegina, St. Nektarios wrote and published many theological treatises, guided the nuns of the monastery toward divine work, and performed many miracles of healing. It was also while serving at the monastery, that St. Nektarios endured many spiritual and physical tribulations, as well as witnessed the magnificent power of the Trinity and the Virgin Mary.

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1920, St. Nektarios retired his spirit to the Lord. However, even in death St. Nektarios continues to perform miracles, the first of which occurred in the very hospital room in which he died. With the passing of St. Nektarios, a hospital nurse, assisted by a nun from the monastery, immediately began to change his clothes and threw his undershirt on the next bed. In this bed lay a paralytic, who once the undershirt landed upon him, was instantly healed and jumped out of bed, praising God for his miraculous healing. This was the first of many miracles that St. Nektarios began to perform in death. The stories of these miracles, along with his body remaining completely intact and emanating a magnificent fragrance for twenty years after his death, led the nuns at the monastery to venerate him as a Saint of the Church. Finally, in April of 1961, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople further blessed St. Nektarios with a proclamation of sainthood.



## LOVE FOR WORK

From "Family Life," by Elder Paisios the Athonite, published by the Sacred Hesychastirion of St. John the Evangelist, Souroti, Greece.



—Geronda, why do so many people feel bored at work?

—Maybe they don't love their job? Or, maybe they work on the same thing continually? With some jobs, say at a factory where they make door and window frames, a laborer might do the same thing from morning till the time he leaves: glue, glue, glue. Another constantly handles windows; another, putty. They constantly do

the same monotonous work; and their boss is always watching them, not for just one or two days, either. It is always the "same old, same old," to the point of boredom. In the old days it wasn't like that though. A contractor would be given four walls from the carpenters and was expected to present the owner with a finished house and the key. He would have built the floors, the door and window frames, and would even have set the windows with putty. Afterwards he would have built spiral staircases, turned banisters; after that he would have painted, built the cupboards and the shelves, even the furniture! Even if he didn't do all of it himself, he knew how to do it. In a pinch a contractor could even put the tiles on the roof.

Today so many people are tormented because they don't love their jobs. They eagerly await the hour when they can go home. But when one has zeal for his job and is interested in what he is doing, no matter how much he works, his zeal grows. He is devoted to his job; and when it is time to leave he says, "Where did the time go?" He even forgets to eat and sleep; he forgets everything! Fasting like this, he isn't hungry; sleepless, he isn't tired, but instead rejoices that he doesn't need sleep. It's not that he suffers from hunger or lack of sleep; it's that work is like a feast day for him.

—Geronda, how is it that when two people have the same job, one can be spiritually profited from it while the other is spiritually harmed?

—It depends on how each one does his work and what is within him. If one works with humility and love, everything is bright, clean, and delightful, and he will feel refreshed. But if one allows prideful thoughts and thinks that he does his work better than others, he may feel a certain satisfaction, but this satisfaction doesn't fill his heart because his soul is not growing; he has no rest.

When a person doesn't do his work with love he grows tired. For such a one merely knowing he must climb a hill to finish a job makes him tired, because he doesn't love his work. The

one who does his job with all his heart, however, goes up and down the hill without even realizing it. A worker could dig in the sun, for example, and not get tired, as long as he does it from his heart. But if he doesn't do it from his heart, he is always stopping, loafing around and complaining. "Oh, it is so hot," he says, and so he suffers.

—Geronda, can a person become so absorbed with his career, his job, that he becomes indifferent or inconsiderate towards his family, etc.?

—He should love his job simply; he shouldn't "fall in love" with it. If he doesn't love his work, he will tire out doubly, both bodily and spiritually. Then even his bodily rest won't relax him because he will be spiritually exhausted. Spiritual exhaustion is something that overwhelms a man. When someone works with all his heart and is joyful, he is spiritually relaxed and his bodily exhaustion disappears.

You see, I know a general who still does all the jobs of his privates. How he worries about them! Like a father! Do you know what joy he feels?! Those under him also rejoice. Once he set out at midnight from Evro, headed to Larisa for the feast of Saint Achillius. He wanted to make it in time for Divine Liturgy, even though it would have been fine for him simply to go later, and be there only for the Doxology service afterwards. But he said, "I must be on time to honor the Saint." He does everything with all his heart! The gratification felt in one who does his work with *filotimo* is a good gratification. It was given by God so that His creature would not tire out. This is true rest from weariness.

—Geronda, how about our God-given, individual talent?

—Each person should increase the talent he has; for God, having given it him, expects a return. For example, the mind is powerful, but depending upon how one uses it, can be used for good or evil. Someone who is very bright—if he uses his mind properly—is able to invent things which may help the world. But if he doesn't use his mind properly he might invent a way, let's say, to rob his neighbor. People who draw cartoons in newspapers and the like are able, in only one cartoon—one sketch—to present their whole message. And if the cartoon is dealing with ecclesiastical issues and such, they are even able to present theology sufficiently. Some of them could have delved deeper into divine teachings if they would have studied theology—had they put their mind to it. That is, they could have sharpened their mind; they could have sanctified it, and thus would have helped themselves and others. But instead, many do negative work; obscene if they are obscene, ridiculous if they are ridiculous.

In other words, those with exceptional abilities will either become useful or destructive, while doubtless those who are not exceptional won't be able to do great good, but at least they also won't be able to do great harm.

## ON ABORTION

By Joe Sobran, *Sobran's Newsletter*, August 24, 2000.

In his famous essay “Politics and the English Language,” George Orwell analyzed the corrupting influence of dishonest politics on the way we speak and think. There is no better example than the effect abortion has had on our language.

Though abortion—including the killing of viable infants at the verge of birth—is now a “sacrament” of the Democratic Party, nobody admits to being “pro-abortion”; they are “pro-choice.” This is an obvious lie. The right to choose anything presupposes the right to live. The child, fetus, embryo, or whatever you want to call the entity growing within its mother’s womb has no “choice” about being killed. It will never have a choice about anything.

The pro-abortion side is pro-abortion in the same way that advocates of slavery were pro-slavery. “Oh,” they protest, “but we don’t insist that everyone get an abortion; we only want people”—that is, mothers—“to have a choice!” Then nobody was pro-slavery either, since nobody insisted that every white man own a slave; they were “pro-choice.” They wanted each white man to be “free” to decide whether to buy slaves; or they wanted every state to decide whether to permit slavery. Of course they overlooked the obvious fact that the slaves themselves had no choice; in their minds this was irrelevant.

The bad conscience of the pro-aborters shows in their studious avoidance of the word kill to describe what abortion is. Why be coy about it? We don’t mind speaking of “killing” when we kill lower life forms. Lawn products kill weeds; mouthwashes kill germs; insecticides kill bugs; mousetraps kill mice. If the human fetus is an insignificant little thing, why shrink from saying an abortion kills it? But the pro-abortion side prefers the evasive euphemism that abortion “terminates a pregnancy.”

As Orwell noted, dishonest people instinctively prefer the abstract to the concrete. Abstract language avoids creating unpleasant mental images that might cause horror and shame; concrete language may remind us of what we are really doing. This is why military jargon dehumanizes the targets of bombs and artillery: so that soldiers and pilots won’t vividly imagine the men, women, and children they are killing. Part of the job of military leadership is to anesthetize the consciences of fighting men. And political leaders (who usually start the wars in the first place) do their part by describing the bombing of cities as “defending freedom.”



In the modern world people are trained to avoid looking directly at the effects of violence they commit or sanction. If possible, the killing is delegated to specialists, who themselves are increasingly remote from their victims—as in the U.S. bombings of Iraq and Yugoslavia, where American casualties were nearly zero. Most of us don’t mind if our military kills people on the other side of the world; we feel no pain, even vicariously. We may even buy the official explanation that our bombs are “preventing another Holocaust.” It may seem otherwise to the Iraqis and Slavs on whose homes those bombs are falling.

But just as the news media refrain from showing us what those bombs actually do, they never show us what an abortion looks like. They even refuse to carry ads by abortion opponents, on grounds that pictures of slaughtered fetuses are in “bad taste.” They certainly are in bad taste; all atrocities are. But the media are willing to show some atrocities, as in the killing fields of Rwanda a few years ago. Since we’re forever debating abortion, why not let us see one? Why the blackout?

The answer, of course, is that the news media themselves are pro-abortion. They adopt the dishonest language of the pro-abortion side: pro-choice, fetus, terminate, and—my favorite—abortion provider (to make the abortionist sound like a humanitarian).

A few years ago NBC produced a sympathetic movie about a woman seeking an abortion—Norma McCorvey, the “Roe” of *Roe v. Wade*. But when Mrs. McCorvey later changed her mind and became an active opponent of abortion, did NBC do a sequel? Unimaginable.

We have to keep our guard up at all times against political language, especially in seemingly bland journalism, that is subtly infected with propagandistic purposes.



The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.

**Thomas Jefferson**

I’ve noticed that everyone who is for abortion has already been born.

**Ronald Reagan**

Sweeter even than to have had the joy of children of my own has it been for me to help bring about a better state of things for mothers generally, so that their unborn little ones could not be willed away from them.

**Susan B. Anthony**



## THE ECONOMY OF OUR SALVATION

By Father Panagiotos Carras.

*This is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart will I inscribe them.*

[Heb 8:10].

† † †

When Adam was led into captivity, God did not cease to love mankind nor did He abandon the creation which was made in His Image and Likeness. Adam and Eve were wounded but not dead. They were outside of Paradise but not away from God. They were now in a captive land, not in their Father's house, but their Creator came searching for them so that they could be led back to the Kingdom of Heaven and become once more children of God.

Within Paradise Adam had been given the opportunity to become a son of God. God had made a Covenant or agreement with Adam. Our Heavenly Father would adopt Adam and make Him His Son when Adam would mature in his love for God. Adam on the other hand was to abide by a single commandment—not to eat of the fruit of the *Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil*. The *Tree* would be the symbol of this Covenant. Our Forefathers did not honour this Covenant and chose to go their own way.

The path which they took led them into a captivity from which they could not save themselves. Their Heavenly Father, however, came searching to find the lost sheep. The Will of God and His providence to lead Adam out of captivity is called the *Economy of Salvation*. The word *Economy* is derived from the Greek word *ekonomia* which literally means “looking after one's house”. The term *Economy of Salvation* is used by St. Irenaeus (Demonstration 47) and other holy Orthodox fathers and refers to everything that God has done to save us from Satan's captivity.

The *Economy of Salvation* began before Adam had fallen: *According as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.* (Eph 1:4). Immediately after the Fall God imposed certain hardships on mankind so that he would have something to make him realize that he was a stranger in a foreign land. Along with these hardships God also promised Adam there would be an end to this captivity. *I will put an enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* (Gen 3:15). These are the words of our Lord as He cursed Satan. He speaks of the struggle between mankind and Satan, and how finally Satan's head will be crushed by our Lord and Saviour, the Seed of Eve.

The Old Testament records the mighty acts of God as He led mankind along the long road to *sonship*. Within the Old Testament we see God's wisdom, patience and love for us. Concerning the *Economy of Salvation*, St. Irenaeus tells us *inasmuch as God is invincible and long-suffering, He did indeed show Himself to be long-suffering in the matter of the correction of man and the probation of us all.* (Against Heresies, III, 23:1). In the Old Testament, the Prophets recorded the many ways that God sought to bring us closer to Him and the stubbornness of the human race which chose to remain under the captivity of Satan. In the days of Noah, our Heavenly Father again made a Covenant with mankind. In time this Covenant was also rejected by mankind and there was not one person in the whole world that loved God.

With the passage of time God appeared to Abraham who, not knowing God, nevertheless desired to find him. *God, having pity on him who alone quietly sought Him, appeared to Abraham, manifesting Himself through the Word as through a ray of light.* (St. Irenaeus, Demonstration, 24.) Abraham was instructed by God to take his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot and to leave their homeland and to go to the land of Caanan. Once again God made a Covenant with mankind. It was revealed to Abraham by the *Logos*, the Word of God, that if he and his descendants were faithful to God, then they would become the people of God. The sign that God chose for this Covenant was circumcision. The new nation, the Hebrews, who at this time became the Chosen People of God were circumcised to show they accepted this Covenant.

Among all the inhabitants of the world only the Hebrew people, the descendants of Abraham, knew God. All other nations worshipped demons. God made a Covenant and founded the nation from which our Lord would arise: *I will establish My Covenant between Me and thee... and thy seed after thee, to their generations, for an everlasting Covenant, to be Thy God, and the God of Thy seed after thee.* (Gen 17:2,7).

With the passing of generations, the Hebrew people lost much of the faith that they had in God and the Lord brought forth another Covenant to strengthen the faith of the Israelites. This was the Covenant of the Hebrew Pascha or Passover. The sign for this Covenant was the Law of God which was given to Moses. The Mosaic Law revealed to them how sin alienated them from God but was powerless to save them from the captivity of Satan. The Hebrew people entered into a new stage of the *Economy of Salvation*: the period of the law. St. Paul tells us that Satan and death which kept mankind separated from God was now exposed for what it is. *Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not*





sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression (Rom 5:14). Commenting on this, St. Irenaeus tells us: *The law coming, which was given by Moses, and testifying of sin, that it is a sinner, did truly take away death's kingdom, showing that he was no king, but a robber ... a murderer.* God was leading mankind, step by step, to the day when Adam's children would be able to become children of God.

St. Paul tells us that the Hebrew nation during the period of the Old Testament, i.e., Covenant, was like a child being guided by his tutor until the day would come when he would no longer need a guardian: *Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.* (Gal 4:1-2). God in His wisdom provided the Israelites of old both with restrictions and instruction in order to help them in their struggle to remain faithful to the Covenant of the first Pascha.

The restrictions which were placed upon them had the purpose of keeping them from worshipping false gods or living an ungodly life and thus abandoning God. The Law of Moses was given to the Hebrew nation to guard them from wandering away from their Heavenly Father. It was not able to bring mankind to *sonship*, but it served to preserve the Israelites from being completely under the rule of Satan. *For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God.* (Heb 7:19). Faithfulness to the Law of God was what the Lord required from His people. If the Covenant with God were to be maintained, it could be accomplished only through the keeping of the Law.

The Israelites knew God through His mighty acts and the Old Testament is a record of the Acts of God which the Israelites transmitted from generation to generation. For the Hebrew people, God was a living God Who made himself known to His Chosen people. Throughout their history God was with them, protecting them and guiding them through every adversity. Even when Jerusalem was destroyed and they were led captives into Babylon, the Covenant between the Lord God and His Chosen people was maintained. The holy Prophet Daniel and the three youths would not worship another God but steadfastly kept all of the Lord's commandments and in this way remained faithful to the Covenant which God had made with their fathers.

The saints of the Old Testament were not faithful to God only because they had seen the acts of God but more so because it had been revealed to them that the day would come when the Lord would establish a new Covenant, the Covenant of *Adoption*. The expectations of the Saints of old Israel are expressed by Prophet Jeremiah: *Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a New Covenant, not like the Covenant which I made with their fathers... This is the Covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: putting my*

*laws into their mind, I will also write them on their heart; and I will be a God to them. And they shall be a people to me. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow-citizen and everyone his brother saying, now the Lord; because they will know me.* (Jer 31:31-34). The Lord God gave the Hebrew people His laws to protect them from falling away but he also gave them His holy Prophets so that they would prepare themselves for the coming of the New Covenant. The Israelites would fall away many times but God always preserved a faithful remnant who were true Israelites: *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.* (Rom 9:6). It was to these faithful Israelites, *to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises* (Rom 9:4).

The Theotokos and the first Christians were the true Israelites who awaited the *Day of the Lord*. (Joel 2:11, Mal 3:1-2). They understood the prophecies of the Old Testament which foretold the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the Son of God became man the teachings of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament became evident. Throughout the books of the New Testament we are constantly reminded that everything which our Lord and Saviour enacted was *according to the Prophets*. (Lk 24:27, 1 Cor 15:3-5). Throughout the Old Testament we can find Prophecies which refer to the Salvific Acts of our Lord and Saviour. Our Lord's *birth from a Virgin* was foretold by Prophet Isaiah (Isa 7:14). The *curing of many illnesses* was similarly foreseen (Isa 61:1-2). Our Saviour's *entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey* (Zech 9:9), *His suffering* (Isa 50:6), the *parting of His garments* (Pss 22:8), the *Crucifixion* (Pss 69:4, 21, Isa 53:3-12), the *power of the Holy Cross over Satan* (St. Justin Martyr, Dialogue 91:112, Exo 17:11), the *Resurrection* (Pss 3:6), the *Ascension* (Pss 23:7) were all known by the Prophets.

The saints of the Old Covenant knew that one day the Son of God would become man and as Emmanuel (*God is with us*—Isa 7:14, 8:8-10) would be with His people as a father is with his children. The whole of the Old Testament looks towards the day of the New Covenant.



**B**lessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Everything we do, our every objective, must be undertaken for the sake of this purity of heart. This is why we take on loneliness, fasting, vigils, work, nakedness. For this we must practice the reading of the Scripture, together with all the other virtuous activities, and we do so to trap and to hold our hearts free of the harm of every dangerous passion and in order to rise step by step to the high point of love.

St. John Cassian (+435)

## OUR HOLY MOTHER

By His Eminence Metropolitan Seraphim of Kastoria, translated by John Sanidopoulos.

As of today we find ourselves once again to be in the month of August. This is the last month of our ecclesiastical year, since from the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, the beginning of the Indiction, a new ecclesiastical year begins.

Since the glorious years of Byzantium this month has been dedicated to the Honorable Cross, hence on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August we celebrate the Procession of the Honorable Cross. The Honorable Cross, the Honorable Wood, exited the Sacred Palace where it was kept and it arrived at the Great Church from where for fifteen consecutive days it was brought throughout the entire City for the sanctification of the faithful.

All these days there are held various Sacred Services and Vigils, as well as the Service of the Sanctification of the Holy Water, *baptizing the Honorable Wood in the sacred water*, in order for the people to be protected from infectious diseases and epidemics which favor the heatwave of August. Even the fast is dedicated to the Honorable Cross. Coupled with the prayers of our Orthodox Church, it is a ladder of communication with God and seeking divine mercy. *Heavenly gifts are received with fasting, vigils and prayer.* These are the methods always used by our Church, and today in particular we need to use them in order to protect ourselves from demonic influence, but also as a measure by which we can capture the grace of God.

However, the Honorable Cross was stolen by the Crusaders, like so many other relics, and brought to the West. For this reason the litany of the Honorable Cross stopped, and this month was then dedicated to the person of the Panaghia, from the 1<sup>st</sup> of August to almost the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, since we celebrate the eminent Marian feast of the Dormition on the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Hence, the person of the Panaghia monopolizes the thoughts of all Orthodox who could be found in all the corners of the earth this month.

The mother of the world celebrates. The mother who understands, who listens and who rapidly obeys, like the *Gorgypikoos* (She Who is Quick to Hear) as she named herself at Docheiariou Monastery on the Holy Mountain. The mother who covers her children, who wipes the tears of tragedy and suffering. The mother who calms the hearts from the storms of life, and who pacifies the mind, as St. Theodore the Studite will write and chant. The mother who as soon

as one stands opposite her icon she fills with joy, which is why they chant together with the sacred hymnographer: *In hymns we thank, glorify and praise your immeasurable mercy and great strength, confessing to all.* The mother who is the protector of all Christians. *“The protection of Christians, Virgin Mother of the Lord.”*

To our mother. To the mother of the world we leave our hope and our endurance always, especially in these difficult days our homeland is going through. To our mother we open our heart, as the Venerable Sophia of Kleisoura would say.

We supplicate to the Panaghia with the sacred troparia of our Church, as Elder Paisios advised, with the purpose of guiding us to her Son and our God. And, our Panaghia is supplicated today by persons whom we do not give any importance to, who repeat daily thousands of times the

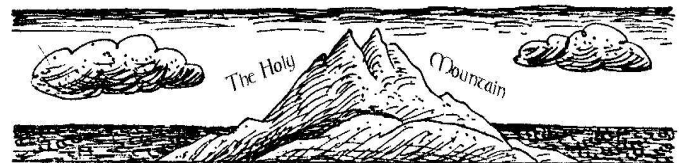
archangelic greeting of *Rejoice, Theotokos and Virgin.*

Along with the entire choir of Saints in the Kingdom of Heaven, together with those also who live today in the trenches of life and with the prayers of those who support the world, we also send her our supplications:

For our Church, for our nation, for the ill who suffer, for our needy brethren, for those battered by the scourges of our times, for the blood being spilled in Syria, Egypt, and in other countries, for every human soul which is to be found with every need.

May the Panaghia speak to the hearts of the powerful of the earth. May she speak to all of our hearts. May she teach us humility in order to find our lost self. May she help us to regain again that which we lost, that is, our sustenance together with our life-providing and life-bearing Holy Tradition.

My Panaghia, my joy, my consolation, my hope, my breath, save us from every circumstance.



What could I give our Most Holy Sovereign Lady for coming to me and bringing enlightenment, instead of turning away in loathing from my sin? I did not behold Her with my eyes but the Holy Spirit gave me to know Her through Her words, which were filled with grace, and my spirit rejoices and my soul leaps to Her in love, so that the mere invocation of Her name is sweet to my heart.

**Saint Silouan of Mount Athos**



## Ὁ Μέγας Ὑποκριτής

Τοῦ πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου π. Διονυσίου Τάτση, «Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος», 30 Μαΐου, 2014.



**Κ**οινή διαπίστωση εἶναι ὅτι οἱ αἰρετικοὶ ἐπιλέγουν τὴν ὑποκρισία προκειμένου νὰ ἐπηρεάζουν εὐκολώτερα τοὺς καλοπροαίρετους καὶ ἀγαθοὺς. Μὲ τὸ διαφορετικὸ τοὺς πρόσωπο ἐμφανίζουν τὸ μαῦρο ὡς ἄσπρο καὶ προσπαθοῦν νὰ σπείρουν τὸ σπόρο τῆς ἀπώλειας

στὶς ψυχὲς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Ἰδιαίτερα προσφιλὴς εἶναι ἡ τακτικὴ αὐτὴ καὶ στὸν αἰρετικὸ Πάπα, ὁ ὁποῖος ἐμφανίζεται στὰ πλήθη τοῦ λαοῦ ὡς ὁ μοναδικὸς ἐκπρόσωπος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὅσο τὰ πλήθη τὸν χειροκροτοῦν τόσο αὐτὸς γίνεται θρασύτερος καὶ αὐξάνει τὴν αἰρετικὴ του πλάνη. Νομίζει ὅτι τὰ πλήθη ποὺ τὸν ἐευφημοῦν τὸν ἐλευθερώνουν ἀπὸ τὴ μεγάλη εὐθύνη, ποὺ ἔχει γιὰ τὴ διαστροφή τῆς διδασκαλίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ γιὰ τὰ πολιτικὰ ἐγκλήματα, ποὺ διέπραξε ἀνὰ τοὺς αἰῶνες.

Ἡ πλάνη δὲν συνειδητοποιεῖται, ὅταν βρισκόμαστε μέσα στὴν κοσμικὴ δόξα καὶ συγχέουμε τὴν πίστη μὲ τὴν ἐξουσία. Ὅλοι μιλοῦν γιὰ τὸν Πάπα, ποὺ ἔχει δύναμη καὶ ὡς ἀρχηγὸς πολλῶν ἑκατομμυρίων χριστιανῶν μπορεῖ νὰ ἐπηρεάσει καταστάσεις καὶ ὄχι ὡς ἓνα Ἐπίσκοπο τοῦ Θεοῦ, ποὺ ὁδηγεῖ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους στὴ σωτηρία. Τὰ πλήθη τοῦ λαοῦ παρασύρονται στὴν προσωπολατρία καὶ παραμένουν στὴν πλάνη καὶ τὴν αἵρεση. Δὲν ὑπάρχει ἡ δυνατότητα πιά, ἀνθρωπίνως πάντα, νὰ ἀλλάξουν τὰ πράγματα καὶ νὰ ἐπιστρέψουν οἱ αἰρετικοὶ στὴ Μία, Ἁγία, Καθολικὴ καὶ Ἀποστολικὴ Ἐκκλησία, ἐνῶ εἶναι πολὺ πιθανὸ οἱ οἰκουμενιστὲς τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας νὰ ὁδηγηθοῦν στὴν πλάνη καὶ νὰ ὑποδουλωθοῦν στὸν Πάπα.

Ἦδη ἔχουν γίνε πολλὰ βήματα προσέγγισης καὶ ἀναγνωρίζεται ὁ Πάπας ὡς ἀδελφός, γίνονται συμπροσευχὲς καὶ κοινὲς ἐκδηλώσεις, γιὰ νὰ ἐμφανιστεῖ ἡ παπικὴ «ἐκκλησία» ἰσότιμη μὲ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη. Καὶ μετὰ τὸ κοινὸ ποτήριο, δηλαδὴ ἡ ἔνωση τῆς Ἀληθείας μὲ τὴν αἵρεση. Ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ τελευταῖα βήματα θὰ γίνον χωρὶς ἰδιαίτερο θόρυβο, γιὰ νὰ μὴ προκαλέσουν τοὺς Ὁρθόδοξους. Σιγά-σιγά, σὲ περιοχὲς ὅπου οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι εἶναι λίγοι καὶ ἀντιμετωπίζουν διάφορα προβλήματα. Ἐκεῖ κυριαρχεῖ στοὺς ἀνθρώπους τὸ κοσμικὸ φρόνημα,

τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ συμβιβασμοῦ καὶ λείπει παντελῶς ἡ μετὰ παρηρησίας ὁμολογία τῆς πίστεως.

Μὲ τὸν τρόπο αὐτὸ θὰ «ἐπιτευχθεῖ» ἡ ἔνωση τῶν «ἐκκλησιῶν» καὶ τὰ δεινὰ θὰ πολλαπλασιαστοῦν. Θὰ βρεθοῦν καὶ πολλοὶ Ὁρθόδοξοι ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν κιβωτὸ τῆς σωτηρίας, γιὰ τὴν ἀκολουθήσουν τοὺς οἰκουμενιστὲς καὶ ἐνωτικoὺς. Βέβαια, ἡ Ἐκκλησία δὲν θὰ πληγεῖ. Πολλὰ μέλη τῆς ὁμοῦ θὰ βρεθοῦν μακριὰ τῆς καὶ θὰ χάσουν τὸν πνευματικὸ τους προσανατολισμό.

Εἶναι μεγάλη ἀνάγκη νὰ ἀφυπνιστοῦν πνευματικὰ οἱ πιστοὶ καὶ νὰ ἀνησυχῆσουν γιὰ ὅσα ἀπεργάζονται οἱ οἰκουμενιστὲς εἰς βάρος τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας. Νὰ διαφωνήσουν δημοσίως καὶ νὰ ἀρνηθοῦν τὶς ἐνέργειες καὶ ἐκδηλώσεις τους καὶ νὰ ὁμολογήσουν τὴν πίστη τους. Καμία ἐμπιστοσύνη πιά στοὺς οἰκουμενιστὲς καὶ ἄς εἶναι μεγαλόσχημοι κληρικοί. Στὰ θέματα τῆς πίστεως πρέπει νὰ εἶμαστε καθαρὸι καὶ σταθεροί. Δὲν διαπραγματευόμαστε τὴν πίστη μας, οὔτε φυσικὰ τὴ νοθεύουμε μὲ νεώτερες θεολογικὲς ἀναλύσεις, ποὺ κάνουν μερικοὶ θεωρητικοὶ τῆς οἰκουμενιστικῆς παραφροσύνης.



**Τ**ὸ Βατικανὸν εἶναι ἡ «Ἐκκλησία» τῶν μεγάλων πλανῶν καὶ τῶν ἐσκεμμένων αἱρέσεων. Ἔχουν τόσο διαστρέψει τὴν ἀμώμητον Θρησκείαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὥστε τὴν ἔχουν καταστήσει ἀγνώριστον...

Δὲν ὑπάρχει, δι' ἐμὲ τοῦλάχιστον, οὐδεμία ἀμφιβολία, ὅτι ἡ μοναδικὴ ἐλπίς τῆς σωτηρίας τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος εἶναι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία. Καθολικισμὸς καὶ Προτεσταντισμὸς ὁμοῦ, ἀποτελοῦν τὴν πλήρη διαστροφήν τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ, τὸν ὁποῖον ἀλώβητον διατηρεῖ ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία.

**Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀμερικῆς Μιχαὴλ (+1958)**

[Διετέλεσε Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀμερικῆς κατὰ τα ἐτῆ 1949-1958]



**Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψη τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων γιὰ τὴν ἐκδοσὴ τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οικονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντες κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὅσιος Ποιμῆν».**



## Ἐμφανίσεις καὶ Θαύματα τῆς Παναγίας ἀνά τοὺς Αἰῶνες

Ἀπὸ διάφορες Ἑλληνορθόδοξες ιστοσελίδες.

**Ο**ἱ ἐμφανίσεις καὶ οἱ θαυματουργικὲς ἐπεμβάσεις τῆς Παναγίας σὲ ὅλες τὶς Ὀρθόδοξες Χριστιανικὲς χώρες εἶναι κυριολεκτικὰ ἀναρίθμητες. Εἰκόνες ποὺ δακρῦζουν, μυροβλύζουν ἢ αἱμορραγοῦν, θεραπείες, ἐμφανίσεις σὲ ἁγίους, ἀλλὰ καὶ σὲ ἄλλοθρησκούς, καθὼς καὶ σωτηρία ὀλόκληρων πόλεων ἀπὸ ἐπιδημίας ἢ ἐπιδρομὲς βαρβάρων.

Μία ἀπὸ τὶς πιὸ γνωστὲς ἐπεμβάσεις τῆς Θεοτόκου εἶναι ἡ θαλασσοταραχὴ ποὺ κατέστρεψε τὸ στόλο τῶν Ἀβάρων τὸ 626 μ.Χ., σώζοντας τὴν πολιορκημένη Κωνσταντινούπολη. Τότε ὁ λαὸς τῆς Πόλης συγκεντρώθηκε στὸ ναὸ τῆς Παναγίας τῶν Βλαχερνῶν καὶ ἔψαλε ὄρθιος τὸν Ἀκάθιστο Ὑμνο, δηλαδὴ τοὺς γνωστούς μας «Χαιρετισμούς». Οἱ Χαιρετισμοὶ τῆς Παναγίας, ἓνα ἀπὸ τὰ σημαντικότερα ποιήματα ποὺ γράφτηκαν ποτὲ στὴν Ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα, φαίνεται ὅτι ὑπῆρχαν ἀπὸ πρὶν. Ὅμως ἐκείνη τὴ νύχτα γράφτηκε τὸ πασίγνωστο τροπάριο «Τῆ Ὑπερμάχῳ», ὡς εὐχαριστία πρὸς τὴ Θεοτόκο.

Παρόμοιο γεγονός συνέβη τὸ 861 μ.Χ., ὅταν οἱ Ρῶσοι, εἰδωλολάτρες ἀκόμη, ἐπιτέθηκαν στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη. Ὁ πατριάρχης ἅγιος Φώτιος ὁ Μέγας, μαζὶ μὲ ὅλο τὸ λαό, λιτάνευσε τὴν τιμία ἑσθήτα τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ κατόπιν τὴν ἔριξε στὴ θάλασσα· καὶ ἐνῶ ἐπικρατοῦσε γαλήνη, ξαφνικὰ ξέσπασε φοβερὴ τρικυμία καὶ καταπόντισε σχεδὸν ὅλα τὰ πλοῖα τῶν ἐχθρῶν. Τὸ γεγονός αὐτὸ ὀδήγησε τὸν ἀρχηγὸ τῶν Ρώσων Δὴρ τὸν Ὄσκόλδ, καὶ πλῆθος τοῦ λαοῦ του νὰ προσέλθουν στὸν Χριστιανισμό.

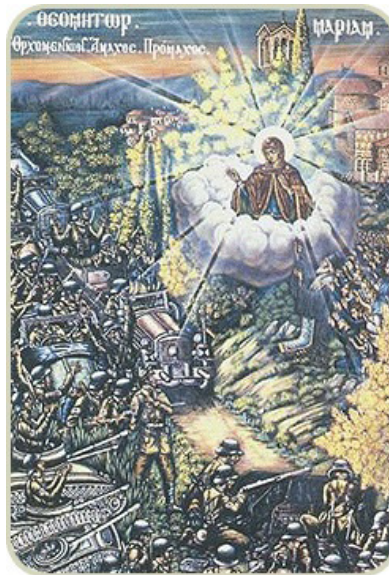
Ἀνάλογο γεγονός ἔχουμε στὴ Φολέγανδρο, ὅπου, τὴν Πρωτομαγιά τοῦ 1790, μετὰ ἀπὸ λιτάνευση τῆς εἰκόνας τῆς Παναγίας, θαλασσοταραχὴ βυθισε 18 πειρατικὰ πλοῖα τῶν Ἀλγερινῶν.

Στὴ Ρωσία (ὅπου ὑπάρχουν πάρα πολλὲς ιστορικὲς καὶ θαυματουργὲς εἰκόνες τῆς Θεοτόκου), τὸ 1395, ὅταν εἰσέβαλλε ὁ Ταμερλάνος, ἔφεραν σὲ χρῶνον ρεκὸρ τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς Παναγίας τοῦ Βλαντιμίρ στὴ Μόσχα, ὅπου τὴν προϋπάντησε ὅλος ὁ λαὸς τῆς Μόσχας ἄνδρες, γυναῖκες καὶ παιδιά. Ὅλοι προσευχόταν μὲ δάκρυα. Τότε ἡ Παναγία ἐμφανίστηκε σὲ ὄνειρο τοῦ Ταμερλάνου, λουσιμένη στὸ φῶς, συνοδευόμενη ἀπὸ ἀγγέλους μὲ πύρινα σπαθιά. Ὁ Ταμερλάνος, ἀφοῦ συμβουλευτήκε τοὺς σοφοὺς Μογγόλους καὶ ἔμαθε ὅτι

αὐτὴ ἡ γυναῖκα ἦταν ἡ Παναγία, ὑποχώρησε. Αὐτὸ τὸ ὄνειρο εἶναι καταγεγραμμένο ὄχι μόνον στὰ παλαιὰ ρωσικὰ χρονικὰ ἀλλὰ καὶ στὰ ταταρικὰ χρονικὰ. Σὲ ἀνάμνηση τοῦ γεγονότος ἰδρύθηκε στὴ Μόσχα ἡ μονὴ Σρετένσκι (Προϋπάντηση).

Κατὰ τὸν 20<sup>ο</sup> αἰῶνα, ἔχουμε μία σειρά ἐντυπωσιακῶν ἐμφανίσεων τῆς Παναγίας στοὺς Ἑλληνες στρατιῶτες, ποὺ πολεμοῦσαν στὸ Ἀλβανικὸ μέτωπο. Σώζεται μάλιστα ἐπίσημη ἀναφορὰ τοῦ ἀνθυπασπιστῆ Νικολάου Γκάτζαρου, μὲ ἡμερομηνία 3 Μαρτίου 1941, ποὺ περιγράφει ἐμφάνιση καὶ ὁμιλία τῆς Παναγίας πρὸς αὐτόν.

Στὸ ἄρθρο τοῦ π. Δημ. Ἀθανασίου «Ἄγνωστες μαρτυρίες γιὰ τὶς ἐμφανίσεις τῆς Παναγίας στὰ βουνὰ τῆς Πίνδου στὸν πόλεμο τοῦ 1940», στὸ ιστολόγιο «Πνευματικὰ Θησαυρίσματα», διαβάζουμε διάφορες σχετικὲς μαρτυρίες, καθὼς καὶ ὅτι ὁ ζωγράφος Γιάννης Τσαρούχης ζωγράφιζε πάνω στὸ καπάκι



ἐνὸς κιβωτίου ρέγγας τὴν Παναγία τῆς Νίκης, ἡ ὁποία ἀπέκτησε τὴ φήμη ὅτι εἶναι θαυματουργή. «Σὲ ἔξαλλη θρησκευτικὴ ἔκσταση ἀπαιτοῦσαν (ἐνν. οἱ Ἑλληνες στρατιῶτες ἀπὸ τὴν Ἄρτα) ἡ θαυματουργὴ εἰκόνα νὰ μείνει ἓνα βράδυ τουλάχιστον στὴν κατασκήνωσή τους. Ἄκουγες φωνὲς ἀπὸ παντοῦ. Ὅλοι οἱ στρατιῶτες φωνάζανε: “Ἡ Παρθένα, ἡ Παρθένα. Νὰ τὴν ἀφήσετε μίαν βραδιά.” Ἐκείνη τὴν ὥρα βάρεσε συναγεμὸς, πέσαμε μπρούμυτα σύμφωνα μὲ τὶς διαταγὲς ποὺ εἶχαμε. Κανένας Ἄρτινὸς δὲν ἔκανε τὸ ἴδιο. “Βρὲ συνάδελφε”, μοῦ εἶπε ἓνας, “βαστὰς τὴν Παρθένα καὶ φοβάσαι;”».

Μετὰ τὸ τέλος τοῦ Β΄ Παγκοσμίου πολέμου, ἀναγνωρίστηκε ἡ σπουδαιότητα τῶν θαυματουργῶν ἐπεμβάσεων τῆς Παναγίας. Γιὰ τὸ λόγο αὐτὸ ἡ γιορτὴ τῆς Ἁγίας Σκέπης, ποὺ εἶχε καθιερωθεῖ νὰ γιορτάζεται πρὸς τιμὴν τῆς Παναγίας τὴν 1<sup>η</sup> Ὀκτωβρίου, μεταφέρθηκε ἀπὸ τὸ 1952 στὶς 28 Ὀκτωβρίου γιὰ νὰ ἐνθυμοῦνται ὅλοι τὴ θαυματουργὴ βοήθειά της στὴ δυσκολότερη, ἴσως, περίοδο τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ ἔθνους».

Εἶναι γνωστὸ—καὶ τὸ καταγράφει σὲ ἄρθρο τοῦ καὶ ὁ ποιητῆς Ντίνος Χριστιανόπουλος—ὅτι στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη, κατὰ τὴ διάρκεια τῶν γερμανικῶν βομβαρδισμῶν, στὰ τζάμια τῶν σπιτιῶν σχηματιζόταν ἡ εἰκόνα τῆς Παναγίας: «Ξαφνικὰ, ἐμφανίστηκαν σὲ καμιὰ δεκαριὰ σημεία, στὸ κέντρο τῆς πόλης (Θεσσαλονίκης), εἰκόνες τῆς Παναγίας στὰ τζάμια διαφόρων μαγαζιῶν. Στὴν ἀρχὴ μᾶς τὸ λέγαν καὶ δὲν τὸ πιστεύαμε. Οἱ Παναγίες ποὺ ἐμφανίστηκαν στὰ

τζάμια δὲν ἦταν ζωγραφισμένες, ἀλλὰ ἀχειροποίητες. Ἡ εἰκόνα σχηματιζόταν στὸ ἐσωτερικὸ τοῦ τζαμιοῦ, μέσα δηλαδή στὴν ὕλη τοῦ γυαλιοῦ, δὲν ἦταν οὔτε ἀπὸ τὴν ἔξω μεριά οὔτε ἀπὸ τὴν μέσα. Καὶ ἦταν καὶ χρωματισμένη, ἀλλὰ μὲ ἄυλα καὶ ἀνεξίτηλα χρώματα. Κάποτε πῆγα κι ἐγὼ καὶ ἔτσι ἀξιώθηκα νὰ δῶ τὴν Παναγία ἀπὸ κοντά. Ἔπιανε τὸ τζάμι καὶ δὲν ἔπιανε τίποτα. Ἀλλὰ ἡ εἰκόνα ὑπῆρχε. Δὲν κάλυπτε ὅλη τὴν ἐπιφάνεια τοῦ τζαμιοῦ, ἀλλὰ μόνο τὸ κέντρο του. Τὰ χρώματα ἦταν πολὺ ἄυλα καὶ ἀχνά. Ὁ κόσμος προσκυνοῦσε καὶ ἀσπάζονταν τὴν ἀχειροποίητη εἰκόνα στὸ τζάμι, μερικοὶ ἄναβαν καὶ κἀνα κερὶ ποὺ ἔφερναν μαζί τους, ἀλλὰ κανεὶς δὲν ἔδινε λεφτά. Καὶ ἄλλωστε ποῦ νὰ τὰ δώσει καὶ γιατί; Ἦταν πραγματικὰ μία ἀπὸ τὶς συγκινητικότερες στιγμὲς τοῦ Ἑλληνοϊταλικοῦ πολέμου».

Τὸ περιστατικὸ συνέβη καὶ στὴν Ἀταλάντη Φθιώτιδος τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ Ἑμφύλιου Πολέμου (1945-1949). Ἐξάλλου, στὶς 10 Σεπτεμβρίου 1943 μία δύναμη ναζιστικῶν τεθωρακισμένων σταμάτησε ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸν Ὀρχομενὸ Βοιωτίας, ἀδυνατώντας νὰ προχωρήσει γιὰ νὰ καταστρέψει τὸ χωριό. Ὁ Γερμανὸς διοικητὴς τους, ὀνόματι Ὁφμαν, εἶδε σὲ ὄραμα τὴ μορφὴ τῆς Παναγίας καὶ ὄχι μόνο ἔδωσε διαταγὴ νὰ ἀνασταλεῖ ἡ καταστροφὴ, ἀλλὰ καὶ χρηματοδότησε τὴν πρώτη ἀπεικόνιση τοῦ θαύματος, μὲ τὴ Θεοτόκο νὰ σταματᾷ τὰ γερμανικὰ τάνκς. Οἱ κάτοικοι τοῦ Ὀρχομενοῦ τοποθέτησαν ἓνα μνημεῖο στὸ σημεῖο τοῦ θαύματος, ἐνῶ κάθε χρόνο, ὅσο τοῦ ἐπέτρεπε ἡ ἡλικία του, ὁ Ὁφμαν ἐρχοταν ἀπὸ τὴ Γερμανία καὶ παρευρισκόταν στὸν ἑορτασμό, κατὰ τὴν ἐπέτειο τοῦ γεγονότος.

Οἱ ἐμφανίσεις τῆς Παναγίας σὲ ἁγίους, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπλοὺς ἀνθρώπους, εἶναι ἐπισης ἀναρίθμητες. Ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὶς ἐμφανίσεις Της στὸ Ἅγιο Ὄρος, ἃς ἀναφερθοῦμε στὸ περιφημο ὄραμα τῆς Ἁγίας Σκέπης, ποὺ εἶδε ὁ ἅγιος Ἀνδρέας ὁ διὰ Χριστὸν Σαλός, στὸ ναὸ τῆς Παναγίας τῶν Βλαχερνῶν: ἡ Παναγία σκέπαζε ἀπὸ ψηλά τὸ λαό, προστατεύοντάς τον, μ' ἓνα συμβολικὸ τεράστιο ὕφασμα. Ἀπὸ τὸ ὄραμα αὐτό, πολὺ ἀργότερα, καθιερώθηκε ἡ ἑορτὴ τῆς Ἁγίας Σκέπης (1 Ὀκτωβρίου), ξεκινώντας ἀπὸ τὴ Ρωσία, ἐνῶ στὴν Ἑλλάδα, ὅπως γράφουμε παραπάνω, μεταφέρθηκε στὶς 28 Ὀκτωβρίου πρὸς τιμὴν τῶν ἐμφανίσεων τῆς Παναγίας στὸ μέτωπο.

Μία πολὺ γνωστὴ ἐμφάνιση τῆς Παναγίας ἐπίσης εἶναι στὸ μεγάλο θαυματουργὸ ἅγιο τῶν Ρωσικῶν δασῶν, Σεραφεῖμ τοῦ Σάρωφ (†1833), ὁ ὁποῖος εἶχε δεῖ τὴ Θεοτόκο ἀρκετὲς φορὲς. Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐφανίστηκε μέσα σὲ ὑπέρολαμπρο φῶς καὶ εὐωδία, συνοδευόμενη ἀπὸ δύο ἀγγέλους, τὸν ἅγιο Ἰωάννη τὸν Πρόδρομο, τὸν ἅγιο Ἰωάννη τὸ Θεολόγο καὶ 12 ἅγιες (Παρθενομάρτυρες). Τὸ ὄραμα εἶδε ἔκπληκτη καὶ ἡ μοναχὴ Εὐπραξία, πνευματικὴ θυγατέρα τοῦ ἁγίου, στὴν ὁποία ἡ Παναγία

εἶπε: «Μαρτύριο δὲν εἶναι μόνο ἡ θυσία τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλὰ κι ὁ πόνος ποὺ ὑποφέρει ἡ ψυχὴ γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Κυρίου». Ὅταν τελείωσε τὸ ὄραμα, ποὺ κράτησε 4 ὥρες, ὁ ἅγιος εἶπε στὴν Εὐπραξία πὼς ἦταν ἡ 12<sup>η</sup> φορὰ ποὺ ἔβλεπε τὴ Θεοτόκο.

Ἀλλὰ καὶ στὸ μεγαλομάρτυρα τῶν ἀθεϊστικῶν φυλακῶν τῆς Ρουμανίας Ἅγιο Βαλέριο Γκαφένκου (†1952) ἐφανίστηκε ἡ Παναγία, τὸν στήριξε στὸ μαρτύριό του καὶ τοῦ εἶπε: «Εγὼ εἶμαι ἡ ἀγάπη σου! Νὰ μὴ φοβᾷσαι! Νὰ μὴ ἀμφιβάλλεις! Ἡ νίκη θὰ εἶναι τοῦ Υἱοῦ μου! Αὐτὸς ἀγίασε τώρα αὐτὸ τὸν τόπο καὶ τὸν ἐτοίμασε γιὰ ὅσα θὰ γίνουν στὸ μέλλον. Οἱ δυνάμεις τοῦ σκότους ἀυξάνουν καὶ ἀκόμη θὰ φοβίζον τὸν κόσμο, ἀλλὰ θὰ ἀφανιστοῦν. Ὁ Υἱός μου περιμένει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους νὰ ἐπιστρέψουν στὴν πίστη. Σήμερα οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ σκότους εἶναι πιὸ ἀτρόμητοι ἀπὸ τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτός. Ἔστω κι ἂν σᾶς φαίνεται ὅτι δὲν ὑπάρχει πιὰ πίστη στὴ γῆ, νὰ ξέρετε ὅτι ἡ ἀπολύτρωση θὰ ἔλθει, ἀλλὰ μὲ φωτιὰ καὶ ἐμπρησμούς. Ὁ κόσμος πρέπει ἀκόμη νὰ ὑποφέρει. Ἐδῶ, ὅμως, ὑπάρχει πολλὴ πίστη καὶ ἤρθα νὰ σᾶς ἐνθαρρύνω. Κρατεῖτε τὴν ὁμολογία σας. Ὁ κόσμος ἀνήκει στὸν Χριστό!»

Να ἀναφέρουμε τέλος ὅτι τὸν 8<sup>ο</sup> αἰῶνα μ.Χ., τὴν ἐποχὴ τῆς Εἰκονομαχίας, ὁ χαλίφης τῆς Δαμασκοῦ, παρακινημένος ἀπὸ τὸν εἰκονομάχο αὐτοκράτορα Λέοντα Γ', ἔκοψε τὸ χέρι τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννη τοῦ Δαμασκηνοῦ, ποὺ ἔγραφε ὑπὲρ τῆς τιμῆς (ὄχι λατρείας) τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων. Ὁ ἅγιος τοποθέτησε τὸ κομμένο του χέρι στὴ θέση του καὶ προσευχήθηκε ὅλη τὴ νύχτα μπροστὰ στὴν εἰκόνα τῆς Θεοτόκου. Τὸ πρῶν τὸ χέρι εἶχε κολλήσει καὶ θεραπευτεῖ. Τότε ὁ ἅγιος κατασκεύασε τὴν περίφημη εἰκόνα τῆς Παναγίας Τριχερούσας, στὴν ὁποία τὸ τρίτο χέρι σημαίνει τὸ δικό του κομμένο καὶ ἀποκαταστημένο χέρι.

Ὅταν ὁ ἅγιος κοιμήθηκε, ὡς μοναχὸς στὴ μονὴ τοῦ ἁγίου Σάββα (στὴν Παλαιστίνη), ἄφησε ἐντολὴ νὰ δοθεῖ ἡ εἰκόνα στὸν πρῶτο ἐπίσκοπο μὲ τὸ ὄνομα Σάββας ποὺ θὰ ἐπισκεπτόταν τὸ μοναστήρι. Αὐτὸς ἦταν ὁ ἅγιος Σάββας, πρῶν ἡγούμενος καὶ μέγας πνευματικὸς πατέρας τῆς Σερβίας, γύρω στὸ 1200 μ.Χ.! Ὁ ἅγιος πῆρε τὴν εἰκόνα στὴ Σερβία. Ὅμως ἀργότερα, σὲ ἐποχὴ ταραχῶν, γιὰ νὰ τὴν προστατεύσουν, τὴ φόρτωσαν σ' ἓνα γαϊδουράκι καὶ τὸ ἄφησαν ἐλεύθερο. Ἐκεῖνο περπάτησε πολλὰ χιλιόμετρα κι ἔφτασε στὸ σέρβικο μοναστήρι τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους, στὴ μονὴ Χιλανδαρίου. Ἐκεῖ φυλάχθηκε ἡ εἰκόνα. Τέλη τοῦ 18<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνα, σημειώθηκε στὴ μονὴ διχογνωμία γιὰ τὴν ἐκλογή νέου ἡγουμένου. Τότε ἡ εἰκόνα ἔφυγε ἀπὸ τὸ Ἱερό, ὅπου βρισκόταν, καὶ πετάχθηκε στὴ θέση τοῦ ἡγουμένου. Ἔτσι, ἡ μονὴ Χιλανδαρίου εἶχε ὡς ἡγούμενο τὴν Παναγία τὴν Τριχερούσα. Νέος ἡγούμενος ἐκλέχθηκε μόλις τὸ 1991.



## Τὸ Πάρισιμο τῆς Πόλης—Μέρος 2ον

Φώτης Κόντογλου.



### Τὸ Κούρσεμα τῆς Πόλης...

Σὰν πατήθηκε πιά ἡ πόρτα τοῦ Ῥωμανοῦ καὶ σκοτώθηκε ὁ βασιλιάς, οἱ Τοῦρκοι γιουργιάρανε μέσα στὴν Πόλη σὰν τ' ἀγριεμένο ξεροπόταμο ποῦ

κατεβαίνει στενεμένο ἀνάμεσα στ' ἀψηλὰ βράχια, ὕστερ' ἀπὸ νεροποντή.

Δὲ μπαίνανε ἑκατὸ-ἑκατό, μηδὲ διακόσιοι, μὰ χιλιάδα ἀπάνω στὴ χιλιάδα. Τέτοια ἦταν ἡ μανία τους μὴ δὲν προφτάξουνε νὰ κουρσέσουνε, ποῦ ἀπ' τὸ στρίμωγμα λαβωνόντανε συναμεταξύ τους καὶ πολλοὶ σκάσανε ποδοπατημένοι ἀπ' τοὺς δικούς τους. Καὶ σὰ μπαίνανε μέσα στὸ κάστρο, σκορπίζανε ἄλλος ἐδῶ, ἄλλος ἐκεῖ, κοπάδια-κοπάδια, σφάζοντας ὅποιον βρῖσκανε μπροστά τους, εἴτε γυναῖκα, εἴτε παιδί, εἴτε ἄντρα.

Τὸ μεγάλο μακελεῖο βάσταξε ἀπ' τὴν ἀνατολὴ τοῦ ἡλίου ἴσαμε τὸ μεσημέρι. Πολλοὶ χριστιανοὶ κρυφτήκανε μέσα σὲ λαγούμια καὶ σὲ σπηλιές κ' ὕστερά τους βρήκανε καὶ τοὺς σκλαβώσανε.

Φτάνοντας οἱ Τοῦρκοι στὴν πλατεία, ἀνεβήκανε στὸν πύργο καὶ κατεβάσανε τὴ βυζαντινὴ σημαία καὶ τὴ σημαία τ' ἀγίου Μάρκου καὶ ἰσάρανε στὸν τόπο τους τὸ σαντάρδο τοῦ σουλτάνου. Τὰ κάστρα ἀπὸ τὴ μιὰν ἄκρῃ ἴσαμε τὴν ἄλλῃ πέσανε στὰ χέρια τοῦ Τοῦρκου.

Μονάχα οἱ Κρητικοί, ποῦ βρισκόντανε μέσα στοὺς πύργους τοῦ Λέοντα καὶ τοῦ Βασιλείου, βαστήξανε τὸν πόλεμο ἴσαμε τὸ μεσημέρι. Ὁ σουλτὰν Μεμέτης σὰν τᾶκουσε θαύμασε τὴν παλληκαριά τους καὶ τοὺς ἄφησε νὰ φύγουνε στὴν πατρίδα τους, παίρνοντας μαζί τους ὅ,τι εἶχανε ἀπάνω τους.

Ὅπως εἶπα πρωτύτερα, πολλὸς κόσμος ἔτρεξε στὴ θάλασσα νὰ γλυτώσῃ, μὰ ἔπεσε μαζεμένος στὰ καράβια καὶ πολλὰ βουλιάξανε καὶ πνιγήκανε πολλὸς λαός. Οἱ πορτιέρηδες, βλέποντας τὸν κόσμο ποῦ ὠρμούσε ὄξ' ἀπὸ τὶς πόρτες, θυμηθήκανε ἓνα παλιὸ ρητὸ πῶλεγε πῶς ἡ Πόλη θὰ ξαναπαιρνότανε ἀπ' τὰ χέρια τῶν Τοῦρκων ἂν γυρίζανε πίσω οἱ Χριστιανοί, κλειδώσανε τὶς πόρτες καὶ ρίζανε τὰ κλειδιά ὄξ' ἀπ' τὸ κάστρο.

Τότε δὲ φούντωσε ἡ σφαγή, ποῦ δὲ μπορεῖ νὰ τὴ χωρέσῃ τὸ μυαλὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ὅσοι γλυτώσανε χάσανε τὰ φρένα τους καὶ τρέχανε νὰ κλειστοῦνε στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία. Κεῖνῃ τὴν ὥρα ἦταν πῶχαν' ἡ μάννα τὸ παιδί καὶ τὸ παιδί τὴ μάννα. Θεὲ μεγαλοδύναμη, ἀπάνω σ' αὐτοὺς τοὺς συμφοριασμένους ἔπεσε ὅλη ἡ ὀργή σου!

Μερμηγκιά ἀμέτρητη πλημμύρισε τὴν ἐκκλησιά, ἀπάνω, κάτω, στὸ νάρθηκα, στ' ἅγιο βῆμα, σὲ κάθε μεριά. Σφαλίζανε τὶς πόρτες καὶ παρακαλοῦσανε μὲ μεγάλες φωνές τὸ Θεὸ νὰ τοὺς λυπηθῇ.

Οἱ κουμπέδες κ' οἱ θεόρατες καμάρες ἀντιβούζιζανε καὶ ρίχνανε πιδὸ πολλὴ τρομάρα στὶς καρδιές τῶν κοριτσιῶν τὰ μικρὰ παιδάκια ξεψυχούσανε ἀπ' τὸ φόβο τους. Σὲ λίγο φτάζανε οἱ Τοῦρκοι καὶ πιάσανε νὰ βαρᾶνε μὲ τοὺς μπαλτάδες τὶς πόρτες. Τὸ κοπάδι, ποῦ ἦτανε μαντρισιμένο μέσα βέλαζε λυπητερὰ σὲ κάθε τσεκουριά.

Ποιά γλώσσα μπορεῖ νὰ πῆ τί γίνηκε σὰν μπήκανε μέσα οἱ Τοῦρκοι, βαστώντας στὰ χέρια τους ἄλλοι ματωμένα μαχαίρια μιὰ ὀργυιὰ μάκρος, ἄλλοι πελέκια ἀκονισμένα, ἄλλοι κοντάρια, π' ἀστράφτανε οἱ σουβλερὲς μύτες τους. Ἡ ἐκκλησιά πιτσιλίστηκε ἀπ' τὰ αἵματα σὲ δυὸ μπόγια ὕψος, πῶλεγες πῶς ἦτανε χασάπικο. Ὅσοι ἀπομείνανε ζωντανοὶ εἶχανε τρελλαθῇ.

Οἱ Τοῦρκοι δένανε τοὺς ἄντρες μὲ σκοινιά, τὶς γυναῖκες μὲ τὶς ζῶνες τους. Ἐβλεπες ἀφεντάδες δεμένους πιστάγκωνα μαζί μὲ τοὺς ὑπηρέτες, κυράδες μὲ τὶς δούλες, παπάδες μὲ γρηές, δεσποτάδες, παλληκάρια βουτημένα στὸ αἷμα.

Ὁ ἓνας μπροστὰ στὸν ἄλλον βιάζανε τὶς γυναῖκες, ἀνάμεσα σε κουφάρια καὶ σὲ λαβωμένους ποῦ μουγκρίζανε. Ἄλλοι πάλι ἀπὸ κεῖνα τ' ἀγρόμια ξεγυμνώνανε τὴν ἐκκλησιά. Μέσα σὲ μιὰ ὥρα ἀπομείνανε μονάχα οἱ τοῖχοι.

Δὲν ἀφήσανε μηδὲ καντήλι, μηδὲ δισκοπότηρο, μηδὲ βαγγέλιο, μηδὲ εἰκόνα, μηδὲ ροῦχα, τίποτα! Πῶς περνᾷ ἡ ἀκριδα ἀπὸ νὰ καταπράσινο περιβόλι κ' ὕστερα, σὰν κἀνῃ φτερά, ἀφήνει χῶμα μοναχό, ἔτσι ἀπόμεινε κ' ἡ Ἁγία-Σοφία ξεγυμνωμένη. Τὸ μαχαίρι κ' ἡ φωτιά βάσταξε τρία μερόνυχτα, ὅπως εἶχε ταμένο στοὺς στρατιῶτες του ὁ σουλτάνος. Ἡ ἀπέραντη Κωνσταντινούπολη ἀντιλαλοῦσε μέρα νύχτα.

Τὶ αἷμα καὶ τί δάκρυα χυθήκανε! Χιλιάδες καρδιές χτυπούσανε, τέτοια συμφορὰ δὲ μπορεῖ νὰ τὴ συλλογισθῇ ἄνθρωπος. Ἄλλοι σφαζόντανε πρὶν πᾶνε στὰ σπίτια τους, ἄλλοι καταφέρνανε νὰ φτάξουνε στὰ δικά τους μὰ δὲ βρῖσκανε τὰ παιδιά τους καὶ τὶς γυναῖκες τους.

Ἄντρούγυνα χωριζόντουσαν, ὁ ἓνας Τοῦρκος ἔσερνε τὸν ἄντρα κ' ὁ ἄλλος τὴ γυναῖκα. Τὰ παιδιὰ τὰ ξεκολλούσανε ἀπ' τὸ λαϊμὸ τῆς μάννας, τὰ κορίτσια τὰ σέρνανε ἀπ' τὰ μαλλιά μέσα στὸ δρόμο.

Πεινασμένα σκυλιὰ πίνανε τὸ αἷμα π' ἄχνιζε μέσα στὰ χαντάκια. Πιδὸ πολλὰ ἦτανε τὰ κομμένα κεφάλια, ποῦ κειτόντανε στὸ χῶμα, παρὰ οἱ πέτρες τῆς γῆς. Φρόνιμες νοικοκυράδες, ποῦ δὲν τὶς εἶχε δῆ ὁ ἥλιος, ἀτμαζόντανε γυμνὲς μέσα στὶς πλατεῖες.



Παπάδες περπατούσανε βιαστικά, φορτωμένοι με βαρειά σεντούκια, πού τους τάχανε φορτωμένα οί ζεμπέκηδες και τους δέρνανε σαν γαϊδούρια και τους τραβούσανε με τὸ καπίστρι ποῦχανε περασμένο στὸ λαϊμό τους. «Καὶ ἦν ἰδεῖν ὄρμαθους ἔξερχομένους ἄπειρους ὡσπερ ἀγέλας».

Στὰ καράβια δὲν εἶχε ἀπομείνει μηδὲ ἓνας Τοῦρκος, γιατί ριχτήκανε στὸ πλιάτσικο. Μὲ μεγάλη μανία γυρεύανε νὰ βροῦνε τὰ γυναικεῖα μοναστήρια, τὰ πατούσανε καὶ κουβαλούσανε τὶς καλογρηῆς μέσα στὰ καράβια κ' ἐκεῖ ὁ διάβολος πιά μπορεῖ νὰ πῆ τὸ τί γίνηκε. Πολλὲς γυναῖκες, γιὰ νὰ ξεφύγουνε τὴν ἀτιμία, πέσανε καὶ πνιγήκανε στὴ θάλασσα καὶ στὰ πηγάδια.

Οἱ Τοῦρκοι εἶχανε τούτη τὴ συνήθεια· ἅμα μπαίνανε μέσα σ' ἓνα σπίτι γιὰ νὰ κουρσέψουνε, στήνανε μιὰ σημαία ἀπάνω στὰ κεραμίδια. Οἱ ἄλλοι Τοῦρκοι, βλέποντας τούτη τὴ σημαία, δὲ μπαίνανε ποτὲ μέσα, μὰ τραβούσανε πάρα πέρα, νάβρουνε ἄλλο σπίτι λεύτερο. Ἦσαμε διακόσες χιλιάδες τέτοια κουρέλια σαλεύανε ἀπάνω στὴν Πόλη, γιατί οἱ Τοῦρκοι βάζανε πολλὲς παντιέρες στὸ ἴδιο σπίτι γιὰ νὰ κάνουνε πανηγύρι.

Ὅλη τὴ μέρα σφάζανε. Τόσο μουσκεμένη ἦτανε ἡ γῆς, πῶλεγες πὼς ἔβρεξε αἷμα, κ' ὅπου ἔβρισκε χαντάκι τὸ αἷμα ἔτρεχε σὰ νάτανε βροχονέρι. Τὰ κουφάρια τὰ ρίχνανε στὸ μπουγάζι τοῦ Βοσπόρου, καὶ τὸ ρέμα τὰ κατρακυλοῦσε σὰ νάτανε πεπόνια, Χριστιανοὶ-Τοῦρκοι ἀνακατεμένοι.

Ὁ σουλτάνος δὲ μπῆκε μέσα στὴν Πόλη μετὸ στρατό, παρὰ ἀπόμεινε στὸ στρατόπεδο. Κατὰ τὸ μεσημέρι οἱ πασάδες τοῦ πήγανε τὰ κλειδιά, σημάδι πὼς ἦτανε πιά δική του ἡ Κωνσταντινούπολη. Τότε καβαλλίκεψε καὶ μπῆκε μετὴ συνοδεία του μέσα στὸ κάστρο καὶ τράβηξε ἴσια στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία.

Δὲ μπῆκε μέσα στὴν ἐκκλησιὰ μετὰ τᾶλογο, παρὰ ξεπέζεψε καὶ μπαίνοντας μέσα θαύμασε πολλὴν ὥρα καὶ περιεργάσθηκε τὸ χτίριο. Ὑστερα φώναξε ἓναν χότζα καὶ τοῦπε ν' ἀνεβῆ ἀπάνω στὸν ἄμβωνα καὶ νὰ φωνάξῃ τὴν προσευχή τους «Ἀλλάχου ἔκπερ, Ἀλλάχου ἔκπερ, Μουχαμετοῦλ ρεσοῦλ Οὐλλάχ.» Σὰν τελείωσε ὁ χότζας, ἀνέβηκε ὁ ἴδιος στὴν Ἁγία Τράπεζα καὶ τὸ ξανάπε. Τὴν ὥρα πῶβγαινε ἔξω, εἶδε ἓναν Τοῦρκο πὸν τσάκιζε τὰ μάρμαρα. Ὁ Μεμέτης τὸν βάρεσε μετὸ καμουτσὶ λέγοντάς του: «Κιοπέκ, σὰς ἄφησα τὸ θησαυρὸ καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, μὰ τὰ χτίρια εἶνε δικὰ μου!»

Ἀπὸ κεῖ τράβηξε μετὸν πασάδες καὶ ρώτηξε γιὰ τὸ βασιλιὰ τῆς Πόλης, ζῆ ἢ πέθανε. Καὶ σὰν τοῦπανε πὼς

σκοτώθηκε, πρόσταξε καὶ πλύνανε πολλὰ κεφάλια στὸ μέρος ποὺ χάθηκε, γιὰ νὰ τὸν γνωρίσουνε, μὰ δὲ μπορέσανε μέσα σὲ τέτοιο πλῆθος.

Σὲ λίγο ὅμως βρέθηκε τὸ κορμί του καὶ τὸ γνωρίσανε ἀπ' τὰ κόκκινα ποδήματά του μετὸν κεντημένους ἀητούς. Κόψανε τὸ κεφάλι καὶ τὸ βάλανε σὲ μιὰ πλατεία κοντὰ στ' ἄγαλμα τοῦ Γιουστινιανοῦ καὶ κεῖ στάθηκε ἴσαμε τὸ βράδυ.

Ὑστερα τὸ μπαλσαμώσανε καὶ τῶστειλε ὁ σουλτάνος στὴν ἀνατολὴ ἀπὸ χώρα σὲ χώρα, γιὰ νὰ δῆ ὁ κόσμος τὴ νίκη του. Τὸ σῶμα τὸ πήρανε οἱ Χριστιανοὶ καὶ τὸ θάψανε.

Τὰ πλιάτσικα κ' οἱ σκλάβοι, ἄλλα στοιβαχθήκανε στὶς τέντες, ἄλλα φορτωθήκανε στὰ καράβια καὶ τραβήξανε νὰ τὰ πουλήσουνε, ὅπως ἔστερξε ὁ σουλτάνος. Κάθε Τοῦρκος ἦτανε φορτωμένος.

Τὶ μαλάματα, τί ἀσήμια, τί χαλκώματα, τί ροῦχα μεταξωτά, τί βιβλία! Καράβια ὀλάκερα γεμίσανε καλογέρους καὶ καλογρηῆς. Ἔβλεπες ζεϊμπέκια ψειριασμένα νάνε ντυμένα μετὰ ροῦχα δεσποτικά, ἄλλοι φοράγανε χρυσὰ πετραχήλια, ἄλλοι κορῶνες καὶ καλυμμαύχια στὸ κεφάλι. Σκυλιὰ δεμένα μετὰ ζῶνες κεντημένες, ἐπιγονάτια καὶ φελόνια γιὰ σαγῆ στ' ἄλογα. Μέσα στοὺς ἀσημένιους δίσκους βάζανε ντομάτες καὶ κρέατα, πίνανε κρασὶ μέσα στὰ δισκοπότηρα. Φορτώσανε στὶς καρότσες βιβλία, πὸν δὲν εἶχανε μετρημὸ καὶ τὰ σκορπίσανε σ' ἀνατολὴ καὶ δύση. Γιὰ ἓνα γρόσι πουλιόντανε ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης, ὁ Πλάτωνας κ' οἱ ἄλλοι ξακουσμένοι σοφοὶ τῆς ἀρχαιότητος, γραμμένοι σὲ πετσί, μετὰ χρυσοκοντυλιῆς καὶ μετὰ χρυσὰ δεσμάτια. Τὰ εἰκονίσματα τὰ σκίζανε μετὰ τὸ τσεκούρι καὶ βράζανε κρέας μέσα στὰ καζάνια.

Τὴ δευτέρη μέρα, δηλαδὴ στὶς 30 Μαγιοῦ, ξαναμπῆκε στὴν Πόλη ὁ σουλτάνος, μετὰ πολλὴ παράταξη, κ' ἀφοῦ τριγύρισε σὲ διάφορα μέρη, πήγε καὶ στὸ παλάτι. Καὶ βλέποντάς το ἔρημο εἶπε ἓναν στίχο κάποιου Πέρση ποιητῆ γιὰ τὴν ματαιότητα τοῦ κόσμου.

Ἦτανε πιά πεθαμένη καὶ θαμμένη ἡ ξακουσμένη Κωνσταντινούπολη, ἡ Θεοσκεπάστη, ἡ Νέα Σιών, ἡ Ἐφτάλοφη, τὸ καμάρι τῆς Ἀνατολῆς, πῶβρισκε ἄνθρωπος καὶ τοῦ πουλιοῦ τὰ γάλα.

Ποῦχε τὸ κάστρο μετὰ τοὺς τρακόσους πύργους, τὰ παζάρια, τὰ ἀρτοπρατεῖα, τὰ χαλκοπρατεῖα, τὰ ἀργυροπωλεῖα, τὰ βλατοπωλεῖα, τὰ κηροπωλεῖα, τὰ λουτρά, τὰ συντριβάνια, τὶς βρύσες, τὶς δεκαεννιά στέρνες, τὰ ἵπποδρόμια, τὰ παλάτια, τὶς τρακόσες



ἐκκλησιᾶς καὶ τὰ διακόσια μοναστήρια, τ' ἀμέτρητα τ' ἀγάλματα κι' ὅ,τι μπορεῖ νὰ βάλῃ ὁ νοῦς τ' ἀνθρώπου. «Τῇ δευτέρᾳ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης, εἰσελθὼν ὁ Μεχμέτης, περιόδευσε τὴν πόλιν· καὶ ἦν ἡ πᾶσα ἄοικος, οὔτε ἄνθρωπος, οὔτε κτῆνος, οὔτε ὄρνεον κραυγάζον ἢ λαλοῦν ἐντός.»

Κοντὰ στὸ παλάτι ἐτοιμάσανε ἓνα μεγάλο τραπέζι γιὰ τὸ σουλτάνο, κι' ἀφοῦ ἔφαγε, ἤπιε πολὺ κρασί καὶ μέθυσε. Τότε πρόσταξε νὰ τοῦ πάνε τὸ ναύαρχο Νοταρᾶ μὲ τὰ παιδιά του καὶ νὰ τοὺς ἀποκεφαλίσουνε. Πρῶτα σφάξανε τὰ παιδιά μπροστὰ στὸ συμφοριασμένον τὸν πατέρα, πῶλεγε ὀλοένα «δίκαιος εἶ, Κύριε!», κ' ὕστερα τὸν ἴδιον. Δὲν περάσανε λίγες μέρες καὶ πρόσταξε νὰ κόψουνε καὶ τὸ Χαλίλ πασᾶ, πὸν τὸν ὑποπευότανε πὼς εἶχε προδώσει τὰ μυστικά του στοὺς γραικοὺς.

Τὸ τέλος τῆς Πόλης φαίνεται ἀκόμα πιδ λυπητερὸ ἄμα συλλογισθῆ κανένας πὼς χαλάσθηκε τὸ μήνα Μάη, τὶς μέρες πὸν μοσκοβολούσανε οἱ πασκαλιῆς κ' οἱ τριανταφυλλιῆς. Ἀνήμερα πὸν σκλαβώθηκε ἡ Πόλη ἦτανε τῆς Ἁγίας Θεοδοσίας, πὸν τὴ γιορτάζανε πάντα οἱ Πολίτες στὶς 29 Μαγιοῦ μὲ μεγάλη δόξα στὴν ἐκκλησιά της, πὸν γίνηκε ὕστερα τζαμί. Μ' ὅλη τὴν ἀγωνία πὸν περνούσανε, οἱ γυναῖκες τὴν εἶχανε στολισμένη, κατὰ τὰ συνηθισμένα, μὲ στεφάνια καὶ μὲ περιπλοκάδες ἀπὸ τριαντάφυλλα. Τὴν ὥρα, πὸν μπήκανε μέσα οἱ Τοῦρκοι, ψέλνανε ἀκόμα οἱ ψαλτάδες. Τοὺς περάσανε ὅλους ἀπ' τὸ μαχαίρι, κι' ἀπὸ τότε βαστᾶ ἡ ὀνομασία «Γκιουὺλ Τζαμί», δηλαδὴ «Τὸ Τζαμί μὲ τὰ τριαντάφυλλα», καὶ μ' αὐτὸ τὸνομα στέκει ὡς τὰ σήμερα. Μέσα σ' αὐτὴ τὴν ἐκκλησιά λένε πὼς ὑπάρχει κ' ἓνα μνημόρι, ὁπῶχει ἀπάνω στὴν πλάκα τοῦρκικα γράμματα, πὸν λένε «Ἐδῶ κείται ἓνας μαθητὴς τοῦ Χριστοῦ» καὶ πὼς αὐτὸς εἶνε ὁ τάφος τοῦ βασιλιᾶ Παλαιολόγου.

Τοὺς Γενοβέζους τοῦ Γαλατᾶ ὁ σουλτάνος δὲν τοὺς πείραξε, γιὰτὶ σταθήκανε φίλοι του στὸν πόλεμο, τοὺς χάρισε μάλιστα καὶ προνόμια. Τὸ φιορμάνι πὸν τοὺς ἔδωσε ἀρχίζει μὲ τοῦτα τὰ λόγια: «Ἐγὼ ὁ μέγας αὐθέντης καὶ μέγας Ἀμηρᾶς σουλτάνος ὁ Μεχμέτ Μπέης, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ μεγάλου αὐθέντου Ἀμηρᾶ Σουλτάνου τοῦ Μουράτ Μπέη. Ὁμνύω εἰς τὸν Θεὸν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ εἰς τὸν μέγαν ἡμῶν προφήτην Μωάμεθ, καὶ εἰς τὰ ἑπτὰ μουσάφια ὅπου ἔχομεν καὶ ὁμολογοῦμεν, καὶ εἰς τὰς ρκδ' (124) χιλιάδας προφήτας τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ πρὸς τὰς ψυχὰς τοῦ ἀάπτου μου καὶ τοῦ πατρός μου, καὶ πρὸς

ἐμαυτὸν καὶ πρὸς τὰ παιδιά μου, καὶ στὸ σπαθὶ ὅπου ζώννομαι...».

Ἀπόβραδο θλιβερὸ στὴν πλέον ἀπόμερη ἐκείνη ἄκρα τοῦ Βυζαντίου, πάνω ἀπὸ τὶς συνοικίαις τῆς πύλης τῆς Γυρολμίνης, τῆς Παναγίας τῆς Σούδας καὶ τοῦ Παλατιοῦ τῶν Βλαχερνῶν. Στενὸ, ὑγρὸ καλντερίμι ἀναοριχᾶται παράλληλα μὲ τὶς σκιῆς τῶν γκρεμισμένων πύργων πρὸς τὴν καστρόπορτα τοῦ Πολυανδρίου, πύλη διπλὴ ὅπου, κατὰ τὸν Φραντζῆ: «...μετὰ τὴν εἰσροὴν τῶν Τούρκων διὰ τῆς Κερκόπορτας, τοσαύτη ἐγένεν συρροὴ (...) ὥστε τὰ πτώματα τῶν πιπτόντων φίλων καὶ ἐχθρῶν κατέφραξαν τὰς πύλας». Ὁ δρόμος κατηφορίζει μετὰ πρὸς τὴν κοιλάδα τοῦ Λύκου ποταμοῦ, προσπερνώντας τὰ Ἀρματίου τὴν ἐκ παραφθορᾶς μετέπειτα ἐνορία Σαρμασικιουγιᾶ νὰ συνεχίσει ἀνάμεσα σὲ σκοῦρα πορφυρόχρωμα χαλάσματα πρὸς τὸν τραγικὸ λόφο τοῦ Πέμπτου.

Τότε ἀκόμα ἔξω ἀπὸ τὰ χερσαῖα Θεοδοσιανὰ τεῖχη ἡ ἀπέραντη Θρακικὴ πεδιάδα ἀπλωνόταν καταπράσινη, γυμνὴ ἀπὸ κτίσματα, καὶ μόνο ἐκεῖ, ἀπέναντι στὴν πύλη τοῦ Ἁγίου Ῥωμανοῦ Τόπκαπι, πύλη τοῦ κανονιοῦ ὅπως τὴν ὀνόμασαν οἱ Τοῦρκοι μία συστοιχία αἰωνόβιων κυπαρισσιῶν δήλωνε τὴ θέση ὅπου ὁ πορθητὴς εἶχε στήσει τὴ σκηνή του, τσαντίρι θεόρατο περιχαρακωμένο μὲ σανίδες καὶ τάφρο, ἔχοντας τριγύρω του τοὺς ἐμπειρότερους τοξότες καὶ ἐπιλεκτοὺς ὑπερασπιστῆς τῆς σουλτανικῆς αὐλῆς. Δεξιὰ του εἶχαν ἐγκατασταθεῖ οἱ πολυάνθρωπε ὀρδὲς τῆς Ἀνατολῆς καί, ἀριστερά, οἱ στρατιῆς τῆς Εὐρώπης.

Φωτιῆς τὴν νύχτα ἄναβαν πέρα ἀπὸ τὴν Καμηλογέφυρα, στὰ ὑψώματα τοῦ Πικριδίου καὶ τοῦ Γαλατᾶ ὅπου στρατοπέδευε ὁ κηδεστὴς τοῦ σουλτάνου Ζαγανὸς πασᾶς. Δώδεκα σπιθαμῆς, λένε, μετροῦσε ἡ περίμετρος τῆς κάθε πετρόσφαιρας πὸν ἔξακόντιζε τὸ γιγαντιαῖο ἐκεῖνο κανόνι πὸν εἶχε κατασκευάσει ὁ Οὐγγρος Ὁρβανός!

Καὶ οἱ Θεοδοσιανοὶ πύργοι κατηφόριζαν πρὸς τὴν Προποντίδα, ὀδεύοντας μέσα στὶς ὀμίγλες τῶν περασμένων, σημαδεμένοι αἰῶνες τώρα μὲ ἀνάγλυφους θυρεοὺς, σταυροὺς πλινθόκτιστους, ὑπολείμματα ἐπιγραφῶν καὶ ἐπικλήσεων: «Νικᾶ ἡ τύχη τῶν σκηπτούχων Λέοντος καὶ Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Εἰρήνης τῆς εὐσεβεστάτης Αὐγούστης», «Πύργος Ῥωμανοῦ τοῦ Φιλοχρίστου Δεσπότη», «Μιχαὴλ καὶ Θεοφίλου μεγάλων Βασιλέων», «Πύργος Ἰωάννου ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ πιστοῦ Βασιλέως καὶ Αὐτοκράτορος τοῦ Παλαιολόγου», «Χριστὲ ὁ Θεὸς ἀτάραχος καὶ





ἀπολέμητον φύλαττε τὴν Πόλιν σου, νίκας δωρούμενος τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ὑμῶν...». Καὶ συνέχιζε νὰ ἐλίσσεται πρὸς τὴν Προποντίδα τὸ ἐρειπωμένο τεῖχος, αὐτὸ ποὺ ἀγκάλιαζε παλιὰ μὲ γρανιτένια μπράτσα τὴ Θεοφύλαχτη Πόλη καὶ ποὺ τῶρα Ἄλβανοὶ μπαχτσεβαναῖοι καλλιεργοῦσαν τὰ κηπευτικὰ καὶ τὰ μαρούλια τους στὴν πλατιὰ του ξεραμένη τάφρο.

Θλιβερὸ τὸ ἀπόβραδο τῆς 29ης Μαΐου, ἡμερομηνία ὀρόσημο στὴν πορεία τῆς Ρωμοσύνης ἀλλὰ καὶ ὄλου τοῦ Χριστιανικοῦ κόσμου· κι ἀναρωτιέμαι πόσοι τάχα ἀπέμειναν νὰ θυμούνται πῶς χρόνια πρὶν, στὴν ἀπόμακρη ἐκείνη ρηγιώνα τοῦ Βυζαντίου, κάθε χρόνο, κάθε τέτοια μέρα ποὺ οἱ κυρίαρχοι πανηγύριζαν τὴν ἐπέτειο τῆς Ἀλώσεως, γενόταν σιωπηλὰ σὺνάξη μιᾶς πλειάδας ἀθεράπευτων νοσταλγῶν τοῦ Βυζαντίου καὶ ἐκεῖ, πίσω ἀπὸ τοὺς ὑψηλοὺς μαντρότοιχους τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου, τοῦ παρὰ τὴν Πύλην τοῦ Ἁγίου Ῥωμανοῦ ὅπου ἔπεσε ὁ Κωνσταντῖνος, τελοῦσαν τρισάγιο εἰς μνήμην τοῦ ὕστατου βυζαντινοῦ αὐτοκράτορα. «Ἐμπνευστὴς τοῦ μνημοσύνου», διηγεῖται ὁ Κωνσταντῖνος Γρίβας, «ἦταν ὁ Τζανὴς ὁ Παπαδόπουλος, ὁ σοφὸς ἐκεῖνος καὶ ἐνθουσιώδης καθηγητὴς τῆς ἱστορίας στὴν Μεγάλη τοῦ Γένους Σχολή. Παρόντες καὶ οἱ χρόνια τῶρα μακαριστοὶ Θεοφάνης Μέντζος, Ἀντώνης Μαλέτσκος, Εἰρήναρχος Κόβας, Νικόλαος Δάμσας, Μιλτιάδης Νομίδης...».

Ἦταν ἡ δεκαετία τοῦ 1930. Ἀργότερα ἔσπευσαν νὰ τοὺς πλαισιώσουν ὁ Δημήτρης Χαβιαρόπουλος, ὁ Γιῶργος Πατριαρχεὺς μὲ νεότατο τότε τὸν Καλλίνικο Γκιουζέλογλου. Τὴν πρώτη ἐκείνη φορά, τὸ 1927, ὁ ἀνίδεος καὶ ἀγαθὸς ἱερέας ποὺ ἐκλήθη πρὸς τέλος τῆς μυσταγωγίας, ἄρχισε χωρὶς τὴν παραμικρὴ ὑποψία νὰ μουρμουρίζει λόγια χιλιοειπωμένα γι' αὐτόν, ἓνα βιαστικὸ καὶ συνηθισμένο τρισάγιο γιὰ τὸν κάθε παπᾶ. «Ὅταν κοντοστάθηκε νὰ ρωτήσῃ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ μνημονομένου καὶ τοῦ ψιθυρίσαμε πῶς ἐπρόκειτο γιὰ τὸν «Κωνσταντῖνο Παλαιολόγο τὸν αὐτοκράτορα καὶ πάντα τοὺς πρὸ τῶν τειχῶν τῆς Βασιλίδος πεσόντας κατὰ τὴν Ἄλωσιν,» κόμπιασε, διέκοψε συγκινημένος καὶ ξανάρχισε ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχή, ἀκολουθώντας ὅλο ἐκεῖνο τὸ βυζαντινοπρεπὲς αὐστηρὸ τυπικὸ ποὺ συνήθως παρακάμπτουν οἱ περισσότεροὶ λειτουργοί...».

Χρόνια ἀργότερα, μέσα στὴ θλιβερὴ ἀλλοτρίωση τῶν πραγμάτων, ὅταν ἄλλοι φύγαμε καὶ ἄλλοι χάθηκαν γιὰ πάντα, ἀπέμεινε στερνὸς ὁ καλὸς μου φίλος ὁ Καλλίνικος, μόνος νὰ τρυγυρνᾷ κάθε ἐπέτειο τοῦ κουρσέματος, πότε

στὰ τεῖχη καὶ πότε κάτω ἀπ' τοὺς θόλους τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ Σοφίας, ν' ἀναπολεῖ καὶ νὰ προσεύχεται ἐκεῖ, δίπλα στὴ σιδερόκλειστη πύλη τῶν κατηχομένων ὅπου παιδιὰ μᾶς ἔβαζαν ν' ἀκούσουμε τὶς ἀχνὲς ψαλμωδίες τῶν τελευταίων λειτουργῶν καὶ τὴ θρηνωδία τοῦ «Παπᾶ τῆς Ἁγία-Σοφίας».

Τὸν θρύλο καὶ τὸ παραμῦθι του μὲ συγκίνηση πάντα καὶ ἐνθουσιασμὸ μᾶς τὸ ἐπαναλάμβανε ὁ Ἄγγελος Βουδούρης, ὁ ἀξέχαστος καθηγητὴς μας τῶν θρησκευτικῶν, ἐκεῖ στὸ πετρόκτιστο φαναριώτικο σπίτι του, δίπλα στὸ μετόχι τοῦ Παναγίου Τάφου. Ἦς τὸ ξανακούσουμε: «Τὴν ὥρα ποὺ οἱ Τοῦρκοι μπῆκαν στὴν Ἁγία Σοφία, δὲν εἶχε τελειώσει ἀκόμα ἡ θεία λειτουργία. Πῆρε τότε βιαστικὰ ὁ παπᾶς τ' ἅγιο δισκοπότηρο, ἀνέβηκε στὰ κατηχούμενα, μπῆκε σὲ μιὰ θύρα καὶ ἡ θύρα ἔκλεισε ἀμέσως. Οἱ Τοῦρκοι, ποὺ τὸν κунήγησαν, εἶδαν νὰ γίνεται ἄφαντος καὶ βροῆκαν ἔμπρὸς στὸ σημεῖο ποὺ χάθηκε τοῖχο. Προσπάθησαν νὰ



τὸν ρίξουν μὰ δὲν μπόρεσαν! Ἔφεραν ὕστερα χτίστες, μὰ κι ἐκεῖνοι δὲν ἔκαμαν τίποτα. Κάλεσαν κατόπιν ὅλους τοὺς χτίστες τῆς Πόλης, ἔβαλαν τὰ πάντα εἰς ἐνέργειαν γιὰ νὰ γκρεμίσουν τὸν τοῖχο ἐκεῖνο, ἀλλὰ οἱ κόποι τους πῆγαν χαμένοι. Οὔτε μὲ τοὺς λοστούς, οὔτε μὲ τὶς ἀξίνες, οὔτε μὲ ὅλα τα σύνεργα ποὺ κουβάλησαν δὲν μπόρεσαν νὰ τὸν χαλάσουν. Γιατὶ εἶναι θέλημα Θεοῦ νὰ ἀνοίξῃ ἡ θύρα μόνη της, ὅταν ἔρθῃ ἡ ἅγια ἐκείνη ὥρα καὶ νὰ βγῇ ὁ παπᾶς νὰ τελειώσῃ τὴ θεία λειτουργία στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία, τότε ποὺ θὰ πάρουμε τὴν Πόλη...».

Θαρρῶ πῶς τότε, στ' ἀνέφελα ἐκεῖνα παιδικὰ μας χρόνια, πίσω ἀπὸ τὰ κλειστὰ θυρόφυλλα τῶν κατηχομένων, ἀκούγονταν ἀκόμα οἱ ἀχνὲς ψαλμωδίες τοῦ παπᾶ τῆς Ἁγία-Σοφίας καὶ πέρα κατὰ τὴν Χρυσόπορτα, στὰ θεμέλια πύργου παμμέγιστου, κοιμόταν ὁ Μαρωμαρμένος Βασιλιάς...



Γιὰ κάποιους ἀνιστόρητους (κυρίως νεοπαγανιστὲς) ποὺ προσπαθοῦν νὰ ἀποβάλλουν τὴν Βυζαντινὴ μας ἱστορία (τὴν Ρωμανία μας) ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑλληνική, ἐπειδὴ τοὺς ἐνοχλεῖ ὁ Ἑλληνορθόδοξος πολιτισμὸς της, θὰ ἤθελα νὰ τονίσω ὅτι ὅταν ὁ κορυφαῖος παγκοσμίως Βρετανὸς βυζαντινολόγος σὲρ Στῆβεν Ράνσιμαν μιλάει γιὰ Ἑλληνες ὑπερασπιστὲς τῆς Πόλης ξέρεῖ πάρα πολὺ καλά γιατί τοὺς ἀποκαλεῖ ἔτσι....

**Ἀνώνυμος**



## Αξιόλογες Συμβουλές

*Δύο γράμματα από τον γέροντα Έφραϊμ, Αριζόνα, ΗΠΑ.*

*Γερά Μονή Αγίου Αντωνίου, 7/1/2010*

**Ε**ύλογημένη μου ψυχούλα του Κυρίου Ίησοῦ...  
 Ὑγίαινε καὶ σώτου ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ τοῦ Ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ μας. Εὐχόμαι νὰ ἀγωνίζεσαι νὰ σώσεις τὴν καλή σου ψυχούλα. Πρέπει νὰ ἀγωνιζώμεθα, μνημονεύοντας τὸ Πανάγιον ὄνομα τοῦ Κυρίου μας Ίησοῦ, **Κύριε Ίησοῦ Χριστέ, ἐλέησον μεὶ καὶ Παναγία θεοτόκε βοήθει μοι.** Αὐτὰ τὰ δύο Πανάγια ὀνόματα ἂν τὰ κρατήσεις γενναῖα στὴ ψυχὴ σου δηλ. νοερώς καὶ στοματικὰ νὰ τὰ προσφέρεις, θὰ τύχης μεγάλης βοήθειας στὴν ἀσφάλεια τῆς ψυχῆς σου, τῆς ζωῆς σου. Οἱ δαίμονες μόνο ἔτσι κτυποῦνται καὶ διώκονται ἀπὸ κοντὰ μας. Θὰ εἶσαι ὀπλισμένη ἀλλὰ καὶ ψυχικὰ χαρούμενη. Νὰ ἐξομολογήσαι τακτικὰ καὶ νὰ ὑπακούης στὸν πνευματικὸ σου πατέρα.

Νὰ προσέχεις τὸ στοματάκι σου νὰ μὴν κατακρίνεις κανένα καὶ νὰ ἀγαπᾷς τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου καὶ νὰ τοὺς προσεύχεσαι. Νὰ κατακρίνεις μόνο τὸν ἑαυτόν σου. Νὰ ἀγαπᾷς τὴν Ἐκκλησία, τὸν ἐκκλησιασμό. Νὰ νουθετᾷς τὰ παιδιά σου καὶ μετὰ τὸ παράδειγμά σου. Στὴν προσευχὴ σου νὰ προσεύχεσαι γιὰ ὅλο τὸν κόσμο. Ἐγγὺς τὸ τέλος μας τὰ γεγονότα μᾶς πληροφοροῦν ὅτι νὰ εἴμεθα ἔτοιμοι.

Κορούλα μου σὲ χαιρετῶ μετὰ πατρικὴ ἀγάπη καὶ στοργή.

+ Γ. Ἐφραῖμ

† † †

*Γερά Μονή Αγίου Αντωνίου, 12/7/ 2011*

**Ε**ύλογημένη ψυχούλα τοῦ Θεοῦ ...,  
 Διάβασα τὰ ὅσα μου ἔγραψες. θὰ σοῦ γράψω μερικὲς συμβουλές.

Ἡ Εὐχὴ τοῦ Ίησοῦ μας νᾶναι ἡ τροφή, τὸ ποτό, τὸ ὀξυγόνο καὶ ἡ ἀναπνοή μας. Δὲν γίνεται ζωὴ Χριστοῦ μέσα μας, χωρὶς τὸ πανάγιον ὄνομα τοῦ Ίησοῦ μας.

Αὐτὴ ἡ προσευχὴ εἶναι ἀτομικὴ βόμβα κατὰ τοῦ διαβόλου, γιὰ αὐτὸ καὶ ἔχει τόση δυσκολία στὴν προσπάθεια νὰ τὴν κρατήσουμε στὴν ἀναπνοή μας, στὴν καρδιά μας, μετὰ ἓνα λόγο: Χωρὶς Ίησοῦ εἴμεθα νεκροὶ ψυχικῶς. Ἐπειδὴ ἐγὼ ζῶ αὐτὴν τὴν νεκρότητα τῆς βρώμικης ψυχῆς μου, σοῦ τὸ γράφω σὰν μία μεγάλη ἀλήθεια καὶ διαπίστωση.

Βιάζε, παιδάκι μου, τὸν ἑαυτό σου νὰ προσεύχεται. Προσπάθησε νὰ κρατᾷς τὸν νοῦ σου ἀπὸ τὸν μετεωρισμὸ καὶ διασκορπισμὸ. Ὁ διασκορπισμὸς τοῦ νοῦ φέρνει ὅλη τὴ σαβούρα τῆς κοσμικῆς βρωμίας στὴν ψυχὴ μας, μετὰ ἀποτέλεσμα νὰ λερώνεται ὅλος ὁ ψυχοσωματικὸς ἑαυτός μας καὶ ἔτσι, ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ νὰ φεύγει ἀπὸ τὴν ψυχὴ μας καὶ νὰ νοιώθουμε ἔλεγχο τρανταχτερὸ στὴν συνείδησι.

Ἀγωνίσου νὰ δώχνεις τοὺς κακοὺς καὶ βρώμικους καὶ ὑπερήφανους λογισμοὺς τοῦ διαβόλου. Νὰ εἶσαι πανέτοιμη καὶ ρωμαλέα στὸν Ζῆλο (τὸν κατὰ Θεὸν) καὶ ἄκρως νηπτικὴ ὥστε μόλις ἡ ψυχὴ ἀντιληφθεῖ πὼς ἔφθασαν οἱ κακὲς σκέψεις, αὐτομάτως νὰ δουλέψει ὁ νηπτικὸς μηχανισμὸς, δηλ. ἡ ἐτοιμότητα καὶ ἡ μαχητικότητα τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως μετὰ τὴν εὐχή, καταστροφὴ τῶν βρώμικων φαντασιῶν, καὶ μετὰ τὸ πνευματικὸ μαστίγιο τῆς αὐτομεμψίας. Μία τέτοια ἀντιμετώπισι, τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα θᾶναι θετικὸ καὶ σωτήριο.

Τὴν αὐτομεμψία, ψυχούλα μου, νὰ τὴν ὑπεραγαπήσουμε. Νὰ τὴν ἔχουμε σὰν καινούργιο γυαλιστερὸ μαχαίρι, καὶ τὰ μάτια μας τετρακόσια· μόλις δοῦμε νὰ ἐμφανίζεται ἡ φωτιὰ τῆς κατάκρισης, ἀμέσως τὸ σπαθί (στὴν αὐτομεμψία) νὰ κτυπήσουμε τὸν διάβολο, πρὶν μᾶς σπαθίσει αὐτὸς νὰ κατακρίνουμε.

Ἡ αὐτοκατηγορία εἶναι ὁ πρόδρομος τῆς χαριτωμένης καὶ πανέμορφης ταπεινώσεως. *«Μάθετε ἀπὸ μένα νὰ εἶστε ταπεινοὶ καὶ πράοι κι τότε θὰ νοιώσετε τὴν ὁμορφά τῆς ἀγάπης μου».* Χωρὶς ταπεινώση, σκέτο βρώμικο σῶμα, χωρὶς ψυχὴ. Ὅταν ὁμως μᾶς ἀγγίξει ἡ Θεοχαρίτη ταπεινώση τοῦ Ίησοῦ, τότε ὅλα εὐωδιάζουν Οὐράνιο μύρον καὶ ὀσφραίνεται ἡ κουρασμένη ψυχούλα μας καὶ δὲν ξέρει πὼς νὰ εὐχαριστήσῃ Τὸν θεῖον Δοτήρα.

Στὴν κάθε σου δυσκολία καὶ μπλέξιμο λογισμῶν τρέχε στὸν πνευματικὸ σου, νὰ σὲ ξεμπλέξει μετὰ τὴν ἐμπειρία του καὶ τὴν φώτισή του. Καὶ μόνον μετὰ τὴν ἐξομολόγησι θὰ νοιώσεις ἐλάφρωση καὶ ἀναπτέρωση.

Μετὰ ἀνύστακτες εὐχοῦλες καὶ ἀγάπη σὲ χαιρετῶ.

Ὁ ἐλάχιστος,

+ Γ. Ἐφραῖμ



**Ο**που ὑπάρχει θεῖα χάρις δὲν κρύβεται, γιατί ἀκτινοβολεῖ. Ὁ χαριτωμένος ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Θεοῦ, μεταδίδει τὴ θεῖα Χάρις καὶ ἀλλοιώνει τοὺς σαρκικοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

**Ἡ** πνευματικὴ ἐργασία στὸν ἑαυτό μας εἶναι ἀθόρυβη ἐργασία στὸν πλησίον, γιατί μιλάει τὸ παράδειγμα καὶ τότε τὸν μιμῶνται οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ διορθώνονται. Ἀπὸ πνευματικὰ κεφάλαιο παίρνουμε τοὺς πνευματικοὺς τόκους καὶ συντηροῦμαστε.

**Υ**πάρχουν ἄνθρωποι ποὺ τὸ νὰ μὴν ἁμαρτήσουν τὸ θεωροῦν προσβολὴ τὴν ἁμαρτία τὴ θεωροῦν πρόοδο καὶ τὴν ἠθικὴ κατεστημένο. Γιατί ἡ ἁμαρτία ἔχει γίνε μόδα...

**Γέρον Παΐσιος ὁ Ἀθωνίτης (+1994)**

## THE VOICE OF ORTHODOXY: METROPOLITAN SERAPHIM OF PIRAEUS

*By Protopresbyter Theodoros Zisis, professor of the Theological School of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, From the Greek Orthodox magazine "Theodromia" (Θεοδρομία), June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (the article was initially composed in 2007). Translated by the Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros (Melissochori, Thessaloniki, Greece) and edited for clarification by the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.*

For decades now the pan-heresy of Ecumenism infects the Orthodox faith and life. The shepherds, the guardians of the flock who should be alert and chase away the wolves of the papist and protestant heresies, many of them keep silent and hide, either out of fear and cowardice or so that they may not fall in disfavor of the powerful, while others have succumbed to the heresies and like wolves in sheepskins spiritually maul the flock. Many presbyters and monks have assumed the protection of the faith but so has the flock itself as well, all of them with spectacular candor. This is not, however, the first time in the history of the Church that the flock proved more prudent than its shepherds, being invisibly shepherded by the chief shepherd, Christ, Who, by the way, installed the shepherds, not to devour but to protect the flock, not to usurp the hierarchal grace for their benefit but to even sacrifice their life as He did for the salvation of the sheep. The good shepherd does not leave when he sees the wolf approaching, and even more so he does not join the wolves but *lays down his life for the sheep.* (Jn 10:15).

The sacrificial prototype of the Great Shepherd Christ, was followed by the Apostles and the Holy Church Fathers, who were expended and martyred, either struggling against the heresies of their time, or against internal distortions and forgeries of the evangelical ascetic ethos. One such example is the great Holy Father and Teacher John Chrysostom, whom not too long ago we celebrated the 1600<sup>th</sup> year of his martyrdom and heroic repose on his way to exile (407-2007).

This teaching of the holy bishops, strugglers and early fighters of the faith was never interrupted in the two thousand year march of the Church to conspicuously establish that there is an uninterrupted apostolic succession, not only in the positions and administration, but especially in the faith and life as we sing in the dismissal of the holy hieromartyrs. *As a sharer of the ways and a successor to the throne of the Apostles, O inspired of God, you found discipline to be a means of ascent to divine vision. Wherefore, having rightly divided the word of truth, you also contested for the Faith even unto blood, O Hieromartyr...* Following the natural silence (due to old age) of the great metropolitan Augustine Kantiotis of Florina (+2010, *Ed.*), in this apostolic and patristic nature of our times, we all wonder about the almost complete absence of courageous

and activist bishops. There is no Kantiotis. When would at last be heard a bold, strong and loud voice of Orthodoxy, to scare the croaking frogs in the stagnant disease-bearing waters of the Ecumenical heresy? There were of course some voices of a handful of bishops who supported and fed this hope of becoming more vociferous; these voices were heard even by the wolves and caused them to flee, while encouragement spread among the sheep.

God heard the warm and hearty prayers of countless faithful as they all prayed for a change to this climate of silence and fright under which "fear overshadowed everything and the people were squashed by slavery." The impossible He makes possible, even when the turnover of conditions seems humanly impossible. *The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.* (1 Sam 2:4). The powerful weakened but it was preordained by God that a loud Orthodox voice of an even young bishop be heard. This voice was the voice of the Metropolitan of Piraeus, the Most Reverend Seraphim. He amazed and pleased us all with everything he wrote, as reported to archimandrite Marko Manoli, this unshakeable and great fighter of Orthodoxy, a spiritual and elder of the "Panhellenic Orthodox Union" and also spiritual overseer of the "Orthodox Press" (Ὁρθοδόξου Τύπος). Whatever he writes and declares is the Faith, the voice, the teaching of the Holy Fathers and the self-consciousness of the Church.

He comprehends, accepts and declares that "the comparative funnel of Ecumenism, as expressed today by the World Council of the so called churches as well as the diverse multinational forums, deceive and debase the Christian revelation and make the message of salvation worldly, rendering it into a morality deprived of the life, grace and power of God. In the final end this effort is just one more hopeless attempt by the dragon of the abyss to neutralize the crucifixion and resurrection message of life of the Apostolic Catholic Church." Ecumenism is thus a comparative pan-heresy, the "churches" of the World Council are called churches when they are not, and the associated display of events, gatherings and overall ecumenical efforts are the direct off-spring of the devil. The opposition towards these works of darkness is truly Seraphimic, angelic.

Apostolic and patristic, powerful and true are all of the declarations made through the powerful voice of this Orthodox bishop about the heresy of Papism. He writes that having separated from the Church it (Papism) lost the divine grace, causing it to fall into multiple heresies, bringing about the adulteration and disfigurement of Christianity thus becoming the cause and foundation of atheism in Europe. The metropolitan forestalls the papist declaration of July, that the papist "church" is the only authentic church and asserts that this applies only to the Orthodox Church. And, for the first time in the last several years, we hear from the

mouth of an Orthodox bishop a strong recommendation for our departure away from the theological dialogues of the great pan-heresy of ecumenism.

He writes: “Humbly, I am of the opinion that our mother, the Holy Orthodox Church, as the only true and historically continuous and undivided Church, ought to declare *urbi et orbi* the truth and surety of her self-consciousness through her documented positions and texts. (*urbi et orbi* denotes a hierarchal address or apostolic blessing given to the City of Rome and to the entire world on certain occasions. It was a standard opening of Ancient Roman proclamations; *Ed.*). Following this, She ought to depart from the said dialogues that provide an alibi, unfortunately, to the leaders and subordinates of all these who live within such heresy as well as those that are subjugated under the shadow of death. And in turn, all of them must be invited to join Her, through words and deeds and true evangelical living, so that all those residing outside the salvific Orthodox Faith return to the common millennium that has apostolically delivered Truth, while all others may rediscover the salvation and the conquering of death through the resurrection, the most valuable and fragrant blessing that emanates from our Holy Orthodox Tradition.”

Such a salvific declaration and soul-cleansing solution, if adopted and acted upon by the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece, will heal the wounds of the Old Calendarism; will quiet down and spread calm among the faithful who agonize over the direction of the Holy Church’s path and the right-mindedness of Her bishops; and it will, most certainly, arouse a problematic uneasiness among the heterodox and guide them towards a healthy uneasiness towards a true path to salvation.

We appreciate that the Metropolitan’s voice was indeed recognized by the heretical Latins as very powerful. Thus, in fear of the potential losses which they could realize by the suggested change of direction for the Church of Greece towards ecumenism, the Pope went on to immediately declare that “Papism is the only authentic Church and that, although the Orthodox Churches had some elements of ecclesiology, they were lacking and were defective and deficient because they do not recognize the supremacy of the Pope, and as such, ‘they do not offer salvation.’” The resonance and significance of the positions taken by the Metropolitan of Piraeus were also exemplified through the actions of the papists in Greece; being quite disturbed by these statements, they composed several letters to Metropolitan Seraphim (through their “catholic” bishop of Syros, Fransiscan Papanoli), expressing their sadness and appealing that he set aside and nullify what was written. These letters are of special interest since, through them, the Latins expose both the papist mentality as well as the lack of repentance towards their many heretical positions.

The response by the Metropolitan of Piraeus to the papist “bishop” is significantly more interesting; within his response, bishop Seraphim, with apostolic outspokenness and patristic frankness, identifies papism as a simple “religious community” that has absolutely no relationship with the Church of Christ due to her numerous heresies and deceits. And, in a personal manner as well as at a brotherly level, he points out to the Latin leader that he is not a bishop of the church but instead just “spiritually responsible for the schismatic and heretical practicing faithful of your community.” Finally, after he most successfully refutes all of the Papist “bishop’s” claims, he advises him to return to the Orthodox Catholic Church. “In closing, I ask your word that you will abandon the false Latin faith and that you will return to the Undivided Catholic Church of the first thousand years, whose Faith, Theology, Asceticism, Spirituality, Governance, Truth and Tradition are being declared unchanged and absent of novelty and innovations, through the many ages of Her historic continuity, by the Orthodox Catholic Church. Expel from your eyes the dimness of the thousand years’ errant life and rejoin the One Holy Apostolic and Indivisible Church, of which the *gates of Hades will not overcome*, so that you may return to the One and Only Body of Christ and find His Mercy and Grace.”

Has a more authentic, patristic, daring and courageous voice been heard by anyone in the last decades from a bishop? As of lately, many clerics and monastics are considering of directing the Greek bishops, through an article, to assume their responsibility and decide through a properly called synod whether: (1) Papism is a Church or a heresy, (2) if Ecumenism is justified ecclesiologically, and (3) to ask them that the Church of Greece depart from the Ecumenical Council of the so called churches. The text has already been composed by the Metropolitan of Piraeus. We place our signature upon this text with pleasure, together with the hands of thousands of clerics, monastics and laity, and we believe among them will be many bishops.

We shall await for the properly executed synodic ratification of the indisputable and truly Orthodox positions that it will express. No matter what the follow-on course of events end up being, we *are pleased and joyful* as we witness the sunrise of the victory of Orthodoxy towards the panheresy of Ecumenism. We are equally grateful that we now have anti-heretical Orthodox bishops, and we are not without any bishops who support our cause, as the Ecumenists often exclaim within and outside of the their heretical circles. We thank and glorify the Trinitarian God for bringing forth new confessors of the faith and we repeat the supplication of the divine liturgy: *First remember Lord the bishop of Piraeus Seraphim, grant that he may serve Your holy churches in peace. Keep him safe, honorable, and healthy for many years, rightly teaching the word of Your truth.*



## TALKING ABOUT THE DEVIL

By Thomas Shaw, January 1999, originally published in "The Orthodox Reader," re-posted at the web pages of "Discerning Thoughts."

Two decades ago, while still a young Orthodox Christian, I had the privilege of hearing Fr. Alexander Schmemmann speak. I cannot clearly remember now the topic of his talk, but one sentence still rings in my ears: "What surprises those in the Ecumenical Movement is that while they are discussing the great project of unification of the churches, the Orthodox are still talking about the Devil."

Orthodoxy is still talking about the Devil because we continue to see his effect on the culture around us and we continue to experience his war upon the Church. Because we are engaged in this unseen warfare, Orthodox theology has always been dynamic. Each generation must discover the truths of the Holy Tradition anew, and in that process of discovery there will be differing understandings of the content of the Tradition. This dynamism has always brought forth controversial theologians within the Church. They are those who step outside the safe formulas and attempt to rephrase the Tradition using unfamiliar guideposts.

One such theologian is Fr. John Romanides. His work, in contrast to today's micro-specialist, presents a strong unified thesis that he applies over vast periods of time and place. His boldness is dismissed as simplistic and overly dogmatic by some. I first encountered Fr. Romanides as a student of theology at the University of Thessaloniki. I was in the last course he taught in Orthodox Dogmatics before his retirement. I took classes from him for three years and have read most of his works, including *Franks, Romanism, Feudalism and Doctrine* (available from Holy Cross Theological School).

Fr. Romanides is every bit the absentminded professor. His nickname at Holy Cross was Fr. Midnight because he seemed so unaware of his surroundings when he talked. He would always begin a lecture the same way. Sitting down, he would speak in a soft, almost inaudible, voice. Beginning almost in mid-thought, it seemed as if the lecture were already going on in his head. As he warmed to his subject his voice would raise and his eyes would flash. Sometimes he would become very quiet and would even seem to nod off for brief periods. His lectures were always well attended because he was a man with something to say.

It seemed odd that even though his area of expertise was dogmatics, his lectures always seemed to be history. The details of the goings-on in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century France and Italy were constantly being related, or the details of 18<sup>th</sup> century France and Russia. He was criticized for this. After all, he was not a trained historian! But as a patristic theologian,

he taught that the Fathers cannot be understood without understanding their history.

Fr. Romanides has an overarching thesis: the purpose of the Church is to heal man of spiritual illness brought on by the Fall (this spiritual illness is characterized by the quest for happiness) and enable him to know God. His secondary thesis is that dogmatic controversies throughout the history of the Church are caused by those who do not understand the function of the Church as a spiritual hospital. Thus, the real difference with the West is their loss of this understanding which occurred because **the Western ecclesiastical institutions were subverted by political forces into mere political institutions**. As political institutions they became concerned with man's happiness instead of his glorification; with mere forgiveness of sins rather than purification.

It is this thesis that is controversial. It is accepted in ecumenical circles that the explanation of the schism of East and West is cultural. According to this concept, the Western, Latin-speaking, Roman Church and the Eastern, Greek-speaking, Byzantine Church became estranged due to cultural and political factors. The essential elements of the

**B**eing a theologian means first and foremost that someone is an expert in the wiles of the devil.

**Fr. John Romanides(+2001)**

"undivided Church" remain the same in both East and West. The task of ecumenical theology is to regain this lost common understanding.

Romanides' thesis attacks these concepts. There never was a "Byzantine" Empire. This was an invention of 18<sup>th</sup> century Western historians. The Roman political institutions remained intact from the founding of New Rome, Constantinople, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century to its fall in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Romanides, then, tells a different story. Not the story of the Greek East and the Latin West, but the story of Romans and Franks. His is a story not of people drifting apart, but of the Romans struggling to assert the truths of Orthodoxy even when faced with impossible opposition. His understanding of the crucial centuries leading up to the schism and the crusades is one of the systematic subjections of the Roman population of the West to the Frankish overlords who eventually were able to capture even the Roman papacy and conform it to their feudalistic scheme.

The truth of his thesis is captured in our language, where *franchise* (to have the rights of a Frank) means to be able to vote, and *villain* (Roman town dwellers) means an evil man. It was not the Roman Empire in the East that was estranged from its roots and traditions, but the Roman Empire in the West which was replaced with feudalism. So, while other theologians discuss the great project of unifying the churches, Romanides keeps talking about the Devil. It is the story of warfare, seen and unseen. It is the story of the Babylonian Captivity of the Church in the West and the threat to us as Orthodox if we do not understand our history,

our heritage, and our Holy Tradition rightly. If we allow the Holy Orthodox Church to become a religion, we will be playing the Devil's own game and will subject ourselves to our overlords without a peep.

Because of the controversy surrounding Romanides' secondary thesis, many lose track of his first and primary thesis. Let Fr. John state it himself:

"We are obliged to have a clear picture of the context within which the Church and the State viewed the contribution of the glorified to the cure of the sickness of religion which warps the human personality by means of its search for happiness both in this life and after the death of the body. It is within this context that the Roman Empire legally incorporated the Orthodox Church into its administrative structure. Neither the State nor the Church saw the mission of the Church as the simple forgiveness of sins of the faithful for their entrance into heaven in the next life... Both the Church and State knew well that the forgiveness of sins was only the beginning of the cure of the happiness-seeking sickness of humanity. This cure begins by the purification of the heart, it arrives at the restoration of the heart to its natural state of illumination and the whole person begins to be perfected beyond one's natural capacities by the glorification of body and soul by God's uncreated glory. The result of this cure and perfection was not only the proper preparation for life after the death of one's body, but also the transformation of society here and now from a collection of selfish and self-centered individuals to a society of persons with selfless love *which does not seek its own.*"



The absence of true pastoral care on the part of the shepherds is a cause of doctrinal divergence, delusion, and heresy.

Since the majority of people thirst for religious instruction and those responsible and competent do little to meet this need by drawing on pure and Orthodox sources rather than foreign and distorted ones, it was only to be expected that many pious and well-intentioned people would be misled, in good faith, on hearing the Christian doctrine, albeit adulterated, wherever this is preached, because when the springs and fountains grow cloudy, with those in authority concealing the clear spring waters, men and beasts, dying of thirst, will prefer to drink from the cloudy stream, finding some slight hope of deliverance in this, rather than die of thirst...

**Alexandros Papadiamantis**

From "*Greece's Dostoevsky: The Theological Vision of Alexandros Papadiamantis*" (ch. 2, pg. 72)

## LET US LAY ASIDE ALL EARTHLY CARE

From "*Life of St. Papa-Nicholas Planas.*"



One day, after the Liturgy, we took a carriage and went somewhere together with Father (Fr. Nicholas Planas, *Ed.*). In the carriage he said to us:

"Today Chrysoula was also in church."

"No, my Father," we said to him, "she wasn't."

"Why, what are you saying? I censured her." He responded.

"No," we repeated, "she wasn't there."

"Oh, well," he said without any concern, and then with conviction, "it was her spirit."

We wondered at what he told us, because the same thing had occurred at a certain monastery, where the priest censured the stall of an absent deacon and would not censure a monk who was in his stall. The monk wondered about this and complained to the priest; how did he omit to censure him, even though he passed in front of him, and yet censured the empty stall? And thus the priest was given an opportunity to hear the confessions of both, that is, what thoughts they had during the Liturgy. The monk confessed that his mind ran towards thoughts which were sinful and far removed from his sacred calling. Whereas the poor deacon, even though he had undertaken a duty outside of the church, kept his mind present in church.

For this reason we also asked the sister (Chrysoula, to whom Fr. Nicholas had referred to, *Ed.*) what she had been thinking of during the previous day, and she said (with great simplicity, for she was illiterate) that her mind and soul had been present at the Divine Liturgy. Her hands were weaving, but her mind was wholly in church. This was why Father Nicholas saw her, and censured her, and without hesitation said that it was her spirit.

Let us also take care when we are in church. Is our spirit also present along with us? The Church cries out with her compunctionate hymn: *Let us lay aside all earthly care*, etc. Do we hear, or does each one of us bring many thoughts unsuitable for the place in which we are present? It is a sad thing that we cannot become masters of the spirit, to control it, to command it to think upon the Heavenly Mystery: the descent of the Lord during the solemn hour of the Liturgy, etc. Whereas we see a simple soul who, even though in reality she was doing other pressing and earthly chores, noetically was found present in church.

## GOD'S ANOINTED SUFFERER: TSAR-MARTYR NICHOLAS II [FEASTDAY JULY 4/17]

From the ROCA parish of St. Nicholas, in Endicott, NY (<http://www.stnicholasendicott.org/>).

*The battle against Tsar Nicholas II was clearly bound up with the battle against God and faith... He became a Martyr, having remained faithful to the Ruler of those who rule, and accepted death in the same way as the martyrs accepted it.*

St. John (Maximovitch) the Wonderworker (+1966)

† † †



Very soon after Russia accepted the seed of the Gospel (in the year 988) her soil was sanctified by the blood of martyrs. The pure young sons of Grand Duke Vladimir, Boris and Gleb, accepted death at the hands of a political assassin in order to save their people from civil war and terrible upheaval. They became *sufferers for righteousness* (1 Pet 3:14); being conformed to the innocent suf-

fering of Christ, they became true *Passion-Bearers*.

As in the beginning of Holy Russia, so at the end: it pleased God to reveal Himself to the Russian people through the innocent suffering of Sts. Boris and Gleb; now, in these latter times, He had again unveiled Himself through the purifying suffering of a Tsar, the Anointed of God and supreme protector of Christ's Church in Russia, Nicholas II.

Western writers do not understand Orthodox monarchy. And because America rebelled against the King of England, Americans in particular have no sympathy for the idea of Monarchy. Indeed, it is almost a sacred tradition to applaud any nation that "comes to its senses" and overthrows its king! The Tsars of Russia are viewed in this same man-centered, rather than God-centered, light.

However, in Orthodox Russia there once existed a society composed not of "church and state" (such as existed in medieval Europe) but of "government and priesthood"—a holy commonwealth. The Tsar was never placed outside the Church or "above the law," but always within the Church and subject to the Law of Christ. He was very much the "servant of the Gospel;" he was required to live by it and rule by it in order to be worthy of the blessings of God upon himself, his family, and his nation. Such a righteous father to his people was the last Tsar, Nicholas II. And now, in this year of grace, 1981, in spite of more than 60 years of Marxist deception, it pleases God to reveal Nicholas and those that suffered with

him, to the Church and to the whole world (if only the world will hear it!).

Blessed Archbishop John Maximovitch has written: *Why was Tsar Nicholas II persecuted, slandered, and killed? Because he was Tsar, Tsar by the Grace of God. He was the bearer and incarnation of the Orthodox worldview that the Tsar is the servant of God, the Anointed of God, and that to Him he must give an account for the people entrusted to him by destiny..*

In Orthodox teaching, Tsar Nicholas was the last representative of lawful Christian authority in the world, the last one to restrain the *mystery of iniquity*. (2 Thess 2:7). (And, indeed, from the time of his martyrdom can be dated the unprecedented lawlessness, godlessness, and apostasy of this final age: the complete unleashing of the forces of darkness, which now threaten to completely engulf the world as a preparation for the reign of the Antichrist).

An Orthodox monarch receives his authority from God, but by what means and in what manner does it come to him? Authority to govern in the Name of God and perform the highest earthly ministry descends upon a Tsar in the Sacrament of Anointing, at the time of his coronation. After the crowning, he is told that *this visible and material adornment of thy head is to thee a manifest sign that the King of Glory, Christ, invisibly crowneth thee*. The Anointing takes place after the reading of the Gospel in Divine Liturgy. The chief hierarch anoints the Tsar with Holy Chrism on the brow, eyes, nostrils, lips, ears, breast, and hands, saying each time: *The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit*.

Thus, Nicholas II received his authority through a Sacrament. The Holy Spirit was upon him! *By rejecting the Tsar, the people blasphemed the Sacrament and trampled upon the grace of God.* (Illustrated History of the Russian People).

In 1917, Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow saw in a vision the Savior speaking to Tsar Nicholas: *You see, said the Lord, two cups in my hands: one is bitter for your people, and the other is sweet for you*. In the vision, the Tsar begged for the bitter cup. The Savior then took a large glowing coal from the cup and put it in the Tsar's hands. The Tsar's whole body then began to grow light, until he was shining like a radiant spirit. Then the vision changed to a field of flowers, in the middle of which Nicholas was distributing manna to a multitude of people. A voice spoke: *The Tsar has taken the guilt of the Russian people upon himself and the Russian people is forgiven*. Nicholas himself once said: *Perhaps an expiatory sacrifice is needed for Russia's salvation. I will be that sacrifice. May God's will be done!*

He had a very strong sense of his destiny as an Orthodox ruler. Although he had an opportunity to flee the country with his family and seek refuge outside Russia, he and his Empress deliberately chose to stay and accept whatever awaited them. He had been born on the feast of the Prophet Job and because of this he often remarked to his advisors: *I have a secret*



*conviction that I am destined for a terrible trial, that I shall not receive my reward on this earth.* No wonder that our Russian Bishops Abroad wrote (in 1968): “Job the Much-Suffering, on the day of whose commemoration the Tsar was born, said in his grievous suffering, concerning the day of his conception: *As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year.* (Job 3:6). Terrible was the night of the murder of the Tsar!”

On that unspeakable night, “the prisoners were all in a deep sleep when they were awakened and ordered to dress in order to leave the city... The Imperial Family descended to the basement where the Sovereign sat down, with his ill son, on a chair in the middle of the room. The Duchesses, the doctor, and three dedicated servants were seated around him. Everyone was waiting for the signal to depart. At the executioner’s announcement (which stunned all the prisoners) of the impending execution, the Empress succeeded in crossing herself. She was killed instantly, together with the Sovereign. God spared them from hearing the groans of the Tsarevitch and the cries of the wounded Grand Duchess Anastasia. The first bullets did not bring death to the youngest ones and they were savagely killed with blows of bayonets and gun butts and with shots at point-blank range. The most innocent and holy had suffered the greatest torture.” (Illustrated Russian History).

In the words of Fr. Dimitry Dudko, one of the first of that wave of modern confessors to speak out against the betrayal of the Church in Russia: *The Tsar is a saint and, moreover, one of the greatest saints. O great saint of Russia, Great-Martyr Nicholas, pray to God for us!*

† † †

St. Seraphim prophesied in clear words about the tragic fate foreordained by God for the Tsar who would be present at the Sarov solemnity of faith, when there would be Pascha in the midst of summer (the glorification of St. Seraphim in 1903). According to his prophecy, if there would be repentance in the Russian people, God would yet have mercy on her, but first He would allow for a time the triumph of lawless men: the Tsar would be overthrown and killed, so that the people might know in experience what life was like under the Tsar anointed by God, and under the rule of men who have trampled underfoot the law of God. St. Seraphim, by revelation from God, wrote in his own hand a letter to the Tsar who would come to Sarov and Diveyevo, entrusting it to his friend Motovilov, who gave it to Abbess Maria, who in turn handed it personally to Emperor Nicholas II in Diveyevo on July 20, 1903. What was written in the letter remains a secret, but one can suppose that the holy elder saw all that was to happen and warned against the frightful events to come...

Abbot Seraphim, Peking, 1920  
Orthodox Russia, 1981, No.1

## ON FALSE TEACHERS

By St. Nikolai Velimirovic (+1956).

Man is at war in this world. Continual is the battle and numerous are the enemies. Among the most dangerous enemies belong the false teachers. Only if the mind of man is directed toward the Living God will he be safeguarded from these dangerous enemies.

False teachers are either as blind men or as thieves; first, because of their blindness they lead both themselves and others into destruction and second, because of their hatred and envy they intentionally lead others astray, and hand over both their souls and bodies to the fires of hell.

The Lord Himself prophesied: *Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many!* (Mt 24:11). The apostle only confirms the words of his Lord. Both false prophets and false teachers will sow the seed of destruction among the people. These are “damnable heresies” by which some will deny their Lord Who redeemed mankind by His All-pure Holy Blood.

Many false teachers have already appeared and have sown many heresies, damnable as tares, throughout the world. Brethren, if you know those “damnable heresies” which the Holy Fathers condemned at the [Ecumenical] Councils, then you will be able to recognize the principle seed of poison, which the devil through his servants sow in the field, over which the Savior had sown pure wheat. But even if you know or, if you do not know, direct your mind toward the Lord, enclose your mind with the sign of the Cross, call to your assistance the Holy and All-immaculate One, the Theotokos, the chosen ones of God, and especially your guardian angel and do not be afraid. Along with these always ask the Church, and the Church, being more experienced and victorious against all falsehoods, will tell you what the truth is. For you are from yesterday and the Church is from time immemorial. Your memory is shorter than the memory of the Church:

*O Lord Jesus, Thou art the only Path, the only Truth, the only Life. O Lord, do not permit that we be led by false teachers and to apostate ourselves from Thee. To Thee be glory and thanks always. Amen.*

To this should be added what St. Vincent of Lerins said in the 5<sup>th</sup> century: *All possible care must be taken that we hold that Faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all.*

How does Ecumenism measure up to this standard? It doesn’t. From a historical point of view, at least, one can assuredly say that Ecumenism was believed nowhere, never, by no one. St. Vincent provides us with a truly Orthodox understanding of the true Catholic Faith in its response to a widespread, but erroneous doctrine: *What if some novel contagion seek to infect not merely an insignificant portion of the Church, but the whole? Then it will be the Christian’s care to cleave to antiquity [i.e. the Church’s ancient teaching], which at this day cannot possibly be seduced by any fraud of novelty.*

## A CASE OF OBEDIENCE

*A selection from the book "The Life and Instructions of Saint Ambrose of Optina."*

Not long before the repose of Elder Ambrose, about two years, I had to go to Optina to collect some money. We had made an *iconostasis* there, and I went to get the payment for our work, a rather substantial sum of money, from the superior. I received the money, and before leaving went to get a blessing from Elder Ambrose for the trip home. I was in a hurry to get back because the following day some people were coming to place a large order, amounting to several tens of thousands.

That day there was as usual a packed crowd of people waiting to see the Elder. He was told that I was waiting, and through his cell-attendant gave instructions that I was to come to him that evening for tea. Although I was anxious to get on my way, the joy and honor of being invited to have tea with the Elder outweighed all other considerations, and I decided to postpone my return trip until the evening, certain that if I travelled all night I would make it home in time.

Evening came and I went to the Elder's cell. He was so cheerful, so joyous: I scarcely felt the ground beneath my feet. Our Batiushka detained me quite a long time. It was already dusk when he said to me, "Well, go with God. Spend the night here and tomorrow I bless you to go to the Liturgy. Afterwards come here for a cup of tea."

How is this possible? I thought to myself. But I didn't venture to contradict the Elder. I spent the night, attended the Liturgy, and went to the Elder's for tea—all the while fretting over my customers. Still, I thought, I could make it back by evening and maybe they'll still be there. Don't bet on it! I finished drinking tea and wanted to say to the Elder, "Bless me to go home," but I didn't have a chance to say a word. "Come tonight," he said, "and spend the night with me." I felt as though my legs were about to give way but still I couldn't bring myself to object.

A day went by, and the night. In the morning I felt bolder and I made up my mind, "Come what may, today I'm leaving. Who knows, maybe my customers waited a day for me." But just imagine! The Elder didn't give me time even to open my mouth before he said to me, "Go to Vespers tonight, and tomorrow to Liturgy. Spend the night with me again tonight!" Was he playing games with me? At this point I was really annoyed and, I have to admit, I even sinned against the Elder. Some clairvoyant, I thought. He's sure to know that thanks to his kindness I've missed a really good

deal. That evening at Vespers I was in no mood to pray. Knocking about in my head were thoughts like "That's your elder for you! That's your clairvoyant! Your income has gone whistling." I was really in a temper.

As if to compound my sin, the Elder, as if—forgive me Lord—to mock me, greeted me after Vespers with such joy. I felt offended, bitter. In the same mood I spent a third night. That night my distress gradually calmed down: water under the bridge. In the morning I came to the Elder. "Well, it's high time you went home. Go with God! God bless you! And in time don't forget to thank Him!"

Here all my distress simply melted away. Leaving Optina, I felt so light-hearted, so joyful that it's impossible to describe. But what did Batiushka mean, "In time don't forget to thank God"? It must be, I thought, because I was granted to attend the Divine Liturgy three days in a row. I didn't even rush home, nor did I give a thought to my customers. I was so grateful that Batiushka had spent so much time with me. I arrived home, and what do you suppose? No sooner had I passed through the gates than my customers rode in after me. They were three days late for our scheduled appointment!

But wait, this isn't the end of the story. Just listen what happened later. Time passed. Our dear Elder Ambrose died. Some two years after his righteous repose my senior workman died. He was a trustworthy fellow; I wouldn't even call him a worker: he was pure gold. He lived with me for more than twenty years. Then he became ill unto death. We sent for a priest, so that he could have Confession and receive the Mysteries while he was still conscious.

Then, from the bed of the dying man the priest comes to me and says, "The sick man is calling for you; he wants to see you. Hurry, before he dies!"

I go into his room and he, as soon as he sees me, with difficulty props himself up on his elbows, looks at me, and sobs: "Forgive my sin, master! I wanted to kill you!" "God be with you, my dear fellow! What are you saying? You're raving!" "No, boss, I really did want to kill you. Do you remember when you were three days late in returning from Optina? Three of us, according to my plan, waited for three days to ambush you from under the bridge. We were greedy for the money you were bringing from Optina in payment for the *iconostasis*. You would have lost your life that night, were it not that the Lord, on account of someone's prayers, saved you from death without repentance. Forgive me, the sinner. For God's sake let my soul depart in peace." "May God forgive you, as I forgive!"

The sick man groaned, and died. God rest his soul...



## THE REALITY OF OUR CONTEMPORARY WESTERN WORLD

*An excerpt from "Against False Union" by Dr. Alexander Kalomiros (published in 1990).*

### Contemporary Idolatry

And now let us see who are those Europeans with whom they want us to be united as a state and as a Church?

A frightening antinomy characterizes the Europeans: it is the antithesis between the inward and outward man. The European appears to be one thing, but is really something else. He lives and moves in the falsehood of compromises. His entire culture is a collection of conventional lies to which he has adapted himself. He is extremely egocentric, but he conducts himself with absolute and almost exaggerated courtesy.

In the "underdeveloped" countries where the people still lack the finesse of European culture, everyone more or less expresses his inner world with some freedom and simplicity which you cannot find in Europe. Their manners are coarse, but the people are more genuine. In Europe this is considered a lack of culture and spiritual development.

In this way, the constant game of hypocrisy has come to be regarded as culture, where the white-washed tombs are full of stench, and the outside of the cup always cleaned for the sake of the appearance to the people.

But as it happens with Pharisees, that constant lie in which they live does not humble them. On the contrary, their outward perfection makes them certain of their superiority. The most characteristic mark of the Europeans is their conceit. They look down upon all the people whom they consider uncultured or underdeveloped.

A few of them might have a great concern for the needs of others, of persons, of groups, or even of nations, and especially the underdeveloped ones, towards whom they nurture compassionate sentiments, but deep down they are concerned for others the way an entomologist is concerned for insects. The sentiments they nurture for people are inferior to the love they have for their dogs.

They have the same high idea of their civilization as they have of themselves. Having critical minds, they do not accept anything unquestioned, and are proud of it. They consider all values relative, even those which they accept; and they discuss with apparent profundity all that humanity has ever believed. Their customary position is that of well-disposed agnostics who are willing to agree with whatever you tell them, but let you understand that, of course, there is no way of proving anything you say, and therefore, it leaves them neither hot nor cold.

One thing, though, which these agnostics never think of doubting is the value of their own civilization. For them there never arose a higher civilization than their own. There might be sharp criticism about particular cultural problems and great

disagreements over details, but the soundness of their culture's general direction has never been questioned.

The civilization of Europe is based upon a religion, but upon a religion which no one wishes to name as such, because this religion is not the worship of one or many gods, but the worship of man.

The religion of the ancient Greeks and their civilization was nothing else than the worship of man. If the civilization of ancient Greece found such a good reception in the hearts of Europeans, one can attribute it exactly to this inward kinship.

Like the ancient Greeks, the Europeans deified man's reason, his passions, the powers and weaknesses of his soul; in a word, they made man the center, measure, and purpose of all things. The culture of Europe proceeds from man; it exists for man; and it receives its justification from man. There might be disagreements about the ways in which the improvement of man's life may be attained; there might be differences in the manner of worshipping man; there might be different conclusions drawn from man's measurement; but for all and always, man is the center around which they revolve, the source of their inspiration and purpose of their actions.

This is the European. Whatever religion he thinks he might have, deep down his religion is the worship of the idol "man." The European has ceased to see the image of God in man; he sees only the image of himself. In other words, the religion of Europe is the old religion of humanity, the one which separated man from God. God's purpose is to deify man. But man, deceived by the devil, thought that he could become god without the grace of his Creator, on his own initiative and with only his own powers. He rushed to eat of the tree of knowledge before he was mature enough for such food.

The result was that his eyes were opened to know good and evil, to see his bodily and spiritual nakedness, and he was shocked. He could no longer bear to face his Lord and God, and he ran to hide from His face. He realized that a great chasm had been opened between him and his Creator. Then, his merciful Father cursed the first cause of his destruction, the devil—"that old serpent"—and in His infinite love even promised salvation: *And I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman [the all-holy Virgin], and between thy seed and her seed [Christ]; and he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* (Gen 3:15). And in order that man should not live eternally in that condition of spiritual death, He cast him out of Paradise, *that he should not extend his hand and take from the tree of life and eat and live unto the ages.* (Gen 3:22). Thus, out of His compassion and love, God permitted bodily death and corruption, which, like spiritual death, was the result of the broken communion with the Source of life, so that man would not carry about through the ages his spiritual death, misfortune, and nakedness. And man, being separated from God and living in the constant reality of death, became a slave to the devil.



It was, therefore, as a reaction to the experience of his own nothingness that man worshipped man, proclaiming him god. In fact, the ancients taught that the human soul is a part of the divine nature, in other words, that it is divine in essence and therefore has no need of God.

This inward will of man to believe in his own divinity, together with the fact of his submission to the demonic powers, is the basis of every form of idolatry. The religion of Europe, then, is none other than that primordial idolatry in modern form. **Papacy, Protestantism, humanism, atheism, democracy, fascism, capitalism, communism, and anything else European, are expressions of the same humanistic spirit.**

The civilization of Europe is nothing but the result of man's agonized and persistent effort to place his throne above the throne of God. It is nothing but the erection of a new tower of Babel; confusion about the method of erection may prevail, but the goal remains common for all concerned. The ideal of the European is identical with the ideal of Lucifer. Deep down, it is the same contempt for the goodness of God, the same insult against His love, the same revolt and estrangement from His providence, the same ingratitude, the same desolate path which, instead of leading upward as man thinks he is going, leads to the abyss of death.

#### **With the Cross As Banner**

But the real religion of Europe is concealed and appears formally with a Christian mask. For all the world, Europe is a "Christian land." The devil is truly the clever one par excellence, and his jests have the most tragic consequences for humanity.

The greatest evil which ever befell the world had the Cross as a banner. The Aristotelianism of Western theologians and their discipleship to the idolatrous rationalistic thought of ancient Greece, the transformation of theology into philosophy, the adulteration of the Faith, the Papacy, the thirst for power and worldly authority, the Crusades, the mixing of religion with politics, the Inquisition, the missions which proved to be advance guards for colonizing powers, conquests, wars, the systematic blood-sucking of nations, orgies, frauds, humiliations, and tyranny took place in the name of the Crucified One.

In the face of this tragic deterioration of religion, it was natural that atheism and Protestantism should spring up as an aspiration for deliverance and health. One should note that the atheism which appeared in Europe was not just an indifference, or agnosticism, or a simple epicurean disposition. The atheism of Europe was not an academic denial. It was a strong hate for the God of the Christians as they had come to know Him in Europe; it was a strong passion, a blasphemy, an indignation of the human soul.

In the Orthodox Christian East, from the time of Constantine the Great until the Greek Revolution, such epidemics never appeared. The people of the East had come to know a God completely different from the god which the people of

the West had known; that is why they never came to deny Him, no matter how sinful they were. The first atheists in Greece came from Europe. Their denial, without their even knowing it, was against the religion which they had come to know in Europe. Their atheism was nourished by the faults of the Christians and the adulteration of the Christian truth which had taken place in the West.

Similarly, Protestantism might appear to be a separate heresy. But in actuality, it originated as a rejection of Catholicism. Protestantism never had a religious position. On the contrary, it was and is a religious denial. What justifies it is the presence of Catholicism. If Catholicism would disappear, then Protestantism would have no reason for existence.

#### **The Way of Knowledge**

Today, atheism as well as Protestantism might be turned against Orthodoxy. But this assault is based on a deception. They detest Orthodoxy because they see her with their own criteria, with their own mentality. They see her as a variant of Catholicism. This is not due to an ill disposition on their part, but to a total inability to judge by other standards and to think with another mentality.

**Catholicism, Protestantism, and atheism are on the same level.** They are offsprings of the same mentality. All three are philosophical systems, offsprings of rationalism, that is, of the notion that human reason is the foundation of certainty, the measure of truth, and the way of knowledge.

Orthodoxy is on a completely different level. The Orthodox have a different mentality. They regard philosophy as a dead end which never led man to certainty, truth, and knowledge. They respect human reason as no one else, and they never violate it. They regard it as one of the useful factors in detecting falsehood and uncovering error. But they do not accept it as capable of giving man certainty, of enlightening him to see the truth, or guiding him to knowledge.

Knowledge is the vision of God and of His creation in a heart purified by divine grace and the struggles and prayers of man. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Truth is not a series of definitions, but God Himself, Who appeared concretely in the person of Christ, Who said: *I am the Truth.*

Certainty is not a matter of intellectual harmony; it is a deep assurance of the heart. It comes to man after inner vision and is accompanied by the warmth of divine grace. Intellectual harmony, which is the outcome of a logical ordering of things, is never accompanied by this assurance.

Philosophy is characterized by conceptualization. The human intellect cannot accept reality as it is. It transposes it first into symbols and then elaborates upon the symbols. But the symbols are counterfeit figures of reality. The concepts are as distant from reality as a picture of a fish from a live fish. The truth of the philosopher is a series of figures and images. These symbols present one great advantage; they are comprehensible. They are cut to man's measurements and satisfy the

intellect. But they also present a great disadvantage; they have no relation to living reality.

Living reality does not fit into the categories of the human intellect. It is a condition above reason. Philosophy is an attempt to transpose the suprarational into rational. But this is counterfeit and fraudulent. That is why Orthodoxy rejects philosophy and does not accept it as a way to knowledge.

The only way to knowledge is purity of heart. It alone permits the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in man. In this way alone is God and His whole creation known, without being conceptualized. He is known as He really is, without becoming comprehensible and without being diminished in order to fit into the stifling limits of the human intellect. Thus, the *nous* of man, living and uncomprehending, comes into union with the living and incomprehensible God. Knowledge is the living contact of man with the Creator and His creation, in mutual love.

The experience of knowledge is something which cannot be expressed in human words. When the Apostle Paul came to know, he said that he had heard unspeakable words—something which is impossible for man to express.

Such is the deeper Christian theology—inexpressible. Dogmas are helpful formulations. But they are not actual knowledge; they simply guide and protect from error. A man can have knowledge without knowing the dogmas, and he can know all the dogmas and accept them without having knowledge. This is why, beyond the affirmative theology of dogmas, the Fathers placed the deep mystery of negative theology where no definition is acceptable, where the mind is silent and ceases to move, where the heart opens its door to receive the Great Visitor *Who stands at the door and knocks*, where the mind sees Him Who Is. And let no one think that these things are true only in regard to the suprarational knowledge which is a movement of God towards man. Man can know nothing with his reason, and he can be certain of nothing—neither of himself, of the world, nor even of the most ordinary and common things.

Who honestly waited to hear Descartes' syllogism "I think, therefore I am" to be certain that he truly exists? And who waited for the philosophers to prove that the world around him is real in order to believe that it is? Besides, such a proof has never existed and will never exist, and they who are engaged in philosophy well know it. No one has ever been able to actually prove by his reason that our thoughts and our own selves, as well as the world around us, are not fantasies. But even if someone were to prove it logically, which is impossible, that logical proof would not be able to assure anyone.

If we are certain that we exist and that our friends are not figments of our imagination, this is not due to the proofs of the philosophers, but to an inward knowledge and an inward consciousness which gives us certainty of everything without syllogisms and proofs.

This is natural knowledge. It is the knowledge of the heart and not of the brain. It is the sure foundation for every thought. Reason can build upon it without fear of toppling. But without it, reason builds upon sand. It is this natural knowledge which guides man in the way of the Gospel and enables him to separate truth from falsehood, good from evil. It is the first step which raises man to the throne of God. When man with his free will ascends the first steps of natural knowledge, then God Himself leans over and covers him with that heavenly knowledge of the mysteries *which are not permitted for man to utter*.

The preaching of the Apostles and Fathers, the Prophets, and the Gospel, the words of Christ Himself, are directed to man's natural knowledge. This is the province of dogmas and affirmative theology. It is the manger where faith is born. The beginning of faith is the heart's ability to grasp that the truth speaks in the small book called the Gospel, that in that commonplace church of poor and faithful people, God descends and dwells. When fear takes hold of one because he steps on the earth which the hand of God laid out, because he gazes at the great and broad sea, because he walks and breathes, then his eyes will begin to shed tears—tears of repentance, tears of love, tears of joy—and he will feel the first caresses of unspeakable mysteries.

Natural knowledge exists in all men, but it is not of the same purity in all. Love of pleasure has the power to darken it. The passions are like a fog, and that is why **few men find the road to truth**. How many people have been lost in the maze of philosophy, seeking a little light which they shall never see?

In this maze it is not important if one is a Christian or atheist, Protestant or Catholic, Platonist or Aristotelian. There is one common identifying mark on them all—darkness. Whoever enters the cave of rationalism ceases to see. And whatever garments he is wearing, they take on the same dark color. In their discussions they understand each other very well because they have the same presuppositions, the presuppositions of darkness. But it is impossible for them to understand those who are not in the maze and who see the light. And no matter what those on the outside tell them, they understand everything with their own presuppositions and cannot see in what way the others might be superior.



It is possible to find a middle word that between two views will signify both. But a middle view between two opposite views concerning the same thing is impossible... **There is no room for compromise in matters of the Orthodox Faith.**

St. Mark of Ephesus

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† † †

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## ON THE FINAL JUDGMENT

By Elder Paisios the Athonite.

### How will the Final Judgment take place?

On the Day of Judgment, each person's state will be revealed in an instant and each one will move on to where he deserves to be. Each person will observe his own wretched state like on a television screen, as well as the other's state. He will see himself reflected against the other and will bow his head in shame and thus move on to the place that he deserves.

For example, a daughter-in-law who used to sit indifferently cross-legged in the presence of her mother-in-law, who although suffering a broken leg, was nevertheless taking care of her little grandchild, will not be able to say "Why, o my Christ, are you putting my mother-in-law in Paradise but not me?" Because that precise scene will appear before her eyes (during Judgment). She will be recalling the scene of her mother-in-law standing on her broken leg to attend to her little grandchild, and she will know she doesn't deserve to go to Paradise—and neither will there be any space for her there.

Or, when monks who have seen the difficulties and the trials that secular people have been undergoing and how they were confronted—but they themselves (as monks) had not lived accordingly—they will hang their heads in shame, and head for where they deserve.



Nuns who had not pleased God will see there all the hero-mothers—who had taken no vows nor had the blessings and opportunities that the nuns had—and how those mothers struggled and to what spiritual state they had reached... And at the same time, their daughters, the nuns, had preoccupied and tormented themselves with all those petty matters; these nuns will be ashamed of themselves!

That is how my thoughts perceive that Judgment will take place. Christ is not going to say: "Hey you, come here! What have you done?" Or "You there, you are going to Hell!" While "You over here, you are going to Heaven." Rather, each one of us will compare himself to the others and will proceed to where he knows his place is.

### How is a soul purged?

When a person upholds God's commandments, works on himself and cleanses himself of passions, that is when his nous becomes illumined, then reaches the heights of *theoria* ("seeing" God) and the soul is brightened and becomes like it was before the Fall of

the first-fashioned humans. It is the state a person will be in, after the resurrection of the dead. However, one can see the resurrection of his soul even before the common resurrection, if one becomes cleansed of all his passions; his body will then become angelic, immaterial, and it will not care about material sustenance.

# 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]

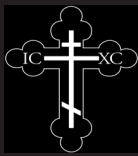
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## WHAT IS ORTHODOXY?

By Protopresbyter George Metallinos, Professor Emeritus, School of Theology, University of Athens, Greece.

In speaking about Orthodoxy, we must not repeat the mistake of Pilate when he asked Christ, *What is truth?* (Jn 18:38). The correct question is: *Who is Truth?* For the truth is not an idea, a theory, or a system, but a Person, the All-Holy Person of the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ. This is how we should ask about Orthodoxy, too, since it is identical with the Theanthropic Person of God the Word. He, as God-Man is Orthodoxy; He is the All-Truth.

### Introduction

If we wanted to define Christianity, *qua* (in the character of, *Ed.*) Orthodoxy and in conventional terms, we would say that it is the experience of the presence of the Uncreated (God) in history and the potential for the created (man) to become God *by Grace*. Given the continuous presence of God in Christ in historical reality, Christianity offers man the possibility of deification (*θεώσις=theosis*), just as medical science provides him with the possibility of maintaining or restoring his health, in both cases through a definite therapeutic process and a specific way of life.

The unique and absolute goal of the life in Christ is *theosis*, namely, union with God, so that man, through participation in the Uncreated Energy of God, becomes *by Grace* that which God is by nature (unoriginate and unending). This is, in Christian terms, the meaning of salvation. It is not a matter of man's moral improvement, but of the re-creation and re-formation in Christ of man and society, through a real and existential relationship with Christ, Who is the incarnate manifestation of God in history. Such is the implication of the expression of the Holy

Apostle Paul: *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.* (2 Cor 5:17). He who is united with Christ is a new creation. For this reason, in Christian terms the Incarnation of God the Word, the redemptive entry of the Eternal and Supratemporal into historical time, is the beginning of a new world—literally, of a “New Age”—which will continue until the end of the ages, in the persons of authentic Christians, that is, the saints. The Church, as the *Body of Christ* and communion in Christ, exists in the world in order to offer salvation, understood as the incorporation of man and society into this process of regeneration. This salvific work of the Church is accomplished through a specific therapeutic method, whereby the Church, in essence, operates in history as a universal infirmary. St. John Chrysostom (†407) thus calls the Church a *spiritual hospital*.

In the ensuing paragraphs we will answer the following questions:

(1) What is the sickness that Orthodox Christianity cures?

(2) What is the therapeutic method that it employs?

(3) What is the hallmark of authentic Christianity that radically differentiates it from heretical deviations therefrom, and also from every form of religion?

### Curing the Sickness

The sickness of human nature is the fallen condition of mankind and at the same time of all of creation, which suffers together with him. This diagnosis pertains to every human being, regardless of whether he is Christian or not. Orthodox Christianity is not confined within the narrow bounds of a religion that is interested only in its own followers. Rather, like God, it *will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*, (1 Tim 2:4) since God is the *Savior of all men*. (1 Tim 4:10). The sickness about which

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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 20<sup>th</sup> 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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Christianity speaks, therefore, is universal: *Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* (Rom 5:12). Just as the Fall (that is, the sickness) is universal, so too salvific therapy depends directly upon the interior functioning of each person.

The natural (authentic) state of a person is defined in Patristic terms, by the functioning inside him of three memory systems, two of which are familiar and monitored by medical science, while the third is a matter for pastoral therapeutics. The first system is cellular memory (DNA), which determines everything inside a human organism. The second is the cerebral cellular memory, the functioning of the brain, which regulates our relationship with our self and with our environment. Both of these systems are familiar to medical science, whose concern it is to maintain their harmonious operation.

The experience of the saints knows another memory system, the memory of the heart, or noetic memory, which operates inside the heart and with which medical science is unfamiliar. The heart, according to Orthodox Tradition, does not function merely physically, as a pump to circulate the blood, for beyond its natural function it has one that is supranatural. Under certain preconditions it becomes the locus of communion with God, namely with His Uncreated Energy. This, of course, can [only] be understood through the experience of the saints, the true Christians, and not through the rational faculty or intellectual theologizing.

St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite (†1809), recapitulating the entire Patristic Tradition in his work "Handbook of Spiritual Counsel," calls the heart a natural center, a supranatural center, and also a para-natural center, whenever the heart's supranatural functioning is inactive on account of its domi-

nation by the passions. The supranatural functioning of the heart is the absolute precondition for the perfection and fulfillment of man, namely, his theosis, his full incorporation into communion in Christ.

In its supranatural functioning, the heart becomes the place in which the *νοῦς* (*nous*) is activated. In the nomenclature of Orthodoxy, the *nous* (in the New Testament it is called the *spirit* of man and the *eye of the soul*) is the activity of the soul by which man knows God, attaining to the vision of God (*Θεοπεία*). Of course we must point out, by way of clarification, that knowledge of God does not mean knowledge of the unapproachable and inaccessible Divine Essence, but of the Divine Energy. The distinction between the Essence and the Energy of God is the fundamental difference between Orthodoxy and every other version of Christianity. The energy of the *nous* within the heart is called the *noetic functioning* of the heart. For the sake of further clarification, *νοῦς* (*nous*) and reason (*λόγος*=*logos*) are not identical in Orthodoxy, because reason operates in the brain, whereas the *νοῦς* (*nous*) operates in the heart.

Noetic functioning is actualized as the *unceasing prayer* (cf. 1 Thess 5:17) of the *Holy Spirit in the heart* (cf. Gal 4:6; Rom 8:26; 1 Thess 5:19), which the Holy Fathers call *remembrance of God*. Having within his heart the *remembrance of God*, man has the sense of God's *indwelling* within him. (Rom 8:11). St. Basil the Great says in his second epistle that the remembrance of God remains unceasing when it is not interrupted by earthly cares, when the *nous* "retreats" to God, that is, has communion with God. This, however, does not mean that the believer who is acted upon by Divine Energy avoids the necessary cares of life, remaining inert or in some



kind of ecstasy. It means, rather, the liberation of the nous from these cares, with which reason is preoccupied.

To use an example relevant to us: a scientist who has acquired noetic functioning deals with his problems by means of reason, while his nous within his heart preserves the memory of God unceasingly. The person who maintains the three aforementioned memory systems is the saint. In Orthodox terms, he is a healthy (normal) human being. This is why the therapy of Orthodoxy is linked to man's journey towards holiness.

The dysfunctionality or subfunctionality of man's noetic energy is the essence of his fall. The notorious "ancestral sin" is precisely man's failure, at the very outset of his presence in history, to preserve the remembrance of God, that is, communion with God, in his heart. All of the descendants of the first-fashioned human beings share in this morbid condition, since it is not some moral—that is, personal—sin, but a sickness of man's nature, transmitted from person to person, exactly like a sickness that a tree transmits to all other trees originating from it.

Inactivity of the noetic functioning or of the remembrance of God, and its confusion with the functioning of the brain—as happens to all of us—enslaves man to angst and to the environment, and also to the quest for happiness through individualism and an antisocial outlook. In the sickness of his fallen state, man manipulates God and his fellowman in order to reinforce his individual security and happiness. God is manipulated through "religion" (the attempt to elicit power from the Divine), which can degenerate into the "self-theosis" of man. One manipulates his fellowmen and, by extension, creation by exploiting them in every possible way. This, therefore, is the sickness that man seeks to cure by becoming fully incorporated into the "spiritual hospital" of the Church.

### The Therapeutic Method

The purpose of the Church's presence in the world, as a communion in Christ, is to cure man through the restoration of the communion of his heart with God—in other words, of his noetic functioning. According to late Father John Romanides, "the Patristic Tradition is neither a social philosophy nor an ethical system, nor is it religious dogmatism; it is a therapeutic regimen. In this respect, it is very similar to medicine, and especially psychiatry. The noetic energy of the soul, which prays mentally and unceasingly inside the heart, is a physiological organ that everyone

possesses and is in need of therapy. Neither philosophy nor any of the known positive or social sciences can cure this organ.... This is why one who is unhealed is not even aware of the existence of this organ."

Man's need to be cured, according to the foregoing, is an issue that concerns all human beings, pertaining primarily to the restoration of every person to his natural state of existence through the reactivation of the **third mnemonic faculty** (that of the *nous*). However, it also extends to man's social existence. In order for man to be in communion with his fellowman as a brother, his self-interest, which ultimately functions as self-love, must be transformed into selflessness.

The love of the Triune God, which gives everything without seeking anything in exchange, is selfless. That is why the social ideal of Orthodox Christianity is not "common ownership," but "non-acquisitiveness," as a voluntary renunciation of any entitlement. Only then is justice possible.

The therapeutic method provided by the Church is the spiritual life, a life in the Holy Spirit. Spiritual life is experienced as *ascesis* and as participation in the Uncreated Grace bestowed by means of the Mysteries. *Ascesis* is the forcing of our autonomous nature deadened through sin, which is on the way to spiritual or eternal death, i.e., eternal separation from the Grace of God. The aim of *ascesis* is victory over the passions, for the purpose of overcoming internal enslavement to the breeding-grounds of [spiritual] sickness and participating in Christ's Cross and

Resurrection. The Christian who practices self-restraint under the guidance of his spiritual Father (therapist) becomes receptive to Grace, which he receives through his participation in the Mysteriological (Sacramental) life of the Body of the Church. There is no such thing as a non-practicing Christian, just as there is no such thing as a person under treatment who does not follow the therapeutic regimen prescribed by his doctor.

### Authentic Christianity

The foregoing considerations thus lead us to certain constants, which confirm the nature of Orthodox Christianity:

(1) The Church, as the Body of Christ, functions as a clinic or hospital. Otherwise, it would not be a Church, but a religion. The clergy were originally chosen by those who were cured, in order to serve as therapists of others. The therapeutic work of the Church is upheld today chiefly in monasteries, which, since they still offer resistance to secularism, are continuators of the Church of Apostolic times.



(2) The Church's expert therapists are those who are already cured. One who has not had the experience of therapy cannot be a therapist. This is the essential difference between pastoral therapeutic science and medical science. Skilled ecclesiastical therapists (both Fathers and Mothers) produce other therapists, just as professors of medicine produce their successors.

(3) For the Church to confine itself simply to forgiving sins for the purpose of affording entry into Paradise after death is a distortion, and is tantamount to medical science forgiving a patient, in order that he might be healed after death! The Church does not aim to send someone to Paradise or "Hell" (=eternal torment). Besides, Paradise and "Hell" are not places, but modes of existence. By healing mankind, the Church prepares a person to behold Christ eternally in His Uncreated Light as Paradise, and not as Hell, that is, as "*a consuming fire*." (Heb 12:29) And this of course concerns every single human being, since ALL people will look eternally upon Christ as "Judge" of the world.

(4) The validity of a science is verified by the realization of its goals (for example, in medicine, by the cure of the patient). This is how genuine scientific medicine is distinguished from quackery. The criterion of the Church's pastoral therapy is the accomplishment of spiritual healing through opening the path to *theosis*. Therapy is not postponed to the afterlife; it takes place during man's lifetime, here in this world (in the here and now). This can be ascertained from the incorrupt relics of the saints, which have overcome biological decay, such as those of the saints of the Ionian Islands: Spyridon, Gerasimos, Dionysios, and Theodora the Empress. Incorrupt relics are, in our Tradition, indisputable evidence of *theosis*, that is, of the fulfillment of the Church's ascetical therapy.

I would like to ask the medical establishment of our country to pay special attention to the case of incorrupt holy relics, given not only that they have not been tampered with by scientists, but also that the energy of Divine Grace manifests itself in them. For precisely at the moment when the disintegration of the cellular system begins, such disintegration automatically ceases, and instead of any stench, the body emanates a distinctive fragrance. I confine myself to medical symptoms, and will not venture into miracles as evidence of *theosis*, since that belongs to another domain.

(5) Finally, the sacred texts of the Church (Holy Scripture and the synodal and patristic texts) are not codifications of any Christian ideology but are therapeutic in nature and function just as textbooks do in medical science. The same applies to liturgical texts, such as prayers. The simple reading of a prayer, without a parallel involvement of the believer in the therapeutic procedure of the Church would be no different from a case in which a patient with severe pains resorts to a doctor and the latter, instead of actively intervening,

merely places the patient on an operating table and reads him the chapter that pertains to his ailment!

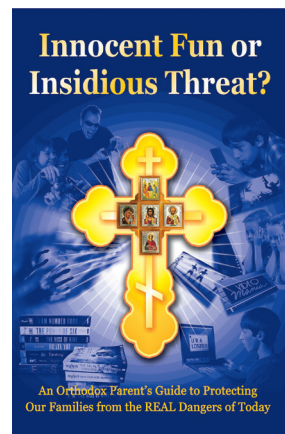
This, in a nutshell, is Orthodoxy. It is of no importance whether one accepts it or not. For this reason, I am addressing everyone, including non-Christians and the indifferent, and also [nominal] "Christians." Any other version of Christianity constitutes a falsification and distortion thereof, even if it seeks to present itself as Orthodoxy.



## RECOMMENDED READING FOR THE "SEASON OF HALLOWEEN": INNOCENT FUN OR INSIDIOUS THREAT

### AN ORTHODOX PARENT'S GUIDE TO PROTECTING OUR FAMILIES FROM THE REAL DANGERS OF TODAY

Compiled by Mary Christodoulou; published by the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.



Today evil invades our lives more than ever before. Particularly alarming is how easily it disguises itself as entertainment, religion, and even as a subject in public schools. Unfortunately, the primary targets of this demonic onslaught are our children. The Harry Potter books and movies have initiated millions of young people into witchcraft and wizardry; celebrities promote New Age religions adverse to Christianity; the Twilight books and movies glamorize vampires; the most popular music, video games, television shows, books, and movies not only bombard our children with images and messages of violence, cruelty, and illicit sex, but also portray demonic phenomena, such as witchcraft and psychic powers, in a way that makes them seem acceptable, and even fun.

All this evil may seem insurmountable, but we must fight against it for the sake of our children. A must-read for every Orthodox Christian, this book examines the shocking extent to which evil has infiltrated our lives, and offers guidance and hope for the struggle against it.

The book can be ordered through the Brotherhood of St. Poimen (see page 23) as well as through Amazon.com.

Price: \$10 per copy (144 pages); ePub/kindle: \$8 per copy.

## ON HALLOWEEN

By Saint Nikolai Velimirovic.



As Orthodox Christians we must carefully examine every aspect of our involvement in the world, its activities, holidays and festivals, to be certain whether or not these involvements are compatible with our Holy Orthodox Faith.

For a while now everything in the outside world is reminding us that Halloween is near: at school our children are busy painting pumpkins, cutting and pasting bats, ghosts and witches and planning the ideal costume in which to go trick-or-treating. Most of our schools, local community organizations and entertainment on television, radio and press will share in and capitalize upon the festival of Halloween. Many of us will participate in this festival by going to costume parties, or by taking our children trick-or-treating in our neighborhood after dark on October 31<sup>st</sup>.

Most of us will take part in the Halloween festivities believing that it has no deeper meaning than fun and excitement for the children. Most of us do not know the historical background of the festival of Halloween and its customs.

The feast of Halloween began in pre-Christian times among the Celtic peoples of Britain, Ireland and Northern France. These pagan peoples believed that physical life was born from death. Therefore, they celebrated the beginning of the "new year" in the fall, on the eve of October 31<sup>st</sup> and into the day of November 1<sup>st</sup>, when, as they believed the season of cold, darkness, decay and death began.

Instructed by their priests, the Druids, the people extinguished all hearth fires and lights, and darkness prevailed. According to pagan Celtic tradition, the souls of the dead had entered into the world of darkness, decay and death and made total communion with Samhain, the Lord of death, who could be appeased and cajoled by burnt offerings to allow the souls of the dead to return home for a festal visit on this day. The belief led to the ritual practice of wandering about in the dark dressed in costumes indicating witches, hobgoblins, fairies and demons. The living entered into fellowship and communion with the dead by this ritual act of imitation, through costume and the wandering about in the darkness. They also believed that the souls of the dead bore the affliction of great hunger on this festal visit. This belief brought about the practice of begging as another ritual imitation of the activities of the souls of the dead on their festal visit. The implication was that any souls of the dead and their imitators who are not appeased with

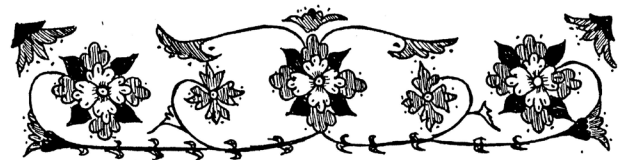
"treats", i.e., offerings, will provoke the wrath of Samhain, whose angels and servants could retaliate through a system of "tricks", or curses.

In the strictly Orthodox early Celtic Church, the Holy Fathers tried to counteract this pagan new year festival by establishing the feast of All Saints on that same day (in the East, this feast is celebrated on another day). The night before the feast (on "All Hallows Eve"), a vigil service was held and a morning celebration of the Eucharist. This custom created the term Halloween. But the remaining pagan and therefore anti-Christian people reacted to the Church's attempt to supplant their festival by increased fervor on this evening, so that the night before the Christian feast of All Saints became a night of sorcery, witchcraft and other occult practices, many of which involved desecration and mockery of Christian practices and beliefs.

Costumes of skeletons, for example, developed as a mockery of the Church's reverence for holy relics. Holy things were stolen and used in sacrilegious rituals. The practice of begging became a system of persecution of Christians who refused to take part in these festivities. And so the Church's attempt to counteract this unholy festival failed.

This is just a brief explanation of the history and meaning of the festival of Halloween. It is clear that we, as Orthodox Christians, cannot participate in this event at any level (even if we only label it as "fun"), and that our involvement in it is an idolatrous betrayal of our God and our Holy Faith. For if we imitate the dead by dressing up or wandering about in the dark, or by begging with them, then we have willfully sought fellowship with the dead, whose Lord is not a Celtic Samhain, but satan, the evil one, who stands against God. Further, if we submit to the dialogue of "trick or treat," our offering does not go to innocent children, but rather to satan himself.

Let us remember our ancestors, the Holy Christian Martyrs of the early Church, as well as our Serbian New Martyrs, who refused, despite painful penalties and horrendous persecution, to worship, venerate or pay obeisance in any way to idols who are angels of satan. The foundation of our Holy Church is built upon their very blood.



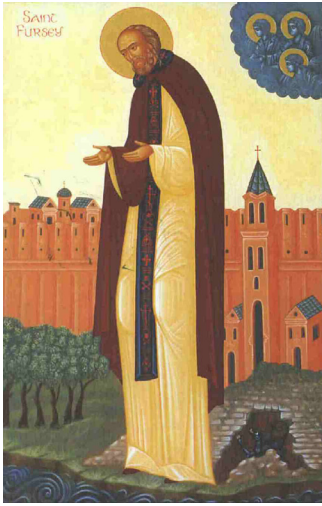
That which is asked of every Orthodox person is to instill a "good uneasiness" into the heterodox, that they might understand that **they are in delusion**. This is so they will not falsely calm their conscience and thus be deprived in this life of the rich blessings of Orthodoxy and in the life to come of the even greater and eternal blessings of God.

**Blessed Elder Paisios the Athonite (†1989)**



## THE VISION OF ST. FURSEY (†650)

By St. Bede the Venerable (†735).



**From the Editor:** *Saint Furseus (also known as Fursa, Fursy, Forseus, and Furseus) was an Irish monk who did much to establish Christianity throughout the British Isles and particularly in East Anglia (a small independent Anglo-Saxon kingdom that comprised what are now the English counties of Norfolk and Suffolk and perhaps the eastern part of the Cambridgeshire Fens). St. Furseus experienced several angelic visions of the afterlife.*

† † †

Whilst Sigebert (Germanic king of Austrasia, 561-575; Austrasia formed the northeastern section of the Kingdom of the Merovingian Franks, comprising parts of the territory of present-day France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, *Ed.*) still governed the kingdom, there came out of Ireland a holy man called Furseus, renowned both for his words and actions, and remarkable for singular virtues, being desirous to live a stranger for our Lord, wherever an opportunity should offer. On coming into the province of the East Saxons, he was honorably received by the aforesaid king, and performing his usual employment of preaching the Gospel, by the example of his virtue and the efficacy of his discourse, converted many unbelievers to Christ, and confirmed in his faith and love those that already believed.

In short, he built himself the monastery, wherein he might with more freedom indulge his heavenly studies. There, falling sick, as the book about his life informs us, he fell into a trance, and quitting his body from the evening till the cock crowed, he was found worthy to behold the choirs of angels, and to hear the praises which are sung in heaven.

He was wont to declare, that among other things he distinctly heard this: *The saints shall advance from one virtue to another.* And again, *The God of gods shall be seen in Zion.* Being restored to his body at that time, and again taken from it three days after, he not only saw the greater joys of the blessed, but also extraordinary combats of evil spirits, who by frequent accusations wickedly endeavored to obstruct his journey to heaven; but the angels protecting him, all their endeavors were in vain.

Concerning which particulars, if any one desires to be more fully informed, that is, with what subtle fraud the devils represented both his actions and superfluous words, and even

his thoughts, as if they had been written down in a book; and what pleasing or disagreeable things he was informed of by the angels and saints, or just men who appeared to him among the angels; let him read the little book of his life which I have mentioned, and I believe he will thereby reap much spiritual profit.

But there is one thing among the rest, which we have thought may be beneficial to many if inserted in this history.

When he had been lifted up on high, he was ordered by the angels that conducted him to look back upon the world. Upon which, casting his eyes downward, he saw, as it were, a dark and obscure valley underneath him. He also saw **four fires in the air**, not far distant from each other. Then asking the angels, what fires those were, he was told, they were **the fires which would kindle and consume the world**. One of them was of **falsehood**, when we do not fulfil that which we promised in baptism, to renounce the Devil and all his works. The next of **covetousness**, when we prefer the riches of the world to the love of heavenly things. The third of **discord**, when we make no difficulty to offend the minds of our neighbors even in needless things. The fourth of **iniquity**, when we look upon it as no crime to rob and to defraud the weak.

These fires, increasing by degrees, extended so as to meet one another, and being joined, became an immense flame. When it drew near, fearing for himself, he said to the angel, “Lord, behold the fire draws near me.” The angel answered, “That which you did not kindle shall not burn you; for though this appears to be a terrible and great fire, yet it tries every man according to the merits of his works; for every man’s concupiscence (*lust, Ed.*) shall burn in the fire; for as every one burns in the body through unlawful pleasure, so when discharged of the body, he shall burn in the punishment which he has deserved.”

Then he saw one of the three angels, who had been his conductors throughout both visions, go before and divide the flame of fire, whilst the other two, flying about on both sides, defended him from the danger of that fire. He also saw devils flying through the fire, raising conflagrations (*infernus, fire storms, Ed.*) of wars against the just. Then followed accusations of the wicked spirits against him, the defense of the good angels in his favor, and a more extended view of the heavenly troops; as also of holy men of his own nation, who, as he had long since been informed, had been deservedly advanced to the degree of priesthood, from whom he heard many things that might be very salutary to himself, or to all others that would listen to them.

When they had ended their discourse, and returned to heaven with the angelic spirits, the three angels remained with the blessed Furseus, of whom we have spoken before, and who were to bring him back to his body. And when they approached the aforesaid immense fire, the angel divided the flame, as he had

done before; but when the man of God came to the passage so opened amidst the flames, the unclean spirits, laying hold of one of those whom they tormented in the fire, threw him at him, and, touching his shoulder and jaw, burned them. He knew the man, and called to mind that he had received his garment when he died; and the angel, immediately laying hold, threw him back into the fire, and the malignant enemy said, "Do not reject him whom you before received; for as you accepted the goods of him who was a sinner, so you must partake of his punishment." The angel replying, said, "He did not receive the same through avarice, but in order to save his soul." The fire ceased, and the angel, turning to him, added, "That which you kindled burned in you; for had you not received the money of this person that died in his sins, his punishment would not burn in you." And proceeding in his discourse, he gave him wholesome advice for what ought to be done towards the salvation of such as repented.

Being afterwards restored to his body, throughout the whole course of his life he bore the mark of the fire which he had felt in his soul, visible to all men on his shoulder and jaw; and the flesh publicly showed, in a wonderful manner, what the soul had suffered in private. He always took care, as he had done before, to persuade all men to the practice of virtue, as well by his example, as by preaching. But as for the matter of his visions, he would only relate them to those who, from holy zeal and desire of reformation, wished to learn the same.

An ancient brother of our monastery is still living, who is wont to declare that a very sincere and religious man told him that he had seen Fursey himself in the province of the East Angles, and heard those visions from his mouth; adding, that though it was in most sharp winter weather, and a hard frost, and the man was sitting in a thin garment when he related it, yet he sweated as if it had been in the greatest heat of summer, either through excessive fear, or spiritual consolation.



**B**e careful with your mouth, but primarily with your mind; do not let evil thoughts start talking with you. Do not let your mouth say words that could perhaps wound your brother. Let your mouth put forth words which are fragrant: words of consolation, courage, and hope. It is a person's mouth that reveals his interior, his inner man.

**Elder Ephraim of Philotheou**  
From "Counsels from the Holy Mountain"

## ON RAISING OUR CHILDREN

*By our Holy Father St. John Chrysostom, from St. Theofan the Recluse's "The Path to Salvation."*

**W**e have been given an important security—children. Therefore we shall take care of them, and take every precaution that the evil one may not steal them from us. Meanwhile, we do everything backward. We make every effort to insure that our fields be in good hands. We seek out the most experienced mule drivers and overseers, but we take no such precautions for what is the most precious to us and through which all other good things come, namely, that we might entrust our son to a man that would preserve his chastity. We take care to provide him with property, but take no care for him himself. Do you see what insanity has taken control of us! First of all educate your son's soul, and he will acquire possessions later. If his soul is bad he will not receive the slightest benefit from money. And vice versa, if he has been given the proper upbringing, then poverty will not harm him in the least. Do you want to leave him wealthy? Teach him to be good. For children who have not received the proper upbringing poverty is better than wealth; it will keep them even against their will within the bounds of virtue. However, wealth, even for one who does not wish it, does not allow one to live a chaste life, but lures him into a countless multitude of crimes.

**Y**ou, mothers, look after your daughters. This should not be difficult for you. Watch that they sit at home. First of all teach them to be pious, modest, disdaining money, and not worrying too much about fancy dress. Give them thus to marriage. If you raise your daughter this way, you will save not only her, but the husband who takes her; and not only her husband, but the children; and not only the children, but the grandchildren. If the root is good the branches will spread out more beautifully, and you will receive your reward for this. Therefore let us do everything as though we are caring for the good not of one soul alone, but of many through the one. For at the time of marriage, they (daughters) should go forth from their father's house's as fighters from the place of competition; that is, they should know precisely the entire science, by which they might, like a leaven, raise all the ingredients to the increase of them.

**S**ons should also be so modest that they might be recognized by their good morals and chastity, and might earn great praise from men and from God. Let them learn to refrain themselves from extravagant possessions, to be thrifty and tenderly loving; let them learn to submit to authority. For they can in this way obtain a great reward for their parents. Then everything will be directed towards the glory of God and our salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord, to Whom with the Father and Holy Spirit be glory, dominion and honor now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

## REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION

By St. Theophan the Recluse, from his book "The Path to Salvation."



It would seem that everything is already done once one has resolved to abandon sin, and all that is left is the action. Precisely—one can act—but what kind of activity will this be, and what kind of spirit will it contain? The person is only left with himself so far. If he begins to act, beginning from this point, then he will be acting from himself and for him-

self, even though it be morally right. This will be an egotistical, pagan morality.

There are people who say that they do good for goodness' sake—that is, they do it because human dignity requires it, or because it would be ignoble and imprudent to act any other way. All such people who act in this spirit retort that their education is internal, and the moral human being has not been completely formed—they have returned to themselves, but they have not turned from themselves to God and brought themselves as sacrifices to Him, which means they have stopped halfway.

The goal of human freedom is not in freedom itself, nor is it in man, but in God. By giving man freedom, God has yielded to man a piece of His divine authority, but with the intention that man himself would voluntarily bring it as a sacrifice to God, as a most perfect offering. Therefore, if you have mastered yourself, now give yourself to God. When you sinned, you not only lost yourself, but in losing yourself you took yourself away from God. Now, having returned from the captivity of sin, after you have mastered yourself, return yourself also to God.

It would also seem that turning away from yourself to God ought to be an easy and simple matter, like, for example, turning from west to east. But, after all, the sinner turning towards God is not an entity independent from Him, and he does not approach Him without anything trailing behind. No, like a runaway slave returning to his master, he appears as one guilty before the King and Judge. He needs to approach in such a way that he will be accepted. In human affairs a master accepts his slave, and the king has mercy on the guilty when each of them approaches admitting his guilt, repents of it and gives a sincere promise to be henceforth completely changed.

It is the same for a sinner returning to God. He will be accepted by God if he (a) admits his sins, (b) repents of them, and (c) makes a vow not to sin. These are the necessary

acts for ardent unification with God, upon which depends the steadfastness of the new life, perfection of it, and good hope for faithful action according to its demands. When the Prodigal Son returned to his father, he said: *I will say, I have sinned*—admitting the sin; *I am not worthy*—repenting; *make me as one of thy hired servants*—the promise to work (cf. Lk. 15:18,19).

### Know your Sins

Thus, having returned to God, *know your sins*. In the inspiration of the resolve to abandon sin, you knew that you were sinful, for why else would you need to contemplate a change in your life; but this sinfulness then appeared in a confusing way. Now you must discerningly come to know that you are definitely sinful, and you must know to what degree—clearly, individually, and as if quantitatively, know your sins, with all attendant circumstances that diminished or magnified the sinfulness of the action. Critically review your entire life with a strict and impartial judgment.

In doing this, place on one side the Law of God, and on the other side your own life, and look at how they compare and contrast. Take your deeds and place them under the Law, so that you can see whether they are lawful or not. Or take the Law and look at whether or not it is being realized in your life. So that you do not leave anything out of this important work, follow some kind of order.

Sit and recall all of your obligations in relation to God, your neighbor, and to you yourself; and then look through your life with respect to all of these relationships. Or—go through the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes, one after another, with all their applications; and, look—is this your life? Or—read the chapters in the Gospel of Matthew where the Saviour sets down the law of Christian life, the Epistle of the holy Apostle James, the last chapter of the Epistles of the holy Apostle Paul, in which are briefly given the duties of a Christian. For example: in chapter twelve in the Epistle to the Romans, in chapter four in the epistle to the Ephesians, and others. The last verses are particularly important because they elucidate the spirit of Christian life. This spirit is clearly and strongly expressed in the First Epistle of St. John the Theologian. Read all of this and check your own life, whether it is like this. Or, finally, take the prayers before Communion and judge your own behavior according to it. Peruse your life and deeds not only as the deeds of a human being, but as the deeds of a Christian, in a certain calling or station at that.

The results of such a perusal of your life is that a countless multitude of deeds, words, thoughts, feelings, and iniquitous desires that should not have been done were allowed; a multitude of things that should have been done were not done. And a multitude of things that were done according to the law were actually defiled due to the impurity of the motivation behind them. Once all this countless multitude



is collected, perhaps the entire life was actually composed of nothing but these bad deeds.

The main thing that you need to remember at this first stage of coming to know your sinfulness is that it is an exact determination of deeds. Just as a business ledger is written with mathematical accuracy, so should your mental list of each of your deeds portray them accurately—with all the circumstances of time, place, people, obstacles, etc. If our self-examination proves fruitless, it will be because we made only a general review.

We must not, however stop with these particulars, but we should continue further along the path of sin, or more deeply enter into the sinful heart. Beneath the deeds, words, personal thoughts, desires and feelings, lies a constant disposition of heart which composes our character traits. Some of our works fell through accidentally; others came from the heart with such power that we had not the strength to stop them; while others became ceaseless, and turned into something of a law. Such a review will allow us to determine which deeds are inspired by producers hidden within the heart which generate from there a constant urge. This is essentially sinful tendencies. By revealing them we expose the nature of our heart, and the quantity and reciprocity of its inclinations.

When this has been done, the chief governing passion will have nowhere to hide. We know that the root of all sin is self-love. From self-love proceed pride, mercenariness, love of pleasure; and from these proceed all other passions, eight of which are considered to be chief, while the rest are without number. Every sinner has all the passions—some in deed, others in embryo—because everyone who sins conducts his affairs with self-love, the seed of all passions or sinful inclinations. But they do not reveal themselves in everyone to the same degree.

One may be possessed by pride, another by love of pleasure, a third by mercenariness. The proud one is not a stranger to sensual pleasures, but it is all right if he does not have them. The mercenary may also think highly of himself, but it is all right if he sometimes has to lower himself for a profit. The lover of pleasure also loves possessions, but it is all right if he has to lose them in order to purchase pleasures. Thus everyone has his chief passion. All other passions stand in the shadows, in submission to and governed by the chief passion, not daring to act with authority at cross-purposes with it. All tendencies and habitual vices, revealed already by the person within himself, are colored and inspired by one passion. This is what predominantly comprises and embodies in his person the root of all evils—self-love. Knowing it should complete the confession of your own sinfulness.

Thus, finally you come to know the root of your sinfulness, its nearest offspring—inclinations—and its distant offspring—numerous deeds. You can see the entire history of your sinfulness and, as it were, draw a picture of it.

### Awaken the Salvific Feeling of Sincere Repentance

Having come to know your sinfulness, do not be its cold observer, but try to awaken a corresponding salvific *feeling of sincere repentance*. It would seem that these feelings would be born in you the moment you come to know your sin, but actually it is not always that way. Sin makes the heart become coarse. Just as a manual laborer becomes coarse from his labor, so does a sinner become coarse, having sold himself to the blackening work of sin—digging through the husks and feeding on them. Therefore work is again required on yourself, in order to instigate a feeling of repentance.

You can come to this feeling through the feeling of *guilt* for sins and an inability to answer for them. The feeling of guilt stands midway between knowing your sins and feelings of repentance, and itself is mediated by *self-reproach*.

Begin first of all to *reproach yourself*—and reproach. Remove everything from your attention and place yourself alone with your conscience before the face of God the Judge All-seeing. Reveal that you knew that you should not have done it, but you wanted to anyway; you could have walked away from what you wanted, but you did not use your self-authority to your own good. Your reason and conscience were against it, and there were even external obstacles, but you disdained all of this good counsel.

Do this with every sin. You will see that each sin was committed according to your own desire, with the consciousness of its sinfulness, and even with effort to overcome obstacles; and your conscience will force you to undefensively admit your guilt. The deceit of a sinful heart will begin perhaps to invent excuses—either it was due to natural weakness, or to strong temperament, or to the course of events, or to the pressures of daily life—do not listen.

All of this could have intensified the attraction to sin, but no one can force you to agree to sin. It is always a matter of will. You could have said: “I don’t want to,” and that would have been the end of all temptation! In opposition to this gainsaying of *guilt for sins*, reveal more completely your personal relationship: who you are, when and where you sinned, so that you might discover how precisely sinful your sin is, in your person and in your circumstances. Then you will see in all this not causes for excuses, but points that magnify your guilt. The limit to which the work of self-reproach should bring you is the feeling of inexcusable guilt, a state in which the heart is saying: “I have no justification—I am guilty.”

In this act of reproach of conscience a person confirms one after another of his sins, and says: “I am guilty of this, and of that, and of a third, and in absolutely everything I am guilty.” He reproaches himself for all his sins and begins to feel that they are weighing upon him with all their heaviness. In coming to know your sins one can even view them from without, but in reproaching them they can be seen inside our

own selves, and they weigh on us. They weigh even more on us because we can make no answer for them. Having reached this point, what can a sinner say but: I am wretched! This is not good, and that is bad. I am myself to blame that it is not good, and that it is within me.

As soon as the person pronounces within his heart: *I am wretched*, immediately one painful feeling after another of repentance for sins is born within him. He is *ashamed* that he has given himself to such low deeds, *upset* that he has pampered himself and betrayed himself to his evil will, *pained* that he has brought himself to such a state of moral decay, and *terrified* that he has offended God and placed himself in such a dangerous position, now and for eternity. These feelings go around from one to another, and the person burns in them as in a fire. He sees himself hanging over an abyss, and in his feelings he descends to the state of the outcasts. This grievous torment provides an opening to a feeling of hopelessness. This is the moment that the demon of despair sometimes grabs a man, suggesting to him that: *your ancient guilt will remain with you*.

Every sinner experiences these feelings to a greater or lesser degree. We must not feel sorry that we are experiencing them, but rather we should desire that they come, and that they come more powerfully. The more a man burns in them and the hotter the burning, the more salvific it is. In the power of this burning is the foundation of his future correction. Now the heart knows how bitter the fruits of sin really are, and it finds the strength through this to turn away from its embrace.

### **The Feeling of Repentance is a Bridge to a Vow**

The feelings of repentance obviously have a sundering effect. The Word passes unto the sundering of soul and spirit, limbs and marrow, and judges the thoughts of the heart. But the goal for which, by God's grace, this has been wrought in a man is not simply to destroy, but so that by destroying the old the new can be created. The new is conceived by a whisper of hope in the possibility of changing.

There is a possibility of changing the unchangeable and retrieving the irretrievable—just take the work in hand. It would seem that the feeling of repentance is a direct bridge to a vow: "Thus, I will turn away from sin and make a vow to work for the one God by fulfilling His commandments." But the one who makes this vow must be sure that on the one hand his former incorrigibility may be forgiven, and on the other hand, that he can receive strength to help him keep his promise. This is why making a vow to work for the Lord is made possible through the good hope of receiving mercy and assistance from on high; and this good hope is produced by faith in the Lord and Saviour, by Whom the handwriting of our sins was torn up on the Cross, and after Whose Ascension all *divine power for life and piety* (cf. II Peter: 1:3) are given.

Without this faith and the good hope that imitates it, the torturous feelings of contrition and repentance go the way of Judas. This is when the Cross of Christ is truly an anchor for man! Tossed about as if over an abyss in painful contrition over sins, he sees it as his only salvation—all strength of faith and hope are contained in it, and from it man draws strength and enthusiasm to make a vow. Just as a drowning man grabs powerfully at a tree, so does the penitent reach for the Cross of Christ, and he feels that now he will not perish. We always knew the power of the Lord's death on the Cross, but one who has passed through this painful regret for his sins feels it, because it becomes an element of his life.

Thus, tormented by feelings of regret and repentance, the sinner reveals in church his incorrigibility and confirms a vow to correct himself. Melted wax pours down indiscriminately, but when you pour it into a mold or press it with a seal, something comes of it. We also need to press a seal into our inner man, so that he will take on a specific image. This happens to him during the Sacrament of Repentance—he is sealed with the divine grace of the Spirit.

### **Why the Mystery of Repentance is Necessary**

What makes the Mystery of Repentance so necessary is on one hand the nature of sin, and on the other hand, the nature of our conscience. When we sin, we think that the traces of sin do not remain on the outside or the inside of us. Meanwhile it is leaving deep marks on the inside and the outside of us—on everything around us and especially in heaven, in the ledgers of divine judgment.

At the hour of sin it is decided there what the one who has sinned has become; in the book of the living he is written in the list of the condemned, and that has been bound in heaven. Divine grace does not descend upon him until he is erased from the list of the condemned in heaven, until he has received absolution there. But it was pleasing to God to make heavenly erasing from the list of the condemned dependent upon the absolution of the sins that have been bound on earth. So, receive the Sacrament of Repentance, that you may be freed by absolution on all sides and open the door within yourself to the Spirit of grace. Now that the conscience has been cleansed and has regained its tenderness and sensitivity to good moral order, it will not give any peace until we are decisively ensured of forgiveness. Thus it is in the usual course of our lives: it will not allow us to show ourselves to the person we have offended until we are sure that he has forgiven us.

With respect to God, the conscience is even more meticulous. Although at that time when a person has raised himself to make a decisive vow, a certain assurance that he is no longer repugnant to God comes down to him; but this assurance is his own, and it cannot be durable. It will soon be toppled by doubts: "Is it really true? Perhaps it is self-delusion?" And this doubt brings inner anxiety, and from anxiety comes a weakening. Then life will have neither firmness nor good

form. Thus, a person needs to hear that all is forgiven from God so that, finally at peace in the assurance in God's mercy, he can then act more decisively and steadfastly in this assurance. Go and confess—and you will receive a pronouncement of God's forgiveness.

### How to Prepare for a Salvific Confession

For a salvific confession, one must prepare himself sufficiently. Whoever has read this narrative thus far is ready. Proceed with reverence and faith!

(1) Firmly convinced of the necessity of this Sacrament, go to it—not as though it were some new part of your life or just a simple custom, but with complete faith that for you as a sinner, this is the only possible way to be saved. By skipping it, you will be numbered among the condemned, and, consequently, you will be outside of any mercy. By not entering this clinic, your spirit will not regain its health and you will remain as you were, sick and disturbed. You will not see the kingdom if you do not enter it through the door of repentance.

(2) By these convictions engender the desire for this Sacrament. Go to it not as to the slaughter, but as to a fountain of blessings. Whoever vividly represents to himself the fruit born in us through Confession could not but long for it. A man goes to it all in wounds from head to toe, and he returns from it healthy in all his members, alive, strong, and with a feeling of safety from future infection. He goes there weighed down by a heavy yoke—the whole sum of past sins on him. It torments him and deprives him of all peace. He returns light, joyful, and with a consoling disposition of spirit that he has received a charter of complete forgiveness.

(3) Shame and fear will come up—let them! That is why this Sacrament was created, to bring shame and fear upon us—and the more shame and fear, the more it will save us. Desiring this Sacrament, desire great shame and great trembling. If someone wants to be healed, does he not know how painful the treatment is? He knows, but resolving to be healed, he also determines to endure the attendant pain in the hope of recovering. And you, when you were tormented by the feelings of regret that came upon you and you rushed to come closer to God, did you not say: "I am ready to endure anything, only have mercy on me and forgive me!"

Well, now it is happening according your wish. Do not be upset over this shame and fear; they are bound up with this Sacrament for your own good. By having burned again in them, you will become morally stronger. You burned already

more than once in the fire of repentance—burn some more. Then you burned alone before God and your conscience, but now burn before a witness appointed by God, in witness of the sincerity of that solitary burning, and perhaps to complete its lack. There will be a judgment, and at it will be shame and fear without hope.

Shame and fear at confession pay for the shame and fear then. If you do not want the latter, go through with the former. Besides, it always happens that, according to the measure of the trembling that the penitent goes through, he overflows with consolation at the confession. This is where the Saviour truly shows Himself to be the Comforter of the laboring and heavy laden! By sincerely repenting and confessing the heart learns this truth by experience, rather than by faith alone.

(4) Then, again recalling all the sins you have committed

and renewing the now ripened, inner commitment not to repeat them, rise up in the living faith that you stand before the Lord Himself Who receives your confession; and tell everything that burdens your conscience, without holding anything back. If you have approached it with the desire to shame yourself, you will not cover yourself, but will express as fully as possible your disgraceful weakness for sins. This will serve to satiate your humbled heart.

You must be sure that every sin you have told is torn from the heart, for every hidden sin remains there even more to your condemnation, because the sinner stood with his wound near the Doctor that heals all things. By hiding the sin, he closed the wound without

regretting that he torments and disrupts his soul. In the story of Blessed Theodora, who passed through the toll-houses, it is written that her evil accusers did not find in their scrolls those sins that she had confessed. The angels later explained to her that Confession wipes away sin from every place that it had been recorded. Neither in the book of the conscience, nor in the book of the living, nor with the evil destroyer is it attributed to that person—Confession wiped away these lines. Tear out all that burdens you without hiding anything.

The point to which you need to bring the revelation of your sins is so that the spiritual father has a precise understanding of you; so that he sees you as you are, and, in giving absolution he absolves you and not someone else; so that when he says: "Forgive and absolve this penitent for the sins he has committed," nothing remains in you that would come under this category.

He does well who, having prepared for Confession for the first time after a long period of residing in sins, finds some op-





portunity to have a preliminary discussion with the spiritual father, and tells him the entire history of his sinful life. This will remove the danger of forgetting or omitting anything in confusion during the confession. Everyone must concern himself with a complete revelation of his sins. The Lord gave the authority to absolve sins not automatically, but under the condition that they be repented of and confessed. If something is left incomplete, then it could happen that when the spiritual father pronounces: "I forgive and absolve you," the Lord will say: "I condemn you."

(5) Now the confession is over. The spiritual father lifts his *epitrachelion*, covers the head of the penitent with it, and keeping it in his hand, pronounces the absolution of all sins, making the sign of the Cross on the head. What occurs at this moment in the soul is well-known to everyone who sincerely repents. Streams of grace pour from the head into the heart and fill it with joy. This is not from human beings, not from the penitent, not from the absolver—this is the mystery of the Lord Healer and Comforter of souls.

Sometimes it happens at this time that some hear clearly in their hearts a divine word to strengthen and inspire them for future works. This is a sort of spiritual weapon entrusted by Christ the Saviour to the man who now enters the ranks of those warring in His name. Whoever has heard such a word, let him treasure it later, to comfort and inspire him—comfort, because it is clear that the confession has been received when it has pleased the Lord to enter into a sort of discussion with the penitent; inspire, because in the hour of temptation all he has to do is remember it, and strength comes from somewhere to resist! With what do warriors in battle inspire themselves? With a word spoken by the commander that affected him powerfully. It is the same here.

(6) With this everything is done. All that remains is to fall at God's feet with feelings of thankfulness for His unspeakable mercy, and kiss the Cross and Gospels as a sign of your vow. Go unwaveringly along the path shown to you in the Gospels, with the commitment to follow Christ the Saviour, as described in the Gospels, under His blessed yoke, only now taken upon yourself. Having completed this, go in peace, with the intention to intently act according to what you have promised, remembering that the judgment over you from now on will be from your own words. You have made a promise—keep it. It has been sealed by the Sacrament, and therefore you must be ever more faithful to it, so that you do not fall again into the ranks of those who have wasted grace.

(7) If the spiritual father gives you a penance, accept it with joy. If the spiritual father does not give you one, then ask him to. This will be not only a send-off to you as you depart on your good path, but also a shield and protection from outside enemy attacks on your new way of life.

Here is what the Patriarch of Constantinople wrote in answer to the Lutherans: "We accompany the absolution of

sins with penances for many respectable reasons. First of all, so that through voluntary suffering the sinner will be freed here from onerous involuntary punishment there, in the next life, for the Lord grants mercy to nothing more than He does suffering, especially voluntary suffering. Therefore St. Gregory also says that God's love is granted for tears. Secondly, it is in order to destroy in the sinner those passionate desires of the flesh which give birth to sin, for we know that opposites cure. Thirdly, it is so that the penance would serve as a bond or bridle for the soul, and not allow it to again take up those same vices from which it is still being cleansed. Fourthly, in order to accustom it to labor and patience, for virtue is a matter of labor. Fifthly, it is so that we will see and know whether or not the penitent has truly come to hate sin."

Whoever finishes this course of spiritual treatment as given and, most importantly, confesses his sins without hiding anything, returns from the house of God the way criminals return from court who have received mercy and acquittal of their crimes instead of a death sentence. He returns with a deep feeling of thankfulness to the Saviour of our souls, with the firm resolve to dedicate himself to Him and to the fulfillment of His commandments all the rest of his life, with extreme disgust for all of his former sins, and with an unrestrainable desire to wipe away all traces of his former error. The one who has received absolution feels within himself that he is not useless, that he has been visited by a special power. Divine grace, which has thus far only acted on him from without in helping him conquer himself, now with the words: *I forgive and absolve* has entered into him, mingled with his spirit and filled it with a burning and longing, with which he now proceeds into action until the evening of his life.



The devil demonstrates simultaneously his weakness and his wickedness. He is unable to harm anyone who does not harm himself. In fact, anyone who denies heaven and chooses the earth is, as it were, rushing towards a precipice, even though running of his own accord.

The devil, however, starts working as soon as he sees someone living up to faith's commitments, someone who has a reputation for virtue, who does good works. He tries to worm vanity into him, to make it possible for him to be puffed up with pride, become presumptuous, lose trust in prayer and not attribute to God the good that he does but to take all the credit himself.

St. Ambrose of Milan,

## Ἐαυτοὺς καὶ Ἀλλήλους καὶ Πᾶσαν τὴν Ζωὴν Ἡμῶν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ Παραθώμεθα

Ἀπὸ τὴν Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Ταξιαρχῶν Πηλίου.

Στὸ βιβλίο τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου Μαξίμοβιτς ὑπάρχει ἕνας διάλογος ἐνὸς ζητιάνου μὲ ἕνα διάσημο θεολόγο. Ὁ θεολόγος ἐπὶ ὀκτῶ ἔτη ἀκατάπαυστα παρακαλοῦσε τὸ Θεὸ νὰ τοῦ φανερώσει κάποιον ἄνθρωπο, ποῦ θὰ μπορούσε νὰ τοῦ δείξει τὸν πιὸ σίγουρο δρόμο γιὰ τὴ Βασιλεία τῶν Οὐρανῶν. Κάποια μέρα ποῦ ἔφθασε στὸ ἀποκορύφωμα τῆς προσευχῆς ἄκουσε μιὰ φωνή: «Πήγαινε καὶ στήν ἔξοδο τῆς Ἐκκλησίας θὰ βρεῖς τὸν ἄνθρωπο ποῦ ζητᾷς». Πηγαίνει βιαστικά στήν Ἐκκλησία, ὅπου βρίσκει ἕνα γέρο ζητιάνο μὲ κουρελιασμένα ροῦχα καὶ πληγωμένα γόνατα καὶ τὸν χαιρετᾷ:

- Καλὸ καὶ εὐτυχισμένο πρωινό, γέροντα.
- Ποτὲ δὲν εἶχα κακὸ καὶ δυστυχισμένο πρωινό.
- Ὁ ἄλλος ἐν ἀμηχανία διορθώνει:
- Εἶθε νὰ σοῦ στείλει ὁ Θεὸς κάθε ἀγαθό!
- Οὐδέποτε μου ἐστάλη κάτι μὴ ἀγαθό!
- Ὁ θεολόγος παραξενεύεται καὶ τοῦ λέει:
- Τί συμβαίνει μὲ σένα, γέροντα; Ἐγὼ σοῦ εὐχομαι

κάθε εὐτυχία.

- Μὰ ποτὲ δὲν εἶμαι δυστυχῆς. Ζῶ σύμφωνα μὲ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Γιὰ τὸ ζυγὸ ποῦ μοῦ ἔδωσε

ὁ Θεὸς ποτὲ δὲν δυσανασχέτησα καὶ εἶμαι πάντοτε εὐχαριστημένος.

- Ἀπὸ ποῦ ἦλθες ἐσύ, γέροντα, ἐδῶ;
- Ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό.
- Καὶ ποῦ τὸν βρῆκες;
- Ἐκεῖ ποῦ τὸν ἄφησα, στήν ἀγαθὴ θέληση.
- Ποιὸς εἶσαι, γέροντα, καὶ σὲ ποιά τάξη ἀνήκει;
- Ὅποιος κι ἂν εἶμαι, εἶμαι ἱκανοποιημένος μὲ τὴν κατάστασή μου, γιατί βασιλεὺς εἶναι αὐτὸς ποῦ κυβερνᾷ καὶ διευθύνει τὸν ἑαυτό του.

Ὁ θεολόγος ἀποδέχθηκε τελικὰ πῶς ὁ δρόμος τοῦ ζητιάνου ἦταν ὁ μόνος σίγουρος γιὰ τὸν Οὐρανό, δηλαδή ἡ τελεία παράδοση στὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ.

- Τί σημαίνει πιστεῦω στὸν Χριστό;
- Ἐμπιστεύομαι τὸν Χριστὸ, δηλαδή τὰ λόγια Του, τὶς ὑποσχέσεις Του καὶ τὰ τηρῶ. Τηρῶ τὶς ἐντολές Του ποῦ εἶναι συνταγὲς ζωῆς, εἶναι οἱ προδιαγραφές μας, οἱ προδιαγραφές τοῦ κατασκευαστῆ μας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ὁ Κύριος ποῦ μᾶς ἔπλασε κατ' εἰκόνα καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅρισε καὶ τοὺς κανόνες καλῆς λειτουργίας ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνέλιξης στήν τελειότητα: ἀπὸ τὸ λίκν καλῶς στὸ ἄριστα ποῦ εἶναι ἡ θέωση (=ἡ ὁμοίωση μας μὲ τὸν Θεό).

- Ποιὲς εἶναι οἱ κύριες ἐντολές;

- Μία εἶναι ἡ κύρια ἐντολὴ καὶ ἔχει δύο σκέλη: Ἡ ἀγάπη πρὸς τὸν Θεὸ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη πρὸς τὸν συνάνθρωπο. «Ἀγαπήσεις Κύριον τὸν Θεόν σου ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ καρδίᾳ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ διανοίᾳ σου. Αὕτη ἐστὶ πρώτη καὶ μεγάλη ἐντολὴ. Δευτέρα δὲ ὁμοία αὐτῇ: ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. Ἐν ταύταις ταῖς δυσὶν ἐντολαῖς ὅλος ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται.» (Ματθ. 22:37-40). Αὐτὴν τὴν ἀπάντηση ἔδωσε ὁ Κύριος στὸν πλούσιο νεανίσκο ὅταν ἐρωτήθηκε γιὰ τὸ ποιά εἶναι ἡ πρώτη καὶ μεγαλύτερη ἐντολὴ.

- Ἡ τήρηση τῆς πρώτης ἐντολῆς συνδέεται μὲ τὴν προτροπὴ τοῦ λειτουργοῦ: «ἑαυτοὺς καὶ ἀλλήλους καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ παραθώμεθα»;

- Βεβαίωτατα. Ὁ Κύριος μᾶς εἶπε νὰ μὴν ἔχουμε κανένα ἄγχος καὶ καμμία μέριμνα, δηλαδή καμμία ἀγωνιώδη φροντίδα γιὰ τίποτε. «Διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν, μὴ μεριμνᾶτε τῇ ψυχῇ ὑμῶν τί φάγητε, μηδὲ τῷ σώματι ὑμῶν τί ἐνδύσθητε. Οὐχὶ ἡ ψυχὴ πλεῖον ἐστὶ τῆς τροφῆς καὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ἐνδύματος; Κατανοήσατε τοὺς κόρακας, ὅτι οὐ σπείρουσιν οὐδὲ θερίζουσιν, οἷς οὐκ ἐστὶ ταμεῖον οὐδὲ ἀποθήκη, καὶ ὁ Θεὸς τρέφει αὐτοὺς

πόσω μᾶλλον ὑμεῖς διαφέρετε τῶν πετεινῶν; Τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν μεριμνῶν δύναται προσθεῖναι ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ

πῆχυν ἕνα; Εἰ οὖν οὔτε ἐλάχιστον δύνασθε, τί περὶ τῶν λοιπῶν μεριμνᾶτε; κατανοήσατε τὰ κρίνα πῶς αὐξάνει οὐ κοπιᾷ οὐδὲ νήθει λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν, οὐδὲ Σολομῶν ἐν πάσῃ τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ περιεβάλετο ὡς ἐν τούτων. Εἰ δὲ τὸν χόρτον τοῦ ἀγροῦ, σήμερον ὄντα καὶ αὔριον εἰς κλίβανον βαλλόμενον, ὁ Θεὸς οὕτως ἀμφιέννυσι, πόσω μᾶλλον ὑμᾶς, ὀλιγόπιστοι; καὶ ὑμεῖς μὴ ζητεῖτε τί φάγητε καὶ τί πίητε, καὶ μὴ μετεωρίζεσθε ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τοῦ κόσμου ἐπιζητεῖ ὑμῶν δὲ ὁ πατήρ οἶδεν ὅτι χρῆζετε τούτων πλὴν ζητεῖτε τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ ταῦτα πάντα προστεθήσεται ὑμῖν.» (Λουκ. 12:22-31). Ἐδῶ ἀκριβῶς θεμελιώνεται ἡ λειτουργικὴ προτροπὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας: «Ἐαυτοὺς καὶ ἀλλήλους καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ παραθώμεθα». Τὸν ἑαυτό μας καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους καὶ ὅλη μας τὴ ζωὴ νὰ τὰ ἀφήσουμε στὸν Χριστό.

- Πρακτικὰ πῶς θὰ γίνῃ αὐτὸ τὸ ἄφημα, αὐτὴ ἡ παράθεσις ὅλης τῆς ζωῆς μας στὸν Χριστό; Πῶς θὰ ἀφήσουμε ὅλους καὶ ὅλα στὸ Χριστό;

- Μὲ τὴν ἀδιάλειπτη προσευχὴ, τὸ ἀδιάλειπτο κοίταγμα πρὸς τὸν Χριστό, τὴν σταθερὰ προσανατολισμένη ἀγάπη μας στὸν Χριστό. Τίποτε νὰ μὴ μᾶς ἀποσπᾷ, τίποτε νὰ μὴν μᾶς ταράξει, τίποτε νὰ μὴ

**Οἱ κτήρων καὶ ἐλεήμων ὁ Κύριος, μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος  
οὐκ εἰς τέλος ὀργισθήσεται, οὐδὲ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα μνησθεῖ.  
Οὐ κατὰ τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν ἐποίησεν ἡμῖν,  
οὐδὲ κατὰ τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἀνταπεδῶσκεν ἡμῖν.**



μᾶς κάνει νὰ ἀγωνιοῦμε. Ἔχουμε Κύριο ποὺ μᾶς νιάζεται, μᾶς ἀγαπάει ἄπειρα, μᾶς φροντίζει στοργικά, μᾶς ἀγκαλιάζει πατρικά. Ἔχουμε Πατέρα Πανάγαθο καὶ Πάνσοφο καὶ Παντοδύναμο. Αὐτὸς μᾶς ὑποσχέθηκε ὅτι «*Ἐγὼ θὰ σᾶς τὰ τακτοποιήσω ὅλα, ὅλες τὶς ἀνάγκες σας τὶς πραγματικές. Ἔσεῖς μόνο μία ἔννοια νὰ ἔχετε: νὰ ζητᾶτε Ἐμένα, τὴν Βασιλεία μου, τὴν ἀρετὴ, τὸ ἀγαθὸν ποὺ εἶμαι Ἐγώ. Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ προδιαγραφή σας. Ἔτσι θὰ ζήσετε εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. Ἡ ἀγάπη πρὸς Ἐμένα εἶναι ἡ προδιαγραφή τῆς ζωῆς. Εἶναι ἡ ἰκανὴ καὶ ἀναγκαῖα συνθήκη γιὰ νὰ ζήσετε πραγματικά.*»

Ὅταν δὲν ἐμπιστευόμαστε τὸν ἑαυτὸ μας, τὸν λογισμό μας, τὶς δυνάμεις μας, τὴν ἐξυπνάδα μας, τὴν ἐνεργητικότητά μας, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἀναθέτουμε τὰ παραθέτουμε ὅλα τὰ ζητήματά μας στὸν Χριστὸ τότε τηροῦμε τὴν λειτουργικὴ προτροπή: «*Ἐαυτοὺς καὶ ἀλλήλους καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ παραθώμεθα.*»

Ὅταν δὲν σκεφτόμαστε μὲ τὴν ἀνθρώπινη κοσμικὴ λογικὴ καὶ δὲν ἀντιμετωπίζουμε μὲ τὶς φτωχὲς καὶ οὐσιαστικὰ ἀνύπαρκτες ἀνθρώπινες δυνάμεις τὸ κάθε μας πρόβλημα ἀλλὰ προσευχόμαστε, ἀνοιγόμαστε ἀγαπητικὰ στὸν Θεὸ τότε ἐπίσης γινόμαστε ὑπάκουοι στὸν Χριστό. Ἀκόμη καὶ ὅταν δὲν ἔχουμε κάποιο συγκεκριμένο, ἄμεσο καὶ πιεστικὸ πρόβλημα πάλι δὲν πρέπει νὰ ξεχνοῦμε τὴν πρώτη ἐντολὴ τῆς «*ἐξ ὅλης καρδίας καὶ διανοίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ ψυχῆς καὶ ἰσχύος ἀγάπης πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*» ἀλλὰ νὰ ἐμμένουμε στὴν προσευχή, στὴν ἐμπιστοσύνη στὸν Κύριο. Χωρὶς αὐτὴν τὴν ἄμετρη ἐμπιστοσύνη στὸν Θεό, στὴν Θεία Πρόνοια, στὴν Θεία Ἀγάπη δὲν μπορούμε νὰ βροῦμε εἰρήνη καὶ ἀνάπαυση στὴν ψυχὴ μας.

Ὁ Κύριος μᾶς εἶπε ὅτι: «*Δεῦτε πρὸς με πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι, καὶ γὰρ ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς ἄρατε τὸν ζυγὸν μου ἐφ' ὑμᾶς καὶ μάθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ὅτι πρῶτός εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ, καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀνάπασιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν ὃ γὰρ ζυγὸς μου χρηστὸς καὶ τὸ φορτίον μου ἑλαφρόν ἐστιν.*» (Ματθ. 11:28-30). Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ποὺ προσεύχεται μιμείται τὸν ταπεινὸ Χριστὸ ὃς ὁποῖος καὶ ὡς ἄνθρωπος προσήυχετο ἀδιάλειπτα καὶ κοινονοῦσε μὲ τὸν ἐν Οὐρανοῖς Πατέρα Του γιὰ νὰ μᾶς διδάξει πρότυπο ζωῆς. Μᾶς δίδαξε ἐπίσης τὴν παραβολὴ «*τῆς χήρας καὶ τοῦ ἄδικου κριτοῦ*» γιὰ νὰ μὴν ἀποκάμνουμε στὴν προσευχή. Ἡ ἀδιάλειπτη προσευχὴ εἶναι ἕνας ἀπὸ

τούς τρεῖς δρόμους ποὺ μᾶς ὀδηγοῦν στὴν ταπεινώση ἢ ὁποῖα φέρνει τὴν ἀνάπαυση στὴν ψυχὴ μας. (Οἱ ἄλλοι δύο δρόμοι ποὺ ὀδηγοῦν στὴν ταπεινώση εἶναι νὰ ἀγαπήσουμε τὸν σωματικὸ κόπο καὶ νὰ βάζουμε τὸν ἑαυτὸ μας κάτω ἀπὸ ὄλους). Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ποὺ προσεύχεται σωστα, «*κρέμεται*» ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό. Ἀφήνει τελείως τὸ θέλημά του καὶ λέγει: «*Κύριε ἐσὺ τακτοποίησέ τα ὅλα. Ἐγὼ τίποτα δὲν μπορῶ νὰ τακτοποιήσω. Ἄν εἶναι θέλημα Σου νὰ γίνουν ἔτσι τὰ πράγματα ἅς γίνουν ἂν δὲν εἶναι θέλημά Σου ἅς μὴν γίνουν. Ἐγὼ θὰ εἶμαι τὸ ἴδιο χαρούμενος ἂν γίνουν ὅπως τὰ σκέπτομαι καὶ ἂν δὲν γίνουν, διότι θὰ ξέρω ὅτι αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ θέλημά Σου, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον.*»

Βέβαια ἡ ἀσφάλεια εἶναι ὁ πνευματικὸς μας ὀδηγὸς τὸν ὁποῖο πρέπει πάντα νὰ συμβουλευόμαστε. Αὐτὸ εἶναι πιδὸ ταπεινὸ καὶ ἀπολύτως ἀσφαλὲς διὰ νὰ διακριθῶνουμε σὲ κάθε περίσταση τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ.



θὰ πρέπει νὰ τὸν ρωτᾶμε ἔχοντας ἀρνηθεῖ τελείως τὸ δικὸ μας θέλημα. Πρέπει νὰ εἶμαστε ἔτοιμοι νὰ ἀκούσουμε τὰ πάντα καὶ νὰ ὑπακούσουμε μὲ χαρὰ. **Ὁ πνευματικὸς μας εἶναι κατὰ τοὺς Ἁγίους Πατέρες «θεὸς μετὰ Θεόν».** Εἶναι ἡ μεγάλη δωρεὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ στὸν ἄνθρωπο. Εἶναι τὸ ὄργανο τοῦ Θεοῦ στὴν προσωπικὴ μας

πορεία πρὸς τὴν Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Μακάριος ἐκεῖνος ποὺ σὰν τὸν Ἀββᾶ Ποιμένα δὲν λογαριάζει κόπους γιὰ νὰ πάει νὰ βρεῖ τὸν πνευματικὸ πατέρα καὶ νὰ τὸν ἐρωτήσῃ ἀποκαλύπτοντας πλήρως ὄλους τοὺς λογισμοὺς του. Ὁ Ἀββᾶς Ποιμένας κάποτε ξέχασε νὰ πεῖ ἕναν λογισμό στὸν Γέροντά του. Τὸν θυμήθηκε βάζοντας τὸ κλειδί στὴν πόρτα τοῦ κελλιοῦ του ποὺ ἀπεῖχε ἀρκετὲς ὥρες ἀπὸ τὸ κελλὶ τοῦ πνευματικοῦ του. Ἀμέσως γύρισε πίσω κάνοντας τὸν ἴδιο πολὺωρο δρόμο γιὰ νὰ ρωτήσῃ περὶ τοῦ λογισμοῦ ποὺ εἶχε λησμονήσει. Τότε ὁ πνευματικὸς του θαύμασε γιὰ τὴν ἐπιμέλειά του, τὸν μακάρισε καὶ προέβλεψε ὅτι θὰ γίνῃ πρᾶγματι μέγας στύλος τῆς ἐρήμου καὶ διακρικότητος πνευματικὸς δάσκαλος.

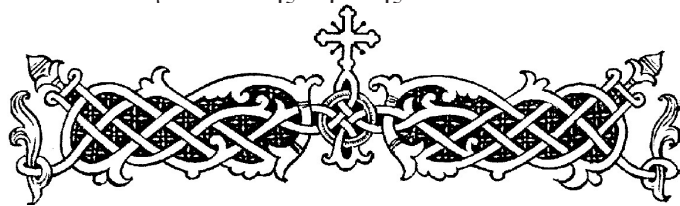
Ἔτσι γίνονται οἱ ἅγιοι. Κατ' αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο ἀρνήθηκαν τὸν ἑαυτὸ τους, ἔκοψαν τὸ θέλημά τους, ἀρνήθηκαν κάθε προσωπικὴ τους ἐπιθυμία καὶ ὑπάκουσαν στὸν Χριστὸ ὃς ὁποῖος μᾶς διδάσκει: «*Εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἔλθειν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι. Ὅς γὰρ ἂν*



θέλη την ψυχήν αὐτοῦ σώσαι, ἀπολέσει αὐτήν ὃς δ' ἂν ἀπολέσῃ τὴν ψυχήν αὐτοῦ ἔνεκεν ἐμοῦ, εὕρησει αὐτήν. Τί γὰρ ὠφελεῖται ἄνθρωπος ἐὰν τὸν κόσμον ὅλον κερδήσῃ, τὴν δὲ ψυχήν αὐτοῦ ζημιωθῆ; Ἡ τὴν δώσει ἄνθρωπος ἀντάλλαγμα τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ;» (Ματθ. 16:24-26). Γιαὶ νὰ τὰ κατορθώσουμε ὁμῶς ὅλα αὐτὰ πρέπει νὰ ἐνταχθοῦμε πραγματικά μέσα στὴν ἐκκλησία καὶ νὰ διατηρήσουμε αὐτὴν τὴν ἐνταξὶ μὲ τὴν ἀδιάλειπτη μετάνοια.

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶναι ὁ χῶρος ὅπου ἀφηνόμαστε καὶ ἀφήνουμε τὰ πάντα στὸν Χριστό. Εἶναι ἡ Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ποὺ καλούμαστε νὰ τὴν ζητᾶμε καὶ νὰ τὴν ἔχουμε ἐνεργὸ μέσα μας προσωπικά ὁ καθένας. Ζώντας ἐντὸς Τῆς πραγματώνουμε τὴν θεραπεία τῆς ἀλλοτριωμένης ὑπαρξῆς μας καὶ ζοῦμε τὴ σωτηρία καὶ τὸν Παράδεισο «ἐδῶ καὶ τώρα». Ἡ ἐνταξὶ μας ἔγινε διὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Βαπτίσματος. Ἡ διατήρησις καὶ διαφύλαξις αὐτῆς τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι δικό μας προσωπικὸ θέμα καὶ ἐγκεῖται στὴν τήρησις τῆς ἐντολῆς τῆς ἀγάπης ἡ ὁποία συνεπάγεται τὴν τήρησις ὅλων τῶν ἐντολῶν. Ὁ Κύριος μᾶς εἶπε ὅτι: «Ὁ ἔχων τὰς ἐντολάς μου καὶ τηρῶν αὐτάς, ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν ὁ ἀγαπῶν με ὁ δὲ ἀγαπῶν με ἀγαπηθήσεται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ ἐγὼ ἀγαπήσω αὐτὸν καὶ ἐμφανίσω αὐτῷ ἐμὰυτόν.» (Ἰωάν. 14:21).

Ἐπομένως ὁ σκοπὸς τῆς ζωῆς μας εἶναι ἡ θεραπεία τῆς ψυχοσωματικῆς μας ὑπαρξῆς διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς στὴν Ἐκκλησία. Ἡ λειτουργικὴ προτροπὴ «Ἐαυτοὺς καὶ ἀλλήλους...» συγκεφαλαιώνει ὅλες τὶς ἐντολὰς ἀφοῦ συνεπάγεται μιὰ ζωντανὴ πίστις, μιὰ ὀλοκληρωτικὴ ἀφοσίωσις καὶ ἓνα ὀλοκληρωτικὸ ἄφημα στὸν Παντοδύναμο Θεὸ τῆς Ἀγάπης.



Ῥώτησαν ἓνα Γέροντα, ἂν ὠφελοῦνται αὐτοὶ ποὺ ζητοῦν τὶς εὐχὰς τῶν πατέρων, ὅταν οἱ ἴδιοι ἀμελοῦν (γιαὶ τὴ σωτηρία τους). Καὶ ὁ Γέροντας ἀποκρίθηκε:

- Ὅπως εἶναι γραμμένο, «πολὺ ἰσχύει δέσις δικαίου», πλὴν ὁμῶς «ἐνεργουμένη» (Ἰακ. 5:16), ὅταν δηλαδὴ τὴ βοηθᾷ καὶ ἐκεῖνος ποὺ ζητᾷ τὴν προσευχὴν, φυλάσσοντας τὸν ἑαυτό του μὲ κάθε ἐπιμέλεια καὶ πόνο καρδιάς ἀπὸ πονηρὰς πράξεις καὶ λογισμοῦς. Γιατί, ἂν ζεῖ μὲ ἀμέλεια, καθόλου δὲν ὠφελεῖται, καὶ ἂν ἀκόμα ἅγιοι εὕχονται γι' αὐτόν. Γιατί, ὅπως λέει τὸ ρητό, «εἶς οἰκοδομῶν καὶ εἶς καθαιρῶν, τί ὠφέλησαν πλεῖον ἢ κόπους;» (Σοφ. Σειρ. 34:23).

**Ἀπὸ τὸ Γεροντικὸ**

## Ἀνεχώρησε διὰ τὴν αἰωνιότητα ὁ ἀγωνιστὴς θεολόγος Νικόλαος Ἰ. Σωτηρόπουλος

Τοῦ κ. Χρήστου Σαλταούρα.



Ἀνεχώρησε γιὰ τὴν αἰωνιότητα ὁ ζηλωτὴς Θεολόγος, ὁ ἀκάματος ἐργάτης τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, ὁ πύρινος κήρυκας τοῦ θείου λόγου, ὁ σφοδρὸς πολέμιος τῶν αἰρετικῶν, ὁ φόβος καὶ ὁ τρόμος τῶν Οἰκουμενιστῶν, ὁ δεινὸς ἐρμηνευτὴς τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς, τὸ κόσμημα τῆς Θεολογίας, ὁ ἱκανὸς συζητητὴς, ὁ πλούσιος συγγραφέας καὶ ἄριστος φιλόλογος, ὁ ἐμπνευστὴς ἡμῶν, ὁ Διδάσκαλος ἡμῶν. Τὸ καύχημα καὶ γαυρίαμα τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων ἀγωνιστῶν τῆς σύγχρονης ἐποχῆς. Ἀνεχώρησε γιὰ τὴν αἰωνιότητα τὸ πλέον πιστὸ τέκνον τοῦ Μακαριστοῦ Αὐγουστίνου Καντιώτη!

Τώρα μοῦ ἔρχονται στὸ μυαλὸ τὰ λόγια τοῦ Νικόλαου Σωτηρόπουλου, ὅταν κάποτε τοῦ εὐχήθηκα μετὰ ἀπὸ μία ἀπὸ τὶς πολλὰς περιπέτειες τῆς υἱείας του «νὰ εἶναι πάντα καλά». Τότε ὁ Νικόλαος Σωτηρόπουλος μοῦ εἶπε: «ΜΟΝΟ ΣΤΟΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΟ ΕἶΝΑΙ ΚΑΛΑ!»

Ὁ Σωτηρόπουλος ἀνεχώρησε γιὰ τὴν αἰωνιότητα καὶ ἡ σύγχρονη Θεολογία εἶναι πλέον φτωχότερη! Πολὺ φτωχότερη! Καὶ ἂν ἡ Θεολογία δὲν θέλει νὰ παραμείνει φτωχὴ, καλὰ θὰ κάνει νὰ ἀξιοποιήσῃ τὸ συγγραφικὸ ἔργο τοῦ μεταστάντος. Ἰδιαίτερος πρέπει νὰ προσεχθῆ ἀπὸ τοὺς Θεολογικοὺς κύκλους ἡ μετάφρασις τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης ποὺ ἐκπόνησε ὁ Νικόλαος Σωτηρόπουλος καὶ τὸ τετράτομο ἔργο του ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑ ΔΥΣΚΟΛΩΝ ΧΩΡΙΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΓΡΑΦΗΣ καθὼς καὶ τὰ περίφημα Ὁ ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΓΙΑΧΒΕ καὶ ΤΟ ΑΓΙΟΝ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΓΙΑΧΒΕ.

Ὁ Σωτηρόπουλος κοιμήθηκε ἀλλὰ τὸ ἔργο του λάμπει σὰν χρυσός. Τὸ ἔργο του ἐμπνέει νέους ἀγωνιστὰς τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας στοὺς χαλεποὺς καιροὺς ποὺ ζοῦμε. Ὁ Σωτηρόπουλος ὑπῆρξε κραταῖος πολέμιος τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἰδίως τῶν ψευδομαρτύρων τοῦ Ἰεχωβά ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ Προτεστάντισμο γενικά. Ἐνθυμοῦμαι κάποτε πού μοῦ εἶπε γιὰ τὸ βιβλίον του ΑΝΤΙΧΙΛΙΑΣΤΙΚΟΝ ΕΓΧΕΙΡΙΔΙΟΝ ὅτι δὲν ἀνατρέπει μόνον τὸν Χιλιασμὸ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν Προτεστάντισμὸ γενικότερα.

Ὅλες τὶς αἰρέσεις πολέμησε ὁ Σωτηρόπουλος. Πολέμησε καὶ τὸν Παπισμὸ καὶ ἐπειδὴ δὲν συμβιβάστηκε μὲ τὴν φιλοπαπικὴ-οὐνιτικὴ στάσις ἀναξίων Οἰκουμενιστῶν λυκοποιμένων διώχθηκε ἀπεινώσως!

Διδάσκαλε Νικόλαε Σωτηρόπουλε, ΣΕ ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΩ. Πρέσβευε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τῶν ἀκροατῶν τῶν κηρυγμάτων σου στὸν Δεσπότη Χριστὸ!

Αἰωνία σου ἡ μνήμη!

## Ἡ Μετάνοια τῆς Τσιγγάνας

### Μία ἀληθινή ἱστορία ποῦ ἀφυπνίζει συνειδήσεις!

*Τερέας Βιορέλ Κοζοκάρου-Κίσιβο, ἀπόδοση στὰ Ἑλληνικά ἀπὸ τὸν π.Γεώργιο Κονισπολιάτη, ἀπὸ τὸ περιοδικὸ «Familia Ortodoxa», τεῦχος 39, Ἀπρίλιος 2012.*

Ἐδῶ καὶ ἑπτὰ χρόνια εἶμαι ἱερέας στὸ παρεκκλήσι τῶν φυλακῶν Προύγκου στὸ Κίσιβο (Δημοκρατία τῆς Μολδαβίας). Ἐπειδὴ παρὰλληλα ὑπηρετῶ καὶ στὴν ἑνορία μου κάνω ἐκεῖ ἀκολουθίες τῆς Τετάρτης καὶ τῆς Παρασκευῆς. Μὲ βοηθοῦν κάποιοι κρατούμενοι ὡς ἐθελοντές. Ἐνα ἀπὸ τὰ καθήκοντά τους εἶναι νὰ προετοιμάσουν τοὺς κρατουμένους ποῦ θὰ συμμετάσχουν στὴν Ἀκολουθία τῆς ἐπομένης ἡμέρας, δινοντάς τους νὰ διαβάσουν εἴτε τὸ Ὁρολόγιο εἴτε κάποιο ἀπὸ τὰ βιβλία ποῦ ἔχουμε στὴν μικρὴ μας βιβλιοθήκη.

Θέλω ὅμως νὰ σὰς διηγηθῶ κάτι ποῦ συνέβη τὸ φθινόπωρο τοῦ 2008.

Οἱ φυλακὲς Προύγκου εἶναι οἱ μοναδικὲς φυλακὲς-νοσοκομεῖο στὸ ὁποῖο βρίσκονται καὶ ἄντρες καὶ γυναῖκες. Σὲ ἓνα κελὶ τοῦ χειρουργικοῦ τμήματος βρισκόταν καὶ ἡ Ζαμφίρα ἢ τσιγγάνα. Ὅταν ἓνας ἀπὸ τοὺς ἐθελοντὲς πῆγε στὸ κελὶ γιὰ νὰ ρωτήσῃ ποιὸς θὰ συμμετεῖχε στὴν Ἀκολουθία τῆς ἐπομένης ἡμέρας ἢ Ζαμφίρα τοῦ εἶπε: «Ἐγὼ θὰ ἔρθω ἀλλὰ δὲν ἔχω ἀνάγκη τὰ βιβλία σου». Ἡ Ζαμφίρα ἦταν περίπου 36 ἐτῶν, ὁμορφὴ καὶ ἀπ' ὅσα εἶχα καταλάβει «ἐλαφρῶν ἡθῶν». Ἦταν στὴν φυλακὴ ἀπὸ τὰ δεκαῆξι τῆς χρόνια ἐπειδὴ εἶχε σκοτώσῃ τὸ παιδί τῆς ἀλλὰ καὶ γιὰ ἄλλα σοβαρὰ παραπτώματα.

Τὴν ἐπομένη λοιπὸν ἢ Ζαμφίρα ἦρθε στὴν ἀκολουθία στὸ παρεκκλήσι. Τὴν ἡμέρα ἐκεῖνη διαβάσαμε τὸν Ἰκετήριο κανόνα πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦ Χριστό, τὴν Παράκληση τῆς Παναγίας καὶ τὸν κανόνα τῆς Θείας Μεταλήψεως. Ἡ Ζαμφίρα ὅμως στὸ πίσω μέρος τοῦ ναοῦ ἀπαντοῦσε σὲ κάθε προσευχὴ κοροϊδευτικὰ καὶ ἔκανε ἄσχημες χειρονομίες. Φυσικὰ ἐνοχλοῦσε καὶ ἐμένα ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους κρατουμένους οἱ ὁποῖοι ἦταν περίπου 35, ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες. Κανεὶς δὲν τολμοῦσε νὰ τῆς κάνει παρατήρηση ἐπειδὴ εἶχε ἓνα κάποιο «κῦρος» στὸν ὑπόκοσμο. Παρότι ἦταν 36 ἐτῶν ἦταν ψηλὰ στὴν ἱεραρχία, κάτι ποῦ ὅλοι οἱ κρατούμενοι σέβονταν ἀπολύτως. Ἐδῶσε ὀλόκληρη παράσταση καὶ κάποιους τοὺς διασκέδαζε μὲ τὰ ἀστεῖα τῆς. Τὴν ἄφησα ἡσυχῇ, μόνο τὴν ρώτησα:

- Πῶς σὲ λένε;

- Ζαμφίρα, μοῦ ἀπάντησε.

Τῆς εἶπα νὰ ἡσυχάσει.

- Καλά, μοῦ ἀπάντησε αὐτὴ, συνέχισε ὅμως τὰ ἴδια.

Μετὰ τὴν ἀκολουθία τοὺς ἐξομολόγησα ὅλους. Σὲ μία γυναῖκα—ἢ ὁποῖα ζοῦσε στὸ ἴδιο κελὶ μὲ τὴν

Ζαμφίρα—εἶπα:

- Δὲ μπορῶ νὰ σὲ κοινωνήσω τώρα. Θὰ κάνεις τὸν κανόνα ποῦ θὰ σοῦ δώσω καὶ θὰ ἔρθεις σὲ δύο ἐβδομάδες νὰ κοινωνήσεις.

Μόνο ἢ Ζαμφίρα δὲν ἐξομολογήθηκε. Τότε τὴν ρώτησα:

- Ἐσὺ θὰ ἐξομολογηθεῖς;

- Ὅχι δὲν θὰ ἐξομολογηθῶ, γιατί ἂν θὰ ἐξομολογηθῶ θὰ σοῦ πέσουν οἱ τρίχες ἀπὸ τὴν μύτη.

- Τότε γιατί ἦρθες στὴν ἐκκλησία ἀφοῦ οὔτε ἐξομολογεῖσαι, οὔτε προσεύχεσαι, οὔτε ἀκοῦς τὴν Ἀκολουθία. ἦρθες γιὰ βόλτα;

- Ὅχι ἦρθα γιὰ νὰ δῶ πόσο ὁμορφος εἶσαι.

Σὲ ὅλα ἀπαντοῦσε πολὺ ἀπότομα. Τότε εἶπα:

- Ἄς γίνει τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Κυρίου.

Μετὰ ἀπὸ δύο ἐβδομάδες ἔστειλα ἓναν ἐθελοντὴ στὴν γυναῖκα στὴν ὁποῖα εἶχα βάλει κανόνα καὶ ἢ ὁποῖα ἔμεινε στὸ ἴδιο κελὶ μὲ τὴν Ζαμφίρα, γιὰ νὰ τῆς θυμίσει ὅτι θὰ κοινωνήσῃ καὶ νὰ ἐτοιμαστῆ. Πάει ὁ ἐθελοντὴς στὸ κελὶ καὶ τῆς λέει:

- Ὁ ἱερέας εἶπε πῶς ἐπειδὴ αὔριο θὰ κοινωνήσετε νὰ ἐτοιμαστῆτε καὶ νὰ διαβάσετε τὴν προσευχὴ πρὸ τῆς Θείας Μεταλήψεως.

Τῆς ἔδωσε ἓνα Ὁρολόγιο καὶ ἀμέσως πετάχτηκε ἢ Ζαμφίρα:

- Θέλω καὶ ἐγὼ νὰ πάω αὔριο στὴν ἐκκλησία.

- Ὅχι δὲν θὰ πᾶς ἐπειδὴ δὲν κάθεται ἡσυχῇ, τῆς εἶπε ὁ ἐθελοντὴς.

- Σὲ παρακαλῶ, θέλω νὰ πάω, ἐπέμεινε ἢ Ζαμφίρα.

- Δῶσε μου ἓνα βιβλίον νὰ διαβάσω.

Τῆς ἔδωσε τὸ Ψαλτήρι. Δὲν ξέρω τί διάβασε καὶ πόσο διάβασε ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐπόμενη ἡμέρα ἦρθε καὶ μὲ βρῆκε μία συγκρατούμενὴ τῆς καὶ μοῦ εἶπε:

- Πάτερ ἢ Ζαμφίρα δὲν εἶναι καλὰ στὸ μυαλό τῆς.

- Δηλαδή, τί θέλεις νὰ πεῖς; ρώτησα ἐγώ.

- Ὅλη νύχτα ἔκλαιγε. Διάβαζε καὶ ἔκλαιγε. Δὲν ξέρω τί διάβασε ἀλλὰ ἔκλαιγε πάρα πολὺ.

Ἄφοῦ τοὺς ἐξομολόγησα ὅλους πῆγα στὴν Ζαμφίρα. Ἦταν γονατισμένη σὲ μία γωνία. Φαινόνταν κλαμμένη. Δὲν ἔλεγε τίποτα.

- Θέλεις νὰ ἐξομολογηθεῖς;

- Ναὶ πάτερ θὰ ἐξομολογηθῶ, ἀλλὰ δὲν θὰ ἐξομολογηθῶ ὅπως ὅλοι οἱ ἄλλοι.

- Πές μου πῶς θέλεις.

- Θέλω νὰ ἐξομολογηθῶ μὲ δυνατὴ φωνή, μπροστὰ σε ὅλους.

Καὶ ὅπως στεκόμουν ἐγὼ μὲ τὸ πρόσωπο πρὸς τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, γύρισε πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους κρατουμένους καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ ἐξομολογεῖται δημόσια!

Ἡ ἐξομολόγησή κράτησε 45 λεπτά. Σὲ κάθε ἁμαρτία ἔκλαιγε, ἔκανε μία μετάνοια καὶ ἔλεγε:

- Παρακαλῶ συγχωρέστε με.



Ἄφου τελείωσε σκέφτηκα: «Νὰ τὴν κοινωνήσω;»

Σύμφωνα μὲ τοὺς κανόνες τοῦ Ἁγίου Βασιλείου ἔπρεπε νὰ μὴν τῆς ἐπιτρέψω νὰ κοινωνήσῃ γιὰ τριακόσια χρόνια μὲ τόσο βαριᾶς ἁμαρτίες ποὺ εἶχε κάνει... Αὐτὸ ποὺ κατάφερα νὰ μάθω ἦταν πὼς ἡ γιαιγιά τῆς τὴν εἶχε βαπτίσει ὅταν ἦταν μικρὴ ἀλλὰ ποτὲ δὲν εἶχε κοινωνήσῃ. Συνεπῶς θὰ ἦταν ἡ πρώτη φρορά.

Δὲν εἶχε φάει τίποτα ἐκεῖνο τὸ πρωινό. Σκεφτόμουν τί θὰ ἔκανε ὁ Χριστὸς μετὰ ἀπὸ μία τέτοια ἐξομολόγησι προσευχόμενος ὡς ἔξῃ:

- Κύριε ἐὰν τὴν κοινωνῶ ἀναξίως παίρνω ἐγὼ ἐπάνω μου αὐτὴν τὴν ἁμαρτία.

Τὴν κοινωνήσῃ. Μετὰ τὴν Θεία Κοινωνία ἔλαμπε ἀπὸ χαρὰ καὶ ἔψελνε « Ἀλληλούια». Βρισκόνταν σὲ μία τέτοια κατάστασι χαρᾶς ποὺ σπάνια συναντᾶς καὶ σὲ Χριστιανοὺς ποὺ ζοῦν ἐλεύθεροι στὸν κόσμο.

Τὸ βράδυ μου τηλεφώνησε ἕνας φύλακας:

- Πάτερ, ἡ Ζαμφίρα πέθανε, μοῦ λέει!

Στὶς ἑννέα τὸ βράδυ ἔφτασα στὴν φυλακὴ καὶ ρώτησα μία φυλακισμένη ποὺ εἶχε κοινωνήσῃ μαζί της, τι συνέβη καὶ μοῦ εἶπε:

- Πάτερ, ἦταν πολὺ χαρούμενη ποὺ κοινωνήσῃ. Ἀπὸ τὸ πρῶτὸ προσευχόνταν στὸ Θεό, μοῦ μιλοῦσε γιὰ τὸ Θεό, γιὰ τὴν μετάνοια, γιὰ τὴν πίστι καὶ τὴν ἀγάπη καὶ ἔκλαιγε γιὰ τὶς ἁμαρτίες της. Κατὰ τῆς ὀκτώ το βράδυ μου λέει: «Δὲν αἰσθάνομαι καλά, κάτι ἔχω».

Πῆγε στὸ μπάνιο, πλύθηκε, ἔβαλε τὰ πιὸ καλά της ρούχα καὶ εἶπε: «Ἐγὼ θὰ πεθάνω τώρα, δώστε μου ἕνα κερί» (σ.ό. Σὲ ἄλλες ὀρθόδοξες χώρες ὅταν κάποιος ξεψυχᾷ πάντα κρατοῦν δίπλα του ἕνα αναμμένο κερί). Τῆς ἔφεραν τὸ κερί, γύρισε τὸ κεφάλι της πρὸς τὸν τοῖχο καὶ πέθανε!

Τὴν ἐπομένη ἡμέρα οἱ γιατροὶ ἔκαναν συμβούλιο. Ἐπρεπε νὰ χειρουργηθεῖ γιὰ κοιλία ἀλλὰ δὲν ἔβρισκαν μία αἰτία γιὰ τὸν ξαφνικὸ θάνατό της. Ἐγὼ πιστεύω πὼς ὁ Θεὸς περμένει τὸν καθένα νὰ ἐπιστρέψῃ κοντὰ Του καὶ ὅταν αὐτὸ γίνῃ καὶ εἶναι καθαρὸς τότε ὁ Θεὸς κρίνει ἐὰν θὰ τὸν πάρῃ δίπλα Του...



## Ἄδικαιολόγητος Ἄγνοια

Τοῦ πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου π. Διονυσίου Τάτση, «Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος» ἀ.φ. 2018, 11 Ἀπριλίου, 2014.

Στοὺς κύκλους τῶν σοφῶν οἰκουμενιστῶν παρατηροῦνται μερικὰ φαιδρὰ καὶ ἀπίστευτα πράγματα. Λὲς καὶ δὲν γνωρίζουν τὸ ἀλφάβητο τῆς

Ὁρθοδόξου θεολογίας. Τονίζουν καὶ ξανατονίζουν ὅτι οἱ Παπικοὶ καὶ οἱ Προτεστάντες ἀποτελοῦν ξεχωριστὲς «ἐκκλησίες» καὶ δὲν εἶναι αἰρετικοί. Ἐὰν ὅμως συμβαίνει κάτι τέτοιο, γιὰτὶ διαλέγονται μαζί τους; Ποιὸ εἶναι τὸ ἀντικείμενο καὶ ποιὸς εἶναι ὁ σκοπός; Μήπως ἡ προσπάθειά τους εἶναι γιὰ ἀσήμαντα καὶ ἐπουσιώδη θέματα, μιὰ καὶ δὲν βλέπουν τὶς μεγάλες δογματικὲς διαφορὲς; Ἀλλὰ γιὰ τὰ ἀσήμαντα τόσος θόρυβος, τόσος κόπος καὶ τόσα ἔξοδα; Δὲν εἶναι παιδαριῶδες αὐτό;

Φοβοῦμαι ὅμως ὅτι οἱ οἰκουμενιστὲς δὲν βρίσκουν πνευματικὴ ἀνάπαυσι στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ ψάχνουν νὰ τὴ βροῦν στοὺς ἑτεροδόξους, στοὺς φιλελεύθερους καὶ ἐκσυγχρονιστὲς «ἀδελφούς» τους, οἱ ὅποιοι ὅμως βρίσκονται πολὺ μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὴ σὴζουσα ἀλήθεια. Χωρὶς νὰ δηλώνουν κάτι τέτοιο δημοσίως, τὸ ἀποδέχονται πλήρως καὶ τὸ πετυχαίνουν μερικῶς μὲ τὶς συχνότατες ἐπαφὲς μὲ τοὺς ἑτεροδόξους. Δυστυχῶς, ἔχουν διαβρωθεῖ τόσο πολὺ, ποὺ δὲν ἀντέχουν νὰ βρίσκονται μακριὰ τους, κλεισμένοι στὴν παραδοσιακὴ Ὁρθοδοξία. Θέλουν τὸν κοσμικὸ χριστιανισμό, ποὺ δὲν ἔχει προέκτασι στὴ μετὰ θάνατο ζωὴ, ἀλλὰ ἀπλῶς ρυθμίζει τὰ ἐφήμερα προβλήματα καὶ διευκολύνει τὴν ἱκανοποίησι τοῦ πάθους τῆς φιλοδοξίας, τῆς φιλοχρηματίας καὶ τῆς φιληδονίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ἄκοῦν γιὰ παραδόσεις καὶ ἀσκητικὸ φρόνημα καὶ χάνουν τὴν εὐθυμία τους. Εἶναι κοσμικοὶ ποιμένες κοσμικῶν προβάτων, μὲ συμβιβασμοὺς καὶ ιδιόρρυθμοὺς ἠθικοὺς κανόνες, ποὺ δὲν ἔχουν πολλὴ σχέση μὲ τὴ χριστιανικὴ ἠθικὴ.

Οἱ οἰκουμενιστὲς δὲν ἀποδέχονται ἐκεῖνο, ποὺ τόνιζε ὁ ἀείμνηστος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀμερικῆς Μιχαὴλ (†1958) γιὰ τοὺς ἑτεροδόξους, παρόλο ποὺ εἶναι ἀπλὸ καὶ αὐτονόητο καὶ δὲν χρειάζεται φιλοσοφικὴ σκέψι, γιὰ νὰ τὸ κατανοήσῃ κανεὶς. Ἐλεγε. «Τὸ Βατικανὸν εἶναι ἡ ἐκκλησία τῶν μεγάλων πλανῶν καὶ τῶν ἐσκεμμένων αἰρέσεων. Ἐχουν τόσον διαστρέψει τὴν ἀμώμητον θρησκείαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὥστε τὴν ἔχουν καταστήσει ἀγνώριστον. Δὲν ὑπάρχει, δι' ἐμὲ τοῦλάχιστον, οὐδεμία ἀμφιβολία, ὅτι ἡ μοναδικὴ ἐλπίς σωτηρίας τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος εἶναι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία. Καθολικισμὸς καὶ Προτεστάντισμὸς ὁμοῦ ἀποτελοῦν τὴν πλήρη διαστροφὴν τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ, τὸν ὅποιον ἀλώβητον διατηρεῖ ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία».

Αὐτὴ εἶναι ὁμολογία πίστεως. Δημοσίως μιᾶς γιὰ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ δὲν διστάζεις νὰ χαρακτηρίσεις αἰρετικοὺς ὅλους ἐκείνους, ποὺ τὴν ἀρνοῦνται. Εἶναι ἀδιανόητο νὰ χαρακτηρίζεις τοὺς ἑτεροδόξους «ἀγαπητοὺς ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφούς», ὅπως χωρὶς καμία ἀναστολὴ κάνουν οἱ οἰκουμενιστὲς.



## Οἱ Δώδεκα Ἀναχωρητῆς

Ἀπὸ τὸ Μέγα Γερωντικὸν.

**Δ**ώδεκα ἀναχωρητῆς ἅγιοι, σοφοὶ καὶ πνευματικοὶ ἄνθρωποι, συγκεντρώθηκαν κάποτε καὶ ζήτησαν νὰ ὁμολογήσει ὁ καθένας ὅσα κατόρθωσε στὸ κελί του καὶ ποῖα ἦταν ἡ πνευματικὴ του ἄσκηση.

Ὁ **πρῶτος**, ὁ μεγαλύτερος στὴν ἡλικία, εἶπε:

«Ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τὴ στιγμὴ ποὺ ἄρχισα νὰ ζω ἡσυχαστικὴ ζωὴ σταύρωσα ὅλο τὸν ἑαυτό μου ἀπέναντι στὰ ἐξωτερικὰ πράγματα, ἔχοντας στὸν νοῦ μου αὐτὸ ποὺ εἶναι γραμμένο: *Νὰ σπάσουμε τοὺς δεσμούς ποὺ μᾶς συνδέουν μαζί τους καὶ νὰ ρίξουμε ἀπὸ πάνω μας τὸν ζυγὸ τους.*

Ἔτσι, ἔκανα ἓνα τεῖχος ἀνάμεσα στὴν ψυχὴ μου καὶ στὰ σωματικὰ πράγματα καὶ ἀναλογίσθηκα ὅτι, ὅπως αὐτὸς ποὺ εἶναι μέσα ἀπὸ τὸ τεῖχος δὲν βλέπει αὐτὸν ποὺ στέκεται ἔξω, μὲ τὸν ἴδιο τρόπο καὶ σὺ μὴ θελήσεις νὰ βλέπεις τὰ πράγματα ποὺ ἔχουν σχέση μὲ τὰ ἔξω. Ἀλλὰ νὰ ἔχεις στραμμένη τὴν προσοχὴ σου στὸν ἑαυτό σου, ἀναμένοντας κάθε μέρα μὲ ἐλπίδα τὸν Θεό.

Ἔτσι θεωρῶ τὶς πονηρὲς ἐπιθυμίες φίδια καὶ ἀπόγονους ἀπὸ ὄχιές, καὶ ὅταν τὶς αἰσθάνομαι νὰ ξεφυτρώνουν στὸ νοῦ μου, τὶς ξηραίνω μὲ φοβέρες καὶ ὀργή. Ἀκόμη, δὲν σταμάτησα ποτὲ νὰ τὰ βάζω μὲ τὸ σῶμα μου καὶ μὲ τὴν ψυχὴ μου, γιὰ νὰ μὴν ἐκτραποῦν σὲ τίποτε ἀνάρμοστο».

Ὁ **δεύτερος** εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τότε ποὺ ἀρνήθηκα τὸν κόσμον, εἶπα στὸν ἑαυτό μου: Σήμερα ἀναγεννήθηκες, σήμερα ἄρχισες νὰ δουλεύεις στὸν Θεό, σήμερα ἄρχισες νὰ κατοικεῖς ἐδῶ σὰν ξένος. Ἔτσι κάθε μέρα νὰ αἰσθάνεσαι, σὰν ἓνας ξένος καὶ ὅτι αὐριο θὰ φύγεις».

Ὁ **τρίτος** εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τὸ πρωὶ ἀνεβαίνω στὸν Κύριό μου, καὶ ἀφοῦ τὸν προσκυνήσω, πέφτω μὲ τὸ πρόσωπο κάτω καὶ ἐξομολογοῦμαι τὰ ἁμαρτήματά μου. Ἔπειτα κατεβαίνοντας προσκυνῶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους του καὶ τοὺς παρακαλῶ νὰ ἱκετεύουν τὸν Θεὸ γιὰ μένα καὶ γιὰ ὁλόκληρη τὴν κτίση. Ἀφοῦ τὸ κάνω αὐτό, κατεβαίνω στὴν ἄβυσσο καὶ ὅ,τι κάνουν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, ὅταν πηγαίνουν στὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα, ποὺ σχίζονται ἐνδύματά τους καὶ κλαῖνε καὶ πενθοῦν γιὰ τὴ συμφορὰ ποὺ βρῆκε τοὺς πατέρες τους, αὐτὸ κάνω κι ἐγώ. Περιπλανιέμαι στοὺς τόπους τῆς κόλασης, βλέπω τὰ δικά μου μέλη (δηλαδὴ τοὺς ἐκεῖ ἄλλους Χριστιανούς) νὰ βασανίζονται καὶ κλαίω μ' αὐτοὺς ποὺ κλαῖνε».

Ὁ **τέταρτος** εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ ἔτσι νιώθω, σὰν νὰ κάθομαι μὲ τὸν Κύριο καὶ τοὺς Ἀποστόλους του στὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν. Εἶπα στὸν ἑαυτό μου: ἀπὸ δῶ καὶ πέρα κανέναν συγγενὴ νὰ μὴν ξέρεις, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε νὰ βρίσκεσαι μ' αὐτούς, νὰ τοὺς ἀναζητᾷς καὶ νὰ μιμῆσαι τὸν καλὸ τρόπο τῆς ζωῆς τους, ὅπως ἡ Μαρία ποὺ καθόταν κοντὰ στὰ πόδια τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ ἄκουγε τὰ λόγια του: *Νὰ γίνετε ἅγιοι, γιὰτὶ ἐγὼ εἶμαι ἅγιος. Νὰ γίνετε σπλαχνικοὶ καὶ τέλειοι, ὅπως ὁ Πατέρας σας εἶναι τέλειος. Νὰ διδαχτεῖτε ἀπὸ μένα ὅτι εἶμαι πρᾶος καὶ ταπεινὸς στὴν καρδιά».*

Ὁ **πέμπτος** εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ κάθε φορὰ βλέπω ἀγγέλους νὰ ἀνεβαίνουν καὶ νὰ κατεβαίνουν γιὰ τὴν πρόσκληση τῶν ψυχῶν. Καὶ πάντοτε, περιμένοντας τὸ τέλος μου, λέω: Εἶναι ἔτοιμη ἡ καρδιά μου, Θεέ μου;».

Ὁ **ἕκτος** εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ καθὼς κάνω τὴν πνευματικὴ μου ἐργασία στὸ κελί, νομίζω ὅτι ἀκούω ἀπὸ τὸν Κύριο αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια: *Νὰ κοπιᾶστε γιὰ μένα κι ἐγὼ θὰ σᾶς ἀναπαύσω, ἀκόμη λίγο νὰ ἀγωνιστεῖτε καὶ θὰ σᾶς δείξω τὴ σωτηρία καὶ τὴ δόξα μου. Ἄν μὲ ἀγαπᾶτε, ἂν εἴσαστε παιδιὰ μου, σὰν Πατέρα ποὺ παρακαλάει, νὰ αἰσθανθεῖτε γιὰ μένα σεβασμό, ἂν εἴστε ἀδελφοί μου, νὰ μὲ σεβαστεῖτε ὅπως ἐκεῖνον ποὺ ὑπέμεινε πολλὰ*

*γιὰ σᾶς. Ἄν εἴσαστε πρόβατά μου, νὰ ἀκούστε τὴ φωνὴ τοῦ ποιμένα, ἂν εἴστε δοῦλοι μου, νὰ ἀκολουθήσετε τὰ παθήματα τοῦ δεσπότη σας».*

Ὁ **ἕβδομος** εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ αὐτὰ τὰ τρία μελετῶ συνεχῶς καὶ λέω ἀδιάκοπα στὸν ἑαυτό μου: πίστη, ἐλπίδα, ἀγάπη, γιὰ νὰ χαίρομαι μὲ τὴν ἐλπίδα, νὰ στηρίζομαι μὲ τὴν πίστη, καὶ μὲ τὴν ἀγάπη νὰ μὴ λυπήσω ποτὲ κανένα».

Ὁ **ὄγδοος** εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ βλέπω τὸν διάβολο νὰ πετάει ζητώντας ποιὸν νὰ καταπιεῖ. Ὅπου κι ἂν πάει, βλέπω μὲ τὰ ἐσωτερικὰ μάτια, καὶ ἀναφέρομαι ἱκετευτικὰ στὸν Δεσπότη μου Χριστὸ ἐναντίον του, ὥστε νὰ μείνει ἄπρακτος καὶ νὰ μὴν μπορέσει νὰ κάνει τίποτε σὲ κανέναν, ἰδίως σ' αὐτοὺς ποὺ φοβοῦνται τὸν Θεό».

Ὁ **ἐνάτος** εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ ὅταν κάνω τὴν πνευματικὴ μου ἐργασία, βλέπω τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τῶν νοερῶν δυνάμεων κι ἀνάμεσά τους τὸν Κύριο τῆς δόξας νὰ λάμπει περισσότερο ἀπ' ὅλους. Ὅταν μὲ βρεῖ ἀκηδία, ἀνεβαίνω στοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ βλέπω τὴν ἔξοχη ὠραιότητα τῶν ἀγγέλων κι ἀκούω τοὺς ὕμνους ποὺ ἀνυψώνουν ἀκατάπαυστα στὸν Θεό,



καθώς και τὴ μελωδία τους. Ὑψώνομαι μὲ τοὺς ἤχους και τὴ φωνὴ και τὴ μουσικότητά τους, ὥστε νὰ νιώσω αὐτὸ ποὺ εἶναι γραμμένο: *Οἱ οὐρανοὶ διηγούνται τὴ δόξα τοῦ Θεοῦ και ὄλα τὰ ἐπίγεια τὰ θεωρῶ στάχτη και σκουπίδια*».

Ὁ δέκατος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ πάντοτε βλέπω κοντά μου τὸν φύλακα ἄγγελό μου και προσέχω τὸν ἑαυτό μου, ἔχοντας στὸ μυαλό μου αὐτὸ ποὺ ἔχει γραφεῖ: *Ἔβλεπα μπροστά μου τὸν Κύριο πάντοτε, ὅτι στέκεται στὰ δεξιά μου, γιὰ νὰ μὴν κλονισθῶ ἀπὸ τὴ θέση μου*. Φοβοῦμαι λοιπὸν αὐτὸν ποὺ παρακολουθεῖ τὴν πορεία μου. Διότι τὸν βλέπω κάθε μέρα νὰ ἀνεβαίνει στὸν Θεὸ και νὰ παρουσιάζει τὰ ἔργα και τὰ λόγια μου».

Ὁ ἐνδέκατος εἶπε:

«Ἐγὼ προσωποποίησα τὶς ἀρετές, ὅπως π.χ. τὴν ἐγκράτεια, τὴ σωφροσύνη, τὴ μακροθυμία, τὴν ἀγάπη και ἔστησα τὸν ἑαυτό μου ἀνάμεσά τους ὥστε νὰ μὲ περικυκλώσουν αὐτές. Κι ὅπου κι ἂν πάω, λέω στὸν ἑαυτό μου: Ποῦ εἶναι οἱ παιδαγωγοί σου; Μὴν ἀδιαφορήσεις, μὴν ἀκηδιάσεις, ἀφοῦ παντοινὰ αὐτὲς τὶς ἔχεις δίπλα σου, ὅποια ἀρετὴ θέλεις κοντά σου εἶναι, και καλὰ λόγια θὰ ποῦν στὸν Θεὸ γιὰ σένα, ὅτι δηλαδὴ βρῆκαν σὲ σένα ἀνάπαυση».

Ὁ δωδέκατος εἶπε:

«Ἐσεῖς, Πατέρες, ἔχοντας φτεροῦγες ἀπὸ τὸν οὐρανό, ἀποκτήσατε οὐράνια ζωὴ. Κι αὐτὸ καθόλου παράξενο δὲν εἶναι, σὰς βλέπω νὰ στέκεστε ψηλὰ λόγω τῶν ἔργων σας και νὰ ἐπιδιώκετε τὰ οὐράνια. Μὲ δύναμη μάλιστα μετακινεῖστε ἀπ' τὴ γῆ ἐσεῖς ποὺ ἀποξενωθήκατε ἐντελῶς ἀπ' αὐτήν. Πῶς νὰ σὰς ὀνομάσω; Ἐπίγειους ἀγγέλους ἢ οὐράνιους ἀνθρώπους; Ἐγὼ κρίνοντας τὸν ἑαυτό μου τόσο ἀνάξιο ἀκόμη και νὰ ζεῖ, βλέπω μπροστά μου τὶς ἀμαρτίες μου. Ὅπου κι ἂν πάω, ὅπου κι ἂν στραφῶ τὶς βλέπω νὰ προχωροῦν πρὶν ἀπὸ μένα.

Στὰ καταχθόνια καταδίκασα τὸν ἑαυτό μου. Λέω: Θὰ εἶμαι μαζί μ' αὐτοὺς ποὺ μοῦ ἀξίζει. Μ' αὐτοὺς ὕστερα ἀπὸ λίγο θὰ μὲ κατατάξουν. Βλέπω ἐκεῖ θρηνητικὲς κραυγὲς και δάκρυα, ποὺ δὲν σταματοῦν ποτὲ και εἶναι ἀνεκδιήγητα. Βλέπω κάποιους νὰ τριζοῦν τὰ δόντια και νὰ πηδοῦν μ' ὄλο τους τὸ σῶμα και νὰ τρέμουν ἀπ' τὸ κεφάλι μέχρι τὰ πόδια. Πέφτω μὲ τὸ πρόσωπο κάτω και ρίχνοντας στάχτη στὸ κεφάλι μου ἱκετεύω τὸν Θεὸ νὰ μὴ δοκιμάσω ἐκεῖνες τὶς συμφορές.

Βλέπω και μία θάλασσα ἀπὸ φωτιὰ νὰ παφλάζει και νὰ φουσομανάει ἐδῶ κι ἐκεῖ και νὰ βρुχιέται, σὲ σημεῖο ποὺ νὰ νομίζει κανεὶς ὅτι τὰ κύματα τῆς φωτιᾶς φτάνουν μέχρι τὸν οὐρανό. Καὶ μέσ' τὴ φοβερὴ αὐτὴ θάλασσα ἀμέτρητους ἀνθρώπους ριγμένους ἀπὸ ἄγριους ἀγγέλους, και ὄλοι μαζί ἐκεῖνοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι μὲ μιὰ φωνὴ νὰ βγάζουν δυνατὲς κραυγὲς και νὰ κραζοῦν μὲ ἰσχυροὺς θρήνους και φωνὲς τέτοιες, ποὺ κανεὶς δὲν

ἔχει ἀκούσει. Σὰν ξερὰ χόρτα ὄλοι νὰ καίγονται, και οἱ οἰκτιρμοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ νὰ φεύγουν μακριὰ ἀπ' αὐτούς, γιὰ τὶς ἀμαρτίες τους.

Τότε θρηνῶ τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων, πῶς τολμᾷ νὰ μιλήσει ἢ νὰ δίνει τὴν προσοχή του σὲ κάτι ἐφήμερο, ἀφοῦ τόσο μεγάλα κακὰ περιμένουν τὸν κόσμο. Μὲ τέτοιους λογισμοὺς κρατῶ τὸ πένθος στὴν καρδιά μου, κρίνοντας τὸν ἑαυτό μου ἀνάξιο γιὰ τὸν οὐρανὸ και τὴ γῆ, και πραγματοποιεῖται σὲ μένα ὁ λόγος τῆς Γραφῆς: *Τὰ δάκρυά μου ἔγιναν γιὰ μένα ψωμὶ μέρα και νύχτα*».

Αὐτὰ εἶναι τὰ κατορθώματα τῶν σοφῶν και πνευματικῶν Πατέρων. Μακάρι κι ἐμεῖς νὰ δεῖξουμε στοὺς ἄλλους μιὰ ζωὴ ἄξια νὰ τὴν θυμῶνται, γιὰ νὰ εὐχαριστήσουμε τὸν Δεσπότη μας Χριστό, ἀφοῦ γίνουμε τέλειοι και ἀψεγάδιαστοι.



Ὁ Ὀρθόδοξος ἀσκητισμὸς δὲν εἶναι μόνο γιὰ τὰ μοναστήρια, ἀλλὰ και γιὰ τὸν κόσμο.

Πολλοὶ λένε ὅτι ἡ χριστιανικὴ ζωὴ εἶναι δυσάρεστη και δύσκολη, ἐγὼ λέω ὅτι εἶναι εὐχάριστη και εὐκόλη, ἀλλὰ ἀπαιτεῖ δυὸ προϋποθέσεις: Ταπεινὴ και ἀγάπη.

Ἄν ἔρθει ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὄλοι και ὄλα ἀλλάζουν, ἔλα ὅμως ποὺ γιὰ νὰ ἔρθει, χρειάζεται πρῶτα νὰ ταπεινωθοῦμε!

Μπορεῖ κάποιος νὰ μιλάει γιὰ τὶς ἀμαρτίες του και νὰ εἶναι ὑπερήφανος κι ἄλλος νὰ μιλάει γιὰ τὶς ἀρετές του και νὰ εἶναι ταπεινός.

Νὰ εἴμαστε ταπεινοί, ἀλλὰ νὰ μὴν ταπεινολογοῦμε. Ἡ ταπεινολογία εἶναι παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου, ποὺ φέρνει τὴν ἀπελπισία και τὴν ἀδράνεια, ἐνῶ ἡ ἀληθινὴ ταπεινὴ φέρνει τὴν ἐλπίδα και τὴν ἐργασία τῶν ἐντολῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Δὲ γίνεται κανεὶς Χριστιανὸς μὲ τὴν τεμπελιά, χρειάζεται δουλειά, πολλὴ δουλειά.

Τὸ πᾶν εἶναι νὰ ἀγαπήσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος τὸ Χριστὸ και ὄλα τὰ προβλήματα τακτοποιοῦνται.

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

Ὁσίου Πορφυρίου Κανσοκαλυβίτου (†1991)

## Ὁ Πόθος τοῦ Ἀπειροῦ

Τοῦ Ἀρχιμανδρίτου, Ἀγίου Ιουστίνου Πόποβιτς.

Τὸ ἀνθρώπινον πνεῦμα ἀδιακόπως ποθεῖ τὴν ἄπειρον γνῶσιν, τὴν ἄπειρον ζωὴν, τὴν ἄπειρον ὑπαρξιν. Καὶ διὰ μέσου ὅλων αὐτῶν ἐν μόνον ἐπιδιώκει: νὰ νικήσῃ τὸ πρόσκαιρον, τὸ πεπερασμένον, τὸ περιορισμένον, καὶ νὰ καταστήσῃ δυνατὸν καὶ ἐξασφαλίσῃ τὸ αἰώνιον, τὸ ἄπειρον καὶ ἀπεριόριστον.

Εἰς ὅλας τὰς κουλτούρας καὶ τοὺς πολιτισμοὺς ὅλοι οἱ κόποι τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου πνεύματος, εἰς τὸ τέλος, συγκεντρῶνται εἰς μίαν γιγαντιαίαν προσπάθειαν: Νὰ ἡττηθῇ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ἡ θνητότης καὶ νὰ ἐξασφαλισθῇ ἡ ἀθανασία καὶ ἡ αἰωνία ζωὴ, νὰ ἐξασφαλισθῇ ὅπωςδήποτε.

Ἀλλὰ δὲν μᾶς παροτρύνουν ἄραγε τὰ πάντα νὰ θέσωμεν τὴν ἐρώτησιν: Πόθεν εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου αὐτὴ ἡ νοστολογία καὶ ἡ φορὰ πρὸς τὸ ἄπειρον εἰς ὅλας τὰς κατευθύνσεις; Τί εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖον ὠθεῖ τὴν ἀνθρώπινην σκέψιν ἀπὸ πρόβλημα εἰς πρόβλημα καὶ ἀπὸ ἀπεραντοσύνην εἰς ἀπεραντοσύνην; Ἐὰν αὐτὸς ὁ πόθος διὰ τὸ ἄπειρον ἐπιβάλλεται ἔξωθεν εἰς τοὺς ἀδυνάτους ἀνθρώπους, πῶς τότε εὐρίσκεται οὗτος καὶ εἰς τοὺς πλέον ἀνεξαρτήτους τῶν φιλοσόφων; Εἰς τοὺς μάλιστα ἔχει ἀναπτυχθῆ οὗτος εἰς πολυσύνθετον προβληματολογία.

Πάντα ταῦτα ἀποδεικνύουν ὅτι ὁ πόθος διὰ τὸ ἄπειρον εὐρίσκεται εἰς αὐτὴν ταύτην τὴν φύσιν τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου πνεύματος. Ἡ φύσις αὐτῆς ταύτης τῆς γνώσεως τείνει πρὸς τὴν ἄπειρον γνῶσιν· ἡ φύσις αὐτῆς ταύτης τῆς αἰσθήσεως τείνει πρὸς τὴν ἄπειρον αἴσθησιν· ἡ φύσις αὐτῆς ταύτης τῆς ζωῆς τείνει πρὸς τὴν ἄπειρον ζωὴν.

Ὅλον τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ διὰ τῆς γνώσεως καὶ διὰ τῆς αἰσθήσεως καὶ διὰ τῆς θελήσεως καὶ διὰ τῆς ζωῆς θέλει νὰ εἶναι ἄπειρον, δηλαδὴ νὰ εἶναι ἀθάνατον. Ἡ δίψα τοῦ ἀπειροῦ, ἡ δίψα διὰ τὴν ἀθανασίαν, εἶναι ἡ παμπалаία, ἡ μεταφυσικὴ δίψα τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου πνεύματος. Αὐτὴ ὠθοῦσε τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πρὸς τὸ ἄπειρον διὰ τῶν πολυαριθμῶν θρησκευτῶν, φιλοσοφιῶν, ἐπιστημῶν, ἀγώνων καὶ ἀγωνιῶν. Μὲ μίαν λέξιν: Τὸ ἀνθρώπινον πνεῦμα θέλει τὴν ἀθανασίαν, τὴν θέλει καθ' οἷονδήποτε τρόπον καὶ ὑπὸ οἵανδήποτε μορφῇ.

Εἶναι καταφανὲς ὅτι αὐτὸν τὸν πόθον διὰ τὸ ἄπειρον δὲν εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ τὸν ἔχη ἐπιβάλλει εἰς τὸν ἄνθρωπον

ἢ ὑλικὴ φύσις, διότι ἡ ἰδία εἶναι πεπερασμένη καὶ περιορισμένη καὶ δὲν ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῇ αὐτὸν τὸν πόθον. Ἐξ ἴσου πρόδηλον εἶναι ὅτι οὔτε τὸ ἀνθρώπινον σῶμα ἔχει ἐπιβάλλει εἰς τὸν ἄνθρωπον αὐτὸν τὸν πόθον, διότι καὶ τοῦτο εἶναι πεπερασμένον.

Ὡς μοναδικὴ λογικὴ λύσις παραμένει ἡ ἐξῆς θέσις: Ὁ πόθος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου διὰ τὸ ἄπειρον, διὰ τὴν ἀθανασίαν, εὐρίσκεται εἰς αὐτὴν ταύτην τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου πνεύματος. Κτισθεὶς κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, εὐρίσκεται ὁλόκληρος μέσα εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν πόθον. Διότι τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα (τὸ θεοειδές) τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, εἶναι ἀκριβῶς ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖον ποθεῖ τὰς ἀπείρους ἀληθείας τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰς ὅλους τοὺς κόσμους. Ἐνυπάρχον εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ θεοειδές (τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα), ὠθεῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον νὰ τείνῃ πρὸς ὅλας τὰς ἀπεραντοσύνας τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ νὰ τὰς ποθῇ.

Εἶναι φυσικὸν διὰ τὴν κατ' εἰκόνα, τὴν θεοειδῆ ψυχὴν, νὰ ποθῇ τὸν Θεὸν ὡς τὸ πρωτότυπόν της. Τοῦτο δὲν εἶναι συμπεράσμα a priori, ἀλλὰ μιὰ διαπίστωσις κατὰ πάντα a posteriori, διότι ὅλη ἡ πείρα τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου γένους μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτῆς τῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ μυστικῆς νοσταλγίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου πνεύματος διὰ τὸ ἄπειρον, διὰ τὴν ἀθανασίαν, διὰ τὴν αἰωνίαν ζωὴν, εἴτε εἰς αὐτὸν εἴτε εἰς τὸν ἄλλον κόσμον.

Ἐὰν στηριχθῶμεν εἰς τὴν κοινὴν πείραν τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου γένους καὶ συνοψίσωμεν τὸν ἄνθρωπον εἰς τὰ βασικὰ συστατικά του, θὰ εὐρωμεν ὅπωςδήποτε αὐτὸν τὸν πόθον διὰ τὴν ἀθανασίαν ὡς τὸ βασικώτατον στοιχεῖον ἐπὶ τοῦ ὁποῖου θεμελιόυται καὶ εἰς τὸ ὁποῖον ὄντολογικῶς ἔγκειται ὁ ἄνθρωπος.



**Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψη τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων γιὰ τὴν ἔκδοσιν τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οικονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντάς κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὁσιος Ποιμῆν».**



## THE MIRACLE AT CHONAE BY ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

COMMEMORATED ON SEPTEMBER 6TH

Source: *The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Sept., pp. 219-226, Trans. from Greek by the Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO.*

Michael, the great and chief commander of God's bodiless hosts, both before the incarnation and after, showed compassion and solicitude toward the race of man (Josh 5:13-15; Dan 10: 13, 12: 1; Jude 1:9; Rev 12:71). He bestowed many benefits on earth before the coming of Christ, and afterward he showed even greater care and love toward the Christians.

Colossae was an ancient city of southern Phrygia, the extensive western part of Anatolia, overhanging the Lykos (a tributary of the Meander) on the upper part of its course. The city was some ten miles from Laodikeia and thirteen from Hierapolis (Col 2:1, 4:13, 15,16; Rev 1: 11). The three cities formed a single sphere of missionary labor for Epaphras, an inhabitant of Colossae (Col 1:7, 4:12, 13). The city originally lay on the main trade route from Ephesus to the Euphrates and the East, at the junction of the highways to Sardis and Pergamon. Colossae was catastrophically weakened in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries with the gradual breakdown of Byzantine power in Asia Minor, leaving the Colossians exposed to Saracen raiders. The remaining population moved to Chonae (the modern Chonas), a fortress about three miles further south, with an impregnable castle upon the steep slope of Mount Cadmus (the summit stands at 8,013 feet). Final destruction came in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the Turkish invasion. The site is presently unoccupied.

When St. John the Evangelist went to a city of Asia named Ephesus, between the borders of Ionia and Lydia, he found many people deceived by the error of idolatry. They especially revered Artemis, who in ancient myth was a courageous woman who was a hunter. The Greek pagans of that time named her a goddess and worshipped her with great sacrifices. While the Evangelist John was in the city with Saint Prochoros, he raised his hands to heaven and silently besought God at length with sighs. Behold! The idol of Artemis in her temple toppled, but no one was injured. Then the rest of the temple collapsed. Saint John worked many signs and wonders in that place.

In one of the villages of Lydia, Saint John the Theologian met with the Apostle Philip and his sister, Saint Mariamne. They departed with him into the land of Phrygia. There they entered into a city, also known as Hierapolis (Pamukkale), on

the borders between Phrygia and Lydia, and they preached Christ. This city, famous for its hot spring and deposits of calcium, was the home of countless idols, which were worshipped by all the people; and besides these false gods they also had a viper for which they had constructed a special temple. They brought food to this viper and offered up manifold and divers sacrifices thereto. And the foolish people also worshipped other vipers and serpents.

Saint Philip and his sister first armed themselves against the viper with prayer, wherein they were aided by Saint John the Theologian, who was with them at the time. And together they slew the viper with prayer, as with a spear, putting it to death through the power of Christ. At length, the pagans crucified Saint Philip, and he received the crown of martyrdom. Christ shook Hierapolis to its foundations with a devastating quake. The profane people of Hierapolis, seized with great terror, repented of their impiety. Failing before the feet of the Apostle John, they begged mercy. He baptized them in

the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and taught them the truth. The substantial ruins of the Church of Saint Philip, on the site of his martyrdom, may still be seen today in Hierapolis.

Thereafter, Saint John determined to go away. He came to a place called Herotopon, which lies nearby Hierapolis, where he brought the pagan Greeks to the knowledge of the true God. In that place, the divine Elder John prophesied that at a later time there would spring forth there a great abundance of holy water in honor of the Archangel

Michael, who would perform awesome wonders and miracles.

Saint John then left that place and continued preaching the Gospel. Not many days passed before water gushed up out of the earth. Whosoever partook of the water with faith received deliverance from every sickness. In fact, not only the Christians enjoyed this divine favor, but also even unbelieving Greeks, who went and drank from the waters found healing. Harken to the following account.

There was a certain rich Greek pagan in the city of Laodikeia. He had an only daughter who suffered with speechlessness and was dumb from her mother's womb. The father experienced great sorrow concerning this, and would gladly have given her his soul just to behold her speak. One day, he beheld a favorable vision. In his sleep he observed a certain man telling him to go to the holy waters (*Agiasma*) of the Archangel Michael; for he would not return embittered. Indeed, he was told that his daughter would receive healing, and that he himself would gain the salvation of his soul. Now he beheld this vision not because he was found worthy (since



he was benighted utterly with the impiety of idolatry), but rather because God, Who wishes to save all men and have them come to a full knowledge of the truth, dispensed in His economy this vision, so that through the working of the miracle the Greek pagan would be converted and others, too, would be strengthened in godliness. When that Greek pagan awoke, with fear and trembling, he took along his daughter and went to the holy waters of the Archangel. Having arrived, he found many people had gathered who were afflicted with various illnesses. Straightway, only by drinking the water or pouring it over their afflicted bodies, they were delivered from whatever ailment possessed them.

The Greek father, observing all these wonders, asked certain of the people what name they were invoking while drinking or pouring the water over themselves that they should find healing. They said to him, "We utter the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one in essence, and the chief commander Michael, the slave of the Trinity." As he heard this, without hesitation, he believed with all his heart. Thus, entreating the God Who is praised in the Holy Trinity and His Archangel Michael, he took up that holy water with faith and gave it to his daughter to drink. Immediately—O the wonder—not only was the girl delivered from the bond of speechlessness, but both father and daughter were loosed from the bond of disbelief. They began in uplifted voices to offer thanksgiving and praise to the true God and to magnify His servant Michael.

What happened after this? The Greek nobleman and his daughter, and all those with them, were baptized and became Christians; in addition, the nobleman built a costly temple. He also erected at the site of the sanctified waters a beautiful building with vaulted roof, so that he might say with the Prophet David, *O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house* (Pss 25:7). Hence, after showing much faith and gratitude for the benefaction he received from the Archangel, he returned to his own house, glorifying God not only for the wonder-working which he beheld in his daughter, but more so for his own conversion.

After the passage of ninety years, a certain child of Hierapolis, the offshoot of good Orthodox parentage, at ten years old, left for the Church of the Archangel, so as to be directed by divine

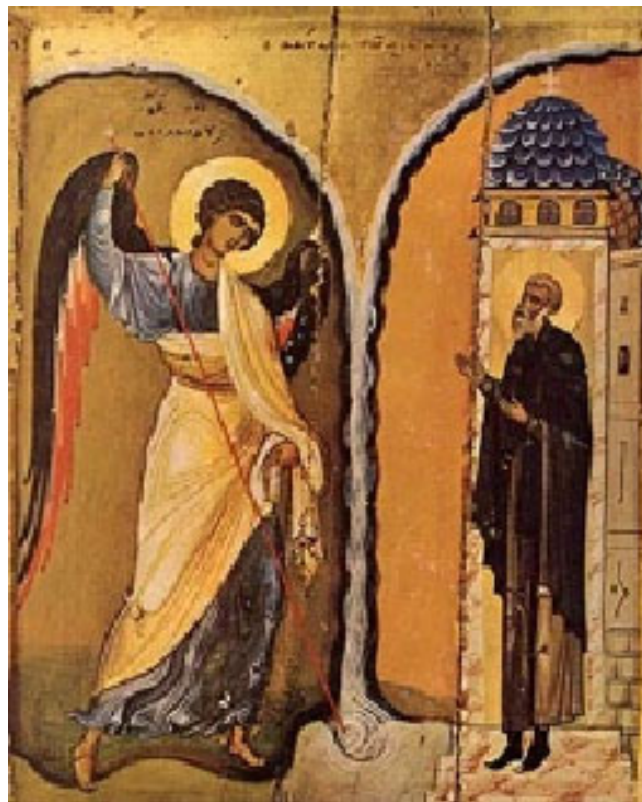
providence from above. His name was Archippos, after the apostle (Col 4:17; Phil 1:2). He became the church's sexton. Possessed of much self-mastery and other virtues, he was vouchsafed divine gifts. He not only controlled those bodily desires that injure the soul, but also disciplined his body and brought it into bondage by neither partaking of bread nor ever bathing, nor did he give his flesh rest in sleep. He took nourishment once a week, faring on wild herbs without salt. His sole drink was from the holy waters. His only two garments were of a coarse cloth of hair; he wore one, and covered himself with the other at night. Every year he alternated the garments, wearing one and covering himself with the other. This was always the dress of Archippos. He filled his bedding with cut stone. As for where

he laid his head, he had another haircloth filled with thorny and prickly plants. This afforded him little sleep, but just enough to sustain him. He maintained this regimen even into manhood and until the day of his repose. When a soul is possessed of such fear of God and love for those future good things, what we deem a harsh conduct of life, requiring strength beyond nature, is sweetness and repose to such a person. We have as further examples the martyrs and righteous one who underwent all forms of torture, affliction, and straits, enduring all that they might gain the kingdom of the heavens. Let us now return to our account.

Archippos, now ecclesiarch at the Church of the Archangel, with such a mode of life, never ceased to have before his eyes

the working out of his salvation, *having a heart that is broken and humbled* (Pss 50:17). He ever strove that God might create in him a clean heart and that the meditation of his heart might be pleasing before the Lord, for the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart. He entreated God: *May my eyes never behold the dainties of this world, nor may my mind be confounded with temporal vanities. Only Thou, O Lord, most compassionate, fill my eyes with spiritual tears; make humble my heart and make straight my steps in Thy law. For what gain have I from this clay body which, on the one hand, today is, but, on the other hand, tomorrow perishes, even as the grass withers with the coming evening? O Lord Almighty, grant me to be striving for the everlasting good and the salvation of the soul.*

Such were the daily thoughts and meditations of Archippos, and God hearkened readily to his entreaty. Living at that time





in the neighborhood of the holy waters was a multitude of unbelievers who daily witnessed the wonderworkings. Envy and malice mounted in them on account of the miracles and the virtuous manner of life of righteous Archippos. Maddened by the holy man's asceticism and struggles, they were speaking evilly of him. Then, one day, those pagans, of one accord, gathered together and, in a maniacal rage, charged against the righteous man. They intended to put him to death and utterly destroy the holy waters. While some were dragging Archippos by force, by the hairs of his head and beard, and beating him with rods and pieces of wood, others were attempting to cover up and choke the course of the holy waters. But, *O Thine indescribable judgments, O Christ!* A flame emitted therefrom and frightened all of them so that they left running; thus, they departed unsuccessful.

After this, they devised something worse: A plan to destroy the church to its foundation and usher in death for the righteous man. What did they contrive? Nearby the Church of the Archangel, where the holy waters were located, from the left side, there ran a river named Chryssos. The unbelievers wished to divert the river, so that the deluge might come down upon the holy waters and the church. They believed that by mixing the waters of the river with the holy water they could dissolve its therapeutic powers utterly, so that the Christians might not drink and find healing.

Having considered how this might be engineered, they cut off the first current of the river that it might flow into the holy waters. But, *Who shall tell of the mighty acts of the Lord? Who shall make all His praises to be heard? (Pss 105:2).* The river, as though it were animate, fearing the grace of the Archangel, straightway turned far over toward the right part of the Church; and there the course of the river remains to this day, thus certifying the miracle. When those most profane ones beheld their unjust enterprise taking the opposite course from that intended, the words of the Prophet David applied: *The Lord scattereth the plans of the heathens, He setteth aside the devices of the peoples. (Pss 32: 10).* The unrelenting pagans, nonetheless, conspired a second time; indeed, something more terrible than before, which we shall explain to you from the beginning.

Two great rivers gush forth from out of the east: one is called Lykokastro, and the other Kouphos. They run separately in the direction of the church and then encircle it from afar, as an island. Then they converge and travel a long distance, as one river, until they separate in Lycia and pour out into the sea against the island of Rhodes. The devil, envious of all good, plotted to let loose the waters of these two rivers. He sowed in the minds of his minions that the rivers could be made to flood the church and the holy waters of the Archangel, so that not even a trace might remain. This seemed very plausible to the pagans, because the land where the church stood sloped downward. Thus, by employing the downward tendency of water, they could fulfill their aim.

Now, at a distance from the church, there was a massive and high rock. The impious hewed the stone and dug down deep in one place, so that the waters would divert and collect with great force. Then, after they dug huge irrigation ditches and fortified collecting basins, they closed off the area. They dammed the waters that collected by the rock, until they were ready to break the seals of the gates. With malignant glee they anxiously awaited for the water level to rise that they might discharge its mighty power against the church, the sanctified healing waters, and Archippos.

Night and day, men, women, and children labored to accomplish their murderous desire. The slave of God, Archippos, beheld the madness of the impious. Mindful of how great the peril

was that awaited him, he fell prostrate on the bare earth, entreating God and the Archangel Michael that the counsel of the ungodly might prove vain and unworkable against the strength and power of God. Thus, Archippos supplicated night and day.

After the passage of ten days, the waters collected in abundance. It was about midnight when the godless broke the gates of the blocked-up waters. They chose that late hour to loosen the turbulent waters, so as to surprise Archippos and plunge him into despair when both he and that holy place would be swept away and submerged in the destruction. The impious stood to the left of the church awaiting the outcome. Archippos heard the clamor of the people and the roaring of the approaching waters. With greater fervency, he gave himself

**T**he miracle at Chonae reminds us that healing is in the church and there is no need for Christians to search for wonder-workers and healers outside of their own parish. There, in the local church, in one's own parish is the fullness of salvation and all gifts of the Holy Spirit are present there. And every form of healing is present there. Of course, when a parishioner comes to their parish's **Orthodox-minded priest**, he can send that person to go to another priest for counseling, someone considered to be more spiritually developed. But, again, not to expect that other spiritual father to solve their problems in a hocus-pocus, magical method. **Everything that happens in our lives happens by God's will, and this applies to our temptations and problems, and when we pray that we might defeat our temptations, for our spiritual well being, we always end our prayer with the words *may it be as the Lord wills for He knows better than we do what is good for us.*** And so on this day and on this feast let us pray that God grant unto us a pure faith which above all means that we might place our trust in Him and His Church and those who have been appointed by the Church to concern themselves with our spiritual well being.

**Bishop Porfirije of Jegar (Serbia)**



over to prayer, reciting the words of the Prophet David: *The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever.* (Pss 92:3-5).

Thus did the saint pray, and a divine vision was made manifest. He heard a voice descending from out of the heavens and calling him by name, "Archippos." He was unable to gaze long at the vision of the Archangel, and fell on his face to the ground. Then the one speaking said, "Rise and stand on thy feet and come here outside in order to behold the invincible might of God." Regaining courage then from the voice, he exited and beheld a fiery column which went from earth to heaven. He heard a voice from thence telling him to stand to the left side and not to fear. Then the Archangel raised his right hand and made the sign of the Cross upon the rock, the one above the church, saying, "Up to this point is thy flux." Then, with what appeared as a javelin in his hand, he struck the place mightily and sundered the rock from the top to the bottom. O Thy power, Christ God! We cry with the Prophet David: *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; thine arrows also went abroad.* (Pss 76:16-17). The waters then halted and stood still as a wall.

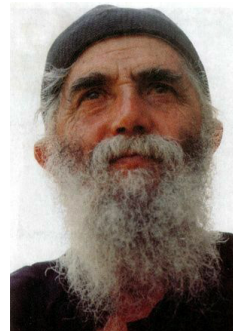
The Archangel, again, made the sign of the Cross, and said, "Funnel the waters here." A great earthquake occurred and instilled fear. The waters of the rivers forthwith poured down into that deep ravine. Thus, the Archangel subdued the raging flow and the thundering of the river. This phenomenon may be seen to this day. The rivers pour into the funnel in the rock which lies above the church, toward the bema (pulpit). Thus this place, formerly called Colossae, from then was named *Chonae*, a Greek word signifying the funneling of the rivers in that place.

Archippos, through the assistance of the Archangel Michael, was delivered from a bitter death. With a loud and clear voice he praised and glorified God, and also greatly magnified His minister, the Archangel Michael. Archippos continued living a God-pleasing life in that sacred precinct for seventy years. He was then laid to rest from the labor of his virtues and hastened to his beloved Christ rejoicing, even as the good cultivator sows with godly tears that he might reap the fruits of his toils in the joy of everlasting life.

To the glory of the Trinity and the chief commander, Michael, a boundless number of wonders took place daily at the place of the holy waters; which wonders, if we were to describe in detail, should make us appear like him who wishes to count the stars or the sands of the sea. O supreme commander of the armies of heaven, we, the unworthy ones, entreat thee, that by thy prayers thou dost ever surround us with the protection of the wings of thine immaterial glory!

## DIVINE PROVIDENCE

*From the Conversations and Homilies of Elder Paisios.*



Our duty and concern must be how to please God and our fellow men; we should not be preoccupied with our needs, as God will take care of them. There is a silent spiritual agreement between God and man. He will look after us, while we will concentrate on how to live our lives according to His will. *Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you.* (1 Pet 5:7).

One day, Mr. I.F. visited me from Germany. He had just completed a study for the construction of a fish pound in Komotini (a city in Northern Greece), and asked me to pray that he get the state's approval for it. I asked him out of curiosity to tell me about the method of the fishes' reproduction and their growth in the fish pound. He replied:

-The small fishes, Father, when they are born have a small sack in their abdomen called "lecithin utricule." The sack contains all the vitamins and necessary substances for the fishes' self-preservation during the first crucial days of their life. By the time the sack empties, the abdomen of the small fishes has grown enough to be able to take in food from the sea.

When I heard this I was deeply moved. During that time, I was in a state of constantly glorifying God and this became one more reason for me to be doing so. I thought to myself:

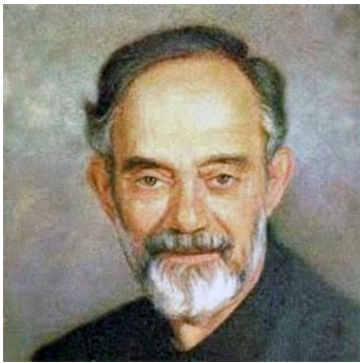
God is so kind that although He created the small fishes for us to eat, He takes care of them in such a wise way, that they can fearlessly grow up. Yet, we are so miserable, that we get distressed and do not trust everything in Him. This is terrible! God looks after the tiniest detail of the smallest of His creatures. How much more He cares for us, His own images, for whom He did everything! Since we are blind, however, we are unable to see His providence which covers every aspect of our life.

Providence is the care that comes from God. Everything which is done with God's providence is done in the best possible way, that is, in a godly manner. The fact that God takes care-indeed very good care-of mankind could very well result from the following logical reasoning:

God is kind; therefore, He takes care and looks after His children (for the one who doesn't provide care is considered evil). Since God is also omniscient, He demonstrates His providence for the whole creation in the most perfect way. When we witness and examine the acts of God's providence, we admire His kindness. We must glorify Him and accept all the acts of divine providence without questioning them, even if sometimes they seem unjust or incomprehensible to us.

## ON HUMAN THOUGHTS AND CONCEPTS

By Protopresbyter John S. Romanides (†2001).



Now what is the origin of human thoughts and concepts? Are the categories of human thought, words and concepts innate to the human mind or are they acquired, gained through external impressions? Although this was discussed in ancient Greek philosophy, it still contin-

ues to be discussed today. We know that Aristotle explicitly thought about this problem. This same question was reexamined later during the Middle Ages. And when we reach the age of the Enlightenment, John Locke and David Hume again returned to these metaphysical categories in their highly cogent studies. And this brings us to the modern era.

Today, the exact sciences are also wrestling with this question. We can see psychologists, psychiatrists, biologists, doctors, biochemists, and others applying the empirical method of research in order to explore the question of how thoughts originate and are created in the human mind. Today this topic is not so much a question of logical processes on man's part (as examined by philosophy and metaphysics) or of philosophical reflection, as it is a matter of empirical investigation.

Currently, (*the year was 1983*) scholars are discussing whether human language is innate or acquired. From linguistics, we learn that every language has such a remarkable development with the passage of time that a linguist can attest to important differences in the same language from one century to the next. So when you read ancient texts from an earlier age, you cannot be certain that you fully comprehend those texts or even the vocabulary of that period. In other words, you cannot be sure how specific words were used then and what they meant.

For example, when you compare ancient Greek with modern Greek in this way, you discover a large number of words that are preserved in modern Greek, but have a different meaning today. So these words no longer signify precisely what they did in antiquity. At any rate, what matters for us is that the Church Fathers are quite familiar with the fact that expressions convey specific concepts. Thus, in order to understand the Fathers properly, we must know not only the expressions that they used, in other words, what they said and taught, but we must also know the corresponding concepts. And when we say *the Fathers*, we do not mean only the Fathers in the New Testament, but the Fathers in

the Old Testament as well. The New Testament Fathers refer to the Old Testament prophets as *the fathers of our fathers*. This is also why we celebrate the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers. So the aim is not merely to know the Fathers' sayings or expressions, but also the concepts they used and the particular expressions or sayings they used to communicate them.

Now when we examine the entire Patristic tradition, we note that the Fathers stress that idolatry begins when someone identifies expressions or concepts about God with God Himself. They make this claim because God cannot be identified with any human concept. The uncreatedness of God literally cannot be expressed through concepts. Although we can attribute names to God (for example, we say that God is Good, Bountiful, Merciful, and so forth), this practice is, strictly speaking, improper. And we know that it is inappropriate because of the prophets' and the Fathers' experience of glorification or *theosis*. During *theosis*, concepts about God have to be set aside. This experience discloses the fact that no created concept corresponds to the uncreated reality of God. There is absolutely no identity or similarity between our concepts or names for God and the reality that is none other than God Himself.

And this explains what is ascertained during the experience of *theosis*—that God is not Unity, He is not One, He is not Trinity. There are some lovely passages on precisely this issue by St. Dionysios the Areopagite and St. Gregory of Nyssa. All the other Church Fathers agree with these passages, because **all the Fathers share the same experience.**



Every greedy man pretends to be virtuous, presenting himself as supposedly pious in the eyes of the world. But as soon as he secures the money which is the goal of his desires, he then immediately disavows the way of life that he heretofore (supposedly) followed; and by virtue of which he was reckoned as a disciple of the Word.

**St. Maximos the Confessor**

Greedy is a worm that eats at the bones of a man by way of the thought of money—rendering him sleepless, as he thinks about how to hide his money. He who wishes, however, can easily overcome greed; since it is not a passion that arises from the nature of man, but from his intention. For this very reason, he who strengthens his faith in God—and who places his hope in Him alone, without wavering—can easily conquer the passion of greed and save himself from great danger.

**Abba Antiochos**

## THE “DIFFICULT” FR. NATHANIEL

Source: “Everyday Saints and Other Stories,” by Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov); edited for length.



If, during the time that I was living there, someone had asked for the name of the most difficult person in the Monastery of the Pskov Caves, the answer without doubt would have been only one name: the Treasurer of the Pskov Caves Monastery, Archimandrite Fr. Nathaniel. What’s more, this choice would have been made unanimously by all the priests, novices, monks, ordinary civilians, Communists from the local administration of the KGB, and even by all the local dissidents. As a matter of fact, Fr. Nathaniel was not merely difficult. He was extremely difficult!

### His Life and Traits

When I met him, he was a thin, elderly man with the keen, owlsh, penetrating gaze of an elder. All year round he was dressed in an old and bedraggled monastic cassock with a torn hem. He usually carried an old canvas bag over his shoulders, in which just about anything might be found, ranging from moldy crumbs of dried bread given to him ages ago by some old grandmother, to perhaps one million rubles in cash. Either of these items in the eyes of this Treasurer of our monastery represented an extraordinary value that had been entrusted to our community by the Lord God Himself; he would drag back and hide away somewhere in his innumerable secret cells and storerooms.

The finances of the monastery were completely under the control and management of Fr. Nathaniel. And there were plenty of funds that needed to be spent: every single day up to 400 pilgrims and 100 monks sat down at our tables to be fed—and fed well. An incalculable quantity of repairs and construction and restoration to the monastery always needed to be conducted. On top of this, our brotherhood had constant daily needs. Moreover, we needed to help the poor, to receive our guests, and to give gifts to officials and bureaucrats...

How Fr. Nathaniel all by himself, without assistants, without computers or accountants or calculators, was able to deal impeccably with these numerous financial problems was something that no one could understand. Furthermore, he alone was responsible for all the many businesses conducted by the monastery, and all their paperwork. On top of that, he was responsible for the creation of the schedules and programs for the long daily services, for setting forth the duties of the monastery secretary, for answering the many letters of persons who were in correspondence with the monastery, often for all kinds of different reasons. As if this were not enough, he shared, together with the abbot of the monastery, all the generally unpleasant work involved in dealing with the official

organs of the Soviet government.

Yet in addition to all of these duties, our Treasurer was also responsible for the general supervision of us, the novices. And you may rest assured that he executed these duties as well with his invariable meticulousness: he snooped, he spied, he listened in on conversations, and in every way possible he diligently tried to discern whether we were worthy, whether we had committed some violation of the rules or otherwise harmed the monastery in any way. To be fair, it must be admitted that it was truly necessary to keep an eagle eye on us novices: most of us had come to the monastery from the outer world as typical good-for-nothings.

Fr. Nathaniel also had one more fantastic quality about him: he always used to turn up exactly at the moment when we least expected him. If, for example, some of the young monastic novices were evading their duties and were hanging around somewhere by the ancient walls of the monastery to relax, chatter, and warm themselves in the sun—suddenly, as if out of thin air, Fr. Nathaniel would appear. Shaking his beard, he would begin in an unbearable grinding voice to scold. And by scold, I mean scold—so severely that the novices would wish that they could just disappear into the bowels of the earth, if only just to stop the torture.

In his zeal, Fr. Nathaniel scarcely ate or slept. He was far more than a mere ascetic: for example, no one ever saw him have even so much as a cup of tea. He would simply drink cold water. And indeed at meals he would barely eat a fifth portion of whatever it was that was served to him.

All the while his energy was simply incredible. We had no idea when, if ever, he slept. Even at night we could see the light coming out through the shutters of his cell. The old monks said that when he was in his cell he either prayed or counted the heaps of rubles (mostly one-ruble notes and three-ruble notes collected during the day’s prayer services). All of these limitless riches he needed to accurately tie up in labeled packets of cash, while all of the coins also had to be sorted accurately into their own separate labeled pouches. As soon as he was finished with this, he would begin to write the program and the commentary for the next day’s service.

Yet even if it so happened that the light in his cell was out, in no way whatsoever did this mean that we had the right to consider ourselves free of his strict supervision for even a moment. Not a chance! All night long, at any moment, Fr. Nathaniel might swoop down on us, here and there and everywhere, checking to make sure nobody was simply strolling around the monastery, which was absolutely strictly forbidden!

I remember how one winter night we were sitting together in a group on the name day of one of our brotherhood. Our gathering went on till quite late. As we were all going back to our cells, suddenly out of the darkness emerged the dreaded figure of Father Nathaniel. We all froze in terror. But then we quickly all realized that on this particular occasion our Treasurer had not even seen us. In fact, his behavior was quite



out of the ordinary. He could barely drag one foot after the other, and was staggering, barely able to keep up his canvas sack. Then we saw him climbing through a low fence of the forecourt—and... suddenly he lay down in the snow right on top of the flowerbed!

“He’s dead!” Some of us thought. We waited a little bit, and then cautiously, almost holding our breath, we approached him. Fr. Nathaniel was lying there in the snow—sleeping. Just sleeping. Evenly and smoothly breathing and even snoring a little bit... Under his head was his sack, which he embraced with both hands.

We decided not to go anywhere and not to leave him alone in that bitter cold until we saw what would happen next. We hid ourselves by the chapel over the holy well and started to wait. About an hour later, having nearly frozen ourselves, we saw how Fr. Nathaniel suddenly cheerfully lifted himself up, brushed the snow off of his sack and cassock, lifted his sack back up onto his back, then dashed off as if nothing had happened.

At the time, we absolutely didn’t understand. It was only later that monks who had known the Treasurer a long time explained to us that Fr. Nathaniel had simply gotten tired and wanted to sleep more comfortably. More comfortably—in other words, for him. Meaning... with the wild luxury of lying down. Because in his own cell he would only sleep sitting. And in order not to indulge in this sinful luxury of lying in bed, if he had to lie down to sleep, he would only allow himself to sleep in the snow.

Just about everything that had to do with Fr. Nathaniel remained for us a total mystery. He would never let anyone into his beloved interior world. Never mind his interior world—he wouldn’t even let anyone into his cell! This rule included even the all-powerful Father Superior of the monastery himself. You would have thought it completely unheard of for such an authority as our monastery head, Fr. Gabriel, to be unable to go wherever he pleased within his own monastery—especially considering the fact that the Treasurer’s cell wasn’t just located in any old place, but right on the first floor of the building in which the abbot himself resided—in fact, right below his lodging.

Well, one day the abbot of the monastery, after some feast day, while in a wonderful frame of mind, announced to Fr. Nathaniel that he would be dropping by immediately to have a cup of tea with Fr. Nathaniel in his cell. Several of our brotherhood who happened to be nearby at that moment immediately understood that something remarkable was about to take place, something that would dazzle the mind, soul,

and entire human imagination.

The abbot solemnly and determinedly crossed the courtyard of the monastery, proceeding implacably towards the cell of Fr. Nathaniel. But the Treasurer dragged his heels with a mincing gait behind, begging the abbot of the monastery to please change his mind about this plan. He begged him instead to do something for the salvation of his soul, to do something useful, rather than wasting his time traipsing about dusty, old, miserable, and totally uninteresting dingy clerics’ rooms. He eloquently described the disorder in his cell, exclaimed that he had not cleaned it in twenty-six years, and warned that there was an unbearably moldy stink in the air.

At last, in absolute despair Fr. Nathaniel began to utter what amounted to threats, ostentatiously thinking out loud how it would be absolutely wrong under any conceivable circumstances to subject the priceless life of the abbot to the dangers that might lurk for him in the frightful mess of the

dwelling place of the Treasurer.

“Now that’s enough, Father Treasurer!” Growled the abbot, interrupting yet another litany of horrors as he stood before the very door of Father Nathaniel’s cell. “Enough! Open up and let’s see what you’ve got in there!”

In spite of the irritation in his voice, it was clear that the abbot was truly just wracked by curiosity. Fr. Nathaniel understood at last that he had no way out, and therefore, he resigned himself. Indeed, unaccountably he suddenly cheered up, and with a merry tone in his voice said, “You are most welcome, Father Abbot.” Then he rattled his key chain and opened up before his boss that mysterious door which by now for over four decades had only been just sufficiently barely opened so as to briefly allow the slim figure of Fr. Nathaniel to slip through . . .

Pitch-black darkness like a complete abyss lurked beyond the threshold of the door. Both night and day the windows of Fr. Nathaniel’s cell remained completely shuttered. Fr. Nathaniel disappeared into the gloom. Indeed, it seemed as if he had been swallowed up by it. The abbot cautiously stepped over the threshold and cautiously intoned in his deep bass voice: “Why is it so dark in here? Don’t you have electricity? Where is the light switch?”

“It’s on your right, Father Abbot,” out of nowhere emerged the courteous voice of the Treasurer. “Just turn the handle.”

In the next moment a horrible cry rent the air, as if some unknown force had cast the abbot straight out of the pitch-black darkness of the Treasurer’s cell into the corridor. Speeding out after him into the light came Fr. Nathaniel. Within one second, he closed and triple-locked the door of his cell once



again. Then he raced over to the severely shocked abbot. The Treasurer fussed about brushing off the dust and adjusting the frock of the abbot, murmuring as he did so:

“Lord have mercy! How unfortunate! One has to get used to that light switch. It broke way back in 1964 on the occasion of the Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God. And since that day I have never gotten around to putting that light switch back... No electricians! I took care of it myself. Two wires are sticking out of the wall: Just put them together, and there’s light in the cell; pull them apart and the light goes out. But I do admit, it does take some getting used to at first... That’s all right. Never you mind, dear Father Abbot, you are most welcome! Come. Right now I’ll just open up the door again, and we’ll slip back in! There’s nothing to worry about now that you know how to use my light switch... Come on. You’ll see I really have lots of interesting things in there...”

But our abbot had long since vanished, well before this rambling speech had come to its end.

Fr. Nathaniel, in spite of this incident, was an absolute model of obedience and wrote extremely long verse odes in honor of the Abbot and dear Father Superior of the glorious Pskov Caves Monastery. Indeed, he even wrote five-page sermons and moral teachings—also in verse.

#### With the Communists

Fr. Nathaniel proved difficult to handle even for the mighty Soviet government, especially when it rudely attempted to interfere with our monastic life. It is said that none other than Fr. Nathaniel gave support and subtle advice to the great Father Superior and savior of the monastery Archimandrite Alipius, when the latter was under particularly heavy pressure from the crude persecutions of the Soviet authorities.

This took place at the end of the 1960s. As you may know, all citizens of the Soviet Union were required to take part in “elections.” They brought a ballot box into the refectory of the monastery, where after dinner the brotherhood, under the discontented grumbling supervision of the abbot, rendered unto Caesar what was Caesar’s.

But it turned out that the First Secretary of the Regional Communist Party Secretary for Pskov Province had found out that unheard of privileges were being given to these “savage” monks: they were being allowed to vote (unanimously, of course) for the one and only slot on the ballot, the Communist Party, not at the local polling place like everyone else, but in their obsolete historical ruin of a monastery! He immediately demanded that from now on and forever those “black beetles” must come and “vote” for the members of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR like all good Soviet citizens, at their polls in their electoral districts strictly according to their place of residence!

It was then, so people say, that Fr. Nathaniel whispered into the ear of the monastery’s abbot, Archimandrite Alipius, a piece of advice that was both innocent and extremely subtle in its defiance. On election day (and, as always, it was a Sunday), after the festal Liturgy was served in the monastery,

from the monastery gates came streaming forth a magnificent procession of the cross, with priests bearing crosses and icons. Paired into two columns, in a long line singing hymns and in full ceremonial dress, the troops of monks paraded through the entire town towards the polling place. Their ancient banners fluttered in the wind as they marched, carrying their traditional crosses and ancient icons. But this was not all. As is the required custom before any important action, right in the middle of the polling place the entire clergy began to pray out loud. The bureaucrats were frightened to death and tried to protest against this, but Father Alipius firmly interrupted them, lecturing that they were interfering with citizens’ rights to express themselves and carry out their constitutional duties as they were required to do! Having “voted,” the monks marched back with similar ostentatious ceremony into their holy monastery.

Needless to say, when the next elections came around, the ballot box was once again waiting for the monks on the table in the monastery refectory.

Yet, by the same token, in his ceaselessly vigilant looking after us, Fr. Nathaniel always stopped us from uttering any outright expression of opposition to the Soviet regime, or from getting involved in any attempts at being a dissident. At first this seemed to us to be disgraceful. Gradually we began to find out that Fr. Nathaniel had been tested on numerous occasions by spies and agent provocateurs or plainclothes KGB operatives, ever seeking any excuse to do real damage to the monastery. Fr. Nathaniel would always interrupt our beloved free opinions. He was thinking of how to protect the monastery, and, more likely, he was protecting us from ourselves, from our temptation to be too passionate or fanatical in our youthful excess, which was chiefly mixed up with nothing more than pride.

Fr. Nathaniel had a very sober and yet personal relationship to Soviet authority—perhaps because of the fact that his own father, the priest Nikolai Pospelov, had been shot to death for his faith in 1937. Fr. Nathaniel had served as a simple soldier throughout all of World War II, and then had served as a novice of the Great Abbot of our monastery, Archimandrite Alipius. He had also been the spiritual son of the holy elder and miracle worker of the Pskov Caves Monastery, Hieroschema-monk Symeon. Both of them, seeing in him a man of impeccable honesty and remarkably lively intelligence, had appointed him, even during those most difficult years of the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church under Khrushchev, the Treasurer and presiding secretary of the monastery, effectively entrusting him with its most valuable secrets.

Here’s another memory about his attitude towards Soviet authority. One summer night it was my duty to be the monk on the vigil in the square before the monastery’s Cathedral of the Dormition. The stars were twinkling dimly in the northern sky. Peace and quiet. The clock sounded three in the morning.

And suddenly I felt that somebody was standing right behind me. Startled, I turned around. It was Fr. Nathaniel, staring intently up into the starry heavens. Then he asked thoughtfully: “What do you think about the main principle of communism?”

Not waiting to hear any answer, Fr. Nathaniel continued as thoughtfully as he had begun: “The main principle of communism is ‘from each according to his capabilities, to each according to his needs.’ But who is going to decide what each person’s capabilities or needs are? Probably it’ll be some commission as usual. But what kind of commission? Probably a ‘troika’ (that is, a group of three judges carrying out the Party’s will). So they will summon me and say, ‘All right, Nathaniel, what are your capabilities? You can chop twenty cubic meters of wood per day. And what are your needs? A bowl of gruel. There.’ That is their main principle.”

### His Spirituality

Although Fr. Nathaniel always tried as hard as he could to stress that he was no more than a dry and stern ecclesiastical bureaucrat, even we novices after a while began to grasp that his modesty carefully concealed his considerable spiritual gifts. This modesty was something, by the way, that all the real monks in the monastery were endowed with. Our Father Treasurer had never become an official spiritual father in our monastery. Only a very few elderly people from the town of Pechory (or from even remoter regions, in the case of a few old-timers) ever came to say their confessions to him. Except for these few, he would not accept anyone else as his spiritual child, and would claim that he was not up to such a thing.

But once, for a brief moment he slightly opened up a priceless part of his own soul—although he once again immediately hid it, with his usual curmudgeonly strictness.

It happened when I made a mistake in performing one of my tasks. It seems I had been unforgivably casual in doing my duties. As a punishment for this, the Father Superior of the monastery himself had assigned me for three days to sweep away the snow from the entire area of Dormition Square. At this, I became considerably annoyed—especially because snow just kept coming down. By the third day I wasn’t just tired, but bone tired. I could barely drag one foot in front of another. I felt so sorry for myself that I took out my anger on the entire world, and was even beginning to nurse a plan for revenge. Of course, what sort of revenge can a novice take on the abbot of the monastery? Nonetheless, as with my last bit of strength I lifted up my shovel, I tenderly nursed within myself the following imaginary scene: the abbot would be walking past me on his way to dinner in the refectory and

would sarcastically ask me, as he saw me shoveling snow:

“Well, how are you doing?”

And here I would answer cheerfully and casually as if I hadn’t been doing hard convict’s labor these past three days: “Never better, Father Superior!” Then he would know that I was not broken so easily!

This little scene of terrible revenge began to so truly warm my heart that even amidst my weariness during the ceaseless snowfall I began to feel significantly more cheerful. And when Fr. Nathaniel passed by I even smiled at him, hoping for a blessing in return. His reply was a wry grin and a surprisingly gentle sign of the cross, as if warding off evil. I bowed to kiss his hand and suddenly heard his reproachful voice.

“So, you say, ‘Never better, Father Superior—thanks to your prayers?’”

I bent over in shock as if paralyzed with arthritis. When I finally dared to lift up my eyes to the elder, I noticed him looking at me with undisguised irony. However, noticing my fear, he then added with genuine kindness: “Have a care, young Georgiy, remember: Sarcasm and defiance never brought up anyone to virtue.”

Lifting up his old sack full of one million rubles in cash, or perhaps just moldy old bread crumbs, he scraped along through the bitter frost and snow towards the main campus of the monastery. I was left standing with my mouth open. And you could only see how at each step the torn shoe sole of our Treasurer was flapping open.

Oh! He was a real Scrooge! Except that he was a saint. As one very respected elder of the Church in St. Petersburg said once: “Spending one year in the Pskov Caves Monastery is the same thing as spending fifty years in some seminary or theological academy.” Of course, whether we really learned our lessons—that is another, and to be honest, sometimes far more bitter question.

### His Fiscal Astuteness

Fr. Nathaniel truly was, a man of legendary miserliness. Not only did he literally quiver over every last kopeck (penny) belonging to the monastery, but with a fury he would turn out any electric lights which he felt had no purpose to be lit, and would perpetually save water, gas, tea, biscuits, and indeed just about anything that could be scrimped and saved.

He was also an absolute stickler for the upkeep of the age-old rituals, as vital to the survival of the monastery as the upkeep of the buttresses and foundations of the medieval buildings of the monk’s hermitages. He absolutely could not abide, for example, if any of our brotherhood ever went on vacation; he could not and would not accept it. He himself, of course, throughout all his fifty-five years of residence in





the monastery, never once in his life took a single day off. I do remember one time when our abbot gave his blessing to one monk who wished to take some time off for summer vacation. Well... that is, he gave his blessing. However, he instructed the poor hapless monk who had received it to go get money for his journey from our Treasurer. I happened to witness the scene.

It began with this monk who was planning to take off for vacation knocking for a long, long, long time at the door of the cell of Father Nathaniel, and receiving no answer. Our Treasurer, having understood right away what the matter was, simply hid, and didn't open the door. At this point the young priest decided to wait the Treasurer out. He sat down on a bench outside and began to wait. Four hours later, Father Nathaniel, with a wary glance around him, sneaked out onto the square. He was immediately overtaken by the young priest, who showed him the written blessing of the abbot to give him money for his journey.

When he saw the paper, Fr. Nathaniel froze as if he was being murdered, and then with a shriek collapsed onto the floor, nervously jerking his arms and legs towards the sky. At this the soles of his tattered shoes flapped open, and the holes in his weather-beaten long johns underneath his cassock were visible. He then began to scream: "Help, help, help! Robbery! Thieves! They want money! For vacation! Oh! They're tired of the monastery! Tired of the Mother of God! Help, help, help! Robbery! Thieves!"

The poor priest was so shocked he couldn't stand up, and so squatted back down. Various foreign tourists who were in the square froze in amazement. Utterly horrified, the poor young priest dashed off to his cell. Meanwhile, the wise Father Superior, as he observed this scene from his window, watched with a very contented smile indeed.

But we always received particular pleasure whenever we were given the task of helping Fr. Nathaniel in guiding excursions around the monastery. Generally, he was entrusted with taking extremely important people around the grounds. Our tasks as novices only involved opening and closing doors, and sometimes opening and unlocking the heavy church doors on the watchtowers and cathedrals. All the rest of the time we would just listen to Father Nathaniel.

And there was plenty to listen to. Fr. Nathaniel eloquently carried on the tradition inherited from his teacher, the great Archimandrite Alipius, retired abbot of the monastery, who had defended it throughout years of persecution with unquenchable faith in God. Father Alipius's gift of wise, if sometimes mercilessly accurate, words had been inherited by Father Nathaniel.

In those atheistic years, the Soviet bureaucrats who visited the monastery were itching for any excuse to close it down: any sign of insanity, illness, psychological inadequacy, just about anything or anyone would have served except what

they actually found: unique but extremely interesting, erudite scholars, remarkably daring and internally free men who actually knew far more about life than anything of which their guests had the least inkling. Within a few minutes the tourists generally realized that they had never met such men in their entire lives.

Once in 1986 the Party bosses of the province of Pskov brought some big shot from the Ministry of Transportation to the monastery. He was actually a surprisingly calm and decent fellow. For example, he didn't ask idiotic questions about where the monks' wives live. And he wasn't interested in asking us how it was that Yuri Gagarin had flown into space and hadn't seen God there. But in the end, after spending two hours with Father Nathaniel, this bureaucrat, being impressed by his new acquaintance, could not help himself:

"Listen! I'm amazed talking to you! I don't think I've ever met such an interesting and unusual man in my entire life! But forgive me—how can you with your intelligence possibly believe in... I mean, after all, science keeps opening newer and newer horizons for humanity! And all without God! The fact is there is no need for him. This year Halley's Comet will be approaching us. And the scientists have totally been able to calculate its orbit and its speed and its trajectory. And for this, forgive me, absolutely no concept of God is needed!"

"Halley's Comet, you say?" Fr. Nathaniel rubbed his beard. "You mean to say that if it's possible to calculate the orbit of a comet, that makes God unnecessary? Hmm! Just imagine this then: put me by a railroad and give me a piece of paper and a pencil. Within a week of observation I will be able to tell you exactly when and in what direction the trains will be running. But does that mean that there are no conductors, no dispatchers, no station workers, and no minister of transportation even? Of course not! Everything needs direction."

### His Repose

Difficult Fr. Nathaniel died with remarkable peace and tranquility. When the cardiologist suggested giving him a pacemaker, he begged the Father Superior not to allow it.

"Father, just imagine," he said, "my soul wishes to go to God, but some tiny electric gadget is violently forcing my soul involuntarily back into my body! Let my soul go, now that its time has come!"

I had the happiness of visiting Fr. Nathaniel not long before his demise, and was amazed by the ceaseless goodness and love now pouring out of that elder. Rather than hoarding the very last ounces of his strength, this incredibly miserly (in all other aspects of his life) and dry ecclesiastical pedant gave the very last ounce of himself to whatever person who, even for a few minutes, had been sent to him by the Lord God. Actually, come to think of it, this is how he had lived his entire life. Only we hadn't understood it at the time.

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## THE TRIUMPHANT CHURCH

By Metropolitan Meletios of Nikopolis and Preveza (†2012).

Once, in a certain Russian monastery, as Staretz Sampson tells us, a monk remembered that, during the Divine Liturgy, he was told to sweep the entrance of the Monastery's Katholikon very well. "I might as well do it now," he thought, "since this part of the Divine Liturgy is not as important." Therefore, the monk took the broom and started sweeping. He was saying the *Jesus Prayer* silently and in a noetic way, and from time to time, he would watch that which was being served.

Not even five minutes had gone by when he turned to look up to see the domes of the Church (like the ones in Russia) suddenly opening and the *Triumphant Church* appearing with all its majesty before him: it was an awesome sight! In the center, there was a Holy Table as big as the sky. In front of it, three Archpriests were on their knees. Many others surrounded them and a multitude of priests and deacons surrounded the former. On the right and left sides Angelic choirs were standing in indescribable and glistening beauty.

There was inexpressible glory and light... Moreover, the thousands of honey-flowing, inconceivable melodies of the Heavenly Commanders who were present filled him with divine blessedness and joy. A heavenly Divine Worship was being ministered! Nevertheless, it was being ministered in a strange way, which

resembled the Divine Liturgy on earth. It was ministered by Holy Hierarchs, such as, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint John Chrysostom (three). Like, Saint Athanasius the Great, Saint Photius the Great and Saint Gregory Palamas (three). Alternatively, like Saint Nicholas, Saint Spyridon and Saint Nektarios (three).

Yet there, in the heavenly Triumphant Church of Jerusalem Above, they received Holy Communion. He saw that they were partaking, in a never-ending way, of the glory and the uncreated triune light, of the *ambrosia* of divine blessedness, of the cup of God's ineffable mysteries...



The monk remained motionless, rooted to the spot until the Divine Liturgy had been completed. When the monks exited the Church, they saw him and he was still standing motionless; he was rooted to that spot and in floods of tears. Not only was he wet inside out but also his cloak was soaking from the unstoppable flood of tears.

Very carefully, they took hold of him and without saying a word; they brought him very gently to his cell where he remained for a long time in a state of total amazement; divine revelation had overwhelmed him. When he recovered, his Spiritual father also arrived. The latter brought him round from all the weeping he went through and then they went together to the Abbot of the Monastery to whom they narrated the monk's exceptional divine vision with a sense of awe and extreme humility.



# 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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## PEACE FROM GOD, CHRIST IS BORN!

*By the saintly Serbian Patriarch Pavle of blessed memory (+2009); his 1999 Nativity epistle to the Serbian flock.*

**Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.**

[Jn 6:68]



Persons and events come and go with the relentless march of time. That which today seems important and crucial may be completely forgotten tomorrow. Persons regarded by their contemporaries as influential and powerful are forgotten, as if they had never existed. History brings and then carries, it concocts and then abandons to oblivion. Everything appears temporary and relative, even us.

Man can carry on in various ways with the pessimism of history, but it is far more important how God sees history. God, by His constant presence and action in history and through what appears as a meaningless course of events, prepares the way that leads toward a pre-determined goal. By His entering into history He has transformed history so that particular events are not relative and temporary; on the contrary, they are unique, un-repeatable and of crucial importance both for God and for man. God's presence in history thus cures

history itself of its natural, perpetual pessimism.

And precisely today, here and now, for the two thousandth time we celebrate and remember the event that divides history in two; the event so significant that we count the years from it as we now complete the second millennium. Two thousand years have passed since that night when history's greatest miracle took place in that cave near Bethlehem, when the Son of God Himself came and put on flesh and became like one of us: *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* (Jn 1:14). He is none other than the eternal and uncreated Son, the Word or *Logos* of God, through Whom all things were made. Since that night nothing in human life and history is as it was before. The *Sun of Righteousness* (Mal 4:2) was born to us and all the depths of human fallenness and struggle against God have been filled by His warmth and light. From that night on, all human life and the history of every nation comes down to only one dilemma, to one simple question: Are you for or against Christ? One simple question, but a question so crucial that our entire life and the future of our people hinges upon it. That question overshadows and defines every historical period of the past twenty centuries.

For or against Him? Earlier periods that were "for Christ" (at least for the most part) brought forth fruit that stands as an example and a starting point for all times. That fruit is called Christian culture. It represents an attempt to Christianize every segment of

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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 20<sup>th</sup> 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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personal, social and national life, so that nothing remains outside or apart from Christ. We call it an attempt, since nothing in history is absolute and final. But the value is truly in the deeply Christian attempt, since a basic characteristic of Christianity is its all-inclusiveness—that *Christ be all in all*. (1 Cor 15:28).

Let us simply remember how the writer of the life of the Serbian ruler Stefan Lazarevic said of him; he had wished that “life throughout his land truly be like the Church of God.” The fruits of life directed in this way are magnificent. Christianity was poured into the everyday way of life. It Christianized every soul and created the atmosphere in which all personal and social life developed. No matter what area of life in that period we examine, we always find at its core a Christian vision and understanding of life and the world. It was an inexhaustible source of vitality and, most importantly, optimism for the age that declared itself *for Christ*. Even the tragedies that occurred, such as our Kosovo, could take on a Christian character in the national consciousness.

Historical periods cannot be repeated, neither can models from the past be transplanted into the present. But what remains as an example for all times is the creative effort to base all of life on Christ, so that there are no spheres of life or activities that honor laws or rules other than Christian ones. Epochs that were *for Christ* well understood His words that *no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*. (Mt 6:24). But then come dark times, times that struggle against God and Christ, regardless of whether they come from conquering foreign peoples or from the actions of our own people. The goals and methods are always the same: Kill Christ in the souls of the people, throw Him out of every area of life, and

erect and proclaim new “gods.” In every such time Christians answered in the same way: with their blood. In such times the history of the whole Church, as well as of our Serbian Orthodox Church, is written in blood. From Kosovo to Jasenovac all the martyrs and new-martyrs witnessed that there is no life without Christ, and they did not fear those who could kill only their bodies but could not harm their souls. Their blood is our foundation, and we are accountable to it, that we not betray Christ even at the price of our lives, much less for our positions or careers. Their blood will be the measure of our salvation.

For or against Christ? On the basis of this yardstick, how can we grade the century we are leaving behind? Wars and a whole ocean of spilled blood. Suffering and misfortunes characterize the past century, but its grade can be summed up in only one word—failure. So much war, so much blood, and so little peace. Even the peace we did have during the past hundred years was not really peace, since we used those times to create the groundwork for new conflicts and wars. Governmental and ideological adventurism during the twentieth century cost the Serbian Church and people dearly. And in the end, what is left is that we are beginning the new century and the new millennium in a state of total crisis. Many are the names and characteristics of the crises in which we find ourselves, but fundamentally what we have is that deepest and most difficult of all possible crises—the crisis of humanity. Wrong has become right for us, falsehood has become truth, and we can only cry out with the Psalmist David, *Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity every one with his neighbor; with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak*. (Pss 12:1-2).

The twentieth century constantly preached with the lips of its demonic “wisdom” that human lives are the cheapest of

all merchandise. In the number of its victims it far surpassed all other centuries of human history. The tyrannies to which it gave rise have nothing comparable in any other time of history. The ideological dictatorships which arose during this time, especially in Orthodox countries, were unprecedented attacks on human freedom and human life. In the name of ideologies millions lost their lives simply because they wished to think and live differently.

What is man, and what is he worth? The twentieth century said that man is nothing, but this feast today tells us, just as that day two thousand years ago told us, that **man is sacred**. And that applies not only to his spirit or his soul, but also to his body. **The whole of man, body and soul together, is an inviolable shrine of incalculable and eternal worth.** Today's feast tells us this, the day on which the Bodiless becomes embodied and on which the Son of God becomes the Son of man. This precisely is what is radically new in our faith. That the soul is holy is suggested by other religions, but that the body is equally sacred is found nowhere else. During the whole first eight centuries of Christianity, which were characterized by struggles against heresies, the Church unyieldingly defended this truth: that the whole of man, both body and soul, is holy. And that applies to every human being, regardless of his religion or nationality. Every murder, every disrespect for human personality and freedom, is sin, even more so when it is justified on ideological or nationalistic grounds.

In contrast to this dismal picture of the twentieth century, today we see before us a young mother holding her newly-born Child to her bosom, and are moved to feel one of the greatest of human virtues and attributes: a warm heart. The motherly love of the Most Holy Theotokos permeates today its entire event and radiates a warm feeling within us. **Christmas is the feast of warmth and of warm human hearts.** If it seems that there is no place today a person can "warm" himself, it is because human hearts have grown cold. They have become hard and unfeeling even towards the suffering of so many of our brothers and sisters who in recent years have been left homeless, exiled from their birthplaces, and some even without their loved ones. That life is hard is not the exception but the rule. Only the twentieth century has brought the simple-minded dream that life should be easy and leisurely, which it never has been throughout history. *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground* the Lord tells Adam (Gen 3:19), and that is the law of human life. But afflictions and difficulties and limitations are easier to bear when we have warmth in us and amongst us. For in the day of His second coming, the Lord will not ask us what kind of times we lived in, but how we related to

our neighbor. Was he our "hell" or our "heaven?" We ourselves build either heaven or hell in our own hearts out of the momentary circumstances we are given, and the warmth of the human heart is able to transform any situation, even to make a cave in Bethlehem the most beautiful palace and birthplace of the King of kings.

It is hard to be a human being. To be a human being who spreads human warmth is even harder, but it is a task to which we are suited and which the Lord Himself has entrusted to us—to be human even in inhuman times. Let us look around us. See how many families are governed by coldness, where there is no more love and which are disintegrating. There are more and more such families. See how many ties of kinship, neighborliness, friendship and *kumstvo* (godparenthood, *Ed.*) have been broken and enveloped in coldness. We will be completely immobilized by the ice of discord and intolerance, of disunity and envy, if we do not bring Christ into our hearts and especially into the hearts of our children. He is the only One able to bring together the disunited and reconcile the alienated, to warm our hearts and give peace to our lives.

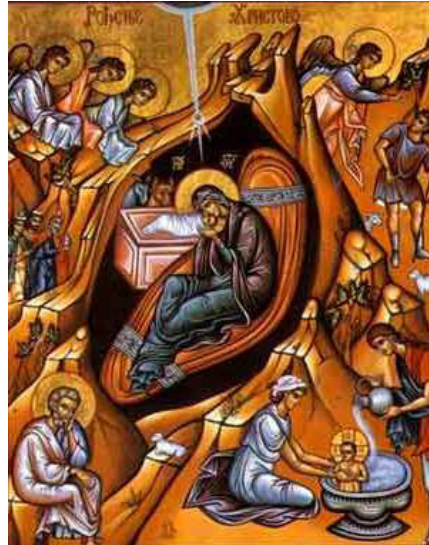
So what is to be done now, in the new century and new millennium? We pose this question to ourselves. We pose this question to our brothers throughout the world who care about us. The future is hidden and unknown. There are many roads before us, but they are not all the right roads. Some of them lead to destruction. But the future which lies before us is not simply something we must await, but it is a road we, first of all, must construct. We are responsible for our future no less than for our past. It is revealed to us as a possibility which we must responsibly and consciously create. And overshadowing the future is the same question we have already asked: For or against Christ?

If the Lord has not revealed the near future to us, leaving it up to us to create it, He has revealed to us the final and ultimate truth—that no matter what, He will triumph. He revealed that good is far stronger than evil, and that every triumph of evil is temporary and illusory. The weeds and the wheat grow together, but only until the harvest. Are we for or against Christ? This is the question that will determine both our future and the future of all nations.

As we gather here today around the Divine Infant Christ celebrating His birth, we hope and we pray to Him that He will be reborn in our hearts, in our neighbors, in our people and our country, and in the hearts of all people and nations.

Peace from God. Christ is Born!

Patriarch PAVLE, Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade  
Christmas, 1999





## THE BIRTH AND BAPTISM OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, from Vol. 2 of "Empirical Dogmatics."



When we talk about the birth of Christ we are speaking of two births. One is the pre-eternal birth of the Word from the Father, according to the divine nature, and the other is the birth in time from the All-Holy Virgin, according to the human nature. This refers to Christ's two natures: the divine and the human.

The important thing is that this Word, before His birth in the flesh, is like the Father in every respect. He does not come from nothing. The Word has two births. One birth was before all ages and the other birth was in time, which is the birth as a man, the incarnation. This theological fact is revelational and above all it is empirical, as the glorified flesh of Christ becomes a source of life for the members of the Church, particularly the saints.

It is not only the Old and New Testaments that clearly teach the fact that the Word, the Lord of Glory, Who is God by nature and co-essential (*homoousios*) with the Father, truly took flesh and was born in His own normal and separate humanity of the Virgin Mary—who is literally, really and truly the Theotokos or Mother of God. Thus He became man by nature, not just by indwelling, and, as the Word in flesh, He became co-essential with us through His humanity. This truth is clearly revealed to all who have reached *glorification* (*theosis*), from which they learn empirically that Christ is the Word, that He is God by nature and man by nature, and also by nature the source of glory. He passes on to His human nature the existence of the source of glory, by means of which the actual flesh of the Word becomes the source of our life and life-giving; this is because the Word Himself is incarnate, and also because of the union and exchange of natural properties between the divine and human natures of the Word.

In the Old Testament there was the tabernacle of witness, where the pot of manna, the tablets of the covenant and Aaron's rod were kept in the Holy of Holies. Now, in the New Covenant, the tabernacle is the flesh that He took from the All-Holy Virgin. This is why the statement that *the Word became flesh and dwelt* (literally: *tabernacled*) *among us* (Jn 1:14) is so important. This dwelling is the tabernacle. God *tabernacled* among us. How? He became flesh and dwelt among us.

The tabernacle of witness is the created form of the uncreated Temple, because the uncreated Temple is Christ Himself, the Word, this Angel of the Lord. For that reason Christ says, *I am in the Father, and the Father in Me* (Jn 14:10-11) and so on. That Christ is in the Father and the Father is in Christ means, in Hebrew terms, that Christ is the Temple of God. So we have the uncreated Temple, as we have the uncreated Law, which is Christ; and we have a created temple, which is the tabernacle of witness, which they later enclosed in Solomon's temple. This is why the created temple, the temple of Solomon, has been abolished and replaced by the created Temple, the human nature of Christ.

Christ as God-man is like God the Father and the Holy Spirit in every respect according to His divinity, and like man in every respect according to His human nature. The phrase that Christ is *the image of the invisible God* (Col. 1:15) refers to His uncreated divine nature.

This is exactly what the Apostle Paul says in the characterization of *the image of the invisible God*, Christ, that is. When he says *image* he does not mean something created, because there cannot be a created image of God. It is different if we speak about an image of Christ; in that case we have an image of something created, because Christ is man and we have an icon of Christ the man, not of Christ's divinity. But when we say that Christ is the image of God, as God is not incarnate, how can God have a created icon? He is the image of the invisible God as an uncreated reality, not as a created reality.

The incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity was in the pre-eternal plan of God, because through the union of the divine and human natures in the Person of the Word, the *glorification* of every human being could come about. From this perspective, the Theotokos was in God's pre-eternal plan. St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain wrote a specific text about our Lady the Theotokos, in which, by quoting the Fathers' words, he asserts that *All the intelligible and perceptible world came into being for this end, that is, on account of the Lady Theotokos, but the Lady Theotokos came into being on account of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The All-Holy Virgin is in the pre-eternal plan of God, as the troparia and the Fathers of the Church say. This is a matter of description. It is not a philosophical question about whether or not the All-Holy Virgin is necessary for the incarnation. It is a fact that the All-Holy Mother of God is ever-virgin. We cannot philosophize about something that is a fact and say that the incarnation could have come about even without the All-Holy Virgin, or from a Mother of God who was not a virgin.

The All-Holy Virgin was the greatest gift of the creation and humanity to Christ. The successive purifications of her forebears, her own struggle and, most of all, the grace of God, made her worthy to become the Mother of the

Son and Word of God. She experienced *glorification* in the Holy of Holies. We know from the Tradition about the *glorification* of the All-Holy Virgin, who entered the Temple at three years old. She reached the Holy of Holies, which means that the All-Holy Virgin at three years of age had attained to the experience of *glorification*. She lived in the glory of God. She also beheld God from at least the age of three, and in this way she was made ready to be the Mother of God.

Christ is co-essential (*homoousios*) with the Father according to His divine nature and co-essential with us according to His human nature. Some people in the early Church claimed that Christ was co-essential with the Father and with His Mother. He cannot be co-essential with His mother and His mother co-essential with us, without Christ being co-essential with us.

The Church ruled at the Third Ecumenical Council that the All-Holy Virgin was to be called Theotokos, because she did not give birth to a mere man, but to the Word of God. The teaching about the Theotokos is therefore included in the infallible teaching of the Church. Furthermore, the Theotokos occupies a position of utmost importance in the Church. In the Mysteries (Sacraments) of the Church the whole catholic Church is present: Christ with the Theotokos, the Prophets, the Apostles and the saints.

The faithful have a spiritual relationship with the Church. Anyone who loves Christ also loves the All-Holy Virgin, who assisted in the mystery of the incarnation of the Son and Word of God and from whom Christ took human nature and glorified it. The relationship of the faithful with the All-Holy Virgin is not, therefore, simply sentimental but spiritual. Furthermore, the glory of the Theotokos is not a theoretical teaching, but empirical, as many saints have seen the glory of the Theotokos.

In any case, the human nature that was assumed by the Word and united immutably, inseparably, indivisibly and unconfusedly with the divine nature, was glorified *at the same time as it was assumed* in the womb of the Theotokos. Christ was not gradually perfected, as human beings are. Christ is God according to essence, whereas man is glorified according to participation. Also, according to the Fathers of the Church, Christ brings about *glorification*: He is Himself the source of man's *glorification* and does not "undergo" *glorification*. Christ is God and glorifies others,

like the other Persons of the Holy Trinity, whereas man is glorified. Christ revealed this glorified human nature to human beings by stages.

There is no question of Christ having passed through the stages of *perfection*, *purification* and *illumination* in order to reach *glorification* or *theoria*. There was no progress towards perfection in Christ, since He had *glorification* or *theoria* or participation in the union of uncreated glory from the very conception of His human nature in the womb of the All-Holy Virgin. He did not possess this by the grace of God, but naturally, seeing that He was God by nature and the actual hypostasis of the Word, Who was the only one of the Holy Trinity to become man by nature, uniting Himself with His own normal human nature, with all its natural properties, including the will and energy that are common to human nature in general.

Christ gradually revealed the stages of perfection in Himself (in other words, the *glorification* of human nature in Himself) to set an example to those who are on the way to perfection. He assumed everything that was common to human nature (except sin) not in external appearance, as the Docetists claimed, in order to delude those observing His



human life, but in reality.

After the incarnation of the Word, exactly the same method of revelation and *glorification* that took place with the Prophets is repeated with the Apostles. The difference now is that the Word reveals Himself in the natural and uncreated glory of His nature, which is shared with the Father and the Holy Spirit, by means of His own humanity. This humanity did not advance towards the continuous vision of divine glory, but was glorified through its union—not by grace but by nature—with the Word from the beginning of its existence in the womb of the Theotokos.

Christ did not progress as a human being towards *glorification*, but was conceived as a glorified man, not by virtue of the union that the saints experience with the divine nature, but by virtue of the one unique natural or hypostatic union with the divine nature and energy. Thus Christ, as man, participates by nature in the divine glory and is the natural source of this glory. The *glorification* of the Prophets, Apostles and saints is a union by grace with the natural glory and energy of the divine nature, but the *glorification* of the human nature of the Word is its hypostatic union with God the Word and the resultant union with the divine nature. All glorified creatures see the divine glory and share in it. Only Christ, because He

is the Word by nature, sees and participates by nature in the divine essence.

The saints understand this from their experience. When they reach *glorification*, the *theoria* of Christ's glory in His human nature, they realize that Christ is the source of the uncreated Light, whereas they themselves are participants in the Light. The fact that Christ was perfect from the beginning was made clear on many occasions, even during His struggle with the devil. In Christ this state of perfection was natural and not acquired. For that reason **His struggle with the devil in the wilderness and His forty-day fast were not an achievement but a manifestation of perfection.** At the same time it was a real fight with temptations, not from within but from the devil.

Christ voluntarily assumed the passible and corruptible aspects of human nature because He really took flesh. However, the so-called *blameless* or natural passions—hunger, thirst, weariness, sleep—did not act in Christ by compulsion. Christ's divine nature had authority over them. So Christ was hungry when He wished to be, thirsty when He wished to be, slept or rested when He wished to. The saints understand this to some extent from their experience. They too, when they reach *glorification* according to grace, observe a suspension of the natural and blameless passions: hunger, thirst, sleep and so on. In Christ this happened naturally because He was true God, and the human nature followed the divine nature.

The incarnate Word not only possesses the state of *theoria* naturally, not by grace, but even as man He Himself is the natural source of *glorification* and glory. If some of the natural and blameless passions are suspended in those who by grace are in a temporary state of *glorification*, how much more must those passions have no natural place in Christ, Who is glorified by nature and the source of *glorification* as man.

So one can see why it is a basic doctrine of the Orthodox Church that the Word as man wants to have the natural and blameless human passions, and really to share in them, transforming them into a source of our salvation and a means by which we ourselves can overcome the devil and pass through the stages of *purification* and *illumination* on our way to *glorification*. On the one hand these passions are a result of the Fall, but at the same time, through the glory of the Cross, they become the source of our salvation, perfection and *glorification*, and the means by which the devil is defeated and destroyed. Paradoxically, the devil is destroyed by means of the very passions by which he attempts to destroy man. The most basic weapon with which Satan tries to destroy human beings is death, but through death Christ and the saints destroy the devil.

It should be noted at this point that the Triune God—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—is present everywhere in

the world according to energy but not according to essence. The God-man Christ, however, is absent from the world according to His essence as Word, but *the human nature of Christ is everywhere present according to essence*, by reason of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures. This issue is linked with the teaching about the essence and energy of God, but also about the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Christ.

The foundation of this teaching is the actual experience of *glorification*. These distinctions that the Fathers of the Church make are not the outcome of philosophical speculation. They know from the experience itself that in the experience of *glorification* the one who is glorified is united with God according to energy.

At Christ's Baptism in the River Jordan, John the Forerunner was accounted worthy to experience the Triune God: *And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, **Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*** (Mk 1:9-11).

For the Forerunner, at least for the day of the Baptism, this is the experience of *glorification*. When he saw the heavens opened and so on, this means that he had a revelation of the uncreated glory of Christ. That is also why we sing in the troparion of the Feast of Theophany that *the Holy Trinity was revealed* in the Baptism. How is the Holy Trinity revealed in the Baptism? Through the manifestation of the glory of God, which is the experience of *glorification* for John the Baptist.



Let anger be stilled for it disturbs peace and tranquility. This is the day in which God descended to sinners! Let the righteous man be ashamed to exalt himself over sinners. This is the day when the Lord of creation came to servants! Let the master of the house humble himself in similar love to his servants. This is the day on which the Wealthy One became poor for our sake! Let not the rich be ashamed to share their table with the poor.

#### St. Ephraim the Syrian

The incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God entered our world. In one sense, indeed, He was not far from it before, for no part of creation had ever been without Him Who, while ever abiding in union with the Father, yet fills all things that are. But now He entered the world in a new way, stooping to our level in His love and Self-revealing to us.

#### St. Athanasius the Great



## IN MEMORY OF FR. JOHN ROMANIDES (+11/1/2001)

*By Protopresbyter George Metallinos, Dean of the Athens University School of Theology.*

One of the most significant Orthodox theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a revivalist of our theology who strived to restore it to the genuineness of Patristic tradition, the Protopresbyter Father John Romanides was escorted by all of us—his friends, his colleagues and his students—to our eternal and true Homeland.

On behalf of the Department of Theology of the Athens University School of Theology and its President Mr. Demetrios Gonis, I was given the honor of offering a few words of love, respect and honor to the Great Colleague, who was en route to the “higher realms.”

The deceased himself had revealed in one of his rare self-introductions the following:

“My parents came from the Roman city of Kastropolis of Arabessus of Cappadocia, birthplace of the Roman Emperor Mauritios (582-602), who had appointed Saint Gregory the Great (590-604) as Pope of Rome, who in turn appointed Augustine as the first Archbishop of Canterbury (597-604).

I was born in Piraeus on 02/03/1927. I left Greece and migrated to America on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1927 (just 72 days old) with my parents and was raised in the city of New York, in Manhattan, on 46<sup>th</sup> Street, between Second and Third Avenue.

I am a graduate of the Hellenic College of Brookline, Massachusetts, the School of Theology of Yale University, a Doctor of the School of Theology of the National Capodistrian University of Athens, the School of Philosophy of Harvard University (School of Arts and Sciences); Professor Emeritus of the School of Theology of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki and Visiting Professor of the Theological School of Saint John the Damascene of the Balamand University of Lebanon since 1970.”

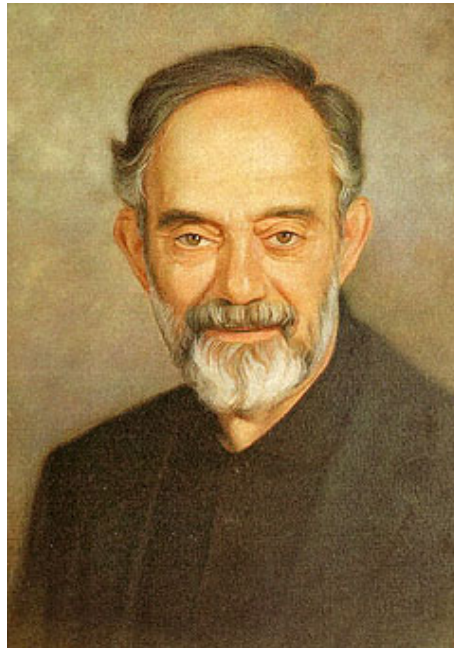
To these we will add that he also studied at the Russian Seminary of Saint Vladimir in New York; the Russian Institute of Saint Sergius in Paris and Munich, Germany. He was ordained a presbyter in 1951 and from then on, was ministering in various dioceses of the United States of America. Between the years 1958 and 1965 he served as a professor in the Theological School of the Holy Cross, but

resigned in 1965, protesting against the removal of Father George Florovsky from the School.

His appointment to the Seat of Dogmatics in the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki took place on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1968, but he was not finally assigned there, because he was accused of being a “communist”!... His assignment finally took place in 1970. In 1984 he resigned for personal reasons, was given full pension, but it was not deemed appropriate to award him the title of Professor Emeritus—something that comes to reveal the dysfunctions of our theological comrades.

### His Work

He had written a plethora of studies, many of which are still unpublished and should be published altogether, in a series of volumes. These relics must be safeguarded, because they have much to offer and reveal.



**Fr. John Romanides**  
(1927-2001)

His doctorate dissertation on the “Ancestral Sin” which was a literary revolutionary treatise, opened new paths in our theology, followed by his equally significant books on Romanity in the area of History. Father John revived both these areas—of research and of understanding.

His work and his contribution to science have been systematically scrutinized in the doctorate dissertation of Andrew Sopko, “Prophet of Roman Orthodoxy—The Theology of John Romanides,” Canada, 1998.

Equally important was his participation and contribution in our Church, with his participation in the Theological Dialogues with heterodox participants, especially Anglicans, but with other religious representatives also (Judaism, Islam). The fact that his native tongue was

American (English) provided him the ease that he needed to expound with precision the positions of our Church. In the Dialogue with the Worldwide Lutheran Federation (1978), I had the opportunity to become better acquainted with him, and become close friends with him, and, more importantly for me, to truly become his student, beyond the extensive and continuous study of his works. In those Dialogues, his broad knowledge of the Patristic tradition became very apparent—along with the forgeries it had suffered both in the East and the West—and especially his knowledge of the theology of Saint Gregory Palamas, the cornerstone of Orthodox tradition.

Father John was a supporter of the association between theology and experience in the Holy Spirit, and the stages of the Saints’ spiritual course of *purification, illumination*

and *theosis* as prerequisites of the Ecumenical Synods and the wholehearted acceptance of them—something that has been discarded in the West—but also in our own, westernizing theological thought. This turn toward patristic mentality as a form of ecclesiastical genuineness was the continuation and the supplementing of the respective movement by Father George Florovsky, whose course he pursued in ecumenical dialogue, himself likewise becoming an annoyance and not easy to converse with. Some day, all of this will be put in writing, so that the outstanding character of the deceased will become apparent, along with his true contribution towards the international and ecumenical presence of Orthodoxy, even though he often kept to himself.

### The Period Before and After Romanides

When reviewing his theological opus—educative, literary and militant—we are naturally compelled to refer to a pre-Romanides and post-Romanides era, because he introduced a real section and a rift in our scholastic past, which resembled a Babylonian captivity for our theology. His dissertation decisively sealed this revivalist course, to the degree that even those who for various reasons criticized or ideologically opposed him, betrayed in their writings the influence of Father John in their theological thought. Specifically, Father John:

(a) Reinstated the priority of patristic empirical theologizing in the academic theological arena, pushing aside the intellectual-meditative-metaphysical way of theologizing.

(b) He linked academic theology to worship and the patristic tradition of the *Philokalia*, proving the inter-embracing of theology and spiritual living, and the *poemantic* (shepherd-like, *Ed.*)-therapeutic character of dogmatic theology.

(c) He discerned and adopted in his theological method the close link between dogma and history, thanks to which, he was able to comprehend—as few could—the estrangement and the demise of theology in Western Europe, which came about with the Frankish occupation and imposition. Besides, his capable knowledge of history, Frankish and Roman (he was destined to be a History professor at Yale), helped him determine and analyze the diametric difference between the Frankish and the Roman civilizations with the introduction of Roman criteria for examining our history and civilization.

(d) He thus assisted in the comprehensive research of Hellenism as well, beyond the manufactured western scenarios, with his upright-to-absolutely-justified use of our historical names, their significance and their potential in the course of our history.

### The Heterodox

It is a fact, that the heterodox acknowledged—more than we did—the personality of Father John and his significance to Orthodoxy. He was considered Augustine's finest Orthodox researcher, who even assisted western theology in

comprehending him, and was characterized as “most assuredly the greatest of the living Orthodox theologians, whose works comprise a critical study of Augustine's work in the light of Patristic Theology.” And it must be said, that we are indebted to Father John for his weighty assertion that the teachings of Barlaam of Calabria on the prophets' god-perceiving experiences being “natural phenomena, that can be done and undone” are derived from Augustine's treatise “On the Trinity.”

Respected and beloved Father John, your friends, your colleagues and co-spokesmen all express our gratitude, for everything that by the grace of God you gave us, as do the thousands of direct or indirect students also. We hold on to the theological trust that you left us, to be our rod in the darkness that calculation, ignorance, indifference and profit have spawned. You have united us with the patristic element within the realm of academic theology, by constantly urging us towards worship and ascetic exercise, where true theology is cultivated. We thank you!

May your remembrance be everlasting, until we meet again at the celestial altar, my beloved Colleague and Co-Minister.



Joy, not happiness. Happiness is a delusion of this world, a sickness of man's soul. To anticipate happiness in the next life is to expect to be in the condition we call “hell,” not heaven. The Church as a spiritual hospital has first and foremost to heal us of the happiness-seeking sickness of mankind which holds us in bondage to a delusion and prevents us from coming to a knowledge of Truth.

### Protoperbyter John Romanides

It is hazardous to take older and more recent [Liturgical] editions and to draw conclusions about modifications and changes in practice. It would be wrong to take such an array of variations and to assemble one's own technique of serving, though one might quote precedents and give convincing arguments for each variation. It is necessary to understand these variations lest we become adamant about practices which have undergone change. It is important to study and to understand the history of liturgies that we might the better distinguish a variation from an innovation which is theologically incorrect, that we might avoid some of the changes one finds in recent editions which seem generated by nothing more than a striving after originality.

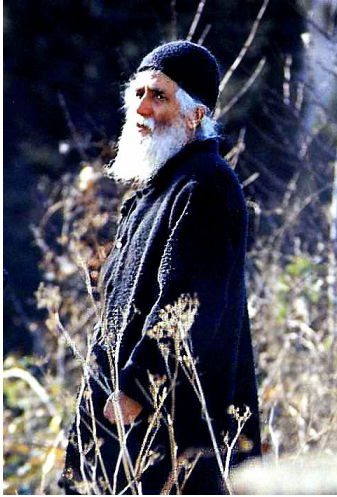
### Hieromonk Justin the Sinaite

[*Librarian at St. Katherine's Orthodox Monastery, Mount Sinai, Egypt*]

## SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE FAMILY

From the book "Family Life," by Elder Paisios the Athonite (Souroti, Greece: Sacred Hesychastirion of St. John the Evangelist, 2002).

### The Practice of Virtue within the Family



—Geronda, how can a husband become practiced in the virtues?

—God will give him opportunities. Many men, however, after asking God to give them opportunities to practice the virtues, grumble when they are faced with a certain difficulty. For example, sometimes the Good God, in His boundless love, and in order to provide practice in humility and patience, will take away His

Grace from the wife, and she will begin acting outlandishly and treating the husband inconsiderately. Then the husband should not complain, but rather rejoice and thank God for the opportunity to struggle which He has given him. Or, a mother asks God to grant her patience. Her little child then comes in, and as soon as she has the table set for dinner, he pulls on the table cloth and everything spills on the floor. At such times it's as if the child is saying to his mother: "Mama, be patient!"

In general, the difficulties which exist today in the world force those who desire to live a little spiritual life to be watchful. Just as, may God protect us, in a war the people are in a watchful state, I see the same thing happening now with whomever strives to live spiritually. Look how tough the poor children have it who are close to the Church! But the war, which exists because of the terrible environment in which they live, helps them, in a way, to stay awake. You see, in times of peace, when there are no difficulties, the majority of people slack off. Instead, they should utilize such serenity for spiritual growth, to cut off their shortcomings and cultivate the virtues.

Silence greatly helps in spiritual life. It is good for one to practice silence for about an hour a day: to test himself, to acknowledge his passions and to fight in order to cut them off and purify his heart. It is very good if there is a quiet room in the house which gives him the feeling of a monastic cell. There, *in secret* [Mt 6:4], he is able to do his spiritual maintenance, to study, and to pray. A little spiritual study done before prayer helps greatly. The soul warms up and the mind is transported to the spiritual realm. That's why, when a person has many distractions during the day, he should rejoice if he has ten minutes for

prayer, or even two minutes to read something, so as to drive away distractions.

—Geronda, is this perhaps too difficult for someone living in the world?

—No, there are laymen who live very spiritually—even like ascetics—with their fasting, their services, their prayer ropes, their prostrations—even with children and grandchildren. On Sunday they go to church, receive Holy Communion, and then return home again to their "cell," just like the hermits who go to the *Kyriakon* on Sunday, and afterwards keep silence in their cells. Glory to God! [*Kyriakon is the main church of a Skete, in which the ascetics from nearby cells gather on Sunday and feast days for common services. The name "Kyriakon" is derived from the Greek word for Sunday, "Kyriaki."*] There are many such souls in the world. As a matter of fact, I know a certain family man who says the Jesus prayer unceasingly, wherever he is, and has continuous tears at prayer. His prayer has become self-activating, and his tears are sweet; they are tears of divine rejoicing.

I also remember a certain worker on the Holy Mountain—Yanni was his name—who worked very hard, doing the work of two men. I had advised him to start saying the Jesus Prayer while working, and slowly but surely he grew accustomed to it. He came to me once and told me that he felt great joy when he said the prayer. *Dawn is breaking*, I told him. Soon after I learned he had been killed by two drunks. How saddened I was! A few days later a certain monk was looking for a tool, but he couldn't find it because Yanni had put it somewhere. That evening Yanni appeared to him in his sleep and told him where he had left it. He had attained such a spiritual state that enabled him to help others from the life hereafter.

How simple spiritual life is! If one loves God, if he acknowledges His great Sacrifice and benefactions and if he forces himself with discernment in imitating the Saints, he will quickly become holy. He attains humility and an understanding of his own wretchedness and his tremendous ungratefulness to God.

### Prayer in the Family

—Geronda, should the entire family do compline together at night?

—The older family members should motivate the youngsters with their solemnity. They should do compline and say to the small children: "If you want, stay a little while." When the children are somewhat older they can have a rule—for example, fifteen minutes for the older ones, and two to five minutes for the young children—then after their rule, as much as they want. If the parents make them stay for all of compline they'll resent it. Parents shouldn't pressure their children because they don't yet understand the power and value of prayer. Parents, you could say, are able to eat beans and meat: hearty food. But when a little child



is still only drinking milk, should they tell him to eat meat because it is strengthening? Maybe it is more strengthening, but the poor thing can't even digest it. That's why starting out they should give him little pieces of meat and broth, so that he'll want more.

—Geronda, sometimes even the adults are so tired in the evening that they aren't able to do compline.

—When adults are very tired or sick they should say half of compline or at least one "Our Father." They should not completely bypass prayer. In wartime if you end up on a hill in the evening, surrounded by enemies, you let out a few shots to frighten the enemy, so they will not attack. Adults should also let out a few shots so as to scare the little demons away.

Prayer has great power within the family. I know two siblings who not only kept their parents—who had a big problem between them—from separating, but even caused them to be more in love.

With us, my father used to say: "You don't know what you're going to do? Two times each day you must entrust the future to God, so as to know where you'll end up." Each morning and evening we would all pray together before the icons, father, mother and the children, ending with a prostration before the icon of Christ. When a problem arose in the family we would pray and it would clear up. I remember once, when our youngest brother got sick and my father said: "Come, let's beg God to make him well or to take him, so that he won't suffer anymore." We all prayed together and he recovered.

Even at the table, we all sat together. First we prayed and then we would begin eating. If someone started to eat before the food was blessed we would say "he fornicated." We considered a failure to remain temperate as fornication. It destroys a family if each person comes home, at whatever hour he wants, and eats alone without reason.

### Children and the Spiritual Life

—Geronda, if a mother gives holy water to her child and he spits it out, what should she do?

—She should pray for her child. Maybe the way in which she gives the holy water to her child causes a reaction. For the child to be on the path of God the parents must also live right spiritually. Some parents who are religious strive to help their children to become good, not because they are concerned for the salvation of their souls, but because they want to have good children. In other words, they are more worried about what people will say about their child instead of whether they might go to hell. So how can God help? The aim is not for children to go to church through compulsion, but to love the church; not to do good through compulsion, but to feel the need to do good. The holy lives of parents instruct the souls of their children and they naturally follow. In this way they grow up piously, with health of both soul

and body and without spiritual injuries. If parents force their children out of fear of God, He helps and the child is benefited. If, however, they do it out of egoism, then God does not help. Children are often troubled because of their parent's pride.

—Geronda, some mothers ask us what prayer should a child of three or four years old do?

—You should tell them: "You are the mother; see how much your child can handle." They shouldn't give them a rule.

—Geronda, what if the little children get tired when their parents bring them here for vigils?

—During Orthros they should let them out a little to relax, and during Divine Liturgy bring them back into the church.

Without forcing their children mothers must teach them to pray. Villagers in Cappadocia intensely lived the ascetic tradition. They would take their children to hermitages, do prostrations and pray with tears, and in this way, the children learned how to pray. Chetes [*primarily of Turkish and Kurdish descent, were irregular hordes of freed criminals who were organized into loose bands of "killing squads" in the Ottoman army. It was the Chetes who led the attack in the Armenian Genocide and Greek Population Exchange and became known as merciless and blood-thirsty outlaws whose number one joy was the screaming voices of violated women, children and dying Christians*] would sometimes go by night to rob them; and when passing the chapels they would hear crying and stop in surprise. "OK, what's going on?" they would say. "During the day they are all smiles and at night they cry?" They couldn't understand what was going on.

Miracles happen through the prayers of small children. Whatever they ask of God He gives them because they are guileless and He hears their pure prayer. I remember one time our parents had gone out into the field and had left me in the house with my two younger siblings. The sky suddenly darkened and a torrential rainstorm began. "What will our parents do now?," we said. "How will they get back home?" The two little ones began crying. "Come here," I told them, "we will ask Christ to stop the rain." The three of us knelt down before the family's icons and prayed. In just a few minutes the rain stopped.

Parents must use discernment to help their children draw near to Christ from their early years, and from their childhood to live the joy on high—spiritual joy. When they start school they should learn, little by little, to read spiritual books to help themselves live spiritually. In this way they will become little angels, and their prayers will have greater boldness before God. Such children are spiritual heads of the home. The lives of saints especially help small children in their spiritual lives. As a small boy I found a little book of the lives of saints which they had back in those days. I went out into the forest to read and pray. I was flying with joy.

From the age of ten to sixteen, when the Greek-Italian war began, I lived the spiritual life without restraint. Childhood joys are pure; they leave an imprint on a person that greatly affects him when he grows up. If children live spiritually they will live joyfully in this life, and in the next they will rejoice eternally with Christ.

### Temptations on Feast Days

—Geronda, why do temptations often occur on feast days?

—Don't you know? On feast days, Christ, the Panaghia, and the Saints are joyful. They distribute spiritual treats to people, giving blessings and spiritual gifts. If parents give gifts when their children celebrate their name days and kings release prisoners when a prince is born, why shouldn't the Saints care for us on special occasions, too? Certainly the joy they give greatly endures and our souls are greatly helped. Knowing this the devil creates temptations in order to deprive people of the Divine gifts: they neither rejoice nor benefit from the feast. Sometimes you even see when a family is preparing to commune on a feast day, that the devil will send them a temptation to fight and then not only do they not commune, but they don't even go to church! That's how the little demon does it, so as to be deprived of all Divine help.

The same thing can be seen in our own monastic life. Many times the little demon—tempter that he is, because he knows from experience that we will be spiritually helped on some feast—will, beginning on the eve of the feast, create an atmosphere of temptation. For example, he might get us to quarrel with another brother, and then afterwards torment us in order to overpower us both spiritually and bodily. In this way he doesn't allow us to benefit from the feast, with its joyous atmosphere of doxology. But the Good God helps us when He sees that we had not given occasion, but that this happened only by the envy of the evil one. And God helps us even more when we humbly reproach ourselves, blaming neither our brother nor even the devil, who hates everything good. For his work is this: to create scandals and spread evil—while man, as the image of God, should spread peace and goodness.



The holy life of parents instructs the souls of their children, and so they naturally obey them and grow up with piety and without psychological problems; and the children are pleased with their parents. The parents are gladdened by their children in this life and in life eternal, where they will once again glory in them.

**Blessed Elder Paisios the Athonite, (+1994)**

## THE AIM OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

*From Russian Orthodox Readings, 1990/2, a Moscow Patriarchate publication.*

*Acquire the Holy Spirit, and a thousand around you will be saved.*

**St. Seraphim of Sarov**

† † †

Saint Seraphim was a great ascetic and wonderworker, but even more important for future generations was his teaching on the essence of the Christian life. Firmly based in the patristic tradition, this teaching emphasizes seeking communion with God as the true purpose of life for every Christian.

St. Seraphim demonstrated that everything else did nothing but offer the means for *acquiring the Holy Spirit*. He stressed that in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the oil which the ten foolish virgins ran out of is to be interpreted as the grace of the Holy Spirit. While engaging in external works of piety, these foolish virgins assumed that this was the essence of Christian life. They did not stop to think whether these acts were really pleasing unto God, whether they helped them gain the grace of the Spirit of God and made them worthy of this grace. In his teaching, St. Seraphim contrasted moralism with genuine spirituality. The Spirit is granted but it can also be taken away. To acquire it one must engage in spiritual struggle.

There is a profound message in St. Seraphim's spiritual counsels, his miraculous transformation in the presence of the young landowner Motovilov, and also in the fact that Motovilov's all-important first-hand account of this experience remained hidden from public view for seventy years. As Divine Providence would have it, his memoirs were recovered only in 1901. It was a time when many had begun to disregard the true purpose of Christian life. In his conversation with Motovilov the wise elder said: *The Lord has revealed to me that as a child you asked many people of high ecclesiastical rank of the purpose of Christian life, but none of them could give you a definite answer. They told you about going to church and praying to God, about abiding by His Commandments and doing good works. Some were even angry with you for your 'impious' questions...*

Thus, some regarded as impious inquisitiveness attempts to get an answer to the central problem facing every Christian. This shows that at that time most Russian Orthodox were preoccupied with the building of this world, confining Christianity to a subordinate role. Then came a time when many became disillusioned with the objectives of such worldly construction, and at that time the Lord reminded His people through His saint of the true purpose of their journey through this world.



Through Motovilov St. Seraphim gave a most important warning to mankind: *Good works bring the fruits of the Holy Spirit only if accomplished for the sake of Christ, because the Holy Spirit came into this world only for Christ's sake. And all manner of good works done for their own sake, and not for Christ, bring no grace of the Holy Spirit* (because all things that are void of faith are sinful).

In these words St. Seraphim reveals the mysteries of the Spirit, re-emphasizing the teaching of the Holy Fathers, such as St. Macarius the Great who called on men *to gain the Lord God the Holy Spirit*. In answer to his questions, Motovilov was told to *abide by God's Commandments and do good Works*, but St. Seraphim calls such answers into question, stressing that the external observance of the Commandments is only the means leading one to the encounter with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

St. Paul warned the Early Church, saying that *a man is not justified by the works of the law* (Gal 2:16). The Christian's ultimate objective is not to emulate the suffering Christ or engage in self-mortification but to gain the Holy Spirit. This is the essence of the personal covenant with God in the Holy Spirit, and this is why the Orthodox do not expect any third covenant or any third revelation to mankind. This revelation is achieved through his personal efforts to acquire the grace of the Spirit. Motovilov's utter perplexity in the face of these counsels indicates that he and his contemporaries had become oblivious of this primary Christian goal: the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.

There are many good works to be accomplished in this world. The difficulty is that we cannot start doing them on our own accord, by emulating historical examples or

the lives of saints. One cannot embark on any important acts of faith or ascetic struggles without some Divine command. St. Seraphim warns that otherwise a person cannot really complain that his most well-intentioned efforts were of no avail.

Every person is assigned his or her own place in the Divine Plan, his personal path in Christ. For him this is the only true path upon which he is called by the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Other men around him have their own ways in Christ. For God there can be no "inferior" or "superior" ways, but only personal ones. The spirit of competition, of trying to surpass others is most dangerous for the Christian, because then *he seeketh his own glory* (Jn 7:18). But he who really loves the Lord takes care not to offend Him by some willful acts, does not try to surpass others, but humbly admits himself to be the lowest of them all.

At the end of his conversation with Motovilov, St. Seraphim said, as if addressing all Orthodox believers: *"And you have no cause to doubt God's mercy, for you can see the words of God, spoken by the prophets, come true in yourself.. I am a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?"* (Jer 23:23).

Your salvation is in your own mouth. The Lord is near to them that call on Him in truth, and all we need is to have true filial love (love befitting a son or daughter, *Ed.*) for Him, our Heavenly Father. The Lord heeds equally the monk and layman, even the most "ordinary" Christian. All they must do is to love God from the bottom of their hearts, and have faith in Him *as a grain of mustard seed and they shall move mountains*. (Mt 17:20). These words of consolation echo in faithful hearts to this day, increasing our love and veneration of St. Seraphim.



**Christ is born; glorify Him!  
Christ comes from Heaven; go to meet Him!  
Christ is on earth; be exalted!  
Sing to the Lord, all the earth!  
And praise Him in gladness, O people;  
for He has been glorified!**



**Χριστὸς γεννᾶται, δοξάσατε.  
Χριστὸς ἐξ Οὐρανῶν ἀπαντήσατε.  
Χριστὸς ἐπὶ γῆς ὑψώθητε.  
Ἄσατε τῷ Κυρίῳ πᾶσα ἡ γῆ,  
καὶ ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ ἀνυμνήσατε λαοί·  
ὅτι δεδόξασται!**



## Χριστός Γεννάται, Δοξάσατε! Χριστός ἐξ Οὐρανῶν· Ἀπαντήσατε!

Τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου Ἀθανασίου Μηνᾶ, Δεκέμβριος 2013.

Τὸ Παράπονο τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας, ὅπως κατεγράφη στὸ κατὰ Λουκᾶν Εὐαγγέλιον: Ἄραγε, ὅταν θὰ ἔλθω, θὰ εὕρω τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; (Πλὴν ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔλθων ἄρα εὕρησει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; Λουκ. ιη', 8), πραγματώνεται στὶς ἡμέρες μας.

Με πόνο, ἀγιορεϊτὴς γέροντας, πρὶν λίγες ἐβδομάδες τόνισε μὲ νόημα τὰ ἑξῆς:

Σήμερα, οὔτε τὰ αὐτονόητα δὲν κηρύττουν καὶ δὲν ὁμολογοῦν, αὐτοὶ ποὺ εἶναι ἐντεταλμένοι ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ καὶ ὀφείλουν νὰ τὸ κάνουν. Σίγησαν οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ συμβιβάσθηκαν. Ἀλλά, δόξα σοι ὁ Θεός, ποὺ στὶς ἔσχατες ἡμέρες μας, ἀναδεικνύει κάποιους ὁ Θεός, οἱ ὁποῖοι, εὐρισκόμενοι στὴν πρώτη γραμμὴ τοῦ πυρός, ὁμολογοῦν τὰ αὐτονόητα πάση θυσίᾳ. Ὡς καλοὶ ἀθλητὲς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐφαρμόζουν πρῶτα οἱ ἴδιοι καὶ μετὰ διδάσκουν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τρεῖς βασικὲς ἐντολὲς Του:

1) **Πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν.** (Ματθ. κη', 19-20).

2) **Ὁ πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς σωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ἀπιστήσας κατακριθήσεται.** (Μάρκ., ιστ', 16), καὶ,

3) **Ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῆ ἔξ ὕδατος καὶ Πνεύματος, οὐ δύναται εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ.** (Ἰωάν. γ', 5).

Οἱ Ἅγιοι Ἀπόστολοι εἶναι οἱ πρῶτοι, ποὺ κατενόησαν σὲ ὄλο τὸ βάθος καὶ τὸ πλάτος τὰ λόγια αὐτὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. Στὴ συνέχεια ἀγωνίσθηκαν καὶ θυσιάσθηκαν εἰς τέλος, δίνοντας τὸ παράδειγμα πρὸς μίμησην γιὰ ὅλους, ἀλλὰ ἰδιαίτερος γιὰ τοὺς Ἱερεῖς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

### Ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος

Ἄς δοῦμε προσεκτικότερα τὴν ἀπολογία τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Παύλου ἐνώπιον τοῦ βασιλέως Ἀγρίππα: **Ἐγὼ δὲ εἶπον. Ποῖός εἶσαι, Κύριε; Καὶ ἐκεῖνος εἶπεν. Ἐγὼ εἶμαι ὁ Ἰησοῦς, τὸν ὁποῖον ἐσὺ διώκεις. Ἀλλὰ σήκω καὶ στάσου ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου, ἐπειδὴ διὰ τοῦτο ἐφάνην εἰς σέ, διὰ νὰ σὲ καταστήσω ὑπηρέτην καὶ μάρτυρα καὶ ὄσων εἶδες καὶ περὶ ὄσων θέλω φανερώσει εἰς σέ, ἐκλέγων σε ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν, εἰς τὰ ὁποῖα τώρα σὲ ἀποστέλλω διὰ νὰ ἀνοίξης τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν, ὥστε νὰ ἐπιστρέψωσιν ἀπὸ τοῦ σκότους εἰς τὸ φῶς καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ Σατανᾶ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, διὰ νὰ λάβωσιν ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ κληρονομίαν μεταξὺ τῶν ἡγιασμένων διὰ τῆς εἰς ἐμὲ πίστεως. Ὅθεν, βασιλεῦ Ἀγρίππα, δὲν ἔγινα ἀπειθὴς εἰς τὴν Οὐράνιον ὀπτασίαν, ἀλλ' ἐκήρυττον**

**πρῶτον εἰς τοὺς ἐν Δαμασκῶ καὶ Ἱεροσολύμοις καὶ εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν τῆς Ἰουδαίας, καὶ ἔπειτα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, νὰ μετανοῶσι καὶ νὰ ἐπιστρέψωσιν εἰς τὸν Θεόν, πράττοντες ἔργα ἄξια τῆς μετανοίας.** (Πράξ. κστ', 15-20).

### Ὁ Ἀπόστολος Πέτρος

Ἄς δοῦμε ἐπιπλέον τί λέει ὁ πρωτοκορυφαῖος Ἀπόστολος Πέτρος στὴν Καθολικὴ Β' Ἐπιστολή:

**Διὸ οὐκ ἀμελήσω αἰεὶ ὑμᾶς ὑπομνήσκων περὶ τούτων, καίπερ εἰδὼτας καὶ ἐστηριγμένους ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ ἀληθείᾳ. Δίκαιον δὲ ἠγοῦμαι, ἐφ' ὅσον εἰμὶ ἐν τούτῳ τῷ σκηνώματι, διεγείρειν ὑμᾶς ἐν ὑπομνήσει.** (Β' Πέτρου, α', 12-13).

Ἐδῶ διακρίνουμε τὴν ἀγωνία, τὸν πόθο, τὴ λαχτάρα καὶ τὴν ἀνάγκη, ποὺ ἔκλειναν στὶς καρδιές τους οἱ Ἅγιοι Ἀπόστολοι, γιὰ τὸν εὐαγγελισμό τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἔπρατταν σὲ δύσκολες συνθήκες, μὲ συνεχῆ κίνδυνο τῆς ζωῆς τους. **Ἐνεκά Σου θανατούμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐλογίσθημεν ὡς πρόβατα σφαγῆς.** (Ρωμ. η', 36).

Ἀλήθεια, ὅστερα ἀπ' αὐτὰ ποὺ ἔκαναν ὅλοι οἱ ἅγιοι, ποὺ βρισκόμαστε ἐμεῖς; Πόσοι θὰ βρεθοῦμε ἀναπολόγητοι κατὰ τὴν ὥρα καὶ ἡμέρα τῆς Κρίσεως, ποὺ ὄντως θὰ γίνεῖ μὲ τὴν ἔλευση τοῦ Μεσσίου Χριστοῦ; Τότε τὸ αἷμα τῶν ψυχῶν τῶν ἀπωλεσθέντων ἀνθρώπων θὰ ζητήσῃ τὸ λόγο ἀπὸ τὰ χέρια ἐκείνων, ποὺ συμβιβάσθηκαν καὶ δὲν ὁμολόγησαν ἐνώπιον ἡγεμόνων, βασιλέων καὶ ἀνθρώπων τὸν Χριστόν, ὡς Μοναδικὸν Σωτήρα καὶ Λυτρωτὴ καὶ τὴν Ἁγία Ὁρθόδοξον Ἐκκλησίαν Του, ὡς τὴν μοναδικὴν κιβωτὸ τῆς σωτηρίας.

### Μεγάλῃ Βλασφημίᾳ

Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία εἶναι Ἄκτιστος καὶ Αἰώνιος, ἔχει δὲ κεφαλὴν τὸν Μεσσίαν Ἰησοῦν, τὸν Θεάνθρωπον, καὶ μέλη της ὅλους τοὺς ἀπ' αἰῶνος Ἅγιους, ποὺ ὁ Τριαδικὸς Θεὸς τοὺς γνωρίζει αἰδίως μὲ τὰ ὀνόματά τους καὶ ὄχι μὲ ἀριθμούς. Εἶναι, λοιπόν, μεγάλη ἡ βλασφημία, ὅταν δεχόμεθα καὶ διαδίδουμε συγκριτικὲς σκέψεις, συγκρίνοντας τὴ μοναδικὴ Οὐράνια Θρησκεία τῆς Θείας Ἀποκαλύψεως, τὴν Ὁρθόδοξια, μὲ ὅλα τὰ ἀνθρώπινα κατασκευάσματα, εἴτε αὐτὰ εἶναι θρησκείες, ἀκόμη καὶ μονοθεϊστικὲς, ὡς διατείνονται κάποιοι κατὰ κόρον, εἴτε αἰρέσεις. Δὲν ἀλλάζει ἀπλὰ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἐνὸς μοναδικοῦ Θεοῦ. Πρόκειται γιὰ ἑτέρους θεοὺς, ὅταν ἀναφερόμαστε σὲ θεοὺς ἄλλων θρησκειῶν. Πρόκειται, γιὰ νὰ μιλάμε ξεκάθαρα, γιὰ δαίμονες ποὺ ὑποδύονται τὸν ρόλο τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ διδάσκουν ξένες διδασκαλίες καὶ φιλοσοφίες, ἄσχετες μὲ αὐτὲς τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου: **Πάντες οἱ Θεοὶ τῶν Ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια.** (Ψαλμ.95, στίχος 5).

Ἀλήθεια, γνωρίζουμε πόσοι Ἅγιοι Πατέρες μας προσπάθησαν κατὰ καιροῦς νὰ ἐπαναφέρουν

ἀλλόθρησκους ἢ αἰρετικούς στὸν εὐθὺ δρόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἔκλαψαν μπροστὰ στὸ πείσμα καὶ στὴν πλάνη τους περνώντας πολλές φορές καὶ ἀπὸ βασανιστήρια; Ἴδου ὀλίγοι ἀπὸ αὐτούς: ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος, ὁ Ἅγιος Θεόδωρος ὁ Στουδίτης, ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός, ὁ Μέγας Φώτιος, ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς, ὁ Ἅγιος Μάρκος ὁ Εὐγενικός, ὁ Ἅγιος Κοσμάς ὁ Αἰτωλός, ὁ Παπουλάκος, ὁ Ἅγιος Νεκτάριος.

Ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ σύγχρονοι Ἅγιοί μας καὶ Πατέρες μας, Πορφύριος ὁ Κουσοκαλυβίτης, Παΐσιος ὁ Ἀγιορείτης, Ἐφραίμ ὁ Κατουνακιώτης, μὲ πόνο καὶ ἀγάπη, μίλησαν, ἔγραψαν καὶ κήρυξαν πανταχοῦ ὅτι ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία ὑπάρχει μόνον σκοτάδι, μπερδεμα καὶ πλάνη. Καὶ εἶπαν εὐθαρσῶς ὅτι τὸ Ὁρθόδοξον Πνεῦμα εἶναι τὸ μόνον Ἀληθές, Δημιουργικόν, Συνεκτικόν καὶ Σωστικόν, Αὐτὸ ποὺ χαρίζει τὴν Ἄκτιστον Τριαδικὴν Χάριν καὶ μεταπλάθει τοὺς πιστοὺς, καθιστώντας τοὺς Ἅγίους καὶ μέλη τίμια τοῦ Σώματος τοῦ Θεανθρώπου Ἰησοῦ.

Ἄν μὲ ταπεινώση ἄνοιγαν τὰ μάτια τῆς ψυχῆς τους ὅλοι οἱ ἐκτὸς Ὁρθοδοξίας, εἴτε ἀλλόθρησκοι εἴτε αἰρετικοί, θὰ διέκριναν τὴν Ἀλήθεια, τοῦ λόγου τὸ ἀληθές. Διότι ὁ Θεός, ποὺ ἀγαπάει ὅλους καὶ θέλει πάντας ἀνθρώπους σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν, εὐεργετῆ καθημερινὰ καὶ ἀλλόθρησκους καὶ πλανημένους, δίδοντας εὐκαιρίες μετανοίας σὲ ὅλους. Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅτι κατὰ τὴν ὥρα τῆς Κρίσεως νὰ ὑπάρχει ἀπόλυτη δικαιοσύνη, δηλαδή ὅτι ἄκουσαν τὸν λόγον καὶ πῆραν θέση εἴτε ὑπὲρ εἴτε ἐναντίον.

Εἶναι τοῖς πᾶσι γνωστόν: ὁ Ἅγιος Γεώργιος στὴ Λύδδα, ἐπιτελεῖ θαύματα σὲ ἀλλόθρησκους μὲ ἀποτέλεσμα, μετὰ ἀπὸ τὰ θαυμαστὰ σημεῖα καὶ τὴν εὐεργεσία, πολλοὶ ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς πίστεψαν, ἐβαπτίσθησαν καὶ κάποιοι ἔφθασαν ἀκόμη καὶ στὸ μαρτύριο. Ἀλλὰ καὶ πολλοὶ αἰρετικοί, παπικοὶ καὶ προτεστάντες, δέχθηκαν εὐεργεσίες, μετενόησαν καὶ ἀφοῦ πρῶτα ἀρνήθηκαν τὴν πλάνη τους, στὴ συνέχεια ἐβαπτίσθησαν Ὁρθόδοξοι. Εἶναι ἀξιοσημείωτο τὸ γεγονός τῆς σωτηρίας τῆς πόλεως τοῦ Ὁρχομενοῦ ἀπὸ τὴν Παναγία μας, θαῦμα ποὺ ὁμολόγησε ὁ ἴδιος ὁ ἀρχηγὸς τῆς γερμανικῆς φάλαγγας Χόφμαν, ὅταν εἶδε τὴν σῶτειρα τοῦ ἔθνους μας Ἀειπάρθενον

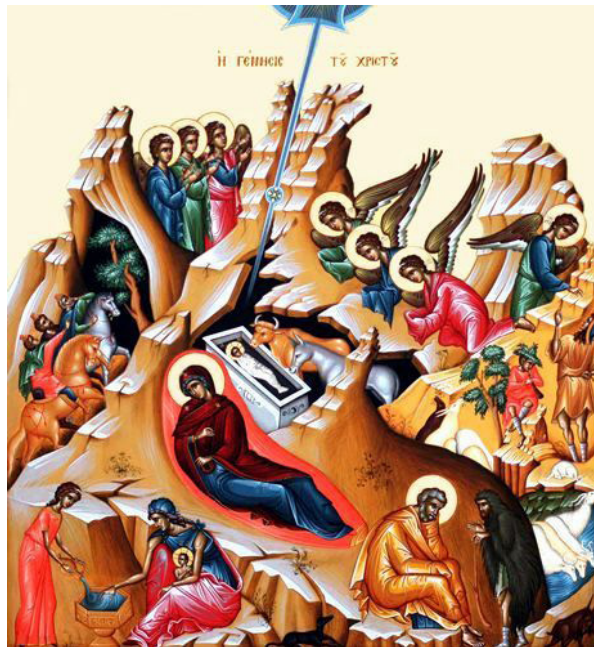
Θεοτόκον Μαρία νὰ στέκεται μπροστὰ στὰ γερμανικὰ τάνκς ἐμποδίζοντας τὴν προέλασή τους πρὸς τὴν πόλη. (10 Σεπτεμβρίου 1943), ὅπως ἐπίσης καὶ ἡ διάσωση τῶν Φιλιατρῶν ἀπὸ τὸν Ἅγιο Χαράλαμπο (19 Ἰουλίου 1944).

Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ ἐκείνους, ποὺ βεβήλωσαν τὴν Διαθήκη τοῦ Μεσσίου Ἰησοῦ καὶ ἀρνήθηκαν τὸν Ἀληθινὸν Πατέρα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ καὶ δέχθηκαν ἕτερο «πατέρα» τὸν σατανᾶ, πολλοί, βλέποντες διαχρονικὰ τὰ θαυμαστὰ, ποὺ συμβαίνουν στὸν Πανάγιο Τάφο, ὁμολόγησαν τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ πίστεψαν ἱκανοὶ τὸν ἀριθμό. Ὄντως, μεγάλη ἢ εὐλογία!

### Πρὸς Ἐτεροδόξους

Σὲ ὅ,τι ἀφορᾷ στοὺς παπικοὺς καὶ στοὺς προτεστάντες, ποὺ ἀκόμη καὶ σήμερα προπαγανδίζουν τὸ **πρωτεῖο**

**ἐξουσίας καὶ τὸ ἀλάθητο καὶ ὅτι εἶναι δῆθεν ἐκκλησία,** ἃς ἐρμηνεύσουν μὲ πνεῦμα ταπεινώσεως, τὴν στάση καὶ τὸ ἦθος τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Πέτρου, ὅταν ἐβάπτισε τὸν Κορνήλιο, πῶς ἀπολογήθηκε μὲ πνεῦμα μαθητείας καὶ ἰσότητος πρὸς τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων, ὅταν τοῦ ζητήθηκαν ἐξηγήσεις: Ἀρξάμενος δὲ ὁ Πέτρος ἐξετίθετο αὐτοῖς καθεξῆς λέγων: *... ἐμνήσθη δὲ τοῦ ῥήματος Κυρίου ὡς ἔλεγεν Ἰωάννης μὲν ἐβάπτισεν ὕδατι, ὑμεῖς δὲ βαπτισθήσεσθε ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ. Εἰ οὖν τὴν ἰσὴν δωρεὰν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ*



*Θεὸς ὡς καὶ ἡμῖν, πιστεύσασι ἐπὶ τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ἐγὼ δὲ τίς ἤμην δυνατὸς κωλύσαι τὸν Θεόν; ἀκούσαντες δὲ ταῦτα ἠσύχασαν καὶ ἐδόξαζον τὸν Θεόν...* (Πράξ. ια', 1-18).

Ὄντως τὸ γεγονός αὐτὸ εἶναι θαυμαστὸν, γιατί ἐκεῖ διακρίνουμε καθαρὰ τὸ μεγαλεῖο τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ὅπως, ἐπίσης, καὶ τίνι τρόπῳ δέχθηκε τὴν ἐπίπληξη τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Παύλου, ὅταν ὁ τελευταῖος διέγνωσε ἴχνη ὑποκρισίας στὴ στάση τοῦ Πρωτοκορυφαίου: *Ὅτε δὲ ἦλθε Πέτρος εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν, κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτῷ ἀντέστην ὅτι κατεγνωσμένος ἦν. Πρὸ τοῦ γὰρ ἐλθεῖν τινὰς ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου μετὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν συνήσθιεν ὅτε δὲ ἦλθον, ὑπέστειλε καὶ ἀφώριζεν ἐ αὐτόν, φοβούμενος τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς. Καὶ συννυπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ Ἰουδαῖοι, ὥστε καὶ Βαρνάβας συναπήχθη αὐτῶν τῇ ὑποκρισει. Ἀλλ' ὅτε εἶδον ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθοποδοῦσι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, εἶπον τῷ*



**Πέτρω ἔμπροσθεν πάντων εἰ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων ἐθνικῶς ζῆς καὶ οὐκ ἰουδαϊκῶς, τί τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις ἰουδαΐζειν;** (Γαλ. β', 11-14).

Ἀλλὰ καὶ στὴν πρώτη Ἀποστολικὴ Σύνοδο, ὁ ἐπίσκοπος Ἱεροσολύμων εἶπε τὸν τελευταῖο λόγο, σὲ ὅ,τι ἀφορᾷ στὴν ἐπιστολή, πὺρ ἐστάλη στὶς ἐκκλησίες (Πράξ. ιε', 13-20).

Ἀπὸ τὰ παραπάνω φαίνεται καθαρὰ πόσο ἀνόητο καὶ βλάσφημο εἶναι νὰ ἰσχυρίζεται οἰοσδήποτε ἄνθρωπος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὅτι κατέχει τὸ πρωτεῖο ἐξουσίας καὶ τὸ ἀλάθητο στὴν Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Σὲ ὅ,τι δὲ ἀφορᾷ στὴν πλάνη τοῦ φιλιόκβε, ἃς μελετήσουν τὸ λόγο τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ, πὺρ εἶπε ὅτι **μόνον ἀπὸ τὸν Πατέρα ἐκπορεύεται ὁ Παράκλητος!** (Ἰωάν., ιε', 26).

### Πόνος ἐκ τῆς Ἀποστασίας

Ἄς συνέλθουμε, λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί μου καὶ οἱ ἐγγὺς καὶ οἱ μακράν. Ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστὶ. Πολὺς ὁ πόνος, τὸ αἶμα καὶ ἡ δυστυχία σὲ ὅλο τὸν πλανήτη ἐξαιτίας τῆς ἀποστασίας. Ὁ γλυκύτατος Ἰησοῦς, ὁ Μεσσίας, μὲ ἀνοιχτές τὶς ἀγκάλες ἀναμένει τὴν ἐπιστροφή ὅλων καὶ τῆ μετάνοιά μας. Στὸν φρικτὸ Γολγοθᾶ ἔδωσε τὸ αἶμα Του γιὰ τὶς ἁμαρτίες μας καὶ λίγο πὺρ πέρα στὸν κῆπο (στὸν Πανάγιο Τάφο) ἀναστήθηκε γιὰ τὴν δικαίωσή μας. Ἐκατομύρια ἄνθρωποι κάθε χρόνο προσκυνοῦν τὸν Φρικτὸ Γολγοθᾶ καὶ τὸν Πανάγιο Τάφο. Ἄς γινόταν ὅλοι αὐτοί, ἀφοῦ πιστέψουν στὸν Ἰησοῦ, νὰ βαπτιστοῦν Ὁρθοδόξως καὶ νὰ τύχουν τῆς Σωτηρίας... Τί χαρά, εἰρήνη καὶ ἀγαλλίαση!

Ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τῆς Παρθένου, ὁ Θεάνθρωπος Μεσσίας, μὲ πολὺ ἀγάπη καὶ σεβασμὸ στὴν προσωπική μας ἐλευθερία, ἀναμένει νὰ ἀνοιξοῦμε τὶς καρδιές μας, γιὰ νὰ φανερώσει σὲ ὅλους τὸ ἀπ' αἰῶνος μυστήριον τῆς σωτηρίας μας. Σήμερον τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν τὸ κεφάλαιον, καὶ τοῦ ἀπ' αἰῶνος μυστηρίου ἡ φανέρωσις. Ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ υἱὸς τῆς Παρθένου γίνεται. Ἀπολυτίκιον τοῦ Εὐαγγελισμοῦ).

Τότε καὶ μόνον τότε, σ' αὐτὴν τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου πίστεως καὶ στὴν κοινωνία τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, ὡς μία ποιμένα μὲ ἓνα Ποιμένα, τὸν Χριστὸ μας, ἡ γῆ σιγὰ-σιγὰ θὰ καταστῆ ἐπίγειος παράδεισος, ἀφοῦ ὅλοι θὰ νοιώθουμε ὅ ἓνας τὸν ἄλλον ἀδελφὸ μας καὶ θὰ βαστάζουμε ὅ ἓνας τὰ βάρη τοῦ ἄλλου ὡς μέλη τοῦ ἰδίου Σώματος, ὥστε ὁ κοινὸς Πατέρας μας, ὁ Δημιουργὸς Τριαδικὸς Θεός, καὶ ὁ Σωτήρας μας Μεσσίας Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, θὰ δέχονται ἔτι καὶ ἔτι τὸ πανηγύρι τῶν ἀγγέλων καὶ ἀρχαγγέλων, πὺρ ἀκαταπαύστως γίνεται στὸν οὐρανὸ, ἐξαιτίας τῆς σωτηρίας τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ἀδελφῶν τους ἀνθρώπων δηλαδὴ ὅλων ἡμῶν.

Γένοιτο Κύριε. Ἀμήν.

### Πατερικοί Λόγοι Σοφίας

Ἀπὸ τὴν Ὁσία Γερώντισσα Μακρίνα (+1995).

Προσέχετε πάρα πολὺ στὸ θέμα τῆς ἐκκλησίας. Νὰ μὴ ψιθυρίζετε στὰ ἀναλόγια, μὲ νεῦμα νὰ συννοηθεῖτε. Ἐκείνη τὴν ὥρα εἶστε νοερῶς στὸν θρόνον τοῦ Θεοῦ σὰν τοὺς Ἀγγέλους, καὶ ὑμνολογεῖτε τὸν Κύριο. Γι' αὐτό, ὅπως οἱ ἅγιοι Ἄγγελοι στέκονται μετὰ φόβου, ἔτσι κι ἐσεῖς νὰ προσπαθῆτε νὰ τοὺς μιμηθῆτε. Τὸ στασιδὶ συμβολίζει τὸν τάφο. Μὲ πολὺ θεῖο φόβο νὰ στεκώμαστε, νὰ σκύβουμε τὸ κεφάλι καὶ νὰ χουμὲ τὸ νοῦ μας στὸν Θεό, στὴν «εὐχή». Νὰ τραβᾶμε κομποσχοῖνι, ὅταν μᾶς πολεμάει ἡ ὑπνηλία, γιὰτὶ ὁ διάβολος τὴν ὥρα τῆς προσευχῆς κοιτάζει νὰ κερδήσει κάτι.

Χρειάζεται πολλὴ προσοχή καὶ πολλὴ προσευχή, νὰ μὴ μᾶς κλέβει ὁ διάβολος τὸν νοῦ. Οἱ νεώτερες πὺρ δὲν ἔχουν ἀσθένειες, καλὸ εἶναι νὰ στέκονται στὴν ἐκκλησία. Σὲ ἓνα ψαλτηράκι νὰ καθήσουν, ὅχι ὅμως ὅλη τὴν ὥρα. Ἄν καμμιὰ εἶναι ἄρρωστη, δικαιολογεῖται. Ὁρθιες λοιπόν, γιὰ νὰ μπορέσετε νὰ νοιώσετε τὴν προσευχή. Γιατί καὶ ἡ ὀρθοστασία βοηθεῖ πάρα πολὺ, ναρθῆ ἡ Χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ μέσα στὴν ψυχή. Ὅταν ὁ ἄνθρωπος στέκεται, αὐτὸ εἶναι ἓνας κόπος, μία θυσία γιὰ τὸν Θεό, καὶ ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἐπισκιάζει.

Μία Θεία Λειτουργία δὲν ἐξαγοράζεται μὲ δισεκατομύρια. Μπορεῖ βέβαια νὰ κάνης τὸ ἓνα, τὸ ἄλλο, ἀλλὰ δὲν εἶναι τίποτε μπροστὰ στὸ Μυστήριον. Ἡ Θεία Λειτουργία εἶναι ἡ Θεία Θυσία. Ὅταν γίνεται ἡ Θυσία καὶ λέει ὁ ἱερεὺς μυστικὰ **μνήσθητι Κύριε, μνήσθητι... Κύριε, ζώντων καὶ τεθνεώτων...**, καὶ μεις ἐκείνη τὴν ὥρα μποροῦμε νὰ μνημονεύουμε ὀνόματα ζώντων καὶ τεθνεώτων. Ἐκείνη τὴν στιγμή ἐνώνεται ἡ γῆ μὲ τὸν οὐρανὸ καὶ γίνονται θαύματα!

Γι' αὐτὸ λοιπόν, πολλὴ προσοχή. Νὰ προσέχετε τὶς συζητήσεις, τὸν θυμὸ, τὰ λόγια, τὴν ἀργολογία, τὴν μεμψιμοιρία, γιὰτὶ ὅλα αὐτὰ ζημιώνουν τὴν ψυχή. Ὁ νοῦς σας νὰ εἶναι οὐρανός, ἡ καρδιά σας θρόνος Θεοῦ, τὸ στόμα σας ἐκκλησία. Νὰ τηρήσουμε τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον πὺρ λέει **μὴ κρίνετε, ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε.** Ὅποιος τηρήσῃ αὐτὸν τὸν λόγο, οὔτε τελώνια θὰ περάσῃ οὔτε τίποτε.

Ἡ κατάκριση εἶναι τὸ μεγαλύτερο ἁμάρτημα πὺρ μᾶς χωρίζει ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό. Μόλις ἔρχεται στὸ μυαλό μας, νὰ βάζουμε τὸν νοῦ μας στὸν Ἄδη καὶ νὰ λέμε, «ἔλα νὰ σὲ πάω στὸ σκόληκα τὸν ἀκοίμητο, ἔλα νὰ σὲ πάω στὸ σκότος τὸ ψηλαφητό, στὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιο, γιὰ βάλῃ τὰ δάχτυλά σου στὴν φωτιά...». Πάρα πολλὴ προσοχή, γιὰτὶ ἔχουμε νὰ κάνουμε μὲ ἓνα λέοντα, πὺρ δὲν μποροῦσαν οὔτε οἱ ἅγιοι νὰ τὰ βγάλουν πέρα μαζί του. Καὶ νὰ ἔχουμε πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν μας τὸ **ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε**, καὶ τὸ **γρηγορεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε, ἵνα μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς πειρασμόν.**



## Ἀρετὴ Ἀρετῶν

Τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικοδήμου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου, «Διδαχὲς Ἁγίου Νικοδήμου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου», Πρεσβ. Διονυσίου Τάτση.

**Ο**ἱ Χριστιανοὶ πρέπει νὰ ἔχουν ἐνάρετη ζωὴ καὶ νὰ δίνουν τὴ μαρτυρία τοῦ Χριστοῦ στὴν κοινωμία. Ἰδιαίτερα ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ βρίσκονται ἀνάμεσα σε ἀπιστους, ἀσεβεῖς, κακὸδοξοὺς κι αἰρετικούς, πρέπει νὰ εἶναι στολισμένοι μὲ εὐαγγελικὰ ἦθη καὶ χριστιανικὲς ἀρετές.

Μὲ τὴν ἐνάρετη ζωὴ τους βοηθοῦν νὰ μεταβάλλονται πρὸς τὸ καλύτερο οἱ ἄπιστοι καὶ οἱ αἰρετικοὶ καὶ ἀντὶ νὰ κατηγοροῦν τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς ὡς κακοποιοὺς καὶ νὰ διαβάλλουν τὴν πίστη τους ὡς πλάνη, παρακινοῦνται στὸ νὰ τοὺς ἐπαινοῦν, νὰ μιλοῦν μὲ καλὰ λόγια γιὰ τὴν πίστη τους καὶ νὰ δοξάζουν τὸ Θεό, ὁ ὁποῖος παρέδωσε στὸν κόσμο τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη κι ἔχει ἀνθρώπους στολισμένους μὲ τόσες ἀγαθοεργίες.

Ὁ Ἅγιος τονίζει: **Ἡ ταπεινοφροσύνη εἶναι θησαυροφυλάκιο ὄλων των ἀρετῶν καὶ χωρὶς αὐτὴ δὲν κατορθώνεται κανένα ἀγαθό.**

Γιὰ νὰ πνευματικὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὴν αἰώνια μακαριότητα, ποὺ πρόκειται ν' ἀπολαύσουν ὅλοι οἱ ἐνάρετοι καὶ κατὰ Θεὸν ζῶντες, δὲν εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ μιλήσει κανεὶς μὲ πληρότητα καὶ ἀκριβεία. Οὔτε ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος μπόρεσε νὰ μᾶς περιγράψει αὐτὰ ποὺ εἶδε, ὅταν ἠρπάγη στὸν τρίτο οὐρανό.

Ὁ Ἅγιος Νικόδημος, σχετικὰ μὲ τὸ θαῦμα αὐτὸ λέει: **Ἐὰν ὁ θαυμάσιος Παῦλος, ποὺ ἠρπάγη ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἄκουσε ἄρρητα ῥήματα, δὲν μπόρεσε νὰ διηγηθεῖ ἱκανῶς τὴν ἐνδοξὴ ἐκείνη μακαριότητα, πῶς νὰ τολμήσω ἐγὼ ὁ ἀνάξιος νὰ διαπλεύσω τόσο μεγάλο πέλαγος χωρὶς κίνδυνο, ποὺ εἶμαι ἁμαρτωλὸς καὶ ἀγράμματος; Τί λέω; Κι ἂν ὅλες οἱ γλῶσσες τῶν ἀνθρώπων μπορούσαν νὰ ἐνωθοῦν, ὅλα τ' ἀστέρια τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κι ὅλα τα φύλλα τῶν δένδρων γίνονταν εὐλαλες γλῶσσες, σοφότερες τῶν εὐγλωττάτων ρητόρων, πάλι δὲν θὰ μπορούσαν νὰ διηγηθοῦν μὲ πληρότητα τὰ ἀκατάληπτα καὶ ἀνεκλάλητα ἐκεῖνα ἀγαθὰ, τὰ ὁποῖα μάτι δὲν εἶδε, αὐτὴ δὲν ἄκουσε καὶ νοῦς ἀνθρώπου δὲν μπόρεσε νὰ καταλάβει. Ὡστόσο, γιὰ νὰ λάβουμε κάποια αἴσθησι ἀυτῶν καὶ κάποια μικρὴ εὐωδία, ἀξιώθηκαν μερικοὶ ἐνάρετοι καὶ εἶδαν μὲ ὀπτασίες, ὁράσεις κι ἐκστάσεις, μέρος ἐκείνης τῆς ἀνέκφραστης ἡδονῆς καὶ τοῦ μεγάλου κάλλους καὶ μᾶς τὸ ἄφησαν μὲσω τῶν κειμένων τους, γιὰ νὰ πληγώσουν τὴν καρδιά μας πρὸς ἐκεῖνον τὸν σωτήριον ἔρωτα.**

Ὁ Ἅγιος Νικόδημος δὲν περιορίζει τὸ καθήκον τῆς ἐλεημοσύνης στὴν προσφορὰ ὑλικῶν ἀγαθῶν στοὺς φτωχοὺς. Τὸ διευρύνει καὶ μιλάει γιὰ ἐπτὰ σωματικὰ ἔργα τῆς ἐλεημοσύνης καὶ ἐπτὰ πνευματικὰ. Τὰ σωματικὰ εἶναι: **Νὰ θρέψει πεινασμένο. Νὰ ποτίσει**

**διψασμένο. Νὰ λυτρώσει φυλακισμένο ἢ σκλαβωμένο. Νὰ ντύσει γυμνό. Νὰ δεχτεῖ ξένο. Νὰ ἐπισκεφτεῖ ἀσθενῆ. Καὶ νὰ ἐνταφιάσει νεκρό.** Καὶ τὰ πνευματικὰ εἶναι: **Νὰ συμβουλέψει ἐκεῖνον ποὺ ἔχει ἀνάγκη. Νὰ διδάξει τὸν ἀμαθῆ. Νὰ παρηγορήσει τὸν λυπημένο. Νὰ διορθώσει τὸν ἁμαρτωλό. Νὰ συγχωρήσει ἐκεῖνον ποὺ ἔσφαλε. Νὰ ὑπομείνει τὴ βρισιὰ. Καὶ νὰ προσεύχεται γιὰ ὅλους.**

Λέει ὁ Ἅγιος: Νὰ σκέφτεσαι ὅτι μία ἀνύψωση τοῦ νοῦ στὸ Θεὸ καὶ μία ταπεινὴ μετάνοια στὴ γῆ, ὅταν γίνονται πρὸς τιμὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀξίζουν περισσότερο ἀπ' ὅ,τι ὅλοι οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς γῆς. Κάθε φορὰ ποὺ ἀφήνεις τὴν ἀμέλεια καὶ βιάζεις τὸν ἑαυτὸ σου μὲ ἐπιμελῆ ἔργα, οἱ ἄγγελοι φέρνουν στὴ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἓνα στεφάνι ἐνδοξῆς νίκης.

Τί ἐννοοῦμε ὅταν λέμε πνευματικὴ ζωὴ; Σὲ τί συνίσταται; Ὁ Ἅγιος Νικόδημος ἀπαντᾷ: **Στὴν ἐπίγνωσι τῆς ἀγαθότητος καὶ μεγαλειότητος τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τῆς δικῆς μας μηδαμινότητος καὶ κλίσης σὲ κάθε κακό. Στὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ στὸ μῖσος τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ μας. Στὴν ὑποταγὴ στὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ σ' ὅλα τα κτίσματα, γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ. Στὴν ἀποστροφὴ ὄλων των δικῶν μᾶς ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ στὴν τέλεια ὑπακοὴ στὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἐπιπλέον, στὸ νὰ θέλουμε ὅλα αὐτὰ νὰ τὰ κάνουμε καθαρά, μόνο γιὰ τὴ δόξα τοῦ Θεοῦ.**



### Ἡ Πεταλούδα...

**Μ**ία μέρα ὁ μαθητὴς ἀποφάσισε νὰ προκαλέσει τὸν δάσκαλό του. Ἔτσι σκέφτηκε νὰ τοῦ στήσει μία παγίδα. Ἐπίασε μία πεταλούδα καὶ τὴν κράτησε στὴ χούφτα του. Ὅταν θὰ πήγαινε στὸ δάσκαλο θὰ τὸν ρώταγε τί εἶχε στὸ χέρι του. Κι ἂν ὁ δάσκαλος τὸ ἔβρισκε, τότε θὰ τὸν ρωτοῦσε ἐὰν ἡ πεταλούδα ἦταν ζωντανὴ ἢ νεκρὴ. Στὴν περίπτωσι ποὺ ἀπαντοῦσε ὅτι ἡ πεταλούδα ἦταν ζωντανή, τότε θὰ ἔσφιγγε τὸ χέρι του καὶ θὰ τὴ σκότωνε καὶ τὸ ἀντίστροφο.

Ὅταν εἶχαν μάθημα λοιπόν, πλησίασε τὸν δάσκαλο, μπροστὰ σε ὅλους τοὺς ὑπόλοιπους μαθητὲς, ἔτεινε τὸ χέρι πρὸς τὸ μέρος του καὶ τὸν ρώτησε:

-Δάσκαλε, τί ἔχω στὸ χέρι μου;”

-Τὴν ψυχὴ σου ἔχεις παιδί μου, ἀπάντησε ἀτάραχος ὁ δάσκαλος.

Ὁ μαθητὴς προβληματίστηκε γιὰ λίγο σκεπτόμενος τὴν ἀπάντησι. Κατέληξε ὅτι ὁ δάσκαλος εἶχε δίκιο. Ἡ πεταλούδα ἦταν μία ψυχὴ ποὺ θὰ μπορούσε νὰ εἶναι καὶ δική του. Ὡστόσο, συνέχισε:

-Καὶ εἶναι ζωντανὴ ἢ ψυχὴ μου δάσκαλε ἢ ὄχι;

Ὁ δάσκαλος τὸν κοίταξε μὲ καλοσύνη στὰ μάτια καὶ τοῦ εἶπε χαμογελαστά:

-Ἀπὸ τὸ χέρι σου ἐξαρθᾶται!...

## Ὁ Αἴσωπος καὶ ὁ Οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης κ. Βαρθολομαῖος

**Οἱ Δηλώσεις τοῦ Κ. Βαρθολομαίου στὸ Σουφλί καὶ ὁ Μῦθος τοῦ Χταποδιοῦ**

*Τετὰ Μητρόπολις Πειραιῶς, Γραφεῖο ἐπὶ τῶν Αἰρέσεων καὶ τῶν Παραθρησκευτῶν, Ἀκτὴ Θεμιστοκλέους 190, 185 39 ΠΕΙΡΑΙΕΥΣ, Τηλ. +30 210 4514833 (19), Fax +30 210 4518476 e-mail: impireos@hotmail.com.*

Ἐν Πειραιεῖ τῇ 29ῃ Σεπτεμβρίου 2014.

Ἐναγνώσαμε στὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴ εἰδησεογραφία τὴν πρόσφατη ἐπίσκεψη τοῦ Παναγιωτάτου Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου κ. Βαρθολομαίου στὸ Σουφλί καὶ τὶς δηλώσεις του κατ' αὐτήν. Ἰδιαίτερα μᾶς ἐντυπωσίασε ἡ διαβεβαίωσή του πρὸς τὴν ἀντιπροσωπεία τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους καὶ δι' αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸν πιστὸ λαὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅτι «οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχουμε, οὔτε προδώσαμε κάτι μέχρι σήμερα ἀπὸ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη μας μὲ τοὺς διαλόγους καὶ τὶς ἐπαφές καὶ οὔτε πρόκειται νὰ τὸ κάνουμε στὸ μέλλον», μὲ τὴν ὁποία ἐδήλωσε ὅτι στοὺς δὲ μέχρι τώρα γενομένους διαλόγους μὲ τοὺς ἑτεροδόξους οὐδεμία προδοσία τῆς πίστεως ἔγινε, οὔτε θὰ γίνεῖ στὸ μέλλον.

Καθὼς διαβάζαμε τὶς παρὰ πάνω δηλώσεις, μᾶς ἤρθε στὸ νοῦ «Ὁ Μῦθος τοῦ Χταποδιοῦ» τοῦ ἀείμνηστου Φώτη Κόντογλου, μὲ κάποια παραλλαγή, βέβαια, προσαρμοσμένη στὰ δεδομένα τῆς σύγχρονης ἐκκλησιαστικῆς πραγματικότητος:

Καθόταν τὸ χταποδάκι μὲ τὴν μητέρα του τὴν χταπόδα στὸν πάτο τῆς θάλασσας. Κάποια στιγμή τὸ χταποδάκι πιάστηκε στὸ ἀγγίστρι τοῦ ψαῤᾳ καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ ἀνεβαίνει πρὸς τὰ πάνω.

- Μὲ πιάσανε μάνα!, φωνάζει τὸ χταποδάκι τὴ μάνα του.

- Μὴ φοβᾶσαι παιδί μου, οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχεις, τοῦ ἀποκρίνεται ἡ μάνα. Τὸ χταποδάκι φωνάζει πάλι:

- Μὲ βγάλανε ἀπ' τὸ νερὸ μάνα!

- Μὴ φοβᾶσαι παιδί μου, οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχεις, τοῦ ἀποκρίνεται πάλι ἡ μάνα.

- Μὲ κόβουνε μὲ τὸ μαχαίρι μάνα!

- Μὴ φοβᾶσαι παιδί μου, οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχεις.

- Μὲ βράζουνε στὸ τσουκάλι μάνα!

- Μὴ φοβᾶσαι παιδί μου, οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχεις.

- Μὲ τρῶνε μάνα!

- Ἄχ παιδί μου τώρα σ' ἔχασα...

Ἡ ἐφαρμογὴ τοῦ μύθου στὴ σύγχρονη ἐκκλησιαστικὴ πραγματικότητα εἶναι προφανής: Μετὰ τὴν ἄρση τῶν Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν τῶν 1965, (ὅπου στὸ Γαλλικὸ κείμενο τῆς Ρωμαιοκαθολικῆς πλευρᾶς ἀναφέρονται ὡς «Ἄρσις τῆς Ἀκοινωνησίας»), ξεσηκώθηκε τὸ Ἅγιον Ὁρος, ἅγιοι καὶ θεοφόροι Πατέρες (ὅπως ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰουστίνος

ὁ Πόποβιτς, ὁ Ἅγιος γέρον Φιλόθεος Ζεφβάκος κ.ἄ.), ἀκαδημαϊκοὶ διδάσκαλοι, ὁ πιστὸς λαὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, διαμαρτυρόμενοι γιὰ ὅσα ἀπαράδεκτα ἔγιναν. Ὡστόσο τὸ Φανάρι ἔσπευσε νὰ καθησυχᾶσει τοὺς πάντες: Μὴ φοβᾶστε, «οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχουμε».

Στὴ συνέχεια τὸ κακὸ προχώρησε ἀκόμη περισσότερο. Φθάσαμε στὶς συμφωνίες τοῦ Μπαλαμάντ. Καὶ πάλι οἱ πάντες ξεσηκώθηκαν. Θύελλα διαμαρτυριῶν ξέσπασε ἀπὸ παντοῦ, (Ἅγιον Ὁρος, κ.λ.π.). Καὶ πάλι τὸ Φανάρι ἀπήντησε: Μὴ φοβᾶστε, «οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχουμε».

Μετὰ τὸ Μπαλαμάντ ἤρθε τὸ Πόρτο Ἀλέγκρε. Καὶ πάλι τὸ Φανάρι: Μὴ φοβᾶστε, «οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχουμε».

Μετὰ τὸ Πόρτο Ἀλέγκρε ἦλθε ἡ Ραβέννα. Καὶ πάλι τὸ Φανάρι: Μὴ φοβᾶστε, «οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχουμε».

Μετὰ τὴν Ραβέννα ἡ προσφορὰ τοῦ Κορανίου ἀπὸ τὸν Παναγιώτατο Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριάρχη κ. Βαρθολομαῖο ὡς ἀναμνηστικὸ δῶρο στὸν πρόεδρο τῆς Κόκα Κόλα κ. Μουχτάρ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἐπίσκεψή του στὴν Ἑβραϊκὴ Συναγωγὴ τῆς Νέας Ὑόρκης. Καὶ πάλι τὸ Φανάρι: Μὴ φοβᾶστε, «οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχουμε».

Στὴ συνέχεια τὸ Πουσαὶν τῆς Νοτίου Κορέας τὸν περασμένο Νοέμβριο. Καὶ πάλι τὸ Φανάρι: Μὴ φοβᾶστε, «οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχουμε».

Τέλος μετὰ τὸ Πουσαὶν ἡ δήλωση τοῦ Παναγιωτάτου Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου στὸ Σουφλί: «Οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχουμε, οὔτε προδώσαμε κάτι μέχρι σήμερα ἀπὸ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη μας μὲ τοὺς διαλόγους καὶ τὶς ἐπαφές καὶ οὔτε πρόκειται νὰ τὸ κάνουμε στὸ μέλλον».

Καθόλου δὲν θὰ πρέπει νὰ ἐκπλαγοῦμε, ἂν στὸ προσεχὲς μέλλον, στὴν μέλλουσα νὰ συνέλθει Πανορθόδοξο Σύνοδο τοῦ 2016, ὅχι μόνον δὲν προχωρήσουν στὴν καταδίκη του Οἰκουμενισμοῦ, ἀλλὰ στὴν πλήρη νομιμοποίησή του. Ὅποτε καὶ πάλι θὰ ἀκουσθεῖ τὸ ἴδιο ποτό: Μὴ φοβᾶστε, «οὐδένα κίνδυνο διατρέχουμε».

Καθόλου ἀπίθανο νὰ φθάσουν καὶ στὸ κοινὸ ποτήριο μὲ τοὺς Ρωμαιοκαθολικοὺς καὶ στὴν πλήρη ἐκκλησιαστικὴ κοινωνία μὲ τοὺς Προτεστάντες. Στὴν περίπτωση αὐτὴ καλὸ θὰ εἶναι νὰ βροῦν κάποιο ἄλλο σύνθημα γιὰ νὰ πείσουν τοὺς ἀφελεῖς, γιὰ αὐτὸ ὡς χιλοειπωμένο δὲν θὰ «πιάνει» πλέον.

Εἰλικρινᾶ πιστεύουν ὅτι μὲ τέτοιου εἴδους δηλώσεις θὰ πείσουν τὸν πιστὸ λαὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ; Ὁ πιστὸς λαὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔχει ἤδη εὐαίσθητοποιηθεῖ ἀπέναντι στὴν αἵρεση καὶ ἐπαγρυπνεῖ στὴν διαφύλαξη τῆς πίστεως. Ἄς δοκιμᾶσουν νὰ φθάσουν στὸ κοινὸ ποτήριο καὶ θὰ τὸ δοῦν στὴν πράξιν!

**Κύριε ὦσον τοὺς ἑγχερεῖς!**

## Τὸ Ἀνάγνωσμα...

Πηγή: Φώτη Κόντογλου, «Μυστικά Ἄνθη», Ἐκδόσεις Παπαδημητρίου.

Ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἶναι σὲ ὅλα ἀχόρταγος, θέλει ν' ἀπολάβει πολλά, χωρὶς νὰ μπορεῖ νὰ τὰ προφτάξει ὅλα. Καὶ βασανίζεται. Ὅποιος ὁμως φτάξει σὲ μιὰ κατάσταση ποὺ νὰ εὐχαριστεῖται μὲ τὰ λίγα, καὶ νὰ μὴ θέλει πολλά, ἔστω κι ἂν μπορεῖ νὰ τ' ἀποκτήσει, ἐκεῖνος λοιπὸν εἶναι ὁ εὐτυχησμένος. Δὲν τὸ κάνει ἀπὸ οἰκονομία, εἴτε γιατί ἔχει τὴν ἰδέα πὼς τὰ πολλά τὸν βλάπτουνε στὴν ψυχὴ ἢ στὸ σῶμα. Ἀλλὰ γιατί στὰ λίγα καὶ στὰ ἀπλὰ βρίσκει πιδ ἄγνη ἱκανοποίηση. Καὶ περισσότερο ἀπ' ὅλα, ἐπειδὴ μὲ τὰ ἀπλὰ καὶ μὲ τὰ λίγα δὲν χάνει τὸν ἑαυτό του.

### Τις ἔστι πλούσιος; Ὁ ἐν ὀλίγῳ ἀναπαυόμενος

Οἱ ἄνθρωποι δὲν βρίσκουνε πουθενὰ ἡσυχία, γιατί ἐπιχειροῦνε νὰ ζήσουνε χωρὶς τὸν ἑαυτό τους. Τρέχουνε ἀπὸ δῶ κι ἀπὸ κεῖ νὰ βροῦνε τὴν εὐτυχία, μὰ εὐτυχία δὲν ὑπάρχει ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸν ἑαυτό μας. Θέλουμε νὰ εὐχαριστηθοῦμε μὲ συμπόσια ἀπ' ὅπου λείπουμε. Ὅποιος ἔχει χάσει τὸν ἑαυτό του, ἔχει χάσει τὴν εὐτυχία. Εὐτυχία δὲν εἶναι τὸ ζάλισμα ποὺ δίνουνε οἱ πολυμέριμες ἡδονὲς κι ἀπολαύσεις, ἀλλὰ ἡ εἰρήνη τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ ἡ σιωπηλὴ ἀγαλλίαση τῆς καρδιάς. Μ' αὐτὸ τὸ βύθισμα στὸν ἑαυτό του βρίσκει ὁ ἄνθρωπος τὸν Θεό. Γιὰ τοῦτο εἶπε ὁ Χριστός: **Ὁὐκ ἔρχεται ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ παρατηρήσεως, οὐδὲ ἐροῦσιν ἰδοῦ ὧδε ἢ ἰδοῦ ἐκεῖ. Ἴδοῦ γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν.** «Μὴν ψάχνετε, ζαλισμένοι ἄνθρωποι, ἐδῶ κι ἐκεῖ νὰ βρῆτε τὴν εὐτυχία. Γιατὶ ἡ εὐτυχία βρίσκεται μέσα σας».

Μέγας λόγος, ὅπως ὅλα τὰ Θεϊκὰ λόγια. Μέσα μας εἶναι ὁ θησαυρός. Ἀπ' ἔξω εἶναι ξέρακας, κι ἂς μὴ μᾶς ξεγελᾷ ἡ φασαρία καὶ τὰ ψεύτικα πυροτεχνήματα. Ὅποιος ζεῖ ἔξωτερικά, ζεῖ ψεύτικα. Ὅποιος ζεῖ ἐσωτερικά, ζεῖ ἀληθινά.

Ξέρω καλὰ τί εἶναι ἡ ζωὴ ποὺ ζοῦνε οἱ λεγόμενοι κοσμικοὶ ἄνθρωποι, οἱ ἄνθρωποι ποὺ διασκεδάζουνε, ποὺ ταξιδεύουνε, ποὺ ξεγελοῦνται μὲ λογιῆς-λογιῆς θεάματα, μὲ ἀσημαντολογίες, μὲ σκάνδαλα, μὲ διάφορες ματαιότητες, ποὺ ἀπὸ μακρυνὰ φαντάζονε γιὰ κάποιον πράγμα σπουδαῖο καὶ ζηλευτό, ἐνῶ σὰν τὰ δεῖ κανένας ἀπὸ κοντὰ, ἀπορεῖ γιὰ τὴ φτώχεια ποὺ ἔχουνε καὶ τὸ πόσο κούφιοι εἶναι οἱ ἄνθρωποι ποὺ ψευτογελοῦνται μ' αὐτὰ τὰ γιαιτροσόφια τῆς εὐτυχίας. Ξέρω λοιπὸν καλὰ αὐτὴ τὴ ζωὴ, γιατί, ἀναγκαστικά, ἔζησα, κάποιες φορὲς, μὲ ἄνθρώπους πλούσιους, ποὺ μὲ προσκαλοῦσανε στὰ σπίτια τους, στίς ἐπαύλεις τους, στὰ κότερά τους καὶ στίς ἄλλες διασκεδάσεις τους.

Μελαγχολία μ' ἔπιανε ἀπὸ κείνη τὴν κατάσταση. Ἐβλεπα δυστυχησμένους ἄνθρώπους, ποὺ κάνανε τὸν εὐτυχημένο, κατάδικους ποὺ κάνανε τὸν ἐλεύθερο. Ἀλλὰ, ἂν δὲν καταγινόντανε μὲ τόσες ψεύτικες

χαρὲς, θὰ πέφτανε στὴ βαρεμάδα, στὴ λεγόμενη ἀνία. Ἡ τὸ ἓνα, ἢ τὸ ἄλλο. Ἄδειοι ἀπὸ κάθε οὐσία, τρισδυστυχησμένοι. Ἡ ψυχὴ εἶναι ἀνύπαρκτη κι ἀνύπαρκτη ἢ εὐτυχία, ἢ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ. Πὼς νὰ γίνε ψωμί, σὰν δὲν ὑπάρχει προζύμι; Πὼς νὰ μὴν εἶναι ὅλα ἄνοστα, ἀφοῦ δὲν ὑπάρχει τὸ ἀλάτι;

Λοιπὸν, ὅποτε ἀναγκαζόμουνε νὰ πάγω γιὰ λίγο κοντὰ σὲ τέτοιους κοσμικοὺς ἄνθρώπους, πράγμα ποὺ γινότανε σπάνια, γιὰ νὰ μὴν τοὺς προσβάλλω, ἀφοῦ μὲ προσκαλοῦσανε μὲ εὐγένεια, δὲν ἔβλεπα τὴν ὥρα καὶ τὴ στιγμή νὰ ἀποτραβηχτῶ στὸ καβούκι μου, νὰ γυρίσω στὸ φτωχὸ σπίτι μου καὶ στ' ἀγαπημένα πράγματα ποὺ βρίσκονται γύρω μου. Ἐβλεπα πὼς ἀντὶ νὰ πάρω κάτι ἀπὸ ὅλη ἐκείνη τὴν τυμπανοκρουσία, ὅπως πιστεῖται ὁ πολὺς ὁ κόσμος, ἐγὼ ἔδινε, ἔδινε ξύπνημα στοὺς κοιμισμένους, ξεμούδιασμα στοὺς μουδιασμένους, ζωὴ στὴ μονοτονία τους.

Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ τώρα ποὺ γράφω, μ' ὄλο ποὺ εἶμαι προσκαλεσμένος σὲ πολλὰ μέρη ἀπὸ κάποιους εὐγενεῖς ἄνθρώπους, ὄχι μονάχα στὴν Ἑλλάδα, ἀλλὰ καὶ σὲ μακρυνὰ μέρη, κάθουμαι στὸ μικρὸ περιβολάκι μας μὲ τὰ λίγα δεντράκια καὶ μὲ τὰ ταπεινὰ λουλούδια. Ξεκουράζομαι κι εἰρηνεύει ἡ ψυχὴ μου. Τοῦτο τὸ μικρὸ κηπάριο εἶναι γιὰ μένα ὁ Κῆπος τῆς Ἐδέμ. Ὁ ἀγέρας μοσχοβολᾷ, κι ὁ νοῦς μου ταξιδεύει. Ταξιδεύει ἐδῶ κι ἐκεῖ, μὰ περισσότερο βυθίζεται μέσα μου, ἐκεῖ ποὺ ἀναβρῦζει τὸ μυστικὸ νερό, ἐκεῖ ποὺ βρίσκονται τὰ «ριζώματα» τοῦ κόσμου.

Εὐχαριστῶ τὸν Θεὸ ποὺ βρέθηκε αὐτὸ τὸ καταφύγιο. Νοιώθω μεγάλη εὐτυχία ποὺ εἶμαι μοναχιασμένος, πού, ἐδῶ ποὺ κάθουμαι, δὲν μὲ ξέρεει κανένας, δὲν μὲ θυμᾶται κανένας. Σὰν νὰ εἶμαι καρaboτσακισμένος ποὺ γλύτωσε ἀπὸ τὴ φουρτούνα, κι ἀκούγει τὸ μούγκρισμα τῆς θάλασσας ἀπὸ τὸ σίγουρο καταφύγιό του. Σὰν νὰ γλύτωσε ἀπὸ ληστές. Ἀνατριχιάζω συλλογισμένος τὴν ἀνεμοζάλη ποὺ τὴ λένε ζωὴ οἱ ὅμοιοί μου, κοινωνικὴ ζωὴ, ζούγκλα γεμάτη σκορπιούς, φίδια καὶ λύκους. Ἀναπαύομαι μοναχὰ μὲ δυὸ-τρεῖς ἄνθρώπους ἀπλοῦς καὶ καλοκάγαθους, ποὺ ἔχουνε ἀγάπη μέσα τους καὶ εἰρήνη στὴν καρδιά τους. Δὲν θέλω μήτε θαυμασμούς, μηδὲ δόξες, μήτε ἄλλες τέτοιες συμφορὲς: θέλω νὰ εἶμαι ξεχασμένος κι ἀσήμαντος.

Ἦ λησμονιά, τί μπάλασμο εἶσαι γιὰ ὅσους ποθοῦνε τὴν εἰρήνη! Κατάρρα εἶναι ἡ δίψα ποὺ ἔχουνε οἱ ἄνθρωποι νὰ κατασταθοῦνε ξακουσμένοι, νὰ τοὺς δοξάζει ὁ κόσμος καὶ νὰ βασανίζονται μέσα στὴ ματαιότητα κι ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ θαυμάζονται κι ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ θαυμάζουνε. Ἐδῶ ποὺ κάθουμαι, νοιώθω πὼς εἶμαι μακρυνὰ ἀπ' ὅλους αὐτοὺς τοὺς βραχνάδες ποὺ τοὺς ἔχουνε γιὰ εὐτυχία οἱ δυστυχησμένοι ἄνθρωποι.

Φυσᾷ στὸ πρόσωπό μου τὸ δροσερὸ ἀγεράκι, μπαίνει ἀπαλὰ στ' αὐτιά μου, σὰν νὰ μὲ χαιρετᾷ.

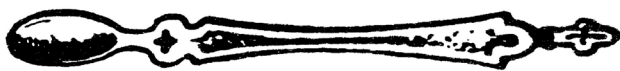


Σιγοσαλεύουνε τὰ κλαδιά κι οἱ κορφές τῶν δέντρων. Μαμούνια περπατοῦνε στὸ μοσχοβολημένο χῶμα, τὸ κάθε ἓνα τραβᾷ τὸν δρόμο του κι ἔχει τὸν σκοπὸ του. Ποῦ πηγαίνουνε; Μυστήριο. Πεταλούδια καὶ μυγάκια λογιῆς-λογιῆς, ἄλλα μακρουλά, ἄλλα στρογγυλά, πετάνε καὶ μαζεύονται γύρω ἀπὸ τὸ φῶς ποὺ εἶναι ἀναμμένο ἀπὸ πάνω μου. Ὅλα εἶναι σπουδαῖα, ὅλα ἀξιαγάπητα. Κι ἐγὼ εἶμαι ἓνα ἀπ' αὐτά.

Δὲν ἀκούγεται τίποτα, παρεκτὸς ἀπὸ τὶς σταλαγματιές τὸ νερὸ ποὺ πέφτουνε ἀπὸ τὴ βρύση, κάνοντας τὴ σιωπὴ ἀκόμα πιὸ βαθειά. Σὰ νὰ γίνεται γύρω μου κάποια μυσταγωγία. Τὸ μυστήριο τοῦ κόσμου τὸ νοιώθω καὶ μέσα μου κι ἀπέξω. Μυστικὲς θύρες ἀνοίγουνε ἀπὸ παντοῦ. Τὸ κάθε δέντρο, τὸ κάθε χορτάρι, τὸ κάθε λουλουδί, σὰν νὰ μὲ βλέπει μὲ τὰ μυστηριώδη μάτια του.

Εἶμαι μακάριος στὸ μικρὸ τοῦτο περιβολάκι μας. Τύφλα νᾶχουνε μπροστά του οἱ μεγάλοι κῆποι καὶ τὰ πολυέξοδα παλάτια, τὰ φανταχτερὰ κόττερα. Ὅσα εἶναι γύρω μου εἶναι ἀγαπημένα, γιατί δὲν εἶναι ἀγορασμένα μὲ λεφτὰ πολλά, ὅπως εἶναι ὅσα ἔχουνε οἱ πλούσιοι. Ἀγορασμένα πράγματα μποροῦνε νὰ δώσουνε εὐτυχία στὸν ἄνθρωπο;

ὦ, ἐσεῖς ποὺ ἔχετε τὰ πλούτη καὶ ποὺ μόνο τί λογιῆς εἶναι ἡ ἀληθινὴ χαρὰ δὲν ξέρετε. Ἄνθρωποι βασανισμένοι, σαστισμένοι ἀπὸ τὶς ἔγνοιες κι ἀπὸ τὶς σκουτοῦρες, σκλάβοι στὴ φιλοδοξία καὶ στ' ἄλλα πάθη, ὦ ἄσωτοι γυιοί, ποὺ φάγατε τὰ ξυλοκέρατα καὶ δὲν χορτάσατε, γυρίστε πίσω στὸ σπίτι τοῦ πατέρα σας τοῦ πονετικοῦ, ποὺ δὲν εἶναι ἄλλο παρὰ ἡ καρδιά ἡ δική σας, καὶ μπεῖτε μέσα νὰ ξαποστάσετε, νὰ εὐφρανθῆτε καὶ νὰ νοιώσετε τὴν ἀληθινὴν χαρὰ!



## Ὁ Ἅγιος Νέος Ἱερομάρτυς Φιλούμενος ὁ Ἀγιοταφίτης

29 Νοεμβρίου: Ὁ Ἅγιος Φιλούμενος κατακρεουργεῖται στὸ Φρέαρ τοῦ Ἰακώβ ἀπὸ τοὺς Σιωνιστές.

Ὁ Ἅγιος Φιλούμενος, κατὰ κόσμον Σοφοκλῆς Ὁρουντιώτης, γεννήθηκε στὴν Λευκωσία τῆς Κύπρου στὶς 15 Ὀκτωβρίου 1913, ἡ καταγωγή του ὅμως ἦταν ἀπὸ τὸ χωριὸ Ὁρούντα. Γονεῖς τοῦ Ἁγίου ἦταν οἱ εὐσεβεῖς Γεώργιος καὶ Μαγδαληνή, οἱ ὅποιοι συνολικὰ ἀπέκτησαν 13 παιδιά. Ὁ Ἅγιος Φιλούμενος ἦταν δίδυμος μὲ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρο καὶ μετέπειτα π. Ἐλπίδιο.

Ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὴν εὐσέβεια τῶν γονέων τους, καταλυτικὸ ὑπῆρξε γιὰ τὴν κατὰ Θεὸν πρόοδο καὶ τῶν δύο (π. Φιλούμενο καὶ π. Ἐλπίδιο) τὸ παράδειγμα καὶ ἡ βιωτὴ τῆς γαργιάς τους Λωξαντροῦς (Ἀλεξάνδρας), ἡ ὁποία δημιουργοῦσε τὶς βάσεις καὶ τὶς προϋποθέσεις γιὰ τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴ τῶν ἐγγονῶν της.

Τὰ δύο δίδυμα ἀδελφία, ἀπὸ μικρὰ ἀπέκτησαν ἰδιαίτερη ἀγάπη γιὰ τὸν Θεὸ καὶ τὴν Ἁγία Του Ἐκκλησία. Ἔτσι ὁ πόθος γιὰ τὴν ὀλοκληρωτικὴ ἀφιέρωση στὸν Θεό, ὀδήγησε τὰ βήματά τους στὴν Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Σταυροβουνίου, ὅπου καὶ ἐντάχθηκαν ὡς δόκιμοι στὴν μοναστικὴ ἀδελφότητα σὲ ἡλικία 14 ἐτῶν, ἔχοντας τὴν εὐλογία τόσο τοῦ Πνευματικοῦ ὅσο καὶ τῶν γονέων τους. Τὸ 1934, μετὰ ἀπὸ προτροπὴ τοῦ ἐξάρχου τοῦ Παναγίου Τάφου π. Παλλαδίου, οἱ δύο νέοι καλόγεροι ἐγγράφονται στὸ Γυμνάσιο τοῦ Ἱεροῦ Κοινοῦ τοῦ Παναγίου Τάφου, στὴν Ἁγία Πόλη Ἱερουσαλήμ. Καὶ ἐκεῖ ὁ Ἅγιος Φιλούμενος ξεχωρίζει γιὰ τὴν ἀρετὴ του.

Τὸ 1937 ὁ Πατριάρχης Τιμόθεος (Θέμελης) τοὺς κεῖρει μοναχοῦς, καὶ τὴν ἴδια χρονιά τους χειροτονεῖ διακόνους. Ἀργότερα ὁ π. Ἐλπίδιος θὰ ἀναχωρήσει ἀπὸ τὴν Σιωνίτιδα Ἐκκλησία, τὴν ὁποία ὅμως ὁ π. Φιλούμενος θὰ υπηρετήσῃ γιὰ 45 συνεχῆ χρόνια, μέχρι τὸ μαρτυρικὸ του τέλος.

Ὁ Ἅγιος Φιλούμενος ὑπηρέτησε τὸ Πατριαρχεῖο Ἱεροσολύμων ἀπὸ διάφορες θέσεις-διακονήματα: Ἀρχικὰ ὡς ἐργοδηγὸς, ἀργότερα ὡς ἐπιμελητὴς τῶν Πατριαρχικῶν Γραφείων, ὡς βοηθὸς φροντιστῆς στὸ Κεντρικὸ μαγειρεῖο, ὡς Ἡγούμενος στὴν Τιβεριάδα, στὴν Ἰόππη, ὡς διευθυντὴς τοῦ Οἰκοτροφείου τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς Σχολῆς, ὡς Ἡγούμενος τῆς Μονῆς Ἀρχαγγέλου, ὡς τυπικάρης τοῦ Πατριαρχικοῦ Ναοῦ τῶν Ἁγίων Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Ἐλένης, ὡς Ἡγούμενος τῆς Ἱ. Μονῆς Μεταμορφώσεως στὴ Ραμάλλα, στὴν Ἱ. Μ. Ἀββᾶ Θεοδοσίου, στὴν Ἱ. Μ. Προφήτου Ἡλίας καὶ τέλος στὴν Ἱ. Μονὴ Φρέατος τοῦ Ἰακώβ στὴν πόλη Νεάπολη (Nablus) τῆς Σαμάρειας, ὅπου καὶ μαρτύρησε στὶς 29 Νοεμβρίου 1979 (ν.ἡ).

Ἀπ' ὅπου καὶ νὰ πέρασε, ἡ διακονία τοῦ Ἁγίου ἦταν ἀγλαόκαρπο! Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἦταν ἀγαπητὸς ἀκόμη καὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς μουσουλμάνους. Στὸ τελευταῖο του διακόνημα στὴν Νεάπολη τῆς Σαμάρειας, στὸ Φρέαρ τοῦ Ἰακώβ, ὁ Ἅγιος εἶχε νὰ ἀντιμετωπίσει πολλές δυσκολίες, κυρίως ἀπὸ φανατικούς Σιωνιστές, οἱ ὅποιοι καὶ δικεδικοῦσαν τὸ Προσκύνημα.

Ὁ Ἅγιος ἀνέφερε συχνὰ τὶς δυσκολίες του αὐτές, σὲ ἄνθρωπους μὲ τοὺς ὁποίους συνδεόταν στενά, ὅπως ὁ συμμαθητὴς καὶ φίλος του (μακαριστὸς πλέον) Μητροπολίτης Βόστρον Ὑμέναιος. Σχετικὰ μὲ τὰ ὅσα συνέβησαν τὴν ἡμέρα τοῦ Μαρτυρίου χαρακτηριστικὴ εἶναι ἡ διήγησή του ἱερομ. π. Σωφρονίου:

«Ὁ μακαρίτης ὁ πατὴρ Φιλούμενος μᾶς ἔλεγε, ὅτι κάθε Παρασκευὴ πολλοὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς μισαλλόδοξους καὶ φανατικούς Ἑβραίους πήγαιναν γιὰ νὰ προσευχηθοῦν στὸ φρέαρ τοῦ Ἰακώβ. Συνέχεια τοῦ ἔλεγαν, νὰ σηκῶσαι ὅλες τὶς εἰκόνες καὶ τὸν Ἐσταυρωμένο ἀκόμα καὶ νὰ τὶς πάρει καὶ νὰ φύγει, διότι τὸ Φρέαρ εἶναι

δικό τους και όχι τῶν Χριστιανῶν. Εἰδάλλως θὰ τὸ μετανιώσει πικρά, ἀλλὰ θὰ εἶναι ἀργά.

Ἀπὸ τὸν καιρὸ ποὺ πῆγε ἐκεῖ ὅλο καιρὸν τὸν φοβέριζαν. Αὐτὸς ὅμως ἤξερε τὰ ἐβραϊκὰ και τοὺς ἀποστόμωσαν. Δὲν εἰδοποίησε ποτὲ τὴν Ἀστυνομία νὰ τὸ ἔχει ὑπ' ὄψιν της και οὔτε τὸ φαντάζονταν ὅτι θὰ τὸν σκότωναν. Στὶς 16 Νοεμβρίου (29 μὲ τὸ νέο ἡμερολόγιο) εἶχε μεγάλη βροχή, ἀσταπές, βροντές, χαλασμοὺς Κυρίου ὅλη τὴν ἡμέρα. Βρῆκαν τὴν εὐκαιρία, ποὺ δὲν ὑπῆρχε κανένας, λόγω τῆς κακοκαιρίας, πῆγαν και τὸν σκότωσαν μέσα στὸ φρέαρ τοῦ Ἰακώβ, μεταξὺ τοῦ ναοῦ και τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου, ὅπως ἔκαμαν και στὸν προφήτη Ζαχαρία, τὸν πατέρα τοῦ Τιμίου Προδρόμου.

Τὴν ὥρα ποὺ ἔκανε ἔσπερινό, ἐκείνη τὴν ὥρα ὄριμαν. Κύριος οἶδε πόσοι ἦσαν, και τὸν σκότωσαν μὲ τὸ τσεκούρι στὰ μούτρα και στὸ δεξι χέρι, κόβοντας τὰ δάκτυλά του. Ἐπίσης, ἡ σιαγόνα του και τὸ ἕνα μάτι του βγαλμένο και τὸ ἄλλο κτυπημένο. Τὸ πῶς μπῆκαν στὸ Μοναστήρι, Κύριος οἶδε, διότι ὁ φύλακας εἶχε φύγει ἀπὸ τὶς 4.00 τὸ ἀπόγευμα και ἔκλεισε τὸ Μοναστήρι. Ὁ φόνοσ ἐγίνε μετὰ τὶς 5.00 μ.μ.. Τὸ πρῶτὸ πηγαίνει ὁ φύλακας στὶς 7.00 π.μ., φωνάζει: «Πάτερ Φιλούμενε;». Στὸ δωμάτιό του δὲν τὸν βρίσκει. Πηγαίνει στὴν ἐκκλησία και τὸν βλέπει σκοτωμένο, μέσα στὰ αἵματα. Ἀμέσως εἰδοποίησε τὴν Ἀστυνομία και ἡ Ἀστυνομία τὸ Πατριαρχεῖο.

Ἀλλὰ ἀφοῦ τὸν σκότωσαν ἔριξαν και χειροβομβίδα ἔξω στὴν προσκομιδὴ και τὰ ἔκαμαν ὅλα κομμάτια. Οὔτε μανουάλια ἄφησαν γερά, οὔτε εἰκόνες. Καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Ἐσταυρωμένου ἔκοψαν τὸ χέρι του τὸ ἀριστερό. Τὰ Ἅγια Ποτήρια χαμένα. Ἦταν τόσο τρομερὴ ἡ κατάσταση σὰν νὰ μὴν κατοικοῦσε ἄνθρωπος μέσα ἀπὸ χρόνια.

Τὸν πῆραν στὸ νεκροτομεῖο, και μετὰ τὸν ἔκαμαν νεκροψία στὸ Τὲλ Ἀβίβ και μᾶς εἰδοποίησαν. Ἐγὼ πῆγα μαζί μὲ ἄλλους τρεῖς πατέρες τοῦ Πατριαρχείου και μᾶς τὸν ἔδωσαν γυμνό. Ὅταν τοὺς ρωτήσαμε ποῦ εἶναι τὰ ροῦχα του, μᾶς εἶπαν εἶναι στὴ Νεάπολη. Ἀλλὰ δὲν φαντάζεστε, ὅταν μᾶς τὸν παρέδωσαν κομματισμένο, τὸ πρόσωπό του ἀγνώριστο, φέρον τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Μαρτυρίου, ὅπως οἱ Πέρσες ἔσφαξαν τοὺς Πατέρες τοῦ Ἁγίου Σάββα και τῶν λοιπῶν μοναστηριῶν. Ἔτσι και σήμερα. Ἀκολούθησε νέο μαρτύριο στὸν πατέρα Φιλούμενο.

Πέντε μέρες τὸν εἶχαν στὸ ψυγεῖο. Καὶ ὅμως ἦταν μαλακώτατος, σὰν νὰ μὴν εἶχε πεθάνει. Ὅταν ἄρχισα νὰ τὸν ντύνω—διότι οἱ ἄλλοι δὲν μπορούσαν, δὲν ἄντεχαν νὰ τὸν βλέπουν ἀπὸ τὶς κακουχίες ποὺ εἶχε—τοῦ λέγω σὰν νὰ ἦταν ζωντανός: «Γέροντά μου, τώρα θὰ μὲ βοηθήσεις νὰ σὲ ντύσω, διότι βλέπεις εἶμαι μόνος μου». Ὅταν ἄρχισα και τοῦ ἔβαλα τὴ φανέλλα, τὸ πρῶτο χέρι ἀμέσως τὸ κατέβασε μόνος του. Ὅπως και τὸ ἄλλο χέρι. Καὶ τὰ πόδια ὁμοίως. Τοῦ μάζενα

τὰ πόδια νὰ τοῦ φορέσω τὰ ροῦχα και ὅταν τελείωνα τὰ ἄπλωνε μόνος του. Στὸ ἀριστερὸ πόδι ἀπὸ κάτω, εἶχε κτύπημα μὲ τὸ τσεκούρι.

Ἀπὸ τὸ νεκροτομεῖο. τὸν φέραμε στὸ Πατριαρχεῖο. Ἔγινε ἡ νεκρώσιμος ἀκολουθία ἐν μέσω Ἁγιοταφίτων πατέρων, και ἄλλων πολλῶν. Ἦλθαν πολλοί, μέχρι καὶ ξένων δογματῶν διότι, ὅλοι τὸν ἀγαποῦσαν και ἦλθαν νὰ τοῦ δώσουν τὸν τελευταῖο ἀσπασμό. Τὶ ὀδυρμός! Τὶ θρήνος! Τὶ κοπετός ἦταν αὐτός!

Τὸν π. Φιλούμενο ὅλοι τὸν κλάψαμε, διότι ἦταν ἕνας καλὸς και ἅγιος πνευματικός. Ὁ Πατριάρχης τὸν ἀποκαλοῦσε «Πτωχοπρόδρομο». Καὶ ὄντως, ἦταν. Οἱ τέλειοι κληρονομοῦν τὴ Βασιλεία τῶν Οὐρανῶν. Ἔπέμεινε λίγο μαρτύριο και βρίσκειται μετὰ τῶν ἱερομαρτύρων και τῶν Ὁσιομαρτύρων ὧν ταῖς πρεσβείες, εἶθε νὰ ἀξιωθοῦμε και ἐμεῖς τῆς Βασιλείας τῶν Οὐρανῶν.»

Μετὰ τὰ γεγονότα αὐτά, τὸ Πατριαρχεῖο Ἱεροσολύμων ἔστειλε ὁμάδες πατέρων γιὰ νὰ ἐπανδρώσουν τὸ Προσκύνημα, ἀλλὰ κανένας ἀπ' αὐτοὺς δὲν παρέμεινε στὸ Μοναστήρι γιὰ μεγάλο χρονικὸ διάστημα. Τὸ 1983 ὁ τότε Πατριάρχης Διόδωρος κάλεσα τὸν π. Ἰουστῖνο νὰ ἀναλάβει τὴν Ἡγουμενία στὸ Φρέαρ. Ἐκεῖνος ἂν και ἀρχικὰ ἀρνήθηκε, κατόπιν διαφόρων ὁραμάτων ποὺ εἶχε, δέχτηκε και πῆγε στὸ Φρέαρ, ὅπου και διακονεῖ μέχρι και σήμερα.

Ὁ π. Ἰουστῖνος κατὰ τὴν διάρκεια τῆς διακονίας του δέχτηκε πολλὲς ἐπιθέσεις ποὺ εἶχαν στόχο νὰ τὸν σκοτώσουν ἢ τουλάχιστον νὰ τὸν κάνουν νὰ ἐγκαταλείψει τὸ Προσκύνημα. Ὁ Ἅγιος Φιλούμενος τὸν ἔσωσε πολλὲς φορές. Χαρακτηριστικὴ εἶναι ἡ περίπτωση ποὺ τὸν σήκωσε ἀπὸ τὸ κρεβάτι και τοῦ ἀποκάλυψε ἕνα ὥρολογιακὸ ἐκρηκτικὸ μηχανισμό!

Στὴν τρίτη ἐπίθεση ποὺ δέχτηκε ὁ π. Ἰουστῖνος, κατάφερε—ἂν και τραυματισμένος—νὰ ἀκίνητοποιήσει τὸν δράστη χρησιμοποιώντας ἕνα μανουάλι ποὺ βρισκόταν δίπλα του. Ὁ δράστησ συνελήφθη και ἀποδείχθηκε ὅτι ἦταν ὑπεύθυνος και γιὰ τὸν μαρτυρικὸ θάνατο τοῦ Ἁγίου Φιλουμένου. Ἡ Ἀστυνομία τὸν ἔφερε και πάλι στὸ Προσκύνημα, ὅπου και ἔγινε ἀναπαράσταση τῆς δολοφονίας τοῦ Ἁγίου. Τότε ἔγινε γνωστὸ σὲ ὅλους τὸ πῶς μπῆκαν στὸ Μοναστήρι, πῶς κρύφτηκαν και τέλος πῶς δολοφόνησαν τὸν ἅγιο Φιλούμενο.

Ὁ π. Ἰουστῖνος μὲ πολλὲς προσευχὲς και ἀγῶνες, ἀλλὰ και μὲ τὴν ἐμπρακτὴ βοήθεια τοῦ Ἁγίου Φιλουμένου, ἔχει ἀποπερατώσει τὴν ἀνέγερση τοῦ Ἱ. Ν. τῆς Ἁγίας Φωτεινῆς, ἡ στάμνα τῆς ὁποίας φιλοξενεῖται πλέον στὸ Προσκύνημα τοῦ Φρέατος. Ἐπίσης τὸ **ἄφθαρτο σκήνωμα τοῦ Ἁγίου Φιλουμένου** μεταφέρθηκε ἀπὸ τὸν Ναὸ τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς Σχολῆς και φυλάσσεται στὸ Ἱερὸ Προσκύνημα τοῦ Φρέατος στὴν Νεάπολη.

## WHOSE SIDE IS GOD ON NOW?

*By Patrick J. Buchanan. Mr. Buchanan is the author of "Suicide of a Superpower: Will America Survive to 2025?" To find out more about Patrick Buchanan and read features by other Creators writers and cartoonists, visit the "Creators" web page at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com).*

In his Kremlin defense of Russia's annexation of Crimea, Vladimir Putin, even before he began listing the battles where Russian blood had been shed on Crimean soil, spoke of an older deeper bond.

"Crimea," said Putin, "is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptized. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilization and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus."

Russia is a Christian country, Putin was saying. This speech recalls last December's address where the former KGB chief spoke of Russia as standing against a decadent West:

"Many Euro-Atlantic countries have moved away from their roots, including Christian values. Policies are being pursued that place on the same level a multi-child family and a same-sex partnership, a faith in God and a belief in Satan. This is the path to degradation."

Heard any Western leader, say, Barack Obama, talk like that lately?

Indicting the "Bolsheviks" who gave away Crimea to Ukraine, Putin declared, "May God judge them."

What is going on here? With Marxism-Leninism a dead faith, Putin is saying the new ideological struggle is between a debauched West led by the United States and a traditionalist world Russia would be proud to lead. In the new war of beliefs, Putin is saying, it is Russia that is on God's side. The West is Gomorrah.

Western leaders who compare Putin's annexation of Crimea to Hitler's Anschluss with Austria, who dismiss him as a "KGB thug," who call him "the alleged thief, liar and murderer who rules Russia," as the Wall Street Journal's Holman Jenkins did, believe Putin's claim to stand on higher moral ground is beyond blasphemous. But Vladimir Putin knows exactly what he is doing, and his new claim has a venerable lineage. The ex-Communist Whittaker Chambers who exposed Alger Hiss as a Soviet spy, was, at the time of his death in 1964, writing a book on "The Third Rome."

The first Rome was the Holy City and seat of Christianity that fell to Odoacer and his barbarians in 476 A.D. The second Rome was Constantinople, Byzantium, (today's Istanbul), which fell to the Turks in 1453. The successor city to Byzantium, the Third Rome, the last Rome to the old believers, was—Moscow.

Putin is entering a claim that Moscow is the Godly City of today and command post of the counter-reformation against

the new paganism. Putin is plugging into some of the modern world's most powerful currents.

Not only in his defiance of what much of the world sees as America's arrogant drive for global hegemony. Not only in his tribal defense of lost Russians left behind when the USSR disintegrated.

He is also tapping into the worldwide revulsion of and resistance to the sewage of a hedonistic secular and social revolution coming out of the West.

In the culture war for the future of mankind, Putin is planting Russia's flag firmly on the side of traditional Christianity. His recent speeches carry echoes of John Paul II whose *Evangelium Vitae* in 1995 excoriated the West for its embrace of a "culture of death."

What did Pope John Paul mean by moral crimes?

The West's capitulation to a sexual revolution of easy divorce, rampant promiscuity, pornography, homosexuality, feminism, abortion, same-sex marriage, euthanasia, assisted suicide—the displacement of Christian values by Hollywood values.

Washington Post columnist Anne Applebaum writes that she was stunned when in Tbilisi to hear a Georgian lawyer declare of the former pro-Western regime of Mikhail Saakashvili, "They were LGBT."

"It was an eye-opening moment," wrote Applebaum. Fear and loathing of the same-sex-marriage pandemic has gone global. In Paris, a million-man Moral Majority marched in angry protest.

Author Masha Gessen, who has written a book on Putin, says of his last two years, "Russia is remaking itself as the leader of the anti-Western world."

But the war to be waged with the West is not with rockets. It is a cultural, social, moral war where Russia's role, in Putin's words, is to "prevent movement backward and downward, into chaotic darkness and a return to a primitive state."

Would that be the "chaotic darkness" and "primitive state" of mankind, before the Light came into the world?

This writer was startled to read in the Jan-Feb newsletter from the social conservative World Council of Families in Rockford, Ill., that, of the "ten best trends" in the world in 2013, number one was "Russia Emerges as Pro-Family Leader."

In 2013, the Kremlin imposed a ban on homosexual propaganda, a ban on abortion advertising, a ban on abortions after 12 weeks and a ban on sacrilegious insults to religious believers.

"While the other super-powers march to a pagan worldview," writes WCF's Allan Carlson, "Russia is defending Judeo-Christian values. During the Soviet era, Western communists flocked to Moscow. This year, World Congress of Families VII will be held in Moscow, Sept. 10-12."

Will Vladimir Putin give the keynote?

In the new ideological Cold War, whose side is God on now?



## MANY CONFESS, FEW REPENT

*From the book "Repentance and Confession," by Monk Moses of the Holy Mountain, "Orthodox Kypseli" publications, Thessaloniki, Greece (edited for length).*

*Confession is a God-given commandment, and it is one of the Sacraments of our Church. Confession is not a formal, habitual ("to be on the safe side," or, "in view of upcoming feast-days"), forced and unprepared act, springing from an isolated duty or obligation and for psychological relief only. Confession should always be combined with repentance. A Holy Mountain Elder used to say: "Many confess, but few repent!"*

[Elder Aemilianos of the Simonopetra Monastery, Mt. Athos]



### What Is True Repentance?

Repentance is a freely-willed, internally cultivated process of contrition and sorrow for having distanced ourselves from God through sin. True repentance has nothing to do with intolerable pain, excessive sorrow and relentless guilty feelings. That would not be sincere repentance, but a secret egotism, a feeling of our "ego" being trampled upon; an anger that is directed at our self, which then wreaks revenge because it is exposing itself and is put to shame—a thing that it cannot tolerate.

Repentance means a change in our thoughts, our mentality; it is an about-face; it is a grafting of morality and an abhorrence of sin. Repentance also means love of virtue, benevolence, desire, willingness, and a strong disposition to be re-joined with Christ through the Grace of the almighty Holy Spirit. While repentance begins in the depths of the heart, it culminates necessarily in the sacrament of divine and sacred Confession.

### The Confessor as a "Spiritual Father"

During confession, one confesses sincerely and humbly, as though in the presence of Christ. No scientist, psychologist, psychoanalyst, psychiatrist, sociologist, philosopher or theologian can replace the confessor. No icon—not even the most miracle-working one—can provide what the confessor's stole can: the absolution of sins. The confessor takes the person under his care; he adopts him and ensures he is reborn spiritually, which is why he is called a "spiritual father."

Normally, spiritual paternity is lifelong, sacred and powerful, **even more powerful than the bond of any blood relatives.** Spiritual birth is a painful process. The confessor must keep track of the confessing soul, with a fear of God (as one who is "accountable to God"), with understanding, humility and love, and guide him with discretion in the ever-upward course of his in-Christ life.

The confessor-priest has been given a special blessing by his bishop for the undertaking of his confessional opus. However, this gift of "binding and un-binding" sins is initially acquired only through his ordination as presbyter, when he is rendered a successor to the Apostles. Thus, validity and canonicity in Apostolic succession, through bishops, is of central and great importance. Confession is performed (and bestows divine Grace upon the faithful), not in conjunction with the skill, the scientism, the literacy, the eloquence, the energy and the artfulness of the priest; not even with his virtue and holiness—but through the canonicity (validity) of his priesthood and through the "Master of Ceremonies"—the Holy Spirit.

The possible sins of the priest do not obstruct divine Grace during the Sacraments. Woes betide, if the faithful were to doubt (on account of the unworthiness of the priest) that the bread and the wine actually become the Body and the Blood of Christ during the Divine Liturgy! This of course does not mean that the priest should not have to constantly concern himself with his own "cleanliness."

Thus, there is no such thing as "good" or "bad" confessors. Each and every confessor provides the exact same absolution.



However, **we do have the right to choose our confessor**; and of course we have the right to turn to the one who truly makes us feel at ease with him, spiritually. To constantly change our confessor however, is not a very sober decision; this kind of tendency does not reveal spiritual maturity.

The confessor's opus is not just the superficial hearing of a person's sins and the reciting of the prayer of absolution afterwards. Nor is it restricted to the hour of confession. Like a good father, the confessor continuously cares for his child; he listens to it and observes it carefully, he counsels it appropriately, he guides it along the lines of the Gospel, he highlights its talents, he does not place unnecessary burdens on it, he imposes canons with leniency only when he must, he consoles it when it is disheartened, weighed down, resentful, exhausted, and he heals it accordingly, without ever discouraging it, but constantly pursuing the struggle for the eradication of its passions and the harvesting of virtues; constantly shaping its eternal soul to be Christ-like.

This ever-developing paternal and filial relationship between confessor and spiritual child eventually culminates in a feeling of comfort, trust, respect, sanctity and elation. When confessing, one opens his heart to the confessor and discloses the innermost, the basest and most unclean—in fact, all of his—secrets, his most intimate actions and detrimental desires, even those that he would not want to confess to himself, nor tell his next-of-kin or his closest friend. For this reason, the confessor must have an absolute respect

for the unlimited trust that is being shown to him by the person confessing.

This trust most assuredly builds up with time, but also by the fact that the confessor is strictly bound (in fact to the death) by the divine and Sacred Canons of the Church, to the confidentiality that confession entails.

### “Economy,” Canons, and Guidance

In Orthodox confession there are of course no general instructions, because the spiritual guidance that each unique soul requires is entirely personalized. Each person is unprecedented, with a particular psychosynthesis, a different character, differing potentials and abilities, limitations, tendencies, tolerances, knowledge, needs and dispositions. With the Grace of God and with divine enlightenment, the confessor must discern all these characteristics, in order to decide what he can utilize best, so that the person confessing will be helped in the best possible manner. At times, leniency will be required, while at other times, austerity.

What is required of the spiritual father is a fear of God, discernment, honesty, humility, deliberation, understanding and prayer. “Economy” (*Oekonomia: to make allowances for something, exceptionally*) is not demanded of the person confessing, nor is it proper for the confessor to make it a rule. “Economy” must remain an exception. “Economy” must also be a temporary measure (Archmandrite George Gregoriates). When the reasons for implementing it no longer exist, it must naturally be retracted. The same sin can be confronted in numerous ways.

A canon is not always necessary. A canon is not intended as a form of punishment. It is educative by nature. A canon is not imposed for the sake of appeasing an offended God and an atonement of the sinner in the face of Divine Justice; that is an entirely heretical teaching. A canon is usually implemented during an immature confession, with the intent to arouse awareness and a consciousness of the magnitude of one’s sin. According to Orthodox teaching, “sin” is not so much the transgression of a law, as it is a lack of love towards God. *Love, and do whatever you want*, the blessed Augustine used to say. A canon is implemented for the purpose of completing one’s repentance in view of confession, which is why Fr. Athanasios of Meteora rightly says: *Just as the confessor is not permitted to make public the sins being confessed to him, so must the person confessing not make public the particular canon that the confessor has imposed in his specific case, as it is the resultant of many parameters.*

A confessor acts as the provider of the Grace of the Holy Spirit. During the hour of the Sacrament of Confession, he does not function as a psychologist and scientist. He functions as a priest, as an experienced doctor, as a caring father. When listening to the sins of the person confessing, he prays to God to give him enlightenment, to advise him what the best “medication” for cure will be, and to gauge the degree and the quality of that confession.

The confessor does not place himself opposite a confessing person with curiosity, suspicion, envy, excessive austerity, power and arrogance; but equally not with indifference, thoughtlessly, carelessly and wearily. The humility, love and attention of the confessor will greatly help the person confessing. He should also not ask too many, too unnecessary and too indiscreet questions. He must especially interrupt any detailed descriptions of various sins (especially the carnal ones) and even the disclosure of names, to safeguard himself even more. But the person confessing should also not feel afraid, or hesitate and feel embarrassed; he should feel respect, trust, honor and show reverence to the confessor. This climate of sanctity, mutual respect and trust must be mainly nurtured, inspired and developed by the confessor.

Our holy Orthodox Church is the Body of the Resurrected Christ; She is a vast infirmary, for the healing of frail, sinning faithful from the traumas, the wounds and the illnesses of sin; from pathogenic demons and from the venomous demonic traps and the influences of demonically-driven passions. She is not a branch office of the Ministry of Social Services, nor does She compete against the various societies for social welfare. The Church is mainly a provider of a meaning to life, of redemption and salvation of the faithful *for the sake of whom Christ died*, through their participation in the sacraments of the Church.

*The priest’s stole is a planing instrument*—as the Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain used to say —*that planes and straightens out a person; it is a therapeutic scalpel that excises passions, and not a trowel for workaholics, or a symbol of power. It is a servant’s apron intended for ministering to people, for providing therapy and salvation.* God uses the priest for the forgiveness of His creature. It is plainly stated in the absolution blessing: *May God forgive you—through me the sinner—everything, both in the present age and in the future one, and may He render you blameless, before His awesome Seat of Judgment; having no longer any worry for the crimes that have been confessed, may you go forth in peace.* Sins that have not been confessed will continue to burden a person, even in the life to come.

Confessed sins should not be re-confessed; it would be as though one doesn’t believe in the grace of the Sacrament. God is of course aware of them, but it is for the sake of absolution, humbling and therapy that they need to be outwardly confessed. As for the occasional penance imposed for sins, one must realize that it does not negate the Church’s love for the person, but that it is simply an educative imposition, for a better awareness of one’s offenses.

### Elements of a Sound Confession

According to Saint Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain, *confession is a willed, verbal revealing of one’s evil deeds and words and thoughts; solemn, accusatory, direct, without shame, decisive, to be executed before a legitimate spiritual father.* This God-bearing saint has succinctly, fully and meaningfully clarified that confession must be willed, free, effortless, without

the confessor straining to extract the person's confession. It should be with solemnity, in other words, with an awareness of the sorrow that he caused God with his sin, and not with sentimental, hypocritical, fainthearted tears.

Genuine "solemnity" implies an inner collapsing, remorse, a hatred towards sin, a love of virtue, and a feeling of gratitude to the Gift-Giver God. "Accusatory" implies a responsible confession, without attempts of justification, subterfuge, chicanery, irresponsibility and scapegoating; with sincere self-reproach and genuine self-humiliation that carries the so-called "happy-sorrow" and the "joyous bereavement" defined by the Church. "Direct" implies a confession with all sincerity, directness and precision, valour and courage, severity and bravery.

It often happens that during the hour of confession, one avoids admitting his defeat, his fall and his weakness and by means of eloquent and long-winded descriptions attempts to deflect his share of responsibility, with twists and turns and half-truths—or even by accusing others—all for the sake of preserving (even at that hour) a prim and proper ego. A confession "without shame" implies a portrayal of our true, deplorable self.

Furthermore, confession should be continuous, so that the *willingly recurring passions* (according to Saint John of the Ladder) *are not strengthened, but rather, are cured sooner*. Thus, old sins will not be entirely blotted out from memory, there will be a regular self-monitoring, self-observation, self-awareness and self-reproach; Divine Grace will not abandon; demonic entrapment will be averted much more easily, and reminiscence of Death will not seem as horrid and terrible.

A basic prerequisite is a purity of heart; a purity that is rid of the spirit of avarice and blissfulness inspired by today's hyper-consumerist society; the spirit of God-despised pride in a world of narcissism, individualism, non-humility, non-philanthropy, arrogance and the bizarre; the demonic spirit of mischievous thoughts, fantasies and imaginations and unclean and obscure suspicions and envy.

Purity of heart has become a rare ornament—in brotherly and conjugal relations, in obligations towards colleagues, in friendships, in conversations, in thoughts, in desires, in pastoral callings. Forgotten are neptic awareness, ascetic sobriety, traditional frugality, simplicity and gallantry. This has led to a polluting of the soul's rationalizing ability, an arousal of its desirous aspect towards avarice, while its willpower has become severely blunted, thus drawing a weakened person towards evil, without any impediments or limitations.

Nowadays prevail self-justification, excuses for our passions, beautification of sin, and its reinforcement through mod-

ern psychological supports. The admission of mistakes is regarded as belittlement, weakness and generally improper. The constant justification of our self, and the meticulous transfer of responsibilities elsewhere have created a human being that is confused, divided, disturbed, worn-out, miserable and self-absorbed, taunted by the devil, and captured in his dark meshes.

In view of all the above—none of which I believe has been exaggerated—it is our belief that the opus of a confessor is not an easy one. Ordinary coercion to repent and the cultivating of humility are nowadays inadequate; the fold requires catechesis, re-evangelizing, spiritual training, as well as a spiritual about-face, in order to acquire powerful antibodies. Resistance, reaction and the confronting of the powerful current of de-sanctification, of secularization, of demoting heroism, of eudemonism and of amassing wealth are imperative. The

young generation is in need of special attention, instruction and love, given that their upbringing has not proven to be of any help in their becoming aware of the meaning and the purpose of life, or of the void and the indecorousness, the lawlessness and the darkness of sin.

### Obstacles in Modern Times

Another serious problem—even for our Christians—is the often over-zealous quest for a labor-less, toil-free and grief-free life. We are in search of Cyreneans to carry our crosses. We refuse to lift up our own personal cross. We have no idea of the depth and breadth of our own cross. We bow in reverence before the Cross in

church, we cross ourselves, but we do not embrace our personal cross. In the long run, we would like a non-crucified Christianity. But there cannot be Pascha Sunday without a Good Friday.

We honor martyrs and saints, but we ourselves do not want to suffer any hardships, any postponements, any difficulties. Fasting is too difficult a task to accomplish; we feel resentful during an illness; we cannot tolerate any harsh words, not even when we are to blame, therefore how could we possibly tolerate injustice, slander, persecution and exile, the way our saints did? Our contemporary, secular spirit of convenience, leisure and excessive consumerism has greatly affected the measure of spiritual living.

One other serious problem of our time is man's morbid and undue reliance on logic, intellect, knowledge, and personal judgment—we are referring to rationalization. Neptic Orthodox theology teaches us to *consider our nous a tool, and to lower it, into the heart*. Our Church does not cultivate and produce intellectuals. Rationalization is for us a clearly sin-oriented life view—a form of atheism—since it goes contrary to the commandment of placing our faith, hope, love





and trust in God. A rationalist judges everything using the filter of his own mind and only with his finite mind, with his sovereign ego as the epicenter, placing no trust in divine Providence, divine Grace and divine Assistance in his life.

By often regarding himself as infallible, a rationalist does not allow God to intervene in his life and thus becomes convinced that he is not in need of confession. Saint Symeon the New Theologian says however that, **for one to believe he has not fallen into any sins is the greatest of falls and fallacies, and the greatest sin of all.** Certain newer theologians speak of “missing the target” and not of “sinning,” in their desire to blunt the natural protesting of one’s conscience. The self-sufficiency displayed by certain churchgoers and fasting Christians can at times be hiding a latent pharisaic stance, i.e., that “they are not like the others” and therefore are not in need of confession.

### **The Delusion Arising from Our Passions**

The greatest of evils is pride. It is the mother of many offspring, the first ones being vainglory and self-vindication. Pride is a form of denial of God; it is an invention of wicked demons, the result of too much praise, which in turn results in God-despised censure, anger, rage, hypocrisy, the lack of compassion, misanthropy, and blasphemy. Pride is a passion that is formidable, difficult, powerful and hard to cure. Pride manifests itself as vainglory, boastfulness, conceit, arrogance, presumptuousness, swell-headedness, insolence, self-importance, megalomania, ambition, self-love, vanity, avarice, flesh-loving, a love for leadership, accusations and arguments. Also as smugness, favouritism, insolence, disrespect, outspokenness, insensitivity, contradiction, obstinacy, disobedience, sarcasm, stubbornness, disregard, indignity, perfectionism and hypersensitivity. Finally, pride can lead to impenitence.

The tongue often becomes the instrument of pride, through unchecked, long-winded, useless talking; gossiping, silliness; vain, insincere, indiscreet, two-tongued, diplomatic, pretended and mocking conversations.

Out of the seven deadly sins many other passions spring forth. Having mentioned the offspring of pride, we then have avarice, which gives birth to the love of money, greed, stinginess, lack of charity, hardheartedness, fraud, usury, injustice, deceitfulness, simony, bribery, gambling. Fornication manifests itself in myriads of ways, for example, envy—with its underhanded and evil spite, insatiable gluttony, anger, as well as suspect negligence and lack of care.

Special attention should also be paid to many un-Orthodox elements in family life. The avoidance of childbearing, the idolizing of one’s children (when regarded as the extension of the parents’ ego); overprotecting them, or constantly watching their moves and savagely oppressing them.

Marriage is an arena for exercising humility, mutual leeway and mutual respect, and not the parallel journey of two egotisms despite a lifelong coupling and coexistence. The devil

dances for joy whenever there is no forgiveness in human weaknesses and in everyday mistakes.

Parents will help their children significantly with their peaceful, sober and loving example in the home, on a daily basis. The participation of the children together with the parents in the sacrament of confession will fortify them with divine Grace in an experiential life in Christ.

When parents ask for forgiveness with sincerity, they simultaneously teach their children humility, which destroys all demonic plots. In a household where love, harmony, understanding, humility and peace bloom, there the blessings of God will be bounteous and the home becomes a castle that is impervious to the malice of the world around. The upbringing of children with the element of forgiveness creates a healthy family hearth, which will inspire them and strengthen them for their own futures.

One other huge matter that constitutes an obstacle for repentance and confession is self-vindication, which plagues many people of the Church also. Its basis is, as we mentioned earlier, demonic pride. A classic example is the Pharisee of the Gospel parable. The self-vindicating person has apparently positive elements, which he will over-praise and for which he would like to be honoured and praised. He is happy to be flattered and to demean and humiliate others. He has excessive self-esteem, he vindicates himself to excess and believes that God is necessarily obliged to reward him. In the long run, he is a poor wretch, who, in his wretched state makes others wretched. He is possessed by nervousness and agitation and he is demanding, thus imprisoning himself; these are tendencies that will not allow him to open the door to divine mercy, through his repentance.

An offspring of pride is censure, which is unfortunately also a habit of many Christians, who tend to concern themselves more with others than themselves. This is a phenomenon of our time and of a society that pushes people into a continuous observation of others, and not of the self.

Modern man’s myriad occupations and activities do not want him to ever remain alone to study, to contemplate, to pray, to attain self-awareness, self-critique, self-control and to be reminded of death. The so-called mass media are incessantly preoccupied with scandal-seeking, persistently and at length, with human passions, with sins, with others’ misdemeanors. These kinds of things provoke, impress, and, even if they do not scandalize, they nevertheless burden the soul and the mind with filth and ugliness and they actually reassure us, by making us believe that “we are better” than those advertised. Thus, a person becomes accustomed to the mediocrity, the tepidity and the transience of superficial day-to-day life, never comparing himself to saints and heroes. Censure in our times gives man the impression that he is justly imposing a kind of cleansing, by mud-slinging at others, albeit contaminating himself by generating malice, hatred, hostility, resentfulness, envy and frigidity.

St. Maximos the Confessor in fact states that the one who constantly scrutinizes other's sins, or judges his brothers based on a suspicion only, has not even begun to repent, nor has he begun any research into discovering his own sins.

### Conclusion

Many and various things can be said; but in the end, only one thing is opportune, significant and outstanding: Salvation is attained, only through sincere repentance and clean confession.

Repentance not only opens the celestial Paradise, but also the terrestrial one, with the foretasting -albeit partial- of the ineffable joy of the endless reign of the heavens and of wonderful peace, in the present time. Those who uphold the practice of confession can be the truly and genuinely happy people; pacifist and peace-bearing; heralds of repentance, of resurrection, of transformation, freedom, grace, and with the blessing of God in their souls and their lives. "God's bounteous Grace turns the wolf into a lamb," says Saint John the Chrysostom.

**No sin can surpass God's love. There is not one sinner who cannot become a saint, if he desires to.** It has been proven, by the innumerable names that are recorded in the Book of Saints.

The confessor listens to confessions and absolves those confessing, under his blessed stole. He cannot however confess himself and place the stole over his own head to obtain forgiveness in the same manner. He must necessarily kneel underneath another stole to confess and be absolved.

That is the way the spiritual law functions; that is the way God's Wisdom and Mercy have ordained. We cannot confess others, but not submit ourselves to confession; to not practice what we preach; to talk about repentance, but not to repent; to talk about confession, but not confess ourselves regularly. None of us can dethrone himself, and none can absolve himself. The unadvised, the disobedient, the unconfessed are a serious problem for the Church.

Dear brothers and sisters, the confessor's stole can be a miraculous scalpel for the removal of malignant tumors; it can raise the dead, renew and transform the indecorous world, and bring joy to earth and heaven. Our Church has entrusted this grand ministry, this sacred service, to our priests and not to the angels, so that we might be able to approach them with ease and without fear, as fellow-sufferers and corporeal counterparts.

All the above have been deposited with sincerity and not at all pretentiously, by a co-sinner, who did not aspire to play the teacher, but a co-struggling, co-student, together with you. It was merely his desire to remind you with simple and inartistic words the Tradition of our holy mother, the Church, on the ever-opportune matter of divinely-spun and divinely-blessed Repentance and the divinely-delivered and God-favored, blessed sacrament of Confession.

## NOTHING SMELLS WORSE THAN PRIDE

By St. Kosmas Aitolos.



There was a virtuous hermit who frequently prayed to God, and who received revelations of many divine mysteries. One day he set out from his hermitage to travel to a distant region. Along the way, he met another man who was journeying in the same direction. This individual was actually an angel, but the hermit did not realize this and assumed he was a regular human being.

As they journeyed together, along the path they encountered a dead horse. The hermit covered his nose and held his breath; the angel did not. A short while later, they came across a dead calf. The hermit again covered his nose and held his breath; the angel did not. Not long after, they found a dead dog in their path. The hermit covered his nose and held his breath; the angel did nothing.

Eventually they approached a certain village where they crossed paths with a beautiful young lady, who was wearing extravagant clothing and ornate jewelry, and taking great pride in her appearance. The angel then immediately covered his nose. When the hermit witnessed this, he stopped and asked, "Who are you? Are you an angel, a human being, or a demon? ... We passed by a dead horse that stunk, but you did not cover your nose. We also passed by the dead calf and dog, and I did not see you cover your nose. Now that we passed by such a beautiful young lady you decided to cover your nose and hold your breath?"

Then the angel revealed himself to the hermit and replied, "Nothing smells as bad as pride does to God." Having said this, the angel disappeared.

The hermit then returned back to his hut and began weeping for his sins, beseeching God to protect him henceforth from the devil's traps, and not allow him to fall into the sin of pride and thus lose his soul.



Today the Lord is born, the life and salvation of mankind; today a reconciliation is made of Divinity to humanity, and of humanity to Divinity; today all creation has leapt for joy; those above sent toward those below; and those below towards those above; today occurred the death of darkness and the life of humanity; today a way was made toward God for man and a way for God into the soul.

St. Macarius the Great

## CURING THE POISON OF GOSSIP

By Saint Theophan the Recluse.

*A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. [Prov 18:7]*

† † †

### The Poison

Evil speech is worse than all poisons. All other wounds may be healed, but the wound of the tongue has no cure. The tongue of the dragon is less evil than that of the whisperer, which in turn comes from a most evil demon: for it provokes quarrelling and bitter strife between brethren, sows evil and discord among the peaceful, scatters many communities. If you permit the whisperer to approach you, he will strip you of every merit you possess. Whosoever becomes involved with him has already become a confederate in his bloodshed, in his murders, and in his slayings! For a whisperer and a murderer spawn the same whelp: if they do not slay you with the sword, they will bring the same disaster on you with the tongue.

Because of these things I charge you severely, that you separate yourself from a whisperer as speedily as you can. Let him be a monk, let him be an anchorite, let him be a champion of virtue or but a novice, whoever he is, as long as he is a whisperer, fly from him. Though he should be your own father, or your brother, if he is a whisperer keep far away from him. For it is better to dwell with a lion or with a lioness than with one who is a whisperer. And do not be ashamed to fly from him; so that he shall not infect you with the poison of his sin.

So then, my sons, have no part in murmuring. Do your work earnestly and in silence; for he who is devoted to silence is close to God and His angels and dwells in heaven. For the Lord tells us that: *He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.* (Prov 13:3).

And then in the day of our visitation He shall say to us: *Blessed art thou, O Israel,* because you kept watch on your tongue; *who is like unto thee.* (Deut 33:29).

May the Lord preserve you in His grace and peace. Amen.

### The Cure

Set, O Lord, a watch before my mouth, and a door of enclosure round about my lips. The greatest necessity of all is to control and curb our tongue. The mover of the tongue is the heart: what fills the heart is poured out through the tongue. And conversely, when feeling is poured out of the heart by the tongue, it becomes strengthened and firmly rooted in the heart. Therefore the tongue is one of the chief factors in building up our inner disposition.

Good feelings are silent. The feelings which seek expression in words are mostly egotistical, since they seek to express what flatters our self-love and can show us, as we imagine, in the best light. Loquacity mostly comes from a certain vainglory,

which makes us think that we know a great deal and imagine our opinion on the subject of conversation to be the most satisfactory of all. So we experience an irresistible urge to speak out and in a stream of words, with many repetitions, to impress the same opinion in the hearts of others, thus foisting ourselves upon them as unbidden teachers and sometimes even dreaming of making pupils of men, who understand the subject much better than the teacher.

When you have to speak, before expressing what has entered your heart and letting it pass to your tongue, examine it carefully; and you will find many things that are better not let past your lips. Know moreover that many things, which it seems to you good to express, are much better left buried in the tomb of silence. Sometimes you will yourself realize this, immediately the conversation is over.

Silence is a great power in our unseen warfare and a sure hope of gaining victory. Silence is much beloved of him, who does not rely on himself but trusts in God alone. It is the guardian of holy prayer and a miraculous helper in the practice of virtues; it is also a sign of spiritual wisdom. St. Isaac says: *Guarding your tongue not only makes your mind rise to God, but also gives great hidden power to perform visible actions, done by the body. If silence is practiced with knowledge, it also brings enlightenment in hidden doing.* In another place he praises it thus: *If you pile up on one side of the scales all the works demanded by ascetic life, and on the other side—silence, you will find that the latter outweighs the former. Many good counsels have been given us, but if a man embraces silence, to follow them will become superfluous.* In yet another place he calls silence *the mystery of the life to come; whereas words are the instruments of this world.* It can be said in general that: *One that keepeth silence is found wise: and another by much babbling becometh hateful.* (Sir 20:5).

I shall indicate to you the most direct and simple method to acquire the habit of silence: undertake this practice, and the practice itself will teach you how to do it, and help you. To keep up your zeal in this work, reflect as often as you can on the pernicious results of indiscriminate babbling and on the salutary results of wise silence. When you come to taste the good fruit of silence, you will no longer need lessons about it.



Many abstain from meat, milk and other food which God has not forbidden and which was even given as a blessing of people who have learned the truth and know how to *partake of these things with thanksgiving* (I Tim 4:4). But the same abstemious, devout-living people, give scandal by their action, and spread scandal with their tongue like an incendiary fire.

**St. Tikhon of Zadonsk**



## THE TWO KINDS OF MUSIC

By Photios Kontoglou.



The beloved iconographer Photios Kontoglou (+1965) is the greatest icon painter of modern Greece and one of her most important theologians and literary writers. He played a major role in the glorious return of traditional Byzantine iconography to the Greek Orthodox world in the twentieth century. He was also an accomplished chanter and a spiritual writer who inspired

countless souls to embrace the unadulterated traditions of the Orthodox faith. He was a man of adamantine Orthodox faith and impeccable character, adorned with the virtues of great humility, long-suffering, courage, wisdom, purity, hope and love. He was a devout man, a holy man, a man of God. All that he did bears the impress of these qualities.

In Kontoglou's writings, we encounter a man who has unshakable religious faith, free from all skepticism and metaphysical anguish. We encounter a man who is steeped in the Holy Scriptures and writings of the Eastern Church Fathers, particularly the great mystics such as Saint Macarios the Egyptian, Saint John Climacos, Saint Isaac the Syrian, Saint Symeon the New Theologian, and Saint Gregory the Sinaite. We find a man who has the profoundest respect for the Sacred Tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy, including all its dogmas, canons and sacred arts (architecture, iconography, music), tolerating no deviations. Orthodoxy was for him the sacred *Kivotos*, the sacred Ark, and these its precious contents, which must be carefully guarded and not cast away, or exchanged for counterfeits.

Kontoglou was strongly opposed to the participation of Orthodoxy in "ecumenism," seeing in such participation the dangers of compromise on matters which admit of no compromise. He was especially critical of the maneuvers of Patriarch Athenagoras, in whom he saw an apostate... a betrayer of Greece and Orthodoxy. In his last book, entitled *Ti Einai he Orthodoxia kai ti Einai ho Papsimos* ("What Orthodoxy Is and What Papsim Is") Kontoglou stressed the abyss that separates Orthodoxy from Roman Catholicism, which renders utterly absurd Athenagoras's assertions that there are no real differences between the two.

As during his life, so at his death, it was evident that Kontoglou was free from worldly attachments, a citizen of the City of God, not of the earthly city, whose glory is temporary and whose power is doomed to pass away. He died poor, ignored

by the State. His body was not accompanied to the grave by any State dignitaries, but only by friends and admirers, who loved him deeply.

† † †

Music is of two kinds (as are the other arts also)—secular and ecclesiastical. Each of these has been developed by different emotions and different states of the soul. Secular music expresses worldly (i.e., carnal) feelings and desires. Although these emotions may be very refined (romantic, sentimental, idealistic, etc.), they nevertheless continue to be exclusively carnal. Many people, however, are misled in believing that these emotions are spiritual. In reality, spiritual emotions are expressed only by ecclesiastical music. Only ecclesiastical music can truly express the secret movements of the heart, which are entirely different from those inspired and developed by secular music. That is, it expresses contrition, humility, suffering and godly grief, which, as St. Paul says, *worketh repentance to salvation*. (II Cor 7:10). Ecclesiastical music can also evoke feelings of praise, thanksgiving, and holy enthusiasm. Secular music, on the other hand—even the purest—expresses carnal emotions, even when it is inspired by suffering and affliction. This type of suffering, Paul calls *worldly grief*, which *worketh death*. (II Cor 7:10).

Thus two kinds of music were formed, the secular, which arouses emotion—any kind of emotion—and ecclesiastical music, which evokes contrition. St. John Chrysostom strongly condemns the attempts that were made by some of his contemporaries to introduce into the Church secular music, the music of the theatre and the mimes. Only the arts which were developed by devout motives since the early years of Christianity have given expression to the spiritual essence of the religion. These alone can be called liturgical, that is, spiritual, in the sense that religion gives to the term spiritual. The *spiritual odes* of which Paul speaks (Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16) were works of such art. All the liturgical arts express the same thing: architecture, hymnody, iconography, embroidery, and even writing, the manner of walking, and in general the movements and gestures of the priests, the chiming of the bells, and so forth.

That these arts are truly of unique spirituality has been realized by many non-Orthodox, especially clergymen, whose senses and physical body have been exposed, from youth on, to formative influences different from those in which Orthodox Christians have been brought up. Nevertheless, they confess that our icons and psalmody evoke in them contrition—of course, when executed by inspired and pious artists.

Thus, the value of the liturgical arts is not merely conventional, but real, extending beyond the limited conceptions that are due to nurture, habit, and taste, since even persons who are not of the Orthodox faith recognize that the arts of the Orthodox Church reflect the spirit of the Gospels and

for this reason lift the soul above the earthly realm. And how could it be otherwise, in as much as these arts have been developed by sanctified hearts, which felt deeply the liturgical element in speech and music?

Liturgical music is the natural musical garb of liturgical speech. Both sprang up together; they are one and the same thing. Essence and expression here have an absolute correspondence, even more exact than that of an object and its reflection in a mirror, for the objects of which we speak here belong to the spiritual realm. The profound and apocalyptic spirit of Christian religion and its mysteries could not be expressed faithfully and worthily except by these arts, which are called liturgical and spiritual, and which were developed by that same profound spirit. Only this music, and none other, uniquely expresses the spirit of our religion, because only this music has an absolute and most exact correspondence with it. This is testified to, I repeat, by certain men whose spiritual upbringing, religious training, whose spiritual upbringing, religious training, and social development have no relation to that of the Orthodox. *The Spirit bloweth where it wills* (Jn. 3:8) and is transmitted to souls by means of sounds which the same Spirit formed, by illuminating the souls of the holy writers of hymns.

The Fathers of the Church ordained that Christians use the voice alone in execution of hymns, chanting as did our Lord Himself and His disciples. St. John Chrysostom says: *Our Savior chanted hymns just as we do*. The Apostolic Constitutions forbid the use of musical instruments in the church. From the time of the Apostles, psalmody was monophonic, or homophonic, as it is to this day in our churches [in Greece].

The Western Church, in order to gratify people and flatter their tastes, put instruments inside the churches, disobeying what was ordained by the Fathers. They did this because they had no idea what liturgical music was and what secular music was, just as they did not know the difference between liturgical painting and secular painting. But the Byzantines distinguished the one from the other, and this shows how much more spiritual they were in comparison with the Westerners and how much more truly they experienced the spirit of Christianity. Byzantine music is, in comparison with the music of the West, exactly as Orthodox iconography is in comparison with the religious painting of the West.

How divine, indeed, is the psalmody of the Orthodox Church! It seems sweeter and sweeter each year to the Christian—a new wine that fills the heart with joy and makes it soar to the ethereal region of immortal life.

Byzantine music is peaceful, sad but consoling, enthusiastic but reserved, humble but heroic, simple but profound. It has the same spiritual essence as the Gospels, the hymns, the psalms, the books of the lives of the saints, and the iconography of Byzantium. That is why Byzantine music is monotonous for one to whom the Gospels are monotonous, naive

for one to whom the Gospels are naive, circumscribed for one to whom the Gospels are circumscribed, mournful for one to whom the Gospels are mournful, antiquated for one to whom the Gospels are antiquated. But it is joyful for one to whom the Gospels are joyful, filled with compunction for one to whom the Gospels are filled with compunction, enthusiastic but humble for one to whom the Gospels, are enthusiastic but humble, and peaceful for one who experiences the peace of Christ.

Byzantine art is spiritual, and it is necessary that a man have spiritual depth in order to understand its mystical treasures. Byzantine music expresses *gladdening sorrow* (*The Ladder*, Step 7:9) that is, that spiritual fragrance which only the spiritual senses are capable of experiencing. Its melody is not unholy, ostentatious, despondent, shallow, tasteless, or aimless; it is meek, humble, sweet with a certain bitter-sweetness, and full of contrition and mercy. It bestows an unwaning spiritual glory upon souls that have become worthy of the eternal mysteries and the compassion of God. It expresses thanksgiving; it causes the flow of tears of gratitude and spiritual joy. This music is the warmest, the most direct, and the most concise expression of the religious feeling of faithful Orthodox people.



We have made our own Christianity, a convenient, humane and reasonable Christianity, as the “Grand Inquisitor” of Dostoevsky says, because the Christianity taught by Christ is inapplicable, inhumane.

Instead of rising towards Christ, who said *if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to Myself*, we have brought Him down to where we are, and have made a Christianity that agrees with our weaknesses, with our passions, with our worldly ambitions, and we have given our saints qualifications that our materialistic minds appreciate and admire, making them philosophers, orators, politicians, psychologists, sociologists, educators, scientists, etc.

The Grand Inquisitor, speaking as if Christ was standing before him (he had commanded His capture, since He once again descended to the earth and people were following Him), said to Him: “At the time you came into the world you brought people a harsh religion, impractical and inhumane. We made it convenient, humane. Why did you come again into the world? Will you spoil it, just as it has taken off? Therefore, I command that you be burned in your name, as a heretic.”

A convenient, a humane Christianity, this human construct, **is a pitiful deformation of the Gospel by the wicked materialism of the flesh.**

**Photios Kontoglou (+1965)**

## ON THE SPIRIT OF PARISH LIFE

*From a parish bulletin of the Holy Virgin Cathedral, San Francisco, October 1990.*

In parish life, everything has deep meaning, if only one understands this meaning. And for this reason a proper attitude should be established towards all this meaning.

Everything in church life should foster a genuinely Christian, angelic and truly Orthodox attitude towards it. We must take great care that everything lead us to the Kingdom of Heaven, that everything contributes to the growth of this Kingdom within us, and not draw it away from our souls. Church life should open to us the laws of this Kingdom. This is its very purpose. The Church of Christ is not only a ladder to the Kingdom of God; it is also a school, instructing the thoughts, feelings, and will of a person in the ways of the Heavenly Kingdom.

Today church life appears unsettled. The evil laws of this world have penetrated church life, and have even begun at times to direct it. The results are evident.

Everything living on earth must submit in some degree to life's natural laws, and by virtue of its existence on earth, even Christ's Church—that which is most holy on earth—is not exempt from the weight of material considerations. Even though the Lord could turn water into wine and make bread to multiply, His Apostles carried with them a money box where they collected donations which people freely gave for their daily needs and the needs of their divine Teacher. This was not a sin; it was simply following the law governing the material life of fallen man. At the same time, it evoked noble feelings of love, of charity and of sacrifice in those people who were instructed about these feelings by the Apostles' preaching. But that man who carried the money box became inflamed by a spirit of materialism, avarice, and self-interest. He regretted the fragrant myrrh used for the Saviour of the world, and he died as a traitor. Found unfaithful in this small matter, he turned out to be unfaithful in that which was great.

For us this serves as an important lesson: anyone who is attached to money will betray Jesus Christ. A Christian's attitude towards money must be sober, free, unrestrained, without any emotional attachment. If one ought not to be foolishly tied to earthly life, then all the more must one remain free of attachment to its wealth, material wealth in particular. Only a soul free from materialism can be truly believing and enter the other world, when its time comes, without distress.

In the church foyer, i.e., as though in a courtyard (the church foyer connotes the court of the Old Testament "skinia") the sale of various church-related goods is permissible as a service to the faithful, since for them to buy bread or candles elsewhere to bring to church would be more troublesome.

But one must clearly understand that all material effects in the church, just as what is experienced spiritually, possesses a free

and voluntary character. Unity in the parish, just as unity in the Kingdom of God, has a wholly voluntary character, foreign to any compulsion. Each believer determines how much he donates to the church and does so without compulsion. Articles which cost money—candles, *prospophora*, etc.—are purchased voluntarily. The collection plate is passed around the church for voluntary contributions. And everything which has to do with prayer must likewise rest upon the same clear and strictly voluntary terms.

It is customary to pay for a service of "need" (*moleben*, *panikhida*, house blessing, etc.). But not everyone realizes that this is a donation on the occasion of this service, and not a fee paid for the service. To "pay for" the service is not right, since every service is effective only by virtue of the Holy Spirit, which is present in it, and it is not possible to receive or to give the Spirit of God for any price; only through selfless prayer, through faith and love does it descend upon men. A genuine "service of need" is worth infinitely more than any material payment, more than all worldly treasure. Conversely, an insincere, hypocritical service of need not only is worth nothing, but it is a sin before God, both for the layman and, even more so, for the priest.

How can one put a price on a priest's blessing, a blessing which gives grace to the world, health, and repels evil spirits? Quite clearly, it is a gift of God, and it can only be regarded as a gift, just as all prayer is a gift, *for the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with utterances...*, testifies the Apostle. All attempts to buy the Spirit, or to pay for it, are doomed not only to failure, but are rejected outright by God. It is enough to remember Simon Magus, who wanted to pay the Apostles for grace—and what did he hear from the Apostle?

For this reason, in every case one must clearly distinguish between 1) prayer, mystery, blessing, i.e., "need" (need of the spirit), and 2) monetary donation, connected to this need.

May no one fall into despondency and end this earthly life on account of poverty, of material failure; may no one attach profit motives of any kind to voluntary contributions and acts of love for one's neighbor. Let people give whatever they are able to the Church, but let them keep in mind that the Church gives everything free of charge, for it gives what cannot be bought—eternal life in a new, imperishable world. If we understand this, our struggle will indeed be a struggle against militant materialism. And we shall strike the ancient serpent squarely on the head. Otherwise, if we should merely sprinkle this serpent with verbal husks, without Christian deeds and feelings, he will swallow even that remnant of the faithful that still remain on earth.

In the Church and near the Church—this is the field of spiritual battle, a battle of God against the worldly antagonist, who reigns over valuables and over people of this dying age. At the foundation of our Orthodox parish life, may there lie not only a common spirit of sacrifice, but also our common service to God: in our actions and in our hearts.



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## LIFE'S DIFFICULTIES ARE ALWAYS BENEFICIAL FOR US!

*St. John Chrysostom.*



Every temptation, every sorrow, every demonic assault can prove to be of great benefit for us, if we are careful and patient. The invisible enemy (the devil) pounced on Job with fierce rage and malice. But did he harm him in the end? Not at all! On the contrary, he helped Job acquire greater holiness and more glory.

When we are alert and vigilant, the devil cannot harm us. Rather, he can unintentionally help us to increase in virtue. Observe what takes place when someone blows on a fire: initially, it seems as though he is blowing it out; ultimately, however, not only does he not put out the fire, but he actually intensifies it.

Without problems, without adversities, without illnesses, without sorrows, what would man do? He would indulge in pleasure and drunkenness, he would roll in the mire of sin, and he would completely forget about God and His holy commandments. Conversely, life's fears, uncertainties, sorrows, and trials keep him attentive, serve as lessons of philosophy, and act as exercises for his soul.

Just as a goldsmith places gold in the furnace and lets it remain in the fire until it is purified, similarly, God allows

our souls to remain in the furnace of hardships until they acquire purity.

If you have committed murder, adultery, or some other grievous ("mortal") sin that precludes you from the Kingdom of Heaven, then you should be sorrowful and cry. If however, with the grace of God, you have done no such thing, why do you become distraught and grumble at the first sight of difficulty? God did not give us the feeling of sorrow to be used untimely and injudiciously, but when necessary and beneficial. We should be sorrowful not when others harm us, but when we harm others; not when we are wronged, but when we wrong others; not when we ourselves feel pain, but when we cause pain to others. This is what our Creator has ordered. We, however, do the opposite. We hurt others without the slightest remorse or feeling of guilt. But when others hurt us, we become upset, unhappy, and discouraged—sometimes we even feel like ending our lives.

We must understand once and for all: for the Christian, there are only two causes of sadness. The first is when he opposes God and acts contrary to His holy will; the second, when he sees his fellow man disregarding God's will.

Let us learn, therefore, to be men of wisdom and to honor Christ as he desires. For a person being honored finds greatest pleasure in the honor he desires, not in the honor we think best. Peter thought he was honoring Christ when he refused to let him wash his feet; but what Peter wanted was not truly an honor, quite the opposite! Give him the honor prescribed in his law by giving your riches to the poor. For God does not want golden vessels but golden hearts.